

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88001539 Date Listed: 9/22/88

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|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| <u>Canyon Grain Bin and Chutes</u> | <u>Whitman</u> | <u>WA</u> |
| Property Name | County | State |

Grain Production Properties in Eastern Washington MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

9-22-88

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Although this individual property nomination defines and justifies a period of significance extending up to 1945, criteria exception G is not checked under section 8 of the nomination form. During a 9/22/88 phone conversation, David Hansen, WA Deputy SHPO, confirmed that criteria exception G should have been indicated as part of the official record for this resource.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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Signature of the Keeper

9-22-88
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

After discussing this nomination during a 9/22/88 phone conversation with David Hansen, WA Deputy SHPO, the official record is being changed to indicate that this resource meets the requirements for listing under criteria exception G.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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AUG 9 1988

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Canyon Grain Bin and Chutes other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number E of County Rd 7030; 2 mi NE of jct. Co. Rds 7030 & 7010 not for publication city, town Hay vicinity zip code 99136 state Washington code WA county Whitman code 075

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private (checked), public-local, public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure (checked), object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 3, Noncontributing 0, Total 3.

Name of related multiple property listing: Grain Production in Eastern Washington

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Jacob E. Olson, Date: 7/28/88, State or Federal agency and bureau: Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. (checked) See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the National Register. (checked) See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture:Storage (grain conveyance
facility)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls wood

roof noneother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the semi-arid wheat country of southwest Whitman County, the Canyon facility appears to be the best preserved historic grain conveyance device in the county and, perhaps, in eastern Washington. It was built in about 1920 on the rim of the deep, sagebrush-covered canyon of Alkali Flat Creek, a tributary of the Snake River. The facility provided the means to distribute grain from the high canyon rim to a flathouse and railroad siding on the valley floor. Though now abandoned and deteriorated, its relatively good state of preservation is exceptional for these rare structures.

Standing 500 feet up the east canyon wall, it overlooked the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (later Union Pacific) tracks and a small settlement known as Canyon. The installation included an elevated wagon or truck ramp, from which wheat was dumped and shoveled into a moveable pipeline leading down to the cribs of the main structure. There the grain remained in bulk storage, until sent through chutes down the hillside to the flathouse or boxcars. Today, the facility retains its three basic elements: the truck ramp, the impressive, well-built cribbed structure, and a system of grain chutes (remaining examples of which are extremely rare in the Columbia Plateau).

The truck ramp stands farthest up the hill, about 75 feet above the grain bin. It is a rebuilt wooden structure dating from the late 1930s or 1940, and has experienced more deterioration and alteration than the other remaining features. About half of the original ramp (its upper part) has been razed. The remaining portion (the lower section of the ramp) measures approximately 12 x 30 feet, and is supported by vertical, 12 x 12 inch timbers standing on concrete piers. Considerable debris (machinery, metal fragments, boards, etc.) remains on the ground between the bins and the truck ramp. Much of this equipment appears to have been part of the pipeline system that conveyed grain from the truck ramp to the bins. The ramp was used as follows: a loaded truck was driven up the steeply inclined platform and parked; gravity then allowed grain to flow out of a small door in the truck's tailgate and into a small opening in the ramp floor; and from there a moveable grain pipe distributed the wheat to bins in the main structure.

The old roads leading to the truck ramp likewise are abandoned. These one-lane roads, now rutted and overgrown with sagebrush, come from two directions off the high plateau. In recent years, the upper segments were totally obliterated by the plowing of wheat fields, about 1/5th of a mile uphill from the truck ramp.

The crib structure is approximately 90 feet long, 16 feet wide, 25 to 30 feet high, and has five interior grain compartments. It stands on a stone and mortar foundation in front, and on excavated bedrock at the back. The walls, consisting of stacked 1 x 6 inch plank cribbing, are reinforced on the inside by long metal rods. Now weathered, the structure

See continuation sheet

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formerly was painted red. The roof was removed, apparently sometime after the early 1940s; otherwise the structure remains largely intact, though exposed to the elements. It is the most prominent and best preserved feature at the site.

Five metal-lined wooden chutes lead from outlets at the base of the cribbed structure and into a larger, single chute extending on down the hillside. Most of this chute system remains unaltered. The five smaller chutes, in particular, remain nearly intact. They consist of boxed 2 x 8 inch or 2 x 10 inch boards and are open at the top. Each exits from a separate compartment in the main structure.

