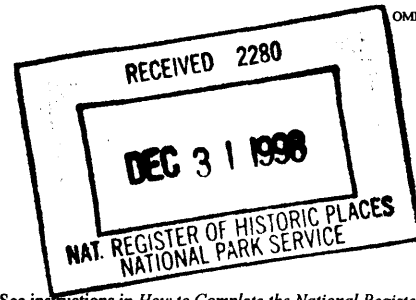


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name BEESON-FOSS RANCH

other names/site number "The Nut Ranch"

2. Location

street & number 6371 Wagner Creek Road n/a not for publication

city or town Talent n/a vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Jackson code 029 zip code 97540

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

/ Deputy SHPO

December 22, 1998

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

1.27.99

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 1

Beeson-Foss Ranch, Talent, Jackson County, Oregon

COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE:

The Beeson-Foss Ranch complex, a 25.3 acre tract, includes orchards, irrigation features, barns, and outbuildings, along with the historic house. The area around the house is fully landscaped with a lawn, shrubs, several mature trees and a wood fence. Two non-historic, non-contributing buildings are on the property--a c.1950s garage and a 1997 dwelling with attached garage. The walnut orchard retains its late 19th and early 20th century plantings, intermixed with newer walnut and other tree crops arranged in regularly spaced rows with open agricultural lands surrounding the centrally located cluster of built resources.

The house is a west-facing two-story wood frame dwelling with horizontal siding, a complex roof line and footprint, and a brick foundation. The original portion of the house, built in the shape of an octagon, was constructed in 1863 for Welborn and Mary Catherine Beeson and modified in 1893 by Julius Foss. As documented in the *Talent News* on May 1, 1892, Julius Foss removed the west half of the octagonal house and erected a more traditional I-form vernacular house with Victorian Eclectic detailing, including the shingled gables, box windows, leaded glass, and carved woodwork such as the porch brackets and sunburst in the porch gable. Windows are predominantly one-over-one double-hung wood sash, paired, with simply detailed trim. As completed in 1893, the Beeson-Foss House was considered one of the finest rural residences in the Wagner Creek area.

Later alterations include a one-story flat-roofed L-shaped addition at the rear where the kitchen and rear porch were completed in the 1960s. It has 6" horizontal drop siding. The aluminum windows are not of similar design but they do not detract from the overall appearance of the historic house. A small connecting volume on the south, also of 6" horizontal siding, is located between the rear of the octagonal portion of the house and the historic water tower. A non-historic wood deck is located at the northeast corner of the building which does not significantly alter the building's historic appearance.

The interior retains some historic elements such as 8" wide baseboard and plain wide board door and window trim with projecting sill, apron and parting bead. The den/dining room retains its built-in natural fir cabinets and closets that follow the unusual angled interior walls. The three-panel wood doors appears to have historic mortised hardware and decorative stamped hinges.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 2

Beeson-Foss Ranch, Talent, Jackson County, Oregon

There is carpeting throughout and the bathrooms and kitchen have been modernized.

The water tower (c.1893) is a tapered volume approximately 60' tall, has horizontal 6" wood siding, and a pyramidal roof. There are wood stairs in the interior of the building, although it is no longer in use.

The blacksmith shop/repair shed (c.1911) is wood frame with board and batten siding. Generally multi-light wood sash windows are used throughout. The northern portion was converted to residential use at some unknown date. An addition, c.1950s was built on the south end, but the original siding and exterior volume and remain intact.

The feed barn (c.1888) is a gable roof building of post and beam framing, has a wood shake roof and dirt floor. It is in fair condition, retains its integrity and contributes to the site.

The nut dryer/processing barn (1911) was a key component in the development of southern Oregon's largest commercial walnut processing plant. It was built in connection with the orchard boom of the period. It is essentially a large machine housed in a stoutly built wood frame gable volume with numerous extensions and unusual spatial arrangements that reflect its purpose. As a machine, it receives the walnut crop grown on the site and washes the nuts to remove dirt and residual husk materials. The walnuts are then passed onto an open mesh conveyor belt for sorting before being sent upward into the second level of the building where a series of open screen trays hold the nuts for drying. The original conveyor system was driven by leather belts and wooden pulleys, pillow blocks and drive shafts. Heat from rooms on either end is directed upward through a system of open metal tubes. Once dried, the nuts are shuttled into separate series of mesh conveyers and chutes for packaging.

The Talent area began as an agricultural community by Jacob Wagner. In the early 1880s, as the railroad pushed south from Roseburg, former carpenter baron P. Talent purchased a large portion of the original Wagner claim and hired Welborn Beeson to survey a site for a new town along the tracks, to be known as Talent. Talent served as the service center and shipping point for the farms of the outlying area. Welborn Beeson came to the area with his father, John, a writer whose publications were influential in shaping eastern views of the Oregon Indian conflict during the 1850s. He wrote in opposition to the treatment of the area's native people. When he left because of threats to his life, Welborn was 17. Welborn took care of his mother, managed

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 3

Beeson-Foss Ranch, Talent, Jackson County, Oregon

the farm, and began making improvements, including the construction of the octagon-shaped house. He wrote in his diary daily about the construction of the new home that would replace an existing log house. The builder, a carpenter identified as "Ole," did all the finish work. There is no comment in Welborn's journal about why he chose the octagon design, a very unusual architectural form for the period. However, the publication of Orson Fowler, *A Home For All*, was widely popular. It promoted octagon housing as "more beautiful [and] capacious, and more consonant with the predominant or governing form of nature", and could likely have influenced the design of this house. There are no other documented 19th century octagon or round dwellings in southern Oregon that were known to have been built at this time.

In 1866 Welborn and Mary Catherine Brophy were married. They had eight children. Like his father, Welborn was considered a free thinker and was described as an agnostic, an atheist and a spiritualist. He wrote articles and letters that were published in the local paper. He was also a successful surveyor. When Welborn's health was failing in the early 1880s, the management of the farm went to this eldest son, 15-year old Emmett. In 1890 Welborn and his family moved to another portion of the original homestead claim and sold the subject land to Julius and Emma Foss. Welborn died in 1893, and Catherine died in 1894, at the age of 45 from cancer.

Julius Foss, born in 1842 in Vermont, was also a southern Oregon pioneer, settling in the Phoenix area in the 1850s. He had helped with the construction of the octagon house and then left the area for a time and worked as a freighter. Julius came back to Talent after finding a Louisiana Lottery ticket worth \$10,000 in a trunk he had taken possession of for non-payment of carrying charges. He bought the Beeson house and began construction of the new portion of the house. It was at this time that the land was converted to orchard use.

