



49

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: 4K Ranch

other name/site number:

## 2. Location

street & number: Fiddler Creek Road

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Dean

vicinity: n/a

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Stillwater

code: 095

zip code: 59028

## 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.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 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

see continuation sheet

removed from the National Register

see continuation sheet

other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beal

2/14/02

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property:</b>	Private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b>	District	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b>	n/a	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> structures
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b>	n/a	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u> Total

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:**  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

**Current Functions:**  
DOMESTIC/Single Dwellings

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:**  
OTHER/Rustic

**Materials:**  
foundation: STONE; CONCRETE  
walls: WOOD/Log  
roof: WOOD/Shake; ASPHALT/Shingle; METAL/Aluminum  
other: STONE; CONCRETE

**Narrative Description**

The 4K Ranch is situated in southcentral Montana and enhanced by the magnificent backdrop of the Beartooth Mountain Front from which numerous clear and rushing streams issue from the mountains. Two of these creeks, the West and East Forks of Fishtail Creek, flow in a northeasterly direction from the Beartooth Front and form the south and east boundary of the 4K Ranch near where they join. A geological uplift just northeast of the ranch, together with the forks of Fishtail Creek, protect the ranch buildings from outside intrusions and allow the ranch to maintain its pristine environment.

Located about 16 miles from the town of Absarokee, MT, the 4K Ranch consists of a historic district of log buildings in three distinct groups. These log buildings are situated in a gently sloping bowl, defined by the geological uplift to the northeast and the Beartooth Front immediately to the southwest. The log buildings in the historic district date from the late 1920s to the 1950s. The buildings are constructed of logs felled in the nearby forests and indigenous rock (cobblestone, sandstone, and mining ores from nearby mining districts) used for fireplaces, foundations, retaining walls and other decorative features.

The first group consists of the main lodge and numerous cabins. The buildings themselves sit along the abrupt edge of a moraine cut by Fishtail Creek, where several enhanced ponds are situated immediately south and below in the bottom. The second group consists of the agricultural unit, including barn, tack room, shop and corrals, located in the bowl area immediately north of the lodge and cabins. The third, a singular log cabin, is separated from the others by pasture and sits on the timbered hillside to the northeast. Originally one of four cabins in the immediate area, it dates to the 1920s.

(see continuation sheet)

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Recreation, Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1927 - 1951

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1927, 1932, 1938, 1948

Architect/Builder: William McManus (mason), Mr. Kuhn, Ben Gum, Frank Gibbler, Donald Griger (builders)

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The 4K Ranch is significant under Criterion A for its historic association with the development of tourism and dude ranching in Montana. The 4K Ranch is a historic mountain guest ranch that provided a western experience for eastern 'dudes' to enjoy the great outdoors in a remote setting. The 4K Ranch also welcomed local clientele to enjoy the many pleasures of the ranch. The 4K Ranch developed in the mid to late 1920s when dude ranches in the West experienced a period of prosperity and played an important role in the local economy of the West. Ed Keene began his guest ranch around 1927 in a remote and beautiful location along the foothills of the Beartooth Mountains in southcentral Montana. The 4K Ranch evolved from a nine-hole golf course and a few log cabins into a mountain dude ranch with a substantial main log lodge and numerous log cabins to accommodate visitors. From 1938 to 1948, the 4K Ranch served as a private ranch that continued the tradition of western hospitality to friends and family. Beginning in 1948, the 4K Ranch once again opened as a dude ranch and operated almost continuously until the late 1960s.

The 4K Ranch is significant under Criterion C as the log buildings exhibit stylistic rustic architecture, influenced by the locally accessible materials of log and stone. The use of local, natural materials in the log construction and stylistic design features found both in the interior and exterior of the main lodge and cabins illustrate superb local craftsmanship and skilled workmanship. Western rustic architecture flourished during the early twentieth century at dude ranches and camps, designed to surround tourists with the rustic western atmosphere they expected. The built environment at the 4K Ranch harmonizes perfectly with the natural setting.

**History of the 4K Ranch**

Crow Territory

The 4K Ranch is situated on lands designated Crow Reservation by the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. Crow Territory encompassed all lands south of the Musselshell River between the headwaters of the Yellowstone River to the west, the headwaters of the Powder River to the east and along the main ridge of the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming along its southern boundary. The Mountain Crow occupied the land south of the Yellowstone River while the River Crow occupied the territory north of the Yellowstone. The Sioux and Blackfeet constantly threatened the Crow within this territory and pushed them towards the southcentral region of Montana. Simultaneously, Crow traditional lifeways were rapidly changing with the disappearance of the buffalo. After the discovery of gold in southwestern Montana in the early 1860s, continuous pressures by whites gradually resulted in several reductions to the original Crow Reservation boundaries. The Stillwater River and all its tributaries, including Fishtail Creek, remained part of the Crow Reservation until the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

(see continuation sheet)

<sup>1</sup> For a general historic overview of the Crow Tribe, see Peter Nabokov and Lawrence Loendorf, *Every Morning of the World*. Report for the National Park Service, 1994: 31-49. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 reduced Crow territory to consist of lands south and east of the Yellowstone River to the present Montana-Wyoming boundary and just east of the Bighorn River. An 1880 agreement ratified in 1882 eliminated all Crow lands west of the Boulder River plus a wide strip of land that included the coal-mining town of Red Lodge and extended to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone. Crow treaties and agreements are available in Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904). For discussions of the reductions of the reservation, see William M. Brooke, "A Contest over Land: Nineteenth Century Crow-White Relations," in *Montana Vistas: Selected Historical Essays*, ed. Robert Swartout, Jr. (Washington, DC: University Press of American, Inc., 1981), 1-24 and Burton M. Smith, "Politics and the Crow Indians Land Cessions," *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 36 (Autumn 1986): 24-37.

9. Major Bibliographic References

(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
- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: approximately 46 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	601878	5025984
B	12	602635	5026000
C	12	602356	5025868
D	12	602264	5025634
E	12	601848	5025547

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): S ½ NE ¼ SW ¼; SE ¼ SW ¼; W ½ SW ¼ SE ¼; S ½ NW ¼ SE ¼; and SW ¼ NE ¼ SE ¼, Section 24, T16E R5S. Beehive Quadrangle, MT 1996. (see attached map)

Verbal Boundary Description

The 4K boundary follows the natural topography that defines the historic district. It begins at the high point (5735 feet ) northeast of the building complexes, and follows the ridgeline eastward to the easternmost point of the 5600 feet contour east of Guest Cabin Twelve. The boundary proceeds along this contour in a generally southwesterly direction until it reaches the edge of the moraine above West Fishtail Creek. The boundary follows this abrupt edge westward until it reaches Cabin #8 that sits isolated on a slight rise. From here, the boundary proceeds north/northeast to the point of the beginning. (see attached maps)

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to encompass the three groups of historic log buildings within this historic district and follows the natural topography.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kirk Michels and Joan L. Brownell  
organization: Kirk Michels Architect, Inc. date: June 2001  
street & number: 222 Callender Street telephone: (406) 222-8611  
city or town: Livingston state: MT zip code: 59047

Property Owner

name/title: William LaWarre  
street & number: 151 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St. telephone:  
city or town: Cincinnati state: OH zip code: 45202

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 1

---

### Description of Resources

#### Group One

Group One consists of the main lodge, eight cabins located to either side of the lodge, and a developed pond.

#### Main Lodge/exterior

The primary building of the first group of log buildings on the 4K Ranch is the main lodge built in 1932 in a western rustic style of log with a stone foundation.<sup>2</sup> The lodge was built into a gentle sloping hill which set up the tri-level "T" shaped floor plan, each level having its own entry at grade. The main lodge foundation is native field and river stone and boulder. The lodge walls are 6" diameter saddle notched logs with a flair cut end projecting approximately 18" at the bottom log and narrowing to 6" at the top. Roof construction is a combination of bearing log truss, purlins, and half log rafters with pitches that are minimal 5/12 for the hand-split cedar shake roofing. Three fireplaces are seen on the exterior. Two very large, battered river stone fireplaces anchor each end of the interior great room and both have castellated stone tops. A third, smaller chimney centers on the dining room kitchen wing at the west end wall. Wonderful original stonework accentuates the entrance to the lodge. A semi-circular river stone wall distinguishes the concrete patio 20 ft wide and 14 ft deep off the east facade wall. A large stone fountain sits just south of this patio. A log post porch extends along the entire north side, covering a concrete patio and the exterior entrance to the bar and mechanical room below the old kitchen. The mechanical room is the only portion of the building with a concrete (plank form) poured wall, which historic photographs show was painted to resemble the stone laid walls elsewhere on the building. Throughout the lodge, windows are all 1980s replacement, anodized brown aluminum double hung, either 9/9 or 6/6. Rustic half log window and door casings remain inside and out.

#### Main Lodge/interior

The most impressive space in the lodge is the great room or the top of the "T" in plan. The great room is a 30 by 50 ft room with a large stone fireplace at each end, and features vaulted ceilings with log truss, purlins, and 1/2 log rafter system. Interior log walls are 13 ft high constructed of 6" diameter logs harvested on the nearby forests. Currently windows are large 9/9 simulated divided lite anodized brown aluminum double hung windows, which replaced original wood double hung 8/8 windows. The front entrance to the great room faces east and has an unusually short stocky door with giant hand hammered decorative hinges and hardware. The floor in the great room is hardwood oak strip.

