

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



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

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

1. Name

historic The Robert Vaughn Homestead (The Captain Couch Ranch)

and/or common The Nielsen Farm

2. Location

street & number Vaughn cemetery road (Cascade County road) N/A not for publication

city, town Vaughn ms. vicinity of congressional district 01

state Montana code 030 county Cascade code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 Sterlin & Vergie Nielsen/James & Wanda Nielsen

street & number P.O. Box 246 / P.O. Box 275

city, town Vaughn / Vaughn N/A vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cascade County Courthouse, Clerk & Records Office

street & number _____

city, town Great Falls state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The buildings and structures on the Robert Vaughn/Captain Couch Ranch originally served a ranch of several thousand acres. They are located on the prairie of North Central Montana where the land gently slopes from three sides into a basin. The larger buildings, most notably the house, have dominated the skyline and were clearly visible from the original gate defining the ranch boundaries a full mile away.

"The Big House" as it has historically been called, is a two-story, square measuring 30'x30' with the original sandstone Robert Vaughn house (ca. 1869) enclosed in brick and adding an additional 20' to the rear of the first story. The "big house" was constructed by Captain Couch in 1889, the year he purchased the ranch from the heirs of Robert Vaughn. Red brick was manufactured and fired on the ranch to construct the exterior bearing walls. The hipped-roof was topped with a balustraded deck which has since been removed.

The front facade is bilaterally symmetrical lending a reserved and elegant appearance in striking contrast to the surrounding vernacular ranch structures. A paired double hung 2/2 windows with sandstone sills are located on either side of the entry with two similar windows on the second level above the first floor units. The original veranda stretched across the front and along both sides. The hipped veranda roof had a gabled end defining the entry door and was supported by lath-turned wooden posts and patterned brackets. In the wide open spaces surrounding the ranch there was no need to provide a balustrade to define the semi-private area from a street as was typical of the period in the more populated areas. The veranda has been removed and replaced by terraced planting beds.

The entry doorway is flanked by narrow side-lights and a transom light is placed above. Directly above the entry is a pair of double hung, 1/2 circular arched windows. A gabled dormer with small double hung, 1/2 circular arched windows projects from the middle of each side of the roof.

The interior is dominated by a curved, balustraded stairway which winds around and narrows as it reaches the third floor. It divides the house in half and the rooms on each side are laid out in the typical four-square plan. The original sandstone house constructed by Robert Vaughn is incorporated in the design of the "big house", adding two additional rooms to the first floor. In the center of the attic is a folding staircase which give access to the balustraded deck. The use of the rooms has changed with the needs of the inhabitants, with the only major interior alteration being the addition of a bathroom on the first floor.

From the back door of the house by way of a path of flat stones, the privy could be reached. It is a miniature version of the "big house" being 5' square in plan and constructed of brick with a hipped roof. The interior is plastered and provides accommodations for two adults and one child.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1869 - 1900 **Builder/Architect** Robert Vaughn and Thomas Couch

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robert Vaughn Homestead/Captain Couch Ranch exemplifies the discovery, conquest, and agricultural development of the Sun River Valley of Montana. Perhaps no group of structures in America demonstrates more honestly the "form follows function" philosophy than the fast disappearing agricultural buildings. These structures were directly shaped by the nature of their use and geographic location. The buildings located on the Robert Vaughn Homestead/Captain Couch Ranch exhibit the foremost building technology of the day, adapted to make use of locally available materials. In this collection of structures, the continuing evolution of changing ranching and farming methods may be read and the growth in both economic prosperity and political importance of the owners becomes evident.

Robert Vaughn was one of the earliest settlers in the Sun River Valley of North Central Montana. The Valley had historically been one of the great hunting grounds of many of the Indian Tribes of the West. Vaughn's writings relate many encounters, both friendly and hostile, with the native peoples.

Robert Vaughn's homestead filed under the Homestead Act of 1862 was the first entered in Choteau County (later Cascade County) in 1869. Vaughn constructed the two room sandstone house which in 1890 was incorporated in the design for the main residence by Captain Couch. His early ranching experiences contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the region's potential as a farming/ranching locality.

Vaughn observed that his domestic stock fattened readily on the weathered grass covering his land, even through the winter. He was one of the first Montanans to focus on the raising of highbred horses and cattle.

Vaughn's settling initiated the establishment of the Town of Vaughn several years later. He served as a county commissioner, and was nominated (but not elected) as a Republican candidate for Representative in the Territorial Legislature.

Captain Thomas Couch extended Vaughn's ranching endeavors after purchasing the ranch in 1889. He is credited with being directly responsible for raising the quality of Montana's ranch stock, experimenting with registered animals of various breeds. The barn, main house (incorporating the Robert Vaughn two room sandstone house), water tank, windmill, privy and other no longer extant outbuildings were constructed during Captain Couch's tenure of the property.