Julius and Emma had two children, Edward and Nellie. In 1908 the Beeson-Foss Ranch became under the management of Edward E. Foss through a life estate agreement with his parents. Edward and his wife, Josephine Twogood, also from a prominent Josephine County pioneer family, lived here for more than 40 years. They continued the walnut operation, expanding it with the construction of the large processing barn in 1911, which coincided with the Orchard Boom years of 1909-12. Edward Foss died here in 1949 at age 73. Shortly afterward, Josephine sold the 25 acre Beeson-Foss ranch to M.J. and Jessie Kounz.

Walnut ranching was a popular and profitable alternative to other fruit crops in the early 20th

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section No. 3 Page 4

Beeson-Foss Ranch, Talent, Jackson County, Oregon

century, with the majority of the production occurring in scattered small scale "mom and pop" operations. The crops were intended primarily for local consumption. This farm site is significant for its association with the agricultural history of this area of Jackson County. This site is also associated with an important person in the community, Welborn Beeson, who platted the town of Talent and through his farming experience and written word, impacted the growth of the area. The site is also significant for its architecture because of the rare octagonal shape of the original portion of the house, the technology of the nut processing barn, and the grouping of agricultural buildings that remain from the historic period.

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	2	buildings
1		sites
2		structures
		objects
7	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

none

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Family Dwelling
Agriculture: Processing; Packing Plant
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Barn
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Blacksmith Shop
Agriculture: Field; Orchard
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Water Tower

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Family Dwelling
Agriculture: Processing; Packing Plant
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Barn
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Blacksmith Shop
Agriculture: Field; Orchard
Agriculture: Outbuilding; Water Tower

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular; Queen Anne/Italianate
Other: Vernacular; Agricultural

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood; Post & Pier, Brick
walls Wood; Weatherboard
Wood; Board and Batten
roof Asphalt, Corrugated Metal
other _____

**Multiple Resources: See Section 7*

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see attached continuation sheets

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 1

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

The Beeson-Foss Ranch complex, a 25.3 acre tract, includes orchards, barns, outbuildings and the historic Beeson-Foss Ranch House. The contributing built resources, along with the orchards, irrigation and other site features, range in date from the 1863 Octagon elements of the main house, built for Welborn Beeson and modified in 1893 by Julius Foss, to 1911 when the Nut Dryer/Processing Barn, a key component in the development of southern Oregon's largest commercial walnut processing plant was completed. All resources retain very high integrity in design, use of materials, and setting. The Beeson-Foss Ranch complex successfully relates its historic development period and the associations for which it is significant under Criterion A and C for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

LOCATION & TOPOGRAPHY

The Beeson-Foss Ranch is located in 38S-1W-26C and includes three individual tax lots identified as numbers 300, 301, and 302 by the Jackson County Assessors Office.¹ Zoned EFU and located in an unincorporated portion of Jackson County south of the city of Talent, the ranch is predominately flat with 800' [⁺/₋] of frontage on Wagner Creek Road. Bisecting portions of the property and forming a partial boundary to the east is the Talent Irrigation District canal. The Beeson-Robison Irrigation Ditch, a historic water feature, runs east-west through in the southern third of Tax Lot 300. Mature orchards, gardens, and several small agricultural related buildings surround the major structures.

The Beeson-Foss Ranch is located in an agricultural area intermixed with small historic and non-historic dwellings. To the west, across Wagner Creek Road at 442 Beeson Lane, is the Emmett Beeson House, built c1890.² The Beeson-Gleim House, built c1900, is located to the south at 6928 Wagner Creek Road.³ Further south at 8448 Wagner Creek Road is the Wagner Creek School, listed on the NRHP in 1992. The Beeson-Foss House itself, identified as the Julius E. Foss House, is included in the county inventory as Site #171, ranked "Primary."

¹ Tax Lot 300, including the historic Beeson-Foss House, is 2.41 acres in size. Lot 301, to the south, is 15.65 acres in area and includes the barns and the non-historic second dwelling on the property as well as an extensive orchard area. Tax Lot 302, to the north of the Beeson-Foss House, is 7.24 acres in size, entirely consisting of orchards. A small portion of the original Beeson-Foss property, now identified as TL 400, is located at the extreme NW corner of the ranch and was divided and developed under separate ownership in the late 1960s. Tax Lot 400 is specifically *excluded* from the nominated area.

² See site #323, op cit. While dated in the survey at c1893 it more likely was built concurrently with the sale of the Beeson-Foss Ranch in 1890 as the Beeson Family moved across the street from the original family home.

³ See site #325, op cit.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 2

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

GENERAL SITE DESCRIPTION

Irregularly shaped but essentially consists of two offset roughly rectangular volumes connected by a narrow isthmus, the 25+ acre Beeson-Foss Ranch consists of a central building core surrounded by regularly planted orchards. The Beeson-Foss House itself is located less than 100' east of Wagner Creek Road. Its lawn is fronted by white painted wood fencing and the immediate area is characterized by large shrubs and several mature trees. To the NE a man-made pond serves as a holding basin for irrigation purposes.

Further to the east, toward the rear of the property and deeply set back from Wagner Creek Road, the barns and service buildings associated with the agricultural uses are placed in a cluster, connected to the road and each other by an internal system of dirt and gravel drives as shown in the attached site plan. A new, non-historic, farm dwelling and attached garage are located near the narrow connection between the building area and the large orchard to the SE.

Scattered plantings, including historic walnut and fruit trees as well as the modern system of raised beds located directly in front of the Nut Dryer/Processing Barn, reinforce the rural agricultural character of the site. Several other minor structures, including pump houses, a modern greenhouse, and a single-wide trailer (used for worker housing) are located in the building core.

CONTRIBUTING SITE FEATURES:

The historic walnut orchard landscape of the Beeson-Foss Ranch, retains elements of the original late 19th and early 20th century plantings of the Foss operation, intermixed with newer walnut and other tree crops. General characteristics include regularly spaced rows of trees and open agricultural lands, surrounding the centrally located cluster of built resources. The Talent Irrigation District canal, located along the western boundary and partially traversing the site, is consistent with the setting. White board and post perimeter fencing, the unpaved dirt driveway/circulation system, a man-made pond, and other features all support the historic character of the site.

On specific element of note on the site is a portion of the Beeson-Robison Irrigating Ditch, which enters the nominated property from the western boundary at Wagner Creek Road and continues in a generally eastward direction. The ditch is included in the *Jackson County Survey of Historic and Cultural Resources* as site number 550. Running from its source, Wagner Creek, the majority of the portion of the Beeson-Robison ditch within the nominated parcel is formed by a shallow dirt embankment although a small concrete flume with wood board "gate" is located just

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 3

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

south of the Beeson-Foss House. The Beeson and Robison Irrigating Ditch is based on the 1854 water rights of those two pioneer families and in 1912 provided irrigation water for 370.30 acres of agricultural lands. (In Re Rogue River Decree, 1912, No.16044) The Beeson-Robison Ditch Company still operates under the direction of member property owners.

