

PH008 7301

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Colorado</b>
COUNTY: <b>Mesa</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>DEC 31 1974</b>

1. NAME

COMMON: **Convicts' Bread Oven**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: ~~W of Mesa on to 65~~  
**7 and 2/3 miles East of Interstate 70 on Colo. State Hwy. 65**

CITY OR TOWN: ~~Sec. 11, Twp. 10 South (SE 1/4, SW 1/4)~~  
**Range 97W, SE Quarter, (SE 1/4)**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Number Four**

STATE: **Colorado** CODE: **08** COUNTY: **Mesa** CODE: **077**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both 	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No 

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Powder Mountain Ranch, Paul Alexander, et al.**

STREET AND NUMBER: **611 - 26 Road**

CITY OR TOWN: **Grand Junction, Colorado** STATE: **Colorado** CODE: **08**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Mesa County Courthouse, Assessor's Office**

STREET AND NUMBER: **6th and Road**

CITY OR TOWN: **Grand Junction** STATE: **Colorado** CODE: **08**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **None**

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

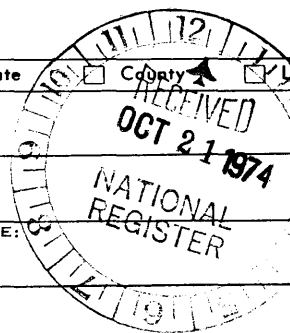
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Colorado**  
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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

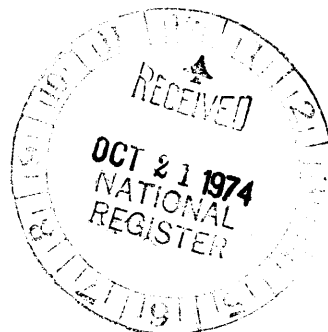
The Convicts' Bread Oven, built in 1911 to service a Road Camp of Convicts, at first glance resembles an above-ground tomb. In reality it is a typical Mexican adobe-type oven of a precise rectangular shape in concrete. The dimensions are 7 feet 4 inches long, 4 feet 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches wide; the height at the center of the roof is 4 feet and curves to 3 feet 3 inches along the length of the sides. Built upon a solid wooden timbered foundation, heavy cement forms floor, sides and roof. The interior of the walls and roof are of random river gravel the texture of rubble. This has been smoothed over with cement both inside and out. A segmental shaped opening in the front wall allowed for a fire to be built inside this thick concrete structure. When the interior was heated sufficiently the coals were raked out and the bread inserted to bake in the declining heat. A heavy door covered this opening but it no longer remains. A circular chimney hole in the roof allowed for circulation of air during the heating period, and was covered during the cooking period.

Within this oven bread was baked daily from April 1911 through July 1912 to feed an encampment of 30 prisoners and their guards who built roads throughout this area.

The oven stands on the flat bottom plain of Plateau Creek, 150 feet South of State Highway 65 which runs along the cliff directly above. The oven is about halfway between Highway 65 and Plateau Creek. A dry gulch carved in the land from the Harris Homestead two miles north of this spot empties into Plateau Creek where the Convicts' Camp once stood. The oven is 159 feet West of the dry gulch.

The setting is one of rough mountainous terrain, with sagebrush, juniper, desert grasses and pinyon pine growing on the mountainsides and on the creek plain where the oven stands marking the original location of the Prisoners' Camp.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The preservation of a primitive oven built in 1911 located in Plateau Canyon on Colorado State Highway 65 would highlight two aspects of regional history: how roads were built in this rugged terrain with pick and shovel, blasting, wheelbarrow and wagon; and how bread, mankind's universal food, was baked in a primitive oven which remains on the site and is an example of Mexican adobe-type architecture.

The development of transportation has traditionally opened new areas of our country for further development. The rough Plateau Canyon area became more accessible when, from 1911 - 1912, a group of convicts from the State Penitentiary at Canon City built roads here.

The Proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners from April 4, 1911 through August 13, 1912 contain numerous items of business pertaining to the establishment of this camp for convicts, the maintenance of it, and finally the disposition of it. The Board communicated with Warden Thomas Tynan of the State Penitentiary through his representative Mr. Jamieson "so that 30 men could be supplied to this county at the cost of salary for two men and the maintenance of the camp." The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, reporting on this meeting of the County Commissioners pin-points the location of the camp, "A location for the convict camp has been established five miles from the mouth of Plateau Canyon and about a mile above Fleming Bridge". It is at this exact spot where we find a primitive oven, the remaining structure showing the existence of this forgotten encampment.

