

1553

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 determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 McKenzie Well

other names/site number Boulder Oil Field's McKenzie Well; McKenzie #1-21; McKenzie #1; 5BL.418

2. Location

street & number Near Independence Road and Colo. Hwy. 119 [N/A] not for publication

city or town Boulder [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Boulder code 013 zip code 80301

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.)

Georgina Coutyglia State Historic Preservation Officer 12/7/04
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
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
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 See continuation sheet.

Edson B. Beall Signature of the Keeper 1/26/05 Date of Action

McKenzie Well
Name of Property

Boulder County, Colorado
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	2	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	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.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Extraction: extractive facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Extraction: extractive facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____

walls _____

roof _____

other Steel

Concrete

Narrative Description

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

McKenzie Well
Name of Property

Boulder County, Colorado
County/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.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

Periods of Significance

1901-1909

Significant Dates

1901

1902

1909

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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:

Colorado Historical Society
Carnegie Library, Boulder

McKenzie Well
Name of Property

Boulder County, Colorado
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.42 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

- | | | | | |
|----|------|---------|----------|---|
| 1. | 13 | 479460 | 4432380 | (NAD27) |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 2. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 3. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 4. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet |

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Matthew R. Silverman and Karl F. Anuta
organization Boulder Historical Society date August 1, 2004
street & number 1206 Euclid Avenue telephone 303-449-3464
city or town Boulder state CO zip code 80302

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

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

name see continuation sheet
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**National Register of Historic Places
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National Park Service**

McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION**

The McKenzie Well is over 100 years old and is still pumping. It marks the discovery of oil in the Denver Basin, one of the key oil producing regions in the western United States. It is also one of the oldest continuously producing oil wells in the entire country, west of the Mississippi River.

The first well for the Boulder Oil Field was drilled just a few feet from the existing McKenzie Well. The initial well, drilled by cable tools in August 1901, was irreparably damaged when a bucket used for bailing loose material became lodged in the borehole at approximately 1700 feet. The drilling rig was moved a few feet to the south and a new hole was drilled to 2540 feet where oil was encountered on February 5, 1902. The new hole was named the McKenzie #1 and was deemed to be the discovery site. Surprisingly, this well remains in production to this day. This site has been utilized continuously since the first drilling in 1901 for the principal purpose of oil extraction. The grassy field on which the well is located is now largely vacant, except for the well and tank, and some small businesses several hundred yards to the southwest.

When the Boulder Oil Field was discovered, the site was a farm or ranch owned by Neil McKenzie. Originally a miner, McKenzie profited greatly from silver and tungsten discoveries in Colorado. He wisely turned his profits to flour mills and ranch land.

A railroad connecting Boulder and Longmont and local roads ran past the property, as the attached 1902 map illustrates. These were essential to bring the drilling and producing equipment to the site; to transport the workers, investors and curious public to the well; and to take the crude oil to market. The roads and the railroad are still present, lending authenticity to the **integrity of the site** and suggesting the links among oil discovery, gasoline production, and the automobile age. For 100 years the well has been a landmark along the rail line linking Boulder and Longmont, and along the highway that was constructed parallel to the rail line in the 1950s.

A large oil field once occupied the area extending north and south from the site for several miles. This is now the last remaining well in the field, out of about 200 drilled. It is extraordinary and highly unusual that the original site of the historic discovery remains as the final producing well.

A steel oil field pumping unit and tank, each of which are approximately 50 years old, are utilized by the 102-year-old well. The pump and tank were installed on the site in the 1970s.

RESOURCE INTEGRITY

The McKenzie Well possesses all of the attributes necessary to convey its historic significance. Each of the seven aspects of integrity (from the National Register Criteria for Evaluation) is discussed briefly below:

- **Location:** The well is located on the precise spot where it was drilled in 1902. Not only is it in the same location geographically, but also geologically. In other words, it is producing oil from the same depth and strata today as it was when oil was discovered there. This location was chosen by the drillers in 1901 precisely *because* of its topographic expression, which is unchanged. Of course, the location of a historic property is often important to understanding why it was created or why something significant happened there. This is evident at the McKenzie

