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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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration 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 Perryman Ranch Headquarters

other name/site number

2. Location

street & number .2 mile east of intersection of County Roads N193 & E159 ☐ not for publication

city or town Duke ☒ vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Jackson code 065 zip code 73532

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State Historic Preservation Office
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 the 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Edson H. Beall — 4.4.07

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	
1	2	buildings
1		sites
1	1	structures
		objects
3	3	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 Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling
Agriculture: animal facility

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant / Not in Use
Vacant / Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: vernacular stone

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls stone
roof wood / metal
other

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

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

8. Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes 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" in all the boxes 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.

Areas of Significance
(enter categories from instructions)

Settlement

Agriculture

Architecture

Archeology, Historic Non-Aboriginal

Period of Significance
1888-1942

Significant Dates
1888, 1892, 1896

Significant Persons
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
unknown

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

☒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 #

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other Name of repository:

Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 5 acres

UTM References
(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	1/4	4/5/1/9/3/8	3/8/4/0/8/9/9
2	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
3	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
4	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

Michael Cassity, Ph.D.
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Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74011
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mcassity@valornet.com

date Additional information provided by Charles Wallis, RPA; Oklahoam State Historic Preservation Office

Date: October 10, 2006

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.
Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Jerry and Charlette Perryman

street & number 4216 143rd Street telephone

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73134

Narrative Description

The Perryman Ranch is located about five miles north and east of Duke, Oklahoma. Perched on a bench that wraps around a hillside and forms a midpoint between the flats below and the crest of the hill above, the historic features of the Perryman Ranch consist of a set of dry-laid rock buildings that from a distance may resemble either a kind of archaic cliff dwelling or the remnants of a fortress complete with walls skirting the edge of the hill. The buildings are no longer in use and some have visibly borne the weight of natural elements and lack of use since the 1980s.[1]

The Perryman Ranch includes two separate clusters of buildings and structures with one cluster that includes a modern house, garage, and storm cellar atop a prominent hill overlooking the broad open area of northern Jackson County. The second cluster includes a half-dugout, the site of a hand-dug well, and a complex of two barns and two corrals arranged generally south to north on a linear bench that curves slightly around the east face of the same hill below the modern dwelling, but above the pasture and crop land on the flats below. The dry-laid stone buildings were constructed beginning in 1888 and served the Perryman family with both residential and ranch utility structures located near each other. The original dugout was slightly larger than the size of the existing half-dugout and burned at some point before 1936. A wood box house was constructed east of the existing half-dugout prior to 1925, but that building was removed in the 1950s and is also no longer evident.

The early ranch buildings and structures—the corrals, barns, and home—drew upon local materials—and little else. Using the technique of dry-laid stone construction, those buildings were constructed by the laborers gathering flat slabs of limestone. Using no mortar, they wove the dry-laid stones, in regular courses, into thick walls that were both tight and durable. In each feature, the stone shows minimal dressing or shaping yet the elevations are generally smooth, with exceptions noted below, and the outside corners and recesses for fenestration tend to be crisp and sharp. The best-preserved sections remain plumb, or nearly so, although some parts, especially of the corrals, where a long span is unsupported by connecting elements, show waving and tilting, and some sections have tumbled to the side. For nearly a century the dry-laid walls survived heavy ranch use and sometimes severe natural elements, although today only one of the two dugouts remains intact. While the corrals and associated structures are visible and large portions of them remain, the two buildings in the barn / corral complex, the Stable / Granary and the Small Barn, have lost their roofs and have suffered accordingly. Some portions of the rock walls have collapsed as noted below. Significantly, most of those walls that have deteriorated appear to have fallen not because of their

[1] The preparer of this nomination gratefully acknowledges the abundant assistance of the Museum of the Western Prairie in Altus, Oklahoma, which possesses photographs and manuscripts crucial to the understanding of the Perryman Ranch history and the members of the Perryman family, especially Rev. Jerry Perryman, who supplied important information regarding the family and the buildings on the ranch. Ms. Jennie Buchanan, of the Jackson County Historical Society, provided unfailing and enthusiastic help in many ways in the archives, in the field, and in the project administration; she is deserving of significant credit in the identification, understanding, and preservation of Jackson County historic buildings.

own structural deficiencies but because of the erosion of the bench on which they are situated. Almost literally, on the east side of the complex, the ground below has worn away and weakened the walls above, and on the west side of the complex the adjacent hillside to the west has increased the flow of water at points along that wall.

Feature 1: Dugout (Contributing Building)

The dugout, a well-known and easily identifiable structure locally, is conspicuous in its location on a bench below the modern ranch residence and at the southwest end of the line of early ranch structures. The dugout is technically a half-dugout since it is built into the side of the hill and is not completely dug out of the earth. Constructed in 1892, it is a single cell dry-laid stone building that faces east, using the steep incline of the hill behind it as a rear wall. The north, east, and south elevations are constructed of native limestone, each elevation about two feet thick. The west elevation of the wall—against the hillside—is also rock that has been smoothed over in modern times with mortar. Originally this elevation, which also served as a retaining wall for the adjacent hillside, consisted of rocks only one deep, which sufficed well because of the natural insulation of the earthen bank behind it. Around 1958, however, pressure from the earth behind the wall caused it to collapse and it was rebuilt to a thickness of around five feet. The internal dimensions of the dugout thus remained the same and the building acquired a much stronger retaining wall for its west elevation. On the south elevation (about seventeen feet as measured on the inside) a retaining wall curves from the building south to west to provide support for the adjacent earth and also for the west portion of the south elevation. As the terrace slopes downward to the east, a plank-framed, wooden window that opens from the inside on hinges is deeply recessed into the elevation just above ground level. The east elevation (about eighteen feet) includes a recessed entrance with wooden door and frame on the south and a recessed wooden window frame and window on the north with stone lintels above both. The north elevation has no fenestration and the rock that is exposed above the sloping terrace is coarser with a surface noticeably more uneven than in the other elevations. At an earlier point, this north elevation also was covered with adjacent earth, and it was necessary for the rocks to be uneven to bond with the bank. A retaining wall, or apron, at that time extended north from the east elevation, but has since been removed. The roof is corrugated metal arched over a cottonwood north-south ridgepole and covers wooden planks that also have been bent over the ridgepole. The roof was originally made of wood shiplap planks, and those planks remain, complete with the vent, now blocked, for a chimney from the stove inside. The planks, however, have been covered with metal for protection. The general appearance of the building remains the same, and the ridgepole—a cottonwood log about twenty feet long that extends beyond the elevations on both north and south—is, like the planks it supports, original. Although some mortar has been applied in recent years to patch and stabilize the structure, most of that change has been on the interior with only scattered applications visible on the exterior. The building was constructed originally as a residence and counterpart to a larger dugout nearby to the north, and was referred to as a bedroom in some accounts. After 1925 when the family moved to new dwellings on the top of the hill, this building was

still used as a bedroom, or bunkhouse, sometimes housing hired laborers, and subsequently serving for food storage. While it is no longer used, its condition is such that it could be.

Feature 2: Site of Hand-dug Well (Contributing Site)

One of the essential features of the early homestead was access to water. Even though the surface water was notoriously hard, or containing gypsum, the family dug a well by hand near their home. The well was dug ultimately to a depth of around twenty feet since in dry years it was necessary to go deeper to access the water. This also meant that the well was about ten feet in diameter to allow access for the digging effort, and the walls of the well were at least partially rock lined. This well was used primarily for domestic use, and was supplemented by other wells elsewhere on the ranch property below. The well has been filled and some rock is still evident in and around the depression that marks the location. Although the structure is no longer present, the location is plainly evident and this feature is considered a contributing site.