Primitive ovens are in use the world over, although their shapes, sizes and materials vary. For centuries the Indians of the Southwest have been building primitive ovens of earth, then making a fire inside, then scraping out the coals and putting in loaves of dough to bake. Here in the Southwest are found the beehive-shaped adobe ovens of the Pueblo Indians. In Mexico the ovens are barrel shaped or of a precise rectangular shape in concrete like the Convicts' Bread Oven. Within the Convicts' Oven bread was baked for George Asher, the Superintendent of the Convict Camp, and for 30 to 40 additional men daily.

This daily camp life was noted by the ranchers of the area. From the 1911 diary of J. Elvin Harris, of the Harris

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

\_\_\_\_\_, The Daily Sentinel, (Grand Junction, Colorado) April 12, 1911.  
 Hartley, David, Building Editor, "Building and Baking in Your Own Pueblo oven, Sunset, August 1971, pp. 50 - 53.  
 J. Elvin Harris, Personal diary, Harris Homestead, Plateau Canyon, Colorado, 1911 and 1912  
 Mesa County Colorado, Proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners, April 4, 1911 through July 15, 1912.  
 \_\_\_\_\_, The Midland Trail Tour Guide 1916, National Midland Trail Association, Grand Junction, Colorado, pp.144-145.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

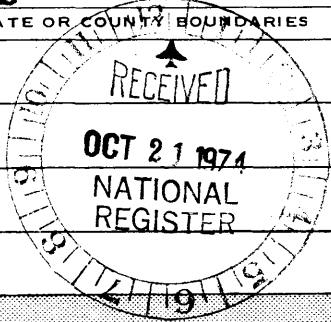
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 12' 14"	108° 11' 52"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

UTM  
 12/742550  
 4342580  
 00

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **0.5 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
None			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Betty M. Neubauer**

ORGANIZATION: **The Antiquarian Club, Grand Junction, Colorado** DATE: **8 - 28 - 74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **922 Bunting**

CITY OR TOWN: **Grand Junction,** STATE: **Colorado 81501** CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

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

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: *Stephen W. Hunt*

Title: *Color. Hist. Pres. Officer*

Date: *10/15/74*

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

*Arthur W. Hartman*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: *12/31/74*

ATTEST:

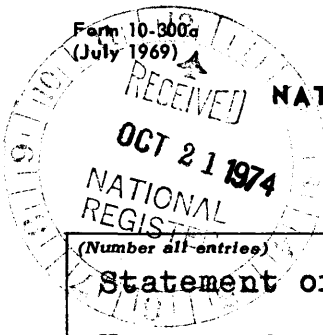
*Ronald M. Greenberg*  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: *12/31/74*

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#1  
(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Colorado	
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Statement of significance - continued

Homestead, a notation of April 20th stated that "convicts moved in on road." On January 4, 1912 he wrote, "early start for Cameo for convicts to work on road. 20 in all. two wagons." A simple March 30, 1912 entry related "convict got away", and finally on August 25, 1912, "camp moved away. Douglas took a load to DeBeque."

A description of portions of the road built by this group is found in the Midlands Trail Tour Book 1916 wherein the entire route from Grand Junction, Colorado to Denver, Colorado is described. Beginning at speedometer reading 21.2 Mouth of Plateau Creek: "curve right and left at fork to 22.4 (speedometer reading) bridge over Plateau Creek; right up winding grade with some sharp turns for next ten miles. Sound horn and drive slowly on turns; when wet keep in beaten track; 32.0 Harris rance on right. Mr. Harris, himself a motorist, has some facilities for repairs; 32.1 Harris' spring, in concrete box on left; fill water bags here--no water for 12 miles."

The County Commissioners file a somewhat different road report dated 14th Spril, 1912; "On motion the Board accompanied by the Clerk proceeded via automobile to the Convict Camp for inspection of the work done and to ascertain as near as possible how much more there was to be completed. Arriving at the Camp a thorough inspection of the work was made and each individual member of the Board expressed themselves as being highly pleased with the splendid work of Mr. Asher and his men. The road when completed, on account of its permanent character and the elimination of the many bridges across Plateau Creek, will reduce the maintainence charge to a minimum and certainly be of inestimable value to the travelling public and very creditable asset to the County." Remnants of the road are to be seen today where stonework and trails cut through Plateau Canyon.

The property on which the Convicts' Bread Oven stands is presently owned by "Powder Mountain Ranch", whose full co-operation with this preservation project has been assured. Cattle graze on the river bottom land around the oven; and in the fall of the year the land is used as a holding pen for the stock. The Ute Water Company has been operating heavy construction equipment around the oven while working on water lines from Plateau Creek. There is some possibility that the oven may be destroyed if steps for its preservation are not taken.