Captain Couch was the recognized leader of the state Republican party. In 1892, he declined the nomination for governor and later declined the position of U.S. Senator. He was instrumental, however, in the selection of Montana's first Senators.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see attached Bibliography

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approximately 20 acres

Quadrangle name Vaughn, Montana

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

A

1	2	4	5	8	7	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing	

B

1	2	4	5	8	7	0	0	5	2	6	6	1	7	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

1	2	4	5	7	9	7	5	5	2	6	6	0	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	2	4	5	7	9	7	5	5	2	6	6	1	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Nominated land is a polygon formed by the above UTM points: Also please see enclosed survey map. ~~T21N~~, R1E, NW¼, Section 25

T21N 1/4

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Perry J. Nielsen, edited by Lon Johnson, historic architect, MT Historic Preservation Office

organization P.O. Box 275 date August 1981

street & number 105 East 300 North telephone (406) 965-3274

Vaughn Montana 59487

city or town Provo state Utah 84601

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

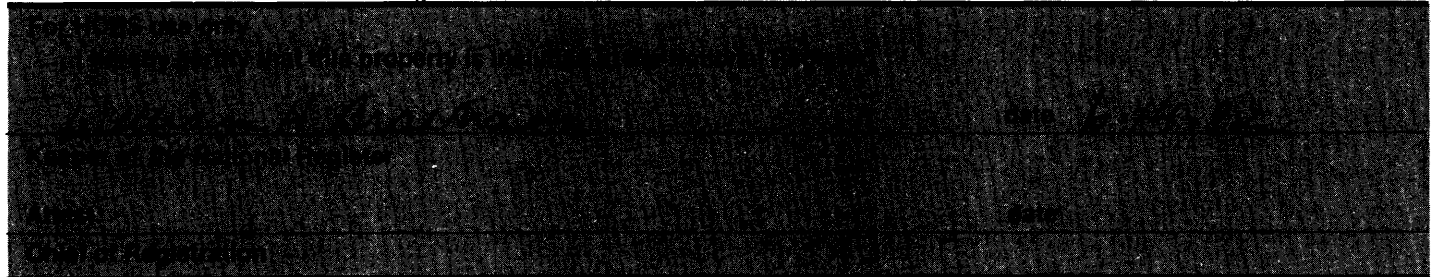
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marcella Steffy

title Deputy SHPO date 3-10-82



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Directly to the rear of the house was constructed a tank house (ca. 1890). The two story hipped roof structure has two later one story shed roofed additions on each side. A windmill pumped water to a storage tank on the second floor which was then gravity fed through the domestic water system in the house.

Constructed to the east of the house (ca. 1890) was the post and beam, board and batten barn. The structure was built to serve the working ranch and its form reflects the original use as a shelter for livestock and fodder. The main body is a rectangle 40' wide and 80' long, 2½ story with gabled roof. To the east and west are two full length shed roofed wings. The interior of the first floor and wings were lined with stalls for animals and served as storage for machinery. The second story hayloft extended the length and width of the barn with an additional smaller storage loft above. Two small, gabled roofed dormer vents extend from the roof at the southern end of the barn.

Known non-extant structures (see map for location) serving the ranch through the years include a bunkhouse, a blacksmith shop, a stable, an ice house and windmills for the barn and house. A private residence was built in 1950 southeast of the house and is still in use.

The nominated property, consisting of approximately 20 acres, includes the entire homestead/ranch complex. The boundary line is drawn along a series of features which serve as visual demarcations: fence lines, irrigation ditches, and field edges. The nominated area is essentially the barnyard.

007 107 01-0010
EXP. 12/31/04

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Captain Couch's contributions extended far beyond the Sun River Valley. He was instrumental in establishing the smelter at Great Falls and served as general manager. He was also responsible for the development of several mines throughout the western United States including the Mammoth Copperopolis, the Bingham, the Hidden Treasure and the Horn Silver in Utah and the Broadwater and Castle in Montana.

The third and present owners of the ranch, the Nielsons, transformed the grazing ranch land into an irrigated farm. The system, laid out with giant levees was completed by hand labor and horse drawn power and produced one of the first irrigated farms in the valley.

