

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **OCT 12 1983**
date entered **NOV 25 1983**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic ⁹ The Rock Creek Stage Station Historic District

and/or common ✓ Arlington

2. Location

street & number South of I-80 not for publication

city, town Arlington vicinity of N/A

state Wyoming code 056 county Carbon code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>n/a</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Chester E. Pitcher

street & number Arlington Road

city, town McFadden vicinity of N/A state Wyoming

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Carbon County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Building

city, town Rawlins state Wyoming 82301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wyoming Recreation Commission Survey of Historic Sites, Monuments & Markers has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1967 and continuing federal state county local

depository for survey records Wyoming Recreation Commission, 1920 Thomes Avenue

city, town Cheyenne state Wyoming 82002

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
n/a moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Rock Creek Historic District is located on a beautiful setting in south central Wyoming. The log buildings constructed of timbers logged in the area are surrounded by a swiftly flowing stream and a mature forest with many mosquitoes. The vernacular structures at Rock Creek visually express the durability of native materials. All of the structures within the district are peeled log buildings that are one or two stories high with little ornamentation. These single detached buildings generally have gable roofs and all have retained their architectural integrity. Small additions constructed in response to specific needs do not detract from the district and are compatible in terms of material, design and scale. Most of the buildings have been rethanked. For protective purposes the owner in recent years reroofed a few of the buildings with corrugated metal. The condition of the structures varies from fair to good and most of the buildings are utilized for ranching or storage purposes. The structures from the earliest period of development are typical of a home station. The dancehall/store/blacksmith shop and homesteader's cabin were constructed during the 1860's and are two of the oldest log buildings in Wyoming. The completion of the transcontinental railroad drastically changed transportation methods, so traffic on the Overland Trail declined. As Rock Creek continued to serve the needs of the surrounding agricultural and timbering community, the post office/bunkhouse was built during the 1880's. Stock raising activities became increasingly important at Rock Creek, therefore a barn, milkhouse and icehouse were constructed during the last years of the nineteenth century. Due to a devastating fire in 1934, several buildings were constructed during the thirties. The garage, house, and woodshed are given a noncontributing designation because of their 1937 construction date. These structures are non-intrusive and are compatible with the nineteenth century log structures. Only eleven buildings are located within the three acres of nominated land. The structures were not arranged in a specific pattern but reflect the district's evolution from a stage station to a ranching community. Development at Arlington continued into the twentieth century but buildings from this period that are not related to the home station or early ranching community are not included in the nomination.

SEE ADDENDUM, Item #7

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
Specific dates 1860, 1864, 1880's, 1890's, & 1930's				
Builder/Architect n/a				

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Rock Creek Crossing and Stage Station was in the 1860's one of many stopping points or way stations along the Overland Trail, a central trail among many Western transcontinental transportation routes. As a stage station known as a home station, Rock Creek became a commercial as well as "entertainment" center for immigrants that traveled along the Oregon Trail. Joe Bush, owner of the stage station, constructed a bridge at the crossing and lived on a log cabin at the site. To serve the many needs of the travelers, Bush operated a dancehall-saloon, general store, and blacksmith shop from one building. Both Bush buildings remain standing. Although travel along the trail declined after the transcontinental railroad was completed, Rock Creek continued to thrive as a supply and social center for growing agricultural and timber interests in the surrounding area. In 1882 a post office known as Rock Dale was constructed at the site and was used as a bunkhouse in later years. The dancehall-store blacksmith shop also served as a school during the 1890's. The owners at Rock Creek station turned to stock raising for economic purposes during the later part of the nineteenth century. Although Rock Creek still served as a commercial and social center, the economic base of the small settlement began to change. Corrals, a barn, milkhouse, and icehouse were built during the 1880's and 1890's. During the early twentieth century, Rock Creek was renamed Arlington but it continued in its dual commercial-agricultural role. Rock Creek's historical significance relates to its evolution from a home station along the Overland Trail to a permanent ranching community. As one of the earliest settlements in Carbon County, Rock Creek contributed in a commercial and social sense to the development of south central Wyoming. The settlement's continued success as both a commercial center and ranching operation during the 1880's and 1890's distinguish it from others along the Overland Trail. Other buildings constructed at Rock Creek during the nineteenth century have disappeared yet the remaining log buildings retained their integrity and represent a significant part of Wyoming's history. The log structures built during the 1860's are some of the oldest log buildings in Wyoming and may be the only extant frame Overland Trail structures in the state.