The great room retains some wonderful historic rustic elements that express hand craftsmanship of local workmen. The fireplace construction in the great room is most unusual. The interior stone lay-up of the fireplaces does not reach the peak of the vaulted ceiling but instead finish about 1/2 way up the log gable end. The fireplaces evoke a sense of upward thrust by their battered form and castellated top. Both fireplaces have large fireboxes with flush hearths. Another unusual feature is a stone lined sunken fountain centered in room. The fountain, which once held goldfish, has about an 8 ft diameter. Hand made (small lodge pole, hide covered) tipi shaped lights hang directly above the fireplace seating groups. The hand built rustic log reception desk still sits in its original spot near the door to the bar.

From the great room, you may ascend the fantastic muscular log slab staircase to the dining room and kitchen level, or descend through a vertical log slab door to the bar at the lowest level. The bar is situated below the dining room on the north side and the only exit to grade from the lowest level. The bar is an incredible piece of rustic log work and projects a very woodsy intimate space. It consists of a front and back bar built of peeled lodgepole tightly laid up and a log slab top with natural log edges. Walls are full logs, and the low, 6 ft 7" ceiling is covered with tightly laid hand peeled lodgepole

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the construction history of the main lodge, please refer to Section 8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 2

---

2" to 3 1/2 " logs. Built-in benches are fashioned from logs while the bench backs are crafted from intertwined branch work. Molesworth tables are done in red leather with the 4K brand or other western motifs inlaid in black.<sup>3</sup> Stirrup light fixtures adorn the log ceiling appropriately located over the tables. Small handcrafted or hand forged 4K iron emblems are intermittently inlaid into the front bar posts. The bar floor is loosely poured concrete finished as if by after thought with a poured concrete ramp up 7" to the great room floor level. A small powder room is located off a small door on the west end of the room with a small corner sink, toilet and unfinished frame walls and ceiling.

Ascending the grand log staircase from the great room, you arrive in the dining room directly above the bar and storage rooms. The dining room is set up with a vaulted roof constructed of log purlins and half log rafters. Side log walls are not particularly high measuring just over 6 ft. The vaulted ceiling and small, but wide 6/6 double hung windows (strategically placed at each rustic table) make an ideal dining room. The original handcrafted log tables and chairs embellish the rustic western atmosphere in the room.

To the west of the dining room through a log partition wall was the original commercial historic kitchen that once contained a walk-in cooler. Previous owners chose to remove the large historic kitchen and replace it with a master bedroom and a small modern kitchen. The new owner, in his rehabilitation of the lodge, will restore this portion of the lodge to a working kitchen with sideboards, bead board and period appliances.

### Main Lodge Integrity

The 4K Ranch Main Lodge retains a very high degree of its original integrity. It has its original walls inside and out. Window and most door fenestration remain intact, although wood single pane double hung windows were replaced by aluminum double hung double pane windows probably in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Interior finishes remain the same including a major portion of the original handcrafted furnishings that are still in place. The only alteration made to the lodge that is readily apparent is the removal of the old commercial style kitchen at the west end. The previous owner removed the old kitchen and built a master bedroom suite and bath and added a wood stove to the dining room. Additionally they changed the gable roof projecting to the south and reconstructed the roof with a continuous shed sloping from the peak to the southern most wall, and in the southwest section built a modern kitchen with modern cabinets and appliances.

It is surprising how much integrity has been preserved considering a major fire occurred in 1989. Fortunately the rural fire department responded quickly and was able to save the structure by pumping water onto the fire from the nearby fishpond. The roof suffered the worst damage, which required partial rebuilding. The replacement roof was built to resemble the original roof although structurally it was lighter and lodgepole rafters were more liberally spaced. At the time of rebuild, the south wall of the dining room roof and side wall presumably was raised to accommodate a full height sliding door.

The current owner is in the process of reversing these alterations and restoring the lodge to its original condition. The aluminum windows are being removed to be replaced with new all wood single pane double hung windows with historical 8/8 and 6/6 divisions. The roof structure is being constructed in an original manner with heavier members to withstand the heavy snow loads. Changes to the upper level will revert the south wall to its historical configuration and restore the commercial kitchen to its historic appearance.

---

<sup>3</sup> From the 1940s to late 1960s, the main lodge and some cabins held furniture by Thomas Molesworth, a furniture maker from Cody, Wyoming whose Shoshone Furniture Company flourished in the 1930s.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 3

---

Historic photographs of the main lodge reveal that the lodge retains its original historic appearance and character. Although some alterations have occurred, the building remains visually unchanged. The interior reflects skilled craftsmanship in the decor and furnishings. The lodge remains today an excellent example of western rustic architecture and interior design. The main lodge is a contributing building to the historic district.

### Guest Cabin One

Directly east of the main lodge is the largest of the guest cabins, historically known as the Book Cabin. According to Joan Cobb, the daughter of Mickey Cochrane who owned the ranch in the 1940s and 1950s with Frank Book, Frank Book built this cabin soon after they purchased the ranch in 1937. The building shows in a late 1930s historic photograph. Frank Book utilized the downstairs, with its fireplace, sitting room, and two twin beds, as his apartment.<sup>4</sup> Upstairs, there are four bedrooms and two baths.

The building is a one-story log building with a full basement laid up with river stone. The full basement completely daylight to the south and is positioned so close to the edge that it requires a log post and beam deck to enter at grade. A lean-to roof also of log and timber construction covers the second floor porch. This porch stacks above the basement deck creating a two-story effect to the south with a beautiful view of the Beartooth Mountains and ponds below. The original portion of the cabin has its gable end running parallel to the slope, constructed of local 7" diameter logs with saddle and cope joints. A later gable (circa 1950s) addition projects north. This log addition appears to have been built by a log kit with logs sawn top and bottom with a stacked corner alternating lap joint and a plank tongue and groove gable end. Roofs are 6/12 pitch covered with heavy hand-split wood shake. Windows in the original building are wood 6 over 6 double hung true divided lite (TDL). Windows in the addition are high horizontal sliders. Aluminum storms have been installed over most of the windows. A river stone fireplace rises on the east side from the basement level. Interiors are intact with exposed log, painted fir floors, and several vintage lodgepole beds with western relief carved in the footboards. This building contributes to the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Two

Guest Cabin Two sits down the path to the east and begins to establish a spatial rhythm for the cabin line. This is an original Keene cabin, built between 1927 and 1934. This cabin shows in a late 1930s historic photograph of the row of cabins east of the main lodge. George Blackford, the nephew of Ed Keene, thought that Ed Keene slept in this cabin during the summer. According to Joan Cobb, her mother and father used this cabin when they were at the ranch. The bathroom was added in the 1940s during the Book/Cochrane tenure. Joan also remembers that there was a cement golf tee box in front of this cabin and when they went to remove it, they found a snake den underneath.<sup>5</sup>

Diminutive in stature, this small one room log cabin is constructed of round logs with saddle notch and cement chink with a willow branch stop. It has a very sophisticated sandstone fireplace on the west side. The precision cut sandstone fireplace seems more in keeping with an early commercial building material and may in fact be made from recycled cut stone.

The cabin has a concrete patio to the north covered by a log post and beam shed porch. The entry door is heavy wood plank with large iron hinges. Windows are wood horizontal sliders and they appear to fit the original window opening.

---

<sup>4</sup> Joan Cobb, interview by Joan L. Brownell, March 28, 2001, Golden, CO. Photograph circa 1937-38 in possession of Joan Cobb.

<sup>5</sup> George Blackford, interview by Joan L. Brownell, July 2, 2001, Billings, MT; Cobb photograph and interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 4

---

Heavy hand-split shakes clad the roof. The roof is a moderate to low 5/12 pitch with a shallow pitched front shed over the covered porch.

Like most of the log one-room cabins at the ranch, a frame addition bathroom was added to the rear in the 1940s. The shed roof addition is clad with 1/2 log siding. The addition roof is rolled asphalt. The cabin interior retains its original appearance with tongue and groove fir floors, log purlins and 1/2 log peeled lodgepole rafters tightly spaced. Original handcrafted rustic furnishings include twin beds and a freestanding closet. This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Three

Approximately 40 feet eastward along the path from Cabin Two sits Guest Cabin Three. This is an original Keene cabin, built between 1927-34. It shows on an early 1930s photograph of the row of cabins east of the main lodge. According to Joan Cobb, Mary Jane Book generally slept in this small cabin that sleeps two. The bathroom was added in the 1940s during the Book/Cochrane tenure.<sup>6</sup>

This cabin is a small, one room, one-story, notched log building with cementitious chink. A concrete patio is covered by log gable porch with a king post truss. Entry is provided by a handsome, half plank and timber branch door. The gable roof is clad with heavy hand-split shakes. The cabin rests on a stone foundation which is pargeted with a cement cap where it meets the log. Windows are 3 over 3 wood single pane double hung with vertical true divided lite. A frame 1/2 log sided bathroom addition clad with asphalt rolled roofing extends to the south.