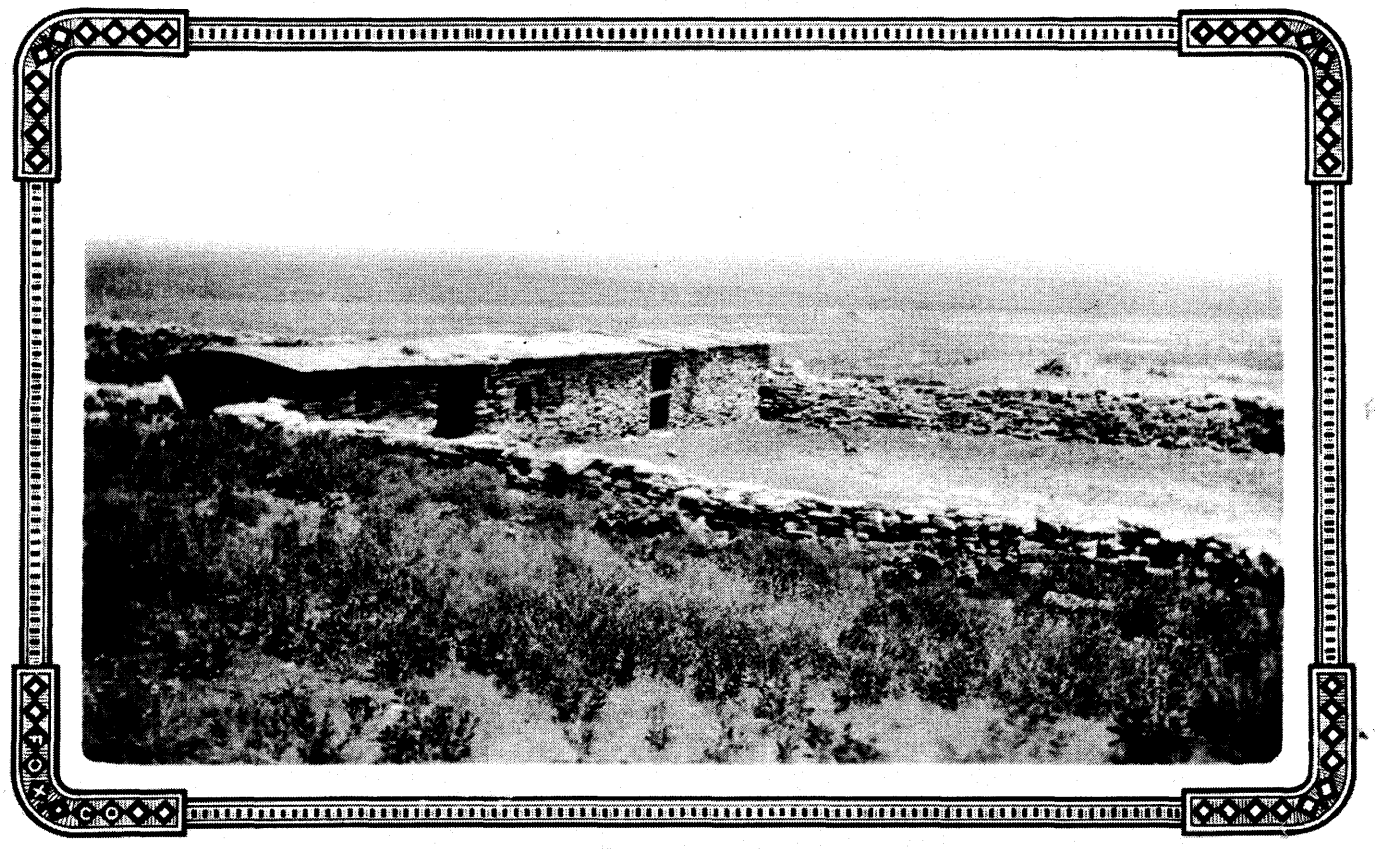
Feature 3: Corral / Barn Complex (2 Contributing Buildings, 2 Contributing Structures)

The Corral / Barn complex consists of four distinct components including (1) two roughly rectangular corrals separated by (2) a linear, two-cell barn (Stable / Granary) that forms the south side of the north corral and the north side of the south corral, and (3) an attached rock structure (Small Barn) at the southeast corner, outside that corral. The continuous rock wall on the east spans approximately two hundred twenty-five feet; all sections are about two feet thick and is generally six feet tall and sometimes rises to seven or eight feet.

The north corral is approximately rectangular in shape, about one hundred fifteen feet on the east elevation and about sixty feet on the north elevation. One departure from construction techniques used elsewhere on the property can be found in the northeast corner of the corral; that corner, instead of coming to a square angle with crisp corners, actually curves so that this corner is rounded, the only rounded corner on the premises. The wall originally was about six feet tall, and often higher, as indicated by extant portions, although erosion has caused significant portions of the west wall to crumble; at this time most of the east wall has tipped and fallen outwards—to the east, or downhill, side. An entrance on the west side of the north corral wall once contained a swinging gate—now missing—that hinged on a vertical metal post and closed against an identical post on the opposite side. The south end of the corral is the Stable / Granary north elevation and allows no entrance from the corral.

The Stable / Granary is a two-cell structure that evolved over time and reflected changes in the focus of the ranch. This structure is about twenty-four feet on its west elevation and about fifty feet across, thereby completely separating and enclosing the north corral on the south and the south corral on the

north. The north and south elevations of the Stable / Granary project beyond its west elevation about ten feet, at which point they intersect with the west walls of the north and south corrals; two small windows open into the west elevation of the Stable / Granary from the small area that is thereby enclosed on three sides. It is important to note that the Stable / Granary has evolved over the years to conform to its changing uses by the ranch. Originally a two-cell structure with a continuous vaulted wood plank roof similar to that of the dugout, the east and west cells each open into the south corral; the entrance to the west cell was wide enough for livestock to pass through. The west cell was first a



Stable / Granary and part of South Corral, also showing part of North Corral on left, Perryman Ranch, 1920s. The picture was made from the hillside overlooking the complex, looking toward the pasture / cropland in the flats to the east. Photo: Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

stable for horses and mules, and the east cell was a granary, but as horses and mules declined in importance and number on the Perryman Ranch, the stable was used more for cattle, especially for milking. (The cows would be penned in the south corral, separate from their calves.) That west cell

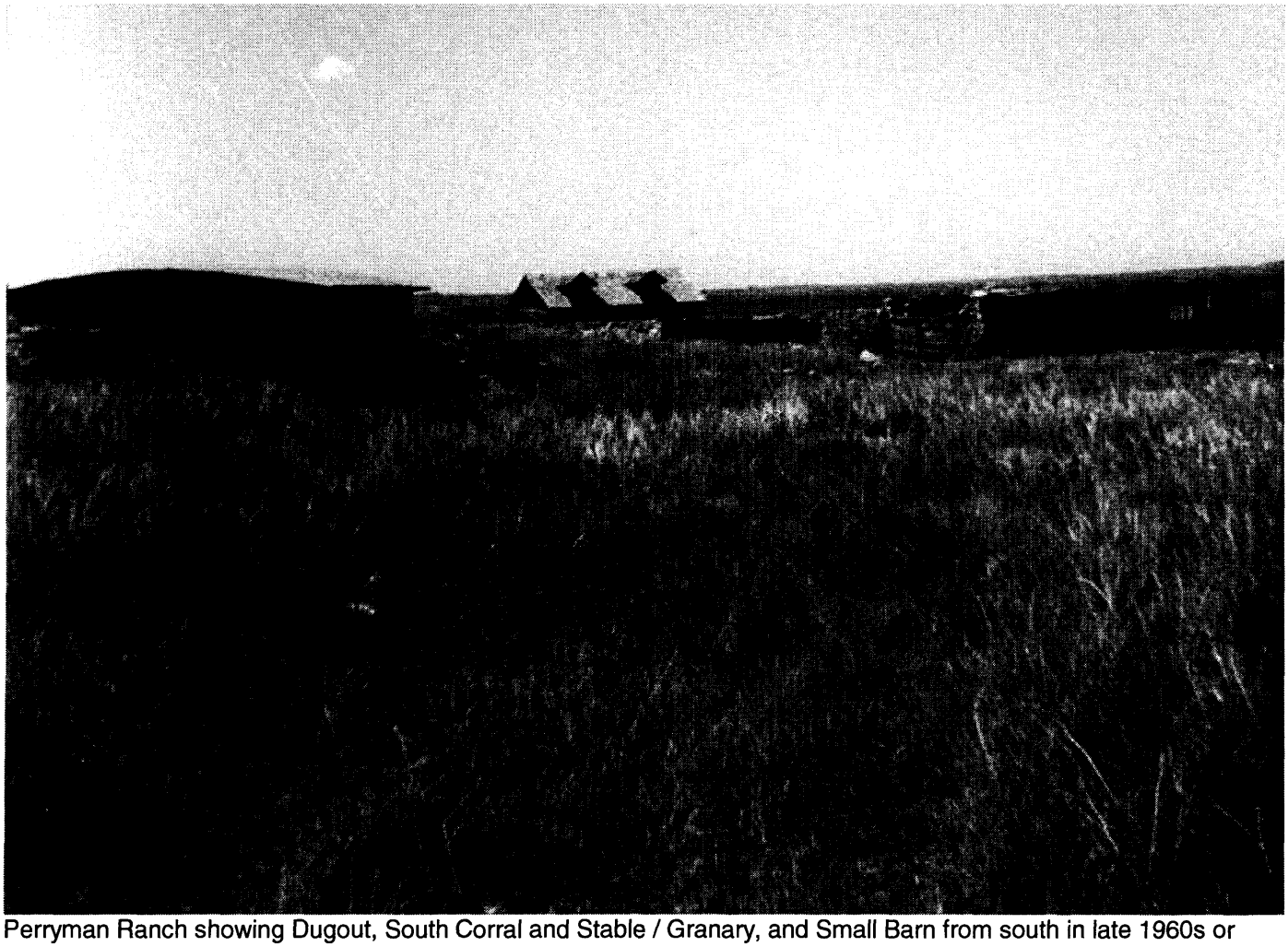
was then used for milking. The arch of the roof allowed for a very small loft above that stable or milking area which served as a roost for chickens, and Zenobia Perryman would regularly scale the rock walls and climb up into that loft to gather eggs in her apron, doing so into her eighties with agility that is still the subject of awe in the family. The east cell continued its use as a granary, but the configuration of that part of the building changed over time. The building was originally covered with wood planks bent over a ridgepole to form an arched roof and grain would be loaded into that granary by taking the planks off so that the grain could be loaded from the top of the structure literally through the roof. In the 1930s the north and south elevations of the east cell were raised about two feet (so that the elevations were all of equal height. With that modification way the vaulted roof was replaced with a gable roof on that portion of the building and two gabled dormers in the upper level faced the south corral. The dormers were used, as related by Jerry Perryman, to load grain into the structure, once again through the top of the building. Typically, oats were stored on one side of the entrance and barley on the other. In 1982 one report indicated that the gabled Stable / Granary was "still in good shape," but a 1993 evaluation of the property noted that "the roof had caved in," and that "many of the stone walls were in the process of collapsing." No remnants of the gabled roof exist in 2006, although a cottonwood ridgepole stretching across the west (stable and milking area) cell remains.

