

# DATA SHEET PH0087131

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Colorado</b>
COUNTY: <b>Jefferson</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

FEB 13 1975

### 1. NAME

COMMON: <b>Rooney Ranch</b>
AND/OR HISTORIC:

### 2. LOCATION

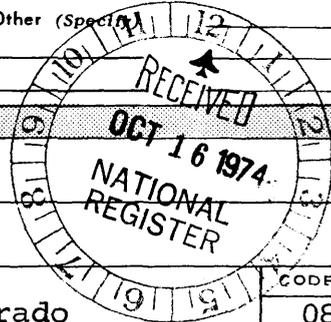
STREET AND NUMBER: <i>S of Golden, intersection of</i> <b>Junction at Rooney Road, Alameda Parkway</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Golden</b>		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
STATE <b>Colorado</b>	CODE <b>08</b>	COUNTY: <b>Jefferson</b>	CODE <b>059</b>

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY <small>(Check One)</small>	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public            Public Acquisition: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE <small>(Check One or More as Appropriate)</small>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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"/> Comments <input type="checkbox"/> Other <small>(Specify)</small>

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: <b>Alexander Rooney</b>		
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>Rooney Road</b>		
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Golden</b>	STATE: <b>Colorado</b>	CODE <b>08</b>



### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: <b>Jefferson County Court House</b>		
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>1700 Arapahoe</b>		
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Golden</b>	STATE: <b>Colorado</b>	CODE <b>08</b>

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: <b>State Inventory</b>		
DATE OF SURVEY: <b>1973</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: <b>State Historical Society</b>		
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>200 14th Avenue</b>		
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Denver</b>	STATE: <b>Colorado</b>	CODE <b>08</b>

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Colorado  
COUNTY: Jefferson  
ENTRY NUMBER: **FEB 13 1975**  
DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good
<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered
(Check One)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

With the exception of the addition of insulation, electricity, plumbing, and a partition in the downstairs bedroom, the appearance is the same as when the building was constructed in 1865. It is a two-story house with a gable roof. It is constructed of native sand stone and native limestone. The walls are 18 inches thick. The house is approximately 36' x 24'. The stones were laid up with lime burned in a kiln on the ranch, mixed with sand from the creek bottom on the ranch. The adjacent spring house, approximately 10' x 12', has the same appearance as the house and was constructed at the same time. It houses a spring which kept dairy products at 51°.

The property is mostly meadow in a valley between a hogback range on the west and Green Mountain on the east. There is a creek that ran the length of Rooney Gulch, a natural mineral spring, clay pits, lime deposits, and coal deposits.

The original buildings were constructed by Alexander Rooney who was a stone mason. He had come west in 1859 and had worked first as a stone mason in Central City, helping to construct the Masonic Lodge. Buildings constructed on the ranch in the subsequent years have been built by other members of the Rooney family, the latest being outbuildings such as a barn and a stable, which were constructed by the present Alexander Rooney in the same way used to construct the original ranch house in 1865. The stone mason's trade was passed down in the family.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1865

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal   | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               |  | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There are two areas of major historical significance:

1. The original ranch house and spring house still are in use as a residence and spring house. This is the oldest stone building in Jefferson County still in use. The residents of the house are the great-grandson, and his family, of the original resident, Alexander Rooney. The area is still being ranched and farmed.
2. The valley formed by the two mountain ridges is an area lending itself to prehistoric archaeological research, as well as to an archaeological repository of Ute artifacts. It is relatively untouched, since a large protion of the original ranch has remained in the Rooney family through the years and has been unavailable to the public.

Alexander Rooney originally came west in 1859, as stated in a love letter written to his wife, "to seek his fortune." For three years he did a variety of tasks, ranging from utilizing his skills as a stone mason, to driving lumber and other supplies to the mining camps between Denver and South Park, to operating a "dary farm." The high altitude caused him great discomfort, so he searched for winter pasture for his cattle. He found his heart's desire in the fall of 1861, and brought his wife, Emeline, and other members of his family west to the valley area between the mountain and the plains, from their home in Anamosa, Iowa. In subsequent years he acquired 4480 acres of land in a variety of ways, ranging through homesteading 160 acres for all qualified members of the family, purchasing adjacent military patents, acquiring land given to the State of New York for a land grant college, purchasing acreage from the Union Pacific, and cash purchases from other adjacent homesteaders. The ranch covered an area that was probably the largest ranching area for cattle and horses in Jefferson County...from the hogback on the west to the Platte River on the east, from Bear Creek on the south to Table Mountain near Golden on the north. He put up hay and grass from his ranch, did enough vegetable farming for his family,

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Homestead patents in the U.S. Bureau of Land management in Denver. Abstract book from the Landon Abstract Company.  
 File of letters from Alexander Rooney to Emeline Littlefield from 1859-1861 in Colorado Historical Society.  
 Crain, Mary Helen. Circle of Pioneers. Also 2 newspaper articles in Canyon Courier.  
 Interviews: Jefferson County Historical Society, 3/74 & 4/74.  
 Crew, Verne. Gold and Grass. unpublished mss.