The historic orchards, plantings, and irrigation features of the Beeson-Foss Ranch retain high integrity and successfully relate the historic orchard and agricultural uses of the property. They are collectively counted as a *Contributing site* under Section 5.

BUILT RESOURCES:

As noted above the built resources of the Beeson-Foss Ranch are centrally located in the nominated area. Occurring on two of the three nominated tax lots, the construction history and description of these structures is as follows;

TAX LOT 300

BEESON-FOSS RANCH HOUSE: 1863/1893, WITH REAR ADDITIONS

The Beeson-Foss Ranch House consists of a west-facing two story wood-framed dwelling with a complex, multi-form, roof line and footprint that accurately reflects its idiosyncratic construction history. Originally completed by October 1863 as Welborn Beeson's famed octagon dwelling (documented in Section 8), the Beeson Foss Ranch was modified to its present appearance in 1893 under the direction of its second owner, Julius Foss. As a part of that process, Foss demolished the front, or west-facing, four sides of the Beeson octagon and replaced them with a more traditional I-form vernacular volume with modest Italianate elements. The rear, or east-facing, four walls and roof of the Beeson dwelling remain essentially intact.

...the west half of the octagonal house formerly owned by Welborn Beeson is being demolished by the present owner, J. E. Foss, preparatory to erecting a new residence on the site. The east half remains but will be improved beyond recognition. (*Talent News*, 1-May-1892)

As completed in 1893, the Beeson-Foss House was considered one of the finest rural residences in the Wagner Creek area.

The finishing touches have been put on J. E. Foss's new home and it is now ready for occupancy. It is one of the most elegant and convenient country residences in Jackson County. (*Talent News*, 15-Oct-1892)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 4

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

Beeson-Foss Ranch House, Exterior Description

A brick foundation follows the perimeter of both the 1893 and 1863 portions of the Beeson-Foss Ranch House and both portions are clad with matching horizontal 6" wide wood cove siding. A large plain frieze board [12" +/-] remains on the octagon while a slightly narrower frieze is used on the 1893 volume. Narrow corner boards, shingled gable ends and other original elements typical of the Italianate form decorate the 1893 volume.. Windows are predominately 1/1 double-hung wood sash, set in pairs, with simple board trim. A narrow stringcourse band divides the gable ends from the wall, framing the window opening on the south and north open gable elevations.

The front 1893 portion of the structure is basically a T-shaped plan below an intersecting gable. An independent hipped roof projects off the main volume to shelter the side entryway. The projecting central entry is set below a gable roof with an elaborate solid-wood fan decoration. Paired 5 x5 chamfered porch posts with incised banding and other details frame this entryway. Less elaborate 4x4 posts support the hipped roof side entry porch. Small fretsawn brackets connect the posts to the rim on both the front and side porches. Detailing of the entire 1893 volume is fairly exuberant for the region and all appears to be original to the structure.

Two projecting rectangular bays flank the primary entry door of the west-facing elevation. Small "mansard" like roofs over these bays intersect the projecting gable volume that shelters the front porch. Bay windows are essentially 1/1 wood frame, with a perimeter band of multi-paned stained glass surrounding all upper sash. Narrow horizontal and vertical board applied surface decoration, typical of the designs associated with the Stick Style, accent both bays..

The intersection of the octagonal and Italianate volumes was not entirely clean, requiring the construction of small "wing" walls to connect the two volumes.⁴ The conical, multi-sided roof form of the rear 1863 portion intersects into the gabled Italianate volume just above the top plate. Roof framing, as visible from portions of the interior, is of RS nominal 2x6 and 2x8, all appearing original. Facing to the east is a gable roof dormer, presumably one built after "Ole," who served as Beeson's master carpenter, successfully convinced him of its necessity.

⁴ These wings, especially the angled portion that remains on the north elevation, may likely be remnants of the other half of the Octagon volume that were retained in 1893 to connect the new with the old volumes. The conical lines of the roof results in the volumes meshing better on the second floor intersection than the first.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 5

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

Ole [the carpenter] thinks that we had better put up dormer windows [but] we have concluded not to put them up but to have a skylight in the roof...(Beeson Diary, 7-July-1863)

A three-part corbeled brick chimney is located at the rear of 1893 volume, just south of the intersecting ridge of the Octagon. Historic images (see Photo #2) document that this remains from what was originally a matched pair of chimneys, although no specific information as to when the northern chimney was removed has been located. Roofing on the entire volume is asphalt shingle, installed by the present owners in the early 1990s.

Several additions and absorptions of structurally distinct volumes augment the Beeson-Foss Ranch House.⁵ A flat roofed l-shaped addition at the rear forming the kitchen and rear porch was completed c1960s, extending the NE corner of the building. Siding here is also of 6" horizontal drop, very similar in design to the historic volumes although windows are non-compatible mill-finish aluminum. A small connecting volume on the south, also of 6" horizontal siding, is located between the rear of the Octagon and the historic water tower (described below). A non-historic wood deck is located at the NE corner of the building, running from the shed-roof covered rear porch around the corner of the kitchen.

Beeson-Foss Ranch House, Interior Description

While generally modernized as the result of the serial changes and additions, the interior of the Beeson-Foss Ranch House retains certain elements from the historic period. As might be expected, these are largely concentrated within the 1863 and 1893 portions of the floorplan where wide [8"] baseboard, both painted and natural-finish fir, survive. Door and window trim is typical plain wide board, with projecting sills, aprons and parting bead. In the "Den/Dining Room," as shown in plan, a series of built-in natural fir cabinets and closets follow the unusual angled interior walls. First floor interior passage doors are three-panel wood (both painted and natural finish) with early-appearing mortised hardware and decorative stamped hinges. Second-floor doors, all painted, are of identical three-panel design, with surface applied hardware, reflecting the traditional variation between 19th century public v. private spaces.

Flooring throughout is generally fir, covered with wall-to-wall carpet in the living room and bedrooms. All bathroom areas, and the kitchen, are of modern design and finish.

⁵ The water tower is treated as a separate feature, documented below.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 6

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

The narrow central stairwell that leads to the second floor of the Beeson-Foss Ranch House ends a central landing opening onto two bedrooms. In general, interior trim of the bedrooms is of simple painted board, all early-appearing. A non-historic bathroom was created within the attic-space of the octagon in the early 1990s, and wrapping around the stairwell, continues to a small storage area. An unusual feature of this area is the 1/1 wood-sash window that lights the interior stairwell, channeling the light from the gable dormer described above..

