

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gibson/Sowards House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3110 North 250 West

N/A not for publication

city or town Vernal

N/A vicinity

state Utah

code UT

county Uintah

code 047

zip code 84078

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Wilson M. Mat 10/11/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Utah Division of State History, Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

for
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 10-24-97

Gibson/Sowards House
Name of Property

Vernal, Uintah County, Utah
City, County, and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>		buildings
		sites
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
		objects
<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
AGRICULTURAL: outbuildings
& animal shelters

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
AGRICULTURAL: outbuildings

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Victorian

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
 walls WOOD

 roof WOOD Shingle
 other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Gibson/Sowards House
Name of Property

Vernal, Uintah County, Utah
City, County, and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c.1891

Significant Dates

c.1891

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Uintah County Library

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 1

Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

Narrative Description

The Gibson/Sowards house, built in 1891,¹ is located near the southern edge of the Steinaker Reservoir State Recreation Area and approximately three miles north of the center of Vernal in the rural area of Ashley Valley in the Uintah Basin. There are seven historic outbuildings and structures associated with the house, believed to have been built near the turn of the century. Directly to the east of the house is a log shed used for storage. A round metal granary is northeast of the house, directly north of the log shed. The ruins of a rock house, built c.1880s, is northwest of the house, connected by a rock fence to a corral edged by the ruins of an open animal shelter. A garage, built in 1925, lies to the southwest of the house with doors on both the east and west sides. A c.1900 hay-derrick is also located on the property. Other agricultural features on the property include corral fencing and water and feed troughs. A plank shed is located southeast of the log outbuilding, next to a non-historic building--a long open ended shed (1990s) covering old farm machinery. It fits well into the landscape and does not detract from the historic association and feeling of the site. The outbuildings and structures contribute to the historic feeling of the site and reinforce its agricultural/rural setting.²

This wood frame one-and-a-half story Victorian Eclectic house has a foundation of native sandstone taken from a hill just north of the house. The Victorian Eclectic style can be seen in the irregular plan and asymmetrical facade as well as the decorative porches. Restrained Queen Anne elements are visible in the lathe-turned columns, decorative brackets, and railings with a scroll-cut pattern on the west (front) and south porches. Pairs of double hung windows appear on the west projecting bay as well as behind the large front porch. Three single double hung windows pierce the east facade irregularly. All windows are double hung with wooden sashes and have decorative corner blocks on the window casings. It has a wooden shingle roof and drop siding with corner boards. The roof line of the house was modified when the house was remodeled c.1912 to install a modern bathroom and a second floor. This modification included a dormer with two windows on the west side over the front porch, and a dormer with three windows on the east side. Three chimneys have decorative corbeling in their brickwork.

The wood frame walls have adobe brick inserted between the studs. All inside doors have transoms. There are at least two exit doors for every room for egress.³ The pine woodwork is hand-grained to resemble oak. The baseboards are eleven and one half inches high with ornamental wood bead decoration on the top. The inside walls are plastered and some of the original wall paper is still intact. The house retains its original architectural features and characteristics of the Victorian Eclectic style and contributes to the historic qualities of Vernal.

¹ Several dates are associated with the construction of the house. The 1988 Structure/Site Information Form uses both 1887 and 1893. William Gibson applied for a patent on the land July 6, 1888 and received the patent on July 29, 1891. William and Mary Gibson took out a mortgage of \$1,000 on August 13, 1891. The 1891 date for the house is used on the assumption that at that time (1891) they had the patent on the land and the money from the mortgage to build the house.

² A cellar was built directly behind the house to the east, but no longer exists.

³ Mr. Gibson planned at least two exits in each room for fire safety.

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Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Gibson/Sowards House is locally significant architecturally as an excellent example of a rare and diminishing type and style of house in Vernal. It is one of only three known frame Victorian houses built before 1900 still standing in good condition.⁴ Vernal and the surrounding Uintah Basin was one of the last areas to be settled in Utah. Its period of early settlement coincided with the height of the Victorian architectural style in Utah, 1880-1910.⁵ The Victorian styles appeared in Salt Lake City in the 1880s and began to be seen in the rural areas in the 1890s. The Gibson/Sowards house is a very early rural example of the Victorian Eclectic style, even more unusual because of its frame construction. It retains its original fabric and contributes to the historic qualities of Vernal.