The south corral is roughly rectangular in shape, about sixty feet across at the Stable / Granary on the north (including the ten feet that project to the west) and about eighty-five feet long on the east. An open area in the center of the south end of the corral marks where a wooden gate once stood that closed the complex at this entrance. The west corral wall has collapsed about half the distance southward from the Stable / Granary, although the southwest corner is in good condition, and almost the entire east corral wall is in excellent condition.

Adjacent to the south corral and forming the portion of the south wall east of the gate, a Small Barn once stood, although its walls have seriously deteriorated. Only parts of the wall on the east and the south survive while no standing portion of the structure on the west, where two entrances once opened, survives. One historic photograph from the 1920s shows this Small Barn with a gabled wooden plank roof with a closeable entry to the upper (loft) level on the west elevation. That roof, however, covered only the west half of the building; the east half was open at the roof and was used as an enclosure for animals, mainly hogs. The roofed portion on the west was itself divided, with one part used for storage of tack, especially harnesses for the workhorses and mules, and the other part used for storage of oats. Another photograph, probably made in the 1960s or 1970s, indicates that the gabled roof and upper level of this structure had collapsed by that time.

Feature 4. Modern Residence (Noncontributing Building)

The evolution of the ranch / farm operation included the movement of the family from the stone buildings on the bench to a residence on the hill above. In 1920 the Perryman family moved from the



Perryman Ranch showing Dugout, South Corral and Stable / Granary, and Small Barn from south in late 1960s or early 1970s. Note gabled roof on Granary and missing gabled roof on Small Barn (next to wagon). Photograph: Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

stone buildings and box house on the bench below to a school house that had been moved from its location elsewhere to the top of the hill above and this building served as their residence until 1950 when they built a one-story frame house nearby. That building burned in 1993 and was replaced by the modern ranch house which rests partly on the foundation of the 1950 building. This house was

constructed by Ward Perryman, son of Alonzo and Zenobia Perryman, and he lived there until his death in 2002. This building is an L-shaped single story brick building that faces southwest, away from the historic buildings. Although a part of the continuing evolution of the ranch, this building is noncontributing because of its recent construction date. This building, moreover, is sufficiently removed from the historic structures as to be only partially and slightly visible from those features and therefore does not compromise the integrity of the historic elements of the Perryman Ranch.

Feature 5. Garage (Noncontributing Building)

The single-vehicle frame garage with a gabled roof on a north-south axis is located immediately northwest of the modern residence. With an open automobile entry on the south elevation and a doorway on the north extreme of the east elevation, the garage also has a small window on the south end of that elevation. The structure is clad with shiplap siding, although parts of it are then covered with shingles. This building was constructed in 1948 and is thus a noncontributing feature.

Feature 6. Cellar (Noncontributing Structure)

The storm cellar is situated immediately west of the southwest corner of the garage. Of course, the cellar itself is underground, but is covered by a flat concrete slab that rises above ground level on the concrete cellar walls. The entrance to the cellar is the dominant element above ground and is a small, enclosed protection for the stairway leading down into the cellar. The east elevation of this structure is a simple doorway while the west elevation is the diagonal roof that slopes from the top of the doorway to the concrete slab roof of the cellar. The north and south elevations and clad with tongue and groove siding. Because this cellar was constructed in 1950, it is a contributing feature.

The Perryman Ranch complex of buildings has changed since the first building was constructed in 1888, and that change has reflected the evolution of the ranch / farm operation, with the construction first of a dugout, then the corral and barn complex over a period of years, another dugout as a bedroom annex to the first, and then a larger, modern house on the flats above the bench. Only two of the earliest features remain, with remnants of a third feature, a hand-dug well, but those features—the 1892 dugout and the barn / corral complex—convey the critical elements of the ranch operation and life on the property. While the condition of this property ranges from one that is just the site where a well once existed, to sections of corral walls that are but remnants of their original configuration, to yet other parts that remain very much as they were they day they were built, the property, with noted exceptions, retains integrity of structure, materials, workmanship, location, appearance, feeling, and association.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Perryman Ranch is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of significance Settlement and Agriculture, under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture and Criterion D, with significance in the area of historic, non-aboriginal archeology. Constructed in the late 1880s and 1890s, as part of the settlement of what was at the time a part of Texas and then became part of Oklahoma, the ranch headquarters consists of a group of buildings and structures that reflect the evolution of agriculture in this area from the 1880s to modern times. In addition, the property conveys the distinctive architectural design and materials sometimes used in those homestead structures.

A Contested Territory

The settlement of Oklahoma is often associated with the removal of the Five Tribes from the U.S. Southeast and also the opening of land to white occupation through land runs and lotteries, but the southwest corner of the state was an exception to both of these processes and was even added at a late date after it had already been settled. When it became part of Oklahoma Territory in 1896, Greer County, Texas, in fact, also brought its own history. And that history includes the forces that shaped the area where the Perryman Ranch is located.

When Thomas Jefferson acquired the enormous parcel of land known as the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803, the western boundaries of the area, the borders separating previously France and now the United States from Spain, were but vaguely understood by either party. According to the precedent of earlier exchanges of territory between Spain and France, part of that border followed the course of the Red River westward to the 100th Meridian, at which point the border turned north until it reached the Arkansas River, then resumed a westward direction.[2] The problem was that the Red River itself, as well as much of the area it traversed, was at the time unmapped. The lack of knowledge of the area, however, did not deter the mapmakers who endeavored to graphically depict the boundaries of this new acquisition, and in 1819 John Melish prepared and published an authoritative map that showed these boundaries.

And so the confusion began. In addition to the speculative nature of the topography itself, Melish's map, which would be the standard and authoritative reference for decades to come, also failed to depict the 100th Meridian accurately—placing it nearly a hundred miles east of the actual longitude.

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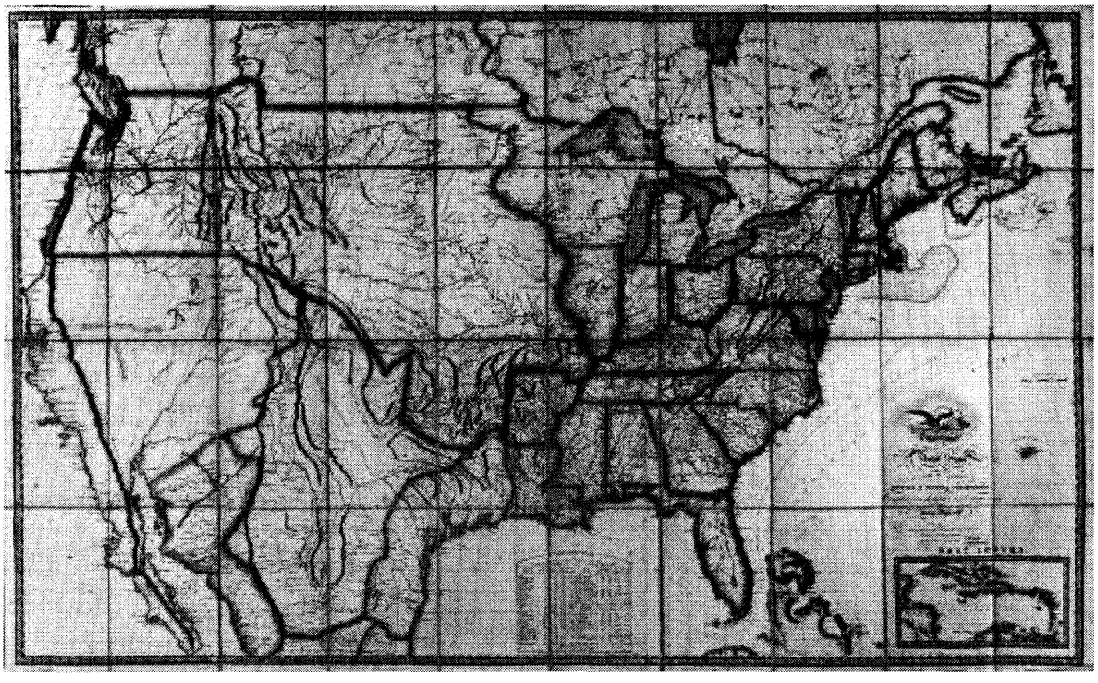
[2] Grant Foreman, "Red River and the Spanish Boundary in the United States Supreme Court," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 2 (September 1924), 299; Emma Estill-Harbour, "A Brief History of the Red River Country since 1803," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 16 (March 1938), 84-85.