The cabin interior is intact with log walls, purlins, and half-log rafters tightly spaced. This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Four

Farther east of Cabin Three is the smallest of the string of cabins east of the main lodge. Guest Cabin Four is an original Ed Keene cabin, built between 1927 and 1934. This small cabin shows on an early 1930s historic photograph of the row of cabins east of the main lodge. The bathroom was added in the 1940s.<sup>7</sup>

The cabin rests on a river stone foundation and is built of the traditional half notch log with cementitious chink. The log ends are cut on a slant, from bottom to top. The front door faces north and is built of 1/2 log slab. The windows are 3 over 3 wood double hung. The roof is a moderate pitched 5/12 clad with heavy hand-split shakes. Again there is a 1/2 log sided frame bathroom addition to the south. Unlike other bathroom additions, this one rests on a river stone foundation. The bathroom addition has a low-pitched shed roof covered with rolled roofing.

This cabin contributes to the historic district. To the east of Cabin Four are the remains of a stone foundation for a cabin of similar size that had a stone patio to the south. Evidence of a shower pan or fireplace footing still remains. This is the former location of what Joan Cobb called the "Double" cabin. Robert Wilson in the 1960s moved this cabin to its present location above and west of the main lodge (Guest Cabin Eight).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Blackford Photograph; Cobb interview.

<sup>7</sup> Blackford Photograph; Cobb interview.

<sup>8</sup> Cobb interview; Robert Wilson, interview with Joan L. Brownell, February 8, 2001, Billings, MT.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 5

---

### Guest Cabin Five

Farthest to the east from the main lodge, at the end of a point, is the second largest guest cabin. Guest Cabin Five is an original Keene cabin, and appears in a 1928 photograph of the family of George Blackford sitting on the porch. Mr. Blackford remembers this cabin as the meeting cabin and also remembers climbing onto the two lofts in the interior.<sup>9</sup>

This cabin consists of the original cabin and a large half log room addition off the east side with a combination gable and shed roofline. The foundation is sandstone stained red on the original portion and river stone on the rear addition. Built of round logs joined by saddle notching, the original cabin gable roof runs in a north/south direction. The original shed porch is canted to the west. The porch has a full width log post and log handrail that sits on a concrete patio. The front door is 1/2 log plank. Windows of the original cabin are brown anodized aluminum picture and slider combination units. Windows in the rear addition are similar and an aluminum sliding glass door opens onto a partially covered deck. Roofing overall is metal brown delta rib.

The original interior of this cabin has a unique sandstone fireplace, two lofts at either end of the gable, log interior walls and wood floors. The cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Six

The first cabin to the west of the main lodge is an original Keene cabin, built between 1927 and 1934. Both George Blackford and Joan Cobb remember this cabin served as the cook's cabin.<sup>10</sup>

The cabin rests on a stone foundation and is built of round logs with half notching. Heavy hand-split shakes clad the straight gable. A simple small gable porch faces east and provides entry by a ladder panel door with a 4 light window. The cabin has a small hand peeled log bathroom addition to the west with a diminutive roof. Windows are all sliding aluminum. This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Seven

Farther west and slightly upslope to the south is another original Keene cabin, built between 1927 and 1934. Both George Blackford and Joan Cobb remember this cabin served as a bunkhouse for summer help.<sup>11</sup> The simple cabin has a straight gable roof with log purlins and saddle notched log construction with cementitious chink. The cabin entry faces north and is accessed by a wood-plank door with a single lite. The foundation is covered with half log siding but may be stone underneath. Windows are side-by-side slider aluminum. The roof is clad with heavy hand-split wood shakes. This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Guest Cabin Eight

Cabin Eight is farthest to the west and above the main lodge on an elevated promontory point overlooking the West Fork of Fishtail Creek and ponds to the south. An early 1960s photograph shows the original cabin sitting on the point. Joan Cobb remembers this was originally a one-room cabin. In the 1970s, Robert Wilson moved a cabin that formerly stood between Guest Cabins Four and Five and joined it to the original cabin at this location.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Photograph circa 1928, in possession of George Blackford, Billings, MT; Blackford interview.

<sup>10</sup> Blackford interview; Cobb interview.

<sup>11</sup> Blackford interview; Cobb interview.

<sup>12</sup> Photograph circa 1962, in possession of Corkey and Shirley Morehead, Polsen, MT; Cobb interview; Wilson interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 6

The weathered condition and the connections and corners of the logs indicate that this cabin is composed of at least two cabins pieced together in an "H" shape. Of round log construction joined by saddle notching, the cabin is formed by two gable roof cabins spaced about 14 ft apart with gable ends running east-west connected by a perpendicular gable sandwiched between. The southernmost cabin sits on the highest part of the site. It has a muscular loosely laid river stone fireplace on its west side, indicating it is the original cabin at this location.

The site begins to drop off quickly to the north requiring the subsequent portions to be shored up to keep their floors levels aligned with the original cabin. Attached to the northern most cabin of the "H" plan is a half log frame shed roof addition that projects north. This addition has been elevated nearly eight feet above the slope. Log posts support the foundation or shoring with rough sawn plank infill stained to match the rest of the building.

The only entrance is a plank door on the east end wall of the original cabin. To the south and west of the entire cabin a large 2x6 wood deck with wooden railings has been added. The shallow pitched gables have heavy hand-split shakes. Windows are a combination of wood double hung and aluminum sliders indicating some original and some replacement. The interior of this cabin retains its western character. This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Swimming/Fishing Pond

Directly in front of the lodge is a river stone lined spring-fed pond. Developed by E.W. Keene in the early 1930s, the pond has served over the years as a fishing pond and a swimming hole. The pond is a contributing structure within the historic district.

### **Group One Integrity**

The cabins at the Four K Ranch exhibit excellent integrity overall. Minor alterations of poured concrete porches and a few window replacements are apparent. Bathroom additions appear to be vintage forties and in all cases attach to the rear of the cabins. Most of the original cabin interiors are very much intact. The cabins showing the most impact are the north addition to Cabin One and the east addition to Cabin Five but are still done in a log style and stain. These additions do not detract from the overall character of the cabins. Guest Cabin Eight appears to be assembled from original cabins and therefore blends with the appearance and character of the other cabins.

### **Group Two**

The second group of contributing buildings consists of three agricultural buildings accompanied by several agricultural features including breaking pens, corral pens, smaller stalls, out pens and a large fenced pasture.

### Shop (Building No. 9)

This building originally served as a horse barn and was built in the 1950s during the later part of the Book/Cochrane tenure. Joan Cobb remembers this building as the horse barn and today it functions as a shop.<sup>13</sup> The building sits in a north-south direction north of the main lodge. It is a simple gable-roof, log, rectangular shaped building with five garage bays across the east wall, a stone foundation and concrete floor. The 6/12-pitched roof is clad with heavy hand-split cedar shakes. Windows are horizontal proportioned hopper type wood with four vertical divided lites. The bay doors consist of three overhead doors and two double doors.

---

<sup>13</sup> Cobb interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 7

---

It appears the building is a kit (or log company product). It is constructed of medium sized 7" log half logs with round face exposed. Corner joints alternate projection of each log course, about 12" each way. This log stack style matches the addition on Cabin One and gable ends are tongue and groove plank also similar to Cabin One.

This cabin retains its historic appearance and character and is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Tack Room (Building No. 10)

According to Joan Cobb, the tack room was built in the 1940s during the Book/Cochrane tenure.<sup>14</sup> The tack room is a very interesting building. It is rectangular in plan with its gable lying in a north-south direction. It is unique by virtue of its full height strong stone corners and round log infill. The stone differs at each corner, some being river or cobblestone, the other sandstone. The log stack butts into the center of each stone column with all four sides being log including the gable ends. Round logs are chinked with cementitious chinking. Many logs are in poor condition and show some rot. There are no windows to the east or west, just large wood plank cross buck rolling barn doors. The two windows to the north and south are fixed pane true divided lite. The gable roof is clad with heavy hand-split cedar shakes.

The tackroom is a contributing building within the historic district.

### Barn (Building No. 11)

The barn with attached sheds sits west of the other agricultural buildings and appears to be one of the early buildings on the ranch. The log barn is a simple small to moderate sized rectangular plan with a 10/12-pitched roof. It rests on a river stone foundation on a south sloping site. Logs are full round saddled notched. Its gable runs in an east-west direction and a shed roof section is attached to the south-descending slope creating a story and a half. A low-pitched shed projects off the northwest corner and faces east. The roof overall is clad with rusty corrugated tin. The barn is a contributing building to the historic district.

### Corrals, Breaking Pen, and Fenced Pastures

Post-and-pole fences define the corral, breaking pens, and fenced pastures between the tack room (building #10) and shop (building #9) to the east and the Barn (building #11) to the west. The circular breaking pen is located immediately west of the tack room, and opens to a long, narrow corral that extends to the northeast corner of the barn. The fences define two narrow fenced pastures between and south of the barn and shop. Together, the fenced areas constitute a contributing structure within the historic district.

### **Group Two Integrity**

The agricultural buildings and fenced areas show excellent integrity, and do not appear to have been altered since their construction except for maintenance items that may have changed the original roofing on the shop and the tack room, or replacement of fence rails.

