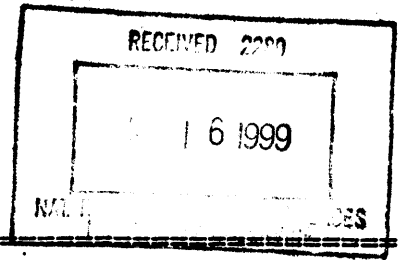


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

158



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Porter Ranch Barn

other names/site number 24FH462

2. Location

street & number North Somers Road

not for publication

city or town Kalispell

vicinity

state MT

code 029

county Flathead

zip code 59901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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]

3/12/99

Signature of certifying official

Date

Krvin Kilcullen, Federal Preservation Officer, FWS, DOI

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]

10-1-98

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

Porter Ranch Barn
Name of Property

Flathead County, MT
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Edson H. Ball 4-15-99

for Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Porter Ranch Barn
Name of Property

Flathead County, MT
County and State

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions

Cat: Agriculture/Subsistence Sub: Animal Facility

Current Functions

Cat: Vacant/Not In Use Sub:
Agriculture/Subsistence Storage

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification

Other: Gambrel Roofed Barn

Materials

foundation Stone: Limestone
roof Shingle and Metal
walls Wood

other Two Cupolas

See Continuation Sheet

Porter Ranch Barn
Name of Property

Flathead County, MT
County and State

=====
8. Statement of 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.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a 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 last 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Period of Significance 1908

Significant Dates 1908

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Contractor/Builder Unknown
Frank W. Porter

See Continuation Sheet

Porter Ranch Barn
Name of Property

Flathead County, MT
County and State

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See Continuation Sheet

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: University of Montana Archaeological Records

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property Less than 1 Acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	707710	5332260	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See Continuation Sheet

Porter Ranch Barn
Name of Property

Flathead County, MT
County and State

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Dagny K. Krigbaum/Research Consultant

organization Historical Discoveries

date April 1998

street & number 731 Cooper

telephone 406/549-8972

city or town Missoula

state MT

zip code 59802

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

See Continuation Sheet

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Northwest Montana
Wetland Management District

street & number 780 Creston Hatchery Road telephone (404) 758-6879

city or town Kalispell

state Montana

zip code 59901
=====

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

Description

The Porter Ranch Barn, built in 1908, is a large two story wood frame building approximately 95 x 65 feet. In style, the barn is a vernacular English gambrel and shed roofed form. The plan is rectangular with the main entrance being the center drive which runs through the middle. The center drive is somewhat unique to the Flathead Valley, in that it runs through the width rather than the length of the barn. In addition to the main drive, there is a center aisle running the same direction through the stable section of the barn. The exterior of the building is finished in tongue and groove wood that has been laid horizontally over the frame. The roof is finished with cedar shingles, and the foundation is built of uncut limestone and mortar. The interior of the barn has few finished walls, allowing full view of the post and beam structure. A ground cellar lies below the barn, and can be entered from each side of the center drive. The barn is located one mile north of highway 82 on North Somers Road, approximately 9 miles south of Kalispell, Montana. With the exception of a small federal storage building that sits nearby, the barn is completely isolated. It is surrounded by more than 500 acres of natural grasslands, cottonwood trees, and ponds that make up the Blasdel Waterfowl Production Area.¹ There have been only small alterations to the barn since its construction.

The two stories of the barn encase several windows and doors. There are 15 small framed, 4 paned windows, and one large framed window on the ground level. Seven doors allow entrance into the barn from the ground level. There are 12 large framed windows with wooden slits or "eyes" on the second story, and access to the second level is by two sets of stairs; one on each end of the barn. All window and door surrounds are constructed of plain milled boards. There are two cupolas on the barn's steeply pitched roof. The cupolas are larger than many seen in the Flathead valley, and resemble one of the early Connecticut Valley types.² The gambrel roof creates a larger space than other designs for hay storage, and is also better suited to handle heavy snow. Although the gambrel portion of the roof is covered in shingles, the shed roof that covers the east face of the barn is covered with corrugated steel. The red color of the barns exterior, although extremely faded, is still visible.

The interior ground level consists of two main areas separated by the center drive of the barn. There are few finished walls in these areas, other than those constructed as separate harness and storage rooms. The south end of the ground level houses 10 horse stalls with full length feeding troughs, and two separate rooms located on the east end of the building. A ceiling track carrier runs through the center aisle of the stable. The north end of the ground level has a similar layout to the stable. There are two separate rooms on the east side that have been constructed with finished walls. One of the rooms was used for grain storage, and can be identified by the window in the ceiling allowing grain to be dropped in from the second story. There is also an additional room (third room) connected to the grain storage, that appears to have been constructed at a later date. With the exception of the individual storage and work rooms, the northern section of the barn is an open space that was once used to shoe and care

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

=====
for horses. There is a ceiling track carrier that at one time completely circled the outer walls of the northern section, but it is no longer unusable due to the more recently constructed room on the east end.