By that map, this area of about two thousand square miles that would be future southwest Oklahoma lay in Spanish territory, and therefore also, in the course of development over the next twenty years, it would be transferred to Mexico and then to Texas first as a sovereign nation and then as a state. In 1819 the issue had been ostensibly resolved by the Adams - Onís Treaty between the United States and Spain, but that treaty simply articulated the Red River and 100th Meridian boundaries without further clarification. It was only in 1852 when U.S. Army Captain Randolph B. Marcy was sent to explore the Red River to its origins that it became known that the river actually had three forks, two of them substantial, the fork to the south being called the Prairie Dog Town Fork (or River) and that to the north the Rio Roxo, or Red River.

This information about the forks became important in 1857. In that year surveyors of the 100th Meridian determined that the longitude previously charted was erroneous and that the true 100th Meridian lay eighty miles west of the forks in the Red River. Given that the Red River constituted a



"Map of the United States of America: with the contiguous British and Spanish possessions / compiled from the latest & best authorities by John Melish; engraved by J. Vallance & H.S. Tanner. Improved to the 1st of Apr. 1819. Philadelphia: J. Melish." Map source: United States Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division. This map shows the boundary (reaching west from Arkansas) of the Red River intersecting with the 100th Meridian (the point at which the boundary turns abruptly north) about a hundred miles east of its ultimately determined course.

major boundary, the question of which fork was the main course of the river became a matter of some consequence. Which fork actually was main stream of the Red River? If it were the south fork, the region north of it would no longer be part of Texas, so the state of Texas in 1860 called for a joint survey with the United States government to determine the boundary. Texas instructed its commissioners on the survey team to insist on the north fork of the Red River as the proper boundary and the state legislature, planning ahead for this area, also created a county known as Greer County of the land south of the north fork and north of the south fork. It was no surprise that the Texas commissioners found the north fork to be the boundary and the U.S. commissioners argued for the south fork, so the effort resulted in conflicting reports from the two sets of commissioners—and also a continuing dispute over the proper jurisdiction of this land. Complicating the issue was the fact that Greer County, Texas had already been created.

Early Settlement, 1884-1896

Still unresolved, the issue became more critical and less hypothetical when white people began to move into the area between the forks of the Red River. As the cattle industry developed in Texas, it began to find its outlet in markets on the railroads beyond Indian Territory, to the north, in Kansas. Those markets moved progressively westward and one of the great cattle trails connecting Texas with the Kansas railroad centers moved directly across this land. Beginning in the 1870s the Great Western Trail crossed the south fork of the Red River at Doan's Crossing and continued north, ultimately reaching Dodge City where the cattle either were shipped to market by railroad or continued on to Wyoming and Montana on what was called the Texas Trail. In the wake of the cattle drives, however, Texas ranchers began to move into the land still recognized as Greer County by the Texas government. For example, the Day Land and Cattle Company, organized in Texas in 1883, purchased land certificates that had been issued by the state to veterans of the Mexican War of 1836 and in 1884 the company received a patent from Texas to 144,000 acres in Greer County and leased more than 200,000 additional acres there. More land was being parceled out too and in 1884 the U.S. Army sent troops from Fort Sill to eject the settlers who were trickling into to claim their own lands, and President Chester Arthur warned people against entering "what is known as the Oklahoma lands in the Indian Territory." Some accounts suggest that the warnings came at the instigation of local cattle ranchers in the area whose interest was not necessarily the upholding of the law; the intrusion of settlers into the area where their cattle grazed land for free was not a welcome development to them.[3]

Texas continued to encourage settlement of Greer County and more people took advantage of the opportunity to homestead free land there. The intricacies of settling on land that was officially closed to settlement by the U.S. government, but encouraged by the state government were filled with contradictions, but the "homesteading" continued. Even though U.S. officials had warned settlers in 1884, as historian Emma Estill-Harbour concluded, "For the next four years settlers came to the

[3] Estill-Harbour, "A Brief History of the Red River Country since 1803," 83.

county from all parts of the United States but mostly from Texas," and in 1888 those settlers were again warned to stay out.[4] Clearly, this did not deter them for Dr. Estill-Harbour observed that they were confident the state of Texas would preserve their land claims.

It was as part of this wave of settlement in 1888 that Alonzo T. and his family, and perhaps more of the Perryman family, all from the community of Blooming Grove near Corsicana, Texas, south of Dallas, loaded up their possessions and drove their small herd of cattle and horses into Greer County to make their claims and start their farming and ranching operations in this contested land. One account, based on an interview with Zenobia Perryman, wife of Alonzo, suggests that they moved to Greer County because of the increasing expense of farmland in their home Navarro County. On July 1, 1888 Zenobia Perryman wrote in her diary that "We are standing in front of the house waiting for the wagons to come by for us . . . . We are leaving for our new home in Oklahoma."[5] The way that she identified the family's destination as Oklahoma, rather than Texas, suggests that they were aware not only of the disputed nature of the territory, but of the weight of the claims for that territory by the United States and what would soon become Oklahoma Territory.[6]

Ten days later the families arrived at a prominent hill fortuitously located in the far southwest corner of a surveyed section of land that allowed the new residents to overlook the flats below that contained grazing and crop land. Alonzo and Zenobia Perryman settled on this land in the corner. By several accounts the Alonzo Perryman family first set up a tent for their home, a practice that was common among homesteaders where no lodging at all was otherwise available, and laid claim to the land, not by filing on it—for this was land not yet open as a part of the U.S. public domain—but by plowing a furrow around the perimeter of the property with a walking plow. After a storm destroyed the tent and scattered their belongings, they then built an arbor in which to live, but then also set about building their permanent home and other buildings. Those buildings soon emerged, made of dry-laid rock and forming the complex currently being nominated.[7]

The account based on an interview with Zenobia Perryman indicates that the original dugout was completed within a few weeks—a daunting task, if that timeline is accurate—but it is likely true that the family dugout shelter was the first structure completed.[8] The rock for the buildings was gathered from the immediate vicinity—just about every slope of a hillside revealed an abundance of flat

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[4] Emma Estill-Harbour, "Greer County," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 12 (June 1934), 146.
[5] Mildred Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 1. This is a handwritten manuscript in the Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma. This document is also available in the museum's archives in a typescript form and I have used the typescript in my references.
[6] Cecil Chesser, "Monument in Rocks Testifies to Industriousness of Pioneer Couple," Altus *Times-Democrat*, October 6, 1963.
[7] Chesser, "Monument in Rocks Testifies to Industriousness of Pioneer Couple;" Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 2-4.
[8] Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 3.

limestone or gypsum rock of a reasonably uniform thickness—and the exposed caprock in the hills around the area provided plenty of this same stone in slabs ready for use.[9] The flat land below appears to have been free from rocks, a major asset for its cultivation, so they may even have traveled several miles to gather the rocks. Given the absence of trees in the area, except for along the drainages, they also had to travel some distance to acquire both firewood and timbers to be used in construction. That wood appears to have come from Turkey Creek and the area north of Blair. Together rocks and timber provided them almost all their building materials. As one account relates, "Nothing had to be bought but a window and door and the facings for them, and these were purchased at Quanah, Texas thirty-five miles away."[10]

Once the home was completed, "a well was dug; then the men built, of rock, one small barn for feed, one long shed for cows, and a rock fence to inclose each of these. This was laborious work and gave the men employment throughout the winter months."[11] Yet another account notes that the rock barns and corrals were "built in the 1890's by the Perryman boys and the cowboys who worked on the ranch."[12] Since the two oldest Perryman sons were born in 1890 and 1896, they probably were unable to contribute much to the construction, but there is reason to believe that other family members participated in the building of the property. There were several Perryman families in the vicinity and the "Perryman boys" could have included more than the immediate family. The children would, of course, have had ample opportunity to participate in the maintenance and repair of the rock corrals and buildings in the future. Grandson Jerry Perryman adds to this information by noting that on occasion individuals passing through the area would stack rocks in exchange for a meal. The building of the dry-laid rock structures was doubtless a huge project, a labor-intensive project, and a project for which labor from a variety of sources was put to work.

