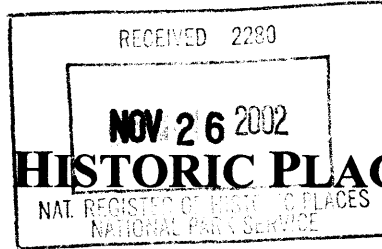


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



16860

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Thomas P. Regan Cabin

other name/site number: 24LC1607

## 2. Location

street & number: McDonald Pass

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: x

city/town: Helena

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Lewis & Clark

code: 049

zip code: 59601

## 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

MICHAEL R. BECKES, Ph.D. Dep. FPO, RI FS

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 A. Beall

11.8.03

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property:</b>	Public/Private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<b>Category of Property:</b>	Building	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> n/a		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> building(s)
		<u>—</u>	<u>0</u> sites
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> structures
		<u>—</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> TOTAL

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions:**

DOMESTIC/camp  
RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

**Current Functions:**

DOMESTIC/camp  
RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation

**7. Description****Architectural Classification:**

OTHER: Rustic

**Materials:**

foundation: Stone  
walls: Wood: Log  
roof: Wood: Shingle  
other: n/a

**Narrative Description**

The Thomas P. Regan cabin stands in a south-facing clearing in the Walker Gulch drainage, just east of McDonald Pass on the Continental Divide and 20 miles west of Helena, Montana. Located in an alpine environment at an elevation of 6000 feet, the cabin nestles back against a stand of Ponderosa Pine, amid a thick Douglas Fir-Ponderosa Pine forest. The building is oriented roughly west to east, accessed by a dirt two-track road that leads roughly 300 yards uphill and north from the major thoroughfare MT Highway 12 as it crests the Divide. A wire fence with a wooden pole gate encompasses the 0.95 acres surrounding the cabin and granted to the Regan cabin under a special use permit by the Forest Service since 1932.

The Regan Cabin is a rustic recreational log cabin built by the owner, with help and expertise from his family and friends. Built of logs harvested from the surrounding forest, the cabin is a single story building with an L-shaped plan. The walls are constructed of peeled logs, joined with saddle notching and battered at each corner. Regan recruited the skills of a local mason to lay a foundation to support the building; the result was an impressive foundation of rubblestone masonry with a retaining wall and stone entry steps, lending sturdiness and naturalism to the design. A massive rubblestone fireplace and chimney pay further tribute to the mason's skills, providing a massive battered form on the exterior, and on the interior a source of heat and rugged beauty.

The tapering lines of the battered elements of the design suggest Craftsman influences, as does the moderate pitch of the roofline and its exposed rafter tails. Although the walls follow traditional log building and joinery methods, the roof was built with more modern technology. Of frame and rafter construction, it is formed with milled lumber and bracing and rests on a single purlin atop the east and west walls. Lacking a ridgepole, the rafters simply are cut to fit and join at the top. On the interior, the walls are stabilized with log beams, and the interior space is open into the rafters. The roofline projects on the gable ends and is clad with wooden shingles.

Construction photographs indicate that the window openings were cut out of the log walls after they were stacked, in a symmetrically balanced pattern of fenestration. On the south elevation, there are two window openings; on the north there is one; and on the east there is one, along with the main doorway to the cabin. Each window opening contains a pair of 4-over-4 double hung windows with

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simple board window heads and sills. Wooden shutters (added in the 1970s) swing shut over these openings to secure the building from break-ins. An uncovered, deck porch wraps the southwest corner of the cabin. Contained within a rubblestone foundation wall, the porch was originally simply a level area filled with gravel. In 1992, milled 2x4 porch decking on a simple 2x4 frame was added.

On the interior, the building is divided into a large common room with a small kitchen projecting to the rear. Log walls are exposed on the interior, as are the structural elements of the roof. Simple three tier built-in bunks, polished fir flooring and vertical pine boards in the gable ends complete an otherwise spartan living space. A contemporary barrel heating stove was added in 1983. During the early years there was a sleeping loft in the west end of the cabin, but after the beam log began to sag the loft was removed.<sup>1</sup>

The cabin site was selected for its proximity to a reliable water source. A small spring is located 16 meters west of the cabin and forms the wellspring for a small tributary creek that emanates from there. A small wooden bridge spans the creek. Northeast of the cabin, approximately 26 meters away, a small pit toilet is located in the forest. It is a wooden frame structure, with a gable roof shingled with wood, and is sided with vertical tongue-in groove boards. Both of these structures contribute to the overall significance of the property.