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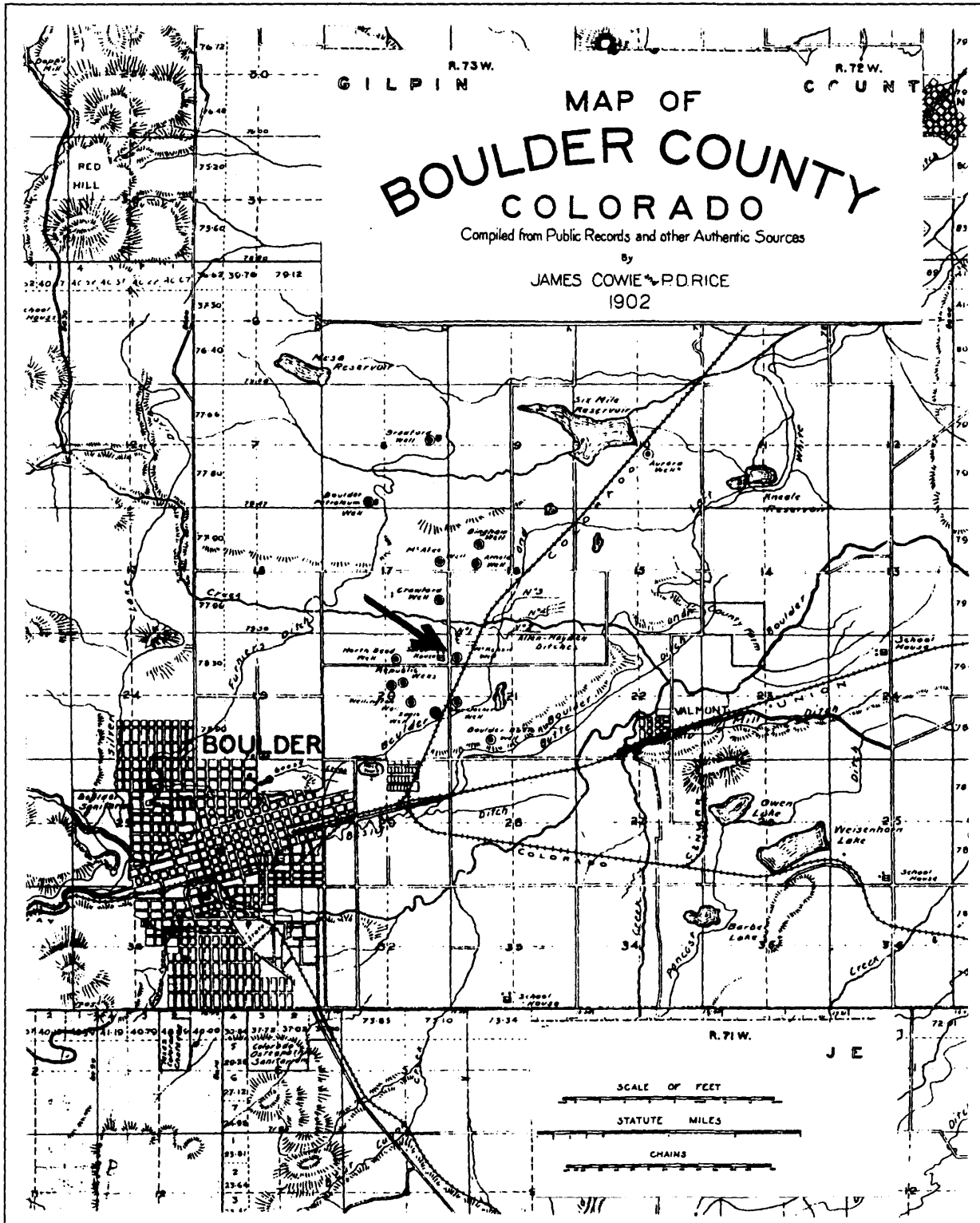
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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

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Portion of a Map of Boulder County, Colorado
Compiled in 1902 by James Cowie and P.D. Rice



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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

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Well, both geographically and geologically. The property has not been moved in any of the three spatial dimensions.

- **Design:** The conscious engineering decisions made during the 1901-02 conception and planning of this property are intact in the subsurface. These design elements include the mechanisms by which the wellbore was drilled, completed and prepared for production, which are essentially unchanged. Though many of the surface materials have been updated to mid-twentieth century technology, the historic functions and purposes of the site are unchanged. (Like other sites on the National Register – for example, the Drake Oil Well in Pennsylvania and the Lucas Gusher at Spindletop, Texas – the surface of the McKenzie site has been altered.)

