

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

✓ NOMINATION: (Lava Rock Structures in South Central Idaho TR)

✓ SITE NAME: Darrah, Ben, Water Tank and Well House SITE NUMBER: 40

✓ LOCATION: ~~Six miles north and one-and-one-quarter mile west~~ of Shoshone, Idaho^{vic}

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Charles Pendleton
Shoshone, ID 83352

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Mammoth Caves, 7.5 minutes ACREAGE 1 1/4 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

✓ The nomination includes the Darrah Water Tank and Well House and the property on which they stand, the Sw 1/4, SE 1/4 and the SE 1/4, SW 1/4, all in the SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 34, T4S, R17E. Legal description on file at Lincoln County Courthouse, Shoshone, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/710540/4766730

DATE OR PERIOD: c. 1916

ARCHITECT OR BUILDER: Bill Darrah

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: agriculture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: local

CONDITION: good, unaltered, original site:

The round water tank is approximately fourteen feet in diameter and about twelve feet high. Mortar in the coursed rubble walls has been brought out almost flush with the surface of the stone. The plank-covered top has a coating of concrete. Standing just in front of the water tank is a well house, a small, low, rectangular building approximately ten feet wide by twelve feet long. The dirt floor is about four feet below the surface of the ground outside. On the exterior of the building its walls are about four feet tall. A four-legged metal windmill tower extends above the shallow gable roof. An aeromotor windmill mechanism, lacking blades, is still in place at the top. The plank roof is supported by three approximately four-by-four-inch beams. The planks are covered with loose straw, baled straw, and dirt upon which grass has grown, producing sod. The plank door centered on the gable wall is set near the inside of the wall with wooden planks partially lining the opening.

SIGNIFICANCE:

This water tank and well house are significant both for their association with the development of sheep ranching in Lincoln County and for their lava rock craftsmanship. This is one of the earliest examples of a number of water tanks built by mason Bill Darrah. Further, it is one of few extant examples in which the windmill tower is in place. This tank and well house were built for Darrah's brother, Ben Darrah, for his upper ranch in about 1916.

In order for sheep ranching to be successful, a source of winter water has to be found. The water in the Little and Big Wood rivers freezes, as does the small amount of water in the canals. Mid-winter lambing operations require large quantities of water. A reliable source of water was developed by the Darrahs by drilling a well in conjunction with a windmill to lift the water. Storage that was free of ice was then needed. Building a stone water tank was a practical, functional solution. This water tank is on the top of a hill to provide enough pressure for water to flow to extensive lambing sheds, bunk houses, a cook house, and other frame buildings. Built partially underground, the small building houses the pumping mechanism below the frost line.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Martin, Art, interview with Marian Posey-Ploss, Shoshone, Idaho, Summer, 1978.