

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED SEP 17 1976  
DATE ENTERED APR 13 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Springfield Farm

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER *7 mi. N of Ellensburg*  
Section 21, Township 19N, Range 18E

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Ellensburg VICINITY OF 4th - Mike McCormack

STATE Washington CODE 53 COUNTY Kittitas CODE 037

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME James Roan

STREET & NUMBER Rt. 4, Box 80

CITY, TOWN Ellensburg VICINITY OF STATE Washington

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Auditor's Office, Kittitas County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 500 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN Ellensburg STATE Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE December, 1974 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN Olympia STATE Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Lying to the north of the town of Ellensburg on the perimeter of the Kittitas Valley, Springfield Farm is situated between Reecer Creek and First Creek, just south of Robbins Canyon. Although irrigated fields and orchards are now a common sight throughout the valley, the land surrounding the former homestead of Dr. John Robbins has been returned entirely to range use. Cattle belonging to the current property owner wander freely through the small group of deserted structures, grazing on wild grasses. The buildings are somewhat protected from the strong westerly winds by a stand of trees growing along First Creek. An orchard of considerable age is located a short distance to the north of the cabin. Springfield Farm once encompassed some 1,280 acres of range and farm land. Today the homestead is represented by a cluster of five log and frame buildings including the Robbins cabin, granary, "blacksmith shop", bunkhouse, and creamery. All of the structures, which date from 1878 through the early 20th Century, are seriously in need of repairs and stabilization.

The Robbins cabin, erected in the summer of 1878, was constructed of stripped tamarack logs. The cabin measures approximately 44 feet by 22 feet, and stands a single story in height. A gabled roof of exceptionally shallow pitch covers a three-room interior. On the south, or main elevation, the centermost room is recessed under the ridge of the gable, forming a wind-protected entry about five feet in depth. This feature, in combination with the gentle slope of the roof and the unusual proportions of the cabin, make it a noteworthy specimen of log cabin design.

The logs employed in construction of the cabin were cut from stands of tamarack in the hills lying directly north of the homestead. Rather than being square hewn, the logs were simply stripped of bark and branches and left in the round. Today their exterior surfaces show the effects of long exposure to harsh sunlight and snows. At each wall intersection, logs were notched on both upper and lower surfaces forming a tight corner bond. Within the broad gable of the south facade, wooden pegs were driven in at an angle at the extremities of each timber, to create a bed for each successive log. The original mud chinking is no longer intact, but was replaced in the late 1940's by a more durable seal of plaster on chicken-wire lath. In executing this repair work, Mr. and Mrs. Manson Backus, who held title to the farm from 1946 to 1950, left intact several loopholes on the east elevation.

Projecting log rafters extend through the length of the house, running perpendicular to the gables. The original shakes were replaced by the Backuses in the 1940's with plank sheathing and wood shingles. A chimney constructed of riverstone is situated to the rear of the cabin on the ridge of the gable.

A two-room shed kitchen extending the full width of the cabin on its north elevation was added c.1900. This frame addition appears in a photograph of the cabin taken at that approximate date. The shed is now covered with shakes, and features one rear doorway and several window openings.

Other aspects of note on the exterior of the Robbins cabin include structural openings on the south facade. These consist of two doorways and two windows, all with crude plank surrounds and reveals. No doors or sash remain intact, thus exposing the interior of the cabin to weather. In the 1940's, the Robbins cabin was shored up by the Backuses and placed upon a cement foundation.

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Long periods of disuse have left the interior of the cabin vulnerable to vandalism and deterioration. The log wall surfaces have been exposed, and floors and ceiling materials removed. A riverstone fireplace still stands along the rear wall of the central room in the cabin proper. These stones were reportedly hauled from Currier Canyon northeast of the homestead, and were originally set with a mortar of local sand, horsehair, and Portland lime. In the shed addition to the rear of the cabin, no evidence remains of the modern kitchen and laundry facilities added by the Backuses. Similarly, the plumbing and electrical systems which they installed have been virtually removed.

During the brief period of Backus ownership of the farm, several outbuildings existed which are no longer extant. A more modern residence had been constructed on the property near the access road to the east. A large cow barn, which is clearly identifiable in the c.1900 photograph, and a smaller horse barn formed a part of the assemblage of structures.

Currently, four dependencies remain standing. The granary, located a short distance to the rear of the cabin near the orchard, is a frame building appearing to represent the most recently constructed of the group. Three structures are situated directly east of the cabin. A frame creamery, where the Robbins family cheeses were reputedly stored, features the usual thick and well-insulated walls of such food storage structures. Nearby, a small log building of considerably less sturdy construction than the cabin is traditionally thought to have served as a blacksmith shop. Adjacent to this is a small frame board-and-batten structure, said to have functioned as the Robbins boys' bunkhouse.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1878

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dr. John Robbins, an English-born physician and engraver, was a colorful figure in the early history of Kittitas Valley, Washington. His family homestead on Reecer Creek, located some nine miles northwest of Ellensburg, was known during the period of Robbins ownership as Springfield Farm. Today the Robbins cabin forms the core of an interesting cluster of 19th and early 20th century farm structures, a number of which are now in advanced stages of disrepair. The cabin is believed to have been erected in 1878 and is a particularly distinctive example of log construction in terms of its plan, its massing, and its generous dimensions. As the original building among the various extant structures of Springfield Farm, the Robbins cabin participated most fully in the early pioneer settlement of the Kittitas Valley.