SEE ADDENDUM

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ADDENDUM, Item #9

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3 acres

Quadrangle name Arlington, Wyoming

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>18</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>18</u> <u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u>
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D	<u>1</u> <u>3</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
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G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE ADDENDUM, Item #10 page one

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark G. Junge - Wyoming Recreation Commission Staff

organization Wyoming Recreation Commission

date September, 1983

street & number 1920 Thomas Avenue

telephone 307-777-6312

city or town Cheyenne

state Wyoming 82002

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Alvin J. Bastrom

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/28/83

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Kevin Lee Dunge
Keeper of the National Register

date 11/25/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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ADDENDUM

Contributing

Homestead Cabin: The Joe Bush cabin, a one story rectangular log building with a gable roof, covered with corrugated metal is one of the oldest structures at Rock Creek. Bush put up the first toll bridge at the site in 1860 and the hand hewn log cabin served as his home. The south facade has three stationary windows and the corner joints resemble square notches.

Dancehall/Store/Blacksmith Shop: This L-shaped log building was constructed between 1860 and 1864 as a part of the original stage stop and toll bridge run first by Joe Bush and after 1868, by William A. and Sadie Williams. The dominant portion of the structure is two stories while a smaller one-story building is part of the south facade. Gable roofs with wooden shingles cover both parts of the structure and a small shed roof covers the wooden, four panel single entrance door on the west facade. A large sliding door on the same facade provides an entrance to the blacksmith shop on the ground floor of the two story building. The fenestration is irregular and the notching is concealed.

Post Office/Bunkhouse: The Rock Dale post office at Rock Creek Crossing was first established in 1882. The late nineteenth century one-story log structure has a rectangular plan with a small board and batten addition on the south facade. Metal roofing and ridgepoles protect the gable roof. The fenestration is irregular and there are four entrances.

Barn: The barn is a late nineteenth century building and has a rectangular plan. This large, log structure is 1½ stories with a stone foundation and gable roof. Today the roof is covered with metal roofing. Large wood doors are located on the east and west facades while small stationary windows are on the east and west facades. The notching is concealed.

Icehouse: The log icehouse was constructed during the late nineteenth century and has retained its architectural integrity. The building is 1 story with a rectangular plan. Wood shingles still cover the steeply pitched roof. Three wood doors dominate the north facade. The notching is concealed.

Milkhouse: The milkhouse, constructed in the nineteenth century, is a 1 story building with a gable roof. Currently both metal roofing and wood shingles cover the roof. The milkhouse has a rectangular plan. A one story addition with a shed roof was constructed on the rear facade. The north or primary facade has irregular fenestration with 2 doors and 1 window. The notching is concealed.

Non-Contributing

House: The log house, in the center of the district, was built in 1937. The house is 1½ stories with a rectangular plan and a gable roof. Although small additions have been constructed on all 4 facades, the building is compatible with the district. The fenestration is irregular.

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Garage: Constructed in 1937, this log building is a compatible structure at Rock Creek. The 1 story garage with a rectangular plan has a gable roof. The east facade has 2 entrances: one wood 4 panel door and a large wood double door. The notching is concealed.

Woodshed: Although is was constructed in 1937, the woodshed is different from other Rock Creek structures. Instead of logs, vertical wood siding cover this simple 1 story building with a shed roof.

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Continuation sheet Significance - Addendum Item number 8

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In tracing the recorded history of the Rock Creek Crossing and Stage Station, it is necessary to begin at least in 1825. In that year General William Henry Ashley and his party of trappers passed through the Rock Creek area on their way to a meeting with fellow trappers on the Green River.

As the era of the fur trade closed, another era in the region west of the Mississippi River was begun - that of migration. With the westward advance of population came also the necessity to explore overland transportation routes to the Far West. Since very little knowledge was recorded concerning the "Great American Desert," as the area west of the Mississippi River was called, the United States Government sent out parties to explore the region. South-central Wyoming lay in the path of a logical east-west transportation route and the Rock Creek area subsequently formed a portion of that route. Although there were other expeditions to the West before it, the first official Government exploration which traveled in the vicinity of Rock Creek was that of Lieutenant John C. Fremont in 1843. It was on the second of his five explorations of the West that Fremont and his party traveled through the Rock Creek area.