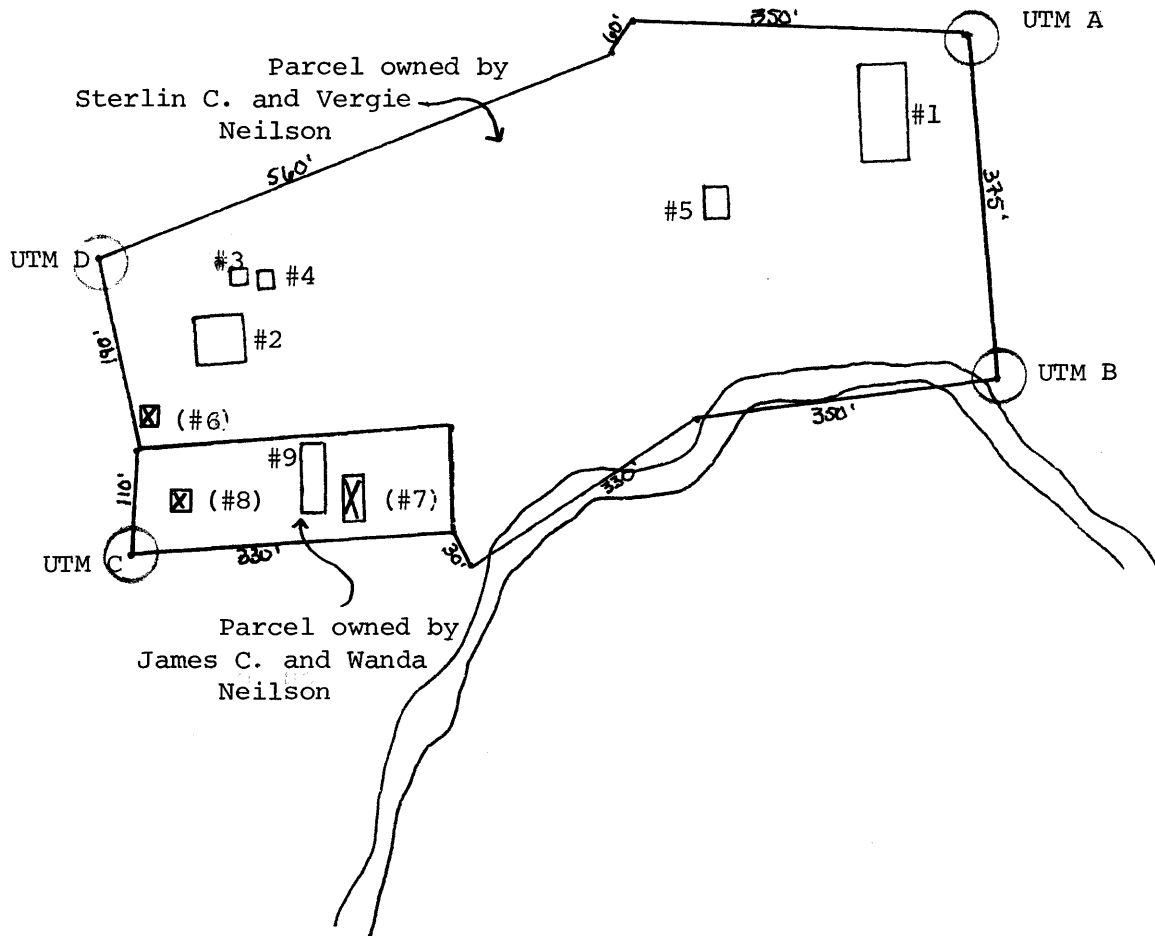
The nominated property includes all of the extant structures of the Robert Vaughn Homestead and the Captain Thomas Couch Ranch. The eastern boundary is marked by the entrance to the ranch site and a standing fence running north-south. An irrigation ditch forms a major section of the southern boundary. A line of trees visually defines a western boundary. The northern boundary follows an established fence which encloses a garden, and small pasture between the main house and the barn/chicken house complex.

MAY 28 1982

ROBERT VAUGHN HOMESTEAD/
CAPTIAN COUCH RANCH
Vaughn, Montana
Cascade County

SCALE: 1 inch = 200 feet

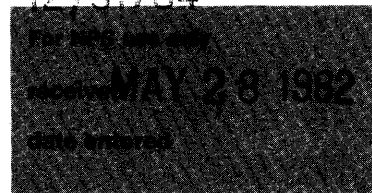
- Extant Buildings:
 - #1. Barn
 - #2. Main House
 - #3. Well House
 - #4. Privy
 - #5. Chicken House
- Structures no longer standing:
 - #6. Stable
 - #7. Bunk House
 - #8. Blacksmith Shop
- Modern Intrusion
 - #9 Residence



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National Park Service**

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NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 12/31/84



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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Maxwell, Mrs. Arthur B., ed. Great Falls Yesterday. The Works Progress Administration, available at the Great Falls Public Library, Great Falls, Montana.

Miller, Joaquin. Illustrated History of the State of Montana. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1894.

Progressive Men of the State of Montana. Chicago: A. W. Bowen and Company, 1902.

Vaughn, Robert. Then and Now; or, Thirty Six Years in the Rockies. Minneapolis: Tribune Printing Company, 1900.