### **Integrity:**

The Regan Cabin, despite small modifications such as a deck, modern shutters, and the removal of the interior loft, retains an extremely high degree of integrity. Indeed, the location, setting, feeling and association remain intact, as does the integrity of the original rustic design, materials and workmanship.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Regan Gans, Letter to daughter Liz Gans, (San Francisco, California) January 2001.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1932-1952

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1932

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: Thomas P. Regan

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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The Thomas P. Regan Cabin is a significant, early 20<sup>th</sup> century recreational cabin that is linked to the expansion of outdoor recreation as a leisurely pastime in an increasingly urbanized society, as well as patterns of recreational property development on federal lands during that era. Thomas Regan sited this recreational property in 1932, just as the construction of Highway 12 across McDonald Pass was being completed, and during early efforts by the USDA Forest Service to promote the proliferation of recreational cabins within its boundaries by offering special use permits for the express purpose of recreational development. Regan was the first in the McDonald Pass/Helena National Forest vicinity to enter into the program. Built by the owner and a variety of family members and friends, the cabin is a charming example of the rustic log building tradition associated in the minds of Montanans with shelter in the undeveloped landscapes of the state. In its well-preserved state, the Regan cabin exemplifies sturdy cabin construction methods of the early 1900s along with Craftsman influences that were prevalent in the popular building trends of the day. For these important attributes, the Thomas Regan Cabin is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

### Recreational Development of National Forest Lands

In 1891, a Presidential proclamation created the first Federal "forest reserves" in the United States, set aside under public ownership. The Organic Act of 1897 set forth a philosophy and program for managing America's forestlands, and the following year, the first forest rangers were put into service in the mountainous west. In addition to such activities as grazing, the reserves also appealed to a populace that increasingly sought solace and recreation in nature, particularly in proximity to emerging urban centers on the West Coast and in Colorado. By 1902, federal regulations addressed the increasing popularity of the reserve lands and allowed for limited recreational development at popular destinations including hot springs and lakes.

Management of the forest reserves became the domain of the Bureau of Forestry under the Department of Agriculture in 1905, and as the first Chief, Gifford Pinchot emphasized the active use of the National Forests for a variety of uses such as: logging, grazing, water power, firewood collection, and recreation, including summer residences.<sup>2</sup> Following the impulse to expand recreational opportunities within the nation's forests, Congress passed the Term Occupancy Act of March 4, 1915 making it possible for private individuals "to permit the use and occupancy of suitable areas of land within the national forests, not exceeding five acres and for periods not exceeding thirty years, for the purpose of constructing or maintaining summer homes and stores."<sup>3</sup>

In 1917, the Forest Service commissioned a national study on the potential and recommended recreational development of the National Forests. The report, by Frank A. Waugh a landscape architect scholar with the Massachusetts Agricultural College, articulated an early version of multiple use in the National Forests, concluding that forest recreation stood alongside timber, watershed and grazing as an

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<sup>2</sup> William C. Tweed, *A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests: 1891-1942*. (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service, February 1987), p. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Occupancy Permits Act of March 4, 1915 (Ch. 144, 38 Stat. 1086, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 497).

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important and valuable use of these natural, publicly owned resources. His recommendations supported the notion that the Forest Service, in addition to the National Park Service, should cultivate properties for the recreational use and enjoyment of the American public. Large tourist centers, administrative trails and areas for recreational cabin development were all a part of the vision for increasing public use of the forests.<sup>4</sup> The United States' involvement in World War I delayed the opening of additional Forest lands to development and the public. However with the conclusion of the war at the end of 1918, and subsequent efforts to put domestic programs back on track, the Forest Service renewed its efforts toward recreational use. During the 1920s, campgrounds proliferated and the American public increasingly took to the woods to go camping, fishing and hiking. However, as agency historian William C. Tweed notes, the emphasis throughout these years was upon providing the setting for recreational activities, for building and running recreational developments, the forests looked to private individuals and enterprises.<sup>5</sup>

## The Regan Cabin on MacDonald Pass, Helena National Forest

Thomas Regan was born in 1889 in South Dakota, briefly practiced dentistry in Nebraska, homesteaded near Lewistown, Montana in about 1910 and then moved to Helena in the mid-1910s. In 1918 he married Agnes Dickerson, a librarian at the Montana Historical Society; her father had been a mining engineer at Virginia City in the 1890s. Regan loved the outdoors and the family (there were eventually five children) often made expeditions to explore the hills around Helena.