The general area of the Rock Creek Crossing and Stage Station and, indeed, the entire Overland Trail was familiar to persons other than United States Government explorers or army troops. For example, the route had been known since 1849 as the Cherokee Trail because of the Cherokee Indians who, beginning in that year, traveled along much of the same route. Under the leadership of Captain Lewis Evans of Arkansas the Cherokee people traveled to California in search of land upon which to relocate and for the gold reported in California. Later, upon the adoption in 1862 of the Stansbury or Cherokee Trail route by Ben Holladay's Overland Stage Line, it became known as the Overland Trail.

Early in 1862 the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express experienced a reorganization, the stage business and United States mail contract having been taken over by the "stagecoach king," Ben Holladay. Holladay soon renamed the company the Overland Stage Line. The stage road over the central route had generally followed the Oregon Trail through Wyoming but by July, 1862 Holladay abandoned the Oregon Trail in favor of a route further south. The new route generally followed that taken by Fremont and extended through what is today Western Nebraska, Northeastern Colorado, and Southern Wyoming. On July 21, 1862 daily mail and passenger service was inaugurated on the Overland Stage Line and the new central route soon became known as the Overland Trail. Thus, the heyday of freighting and stagecoaches along the Overland Trail, lasting from 1862 to 1869, was begun. So also began the most significant phase in the history of the Arlington-Rock Creek area.

The Overland Trail split off from the older Oregon Trail near present-day North Platte, Nebraska. Stages loaded with passengers and mail from that point rolled along the South Platte River to Julesburg, Colorado and on to Latham (Greeley, Colorado), one hundred and thirty-five miles southwest of Julesburg. From Latham

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a branch line was extended south to Denver while the main stage and mail route to the Pacific went northwest from Latham to La Porte. From La Porte the trail turned northward, cutting through the Laramie Range to arrive at Virginia Dale at what is today the Colorado-Wyoming State Line. Leaving Virginia Dale the trail went north through the Laramie Range and entered the wide prairie of the Laramie Plains. Continuing a north-northwest course across the Plains the trail crossed the Big and Little Laramie Rivers as it headed for the northern end of the Medicine Bow Range. Sixty-two miles northwest of the Virginia Dale station, the trail reached an important stage station at Rock Creek.

Because of the various hazards, a bridge was built in the 1860's where the Overland Trail crossed Rock Creek, and a fee was charged by a resident gatekeeper for its use, such as fifty cents for a horse and rider, and varying from seventy-five cents to a dollar for a wagon. On one occasion the leader of a large wagon trail defied the owner of the bridge and refused to pay the toll. He took his wagons downstream, found a place to cross the creek and, as the news of his successful crossing became spread about, the incident was repeated by others. As the profits from the bridge thus decreased, the attempt to charge a toll was eventually abandoned.

Stage stations along the Overland Trail were usually spaced from ten to seventeen miles apart and were built of native materials at hand. In a given area, they were similar in appearance. For example, those stations just west of the Continental Divide were made of sandstone while those just east of the Divide were usually made of pine logs. However, the stations in a given area were not all alike in the number of their buildings or in the services offered to the traveler. Some were merely one-room structures containing little, if any, furniture. Near these simple structures was a corral for perhaps a dozen head of livestock. These stations were known as "swing" stations and usually offered a poor bill of fare to the traveler.

On the other hand, the "home" station was more extensive, having several or more buildings, offering larger and more commodious quarters, and serving better food than could be found at a swing station. The stage station at Rock Creek, being a home station, thus had more to offer than the primitive swing station. In the 1860's there were a few buildings at the Crossing and in time a very small community grew up around the site which was later named Rockdale and eventually, at an unknown date, became Arlington. One of the earliest buildings was a two-story log and frame structure which housed a blacksmith shop on the ground level. Here travelers could shoe their teams and repair their wagons. Over the shop was a dance-hall and adjoining the shop and dance-hall was a saloon where one could drink and gamble. With these and other services at hand, the traveler who stopped at the Rock Creek Station was offered some of the amenities of civilization. Dances, especially, were a popular form of entertainment on the frontier. People came to such stations as Rock Creek from miles away by wagon or horseback in order to "trip the light, fantastic toe."