### **Group Three**

This group consists of a singular log cabin, isolated from the others some distance to the northeast. It is located in a timber stand on the north edge of a south sloping pasture about a quarter of a mile north of the main lodge.

---

<sup>14</sup> Cobb interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 8

---

### Guest Cabin Twelve

This cabin, known as the Brown cabin, generally served as the wrangler's cabin. According to Barbara Bixby, her father, Rockwood Brown, a lawyer from Billings, MT, leased the land from Ed Keene in the early 1920s and built four cabins. They built a main cabin for her parents, two small cabins for her and her brother and a cabin with a large dining area, a kitchen and living quarters for their maid. She remembers all of the buildings had fireplaces.<sup>15</sup>

Cabin Twelve is one of the larger cabins at the 4K and has its own kitchen, living and bedroom. Joan Cobb thought that they built a bedroom and bath onto this cabin. The gable runs east/west with a smaller bedroom section furthest east. The construction is of round saddle notched logs. It rests on a stone foundation. The roof is clad covered with heavy wood hand-split shakes. The windows are double hung six over six. A centered wood door provides entry. It has a large river stone fireplace on the west end that has the date of 1928 inscribed.<sup>16</sup> This cabin is a contributing building within the historic district.

### **Group Three Integrity**

The building retains excellent integrity, and contributes to the historic district.

### **District Integrity**

The physical landscape of the 4K Ranch is pristine and relatively undisturbed since its historic period due to the remoteness of the ranch location. No modern intrusions are visible from within the ranch complex. The forested foothills of the Beartooth Mountains within the Custer National Forest protect the ranch to the west and south while the natural topography protects it in other directions. The 4K Ranch retains excellent integrity of setting, location, historic association and feeling. The design and appearance of the ranch buildings retains wonderful integrity with the utilization of local materials and skilled craftsmanship.

---

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Bixby, interview with Joan L. Brownell, June 9, 2001, Whidbey Island, WA. The Brown family stopped coming to the ranch in the late 1920s.

<sup>16</sup> Cobb interview; Steven Young, interview with Joan L. Brownell, May 19, 2001, Dean, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 1

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the Stillwater drainage within the reservation boundary experienced limited settlement. The passage of the Bozeman and Bridger Trails in the 1860s through the region to reach the gold fields in southwestern Montana made no lasting impact. In 1875, the Crow Agency moved from Mission Creek on the Yellowstone River to a new location on Butcher Creek, a few miles south of present-day Absarokee, Montana. The presence of the agency created the first permanent settlement within the Stillwater drainage. It also stimulated development north of the Yellowstone River (and outside the reservation boundary) to accommodate traffic and provide supplies to the agency. The present-day town of Columbus (first called Stillwater) emerged from this activity and the completion of the Northern Pacific Railway by 1883 along the Yellowstone River Valley assured the town's permanence.<sup>17</sup>

In 1883, the Crow Agency left the Stillwater drainage and moved eastward to its present location on the Little Bighorn River. That same year, prospectors discovered copper-bearing ore on the West Fork of the Stillwater, which brought a small rush to the region. By late 1883, over 200 claims had been staked and a small tent city called Nye became the second settlement in the Stillwater drainage. By 1887, the Minneapolis Mining Company had purchased the majority of claims and developed a full-scale mining operation. This mining region was abandoned in 1889 after government surveyors discovered the district was within the Crow Reservation boundaries.<sup>18</sup>

The mining activity on the West Stillwater intensified efforts by whites to remove the Crow from the Stillwater region. In 1890, the federal government came to another agreement (ratified in 1892) with the Crows for another reduction of their reservation. Under this agreement, the Crow Tribe ceded all lands east of the Boulder River to a new reservation boundary on the divide between Pryor Creek and the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. On October 15, 1892, the newly ceded lands opened for settlement. Settlers could now file homestead entries as soon as government surveys had been completed and approved.<sup>19</sup>

### Land Settlement

The *Billings Gazette* announced the opening of the Crow Reservation.

#### Now For A Home!

Claims Being Staked Out and Locations Filed on the Late Crow Reserve  
Hundreds of Settlers Crossing the Yellowstone to the Land Of Promise

... up the valley, from Laurel, Park City and Stillwater the excitement is intense and the settlements are almost deserted, every able bodied man being out on the reservation building a foundation, posting locations notice or camping right down on the spot that he has had in view since early last year.

<sup>17</sup> The authority on the Bozeman Trail is Susan Badger Doyle, *Journeys to the Land of Gold*, 2 vols. (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2000); Jim Annin, *They Gazed on the Beartooths*, 3 vols. (Billings, MT: Reporter Printing & Supply, 1964), vol. 2, 128-130.

<sup>18</sup> Annin, vol. 3, 593-596; for a general overview of the development of the West Stillwater, see also Mitzi Rossillon and Mary McCormick, "Cultural Resource Inventory of the Stillwater River road Project on Montana Forest Highway 83, Stillwater County," Report by Renewable Technologies Inc., Butte, MT for Western Federal Lands, Highway Division, Vancouver, WA.

<sup>19</sup> Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, 432-436.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 2

---

The Rosebud valley and Stillwater river was pretty thoroughly colonized by boomers three weeks or a month ago, all determined to be upon the ground when the glad tidings should be proclaimed.<sup>20</sup>

A few weeks later, a local businessman at Columbus reported: "the Stillwater, Rosebud, big and little and Fish Tail basin is pretty thoroughly staked out by someone."<sup>21</sup>

A formal application to legally file a land patent requires an approved federal land survey. Problems with the surveys and the existence of pre-existing Indian allotments delayed settlers from filing land claims on the newly ceded lands. Early settlers unable to legally file became known as 'squatters.' Many squatters filed documents called ranch declarations in the appropriate county courthouse to declare their valid right to a certain property.<sup>22</sup>

Although no ranch declaration for the property has been located, Charles Fisher, the original homesteader at the 4K Ranch location, squatted on the land for over seven years before he could legally file his homestead claim. He declared in September 1903 that he had settled on his homestead in the SW1/4 Section 24 T5S R16E on June 15, 1896. The previous year (1902), he filed a water right for waters of the West Fork of Fishtail Creek for irrigating his homestead entry and for domestic use.<sup>23</sup>

Fisher is identified on the 1903 General Land Office (GLO) survey map for T5S R16E at the present location of the 4K Ranch. The map shows extensive development along the creek bottoms, including houses, barns, stables, roads, fencelines, irrigation ditches, cultivated fields, hay fields and even a schoolhouse. All these improvements indicate that most of the twelve settlers, including Charles Fisher, squatted on the land for many years prior to the government survey. Several individuals filed water rights for the West Fork of Fishtail Creek as early as 1893.<sup>24</sup>

The surveyor's description of the township is as follows:

This township is in the main mountainous. The soil is generally gravelly and rocky. The alluvial lands along the streams are rich and productive, hay, grain and vegetables being grown thereon. The mountainous portion of the township is covered with a rich growth of bunch grass, affording pasturage for hundreds of head of cattle.

---

<sup>20</sup> *The Billings Gazette*, October 20, 1892, 1.

<sup>21</sup> *The Billings Gazette*, October 27, 1892, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ranch Declarations are usually filed in the clerk and recorder offices in county courthouses. The 4K Ranch location was in Yellowstone County until the creation of Carbon County in 1895. Stillwater County was not created until 1913; records in both Yellowstone and Carbon Counties were reviewed but no ranch declaration for the 4K location found.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Fisher, Certificate Patent Case File, Bozeman Land Office, Homestead Certificate No. 2259, Records of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), RG 49, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as Fisher Case File); "Notice of Water Right," Miscellaneous Record Book 3:272, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT.

<sup>24</sup> United States Surveyor General, 1903 General Land Office (GLO) survey map and notes for T5S R16E, microfiche on file at Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management State Office, Billings, MT (hereafter referred to as Surveyor General); Yellowstone County, Water Rights, Book 1: 111, 121; Book 2: 21, 30, 45, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Yellowstone County Courthouse, Billings, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 3

---

The Southern and Western portions of this township lie along the foot-hills of a range of high, rugged mountains. The foot hills consist of very broken boulders, ridges or moraines. Near the foot of the mountains these moraines are devoid of soil and grass, the only growth being a scrubby pine. There is no valuable timber in this township.