The second story of the barn is an extensive, wide open space and the interior wood frame is completely exposed, as if on display. On this level, the threshing floor is in the middle of the barn (located directly above the center drive) and is raised above the two mows, one on each side. Each mow contains two hay chutes that go directly below, to where the animals were housed and fed. Each mow has a small hay door opening to the outside that can be reached from standing in the mow, as well as a large hay door at the peak of the roof, towering approximately 40 feet above. The mow's are illuminated by large cupolas that extend 8 feet above the 40 foot ceilings. These cupolas have for some time now, been the home of two great horned owls.

The post and beam structure of the barn on both the ground level and second story have common characteristics. Most timbers have been milled out of a single tree, and many are either spliced or notched together and fastened with trunnels. The form of notching used for securing the barn posts was known to be a popular method of construction from 1800 to 1875. Many barns built around the turn of the century still used notching methods, while older barn frames were splayed or shouldered.³ In addition to notching, splicing, and using trunnels, much of the structure has been carefully assembled with mortise-and-tenon joints. The mortise is a cavity cut into the wood, and the tenon is the cut end of another piece of wood that fits into the mortise.⁴

Integrity

The setting of the barn is unique in that it is now part of the Blasdel Waterfowl Production Area. Few developments can be seen directly from the barn. The surrounding communities are, however, experiencing increased tourism and development in residential and commercial areas. Although the barn sets off in the distance from major thoroughfares, it can be seen towering over all of the buildings in the foreground from two major highways. The barn is a reminder that the early communities of Kalispell and Somers were built by those who's livelihood included ranching or farming. The direct surroundings of the barn contribute to it's feeling of association. With the exception of the corrugated steel storage building sitting a short distance away, the barn is completely isolated, and surrounded by nothing more than several hundred acres of natural grasslands and cottonwoods. Many of the old cottonwood trees appear to have been carefully planted to line the road entering the property and shade the homestead and outbuildings that were once constructed nearby. These buildings have since burned.⁵ The barn retains its original appearance, and although quickly falling into a state of disrepair, restoration is still possible. The barn has been said to have been used for little else other than hay storage since the original owner sold it, and it has seen little vandalism considering it's long term vacancy.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

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¹Ray Washtak, Personal communication, February 10, 1998.

²Sloane, Eric, *An Age of Barns*, p. 88.

³Ibid, p. 20.

⁴Ehringer, Gavin, *Roofs and Rails*, p. 27.

⁵Ray Washtak, Personal communication, February 10, 1998.

⁶Montana Historical & Architectural Inventory, University of Montana, Site # 24FH469.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 1

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

Statement of Significance

The construction of the barn was contracted to a builder in May of 1908 by Frank Porter, a well known logging contractor.¹ The size, the detailed work and the structural integrity are representative of an accomplished builder. Standing strong after 90 years, the enormous building is a local landmark symbolizing Mr. Porter's wealth and prosperity made from the local economy in which he was a pioneer. The barn is a reminder of the early settlers like Frank Porter who prospered in the Flathead valley from the timber industry, farming, and the coming of the railroad. The barn is constructed between the communities of Kalispell and Somers, Montana. Both communities grew and prospered from figures that promoted and maintained the timber industry.²

Although the barn was contracted to be built in May of 1908, the timber for the barn wasn't hauled to the site until late June. After partial construction, the weekly newspaper reported in July that Porter's barn was surely to be the largest in the entire valley.⁶ By late August, the barn was complete with the exception of the windows, and on August 29th, Mr. Porter celebrated by initiating the barn with a traditional hoedown. People from all over the valley attended the hoedown, and they were entertained by two bands. The Lower Valley Stars baseball team hosted the dance. The Somers band came out in uniform and played several selections, and the night was capped off by the music of Wagner's orchestra. The baseball team netted a nice amount to help support the team financially.⁷

It is not clear where the timber for the barn was transported from, but the newspapers made it known that much of it was hauled by Frank Porter.³ Timber companies and contractors often transported in winter by horse teams and sleds. The hauling had a short window of 40-60 days, because without snow and ice, the horses couldn't move heavy timber, forcing contractors to shut down production.⁴ Frank Porter was quite familiar with transporting methods, and his comments on weather conditions for hauling timber often ran in the newspapers. Frank would discuss shipping hardships on timber companies when the winters were dry.⁵ The fact that Mr. Porter hauled the timber for his barn in the month of June, is a feat perhaps only a timber contractor could accomplish. In addition to the difficult task of transporting the timber, the purchase, the milling and the construction of such a large barn would have been a great financial burden for even the more productive farmer.