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One of the pioneer settlers in the Rock Creek area during those early days was Joe Bush. Bush filed a claim on the land where the stage station stood and for several years operated the stage station, keeping there a stock of groceries. He also built the first toll bridge across Rock Creek in the 1860's, according to the book Wyoming's Pioneer Ranches. W.O. Owen and W.O. Downey, pioneer Wyoming surveyors, both surveyed the Bush claim in the 1870's. W.O. Owen knew Bush well and called him, "...a large genial whole-souled man..."

I made many surveys for Mr. Bush, [Owen once recalled,] and found him four-square to the world all the time. John Bush had fought Indians for years and when they attacked his station it was no new experience for him. The stage station at this point was repeatedly attacked by Indians and Bush fought the savages valiantly. He had a score of wounds from arrows and many times have I seen the scars.

Bush did not hold on to his claim for many years before it came into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Williams about the year 1868. For a couple of years the Williams, like Joe Bush before them, operated the property at Rock Creek as a way station along the Overland Trail.* The Williams raised a large garden and sold produce in season to miners, emigrants, and others. They also took out a water right on Rock Creek to irrigate hay which they cut and sold to the travelers. Bill Williams himself was reputedly a skillful cowhand but was the victim of a tragic accident when his horse threw him over a barbed-wire fence and dragged him to death. Consequently, his wife Sadie then became the sole owner of the property and proved to be a very capable one. According to one report she was an efficient, practical nurse and was always ready to help her friends in time of illness. On the other hand she also ran card games at the saloon and according to one report she "had a ready tongue and could handle a six-shooter as well as most men." Some time after the death of her husband, Sadie Williams married Sid Morris and together they continued to operate the station until the operation was sold to Joe and Aunt Mary Dixon in the early 1900's. When Joe Dixon died in 1910 his wife thereupon sold the property to her brother-in-law Alvy Dixon.

Alvy Dixon was the son of Marshall Dixon. The Marshall Dixon family, like some of the earliest settlers in Wyoming, migrated west because of the attraction held by the mining industry. After 1879 young Alvy Dixon worked as a freighter between Rock Creek Station, Fort McKinney, and Fort Fetterman. At various times he worked as a cowhand,

* The Rock Creek Station continued to be operated even after the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad across Southern Wyoming in 1868 because there was still some traffic to be served along the Overland Trail.

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and in the Medicine Bow Mountains he felled trees from which ties were cut to supply the railroad. But, like his father, he also took a homestead along Rock Creek, just east and north of Arlington. As Alvy Dixon added more and more land to his original homestead, his ranch eventually included some of the choicest portions of the Rock Creek Valley, including the land at present-day Arlington.

The post office, Rock Dale, was set up by the federal government in 1882 with Milton A. Williamson as postmaster. Both Bill and Sadie Williams also served in the postmaster position. After 1902, the post office designation was changed to Arlington. The dancehall continued to be a gathering place, drawing patrons from the nearby mining and timber camps as well as the neighboring ranches. As early as 1895, the lower portion of the building was being used as a school by district number twenty-four. Several of the Dixon family females served as teachers at the rate of fifty dollars per month and Alvy Dixon served as district treasurer for many years.

Stock-raising activities after 1880 resulted in the construction of ranch facilities including corrals and outbuildings. Between 1896 and 1920, Dixon applied for numerous free use permits in the Medicine Bow National Forest. Requests for house logs, barn beams and fence posts reflect the growing importance of the area as a ranching community as do grazing permits.

When Alvy Dixon died in 1944, the ranch site at Arlington passed to his second wife Rosemary Pitcher. Her son Chester now resides in the 1937 log house located near the center of the proposed district.

The hay fields, browsing cattle, and weathered log and frame buildings as well as the rushing waters of Rock Creek present an historical progression of exploration and settlement in a Rocky Mountain agricultural community.