In 1932, after learning that the Forest Service was inviting applicants for recreational special use permits, Regan obtained a permit for 0.95 acres in the Helena National Forest "for the purpose of [a] summer residence." Permittees were allowed one residence per tract, and construction was to begin within three months and be completed within a year. Specifications for the building were to be approved by the Forest Service prior to construction, and the original drawing for the cabin is still on record with the family and the Helena National Forest.

The following is excerpt from Agnes Regan Perkins' unpublished memoir:

"My father, Dr. Thomas P. Regan, started building our cabin in 1932, the summer I was six. Someone from the Forest Service, I believe one of his dental patients, had been telling him that the use for vacation homes was being encouraged and had interested him in picking a site and applying for a permit.

The MacDonald Pass highway was just being constructed, not yet completed from Helena, although the section from Elliston to the summit was passable. One Sunday the whole family drove across the divide, probably on Priest Pass on the old Mullan road, and back up the MacDonald road to the top. Then we walked through the forest on the east side, looking for a good spot for building. It must have been quite a distance for Dick, who was only four, but he was always a good hiker. My brother Tom, the eldest of my siblings, was thirteen. Margaret, Ethel and I were in between in age, spaced about two years apart. Our criteria, if I remember right, were a clearing not too steep, a spring, and a good view. The regulations said it must be at least a thousand feet from the projected highway. The other requirements were that it sit on a fenced acre, and that the porch sides should be solid so that junk couldn't be stored underneath. I remember clearly that Dad was promised a ninety-nine year lease, for a dollar a year. After his death, no one could find any documents detailing all of this, but we talked about it enough so that I know we all had that understanding from the time we picked the spot to build. I think we considered several places but settled that day on the site where the cabin now stands.

Dad had probably three reasons for wanting to build the cabin. The first, of course, was to provide a vacation home for the family and a place where he could get out in the country away from the telephone. He always dreaded getting a Saturday night call that would take him back to his office, usually from someone who had suffered a toothache from Wednesday on and suddenly decided at ten p.m. Saturday that he couldn't stand to wait through Sunday until office hours on Monday. Even after a phone line was strung to the highway maintenance house about a mile west of the cabin and it would never have been possible to tap into it, dad never wanted a phone there and we've never had one.

<sup>4</sup> Tweed, *A History of Outdoor Recreation Development in National Forests: 1891-1942*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

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Another reason for building the cabin was a depression era desire to provide employment for people who needed dental work and were willing to trade labor for it. Money was very scarce and a lot of people bartered for what they needed. Sometimes a farmer would pay with a sack of potatoes. We always had milk delivered in Helena by two different dairies, both of whose owners owed for dental work and we took our groceries from the Eighth Avenue Grocery store (not a convenient place for Mother to shop), because Ed Grady, the owner, was a patient and could charge the groceries off against what he owed. With so many people barely scraping by, dental bills were far down on priority for paying, even though the charges were amazingly low by modern standards: two dollars for a filling, two dollars for a cleaning, two dollars for an extraction, maybe fifty dollars for a denture. While there were some deadbeats, Dad always thought that if a person wanted to pay, he should try to make it possible. Most people hated to take charity and working to pay off a debt saved their pride. Over the years, most of the work on the cabin that Dad and Tom didn't do themselves was done by such men.

The third reason was a quirk of Dad's personality. He simply wanted to see whether he could do it. He always liked a challenge to this ingenuity and skill in making things and he pattered around in his basement workshop, making tools from old sewing-machine motors and inventing new dental instruments for his office. The cabin was a bigger project in much the same spirit.