The Perryman family, either collectively or just the Alonzo Perryman family, had brought livestock with them, probably around thirty head. Yet from the beginning the Perryman Ranch seems to have followed the course of diversification and self-sufficiency common to homesteaders throughout the West. They grazed their cattle between their homestead and Turkey Creek, about four miles away, and they purchased seed to plant the following spring for feed for their cattle and horses, sowed wheat for grazing and flour, and grew a substantial vegetable garden.[13] Moreover, like other self-sufficient homesteads, they raised their own hogs for winter meat, raised chickens, and also some milch cows. The crops aside, it was clear from the beginning that this was to be a livestock operation. In 1891 Alonzo Perryman recorded with the county his cattle brand and horse mark as the

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[9] "Ward Perryman Interview," October 9, 1986, audiotape at Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma. The interview was conducted by Frances Herron.
[10] Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 3.
[11] Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 4.
[12] *Pictorial History of Jackson County, Oklahoma: Crossing the Red* (Altus: Altus Times, 1995), 10.
[13] Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 3.

Cross IU (+IU).[14] Others had the same idea and by the time Perryman recorded his brand, a school had been established in the area, suggesting that the wave of settlement was sufficient to provide that service for the dispersed farmers and ranchers. There is only one discordant tone in this process and one account notes that: "It [the school] was a frame building and was soon destroyed by fire. The cowboys were accused of having set fire to the building . . . ."[15] Whether justified or not, that suspicion served as yet one more indication of the continuing tensions between the large ranchers who regarded the land as open range free for their own use and the small homesteaders who saw it as a land to be settled. And it also suggests that the land was being taken up rapidly.

The Perryman family grew, and more children were born than survived, a circumstance common especially to rural life, but of those four children who lived, sons Albert (born 1890) and Ed (Thomas Edwin, born 1896), were born on the property in the half-dugout that served as their original home while it was still part of Texas. By the time Edwin was born, however, larger forces were at work that changed the life on this homestead and throughout Greer County, Texas. The dispute between Texas and the United States over the boundary represented by this part of the Red River became increasingly forceful, organized, and imperative to resolve. Indeed, it appears that the army ceased its effort to remove settlers because of a pending lawsuit to settle the case. The lawsuit had its origin in the federal legislation that organized Oklahoma Territory in 1890; very simply, but very bluntly, the Oklahoma Territory Organic Act ordered the U.S. Attorney General to file suit to resolve the dispute.[16]

The case, which the state of Texas urged the United States Supreme Court to decline to hear, evidently preferring that the case be argued in a Texas court, provided an opportunity for both sides to develop complex and wide-ranging arguments that addressed the prior use of the land known as Greer County, Texas, the details of diplomatic agreements, and the understandings of local topography by Native Americans, white explorers and settlers, military officials, and about anybody else who had formed a view of the proper boundaries and river flows of the Red River in that area. After volumes of evidence had been gathered and arguments developed, the Supreme Court finally heard the case and rendered its verdict, a very long document, on March 16, 1896. And that judgment ruled that the south fork of the Red River—the Prairie Dog Town Fork—was the main stream of the river, that the sequence of diplomatic agreements and treaties intended that the boundaries follow the main course of the Red River in a westwardly (not northwesterly) fashion until it intersected the 100th Meridian, and that the area previously organized as Greer County was actually a part of Oklahoma Territory.[17]

The implications of this decision for the people living in this disputed area were far reaching. On one level it meant, as has been noted by some who have chronicled the history of the Perryman family,

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[14] "Two Inducted to Old Greer Pioneers Hall of Fame," Altus *Times*, November 28, 2004.
[15] Lowry, "Pioneer Life," 7.
[16] Estill-Harbour, "Greer County," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 12 (June 1934), 146.
[17] *U.S. v. Texas*, 162 U.S. 1 (1896).

that the two sons Albert and Ed were born in Texas and future sons Barney and Ward would be in Oklahoma even though they were all born in the same half-dugout. On another level, though, what did this mean for the claims to the land that they had settled and on which they had built their homes, farms, and ranches? The apprehensions were enormous, for if part of their original anticipation was that the state of Texas, which had encouraged their migration to this area and sanctioned their homesteading, would protect their claims, the state of Texas was now in no position to protect anything. Indeed, Texas had lost its own claim and the state to the south was now literally more than two thousand square miles smaller than it had been. The Red River probably had never seemed so broad and impassable as it did to Texans looking northward on March 17, 1896. Since the United States had warned settlers not to move in, had attempted to remove them, and had offered no sanction or recognition of their homesteading efforts, there was the distinct possibility that they would be officially and finally removed as of the date of the Supreme Court decision. The river may even have looked equally broad to those who lived on the north side, in Greer County, Oklahoma Territory, as they looked south to Texas and felt themselves adrift in a legal limbo where their homesteads and their futures were more uncertain than ever.

The Perryman Ranch and Agriculture, 1896-1942

That eviction was not to happen, though, and these settlers were there to stay. Greer County, Texas, now became Greer County, Oklahoma Territory and, because of the court decision, Congress in January 1897 passed legislation that both opened the area to homesteading and gave settlers already on the land preference in filing claims which would be under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862. That meant that each head of a household would be able to claim a quarter section—160 acres—for free, subject only to paying the land office fees. Plus, and unlike the application of the Homestead Act to other areas, which allowed for only one such quarter section claim in a lifetime, this new legislation also allowed those settlers to purchase an additional quarter section for a dollar an acre, the payment to be made in five annual installments. Also a new land office was opened in Mangum, the county seat of Greer County, to handle these claims.

The Homestead Act required settlers to live on the land for five years and to develop it, and the Greer County settlers were given credit for the years they had already been on the land. For the Perryman families who had already been there eight years, the land had already been developed, was cultivated, and even had dwellings on it. So, in the spring of 1897 in order to receive full title to the land they had settled in 1888, they needed to meet minimal requirements of remaining on the land and paying a simple filing fee. On August 30, 1897, Alonzo's uncle, John B. Perryman, who had settled on the quarter section north of Alonzo's in 1892, paid his filing fees and applied for his quarter section homestead and two weeks later—September 15, 1897—Alonzo Perryman did the same for his 160 acres. In Alonzo Perryman's application he itemized the improvements on his land, as of march 16, 1896, as "(2) Rock houses 13 x 15 & 19 x 17 respectively; two rock granaries, Stable, cow

lot; horse lot, hen house, 2 wells & a windmill over one of them, fenced with 3 wire."[18] John B. Perryman noted on his application that he had a one-room rock house and well on his land.[19] The processing of the patents for the land took time, but on January 27, 1900, the government issued Alonzo Perryman the patent to the quarter section he homesteaded. His uncle John's patent on the quarter section immediately north of Alonzo was issued on October 5, 1899.

Both men, however, also intended to purchase the quarter sections immediately to their east under the provisions of the 1897 law. Accordingly, Alonzo paid thirty-two dollars toward that purchase each year for five years, and on March 2, 1901 he had paid the necessary $160 for 160 acres and received a patent to that land as well. John Perryman was making similar payments on the adjacent quarter section, but in 1899, less than two months after receiving the homestead patent on his original quarter section, he sold both quarter sections to Alonzo for $700, plus the sixty-four dollar balance that remained to be paid on the northeast quarter being purchased from the government. Final title to that land was transferred to Alonzo Perryman in March 1901. The Perryman ranch of Alonzo and Zenobia Perryman was expanding and they now had not just the single quarter section that they homesteaded but a full section of land for their crops and cattle.

It was on this land that the ranch came into its own and followed a pattern of development and change reflective of the larger contours of agriculture. The Perryman Ranch raised, of course, beef cattle but it appears that they actually raised as many or more horses and mules than they did cattle. When an interviewer of the youngest son, Ward Perryman, who was born in 1905, suggested that it was a cattle ranch, Mr. Perryman gently added about his father that "of course, he was in the horse and mule business in the early days too along with cattle. He had quite a few of them [horses and mules]."[20] The extent of their horse and mule operation is hinted at by other evidence. When Alonzo Perryman's health declined in 1910, Ward Perryman's older brother Edwin, at that time fourteen years old, took on many of his father's responsibilities in the physical operation of the ranch with his mother (and evidently also with the continuing direction of his father). Years later Edwin recalled that they would breed their thirty mares to a donkey one year to produce mules which were in great demand for the strength in pulling the farm implements, and the next year to stallions for a crop of colts.[21] While cattle were important, and while the Perryman family would drive their beeves to market in Mangum, the horses and mules were an important part of the ranch operation.