The large main chute, also uncovered on top, was built with ca. 2 x 12 inch planks, with strips of sheet metal covering the 8 or 10 inch wide exposed surface of the bottom boards. Metal lining, of course, facilitated the flow of grain, and protected the boards and wheat from damage due to excessive friction. The upper portion of the main chute remains intact, but, lower down the hillside, it has been knocked off its concrete or wooden piers; remnants are widely scattered. Gone is a segment of trestle and chute that extended (at boxcar height) to the OR&N tracks. The tracks and flathouse that stood on the valley floor at the base of the main chute also have been removed; only the railroad grading and portions of the flathouse foundation remain.

The little community of Canyon, which was widely scattered over the 1/5th-mile-wide valley floor, included a store and post office, school, and a few other structures, as well as the railroad siding and the Interior Warehouse Company flathouse. All are gone now except some foundations, such as the substantial concrete footings of the razed schoolhouse west of Alkali Flat Creek, and concrete foundation piers and a few stones at the flathouse site at the base of the hill below the main chute.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Commerce

Period of Significance

1920-1945

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chapman, William E. (builder)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Canyon Grain Bin and Chutes may be the most complete and best preserved grain conveyance system in Washington State. It is significantly associated with the history of grain production and the development of conveyance technology. The system meets the registration requirements for "Grain Conveyance Systems" as established in the Grain Production in Eastern Washington Multiple Property Documentation Form in the following ways: although in ruinous condition, it reflects a significant element of the system, sufficient to convey the character of the entire system; it is a better representative of these systems than other resources known to be associated with the same technology; and even in its ruinous condition it is likely to yield significant information about grain conveyance.

The Canyon Grain Bin and Chutes form a linear conveyance system which allowed farmers to move wheat from the rim of the canyon above Alkali Flat Creek (a tributary of the Snake River) to a flathouse and railroad siding on the valley floor. The system included a truck ramp from which wheat was dumped and shovelled into a pipeline leading down to the cribs of the main storage structure, where it was stored until it was sent through chutes to the flathouse or a waiting boxcar. Today, the facility is in ruinous condition but retains three significant elements: the truck ramp, the cribbed storage structure, and a rare system of grain chutes. Built in 1920, it reflects a technology critical to the wheat farmers of the Snake and Columbia watersheds.

It was somewhat unusual for incorporating bulk storage bins in the design, but otherwise its technology and method of operation were typical for historic grain chutes and pipelines. Even though it now is abandoned and deteriorated, its relative good state of preservation is exceptional for these structures, which are among the rarest of all historic agricultural properties in the Columbia Plateau.

In steep canyons of the Snake and Columbia watersheds, it was difficult and time consuming for wagons to negotiate the steep, tortuous roads leading from the high plateau down to steamboat and railroad facilities on the valley floors. Consequently, farmers and grain merchants built long, linear chutes, pipelines, rail trams, or bucket trams to move grain down the canyon walls. A dozen or more were erected in eastern Washington in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and some remained in use up to the eve of the Second World War.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Interviews:

Cecil "Tike" Curtis, Hay, Washington, March 15, 1988.
Della Evans, Star Route, La Crosse, Washington, December 1, 1987.
Don Henley, Jr., Whitman County Commissioner, Courthouse, Colfax, Washington, February 22, 1988.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1 acre

UTM References Top:

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

To reach point of beginning, start at intersection of abandoned Union Pacific railroad right-of-way grade and the north section line of Section 9, Township 13N, Range 38E, proceed southwesterly along the east edge of said grade approximately 950 feet to point of beginning. From this point, proceed southeast approximately 350 feet, proceed southwest 50 feet, proceed south 150 feet, proceed northeast 150 feet, proceed northwest 150 feet,

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include all of the essential elements of this historic grain conveying facility, including the main bin structure, all of the chute system, the truck ramp, all the nearby collapsed machinery and chutes, and a small portion of the abandoned roadway.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glen Lindeman, Historian
organization Archaeological & Historical Service, EWU date March 31, 1988
street & number Eastern Washington University telephone (509) 359-2239
city or town Cheney state Washington zip code 99004

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These unique conveyance devices played an especially prominent role in the history of the Snake River corridor in Whitman and Garfield counties. The Canyon facility was a part of this development, though it was among the last to be constructed in about 1920. Standing on the east side of Alkali Flat Creek canyon, a tributary of the Snake, it was in operation as late as the early 1940s, also making it one of the last to be utilized.

William E. Chapman, the builder of the Canyon bin and chutes, arrived in the Alkali Flat Creek country in about 1915. At the time, this dry, sagebrush-covered section of Whitman County remained very much in the "homestead stage" of development. Only lately settled, its residents yet experienced the same hardships and privations akin to pioneering in the previous century. Farmers, sheepmen, cattlemen, and railroad workers made up the local rural society. Chapman, like most of his neighbors, was a wheat grower.