However, the basic features that expressed its design and function one hundred years ago are still present. In terms of such considerations as the structural system; arrangement of spaces; and type, amount, and style of detailing; the McKenzie borehole is the same as it was in 1902. The absence of planned landscaping today reflects the historic design, as well.

- **Setting:** The actual location of this historic property is complemented by its setting. This setting reflects that of the historic period remarkably well. The railroad that brought equipment and personnel to Boulder is still in place, as it was in 1901. The roads that enabled transportation to-and-from the oil field have been updated, of course, but are evident at the site, as they were 100 years ago. Four Mile Creek still flows placidly past the location, with towering cottonwoods on its grassy banks. The foothills of the Front Range dominate the skyline to the west. Farmland (including a large portion of the original McKenzie farm, now owned and occupied by Neil McKenzie's great-grandson and his family) remain to the east. All of this adds to the historic character of the site and help capture a sense of the historic events that transpired here.
- **Materials:** The physical elements that were combined in 1901-02 to form the McKenzie site are particularly well expressed in the borehole, the key element in this historic property. The choice of 9-inch borehole dimensions, casing material and size, and open-hole completion techniques reveal the preferences of Isaac Canfield and the others who created the property. They also indicate the historic technology and materials that were available. The property is the actual historic resource, not a recreation.
- **Workmanship:** The physical evidence of the technological skills utilized during 1901-02 is subtly present in a well that has surprisingly lasted over 100 years. The labor and proficiency of the drilling crews in constructing the well are reflected in its physical integrity a century later. This workmanship is expressed in the vernacular methods of well drilling and completion that were pioneered in the East, then brought to the West by Canfield and others. That the well is still producing furnishes ample evidence of their craft.
- **Feeling:** The McKenzie Well's continued use for oil extraction augments our historic sense of the period of time in which it was drilled and during which production peaked. The producing well and the operating railroad, the creek, farmland and views, taken together, convey its historic character. These elements combine to relate the feeling of life in the midst of an oil boom in the first decade of the 20th century.
- **Association:** The Criteria state that "A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer."

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McKenzie Well

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The physical features that convey this property's historic character as an oil field on the outskirts of Boulder remain intact.

Finally, the Criteria indicate that "Ultimately, the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the **identity** for which it is significant." This identity is clearly retained, and the well's continuing function for its original purpose, at its original location, with the feeling for the original setting is apparent.

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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 5**SIGNIFICANCE**

The McKenzie Well is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of *industry* for its association with the 1901 discovery of the Boulder Oil Field. The well site is the location of the first discovery of oil in the multi-state Denver Basin. The period of significance begins with the 1901 discovery, includes the drilling of the McKenzie #1 in 1902, and ends in 1909 when the Boulder Oil Field reached its peak annual production level of 85,000 barrels of oil.

One of the oldest producing fields in the West, the Boulder Oil Field is also the second oldest oil field in the state of Colorado. The McKenzie Well, also called the McKenzie #1, was drilled in February 1902. Atypically, this single remaining well was one of the two earliest commercial producers in the field. It was drilled on the site of the McKenzie #1 discovery after that well suffered a mechanical failure a few months earlier (prior to its completion). This well now represents a unique opportunity for historic preservation.

The field was discovered by a group associated with Isaac Canfield, one of the pioneers of the Florence Field, Colorado's oldest (see "Oil Spring" National Register nomination, Fremont County, Colorado, 5FN.118). The discovery at Boulder established the presence of oil in the Denver Basin, which includes vast portions of northeastern Colorado, southeastern Wyoming and southwestern Nebraska.

The Denver basin has since become one of the country's most active and important oil and gas provinces, with thousands of wells having yielded over 800 million barrels of oil and 1.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Forty- and fifty-story skyscrapers were built to house regional, national and international oil firms, and Denver became the center for energy production and distribution in the Rocky Mountain Region. In a very direct way, the Boulder Oil Field is largely responsible for the Mile High City assuming its position as the natural resources hub of the Western United States.

The Boulder Field was the focus of a forgotten boom. Ultimately, two hundred wells were drilled, most with "other people's money." Companies sprouted up and stock was sold to locals and outsiders from New England to California. Promoters promised "Oil or money refunded" and "This stock is sure to pay." Real estate prices skyrocketed, and speculation in minerals was intense. One University of Colorado professor, B. A. Langridge, raised \$500,000 for drilling, equivalent to several million dollars today. New schools were built in Boulder in anticipation of a boom, and the town's population nearly doubled in the decade following the McKenzie discovery.