The Beeson-Foss Ranch House, containing elements of the original 1863 octagon as modified in 1893 by the construction of the vernacular portion to the west, accurately and effectively document its construction history and retains sufficient integrity in materials, workmanship, design and overall character to successfully relate the associations that make it significant. The Beeson-Foss Ranch House is counted as *Contributing Building* under Section 5.

WATER TOWER: c1893

Originally a free-standing structure as shown in available historic images (See Photo #2), the exact construction date of the water tower is unknown but presumably dates from the Foss period. Consisting of a tapered volume approximately 60' tall, the tapered shaft supports a rectangular tank house (approximately 12' x 12'0" that projects over the base in typical two-part water tower design. Structurally, the water tower is built of 6x6 RS corner posts with interior cross-braced 2x6 and 2x4 members, all appearing original. Siding is horizontal 6" wood, matching the octagon and 1893 volumes.⁶ Roofing of the tower is a typical shallow pyramidal hip, covered with asphalt shingle.

Located on a projecting "shelf" on the west-facing elevation, the early iron windmill of the water tower survives. Identified on the vane as the work of "The Motor Company" no specific information on this feature could be found although it may be a product of The Multi-Motor Company of Reno, Nevada which marketed windmills in the 1890s. (Baker, 1985:364) Shown in Photo #2, the windmill was clearly in operation by 1908.

Accessed by the series of wood stairs that wind up the interior of the building, the wood-stave and metal-banded water tank of the tower remains in place although it is no longer functional.

⁶ The first 8' of the exterior of the water tower is clad with painted T-111 sheetgoods, applied over the original material which is visible from the interior.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 7

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

At some undated time, the rear of the Beeson-Foss Ranch House was augmented by a shed-roof volume that extends from the SE corner of the octagon and connects with the water tower base, forming a single volume. On the interior, the 6" horizontal siding and entry door of the tower base survive, creating a space now used for storage. To the rear of the water tower, on its east-facing elevation, yet another added volume, also with a shed roof, forms a small space long used as an office. This latter addition, clad with T-111 sheetgoods, pre-dates 1987 when the present owners purchased the site, but is otherwise undated. Multi-pane wood windows lining the rear of this shed volume were likely salvaged and re-used.

The water tower, although now absorbed into an amalgamation with the Beeson-Foss Ranch House retains structural independence and is sufficiently separate visually and by use to be individually counted as a *Contributing Building* under Section 5.

GARAGE: c1940s-1950s

Located just to the rear of the water tower, this small wood-framed gable volume was apparently constructed circa 1940s-1950s, mostly likely after 1949 when the property left Foss family ownership. (Kounz, 1998)⁷ Built of milled 2 x 4 construction with single-thickness 1 x 8 exterior siding, the garage is divided into two dirt-floored bays. Roofing is standard asphalt shingle.

Built outside the historic period of significance as defined in Section 8, the garage is considered essentially compatible with the character of the ranch but is counted as a *Non-Compatible Building* in Section 5.

KNOWN ALTERATIONS: TL 300

Except as detailed above, no major alterations to the remaining structures on Tax Lot 300 are known. A small wood-framed gable house which was historically located to the NE of the Beeson-Foss Ranch House is shown in Photo #2. This structure existed at least as late as the early 1950s and was reportedly disassembled in the late 1960s with its materials used to partially construct the building that now occupies Tax Lot 400.⁸

⁷ Mrs. Joan Kounz, personal communication with the Author, 28-April-1998. Mrs. Kounz is the daughter-in-law of M. J. and Jessie Kounz, who purchased the property from the Foss family in 1949.

⁸ See Footnote 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 8

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

TAX LOT 302

BLACKSMITH SHOP/REPAIR SHED: c1911

This wood-framed gable building was probably constructed circa 1911, in connection with the expansion of the Foss operation but is not specifically dated. The original rectangular volume, forming the western 4/5 of the building footprint, is clad with original board and batten siding. Windows in this volume, while inconsistent, are generally multi-pane wood sash with either four or six lights. The northern portion of the structure was converted to residential use at some unknown point although much of the exterior remains unpainted board consistent with the original construction. A corrugated metal "annex," framed with modern milled 2 x 4 was built circa 1950s at the south gable end, although the original exterior volume and siding remains intact within. The "annex" has a dirt floor and houses an open metal forge, belt-driven drill press and other early metalworking equipment, probably indicating an open forge area was simply enclosed at a later date. Roofing on all areas of the Blacksmith Shop/Repair shed are standard zinc-coated corrugated metal.

To the east of the early gable volume, a similarly dated shed extension now houses the retail nut and produces sales facility that is operated seasonally to market the ranch's products. Of mixed corrugated metal and original wood board and batten siding, this space was originally the repair shed/workshop on the ranch and retains a leather-belt driven drill press, hacksaw, and two grinders from that period. Exterior windows are generally fixed wood-sash. Interior flooring is wood board, with internal posts and framing to support the pillow block, drive shaft and pulley system of the belt drive. A small covered porch area runs the east elevation of the building.

FEED BARN: c1888

While not certain, this open gable roof building may be the barn referred to in the following notice, as published in 1888.

Squire Beeson is building a commodious feed barn. Herman Stock has the contract which is sufficient assurance of a complete job."
(*Tidings*, 4-May-1888, 3;4)

Of simple construction, and clearly modified and rebuilt in portions as evident in the use of milled timbers and a new roof, original portions of this structure appear consistent with typical

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 9

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

late 19th century barn construction in the region.⁹ The Feed Barn has a dirt floor and post and beam framing. The wood shake roof is in poor condition and the structure is currently used for outdoor plant sales in connection with the ranch's agricultural sales.

Simply designed and constructed, the Feed Barn is in only fair condition but retains sufficient integrity in design, setting and workmanship to convey its role in the history of the ranch. It is accordingly counted as a *Contributing Building* under Section 5.

NUT DRYER/PROCESSING BARN: c1911

This large multi-story wood-frame structure was probably built in 1911 in connection with the "Orchard Boom" inspired expansion of the Foss walnut ranching operation. At that time the local newspaper reported;

E. E. Foss of South Talent is finishing a fine new barn. (*Tidings*,
24-May-1911)

The Nut Dryer/Processing Barn, as the name implies, is essentially a large machine housed in a stoutly built wood frame gable volume with numerous extensions and idiosyncratic spatial arrangements that reflect both its original purpose and more than 85 years of use. As a machine, the building's primary purpose is to receive the walnut crop grown on site during the October harvest period at the "washing" station, located on the west-elevation. (See Photograph 11) Spun in open web drums and flushed with water to remove dirt and residual husk materials, the walnuts then pass onto an open mesh conveyor belt for sorting before being sent upward into the second major level of the building, a series of open screen trays, where the nuts are dried. Originally the conveyor system was driven by leather belts and while the wooden pulleys, pillow blocks and drive shafts of that system survive, motive power is now via standard v-belt driven equipment.