On the Columbia Plateau, grain traditionally was hauled in burlap bags holding two bushels weighing 130+ pounds. The agricultural equipment and transportation facilities of the era were likewise designed to handle sacked wheat. In the 1910s, however, a number of Columbia Plateau farmers and grain merchants attempted to switch from bagging grain to handling it in bulk. New horsedrawn combines and hopper-bottom wagons had finally provided the means to haul in bulk, thus dispensing with the expensive, labor-intensive process of sacking grain. Besides, burlap sacks had become scarce in the World War I period.

By about 1920, Chapman had decided to switch to bulk handling, and he built the grain and chutes on the rim of Alkali Flat canyon. Constructing the innovative, well-built facility must have been expensive and time-consuming for an individual farmer like Chapman. He constructed hopper-bottom wagons to haul bulk grain directly from the threshers in the fields to the facility. The wagons were driven up an elevated ramp, and wheat was dumped into a pipeline system leading into the bins. Grain remained in storage, until sent down chutes as needed to the OR&N siding. The new facility, of course, also eliminated the long wagon haul up and down the steep, 500-foot-high canyon wall.

The scheme appears to have had problems and apparently did not operate too successfully. At any rate, after a period of time, burlap became more plentiful, and Chapman, like many other growers, resumed sacking wheat again. His Canyon bins and chutes stood unused. For a variety of reasons (too extensive to explain here), bulk handling of grain would not be universally adopted in the Columbia Plateau until the late 1930s.

The property passed to other owners during the depression years of the late 1920s and 1930s, until acquired by Earl M. Pierson in about 1938. At this time, grain elevators, trucks, augers, and other gas- and electric-powered machinery were being adopted, finally allowing farmers to universally switch to bulk handling. With the encouragement (and possibly financial backing) of a banking firm (Vermont Mortgage and Loan Co.), Pierson refurbished the abandoned Canyon facility by rebuilding the truck ramp and making other modifications.

In about 1939 or 1940, Pierson and his crew put the facility into operation, but not without some problems. In 1941, for instance, a heavily laden truck slid back on its hind wheels when going up the steeply-inclined truck ramp spilling its load of grain. The driver, Don Henley, Jr. (a future county commissioner) and the operator of another truck,

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Cecil "Tike" Curtis, had to shovel up the dumped grain by hand. No damage resulted from this minor incident.

More serious difficulties were encountered in the operation of the chutes, which were open on top. During its rapid descent, a portion of the grain tumbled out, scattering across the hillside. Also, wheat in the main chute could hit the waiting railroad box-car below with sufficient force to actually cause damage. The grain itself, after the quick fall, might be seared, battered, and gritty. On the other hand, the least bit of dampness hindered the flow of grain and the chutes needed to be dry before put in use. These undoubtedly were some of the same difficulties that Chapman had encountered twenty years earlier. Pierson appears to have overcome most of these problems, however, by adding jogs every few yards to slow the flow of grain.

Pierson filled the bins with about 20,000 or 25,000 bushels during the 1941 harvest. All of the grain later went down the chutes to the railroad siding. After only a couple of years, however, Pierson stopped using the facility. By then, grain was universally being hauled in trucks on modern roadways, eliminating the need for the outdated grain conveyance systems. Some salvaging was attempted, mainly resulting in removal of the main structure's roof and about half of the truck ramp, but otherwise the facility was largely left unaltered when abandoned.

Thus, the Canyon facility appears not to have been too successful. Today, however, this decayed but otherwise largely intact facility may well be the best preserved historic grain conveyance device in eastern Washington. The structure generally has escaped board and metal salvagers as well as range fires, which are rare but occasionally occur in this locality. Altogether, the facility's relative good state of preservation is quite exceptional for these rare structures.

Criteria Exceptions: Although the period of significance extends to 1945 (when the system was abandoned), the property is of extraordinary importance in illustrating the agricultural heritage of the Palouse. Moreover, operations between 1938 and World War II are integral to those during the historical period.

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Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

proceed southwest 50 feet, proceed northwest 350 feet to railroad grade, proceed along grade southwest to point of beginning. The main chute and its scattered remnants are included in a 50-foot-wide corridor (i.e., 25 feet on either side of the main chute) extending uphill from (but not including) the abandoned railroad grade to the point where the five smaller chutes converge on the main chute. This corridor is 350 feet long. The other features at the site are included within a connecting 30,000 square foot area (with the main bin structure near the center), allowing for 20 feet or more buffer zone around all of the property's features.