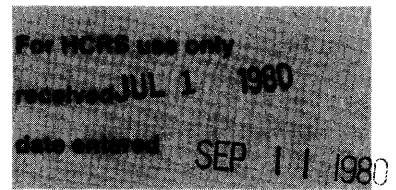


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Lonetree

and/or common Steele

**2. Location**

street & number S of Geraldine \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Geraldine me  vicinity of congressional district 2

state Montana code 30 county Chouteau code 015

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name John and Mary Tanner

street & number Lonetree

city, town Geraldine  vicinity of state Montana

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chouteau County Court House

street & number 1308 Franklin Street

city, town Fort Benton state Montana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>January 15, 1980</u>

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lonetree site and buildings are located in a narrow canyon which cuts a 500-foot vertical granite cliff along the Big Sag, which cuts across the northern approaches of the Highwood Mountains. This valley was formed by the Missouri River during the last ice age. The site is three miles west of Montana Highway 80 between Geraldine and Square Butte.

The site contains six buildings, a dugout and a spring. The main structure is a story-and-one-half, 26' by 40'. The first story is of hand-cut rough uneven course sandstone which was quarried there in the Big Sag. The rough stone is very uneven along the outer surface, has three bays on the east, two on the west, two bays and a door on the south and a bay and a door on the north plus a second window cut in since the original construction. All bays have large stone lintels and stone sills with double sashed windows. The galvanized steel corrugated sheeted gambrel roof is interrupted by two small shed dormers, one on each of the east and west slopes. The west dormer contains three small windows; the east dormer contains only one window. The angle of the slope of the top portion of the roof continues on to the roof of each dormer. The two gabled ends under the roof are of board-and-batten siding to the top of the break in the gambrel roof; that portion to the peak of the roof is shingled. Each end contains two double-sashed windows with their tops even on a line in the break of the roof. Across the front or south exposure is a shed porch 6'x26' along the entire side at the height of the first story supported by four turned posts. Two chimneys break the roof, one low on the roof midway down the west slope and one at the north near the peak on the east slope.

The house contains seven rooms, three downstairs and four on the second floor; the rooms are finished with beaverboard walls and ceiling with wainscoating below. The kitchen contains a lead basin with a pipe leading from the small house enclosing the spring just to the rear of the north exposure. The spring has furnished a continuous flow of water into the house since its construction. The interior is essentially unaltered with the exception of a modern bath (see diagram of floor plan).

North of the main house are two smaller stone buildings, one 6'x8' which covers the spring constructed of small stones of granite from the hillside behind; it has a low-pitched gabled roof and only one opening, a door on the south end. The other two-room building is a one-story cabin with stone walls where granite was used in the lower courses and sandstone in the upper. The stone is hand-cut rough and in uneven courses with two windows on the south, one window near the front on the north and a door on the front facing west. The east exposure contains a window which has been altered from an original door at that end. It has a low-pitched gabled roof with five logs used as ridge poles to support the shingled surface.

Directly across the road to the west of the two-room cabin is the door into the dugout. The bank around the door has been supported by stone laid up the sides of the bank to prevent caving in. No other openings enter the cave and the door is solid, of rough-cut lumber in a wooden frame. The other buildings on the site are to the south of these four, more out of the canyon and into the valley. There is a barn and two outbuildings for hay and feed and a corral contained in this portion.

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Continuation sheet

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The barn is of wood construction with board-and-batten siding and is 24'x45' and 18' in height. The building has a corrugated metal gabled roof of unusual design. The east slope is similar to a lean-to, but not all at the same pitch; in the center over the main doors is a gabled dormer containing a window. The gable extends back until it meets the line where the roof changes pitches. To the front and south are corrals to contain livestock. The one to the south looks original with much of it in poles. There are two small wooden buildings containing feed and hay which form the east side of the southern corral. The first building is 12'x15' and 15' high while the second which joins the first on the north-south side is 12'x30' and 10' tall. Both have metal gabled roofs. The second building is open on its east and south sides. Both buildings are in poor shape and need repair.

One other building remains within the site but is of no historic value. It has obviously been constructed at a much later date than the others. This building is a garage with two stalls and a small shop attached with shed roof and tile-brick construction up three to four feet, the remainder constructed of log.

