

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Montana
COUNTY: Ravalli
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE DEC 19 1974

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Alta Ranger Station

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
27.7 miles south of Conner, MT on State Secondary 473 then 0.2 miles

CITY OR TOWN:  
east on Forest Road 310 in Section 34, T. 2 S., R. 22 W., M.P.M., on the Bitterroot National Forest

STATE: Montana      CODE: 30      COUNTY: Ravalli      CODE: 081

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____
			<input type="checkbox"/> Comments Not being used

**4. AGENCY**

USDA Forest Service

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)  
Bitterroot National Forest

CITY OR TOWN:  
~~Missoula~~ Hamilton

STREET AND NUMBER:  
316 North Third Street

STATE: Montana      CODE: 30

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Ravalli County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Hamilton

STATE: Montana      CODE: 30

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
NONE

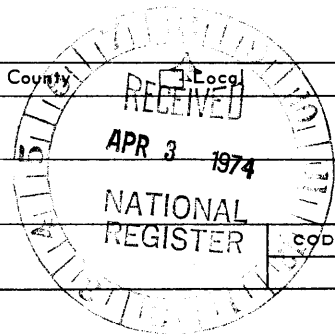
DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal       State       County

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Hamilton

STATE: Montana      CODE: 30



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)  Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated  Ruins  Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered  Unaltered

(Check One)

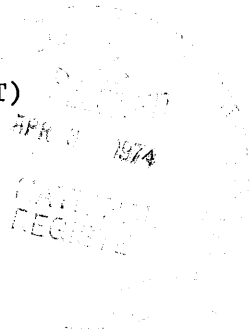
Moved  Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A 13' x 15' one room, one story log cabin with a dirt floor and a shake roof.

Alterations consisted of placing a stone foundation under the building.

(SEE NEW WRITEUP ON CONTINUATION SHEET)



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) Built 1899

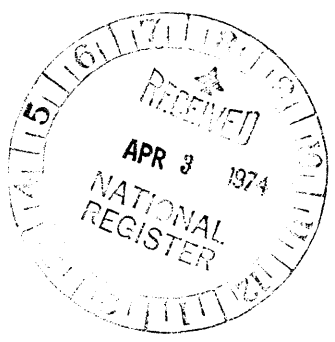
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alta Ranger Station was built in 1899 by two early Forest Service rangers, Than Wilkerson and Henry Tuttle. It is the first ranger station built in the United States and served as headquarters for Wilkerson and Tuttle while serving on the newly created (1897) Bitterroot Forest Reserve. The land on which the Ranger Station was constructed was patented under the General Mining Law in 1904 thus passing from public to private ownership. In 1941 the Hamilton Montana Lions Club purchased 0.732 acres of the Alta Placer on which the Ranger Station sat and donated it to the United States Forest Service.

The Forest Service placed an informational sign on the site and has maintained the building since.



(SEE NEW WRITEUP ON CONTINUATION SHEET)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Forest Service file - Land Acquisition  
(5420 Donation) - Alta Ranger Station

Names on the Face of Montana, Roberta Carkeek Cheney, Printing Department,  
University of Montana, Missoula, Montana 59801.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

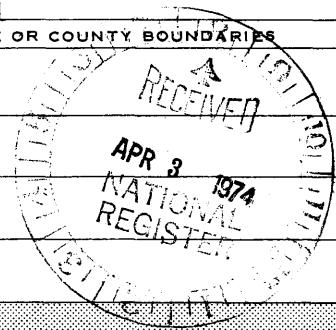
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		45 ° 37 ' 9"	114 ° 17 ' 56"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11/710 610  
5055 050  
CD



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: <u>Robert A. Boyer, Forester</u>	DATE: <u>June 18, 1973</u>
BUSINESS ADDRESS: <u>West Fork Ranger Station</u>	
STREET AND NUMBER:	PHONE: <u>406-821-3269</u>
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Darby</u>	STATE: <u>Montana</u>
	CODE: <u>30</u>

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

Yes  
 No  
 None

Wesley C. Roberts  
State Liaison Officer Signature

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is  National  State  Local

Lawrence M. Milfield 4/11/74  
Federal Representative Signature Date

Deputy Regional Forester  
Title

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

AR Martensen  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

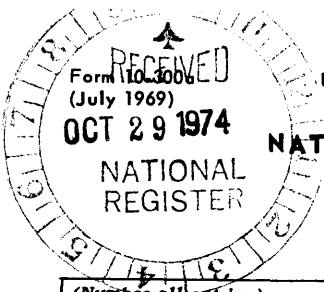
Date 11/19/74

ATTEST:

Charles W. Sturges  
Keeper of The National Register

Date 11.14.74

Director of Recreation



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

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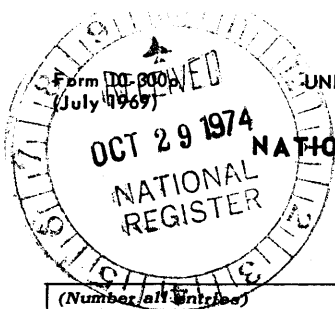
7. The Alta Ranger Station is located on Hughes Creek just above its mouth. The small tract (0.732 acre) is fairly level, but is on two gravel benches which differ about 5 feet in elevation.