Over 100 oil companies were doing business in Boulder in 1902, some of which had such colorful company names as Boulder Belle, Millionaire Oil, Left Hand Oil, Gnome Oil & Refining, and Mogul Oil. Others included predecessors of modern companies like BP/Amoco and ConocoPhillips. Photographs were taken and doctored by pioneer photographer, J.M. "Rocky Mountain Joe" Sturtevant to promote investment. There is little record of the investors making a profit in these ventures, and the wily Isaac Canfield got out early in the boom.

As specified in the National Register Criteria, the McKenzie Well is a **Rare Surviving Example of a Property Type**. No other wells remain from the 200 that were drilled in the Boulder Oil Field, and none from a similar age remain anywhere in the huge, multi-state Denver Basin. Despite being drilled at the field's birth, the McKenzie Well retains the essential physical features that enable it to convey its

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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

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historic character. The absence of other extant examples of the type justify accepting a greater degree of modification of the surface facilities, especially since enough of this property survives for it to be a noteworthy resource.

A historical contemporary would almost certainly recognize the McKenzie Well as it exists today. The 2500-foot borehole, rod-and-beam pumping equipment, cylindrical tank storage, and unimproved road leading off the property towards the railroad would seem readily identifiable to Isaac Canfield, his "diggers," or the investors if they could see it today.

**National Register of Historic Places
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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 7**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF SURFACE AREA, McKENZIE #1 WELL

AREA PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION

The Existing Oil Well Working - Maintenance Area located in the NW1/4, Section 21, T. 1. N., R. 70 W., 6th P.M., Boulder County, Colorado, illustrated on Survey No. 4344 prepared by Drexel, Barrell & Co. revised 5/20/1992, and as described on Exhibit B, Film 1366, Reception No. 0705736, Boulder County Records, and on a certain Assignment, Bill of Sale and Conveyance, recorded on Film 1505, Reception No. 00890734, Boulder County Records,

Described by metes and bounds as follows:

Commencing at the Northwest corner of said Section 21,

Thence N 89° 56' 50" E 1067.84 feet along the North line of said Section 21;

Thence S 24° 0' 0" W 180 feet more or less to an existing fence line of the Oil Well Working - Maintenance Area, the

TRUE POINT OF BEGINNING;

Thence following along the existing fence line of the said Oil Well Working - Maintenance Area N 72° W 300 ft., more or less;

Thence continuing along said existing fence line S 15° W 55 ft. more or less;

Thence continuing along said existing fence line S 60° E 165 ft. more or less;

Thence continuing along said existing fence N 35° E 70 ft. more or less;

Thence continuing along said existing fence line S 82° E 120 ft. more or less;

Thence North to the true POINT OF BEGINNING.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary of the proposed National Register site includes all of the existing Oil Well Working - Maintenance Area as described in conveyances executed between the holders of the mineral interest. It is the area currently fenced and includes the tank battery, pump jack and well head over the borehole. The area designated under the City of Boulder Landmark Designation is included within the Oil Well Working - Maintenance Area.

This encompasses the full extent of the historic resource, recognizing the essential sub-functions of drilling, producing, storage and transfer, all within the overall function of extraction. No extraneous area is included.

**National Register of Historic Places
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McKenzie Well

Boulder County, Colorado

Section number ____

Page 10**PROPERTY OWNERS**

Surface Owner:

Birch Mountain, LLC
c/o Randall Bjerke
1000 Alpine Ave., #100
Boulder, CO 80304

Well Operator and Mineral/Equipment Owner:

E&F Investments and Intra-Global Petroleum Reserves, Inc.
44734 Fairway Estates Pl.
El Macero, CA 95618-1010

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-7, except as noted:

Photographer: Matthew Silverman
Date of Photographs: March 2003
Location of Negatives: Possession of the photographer

Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	Beam pump, camera facing south.
2	Beam pump, tank in background, camera facing west.
3	Tank, camera facing south.
4	Beam pump, camera facing south.
5	Close-up view of borehole.
6	Well site in 1902 showing the original wood derrick used to drill the well. Photographer: J.B. (Rocky Mountain Joe) Sturdevant. Date of photograph: February 1902. Location of negative: Original photograph in Carnegie Library and University of Colorado Archives (Western History Collection, Norlin Library), Boulder.
7	First rail tank car of oil produced by the McKenzie Well in the Boulder Oil Field. Car with banner is shown in the Boulder rail yard. Photographer: J.B. (Rocky Mountain Joe) Sturdevant. Date of photograph: February 18, 1902. Location of negative: Original photograph in Carnegie Library and University of Colorado Archives (Western History Collection, Norlin Library), Boulder.