Heat is generated in two oil-fired furnaces, located within separate rooms at either end of the dryer. Hot air is directly upward through a simple octopus-like system of open metal tubes and naturally rises, through the open mesh screens, before escaping from the building.¹⁰ Once dried, the nuts are shuttled into separate series of mesh conveyors and chutes to the a set of spouts

⁹ This barn, whatever its history, pre-dates 1949 and was in place upon the Foss sale to M.J. Kounz. No subsequent owner or anyone else familiar with the property contacted in connection with this nomination recalls any barns other than those standing as having ever been located on the Beeson-Foss Ranch.

¹⁰ While both oil-fired furnaces survive, only one is currently operational. Likely later modifications, two brick chimneys remain in the furnace rooms although the original source of heat is unknown.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 10

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

located near the SW corner of the building. (See Photograph 12) Controlled by simply leather and metal “valves” walnuts are packaged in burlap sacks for distribution and sale.

Undergoing constant stress during its operation, with belts and pulleys causing vibration and hot air turning the entire structure, in effect, into a very large chimney, the Nut Dryer\Processing Barn was exceptionally well built, with massive support timbers used in its post and beam frame. Interior partitions, such as those that form the heater rooms, is of horizontal 1 x 10 fir, all of very high quality. Flooring is generally wood, of 3” wide tongue and groove although other flooring materials are also present.

The exterior of the dryer is of vertical board and batten, similar to the original siding of the Blacksmith Shop\Repair Shed and supporting their concurrent construction dates. Original roofing was probably wood shake or shingle and is now a mixture of corrugated metal and asphalt shingle. The roof framing of the uppermost gable portion of the building, above the drying screens, was rebuilt at some point with modern milled 2x6 rafters, perhaps indicating a fire. Original appearing windows, generally multi-paned wood-sash are located throughout the building, notably the bank of windows that lines a small shed roof portion on the west-facing elevation. The foundation of the dryer is entirely post and pier and accessible portions indication the use of stones and similar found materials.

The rear, east-facing, portion of the dryer is formed by a large shed roofed area that covers a single open space, possibly used as a warehouse or packing shed but now, essentially, a storage area. Given the limited period of use of the dryer over the course of the year, only during the short harvest season, a number of smaller inserted spaces have been created within the volume. Historically these include small work rooms, shops, and storage areas of indeterminate construction date. Open wood storage is located at the SE corner. The only recent alteration identified is the creation of a small one and one-half story loft apartment at the SW corner of the building, entirely within a former storage area, that is accessed by a non-historic metal-clad fire door.

The Dryer\Processing Barn, an integral element in the walnut ranching operation at the Beeson-Foss Ranch is a locally unique agricultural processing facility and might well be considered eligible individually under Criterion C. The building, still used for its original function and retaining substantial amounts of its mechanical workings from the historic period, retains high

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 7 Page: 11

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

integrity in virtually all aspects of evaluation. As an element in the Beeson-Foss Ranch Complex, the Nut Dryer/Processing Barn is counted as a *Contributing Building* under Section 5.

MODERN FARM DWELLING: 1997

This large multi-story dwelling and its attached garage are located near the juncture of the building core area and the extended orchards that form the southeastern portion of Tax Lot 302. The Jackson County Planning Department approved construction in 1993. Designed and built by the owners, the dwelling was not completed and occupied until 1997. The Modern Farm Dwelling is considered generally compatible but is counted as a *Non-Compatible Building* in Section 5.

In summary, the major resources the Beeson-Foss Ranch, their dates of construction and evaluation for purposes of the National Register of Historic Places are;

ID	NAME	YEAR BUILT	SECTION 5 EVALUATION
1	Site and Landscape features	n/a	Contributing site
2	Beeson-Foss House	1863/1893	Contributing building
3	Water tower	c1890	Contributing building
4	Garage	c1940s-1950s	<i>Non-Contributing building</i>
5	Blacksmith Shop/Repair Shed	c1911	Contributing building
6	"Feed Barn" [early gable	c1888	Contributing building
7	Nut Dryer/Processing Barn	c1911	Contributing building
8	Modern Farm Dwelling	1997	<i>Non-Contributing building</i>

SUMMARY:

The five historically significant built resources, set within the contributing landscape of the Beeson-Foss Ranch retain very high integrity in location, design, setting, use of materials, and workmanship. Individual structures, most notably the 1863/1893 Beeson-Foss House and the Nut Dryer/Processing Barn accurately and effectively relate the development of property and effectively and accurately convey its feeling and character during the historic period. The Beeson-Foss Ranch successfully relates the associations that make it significant under Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture; Walnut Ranching
19th Century Architecture

Period of Significance

1863-1949

Significant Dates

1863-1949

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Jackson County Courthouse

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 1

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

The Beeson-Foss Ranch is a twenty-five acre property located south of the city of Talent in an unincorporated portion of Jackson County, Oregon. The land was settled in 1853 by Oregon pioneer John Beeson and his prominent son, diarist Welborn Beeson continued to live on the ranch until 1890. Largely developed into its present configuration between 1890 and 1911, the Beeson-Foss Ranch includes four contributing built resources, a house and three barns, as well as the surrounding historic orchards and irrigation features that effectively relate the property's role in southern Oregon's agricultural history. The architecturally significant Beeson-Foss House, incorporating elements of Welborn Beeson's 1863 octagonal residence as modernized in 1893 by second owner Julius Foss, is the only known octagonal residence built in southern Oregon in the 19th century and, as modified in 1893, remains one of the best identified vernacular farm residences in the Talent area. The Beeson-Foss Ranch complex is nominated for listing on the National Register under both criteria "A" and "C."

CONTEXT

The Beeson-Foss Ranch is located in what is generally known as the Wagner Creek area of southern Oregon, one of the first settled areas in Jackson County. Named after early settler Jacob Wagner by 1853, when John Beeson and his family arrived from Illinois after a journey over the Oregon Trail, Wagner Creek was one of the Rogue Valley's most populated drainage basins.