The Alta Ranger Station is a one room, one story log cabin, 14 x 16 with dirt floor. There are four-pane windows on the south, north, and west sides of the building. The plank door faces north. The building originally supported a sod roof which has since been covered by a board-on-board roof. One-half of the roof on the inside of the cabin is round pole sheeting and the other half split round poles. Some of the furnishings originally in the cabin were a bunk, table, and dry-goods boxes for chairs. The outside log corners of the building are an inverted "V" shaped saddle notch which shed rain. The original mud chinking in the cabin is deteriorating and much of it has been lost. A small frame toilet also occupies the site (it is not known when it was constructed). The door to the station has names of previous guests in pencil. Among those which are legible appears "F. A. Fenn July 9, 1903" (first supervisor of the Bitter Root Forest Reserve). There are also names on the door jamb as well as on the interior walls of the station. (Unfortunately, during the 1960's others felt compelled to add their signatures.)

When the second roof was added, the hole for the original stovepipe was covered. Other alterations of the building consisted of placing a stone foundation under the building and replacing some of the sill logs that had deteriorated. The window sills were painted several years ago; however, the paint has worn off and the sills are returning to a natural, weathered appearance. The windows in the building have been replaced numerous times and are now a heavy-duty fiberglass to discourage vandalism. At one time the Forest Service attempted to keep the cabin door locked; however, this increased vandalism as people seem to have a need to enter the building and "look" so the door is no longer locked. Some of the signatures on the door were added at later dates (1960's).

8. The Bitter Root Forest Reserve was created by Proclamation in 1897 to aid in the preservation of its natural resources. In June 1899 Nathaniel E. "Than" Wilkerson and Henry C. "Hank" Tuttle, among the first to be appointed as Forest Rangers under the Interior Department, received 1, perturbing instructions to meet wach other with the dual responsibility to patrol some 500,000 acres in the newly created Reserve, watch out for timber trespassers, and put out fires.

They built the first Ranger Station in the United States in 1899. The logs for the station were snaked to the site by a horse borrowed from a nearby neighbor, Pete Bennett. Grantsdale, a 100-mile round trip, was the source of materials such as hinges, nails, windows, and a flag which Wilkerson and Tuttle paid for from personal funds . . . "Uncle Sam wasn't putting out a cent for a pair of hillbilly rangers to live while they



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8. (continued)

"took care of his woods."\* The station was completed in time for a flag-raising ceremony on the 4th of July. Residents from Darby, Montana (a community 33 miles southwest) attended.

No other improvements save a lone prospector's cabin, occupied by P. B. "Pete" Bennett, existed on the West Fork at that time. Later the Alta assay office, Post Office, and store buildings were constructed neraby as mining developments increased in the area. The population at Alta was approximately 500 during the gold boom of the 1890's.

The station was occupied intermittently by Forest employees or its agents, and on January 11, 1909, the ground on which the Alta Ranger Station stood was patented to Peter B. Bennett as Alta Placer Mining Claim, M. S. 7301, 59.95 acres.

In 1941 the Hamilton Lions Club purchased 0.732 acre of land upon which the station sits from the Bennett estate and donated it to the Forest Service. At that time the Lions Club proposed that the Forest Service restore the building under the direction of Than Wilkerson. How much, if any, restoration work was done at that time is unknown (Mr. Wilkerson died in Hamilton in 1952.).

The Forest Service placed an informational sign at the site and has maintained the building since.

At the present time the site is bordered on three sides (north, west, and east) by private land. There has been some recent development and cabin sites are now for sale in the area.

There are several buildings still remaining at the Alta townsite, one of which is located across the road about 150 feet west of the Station. One other building is still occupied intermittently. (Believed to be the old Post Office and stage station.) A trailer house was moved onto the townsite this summer (1974) and is reportedly occupied by a "prospector" who was moved off National Forest land.

Mrs. Bessie K. Monroe, a resident of the area since birth (1888), stated: "For me the little Alta Cabin is a monument to the ideals of the early Forest Rangers. It should be preserved, even as their ideals should still be remembered with honor." (Personal communication, September 6, 1974)

\*Cheney, Roberta Carkeek, 1971, Names on the Face of Montana, page 4, University of Montana Publications in History.