The site contains several large cottonwood trees as well as fruit trees. The old stage road runs from north to south down the center of the site. The site is approximately 100 feet wide at the north end, extends 450 feet down the canyon toward its mouth, and the southern end of the site is approximately 250 feet wide. It contains slightly less than two acres. (See diagram attached.)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1890 - 1895      **Builder/Architect** Christopher and Edward Wilson

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The site is historically significant to the settlement of the area, acting in several capacities at varying times in its existence: first as a ranch, later as a stage station, post office and school. During the period of 1890 - 1915 it served the surrounding area as an important center for communications and learning both during the early cattle-raising era and later during the homestead period of the area.

The original settlers of the site were two brothers, Christopher (Kit) Wilson and Edward (Ned) Wilson, born in the East who came to Montana in 1886 and 1887. They first worked in the area as cowboys then started a small ranch operation of their own. In the late 1880's they chose the Lonetree site as their ranch headquarters, first living in the dugout shelter while building the small two-room stone house. Some time between 1890 and 1895 the large house was constructed at the site.

Christopher Wilson not only was an early stockman of the area but also served as a deputy sheriff and Treasurer of Chouteau County. Edward served as postmaster at Lonetree from 1900 to 1913, Justice of the Peace and school board member in the area, dying here in 1913.

The stage line between Fort Benton and Lewistown was established on August 16, 1888. There were four post offices established on the run to service central Montana with a mail route and transportation to the two railroads located in these towns. Prior to 1900 the stage line may have used this as a stop, but in 1900 a post office was established which served as both stage and mail stop until 1913. At one time in the early 1900's, it served two routes - the one from Fort Benton to Lewistown and a shorter route from Fort Benton to Knerville.

During the homestead period the stone house served as a community center for the people of the area. They came here to pick up the stage to the city; the spring served as a water supply for many homesteaders who picked up water in wooden barrels hauling it by wagon to their 160's until a well could be dug. It served as the school from September 1912 until 1915, using both the little house and a room upstairs in the big house. Its greatest importance, though, was its service as a post office, first to the scattered ranchers of the area; with the arrival of the "sodbusters" it became the mailing address of hundreds of people who flocked into the area to settle their claims and make a new life in the West. It then became the most important place for all in this 400-square-mile area.

With arrival of the Milwaukie Railroad and the establishment of the town of Geraldine at the site of Winchell Springs about twelve miles away, Lonetree lost its importance. The post office was moved in December of 1913 and it was all over as the stage line disbanded the same year with the coming of the railroad.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Billings Gazette - December 28, 1975  
 River Press - January 26, 1972  
 Great Falls Tribune - June 18, 1972  
 J.L. Polk Directory of Choteau - 1903-1904, 1907-08, 1909-10, 1911-12, 1913-14  
 Geraldine Review, Alice Rector's letter to Mary Tanner - August 30, 1979 Continued

# 10. Geographical Data

Acraege of nominated property 2 **UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
 Quadrangle name Geraldine **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED** Quadrangle scale 1:24,000  
 UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>2</u>	<u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 26 Township 21 North Range 11 East  
 NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 26 Township 21 North Range 11 East  
 1 acre in each of these five-acre plots

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Henry L. Armstrong/Jonathan Hayt, Historic Architect  
 organization Historic Preservation Office date 1/15/80  
 street & number 225 North Roberts telephone 406-449-4584  
 city or town Helena state Montana

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title [Signature] date 6-6-80

**For HCERS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.  
 for W. Ray [Signature] date 9/1/80  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: [Signature] date 9/9/80  
 Clerk