Early pioneers in the area, living in close proximity to "Fort Wagner," a palisaded rendezvous built on Wagner's property, quickly gained a reputation for both their fine agricultural efforts and liberal viewpoints and opinions. The area, though lacking the central town of its neighbors Ashland and Phoenix, developed a strong sense of identity and its residents, including the Beesons, generally prospered through selling their agricultural products to the miners and city-dwellers of the surrounding valley. In the early 1880s, as the railroad pushed south from Roseburg, former carpenter Aaron P. Talent purchased a large portion of the original Wagner claim and soon hired Welborn Beeson to survey a site for a new town along the tracks, a town eventually to be known as "Talent." Substantially established by the late 1880s, and incorporated in 1910, the town of Talent served as the service center and shipping point for the farms of the outlying area. Wagner Creek itself remained entirely lacking in any community services beyond one "spiritualist" hall and the Wagner Creek

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 2

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

School.¹ While utilizing Talent as a service and shipping center, the tight-knit Wagner Creek community adamantly refused annexation to its “upstart” neighbor and even today Wagner Creek remains an unincorporated but widely recognized region within Jackson County.

THE BEESON YEARS: 1853-1863

While the original settler of the Beeson-Foss Ranch was a “Mr. Walton,” the known history of the property begins with its acquisition by John Beeson in 1853. Born in England in 1803, Beeson migrated to America in 1830 and came to Jackson County over the southern emigrant route, a journey that was recorded in great detail by Beeson’s 15-year old son Welborn.²

...We decided on buying Mr. Walton’s claim for \$1500. We get the crops which are about 1.3 acre potatoes, acre in pumpkins, and beets, onion and a great deal of garden stuff. The farm joins Mr. Robison the south and west, Mr. Anderson on the west, U. S. on the north and Mr. Wagoner (sic) to the east. (Beeson, 5-Sept-1853)

John Beeson’s stay in Jackson County and on the subject property was short but memorable. Considered a “radical” thinker for his day, Beeson was appalled by the treatment of the area’s native people by the majority of the pioneers and freely spoke his mind on this issue. At the height of the so-called Rogue River Indian Wars in 1855, Beeson began writing for publication in the east. The most notable of his works, published as *A Plea for the Indians*, was widely influential in shaping eastern views of the Oregon Indian conflict. In particular, John Beeson was opposed to his former neighbor’s constant requests for additional government financing of the war effort.³ As might be expected, such activities won him few

¹ The former, known as the Universal Men of Liberty Hall (or UML) stood just opposite the nominated property near the intersection of Beeson Lane and Wagner Creek Road. The various wood frame Wagner Creek School buildings further up the canyon were replaced by a concrete structure in 1929. The Wagner Creek School was listed on the NRHP in 1992.

² Welborn Beeson began a daily journal at the outset of the family’s overland crossing in 1853 and continued to do so until his death in 1893. The Beeson Diaries, one of the most thorough and informative primary sources on the southern Oregon area, are now in the Special Collections of the University of Oregon library.

³ As Beeson pointed out, much of the “war” was based upon drummed up accusations that strangely ebbed and flowed with the planting season, converting the military action into little more than a money-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 3

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

friends among his fellow settlers and eventually, when a copy of *Plea* was distributed in southern Oregon, Beeson's life was placed in jeopardy.

...they called an indignation meeting which every available man attended. The paper was read and discussed and it was decided to hang this man the next morning at day break. This man had a son who was a fine young fellow and belonged to the [army] volunteers, and in some way got he got wind of the meeting...he ran home [and] got his father out of bed and rushed him to [Fort Lane]...Under guard he was taken to Crescent City, where he was put on a steamer and shipped out of the country..." (Gillette, 1917:66:67)

After leaving the Rogue Valley under armed guard, Beeson traveled to the eastern United States and continued to speak out on the mistreatment of Oregon's native peoples. He became widely known, lecturing and publishing numerous tracts via his own small press, devoted entirely to improving the native situation in southern Oregon and elsewhere. His fame culminated in 1861 when Beeson met with President Lincoln at the White House to discuss the issue. Robert Wintson Mardock, writing in *The Reformers and The American Indian* called John Beeson "...one of the most important of a large number of humanitarians who engaged in Indian policy reform activities."⁴

John Beeson did not return to live in Oregon until 1887, when he moved back to the family claim and lived on the subject property with son Welborn and his family.⁵ John Beeson died two years later, at age 85, on April 21 1889.

making opportunity for settlers prior to harvest or miners during drought. See Schwartz, *Rogue River Indian War, 1855-1856*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press), 1997.

⁴ See Eva Hamilton, "Pioneer John Beeson Defied Threats, Danger..." *Medford Mail Tribune*, 9-May-1971 and Mardock, University of Missouri Press, 1971.

⁵ Beeson's wife, Ann Welborn Beeson, died in 1866, apparently having never seen her husband again after his sudden departure from Oregon.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 4

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

John Beeson was a man of much more than ordinary ability, and enjoyed the respect and friendship of many prominent philanthropists of his time, with whom he labored for the elevation of the whole human family, and particularly for the American Indian. (So. Oregon Pioneer Association Minutes, I:142-143)

In his father's absence, 17-year old Welborn assumed management of the family farm and responsibility for his ailing mother. As early as 1861 Welborn was making improvements to the property, hiring Abel Helman to "frame up a barn" for \$5 per day and bargaining with George Dysart for 22,000 shingles at \$6.50 per thousand, delivered. (Beeson Diary, 3-Feb-1861) In late 1862 he wrote that he was "...calculating to build a new house this coming summer, if I can keep out of debt." (Beeson Diary, 31-Dec-1862)

Welborn apparently steadied his finances and his diary entries from January 1863 though Summer are filled with details of the construction of the new home. In early January he reports having bartered for brick from the kiln in Gasburg (now Phoenix) to build the chimney. The entry for 3-June-1863 states that "we raised the main part of the house today. It is quite a job to frame it and put it together." Mr. Arundahl, the brickmaker of Phoenix, also served as the mason and a carpenter identified only as "Ole" did all the finish work and planed the siding. On 26-August-1863 Beeson reported that Ole was "...putting in the partitions and casing the doors." A day laborer named *Julius Foss* is also credited by Beeson as working on the house that day. By 24-October-1863 Beeson wrote;

Will [Robison] has finished up the painting job. He has used nearly six kegs of white lead and two cans of oil. The house is painted lead color and the windows, doors, and casings [are] white. (Beeson Diary, 1863)

Welborn's new home was finally completed in late October 1863 and he and his mother at their first breakfast there on the 27th of October.