Addendum, Item #9

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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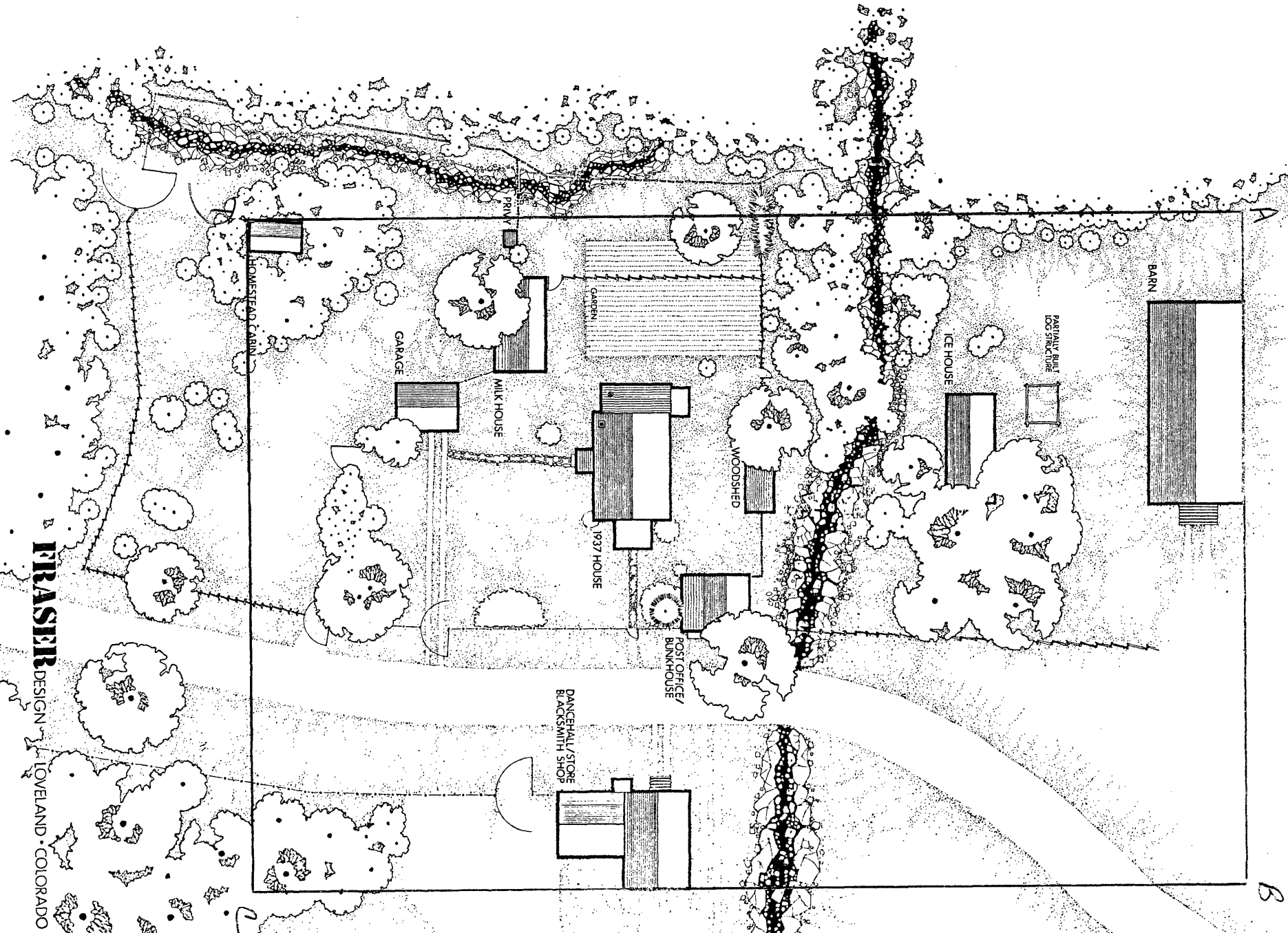
Continuation sheet **ADDENDUM**

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The buildings within the Rock Creek Stage Station Historic District provide a basis for the extension of arbitrary lines to act as boundary lines. The northern boundary is drawn along the north edge of the barn and extends in a straight line from point A to point B. The east wall of the two story section of the dancehall-store-blacksmith shop acts as an eastern boundary and extends in a straight line from point B to point C. The south wall of the homestead cabin acts as a reference point for the southern boundary as the straight line extends from point C to point D. The west boundary is drawn along the west wall of the homestead cabin and extends in a straight line from point D to point A.



FRASER DESIGN • LOVELAND • COLORADO

ROCK CREEK STAGE STATION

MEDICINE BOW MOUNTAINS

CARBON COUNTY

WYOMING