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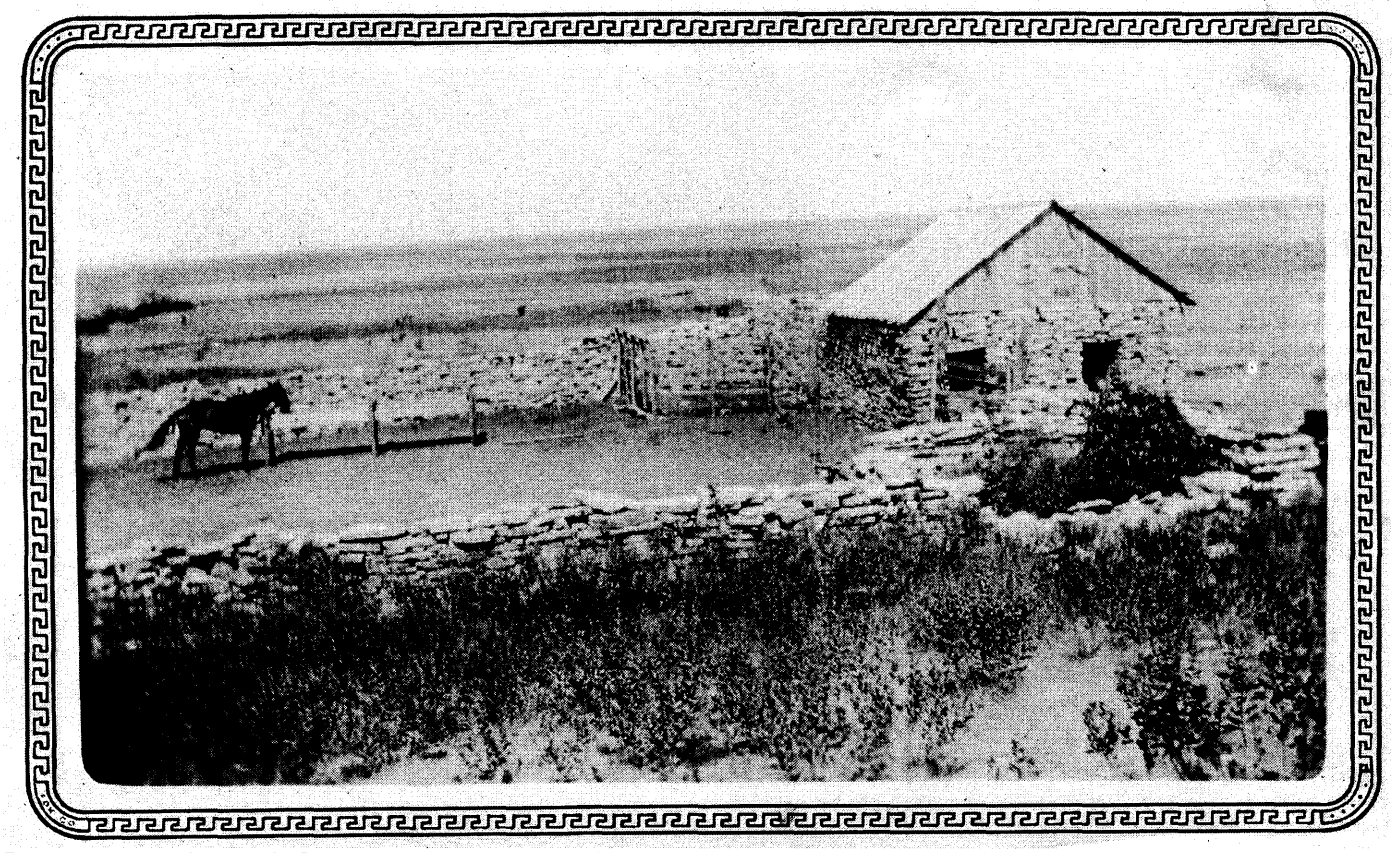
[18] National Archives and Records Administration, Land Entry Files, file for Alonzo T. Perryman, Homestead Application No. 541, Patent Final Certificate No. 541.
[19] National Archives and Records Administration, Land Entry Files, file for John B. Perryman, Homestead Application No. 461, Patent Final Certificate No. 586.

[20] Ward Perryman Interview, Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.
[21] Kelly Perryman, "The Life and Times of Thomas Edwin Perryman," typescript at Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma, 2. Although this document is not dated, internal references

The corrals and barns they built served the varied livestock with two corrals, or pens, enabling them to keep the horses and cattle separate. One historic photograph shows a horse being kept in the south corral and that appears to have been the dominant use of the south lot until the 1930s. The two-cell structure at the north end of the pen on the south provided on the west a stable and on the east storage space for the grains used in feeding both horses and cattle, one side of the granary



Perryman Ranch, South Corral and Small Barn. Although the photo is undated, photo content, materials, and style of printing suggest that it was probably made in the 1920s. Photo: Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

storing barley and the other oats. In addition, and not to be neglected, the small barn outside and adjoining the south lot, at the southeast corner of the complex, was used for hogs, a necessity on the ranch in getting the family through the winter.

suggest that this account was written in 1999 and was based on interviews with Edwin and others in the family.

The flat land below the ranch headquarters worked well for grazing, but it was also good for cultivation and the Perryman family planted crops early on. When Alonzo Perryman filed for his homestead in 1897 he reported that a hundred of his 160 acres were in cultivation.[22] In the beginning those farming activities, however, were of a secondary nature and in support of their livestock raising—especially for their horses—and were part of a diversified, self-sufficient operation, so they planted and harvested oats and what they called bundle feed—either red top cane or sorghum—and some wheat which they would use for their own consumption and then market the remainder. And to produce sufficient crops, the Perryman family used the standard horse- and mule-drawn equipment in the field. Early in the century the family used a two-disk plow pulled by teams of horses or mules, with which they could plow about four acres a day. But they were also a little ahead of the trend; where most of their neighbors had a one-row cultivator, the Perryman family acquired a two-row cultivator that could cover fifteen to twenty acres in a day. That too changed.

Certainly the Perryman Ranch was becoming more mechanized, using more machines, heavier machines, and more specialized machines. And World War I contributed to this process. The combination of reduced world-wide competition in the production of food and fiber as Europe mobilized for war on the one hand, and governmental price supports at home on the other hand, meant that commodity prices in the U.S. rose, and they increased even greater than the rate of inflation. This not only brought some degree of prosperity to the farmers but it also encouraged them to expand their operations. After the war, the Perryman family, as Ward Perryman recalled, purchased a twelve-foot header – binder, a device capable of both cutting and binding grain into bundles that would be stacked to be dried and then taken to a threshing machine parked at a stationary location.[23] Ward Perryman's brother, Albert, who lived nearby, ran a threshing machine that was powered by a long belt connected to the drive wheel of a steam engine that would be parked in a field; crews would then gather the shocks of grain from the fields and bring them to the thresher where they would be fed into it, thereby separating the grain from the straw and chaff. Agriculture, as the experience of the Perryman family showed, was becoming increasingly mechanized.

The ranch evolved in several ways. One involved the machinery used. Another way could be seen in the size of the ranch. When Alonzo Perryman died in 1925 the probate record indicated that the farm included by that point nearly two full sections of land which passed into the hands of his widow Zenobia. This had been accumulated over three decades since the land was opened for legal settlement and it supported two generations of the Perryman family by then. The size, however, may also be an indication of the growing importance of improved and specialized machinery. Just as the

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[22] National Archives and Records Administration, Land Entry Files, file for Alonzo T. Perryman, Homestead Application No. 541, Patent Final Certificate No. 541.
[23] Ward Perryman Interview, Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma.

larger implements allowed the family to farm a larger area, it worked the other way too; the larger acreage was necessary for the production of crops in quantities sufficient to pay for the equipment.

And this expansion of the acreage of the farm came around the same time that the family moved (1920) from the half-dugouts and the box house to a new residence atop the hill. A building that had been used as a school house in a nearby district was purchased from the school district and moved onto the land, where it was then divided into six rooms. This provided larger quarters, and probably better quarters, than the dwellings on the side of the hill that they had used since 1888. The half-dugout, at least, was then used as a bedroom or bunkhouse for hired help, and after that for storing the huge supplies of produce from their garden that they canned for winter use.

Also indicating the trend toward both mechanization and increasing cultivation of crops, somewhere in these years the farm acquired its first tractor, and that was an event of considerable significance. The Perrymans traded twelve or fifteen head of horses and mules for a Farmall tractor, and it was the Farmall that was revolutionizing agriculture. As agricultural historian Gilbert Fite notes, "It was not until 1924, when the International Harvester Company introduced the all-purpose Farmall tractor, that the tractor age really began in American agriculture."[24] The swap of horses and mules for a tractor was both a practical matter and also a deeply symbolic exchange.