The cabin took several years to complete. One of the first things Dad and Tom did, after the fence was up to keep out the cattle, was to dig out the spring to get a good supply of clear water and to run a pipe down nearer to the cabin. Later they made a box with the water running through it, and built compartments to hold milk bottles and the crocks where we kept butter and meat. The water came out of the ground at just above freezing, 34 and 35 degrees and even in the box was too cold to hold one's hand in it for more than a few seconds, and it has a wonderful fresh taste.

Ross Teets, a rancher in the Elliston area, helped Dad cut dead trees on the mountain above the cabin site and haul them down with his team of horses. The main worker in the construction was Al Harstead, from East Helena, who had a part-time lapidary mail-order business in the Kohrs Block where Dad had his office, but was by training a carpenter and contractor. There was very little building started in those early thirties years, and Mr. Harstead was scrambling like everyone else. Also he was interested in Dad's schemes and needed dental work for his wife and two children. An old stonemason, unemployed built most of the foundation walls and the fireplace. Ole Berg, an old man with a strong accent and one cocked eye, did a good deal of heavy work, including digging the holes for the fence and setting the posts in. We always thought his eye accounted for the oddly uneven line of the fence, but maybe it was just his need to avoid large roots and stones. Dad would bring other laborers up for a day or an afternoon. A few stayed, one at a time, in a tent up there for a few days or weeks. One, whom we knew only as Old Jack (maybe all men beyond fifty seemed old), must have been there for some time. He had trained the birds we called camp robbers (some kind of jay?) to take food from his hand. From the first, Tom worked along with Dad, first stripping the bark off the logs and then on whatever stage of building was current, and before the construction was completed, when he was about sixteen or seventeen, he was one of the main workers with Dad and Mr. Harstead."<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, family members built memories of the cabin and the visitors they entertained there. Afternoons picking huckleberries, high school picnics, special visitors and occasions are all fondly remembered by the children and grandchildren of Thomas and Agnes Regan.

### Expansion of Recreation Properties Along the Continental Divide

Along the Continental Divide and throughout Region One of the Forest Service supervisors authorized a number of forest tracts created expressly for use as cabin sites. On McDonald Pass just west of the Regan Cabin, Helena National Forest recreation planners established the Forest Heights development in 1943, a grouping of 16 special use cabin sites for term leases of 30 years. The emphasis on cabin recreation continued for decades, as correspondence between various Forest supervisors and managers in Montana reveals. The "Forest Service Summer Home Policy" issued in February 1941, opens with the management directive "the greatest good to the greatest number in the long run," and offers guidance on the development of summer home areas. Preserving natural settings and non-interference with the

<sup>6</sup> Agnes Regan Perkins, "The Regan Cabin on MacDonald Pass, Helena National Forest." Unpublished Memoir. (Billings, Montana) November 2000.

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enjoyment of others are two policies, which are emphasized in the outline. In contrast to the Regan Cabin, one of the first to develop in the area, the Forest Service after 1941 adhered to the policy that "as a general rule, it is both impracticable and undesirable, to permit single summer homes in isolated, scattered locations. Several lots usually are surveyed in a group, with adequate spacing between the individual summer homes for separation and privacy." Situating summer home areas away from highways, lakeshores and scenic features was recommended, as were lot sizes of 0.5 - 1 acre and an annual fee of \$15-25 per year.<sup>7</sup>

Guidance on architecture encouraged rustic building – "Buildings on summer home lots must be of a type and materials appropriate to the forest environment."<sup>8</sup> While initially, forest personnel were called upon to approve the permittees choice of summer residence, as time went by the Forest Service endorsed certain designs and prefab buildings for "erection on it's leased Forest Land."<sup>9</sup> By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century recreational use on the nearby Lewis & Clark Forest grew from 74,000 visitors in 1929 to 100,000 visitors in 1938, to over 128,000 visitors in 1949. On that forest alone there were 180 summer home sites by 1953;<sup>10</sup> and scores of recreational properties scattered throughout the mountains of Region One. Individual cabin usage was encouraged up until the late 1970s, as increasingly toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the public called into question the exclusiveness of cabin and recreation leases for a select few. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the tide and forest policy had reversed, resulting in policies to terminate special use permits and often to remove old cabins when they came up for renewal or transfer to new ownership. In recent years, the Forest Service has recognized the historic value of many such recreation cabins and has refocused its evaluative procedures to appreciate the significance of many historic cabins to the history of development and recreation of the National Forests.