There is one settler in each of Secs. 6, 9, 11, 14 and 21; two in Sec. 4 and 24, and three in Sec. 13.<sup>25</sup>

The GLO map was approved, and Charles Fisher filed his homestead entry on September 11, 1903. He declared:

that he is applicant to enter under the homestead laws the SW4 Sec 24. T5S, R16E. M.P.M, that he settled on said land on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of June 1896, prior to Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1902 the date of the creation of the Yellowstone Forest Reserve Absaroka [sic] division, Montana. and has been in possession and resided on same ever since that day of settlement. That he has placed improvement thereon to the value of \$1000.00 consisting of a house, barn, corrals, chicken house, cellar, fencing and 40 acres under cultivation covered by a water ditch.<sup>26</sup>

Charles Fisher was 33 years old when he filed his homestead entry. He was born in Tennessee and had a wife and three children. On his final proof in November 1903, he declared he had a log house 16x18, log stable 12x14, a root cellar, fences and irrigation ditches worth about \$1000.00. He had worked from 10 acres to 40 acres over a six-year period.<sup>27</sup>

Fisher experienced difficulties with the federal government in obtaining his final homestead patent. In September 1902, the creation of the Absaroka Forest Reserve reserved the entire township (T5S R16E) where Fisher had homesteaded from all entry and settlement. After the Yellowstone Forest Reserve absorbed the Absaroka Forest Reserve in 1903, it was not until May 1904 that certain sections including Section 24 within this township (T5S R16E) were restored to entry and settlement. Therefore, Charles Fisher, the original settler at the 4K Ranch, first had to wait for the approved government survey to formally file a homestead entry and then almost lost his homestead claim with the creation of a forest reserve.<sup>28</sup>

Charles Fisher received his homestead patent in October 1904 but four years later sold his 160 acres to F. E. Runner in June 1908 for \$1500.00. After Fisher left the ranch, he worked at various occupations in the region until his death in 1927.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Surveyor General, 1903 GLO survey notes for T5S R16E, microfiche on file, Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management State Office, Billings, MT.

<sup>26</sup> Fisher Case File.

<sup>27</sup> Fisher Case File; Annin, *They Gazed on the Beartooths*, vol. 1, 158. No evidence of the Fisher homestead remains.

<sup>28</sup> Presidential Proclamation No. 39, September 4, 1902, 32 Stat. 2027; Presidential Proclamation January 29, 1903, 32 Stat. 2030; Presidential Proclamation No. 26, May 4, 1904; Notice of Restoration to Entry, etc formerly within the Yellowstone Forest Reserve, Department of the Interior, General Land Office, Washington, DC, May 28, 1904. The Yellowstone Forest Reserve became the Beartooth National Forest in 1907 and now is part of the Custer National Forest.

<sup>29</sup> Fisher Case File; Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT; Annin, *They Gazed on the Beartooths*, vol. 1, 158.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 4

---

F. E. Runner operated the Absarokee Trading Post in Absarokee from 1898 to 1903 and later established and served as president of the first bank in Absarokee. He also became involved in the livestock industry and real estate in the region. Runner purchased adjoining land to the Fisher homestead in Section 24 and in August 1919, sold the combined property of approximately 320 acres to E. W. Keene, of Billings, MT.<sup>30</sup>

### E. W. Keene

Elliot "Ed" W. Keene, born in Missouri in July 1876, came to Montana around 1898. He spent his first summer working in Yellowstone National Park driving a stage for the Wylie Transportation Company. He became an apprentice carpenter at the Nelson Story Milling Company in Bozeman, MT the following year and possibly worked for the famed 79 Ranch in Lake Basin before settling in Billings. He moved to Billings around 1900 and worked for the Billings Brewing Company for four years. He served as the City of Billings street commissioner from 1903-04. Keene then became a contractor and built several commercial buildings and 14 residences in Billings. In 1913 Keene with a partner opened a shoe store in Billings and obtained the Cadillac dealership, which he held until 1915. In 1914 he became the Oldsmobile distributor and operated this dealership until his retirement in 1930. Beginning around 1914, Keene also started farming with livestock.<sup>31</sup>

After Ed Keene bought the land in 1919, he presumably ran some livestock at the property. In July 1927, the *Absarokee Enterprise*, a local newspaper, provides us with the first reference to the ranch as a tourist attraction. Several couples from Absarokee "visited the wonderful tourist camp of Mr. Keene above Dean. They returned very much pleased."<sup>32</sup> The following month, the same newspaper informs us that "Mr. Keene has spared no expense in making the Keene ranch one of the beauty spots of Montana. It is ideally located and he has one of the finest nine-hole golf courses we have ever seen. A day spent at the Keene Ranch is both pleasurable and profitable."<sup>33</sup>

Amazingly enough, Mr. Keene built a golf course at an elevation of approximately 5600 feet. According to his nephew, George Blackford, Ed Keene's wife was an avid golfer in Billings and he probably built the golf course for her enjoyment. Keene held his grand opening for the golf course in August 1927 with a golf tournament between the Billings Golf and Country Club and the Hilands Golf Club. Over 150 people attended the event and enjoyed a barbecue. The "golf course on the Keene ranch is credited as one of the best in Montana and has been under development for some time. The natural lay of the ground has contributed much to the excellence of the course." Mr. A. A. Morris, a former civil engineer for the Milwaukee Railroad and a resident of Roundup, designed the course. Not surprisingly, Mr. Morris won the tournament and had the honor of naming the ranch. He chose the "4-K" ranch, for "Keene's Kozy Kountry Klub."<sup>34</sup>

Barbara Bixby, who spent summers at the ranch in the 1920s, remembers mostly friends of her parents or the Keenes using the golf course. She remembers it was always a private ranch in the 1920s when her family came up to the ranch from Billings. Her father, Rockwood Brown, a lawyer from Billings, leased land from Keene around 1920 and built four log buildings for his family on the hillside north of the main complex of buildings. Mrs. Bixby remembers she would stay

---

<sup>30</sup> Annin, vol. 3, 149-150; Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT.

<sup>31</sup> Tom A. Stout, *Montana Its Story and Biography* 2 vols. (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1920), vol. 2, 227; *The Billings Gazette*, November 23, 1928.

<sup>32</sup> *The Absarokee Enterprise*, July 28, 1927, 5.

<sup>33</sup> *The Absarokee Enterprise*, August 4, 1927, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Blackford interview; *The Billings Gazette*, August 26, 1927, 5; August 30, 1927, 6. No evidence of the golf course remains.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 5

---

up at the ranch all summer and ride Keene's horses. Mrs. Bixby remembers that Keene had a large log house and a few small cabins during this time.<sup>35</sup>

It appears that Ed Keene began to seriously consider his property as a guest ranch by the summer of 1927. The completion of the golf course coincided with the construction of cabins on the ranch. In August 1927 at the opening of the 4K golf course, Mr. Keene hoped that "accommodations for as many as possible will be furnished in the cabins." William McManus of Dean reportedly spent most of the "summer building fireplaces in the lodges being erected at the Keene dude ranch..." Mr. McManus, a skilled mason, reportedly built fireplaces in Yellowstone National Park and was said to have cut the inscription on the stone arch entrance to the park.<sup>36</sup>

After the "largest house" at the 4K Ranch burned in October 1929, no new construction apparently occurred until the winter of 1931. In February 1931, Mr. Kuhn of Red Lodge began preparatory work on new log cabins, assisted by local men who hauled logs from the forest. In May 1931, the *Stillwater Enterprise* reported Mr. Keene was building several cabins at the ranch for use of tourists.<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Keene began to build "a big log lodge on his dude ranch" in the winter of 1932 where he had "quite a large force of men at work." By July, he had "his main building well near completion. The building is of logs and is about 60 ft. long and is about the same width. It has two fireplaces in the main lobby and has a fine appearance. The building will have a kitchen, dining room, dance hall, fountain, store room and bath room."<sup>38</sup>

To complete the newly constructed lodge, Keene hired Egil Rathje over the winter to build furniture for the interior. Mr. Rathje was a Norwegian bachelor carpenter/furniture maker and specialized in burlled pieces. Rathje had come from Norway to Montana and first lived in Roundup. He worked in Yellowstone National Park and lived in the Billings/Red Lodge area for about ten years before he moved to Idaho. He also made furniture for the Beartooth Dude Ranch on the Upper Stillwater River and other locations in Montana, like the Melrose Bar in Melrose, MT. The lodge and some cabins at the 4K Ranch still contain some of the original furniture built by Rathje.<sup>39</sup>

Ed Keene formally opened his 4-K Dude Ranch on July 30, 1933.

With the formal opening of the 4-K Ranch, Sunday, July 30, Stillwater county again takes a forward step on its road to recognition as one of the leading summer resort areas in Montana. E. W. Keene is the owner of the 4-K Ranch, located on one of the prongs of Fishtail creek in as beautiful a spot as can be found anywhere in the west. Only 38 miles from Columbus the new dude ranch will prove to be one of the most popular resorts in the Beartooth mountains, local residents aver, for it has everything to offer to entice the eager vacationist.

---

<sup>35</sup> Bixby interview.

<sup>36</sup> *The Billings Gazette*, August 26, 1927, 5; Lon Johnson, the architectural historian for Yellowstone National Park, was unable to verify this information on Mr. McManus. Lon Johnson, interview by Joan L. Brownell, May 21, 2001, Mammoth Hot Springs, WY.

<sup>37</sup> *The Stillwater Enterprise*, October 10, 1929, 4; *The Stillwater Enterprise*, February 19, 1931, 1; March 15, 1931, 1; May 7, 1931, 1.

<sup>38</sup> *The Stillwater Enterprise*, January 7, 1932, 5; July 28, 1932, 5.

<sup>39</sup> *The Stillwater Enterprise*, November 10, 1932, 4; Leona Rathje, interview with Joan L. Brownell, May 24, 2001, Billings, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 6

---

The main ranch building, in the estimation of those who have visited the 4-K ranch, is a marvelously constructed rustic cabin. Constructed on a gently sloping incline the view from all sides is particularly beautiful. Only a few hundred yards from the cabin, and towards the timber-covered mountains, lies a spring-fed lake that supplies the water for irrigating a nine-hole golf course. Sufficient water is brought down through another canal to operate a small generator, through the medium of a very busy waterwheel that supplies the cabins and main ranch home with electric light.