VERNAL HISTORY:

Unlike many other sections of Utah that were settled by groups in a communal manner under the central leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons),⁶ the Uintah Basin area was open to homesteading by individual families. Early scouts sent in 1861 by Brigham Young, President of the Mormon church, told him that the area was not good for settlement. That same year, United States President Abraham Lincoln set aside the land south and west of Vernal as the Uintah Indian Reservation. Mormons and gentiles alike competed for land after relations with the Indians were regularized in the time of peace following the Black Hawk War in 1869. The area where Vernal is now located was occupied by Native Americans, trappers, prospectors, and drifters until c.1876. Pioneer families began to arrive in c.1878, and this area was homesteaded. The town of Vernal was founded in 1878, after settlement had already begun in the outlying areas. The downtown area was laid out in the standard Mormon community grid pattern but the outlying areas were developed without a grid. Because of the distance to a major railhead, settlers produced, manufactured, and developed almost everything they needed. Sheep and cattle ranching, and the farming of grains and alfalfa, along with milling and honey production, were the primary economic endeavors in the area. A boom/bust economy related to the oil industry which began in 1948. Oil,

⁴ A review of the Utah Historic Preservation Office computer database reveals that based on the 1986-7 survey of Vernal there are seven nineteenth century (pre 1900) Victorian houses, of which three are frame.

⁵ Thomas Carter and Peter Goss. Utah's Historic Architecture, 1847-1940. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Graduate School of Architecture and Utah State Historical Society, 1991, p. 110.

⁶ Utah settlement patterns were based on the Plat of the City of Zion that was outlined by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith. The plan, though not fully implemented, served as a model for Mormon settlements across the west under the direction of Brigham Young. The plats were one mile square, the blocks were ten acres each and forty rods square, and the lots were laid off alternately within the squares. The towns were set out in a grid pattern with the public buildings and church located in the center of town, surrounded by residences, with the outlying areas being used as farmlands. Mormon settlements became characterized by in-town family farmsteads with a daily trek to the outlying fields. Out-migration became inevitable as populations grew, but much of the old pattern originating in the Plat of the City of Zion has persisted to the present.

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Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

tourism, and agricultural related industries continue to provide the economic support for the town of Vernal.⁷

GIBSON HISTORY:

William Gibson was born in Kilmarnock, Scotland in 1845. He came to America with his parents in 1852. The family lived a nomadic lifestyle in New Orleans, St. Louis, Florence and Council Bluffs until arriving in Salt Lake City on August 9, 1860. In 1864 William moved to Kamas, Utah. The following year the Black Hawk War began and William enlisted in the Utah Militia. He married Mary Adelia Lambert on May 6, 1872 in Kamas. Mary was born in Salt Lake City on September 11, 1851. She moved with her parents John and Adeleg Grosbeck Lambert to Kamas in 1861.

After the Utah Militia was discontinued, the Indians made several raids on Kamas driving off horses that belonged to the settlers. William pursued them several times through the Uintah Mountains with his old militia company. Through his expeditions he discovered that he wanted to live in the Uintah Basin. He, Mary, and two children⁸ moved to Ashley Creek, just east of the present house,⁹ as soon as it was possible in November of 1877. They built a rock house but lived there for only a short time until the frame house was completed in 1891. The garage was built in 1925 with doors in both the front and the back because William feared that Mary might be unable to stop. (William refused to learn to drive and Mary, who was 74 years of age at that time, was the only driver.)

William was politically active in the area, serving as the first sheriff in Uintah County after it was formed in 1880. He was also elected to the first state legislature in 1895 where he was outspoken and usually said something which the newspapers considered worthy for printing. During this time he conceived of the idea of painting "Remember the Maine" on the face of a 500 foot high cliff in Ashley Canyon (still visible). William died in 1932.

Mary was a Sunday school teacher in 1880, a district trustee during 1904-08, and president of the newly organized Ashley Ward Relief Society in 1915. Mary died in 1935.

Their daughter, Mary Eliza Gibson, and her husband, General Nelson (N.G.) Sowards, moved into the house following the settlement of William and Mary's estate. N.G. was born in Kentucky in 1862. He attended B.Y.U., the University of Utah and the University of California. He served as principal of the Uintah Academy in 1892-1893, as Uintah County superintendent of schools for seventeen years and taught school for fifty years. Mary attended the L.D.S. College in Salt Lake and the University of Utah.

⁷ Burton, Doris. "Vernal." Utah History Encyclopedia. Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1995.

⁸ James Lambert, age four, and Mary Eliza, age two.

⁹ Mary was often frightened by Indians. Sarah Adelia, their third child, was born in 1881.

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Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

She was a Sunday School teacher, Primary teacher and First Counselor in the Relief Society. Mary and N.G. had ten children.¹⁰

After their son, Leland Sowards, and Ruth Louise Jones were married in 1938, they moved in with his parents into this house. Leland farmed and ranched for his father and later followed his grandfather's lead in politics, serving as state representative and state senator. Ruth was a nurse at the Uintah County Hospital until her retirement. Leland and Ruth had seven children.¹¹ Ruth Sowards is the current owner and occupant of the house.

