

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: Long Valley Finnish Structures (Thematic Group)

SITE NAME: Jacob and Herman Mahala Homestead SITE # 2

LOCATION: Section 10, Township 16 N Range 3 E, Boise Meridian, about one-fourth mile north of Donnelly, Idaho.

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Mrs. Tilda Barker, Donnelly, Idaho 83615

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Cascade, 15 minute ACREAGE: less than one 2.5

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The nomination includes the four Jacob and Herman Mahala Homestead buildings: NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 10, T16N, R3E; SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 10, T16N, R3E

UTM(S): 44° 43' 55" latitude, 116° 02' 42" longitude

DATE OR PERIOD: ca. 1903 EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: State

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

CABIN "A": deteriorated condition altered original site

This ten-by-twelve-foot hewn-log building has a ten-foot board extension on its north end, making the overall dimensions ten-by-twenty-two. There is a low door cut into the north end of the original log structure and a window cut into the west wall. The building is low, seven logs high, with vertical milled board gable-ends. Its roof still is partially covered by the original shake shingles. The corners are notched in the full-dovetail style. A second door was cut into the west wall of the board extension.

Significance:

The Mahala brothers homestead cabin "A," so designated because there are three other log dwellings on the property, was probably one of the first two structures to be built on the site. It is significant as a good example of Finnish log cabin building, with its hewn logs and dovetail corners. The original shakes are still visible on the roof. The small size (ten-by-twelve) of the original log portion of this building suggests that it may have been the first building, constructed so the brothers would have shelter while building larger structures on their adjoining homestead properties. Both Jacob and Herman received patents to their homesteads in 1908, which suggests that they began improvements on the land no less than five years earlier, in 1903. It is a good example of the type of structures found on Finnish homesteads in Long Valley.

CABIN "B": deteriorated condition altered original site

This hewn-log cabin, approximately twelve feet square, has a twelve-foot board extension on its south end, making its overall dimensions twelve-by-twenty-four. The original log portion, which is eleven logs high, has corners with a unique locking dovetail notch, a notch not found on any other Finnish homestead in Long Valley but found by Karni and Levin in Minnesota. The building has a low, five-foot-high door cut in its south end, and three very tiny openings, perhaps windows, cut in its east, north, and west walls. The board extension has a door cut in the east wall and a window cut in the south end. The gables in the original log portion are made of "milled boards" placed vertically. The rafters are made of poles and the roof still has some of its original shake shingles.

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Jacob and Herman Mahala Homestead (Continued) (Site 2)

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CABIN "B" (Continued):

Significance:

The Mahala brothers homestead cabin "B," so designated because there are three other log home buildings on the property, was probably one of the first two log structures built on the site. It is a good example of Finnish log cabin building, with its hewn logs and dovetail corners, and the unique locking dovetail notch found on this structure gives it added significance. The small size (twelve-by-twelve) of the original log portion of this building suggests that it may have been the first of the two dwellings, constructed so that the brothers would have shelter while building larger structures on their adjoining homestead properties. The tiny window openings, moreover, suggest that it was constructed primarily as a temporary shelter. Nevertheless, the care with which the logs were fitted and notched is evidence of the craftsmanship of the builders. Both Jacob and Herman received patents to their homesteads in 1908, suggesting that they began improvements on the land no less than five years earlier, in 1903.

BLACKSMITH'S SHOP: deteriorated condition unaltered original site

This hewn-log structure, which appears to have been intended as a blacksmith's shop, still contains the smithing hearth and some implements used by the Mahalas. It measures approximately twelve-by-fourteen-feet, and is constructed of large timbers, some more than a foot wide. It differs from the log cabin structures on the site in that it has horizontal hewn log gables instead of vertical board gables. The corners are notched in the locking dovetail style. Unlike the other two log cabins here, this building is set on a rock foundation. Its door, on the west wall, is higher than the cabins', measuring approximately six feet tall. The structure has windows on its south end and east wall. Some of the original shake shingles are still on the roof; there are windows on the east and south walls.

Significance:

The Mahala blacksmith's shop was probably built after the cabins on the site and before the hewn-log house. Nevertheless, it too was most likely constructed within a few years of the cabins, around 1905. It is an excellent example of Finnish log construction, with its fitted log walls and locking dovetail notched corners. Because of its rock foundation the building remains remarkably sound.

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BLACKSMITH'S SHOP (Continued):

Significance (Continued):

It is also a reminder of one of the principal occupations of Finnish homesteaders—smithing. Several homesteads in the valley contained some sort of smithing shop, where other farmers could bring their broken implements or have tools made, among them the Finnish tool, the "vara," a scribing tool for measuring distances between logs in cabin walls in order to fit them snugly. This structure represents both the craftsmanship of the Finns as log builders and the occupation of smithing which many of them held.

LOG HOUSE: fair condition unaltered original site

This hewn-log house, measuring about fourteen-by-twenty-feet, contains two rooms fourteen-by-ten each. The rooms are divided by a hewn-log partition which extends through the outside wall, where the ends of it are cut flush with the wall. It sits on a rock foundation and has four windows of a larger size than found on any of the other buildings on the property, one on the north and three on the east walls. Its door, cut out of the west wall, is about six feet high. The building is ten logs high to the gables, which are also of hewn logs. Its roof has been covered with sheet metal.

Significance:

This structure, obviously intended as more than a temporary living place, exemplifies several of the techniques used by Finnish homesteaders when building their log homes. Its logs have been fit closely together and pegged with wooden dowels in places to hold them snugly, and its hewn-log inside wall extends to the outside, where the partition logs have been set firmly into the wall timbers. As it was built after the cabins (circa 1903) but before the frame houses on the property (circa 1920), it was probably constructed around 1907. This structure, when taken with the others on the site, tells the story of the Mahala's progression from small, one-room cabins to these more permanent living quarters. It is also one of the few remaining structures of this type in Long Valley.