As the visitor approaches the ranch home a little pond, that later is going to be converted into a lily-pad lake, is a welcome sight for the lake is fed by a sunken spring and over the spring hangs a long-handled drinking gourd. To the right are the smaller cabins on the edge of the hill that overlooks a beautiful wooded park and the swimming pool.

Steps lead up the hill side to the big porch of the main ranch building. The entrance foyer leads to a spacious lounge room. An electrically lighted fountain plays in the middle of the room. At each side of the hall massive fire places rear to the ceiling. One is constructed of rough sandstone, the other of various ores, copper, iron and chrome. If at all possible the visiting party should get in touch with Archie Adams, who for the past two years has assisted Mr. Keene in the construction of this resort. Mr. Adams will point out the finer points of the intricate work that has gone into the building of this lodge. Chairs, a writing desk, the reception desk, smoking stands, even the mail boxes back of the reception desk, all are constructed out of native materials and even the novice can get some realization of the skillful artistry that has gone into making this the beautiful lodge that it is. It is a complete picture. Even the rods holding the drapes over the big windows are hung on old buffalo horns.

Across from the main entrance a short flight of wide stairs leads to the dining room where on each side cleverly fashioned table and chairs have been constructed. To the rear of the dining room is the kitchen and what a kitchen. The native materials motif was not forgotten when the kitchen was constructed – even the ice box is an artistic accomplishment.

The actual beauty of Mr. Keene's resort home can be gained only by a personal visit. Pages could be written on the little details that must have entailed considerable labor, but which in the final analysis makes the place incomparably beautiful. And if the visiting guest desires all the comforts, they are here, for the cabin has shower and tub baths, electric lights and radio service.<sup>40</sup>

The following spring in March 1934, Keene had another crew constructing more cabins in preparation for summer guests. By January 1934, the 4K Ranch registered as a member of the Dude Ranchers' Association, an organization of dude ranches primarily in Montana and Wyoming. The 4K Ranch continued as a member until October 1937.<sup>41</sup>

While it is difficult to gauge Keene's success with "dudes" or out-of-state guests, he obviously catered to both the eastern and local population. According to George Blackford, he did advertise nationally and "lots of dudes" visited the ranch in the summer. Keene provided horses for the dudes and organized pack trips and fishing. During the summer months, Ed

---

<sup>40</sup> *The Stillwater Enterprise*, July 28, 1933, 1.

<sup>41</sup> *The Stillwater Enterprise*, March 16, 1934, 4; *The Dude Rancher*, vol. 1, no. 1 through vol. 6, no. 1, on file Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 7

Keene established a Sunday tradition of southern fried chicken dinners. He also held dances on weekends with various bands from Billings and elsewhere. The golf course remained open to all, both eastern guests and locals who would drive up to the ranch from Billings or nearby Absarokee to spend the day. According to Joan Cobb, Ed Keene was a wonderful storyteller and this probably helped draw people to the ranch.<sup>42</sup>

In the summer of 1937, Keene apparently leased the 4K Ranch to a group called Parkhill Travelkamps, owned by a family in Illinois, although Keene assisted in the operation. *The Columbus News* in July 1937 reported "a new industry, unique to Stillwater County at least is now actively taking shape at the famous 4-K ranch at upper Fishtail Creek" where "a camp for boys under 16 is now being conducted." Later that summer, a large group of 100 boys and girls came to the 4K Ranch for 3 weeks. In October 1937, the *Dude Rancher* reported that the "Parkhill 4K Ranch has been operating to capacity this season and is making extensive plans for next year."<sup>43</sup>

### Frank Book and Mickey Cochrane

However, Keene instead sold the 4K Ranch that fall to Frank Book, Gordon S. "Mickey" Cochrane and Elmer S. Holmgren from Detroit, Michigan in September 1937.<sup>44</sup> Frank Book was a Detroit capitalist who held extensive real estate in Detroit and was instrumental in its development, building several large commercial buildings including the Book-Cadillac Hotel and Book Tower. Joan Cobb, the daughter of Mickey Cochrane, recalls that the Books visited the Van Cleve Lazy K Bar Ranch near the Crazy Mountains at Melville, MT before they purchased the 4K Ranch. Mickey Cochrane was the famed Baseball Hall of Fame catcher for the Philadelphia A's and the Detroit Tigers. Cochrane hunted at the Lazy Bar F Ranch at Valley, Wyoming up the West Fork of the Shoshone River after winning the 1935 World Series. He continued to come West on several occasions before they purchased the 4K Ranch. Elmer S. Holmgren was Mr. Book's secretary.<sup>45</sup>

Joan Cobb describes the ranch as "somebody's home with a lot of room for guests." The Book and Cochrane families used the 4K Ranch as a private family summer ranch where family and friends would stay. The Books and Cochranes had three children each. Peggy Book, the daughter of Frank Book, and Joan Cobb, the daughter of Mickey Cochrane, spent their summers on the ranch every year, first arriving when Joan was seven years old in the summer of 1938. Both girls had their own horse and "they just turned us loose, and we had a ball."<sup>46</sup>

The children usually got to the ranch in mid-June and stayed until the end of August, when they would shut the place down. While the parents would come and go during the summer, the children or at least Joan and Peggy would stay all

<sup>42</sup> Blackford interview; *The Stillwater Enterprise*, April 14, 1932, 1; *The Columbus News*, August 10, 1933, 4; July 18, 1935, 4, August 22, 1935, 5, September 12, 1935, 5; Cobb interview.

<sup>43</sup> *The Columbus News*, July 1, 1937, 1; *The Billings Gazette*, May 9, 1937, 2<sup>nd</sup> Section, 1; *The Dude Rancher* vol. 6, no. 4, (October 1937):13.

<sup>44</sup> Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT; *The Billings Gazette*, January 13, 1938, 1, announced that the 4K Ranch had been sold to Julius Peters of Great Falls and his eastern associates (presumably Frank Book). Mr. Peters discovered the Badger Basin oil field in the Big Horn Basin in 1936. Peters however is not named on the deed to the property.

<sup>45</sup> Deed Books, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT; *The Detroit News*, October 5, 1961; *The Detroit News*, March 14, 1933; Charles Bevis, *Mickey Cochrane The Life of a Baseball Hall of Fame Catcher*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 136, 140, 141; Cobb interview.

<sup>46</sup> Cobb interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 8

---

summer, under the watchful eye of the ranch caretaker. As they got older, they worked around the ranch, milking the cows, separating the milk and gathering eggs. While Peggy learned to run the horse operation, Joan preferred to take the car to town and do the shopping rather than “throw saddles.”<sup>47</sup>

Friends of the Books and Cochranes visited the ranch and they provided horses for all their guests. They served breakfast, lunch and dinner in the dining room and cocktails every night in the bar before dinner. Babe Ruth came to the ranch the year before he died.<sup>48</sup>

During the 1940s, the 4K partners also operated a working cattle ranch below the upper ranch on Fishtail Creek. The lower ranch had over 5000 acres at one time. Joan Cobb remembers working hard during the war, putting up hay and herding cows. Frank Book also purchased some mining properties in the area.<sup>49</sup>

In 1948, The *Dude Rancher* announced the membership of the 4K Guest Ranch to the Dude Ranchers' Association, initiating the re-opening of the ranch to the public.

The 4-K Ranch was originated, owned and operated by the genial “Dude Booster, Ed Keene.”

The ranch is now owned by Frank P. Book of the Book Cadillac Hotel, Detroit, and Gordon S. (Mickey) Cochrane of baseball fame. It is being managed by Emery B. Hatch who had had a number of years of experience in the dude business.

The location of the 4-K Guest Ranch is near Dean, Stillwater County, Montana-southwest 30 miles from Columbus, Mont., and 75 miles from Billings, Mont. To the south, 30 miles away, lies the famed Yellowstone National Park.

As a spot for an ideal western vacation, the 4-K Guest Ranch has everything you could desire. It is beautifully situated, lying in rolling hills at the foot of the rugged Beartooth range of the Rockies, close to sparkling streams and crystal lakes. Here, in years past, many a celebrity of the screen, radio and sports world has been entertained as the guest of 4-K's owners, Frank P. Book and Gordon S. (Mickey) Cochrane. Now, its lovely Main Lodge and surrounding guest cabins are open to you-yours to enjoy to your heart's content.

Accommodations are limited to 30 persons per day from June 1 through September 15. The same restrictions are found at other places catering to a discriminating clientele are in effect at 4-K. The management also reserves the right to terminate at any time the visit of any person not compatible with ranch standards.

Experience has convinced us that two weeks is the minimum period for a satisfactory visit. It is not possible to accommodate transient guests.

---

<sup>47</sup> Cobb interview.

<sup>48</sup> Cobb interview.