ARCHITECTURE:

Victorian forms were popular in Utah 1885-1915. The central-block-with-projecting-bays house type was an important basic form of the Victorian house. Projecting bays were added to the principal rooms to achieve a desired external irregularity of design and made the rooms larger and brighter. This house form is characterized by a roughly square central section punctuated by bays on one or several sides. The main roof is hipped or pyramidal, while the bays are usually gabled. In the smaller, less expensive houses, the entry was usually directly into the living room or parlor.¹²

The style of the Gibson/Sowards house also describes the early twentieth century and the changes that were occurring in Utah. This central-block-with-projecting-bays house type with Victorian Eclectic styling is important in describing the end of Utah's isolation in the late nineteenth century. Rural areas were less isolated from stylistic developments occurring on both the national and local levels. The pattern-book styles and standardized building components were available and easily adapted for use with local materials. The former isolation of rural areas was no longer an obstacle to building well and the quality of design and workmanship were also affected during the Victorian era.¹³

¹⁰ Leona Adelia (1894), Ethylene Marie (1896), William Carl (1899), Leland Nelson (1902), Mary Louisa (1905), Orlin Lewis (1909), Shirley Gibson (1910), Francis (1911), Orval Lorin (1915) and Vaughn Clinton (1917)

¹¹ Ruth LaVan (1938), Carol Ann (1940), Robert Dean and Barbara Jean, twins (1945), Janet Lee (1954), Donna Marie (1957) and David Kevin (1959)

¹² Carter, Thomas, and Peter Goss. Utah's Historic Architecture 1847-1940. p.44.

¹³ Ibid, pp.110-111.

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Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

Bibliography

Abstract of Title, Uintah County Recorder's Office, Vernal, Utah.

Burton, Doris Karren. Silver Stars and Jail Bars; An Account of Uintah County Sheriffs. .

Burton, Doris Karren. A History of Uintah County: Scratching the Surface. Salt Lake City, UT: Utah State Historical Society and Uintah County Commission, 1996.

Carter, Thomas and Peter Goss. Utah's Historic Architecture, 1847-1940. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Graduate School of Architecture and Utah State Historical Society, 1991.

Daughters of the Utah Pioneers of Uintah County, compilers. Builders of Uintah: A Centennial History of Uintah County, 1872-1947. Springville, Utah: Art City Publishing Co., 1947, pp. 19,50.

Family records of Leland Nelson Sowards in possession of Mary A. Shaffermeyer, Vernal, Utah.

Halverson, Carol Ann Sowards, compiler. *Autobiography of Nelson General Sowards with Additional Recollections by William Carl Edwards, a son, Leland Nelson Sowards, a son, Mary Louisa Sowards Underwood, a daughter, Milo Colton, a grandson, Colleen Samuels Lenton, a granddaughter, Carol Ann Sowards Halverson, a granddaughter.* Typed by Mildred Potter Bunnell, June 1980.

Minutes from the Uintah County Historical Society Meeting, February 11, 1984, on "Remember the Maine" and Calder's Creamery. Uintah County Library, Regional History Room.

Prominent Men of Utah.

Sowards, Carl. Personal interview with Doris Karren Burton in 1988.

Sowards, Ruth. Personal interview with Doris Karren Burton in 1988.

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Section No. PHOTOS Page 6

Gibson/Sowards House, Vernal, Uintah County, UT

Common Label Information:

1. Gibson/Sowards House
2. Vernal, Uintah County, Utah
3. Photographer: Doris Karren Burton
4. Date: October 18, 1988.
5. Negatives on file at Utah State Historic Preservation Office

Photo No. 1:

6. Southwest elevation of building. Camera facing northeast.

Photo No. 2:

6. Northwest elevation of building. Camera facing southeast.

Photo No. 3:

6. Northeast elevation of building. Camera facing southwest.

Photo No. 4:

6. Southeast elevation of stone house ruins and south elevation of stone animal shelter. Camera facing northwest.

Photo No. 5:

6. East elevation of garage. Camera facing west.

Photo No. 6:

6. West elevation of log outbuilding and metal granary. Camera facing east.

Photo No. 7:

6. Northeast elevation of machine shed. Camera facing southwest.

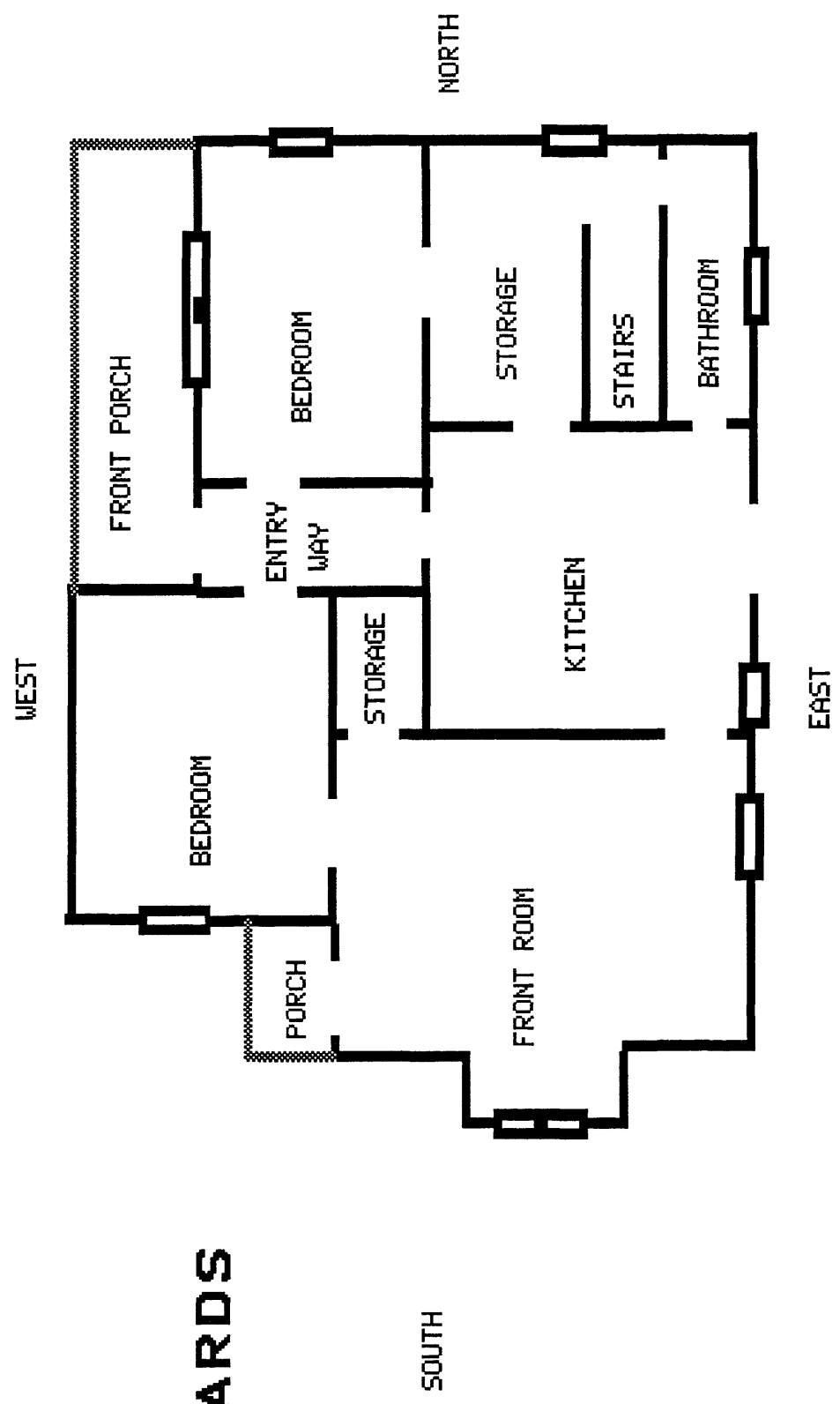
Photo No. 8:

6. Northeast elevation of plank shed. Camera facing southwest.

Photo No. 9:

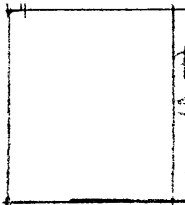
6. Southwest elevation of hay derrick. Camera facing northeast.

SOWARDS

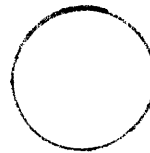




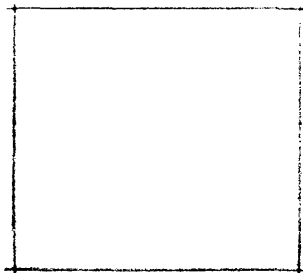
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ANIMAL SHELTER



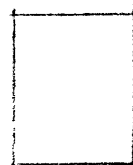
RUINS -
STONE
HOUSE



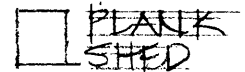
METAL
GRANARY



MAIN
HOUSE

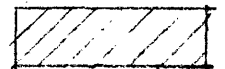


ZOG
OUTBUILDING



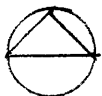
PLANK
SHED

MACHINE
SHED



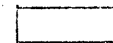
GARAGE

O HAYDERRICK

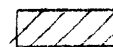


GIBSON-SOWARDS

VERNAL, UTAH



CONTRIBUTING



NON-CONT.

NOT TO SCALE