Based on several newspaper articles commenting on Mr. Porter's barn, there is little doubt that he ranked with some of the wealthiest people in the surrounding communities, and that he did indeed build the largest barn in the valley. To give us some idea of the size of the structure, we can turn to the area's newspaper, which offers us a comparison. The *Daily Interlake* ran several articles on barn building designs during the early years of growth in the valley. The architectural plans for one of the closest in design, ran in the Kalispell newspaper on September 20, 1907.⁸ The barn was a center drive, but had a gable instead of a gambrel roof.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 2

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

The barn was designed for housing 8 horse teams or 16 horses, and included a second level for plenty of hay storage. The dimensions for the barn were 35 x 46 feet with the second story providing a ceiling height of 18 feet. These dimensions, although average size for a horse barn, are less than one-half the size of the Porter barn.

The English gambrel roof that defines the Porter barn is not an uncommon sight in the Flathead Valley. A gambrel roof of such magnitude, and designed with a center drive, however, is not common in the valley nor in much of western Montana. Although they are generally much smaller in size, the design of Mr. Porter's barn is common to the Northeast and the Midwest.⁹ Frank, born and raised in Wisconsin would have been quite familiar with the design.¹⁰

The structural frame and exterior siding on Porter's barn, display the advances made in milled and planed timber by the turn of the century. The barn can definitely be admired for it's sound structural system. In addition to planed timber, many of the posts and beams are made from the squared timber of a whole tree. The dimensions of the beams are of various sizes, and include 8 x 8 to 12 x 12 with lengths of 15 to 20 feet. Due to the great ceiling height of the barn's second story, most of the structural posts have been made by splicing and trunneling two beams together. The roof of the barn, although quite heavy, has no ridge board to support the weight. There are small tie beams bracing the roof at its peak, and most of the weight is supported by the king posts that brace the steeply pitched sections of the roof.

Unique features of the barn's structure also include the cedar roof shingles. They are representative of technologically advanced wood products that were starting to be promoted in the Flathead valley in the early 1900's. Correspondence between B.J. Boorman of Fortine, Montana and the Department of Public Works in Philadelphia in 1912, make it clear that Flathead Valley farmers and others throughout the nation were very skeptical of using cedar shingles. Besides the expense, cedar shingles were believed to be a fire hazard, and to deteriorate quickly in Montana's snow and hail.¹¹ In addition to it's unique features, both the interior and exterior of the barn display's some of it's original hardware. For instance, hooks, latches, hinges, ladders, and the hay fork carrier or sling pulley for loading hay to the second story are all still in place. In addition, horseshoes belonging to large workhorses, hang twenty feet above the center drive as a reminder of those animals the barn protected. The sheer height in which many of the pieces of hardware hang has been a deterrent in their theft.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 3

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

Historical Background and Significance

The Blasdel Barn, as it is currently known, gets its name from its more recent owners, Jesse O. And Ethel E. Blasdel. Jesse and his wife purchased the property in 1945 and sold the property to Creston Fish & Wildlife Service in 1987.¹² The Wildlife Service maintains this property, currently known as the Blasdel Waterfowl Production Area.

Originally, the 160 acres where the barn stands was owned by Lewis and Maria Coles. Frank Porter purchased the land from the Coles in April of 1904.¹³ Frank later purchased an additional 80 acres adjoining his ranch.¹⁴ Mr. Porter was an important figure in several of the communities throughout the valley. He made his fortune from two industries in particular. He was a farmer and a large contractor for the timber industry and railroad. His land where the barn now stands was known throughout the valley as the "Porter Ranch."¹⁵ Frank moved into the Flathead valley by 1898, and by 1907 he was vice president of the Flathead County Logger's Association. He established himself as a pioneer in logging and later, a financial success. His industrious career is documented well into the late 1920's.