We are situated a little different now to what we were one year ago. We are now living in a new house and it is much more comfortable than that old log cabin on account of the roof. (Beeson Diary, 1-January-1864)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 5

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

OCTAGON STYLE:

It is curious to note that as far as can be determined Welborn never documented his reasoning for building a home of octagon design nor recorded any thoughts or impressions on what, at least locally, was a very unusual architectural choice. In June 1862, shortly after the framing was completely, Beeson cryptically wrote "I like the house better the more we work on it — it does look like a funny affair though."⁶ While there is no direct evidence as to Beeson's design inspiration for the 1863 dwelling it is logical to assume that the publication of Orson Fowler's *A Home For All*, a widely popular tract promoting octagon housing as "...more beautiful [and] capacious, and more consonant with the predominant or governing form of nature" served as an inspiration.⁷ Given Beeson's long association with "free-thinking" and so-called radical ideas, his choice of an octagon seems a logical one.

While the seemingly purposeful avoidance of any mention of the design in the Beeson diaries might indicate that octagon homes were so common in mid-19th century southern Oregon as to be unworthy of commentary, such was not the case. No other documented 19th century octagon or round dwelling in southern Oregon is known to have been built and contemporary accounts of Beeson's home indicate that it was perceived as a rather idiosyncratic oddity at the time, albeit one that could be expected of the independent Beeson clan. In 1884 a former valley resident, who identified himself only as "Prodigal Son," returned to the valley and the *Ashland Tidings* published a letter of his impressions on the valley's growth in the twenty-five years since he departed. After considerable comment on the changes encountered and his fear that he was in the wrong county for the lack of the familiar, "Prodigal Son" wrote

I started up the lane heading up the creek but nothing looked natural until I came to the conical-shaped roof of the dwelling of my old friend Welborn Beeson. (*Tidings* 31-Oct-1884, 1:4)

⁶ What Beeson meant here is certainly open to interpretation. No occurrence of the word "Octagon" could be found in any 1863 diary entry and while others would later refer to Beeson's unusual "conical" home, the prolifically literate Beeson does not himself appear to have ever written anything regarding his choice for the design.

⁷ Orson S. Fowler, *The Octagon House: A Home for All*, 1853. (Reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, 1973).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 6

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

A decade later the same paper reported, in connection with the remodeling of the octagon by Julius Foss, that,

J. E. Foss is rebuilding the old Welborn Beeson house on Wagner Creek. The house was built in octagonal shape and has been a curiosity in architecture for thirty years. Mr. Foss has torn down the west half of the house, but four sides of the east half still stand. (*Tidings*, 6-May-1892)

There is only one other known octagonal structure standing in Jackson County, a c1920s barn and no information regarding any other pre-existing 19th century octagon dwellings or barns in the region has been located in the course of this project.⁸

BEESON YEARS: 1863-1890

In 1866, three years after completing the octagon house, Welborn married Mary Catherine Brophy and over the ensuing decades the couple had eight children. Welborn was beset by a variety of health problems and by the early 1880s, with his health “..having broke down completely...” entrusted the management of the farm to his eldest son, 15-year old Emmett.

Like his father, and many of early residents of the Wagner Creek area, Welborn Beeson was what was at the time was referred to as “a free-thinker.” Of other-than mainstream religious convictions, Beeson has been described as a agnostic, an atheist and a “spiritualist.” He was a leader in the various social and political organizations that promoted those types of issues in the predominately, and somewhat unusually, liberal enclave along Wagner Creek during the latter 19th century. Following his father’s lead, Welborn wrote articles and letters that were published in the local paper and, again like his father, his views were often diametrically opposed to much of the Rogue River Valley. However, perhaps as the result of his failing health, Welborn became an object of a rather fond tolerance and apparently was successful professionally (as a surveyor) and generally respected as far as can be determined. Welborn’s last diary entry, written in February 1893, was a rather somber reflection of an assuredly interesting life.

⁸ The sole other octagonal structure known to remain in Jackson County is the Balfour-Guthrie Co. Barn, built circa 1925 in the Ashland vicinity. (See Clay and Atwood, Jackson County Cultural & Historical Resource Survey, 1979/1991, site #375.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 7

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

Being lonesome and [having] nothing of interest to read, I have been looking over the diary of 1859, what memories it raises in mind, now nearly thirty-four years have passed since I penned the foregoing pages...I have worked and toiled through many ups and downs and am now the father of eight children and grandfather of one. Have a comfortable home and do not owe a cent to anyone and therefore I should be thankful. I feel the heft of years upon my head and realize that but a few more are ahead of me on this earth and of the future I am ignorant but have nothing to fear. (Beeson, 5-Feb-1893)

Welborn Beeson, age 57, died on April 29, 1893. His wife survived with the couple's children, ranging in age from Emmett, then 26, to Carl, age 4. "Years hence, when we are turning over the pages of the past...the name of Welborn Beeson will come vividly to mind and we shall drop a tear to his memory." (*Talent News*, May 1893)⁹

THE FOSS YEARS: 1890-1949

In 1890, three years before his death, Welborn had moved to another portion of the original homestead claim and sold the subject 25 acre parcel, including the octagon house, to Julius E. and Emma J. Foss. (JCD 21:49, dated 25-Nov-1890)¹⁰ Julius Foss, born in Vermont in 1842, was also a southern Oregon pioneer and had first settled in the Phoenix area in the early 1850s. As noted above, he at least briefly had helped during the construction of Beeson's octagon house in 1863 and it is reasonable to assume that the two men had some sort of long-term acquaintance. After the Civil War, in which he served as a sergeant in the Oregon Volunteers, Foss married and then left southern Oregon to live in California where he found work as drayman.

⁹ Catherine Beeson, Welborn's widow, died in Sept. 1894 at age 45 from cancer, leaving Emmett in complete charge of the farm and all of his siblings at the age of twenty-seven.

¹⁰ Welborn apparently moved into a house his son Emmett had built at the corner of Wagner Creek Road and Beeson Lane, just opposite the Beeson-Foss Ranch.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 8

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

He also was what we call today the local parcel deliverer. In a trunk he possessed for non-payment of carrying charges, which he kept for a year, he found a ticket to the Louisiana Lottery worth \$10,000. He cashed in the ticket and that gave him enough money to pull up and buy a part of the Beeson place in 1890, so he came back... (Lewis Beeson, in Atwood, 1975:18)

Having purchased the Beeson House, by 1893 Foss and his family undertook the modernization of the front of octagon and construction of the vernacular Italianate portion as described in Section 7. Up to this time, under Beeson ownership, the land was apparently used to raise grains (wheat) and as forage for cattle. Typical of the close-knit pioneer community of early southern Oregon, Julius Foss was the brother-in-law of Orlando Coolidge, the noted Ashland nurseryman, and it was possibly through that connection that the property was converted to orchard use and the first walnut plantings at the Beeson-Foss Ranch were developed.