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McKenzie Well

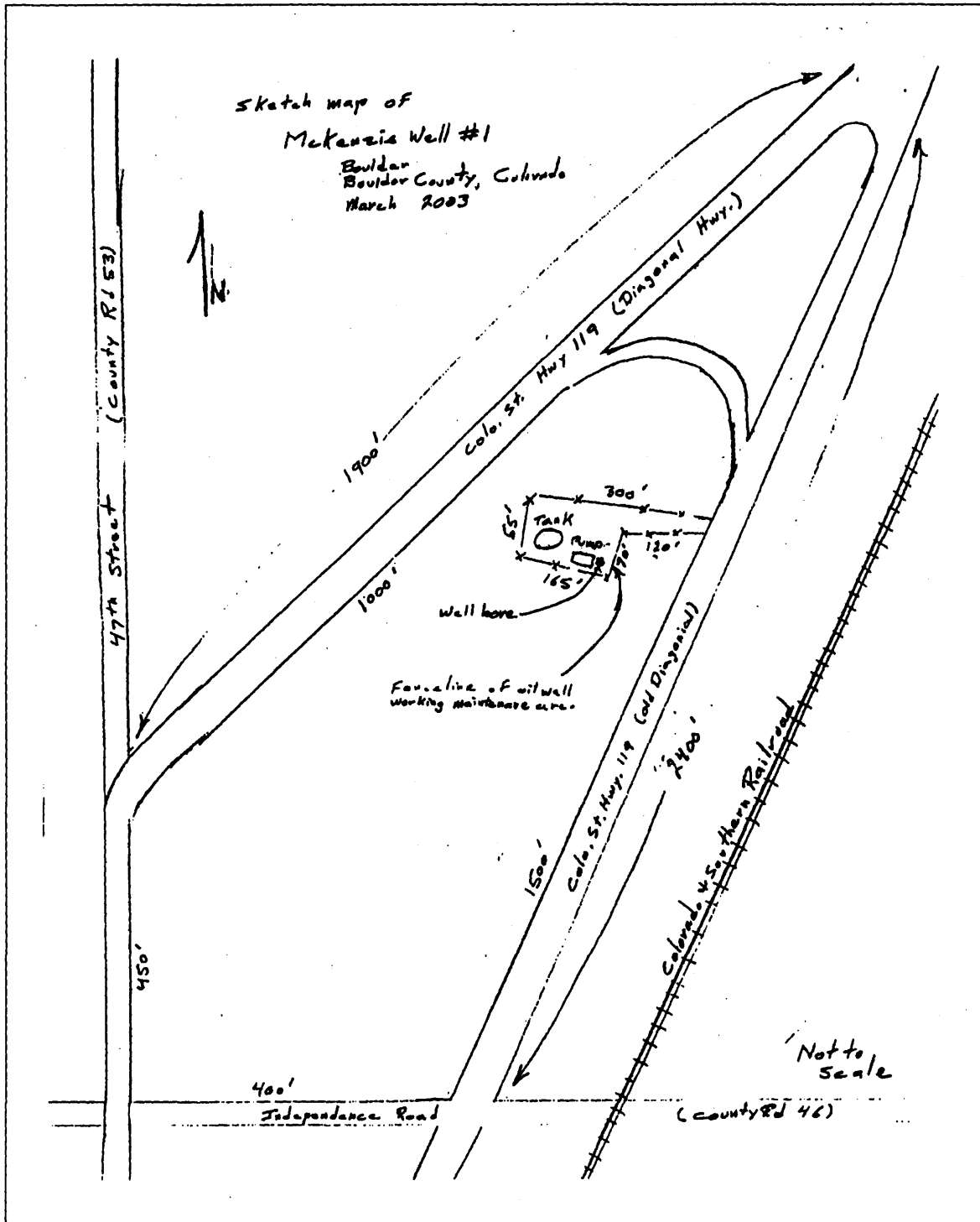
Boulder County, Colorado

Section number ___

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SKETCH MAP

(Not to scale)