Frank owned land throughout the Flathead valley, and he bought and sold land yearly, as needed for his financial ventures. He owned entire city blocks in the township of Kalispell, additional farmland, and large acreage for cutting and milling timber. His mills were a good source of employment in the Big Fork, Echo Lake, Kila, and Fortine areas, as he hired large crews with each new contract.¹⁶ Frank worked closely with many of the large mills. Not only was he contracted by mills, but sometimes mill owners had to have easements through Porters personal property to cut and transport their own timber.¹⁷

The 160 acres where the barn is built is one of the only pieces of property that Mr. Porter held onto for any length of time during his industrious career. The properties he purchased were most often used strictly for financial gain, and were sold within a short period of time. Although some of the land purchased by Porter were small parcels, other purchases were over a 1000 acres. The 160 acres of the Porter ranch was, in addition to being the longest held, one of the smaller parcels purchased. This 160 acres was the home of Frank and first wife, Jennie. Later, it was home to Frank and his second wife, Annie Harness. Frank and Annie were married in 1909.¹⁸ When the Porter Ranch was sold in 1918, it was sold for one dollar to one of the wealthier cattleman in the valley. In exchange, Frank Porter received over 1400 acres from the buyer, Chas A. Lynch.¹⁹

Soon after the ranch was sold to Mr. Lynch, it was sold to the Bank of Commerce. With the exception of one future buyer who lost the land due to bankruptcy, the Bank of Commerce maintained ownership of the ranch until 1945 when it was sold to the Blasdel's. In an interview with Ed Blasdel conducted by Kevin Shelley in 1988, Ed stated that the barn had been used over the years only to store hay, and was essentially left in its original condition.²⁰ Today, it is once again vacant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 4

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

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¹*Kalispell Bee*, May 29, 1908.

²*Interlake*, June 19, 1908.

³*Elwood, Henry, Kalispell and The Upper Flathead Valley*.

⁴News Clippings/Correspondence, *A.E. Boorman's Scrapbook*, University of MT Archives.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Kalispell Bee*, July 28, 1908.

⁷*Kalispell Bee*, September 1, 1908.

⁸*Interlake*, September 20, 1907.

⁹*Ehringer, Gavin, Roofs And Rails*, p.35.

¹⁰*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 Population*.

¹¹News Clippings/Correspondence, *A.E. Boorman's Scrapbook*, University of MT Archives.

¹²*Deed Record*, Book 270, Page 188.

¹³*Deed Record*, Book 76, Page 634.

¹⁴*Deed Record*, Book 96, Page 552.

¹⁵*Interlake*, August 28, 1908.

¹⁶*Flint, Kedric & Nona Paul, Early History of Bigfork & Surrounding Communities*, p. 13;
News Clippings/Correspondence, *A.E. Boorman's Scrapbook*, University of MT Archives.

¹⁷*Deed Record*, Book 154, Page 132.

¹⁸*Interlake*, August 10, 1909.

¹⁹*Deed Record*, Book 178, Page 399.

²⁰*Montana Historical & Architectural Inventory*, University of Montana, Site #24FH469

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 2 Page 1

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

Major Bibliographic References

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- Elwood, Henry, *Kalispell & The Upper Flathead Valley*, Thomas Printing Inc., Kalispell:1989.
- Eringer, Gavin, *Roofs and Rails*, Western Horseman Inc., Colorado:1995.
- Flathead County Records, *Deed Record # 76*, Lewis & Maria Coles to Frank W. Porter, April 6, 1904.
- Flathead County Records, *Deed Record # 96*, Chas Hoppe to Frank W. Porter, March 30, 1908.
- Flathead County Records, *Deed Record # 154*, F. H. Stoltze to Frank W. Porter, February 18, 1918.
- Flathead County Records, *Deed Record # 170*, Charles A. Lynch to Frank W. Porter, May 16, 1921.
- Flathead County Records, *Deed Record #270*, Bank of Commerce to Jesse E. & Ethel E. Blasdel, December 21, 1945.
- Flint, Kedric & Nona Paul, *Early History of Bigfork & Surrounding Communities*, Copyright 1957.
- Interlake*, September 20, 1907, Stable Plan for Housing Eight Teams.
- Interlake*, Somers News, June 19, 1908.
- Interlake*, Somers News, August 28, 1908.
- Interlake*, Porter-Harness, August 10, 1909.
- Kalispell Bee*, Lower Valley, May 29, 1908.
- Kalispell Bee*, Lower Valley, July 28, 1908.
- Kalispell Bee*, Lower Valley, September 1, 1908.
- Montana Historical & Architectural Inventory*, Site # 24FH469, University of Montana, Archaeological Records, 1988.
- Sloane, Eric, *An Age of Barns*, Funk & Wagnalls Division, NY:1967.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9.10 Page 2

Porter Ranch Barn
name of property
Flathead County, Montana
county and State

Major Bibliographic References Continued

U.S Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the U.S., 1910 population*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Washtak, Ray, *Personal Communication* with Dagny Krigbaum, February 10, 1998.

Verbal Boundary Description

The center of the southwest of the southeast, Section 12, T27N, R21W; that portion containing the structure and buffer zone.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the barn and a 50' buffer zone around the barn.