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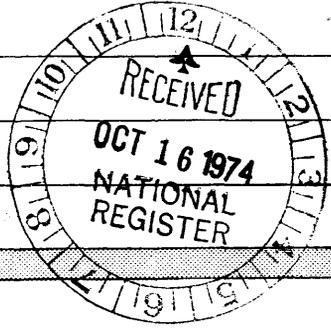
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
NW	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NE	39	41	25.7	105	11	51			
SE	39	40	52.2	105	11	15			
SW	39	40	52.2	105	11	51			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 172 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ CODE \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Stephen G. Hart

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 10/8/74

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

AR Mortensen  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 7/13/75

ATTEST:

WJ Mortensen  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 2-12-75

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(Number all entries) #8

Other famous visitors included Buffalo Bill Cody and Teddy Roosevelt. Buffalo Bill Cody and Otis Rooney were old friends and once had been partners in a venture running the first Hereford cattle in Wyoming. He often visited the ranch and on one occasion tried to persuade Otis to allow his daughter Edna Belle, who was a champion bareback rider, to join his Wild West Show. When Cody's show closed many of its tents found their way to the Rooney ranch where they were used to cover haystacks. Theodore Roosevelt came to Colorado in 1908 to hunt elk. Otis outfitted him with a Studebaker farm wagon for the expedition. Later Roosevelt visited the ranch and gave the wagon and utensils in it to the Rooney's.

Alexander and Emeline Rooney had six children, five of whom were born in the ranch house. Otis Rooney was one of these children. His three children (Morris, Ruth, and Alex) were also born there, and Alexander Rooney's four sons were born there. Alexander Rooney presently owns the ranch and his son Otis lives in the original stone ranch house.

The Panic of 1893 forced the Rooney's to give up a large part of their ranch and lands, however they still retain the core ranch house area and 1380 acres.

Coal was discovered on the property in 1872 and a large mine operated on the ranch lands under various managements until 1933. Exposed coal seams still supply the Rooney's with coal for the stone house.

Some of the earliest silent cowboy movies were also shot on the ranch property.

Dinosaur footprints were discovered on the property on a site near the present Alameda Parkway, which cuts through the ranch and is frequently visited by school children from Jefferson County, as is the ranch house. Dinosaur bones have been found in the surrounding clay pits, and members of the family have collected quantities of Indian artifacts from the property.





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but primarily raised cattle and horses. He chose to raise a special breed of cattle, and first introduced Galloway cattle imported from Scotland to the West. He drove them to his ranch in a cattle drive from Missouri. They resembled buffalo because of their hugh shoulders, powerful necks, and long wavy hair. Stockmen made heavy coats from their hide. Rooney also bred Morgan horses for the United States' Calvary and the British Army. The Rooney family raised Galloway cattle on the ranch until 1971.

There were several illustrious visitors to the ranch area. Colorow, chief of the Ute Indian tride that roamed the area, became acquainted with Alexander Rooney as Rooney was first in the process of building his barns and corrals from cedars that grew on the hogback. The Utes, though transitory, would make annual pilgrimages to the area chosen by Rooney for his ranch for two reasons. There was a tree on the slope behind the ranch house that Colorow called his "Inspiration Tree." The whites came to refer to it as his "Council Tree," however, because it was Colorow's custom to assemble his council under the tree when he came out of the mountains each year. The Utes also came annually to a mineral spring that formed a pond near the ranch buildings (and still exists). They felt that it was necessary to their good health to smear themselves with the blue mud from the pond, sit in the sun until it dried and cracked, peel it off, and continue their travels with pure skins. The Utes, although not normally in the habit of making friends with the whites, came to respect Rooney because of his fair dealings with them. A few stayed to help him build his corrals, many caught wild horses for him to break for his trade with U.S. and British cavalries. The Utes found him to be a man of his word, and consequently treated his family and his home with respect. Colorow paid social calls on the family, even offering to marry one of Rooney's daughters.

A large battle took place between the Utes and the Arapahoes on the hogback west of the ranch and on the ranch, and though Rooney feared the destruction or damage of his wooden out-buildings and his haystacks, the Indians all carefully avoided the civilized portions of the ranch. The tribe camped yearly in the meadows surrounding the ranch, however, and generations of Rooney boys grew up with Ute Indians as companions. Today, the Red Rock Lions' Club annually reenacts the life of Chief Colorow in a ceremony under the "Inspiration Tree."