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

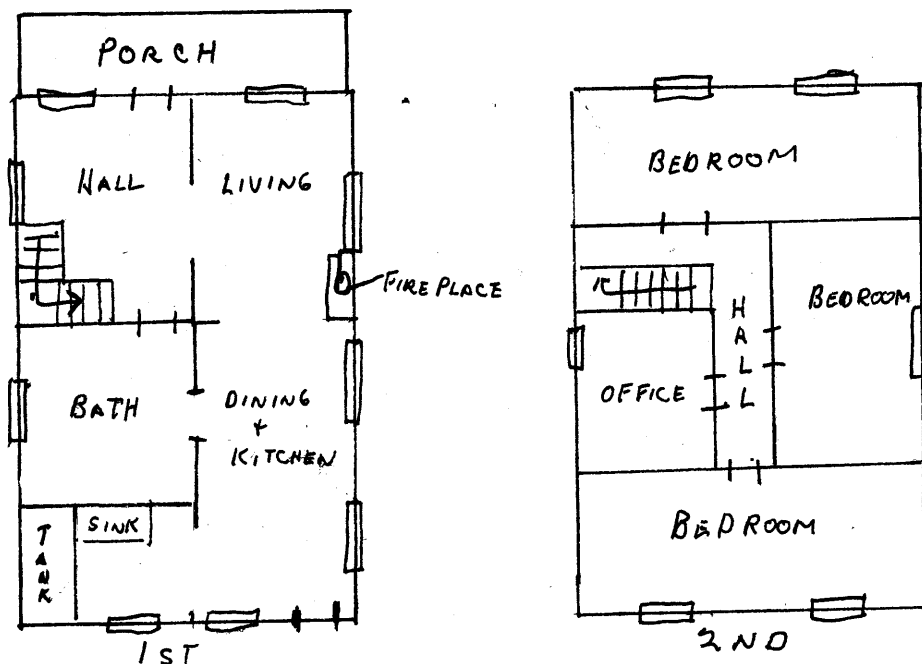
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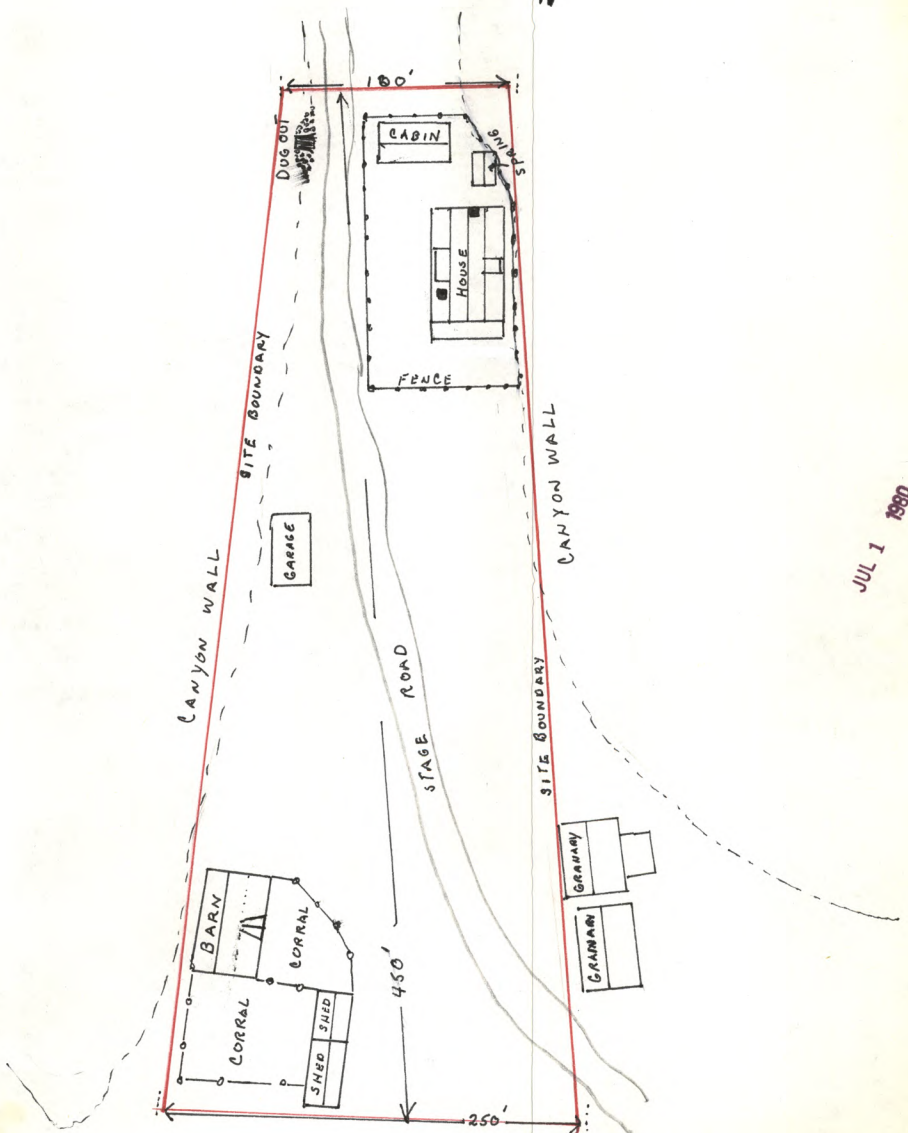
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NOT TO SCALE  
FLOOR PLAN MAIN HOUSE

LONETREE SITE  
(NOT TO SCALE)  
APPROXIMATELY 2 ACRES



JUL 1 1980