The son of a carpenter-builder, John Robbins was born in Birmingham, England in 1834. He was educated in the parochial schools of the Church of England until, at the age of fourteen, he became apprenticed to an engraver. Robbins reputedly won honors for the ornamental engraving of guns and silverware in the Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851. Seven years after the start of his apprenticeship, Robbins formed an independent partnership of unknown duration.

Under the tutelage of a Dr. Hastings and a Dr. Lawrence, Robbins embarked upon the study of medicine. This he presumably practiced for some time until his own faltering health demanded that he return to outdoor living. From that time until his emmigration to America in 1872, Robbins engaged in agriculture. Dr. John had married twice during his years in England, and had fathered eleven children. Six more were to be born to Elizabeth Benton, his second wife, in the course of their travels in the United States.

For three years following their arrival in America, the Robbins family resided in various locations in the state of Nebraska. It is claimed that Dr. John engraved the "first map of Nebraska" for publication in the Omaha Bee. Subsequent moves in 1875 found the growing family in San Francisco for a short time, and in Portland, Oregon for a period of three years.

In May of 1878, Dr. John, Elizabeth, and their fourteen children made one final move to the Washington Territory, where they homesteaded on the banks of Reecer Creek in the Kittitas Valley. Unknowingly, the Robbins family settled upon a section of land owned by the Northern Pacific Railroad. It was not until 1897 that John Robbins officially acquired 480 acres of this land from the Railroad for the purchase price of \$960.

It appears certain that the present-day cabin was erected almost immediately following the family's arrival in May. In a biographical sketch of Dr. John published in a 1904 county history, it is recorded that the Robbins' fifteenth child, Mary Burton, was "born in a log cabin in Kittitas valley, Washington, August 24, 1878". The same history reports that

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Backus, Mrs. Manson. Bellevue, Washington. Telephone interview, July 27, 1976.  
 County Records, Auditor's Office, Kittitas County Courthouse, Ellensburg, Washington.  
History of Klickitat, Yakima and Kittitas Counties, Washington, Interstate Publishing Company, 1904.  
History of Yakima Valley, S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1919.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY three

UTM REFERENCES

A	[ 1   0 ]	[ 6   8   3   0   7   5 ]	[ 5   2   2   2   3   7   5 ]	B	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	D	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Florence K. Lentz, Historic Pres. Spec.

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

Larry J. Nickel, Director  
 Kittitas County Museum  
 Ellensburg, Washington.

DATE

July, 1976

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-4116

STATE

Washington

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*[Signature]*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

September 13, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CHIEF

*[Signature]*

DATE

4/13/99

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

3/31/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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neighboring families depended upon the Robbins homestead for protection during the Ellensburg area Indian scare in the fall of 1878. This suggests that a house of substantial proportions was in use by that date. The existing cabin does feature several loopholes in the mortar joints of the east wall which duplicate openings in the original chinking, clearly indicating that the structure was complete before the close of 1878.

Little information of a specific nature has been uncovered concerning the activities of the Robbins family during their occupancy of Springfield Farm. Dr. John is said to have served for some time as the area's only physician and veterinarian. However, following the arrival of several such professionals in Ellensburg, Robbins turned his attentions entirely to farming. Grain, cattle, and dairy cows were raised, and cheese was produced in large quantities for commercial sale. In addition to farming activity, a private school was held at home for the numerous Robbins children. Tutored by a Mr. Leath, these classes were presumably conducted in the cabin itself.

Historical information concerning the various structures on the property and their physical evolution over the years is scanty, and consists largely of oral traditions passed down among family members and local inhabitants. Reportedly, the interior walls of the cabin were initially hung with white sheets in lieu of a more permanent finish. Eventually, however, the walls were sheathed with wide vertical planks and hung with wallpaper. Similarly, floors and ceilings were constructed of wide boards, and a wooden mantelpiece was fabricated. A framed shed kitchen was attached to the rear of the cabin in which indoor running water was installed c.1900. With seventeen children it was obviously necessary to house certain members of the family elsewhere. A board and batten structure which stands today in the cluster of outbuildings to the east of the cabin was purportedly used as a bunk house for the Robbins boys.

Dr. John Robbins died in 1907, five years following the death of his wife Elizabeth. His sons William V. E. and Charles O. continued to develop and operate the ranch until 1919, when they moved to Ellensburg to open a hardware store, and the property was sold to other members of the family. At that time, Springfield Farm consisted of 640 acres of farm land and an equal amount of ranch land.

In 1946, the property was purchased from Carl and Lloyd Robbins by Mr. and Mrs. Manson Backus of Bellevue, Washington. The cabin had long been unoccupied and was being utilized for storage of hay. The cabin was extensively repaired and modernized by the Backuses, who retained ownership for four years. Today the cabin, once again abandoned, has been stripped of the more recent features of its interior. Together with its surrounding dependencies, the Robbins cabin stands exposed to the deteriorating forces of wind and weather, mute remnants of the once prosperous homestead of Dr. John Robbins.