### Architectural Significance

On the forested frontiers of North America, log cabin architecture spanned more than four centuries of settlement. In Montana and the West, the traditional log cabin with gable roof and massive stone chimney became ubiquitous in the mountain regions. As western communities were built and the region developed through the second half of the nineteenth century, the log cabin became both a defining element of the built environment and a symbol of the rugged spirit of western culture. Beyond the time that log building was dictated by necessity, the log cabin remained popular. Indeed, rustic architecture was the guiding style of parks and forests, and the log cabin the principal building style

The Thomas P. Regan Cabin, with its honest workmanship, draws upon the basic elements of American log construction. Reliance upon hand-formed native materials, a simple rectilinear form, a pitched gable roof, and sturdy workmanship all contribute to these classic aspects. In addition, Regan's cabin reflects the influence of popular Craftsman detailing with its moderate roof pitch, exposed rafter ends, battered forms in the walls and chimney, and multi light fenestration. Although it is a modest building, this architectural cross-pollination is an apt reflection of the evolution of building traditions and stylistic trends in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Montana. In addition, it is reflective of the very conscious adoption of rustic construction for various recreational buildings during this time period.

<sup>7</sup> Forest Service Summer Home Policy, (United States Department of Agriculture) February 1941.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Advertisement for the Butler Manufacturing Company, Kansas City, Missouri February 1957.

<sup>10</sup> *Great Falls Tribune* "Forest Land Used by 180 For Summer Home Sites," December 18, 1953.

Thomas P. Regan Cabin

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Name of Property

County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  State Historic Preservation Office  
 previously listed in the National Register  Other State agency  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  Federal agency  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  Local government  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  University  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  Other -- Specify Repository:

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.95 acres

UTM References: **Zone**      **Easting**      **Northing**  
                         12      400137E      5158903

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): The property is located in the NE¼ SW¼ NE¼ of Section 36, T10N, R6W.

### Verbal Boundary Description

See attached plat map by B.A. Goodman, drawn September 1, 1932.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn, based on legally recorded boundary lines, to include the building and the 0.95 acres for which Thomas P. Regan received a recreational special use permit from the USDA Forest Service, September 21, 1932. In recent years, this cabin has been referenced by the USDA Forest Service as Cabin No 121 on the Helena National Forest.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Chere Jiusto  
organization: MT SHPO      date: February 2002  
street & number: PO Box 201202      telephone: 406-444-7715  
city or town: Helena      state: MT zip code: 59620

### Property Owner

name/title: Thomas P. Regan, Jr. (buildings and structures)  
street & number: 204 Mountain View      telephone:  
city or town: Billings      state: MT zip code: 59101

name/title: Helena National Forest (land)  
street & number: 2880 Skyway Drive      telephone: (406) 449-5201  
city or town: Helena      state: MT zip code: 59601