The farmers and ranchers like the Perrymans did not operate in isolation, and the more commercial their system of production, the more vulnerable they were. They had to contend with powerful forces that were reshaping the countryside and altering the fundamental contours of agriculture. The agricultural statistics gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau clearly show the prevailing trends. Cattle production was up by about ten percent in the decade between 1910 and 1920, reflecting the boom generated by the war. The size of the average farm also increased during those years too, although some ranches clearly expanded while others declined. That does not, however, necessarily translate to prosperity, for the decade of the 1920s also produced an agricultural depression in Oklahoma and in the nation. Commodity prices dropped at the end of World War I, government prices supports were ended, and farmers who had borrowed money in prosperous times to expand their holdings and purchase implements often faced increased burdens when they had to make their payments in difficult times. Even when there was a slight recovery in prices around 1923 and 1924, bank closures were rampant especially in rural America as thousands of small town banks shut their doors in 1921-1924, taking with them not only the savings of many farmers and ranchers but calling in the loans that had been made for that additional land and equipment. In fact, between 1920 and 1929 almost six thousand banks closed, a number equal to about twenty-percent of the total; and the vast majority of these banks were in the rural parts of the nation.[25] The twenties may have roared in the big cities,

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[24] Gilbert C. Fite, "The Transformation of South Dakota Agriculture: The Effects of Mechanization, 1939-1964," *South Dakota History*, 19 (1989), 280.

[25] Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 249.

but in the countryside, in places like Jackson County, the twenties groaned under the weight of social change and economic transformation.

If the 1920s were challenging, the Depression of the 1930s brought only more hardship and distress to small and large farm and ranch operations alike. The forces bearing down on the Perryman Ranch were powerful and severe. Cattle prices dropped dramatically and Ward Perryman recalled that in the 1930s they sold "some of the best yearlings that ever walked across a field for two and a half, [or] three dollars a hundred weight." When Mr. Perryman was asked if his ranch got down to their last dollar during the Depression, his answer was the same as that of many a farmer and rancher: "Yes, and we got past *that*."[26]

The decline in the markets was one problem. The lack of water was another. Water had always been a matter of great concern here, both in terms of availability and in quality. That problem worsened in this area on the fringes of the Dust Bowl that had its epicenter in the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles. Ward Perryman recalled that in the dry years of the 1930s the ranch had great difficulty growing crops and even grass for pasture. The drought of 1936 in particular meant that very little in the way of crops and forage were growing.

One possible key to the ability of the Perryman Ranch to withstand some of the rigors of those years may have been their ability to practice subsistence agriculture. By growing their own food supplies, by living on the animals they grew, by raising their own chickens, by growing their own oats and barley and other grains necessary for the family and the livestock, they were perhaps able to insulate themselves slightly from the downturn in the markets that ravaged those operations that were completely dependent on commercial production. In addition, of course, they were able to sell their surpluses, from milk and cream to cattle and wheat, to provide additional support.

In 1929 Ward Perryman graduated with a degree in animal husbandry from Oklahoma A&M College in Stillwater and returned to the ranch. The 1930 census shows Zenobia Perryman and Ward Perryman at the ranch with sons Albert and Barney and their families living nearby. The college degree, of course, reflects many things, including the commitment of the family to education, but it also reveals the increasing scientific and business nature of agricultural operations. And certainly that approach helped as the family navigated the ranch through the Depression. By the end of the 1930s, Ward Perryman recalled, he was growing more wheat; in fact, as he said in his 1986 interview, "actually, we didn't start to raise much wheat until the late 1930s and early 1940s."[27] And this was a reflection of larger changes at the ranch. The horses and mules were increasingly being replaced with tractors, part of the national trend, and so the Perryman Ranch devoted less attention to raising them. And with the reduction of horses and mules, the use of the structures also changed. Jerry Perryman, who grew up on the ranch, remembers that the south corral came to be used for

[26] Ward Perryman interview.
[27] Ward Perryman interview.

cattle instead of horses and mules; it became known as the cow lot since cows would be kept there to be milked while their calves would be left outside.

It would not be exactly accurate to say that horses and mules were replaced with wheat, and certainly the linkage was not direct, but that was the general trend. Between 1920 and 1935 the production of wheat in Jackson County increased literally by tenfold, from just over 64,000 bushels in 1910 to more than 644,000 bushels in 1935.[28] The Perryman Ranch also began to grow cotton, which other farmers in the area also cultivated. The number of horses and mules in Jackson County dropped dramatically, falling from 14,323 in 1920 to 10,612 in 1935, but fell even more in the following five years, dropping down to 4989 in 1940, a reflection also of the growing importance of tractors and trucks on the farms of America.[29] And, as Jerry Perryman remembers, the family bought tractors and other equipment in the years 1939-1942 and the steam thresher was replaced with gasoline powered equipment.[30] Agriculture in Jackson County, agriculture in Oklahoma, and agriculture in the nation was being transformed.

Yet one more dimension of the transformation of agriculture was the new government programs that emerged to assist the commercial producer. In particular, the greater water conservation effort to mitigate the sources and consequences of drought provided a new support and encouragement for the growing of crops. The federal government's conservation programs came into this area after 1933 as part of the New Deal and encouraged the construction of dams and farm ponds, the rotation of crops, contour plowing, terracing the land, and strip farming. Ward Perryman, significantly, became active in the major agricultural program in this area and even served as chair of the local Conservation District in 1938, remaining in that position for thirty-eight years.[31]

By 1942, which is the end of the period of historic significance, the Perryman Ranch was one of the oldest continuously operating family farms in the county, still within the same family, too, and in the previous period of more than a half century it had survived the challenges of settlement, the legal

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[28] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume VII, Agriculture 1909 and 1910 Reports by States, with Statistics for Counties* (Washington: G. P. O., 1913), 367, 382-383; *United States Census of Agriculture, 1925, Part II* (Washington: G.P.O., 1927), 1074-1075.

[29] U.S. Department of Commerce, *United States Census of Agriculture, 1935. Reports for States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary for the United States, Vol. I* (Washington: U.S.G.P. O., 1936), 729; *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume VI, Part 2, Agriculture* (Washington, G.P.O., 1922), 638-639.

[30] Jerry Perryman telephone interview, October 20, 2006.

[31] "Ward Perryman," information page in Perryman Family Collections, Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma. "Museum to honor Perryman," undated, unidentified newspaper clipping in Perryman Family Collections, Museum of the Western Prairie, Altus, Oklahoma. Obituary for Ward Perryman, Altus *Times,* August 2002.

obstacles associated with the transfer of the land from Texas to Oklahoma Territory, the commercialization of agriculture, and the vicissitudes of markets, drought, and social change. The stone buildings and structures endured. All four of the sons of Alonzo and Zenobia Perryman continued the farming tradition, although Barnett died in 1931, with two establishing their own farms on adjacent land and the youngest son Ward Perryman remaining on the original property until his death in 2002 at age 97. Zenobia Perryman resided there also until her own death in 1960 at age 93. Ward Perryman continued to raise cattle on the ranch until about 1980 or 1985.

Today the stone dugout and the corrals and barns remain tucked into the side of a hill that overlooks the flatlands below where the Perryman family for a century raised its livestock and crops. In a fitting display of the milestones of history, the stone buildings hug the contour of the land so closely that they appear to have actually emerged from the land, which, in a way, they did. But those buildings can best be viewed by climbing up one of the abandoned implements on the flats below, an ancient combine that once scoured those fields to glean the grain they produced, and that combine serves as a marker of another end of that historical process that the Perryman Ranch not only reflected, but helped shape.

Historical Significance of the Perryman Ranch

The Perryman Ranch is eligible under Criterion A in the area of significance Settlement because its origins lie precisely in the settlement of southwest Oklahoma and because it reflects the larger pattern of settlement in that area, a part of the state that has a distinctive history and where settlement emerged under a different framework from that in the rest of the state. Following in the wake of Texas cattle drives, the Perryman family joined with other Texas settlers who moved into the ambiguously defined and owned area known as Greer County before it was officially opened to homesteading by the U.S. government. There they built their ranch, finally laying claim to it after the intricate and hotly-contested process by which the area where they lived was transferred from Texas to Oklahoma Territory.

It is also eligible under Criterion A in the area of significance Agriculture. The ranch that the Perryman family built on the side of this hill and the flats below it to the north and east both led and represented broader trends in agriculture. They raised livestock, and while cattle were a natural element of that effort, they also became adept at and focused on raising horses and mules, a reflection of not only the pattern of transportation in that day but also an indicator of the source of power used on the farm. Indeed, the Perryman Ranch itself used that horse and mule power to sow and harvest their crops; and those crops ultimately came to supplement and even replace some of the livestock. Where home consumption was the primary goal of the original crop effort, with their crops being produced to provide feed for their livestock and their own domestic use, only marketing commercially that portion that was left over after people and animals had been fed, the mechanization of the crop production reflected the increased commercial orientation of the ranch.

Agriculture in Oklahoma and the nation no longer resembles what it once did, and by the beginning of World War II it was clear that a different system prevailed. It was not just that tractors had replaced horses and mules, although that was an important symbolic and real transformation, but extensive cultivation of a large acreage instead of intensive cultivation of a quarter section homestead was the dominant pattern. In this way, the Perryman Ranch qualifies for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A both in the area of significance Settlement and in the area of significance Agriculture.