<sup>49</sup> Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT; Cobb interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 9

---

Persons interested in vacationing at the 4-K Guest Ranch should write – 4-K Guest Ranch, Dean, Montana or to The 4-K Guest Ranch, 3600 Book Tower, Detroit 26, Michigan.<sup>50</sup>

Joan Cobb remembers that her parents ran the ranch for two or three years in the late 1940s. “It never really was open to the public while we had it. Mother and Daddy would charge people. If you weren’t friends of ours or Uncle Frank’s, you couldn’t get in anyway. It was just invited guests, and you got a bill.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1954, the 4K partners apparently decided to put serious efforts towards promoting the 4K Ranch and hired a public relations consultant named Paul C. Raborg to operate the 4K “in a manner which will equal any guest ranch in the Northwest, in fact, the United States.”<sup>52</sup> This effort resulted in at least a new promotional brochure for the 4K that extolled its wonders, declaring “we believe that 4K really “has everything”-with the exception of two items that vacationists often expect to find. For . . . here there are *no* mosquitoes, and *no* snakes.”<sup>53</sup>

From around 1956 to 1960, Jack Chapman managed the ranch with a season from June 15<sup>th</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>. Promotional materials during this period described the ranch as an “outstanding guest ranch with large lodge and cabins accommodating 26 guests. Noted for its fine food and genial hospitality. Located in the foothills of the Beartooth Mountains, elevation 5,900 ft. Riding, fishing, swimming, pack trips, etc.”<sup>54</sup>

Mickey Cochrane sold his interest in the ranch to Book and Holmgren in January 1960. E. D. “Corkey” and Shirley Morehead purchased the ranch from the Book children (Book died in 1962) and Holmgren in March 1964. The Moreheads had been in the area since 1956, running a cattle ranch west of the 4K Ranch. Corkey and Shirley leased it for several years and then bought it. They lived at their cattle ranch in the winter and the 4K Ranch in the summer.<sup>55</sup>

The *Dude Rancher* announced the 4K Ranch as a member of the Dude Rancher’ Association in January 1962 and declared that those “who like to get away from the grind find the 4-K Ranch near Fishtail, Montana, the ideal spot for vacationing.” Under the Morehead’s ownership, visitors could take part in everyday ranch activities, enjoy pack trips, fishing and hunting in the fall. They had horseback riding twice a day, cookouts and all meals served family style except breakfast. Most of the visitors came from Minneapolis and Detroit. Corkey and Shirley said it was a hard way to make a living but they missed it after they sold it.<sup>56</sup>

The Morehead’s operated the dude ranch until April 1968 when they sold it to two men from Pasadena, California. These men held the ranch for only four years until Robert and Elizabeth Wilson of Billings, MT bought the ranch in May 1972.

---

<sup>50</sup> *The Dude Rancher*, vol. 17, no. 3 (July 1948): 8. The 4K Ranch remained on the membership list from 1948 until January 1953 and then reappeared in the Winter issue of 1958 to winter 1960 and relisted in February 1962.

<sup>51</sup> Cobb interview.

<sup>52</sup> *The Dude Rancher*, vol. 22, no. 2 (April 1954): 36.

<sup>53</sup> 4K Guest Ranch Brochure, circa 1946, in possession of Joan Cobb, Golden, CO. However, the last statement is false. There are mosquitoes and a snake den was once found in front of one of the cabins.

<sup>54</sup> *The Dude Rancher*, July 1956-April 1960; Dude Ranchers Association, “A List of Western Ranches,” 1957, 4, vertical file, Montana Room, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT; the elevation at the 4K is not 5900 but between 5600 and 5700.

<sup>55</sup> Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT; E. D. “Corkey” and Shirley Morehead, interview with Joan L. Brownell, March 17, 2001, Polson, MT.

<sup>56</sup> 4K Dude Ranch brochure in possession of Corkey Morehead, Poulson, MT; Morehead interview.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 10

---

The Wilson's subdivided the ranch and called it the Island Lake Ranch. However, Judge Wilson later regretted his decision to subdivide and bought out all the new owners to restore the ranch to its original acreage. The Wilson's recently sold the ranch to the present owner.<sup>57</sup>

### Dude Ranching

Dude ranching "was a primary reason for the growth of the tourist industry in the West, along with railroads and national parks."<sup>58</sup> In the late nineteenth century, western ranches often accommodated early travelers from the eastern United States or Europe. The original dude ranch is generally attributed to Howard Eaton and his brothers, who came from Pittsburgh to a cattle ranch at Medora, North Dakota. Visitors from the East encouraged them to accept payment for the services they were providing to guests and beginning in 1882, the ranch received paying guests. The Eaton's moved their ranch in 1904 to the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains west of Sheridan, Wyoming and established the first true dude ranch in the West.<sup>59</sup>

The dude ranch industry evolved gradually during the first two decades of the twentieth century from an individual, informal, undeveloped tourist activity into a significant industry important to local economy. The romanticism of the West and wilderness, the desire to enjoy the outdoors and live close to nature, increased the demand for dude ranches. Originally dudes were defined as guests to whom the owner furnished food, lodging and a saddle horse. By the 1920s, there were two types of dude ranches: the working cattle ranch and the mountain ranch designed primarily for guests, in a remote scenic location and where horses were the only livestock. The success of a dude ranch depended on an informal atmosphere that stressed western hospitality and provided a western experience for the whole family that included horses, pack trips, fishing, hunting (in season), ranch work and "hearty" food.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1920s, dude ranches experienced a "golden age of dude ranching." After World War I, many easterners looked for a western experience for their vacation and many working ranches opened their doors to dudes to compensate for the early 1920s economic depression. In September 1926, dude ranchers from the Yellowstone region in Wyoming and Montana came to Bozeman, Montana and created the Dude Ranchers' Association (DRA) where 26 dude ranches became charter members. This meeting, sponsored by the Northern Pacific Railroad, resulted in a mutually beneficial partnership with the railroad, where free advertising of dude ranches by the railroads hopefully led to increased passenger traffic. The establishment of the DRA gave legitimacy to the industry and supported cooperation between the ranches on various subjects, like promotional activities. By 1927, there were 47 DRA members and by 1929, 91 dude ranches held a membership in the association.<sup>61</sup>

During the economic depression of the 1930s, most dude ranches struggled but survived and in 1938 Montana had 38 members. Tourism in the West changed after World War II. Affected by increased mobility available by better roads and automobiles, the dynamics of travel changed and dude ranches lost in the transition. By the 1960s, dude ranches "had

---

<sup>57</sup> Deed Records, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT.

<sup>58</sup> Lawrence R. Borne, "Dude Ranching in the Rockies," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 38 (July 1988): 15; for a history of dude ranching in the Rocky Mountain West, see Lawrence R. Borne, *Dude Ranching A Complete History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983). One of the first studies on the dude ranching industry was Charles G. Roundy, "The Origins and Early Development of Dude Ranching in Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming*, 45 (Spring 1973): 5-25.

<sup>59</sup> Borne, *Dude Ranching*, 19-22, 30-31, 45-46; Roundy, "Origins and Early Development of Dude Ranching," 8-17.

<sup>60</sup> Borne, *Dude Ranching*, 38-39, 91-108, Roundy, "Origins and Early Development of Dude Ranching," 13-15.

<sup>61</sup> Borne, *Dude Ranching*, 49-60. 75-86.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 11

---

been relegated to a position of economic insignificance.”<sup>62</sup> Today, dude ranches are experiencing a resurgence in popularity.

Early Montana and Wyoming dude ranches concentrated in the Greater Yellowstone National Park region. In Montana, Dick Randall established the first dude ranch at the OTO Ranch north of Gardiner, Montana near the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park. Originally a hunting guide, Randall began to take paying guests in 1905. The second dude ranch in Montana, the Pete Karst Ranch, opened around 1907 in the Gallatin Canyon northwest of the Park. By 1934, the first year the 4K Ranch was listed, the DRA registered 33 Montana dude ranches as members with the majority in the Yellowstone National Park region.<sup>63</sup>

A 1926 promotional brochure praised the benefits of mountain resorts in Stillwater County:

Tributary to the Stillwater River are several mountain resorts. It is a pleasant change to leave the humid lower altitudes and find soothing ease among Stillwater's resorts. Every condition at these resorts is to satisfy the urge to get back for a time to elemental things and build up strength and refreshen the spirit to meet the world's tasks when vacation days are over.<sup>64</sup>

The 4K Ranch was one of several dude ranches in Stillwater County that offered the western experience to visitors. Stillwater County claimed two charter members of the DRA, located on the upper Stillwater River. Originally a homestead, the Beartooth Ranch first became a camp for boys when Edward Ikerman bought the ranch in 1922 but he quickly transformed into a family-oriented dude ranch. The “Flying H” Ranch, operated by Harold A. Sayer and Alfred H. Clarke, catered to wealthy eastern tourists by 1925. William Branger and his sons operated a third ranch, the TO Bar Ranch or East Rosebud Lake Resort, situated on East Rosebud Lake in the Beartooth Mountains. Branger and his family had entertained guests since around 1913. On the West Fork of the Stillwater, Helen Hereford ran the “Swinging H” Ranch from 1929 to 1937. Also on the upper Stillwater, B. L. Kratz opened a dude ranch at Midnight Canyon in 1930 for both summer and fall activities. All of the ranches in the Stillwater region like the 4K Ranch were small, located in remote settings and with rustic accommodations. None of these ranches operate as dude ranches today.<sup>65</sup>

The 4K Ranch would be classified as a mountain ranch located in a remote setting in a beautiful pristine environment and designed primarily for guests. It does not however fit neatly into the mold of a dude ranch. Mr. Keene's vision catered to

---

<sup>62</sup> Roundy, “Origins and Development of Dude Ranching,” 22.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Parker Sullivan, “A Description and Analysis of the Dude Ranching Industry in Montana,” Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1971, 13-14; 23-24; *The Dude Rancher*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January, 1934).