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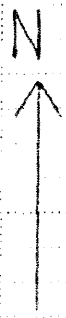
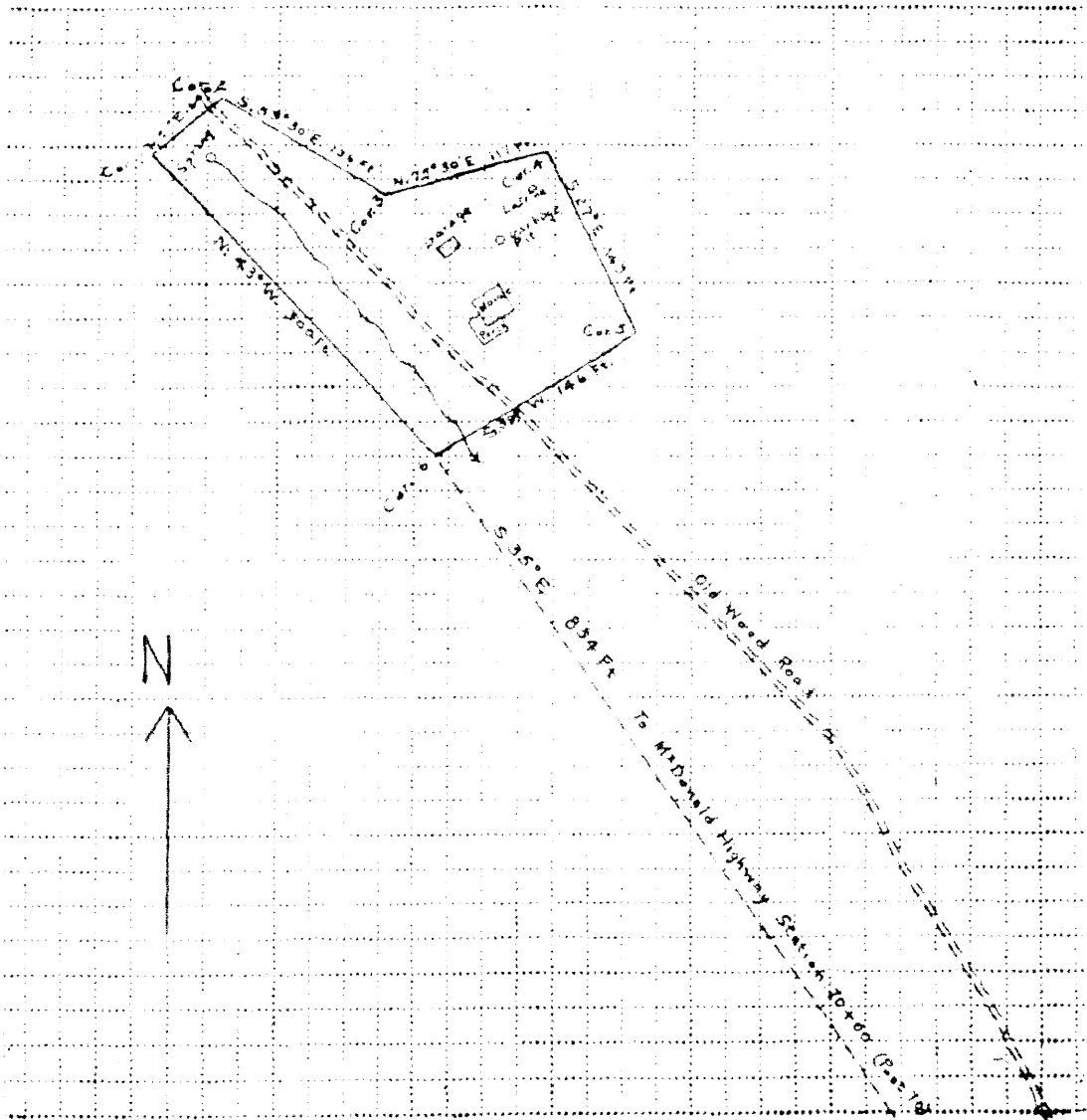
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2720 Home in Land District Mod. Decln. 28 50 P Area 0.95 Acre  
Regan - SW 1/4 NE 1/4 Sec. 36 T. 10 N. R. 6 W. M. Mer Scale 1 inch = 100 ft  
Cabin



Field work by B.A. Goodman, F.S. Date 8/1/32 Platted by B.A. Goodman

Remarks:

Approved *[Signature]* 8/1/32

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Historic Photographs

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Cabin under construction, c. 1932



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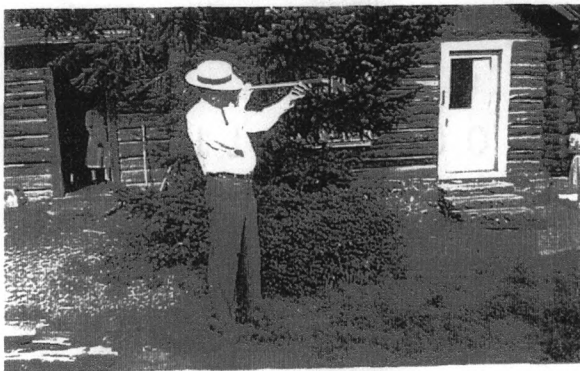
Historic Photographs

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Under construction, c. 1932



Thomas P. Regan, n.d.

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Interior of cabin, n.d.