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McKenzie Well

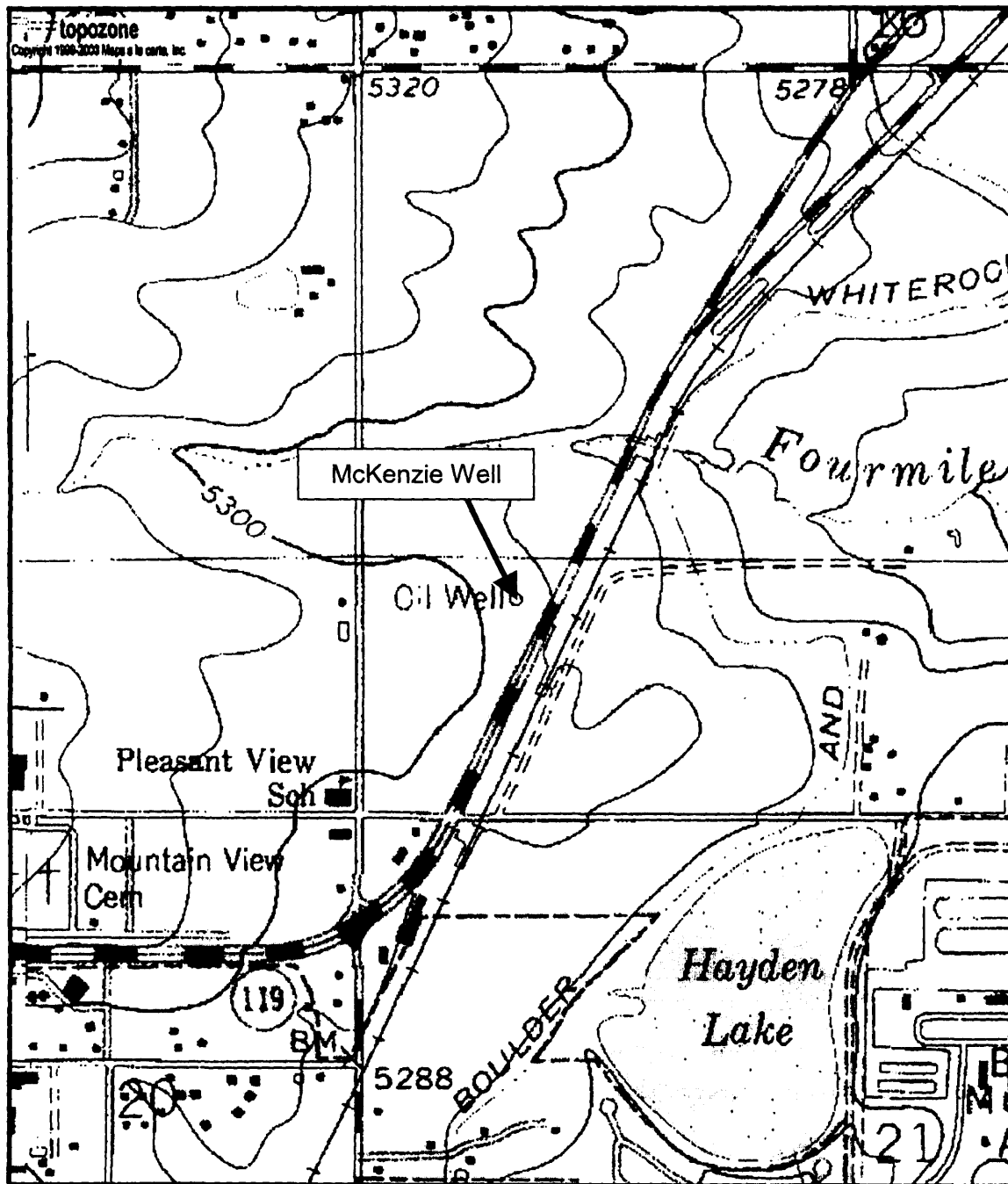
Boulder County, Colorado

Section number ___

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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Niwot Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series (Enlarged), 1979

UTM: Zone 13 / 479460E / 4432380N (NAD27)
PLSS: 6th PM, T1N, R70W, Sec. 21 NW¼ NE¼ NW¼ NW¼
Elevation: 5,295 feet
Site Number: 5BL.418



0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 km
0 0.09 0.18 0.27 0.36 0.45 mi
Map center is UTM 13 479460E 4432380N (NAD27)
Niwot quadrangle
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum

*M
G
M=10.197
G=-0.155