<sup>64</sup> “Stillwater County Montana,” The Stillwater Club, Columbus, MT, 1926, vertical file, Stillwater County Library, Columbus, MT.

<sup>65</sup> “Beartooth Ranch” *Montana Free Press*, March 1994; Northern Pacific Railway, “National Forest Vacations in the American Rockies,” circa 1925, PAM file 3989, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, MT, 4, 7; Annin, *They Gazed on the Beartooths*, 59-61; Helen Brooke Hereford Papers 1886-1957, Manuscript Collection 2109, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Libraries, Bozeman, MT; *The Stillwater Enterprise*, November 13, 1930; Northern Pacific Railway, “Ranch Vacations,” circa 1932, vertical file, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Libraries, Bozeman, MT. There was also an educational camp on the upper Stillwater at Beehive associated with the Billings Polytechnic Institute of Billings, MT, “Beehive Camps Ranch,” circa 1931, vertical file, Parmly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 12

---

both local and eastern visitors with special amenities like a nine-hole golf course. For ten years, the 4K served as a private ranch for friends and family. When the 4K Ranch opened again to the public in 1948, it operated as a classic dude ranch until the late 1960s.

### Architectural Significance

The 4K Ranch is significant under Criterion C as the log buildings exhibit stylistic western rustic architecture. Western rustic architecture evolved from vernacular log cabin folk architecture, embellishing common construction traditions. The building technology utilized by early pioneers incorporated locally accessible natural resources to provide materials for shelter. Timber and stone were readily available in the nearby forests, mountains and streams. The use of local materials in the log construction and stylistic design elements found in the interior and exterior of the main lodge and most cabins at the 4K Ranch illustrate superb local craftsmanship and skilled workmanship.

The western rustic style is characterized by use of native materials, presented in a non-intrusive manner. Rustic architecture harmonizes rather than competes with natural topography and scenic values. At the 4K Ranch, horizontal log construction and rockwork of chimneys, steps and walls naturally blend into the surrounding landscape. The dramatic setting of the 4K is undisturbed even by the substantial main lodge, gracefully set into a slight slope that diminishes its size.

During the first half of the twentieth century, western rustic architecture reflected the need to perpetuate the romanticism and rugged individualism of the West and a conservation attitude towards nature. As industrialization and urbanization expanded, easterners feared the loss of the frontier and desired to savor the Old West of the Cowboy and Indian with its magnificent scenery, excitement and adventure. They wanted to relive earlier western traditions and the log cabin best exemplified the frontier.

Western rustic architecture of log and stone at dude ranches satisfied the importance of looking western to fit into this idealized view of Old West. Dude ranches therefore presented tourists with the rustic atmosphere they expected. The 4K Ranch represents typical western style dude ranch accommodations with a main log lodge, small log cabins and unique handcrafted furnishings and décor. The native building materials harmonizing with the natural landscape at the 4K Ranch provides a wonderful example of the western rustic architectural style.

### Summary

The 4K Ranch is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the development of tourism and dude ranching in Montana. An historic mountain guest ranch that provided a western experience for eastern 'dudes' to enjoy the great outdoors in a remote setting, the 4K also welcomed local clientele to enjoy the many pleasures of the ranch. The 4K Ranch developed in the mid to late 1920s when dude ranches in the West experienced a period of prosperity and played an important role in the local economy of the West. The ranch is significant also under Criterion C as the log buildings exhibit stylistic rustic architecture, influenced by the locally accessible materials of log and stone. The use of local, natural materials in the log construction and stylistic design features found both in the interior and exterior of the main lodge and cabins illustrate superb local craftsmanship and skilled workmanship.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 1

---

## Bibliography

*The Absarokee Enterprise*, 1922-1920.

Annin, Jim. *They Gazed on The Beartooths*. 3 vols. Billings, MT: Reporter Printing & Supply, 1964.

"Beartooth Ranch." *Montana Free Press*, March 1994.

Bevis, Charles. *Mickey Cochrane The Life of a Baseball Hall of Fame Catcher*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998).

*The Billings Gazette*, October 20 and 27, 1892; August 26 and 30, 1927; November 23, 1928; May 9, 1937; January 13, 1938.

Billings Polytechnic Institute. "Beehive Camps." circa 1931 brochure, Montana Room, Pamly Billings Library, Billings, MT.

Bixby, Barbara. Interview by Joan L. Brownell, June 9, 2001, Whidbey Island, WA.

Blackford, George. Interview by Joan L. Brownell, July 2, 2001, Billings, MT.

Borne, Lawrence R. *Dude Ranching A Complete History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Dude Ranching in the Rockies." *Montana the Magazine of Western History*, 38 (July 1988): 14-27.

Brooke, William M. "A Contest Over Land: Nineteenth Century Crow-White Relations." In *Montana Vistas Selected Historical Essays*, edited by Robert R. Swartout, Jr. Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1981.

Carbon County. Deed Books, Miscellaneous Record Books and Road Record Books, Carbon County Courthouse, Red Lodge, MT.

*The Columbus News*, 1927-1932; 1938.

Cobb, Joan. Interview by Joan L. Brownell, March 28, 2001, Golden, CO.

Doyle, Susan Badger. *Journeys to the Land of Gold*. 2 vols. Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2000.

*The Dude Rancher*, 1933-1966.

Fisher, Charles. Certificate Patent Case File, Bozeman Land Office, Homestead Certificate No. 2259, Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49, National Archives, Washington, DC.

Hereford, Helen Brooke. Papers 1886-1957, Manuscript Collection 2109, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Libraries, Bozeman, MT.

Kappler, Charles, ed. and comp. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. 2 vols. Washington, DC: GPO, 1904.

Morehead, Corkey and Shirley. Interview by Joan L. Brownell, March 17, 2001, Polson, MT.

Nabokov, Peter and Lawrence Loendorf. "Every Morning of the World." Report prepared for National Park Service, 1994.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 2

---

## Bibliography, cont.

Northern Pacific Railway. "National Forest Vacations in the American Rockies." circa 1925 brochure, PAM file, Montana Historic Society Library, Helena, MT.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ranch Vacations." circa 1932 brochure, on file, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University Libraries, Bozeman, MT.

Presidential Proclamation No. 39, September 4, 1902 (32 Stat. 2027); January 29, 1903 (32 Stat. 2030); Presidential Proclamation No. 26, May 4, 1904, 33 Stat. 2344).

Rathje, Leona. Interview by Joan L. Brownell, May 24, 2001, Billings, MT.

Rossillon, Mitzi and Mary McCormick, "Cultural Resource Inventory of the Stillwater River Road Project on Montana Forest Highway 83, Stillwater County." Report prepared for Western Federal Lands Highway Division, 1991.

Roundy, Charles. "The Origins and Early Development of Dude Ranching in Wyoming." *Annals of Wyoming*, 45 (Spring 1973): 5-25.

Smith, Burton. "Politics and the Crow Indians Land Cessions." *Montana Magazine of Western History* 36 (Autumn 1986): 24-37.  
*The Stillwater Enterprise*. 1928-1934.

Stillwater County. Deed Books and Miscellaneous Records. Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT.

United States Bureau of Land Management. General Land Office Records, on file, Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management State Office, Billings, MT.

United States Bureau of Land Management. Official Federal Land Patents Records Site. [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov).

United States Surveyor General. 1903 General Land Office survey map and notes T5S R16E, microfiche, Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management State Office, Billings, MT.

Yellowstone County. Deed Books, Miscellaneous Record Books and Water Rights Books. Yellowstone County Courthouse, Billings, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 1

---

## Photographs

Photographer: Joan L. Brownell

Date: June 2000 (unless otherwise stated)

Negatives: Joan L. Brownell, Billings, MT

<u>Photo Number</u>	<u>Description</u>
1.	Overview, view to south/southwest
2.	Lodge, north elevation, view to south/southwest
3.	Lodge, west and south elevations, view to southeast
4.	Lodge, north elevation, view to south
5.	Lodge, east elevation, view to west
6.	Cabin 6 and Cabin 7, east and south elevations, view to southwest
7.	Cabin 1, north and west elevations, view to southeast
8.	Cabin 2, north and west elevations, view to southeast
9.	Cabin 3, north and east elevations, view to southwest
10.	Row of cabins, view to west (Cabin 4 in foreground)
11.	Cabin 5, north and west elevations, view to south/southeast
12.	Cabin 8, west elevation, view to southwest
13.	Tack room (No. 10), south and east elevations, view to northwest
14.	Shop (No. 9), south and east elevations, view to northwest
15.	Barn (No. 11), south and west elevations, view to north/northeast
16.	Cabin 12, west and south elevations, view to northeast

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

4K Ranch  
Stillwater County, Montana

Page 2

**Beehive, MT Orthophotoquad**  
Detail showing 4K Ranch