Architectural Significance of the Perryman Ranch

The Perryman Ranch headquarters is also significant under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture because the buildings and structures represent a distinct type and period of construction. One of the outstanding features of the ranch is the half-dugout that served as a bedroom for the family and subsequently as a storage area for the ranch's canned food ("canned" meaning in this case, food that had been preserved and sealed in jars). The dugout form of building is legendary in the annals of settlement on the Great Plains since it was a kind of habitation that could be constructed using exclusively, or nearly so, materials available on the land even in those areas where the country was noted for an absence of trees. In his enduring study of agriculture in the nation, historian Fred Shannon wrote of the dugout that was so common on the Great Plains, "Such dwellings, whatever else may be said as to their commodiousness or sightliness, could be kept dry and with little fuel heated comfortably warm through the bitterest winter."[32]

This widespread use and broad importance notwithstanding, however, the dugout as a form of building is often neglected in studies of American architecture. The dugout could be of two basic forms, the full dugout, completely dug into an embankment or even into the ground, and its variation, the half-dugout, in which an earthen bank forms one side of the structure and other materials (logs, sod, or rocks, usually) make up the remaining walls. While modest and certainly humble, the dugout met the needs of people with meager resources and in areas that were often inaccessible and where commercial building products were unavailable. When the dugout is mentioned as a building type it is often assumed that it was made of sod, but rock also provides an important material in this form of architecture, and the rock buildings were once common in this area. In the standard study of American house architecture, Virginia and Lee McAlester discuss the Plains Tradition of architecture that included sod and log buildings. While the McAlesters discuss sod buildings as the standard plains dwelling, they also mention the dugout as an architectural form. They include in their book photographs of three typical half-dugouts, one made of logs, one made of sod, and one made of stone. The photograph of

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[32] Fred A. Shannon, *The Farmer's Last Frontier: Agriculture, 1860-1897* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1945), 149.

the half-dugout made of stone that they use is a picture of the Perryman Ranch half-dugout in Jackson County, Oklahoma.[33]

The second element of this architectural significance is the stone work. The McAlesters, in their discussion of the Perryman half-dugout, observe that "such stonework was common in the eastern and southern plains where exposures of bedrock are frequent." This stonework—dry-laid stone or rock—is an honored and ancient craft in the United States. The Dry Stone Conservancy, an organization dedicated to the preservation of these buildings, notes that "On farms, there were drystone dwelling houses, barns, slave quarters, spring houses, smoke houses, and ice houses."[34] And dry-laid stone was even once common in towns in the construction of various domestic and commercial buildings and it was often used in transportation structures like bridges and in dams. Retaining walls and fences are conspicuous examples of the technique. As compared with other forms of construction, the craftsperson who became skilled in dry-laid stone work required a minimal amount of capital, but the skill was essential; the dry-laid stone structures were held together by skill in interlocking the multiple pieces instead of depending on mortar. To some observers, the lack of mortar in the construction implies a structural weakness, a shabbiness of construction, or at least an absence of strength and durability. Yet mortared walls typically have a shorter life span than the unmortared because the dry-laid stone walls are more flexible, thus hugging the ground more tightly with less damage upon settling, because they are less vulnerable to the expansion and contraction of freezing rain and snow caught in the interstices, and because they are so much easier to repair when damaged. When a mortared stone wall breaks, the repairs are both more extensive and more expensive than with the dry-laid stone. Indeed, as the completed wall settles, the tendency is sometimes for the dry-laid stone to become tighter, as opposed to the mortared stone that cracks.

The buildings and structures at the Perryman Ranch are an outstanding example of this form of construction and the use of these locally available materials. Even though portions of the corral wall have fallen, the rocks have simply tipped sideways and sometimes, on the adjacent ground, retain their courses in which they were originally placed when the wall was upright.

Archeological Significance of the Perryman Ranch

Archeological investigations have been conducted within the southwestern region of what is now Oklahoma during the past sixty years. The surveys have documented sites dating from 12,000 years ago up until the present. These studies typically amount to little more than surface surveys, with little

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[33] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 87.

[34] See the history of dry-stone construction published by the Dry Stone Conservancy on the World Wide Web at http://www.drystone.org/history/, accessed September 20, 2006. See also, Jane M. Wooley, "The Logic of Stone," *Stonexus Magazine* (Summer 2001), 35-38.

in the way of actual excavations having been conducted. Furthermore most have concentrated on identifying sites dating from prehistoric times. It is only recently that archeological sites dating from the late-ninetieth and early-twentieth centuries have gained recognition that they also have to be judged comparably for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Standing buildings affiliated with ranch compounds and individual homesteads typically are judged on their architectural merits alone. Once these remains have been delegated to surface or near surface elements they become archeological resources since less evidence remains to define the dwelling architecturally.

When Alonzo T. Perryman and family arrived in old Greer County in 1888, the area was undeveloped open prairie with little timber resources for building materials. In this regard, use of locally available limestone for dry-laid wall construction was a logical choice. Today many of the original buildings are still evident, although in most cases in a dilapidated condition. Clarification of building characteristics and confirmation of actual dimensions can be accomplished by conducting archeological excavations in areas marked by both surface and subsurface evidence. Materials recovered may help define the purpose or function(s) of these structures. This line of evidence accompanied by the documentary evidence would form a clearer picture of the layout and use of the ranch complex.

According to the documentary evidence, the ranch evolved over time with later subsequent development taking place nearby, not in the same locations. Such greatly enhances the chance of the preservation of spatial patterning, both spatially as well as chronologically. Archeological excavations can be of assistance in defining such patterns.

The Ranch has continued to be occupied by the Perryman family for more than a century. This family moved from north central Texas into what was viewed at the time to be unsettled lands, still part of Texas. In this regards they clearly had ties to Texas ranching habits and culture, perhaps unlike those for nearby Oklahoma and Indian territories. This site should be viewed as a "type site" for defining such patterns if they exist. Only through adequate archeological sampling of such sites can we form a basis of comparisons between different ethnic groups settling within what amounts to a broad Southern Mixed Grass and Tall Grass prairies' setting.

Although unclear based on the level of information presented in the background documentation, it is quite likely that discrete horizontal differences in disposal of trash will be preserved at various locations on the property. This could simply involve practices such as burial in once open features (abandoned dugouts, hand dug wells and perhaps root storage or storm cellars now only represented by shallow depressions) early on, and later, disposal of materials "off site" in eroded areas or similar non-productive locations further from the main ranch compound. This tends to be a documented pattern elsewhere following a trend of reuse of product containers early on, versus use once, then discard for containers or goods accompanied by excessive packaging later on. Even if only on site

disposal is reflected, the spatial evolvement of primary residences with accompanying out buildings over time may still allow for the preservation of such differences, both horizontally and vertically.

If such can be demonstrated, then the Ranch Complex would be an ideal location for the archeological investigations of acquisition (i.e. distribution systems) and product preference for material goods over time in western Oklahoma. The period of time, bridging old Greer County (Texas) into and past Statehood, would be of use in defining much broader, regional patterns.

Ethnic as well as economic differences may also be apparent. Judging from what is already known about the site, the Perrymans should be viewed as a rather well off, Anglo American family. Comparison between material goods acquired by this family, compared to nearby less effluent ranching and farming families, would be of value. This type of information needs to be acquired through archeological means, rather than simply relying on either oral history or archival data. Past studies have shown that reliance on the latter two lines of information alone can be misleading.

Based on the potential of the Perryman Ranch Compound to yield archeological information important in history, it is also eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places based under Criterion D.

Summary

The Perryman Ranch has long been a representative and leading ranch and farm in Jackson County, Oklahoma and its origins provide a deeper understanding of the settlement of the southwest part of the state. Because of this the historic buildings on the ranch are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the areas of significance Settlement and Agriculture. Moreover, because the buildings represent a type of construction and use materials distinct to that period, they are also eligible under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture. The Perryman Ranch is also eligible under Criterion D, for the information it could yield as a single-occupancy, settlement period ranch in Old Greer County

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

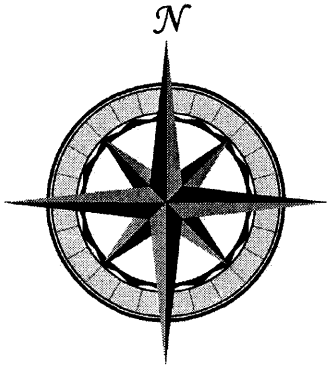
This property includes an irregular-shaped parcel of less than five acres including the Perryman Ranch Headquarters buildings and adjacent property located in the southwest ¼ of the southwest ¼ of Section 21, Range 22 West, Township 3 North.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Perryman Ranch Headquarters buildings.

Perryman Ranch

Jackson County, Oklahoma
Southwest ¼, Section 21, Range 22 W,
Township 3 N



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