Julius Foss and his wife Emma had two children, Edward E. Foss and Nellie J. Foss. In 1900 Nellie married Welborn Beeson, Junior, who lived with his elder brother Emmett on Beeson Lane, just across Wagner Creek Road, further cementing the ties between the families. The wedding was held at Nellie's parents house and "...in honor of the joyous event the beautiful home was artistically and elaborately decorated with Oregon cut flowers and blooming plants — camellias and orange blossoms from California." (*Tidings*, 24-Dec-1900)

In 1908 the Beeson-Foss Ranch came under the management of Edward E. Foss through a life estate agreement with his parents. Edward and his wife, the former Josephine Twogood, of a prominent Josephine County pioneer family, lived on the property for more than forty years, continuing and expanding the walnut operation with the construction of the large processing barn by 1911. Edward Foss died at the family home, in April 1949 at age 73. "Foss was born in Sacramento and lived for a short time in Berkeley, coming to his Wagner Creek home when he was 14 years of age, where he has farmed to the time of his death." (ADT, 2-April-1949, 1:8) In September 1949 Josephine Foss sold the subject 25 acres to M. J. and Jessie Kounz, ending both the Foss association with the property and the historic period of significance. (JCD 322:310-12).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 9

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

WALNUT ORCHARDS IN SOUTHERN OREGON:

The rich agricultural lands of Jackson County in general, and of the Wagner Creek valley in particular, had gained considerable notice with the earliest days of the region's settlement. By 1878 the lush soils drained by Wagner Creek had achieved a certain fame for their productive capacity.

[Wagner Creek] is one of the richest portions of the Rogue River Valley and has long been noted for its melons, peaches, corn and tall timothy. (*AT*, 4-January-1878.)

In 1883, as the prospect of a railroad connection loomed, predictions for a coming agricultural boom that would surpass the county's long dependence on mining were legion. While wheat and other crops for the local market had predominated in the early years, one source noted that "...for twenty years men have been prophesying an era when the fruits of this valley will be regarded universally as the best in the world and sought for at the highest prices....Hitherto the foot-hills have been used chiefly as a grazing ground for sheep, but that the flocks will seek 'pastures new' and the land be planted extensively in vineyards and orchards is certain." (Walling, 1883:317-318) In a similar vein two years later a booster-type publication noted that "Hitherto the...complete isolation of the country, it having been 150 miles from the nearest railroad station, over a range of mountains, was a practical embargo upon the exportation of all produce." (*Rogue River Valley, Southern Oregon*, 1885)

With the arrival of the railroad, the predictions for agricultural growth came true in southern Oregon and the orchard industry quickly expanded. That dramatic growth reached its peak during the so-called "Orchard Boom" years of 1909 to 1912 and was generally limited to fruit crops—apples, peaches and, of most lasting impact, pears. However other orchard crops, notably cherries, plums, apricots and walnuts, were also a component of Jackson County's burgeoning agricultural industry.¹¹

It was during the Orchard Boom era that Edward Foss either expanded or established the walnut processing facilities on the subject property and formally developed the site into one

¹¹ Numerous other crops, such as the Tokay Grape, strawberry, Loganberry and tomatoes were all widely grown and considered an integral part of the valley's "Orchard" boom during the late 19th and early 20th centuries although it was the pear and apple crops that by far dominated the area's production and brought the area national renown.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 10

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

of the largest, if not the first, commercial walnut orchards in southern Oregon. The 1911 construction of the dryer or processing barn, apparently the first such facility in the region and even today the only such building known to survive, is the most dramatic indication of the extent of the Foss operation.¹²

The development of walnuts as an additional tree crop to augment pears and apples was supported by a wide variety of government and local “booster” agencies. “

People are just beginning to realize the Oregon's value as a walnut center and her destiny as the source of supply for the choicest markets of the future....However in all of Oregon, throughout the vast domain that seems to have been providentially created to furnish the world with its choicest nut fruit, there are, perhaps, not more than 200 acres in bearing at the present time. (Cooper, 1910:6)

On a limited scale, walnut ranching proved a popular and profitable alternative to other fruit crops in the early 20th century. The majority of the production occurred in scattered small scale “mom ‘n pop” operations intended primarily for local consumption. Given the nature of walnut growing, the comparatively high yield per tree and good return per pound, such small operations were entirely plausible.¹³ “One good walnut tree could produce well over 100 pounds and we had a pretty good small trade here for years.” (Berry, op cit.) Government statistics for walnut production in southern Oregon prior to 1920 were not located but as late as 1920 the Beeson-Foss Ranch still represented nearly *half* of the 50 acres in walnut production in Jackson County.¹⁴ Throughout the first half of the 20th century area walnut production continued to increase with 150 acres by 1930, rising to 250 acres in 1940 and 380 acres in 1948.¹⁵

¹² Mr. Don Berry, personal communication with the Author, 30-April-1998. Mr. Berry was an Agent at the OSU Extension Service office in Jackson County from 1948-1982.

¹³ One published report documents that in 1901 Mr. E. Terpening of Eugene, Oregon produced more than 3000 pounds of walnuts on just four acres of trees. (J. C. Cooper, *Walnut Growing in Oregon*, 1910).

¹⁴ One 1910 report indicates that there were “30 or 40 acres” of walnut groves planted in Jackson County with no record of any plantings in Josephine or Douglas counties but this has not been otherwise verified. (Cooper, 1910:61)

¹⁵ See Federal Cooperative Extension Service, *Oregon's Tree Fruit and Nut Crops, 1910-1949*, (Corvallis, March 1950).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 11

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

Under the direction and ownership of Edward Foss, the Beeson-Foss Walnut operation continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s, possibly with occasional added income coming from renting out the dryer operation to other area walnut growers. Sometime in the 1920s Foss purchased additional acreage from Harry S. Gleim across Wagner Creek Road and planted it all with walnuts to enlarge his operation. "Mr. Foss was quite a good businessman and was always working and improving his operation. They had almost all their property in walnuts as I recall."¹⁶ While Foss's remained the largest walnut ranch in the region, several other operations developed in the area including two or three acres of trees on the Gleim Ranch, just to the southwest, up Wagner Creek Road.

While a brief surge in local walnut production occurred just after WWII, peaking in the early 1950s, the area's production was increasingly limited by aging trees, disease, and lack of modern processing facilities. Area walnuts were found especially susceptible to both Walnut Husk Fly and Walnut Blight and these strains proved difficult to eradicate due the widespread existence of single walnut trees, planted in people's yard for their own use.¹⁷ The Foss Dryer, already almost half a century old, proved inadequate and local growers shipped their crop to a dryer in Lebanon for processing, adding considerable expense.¹⁸ In 1959 the Oregon State College Extension Service noted in its annual report on Jackson County that "Walnut and Filbert acreage continue to decrease," and their annual reports document that decline. (OSC, 1959:17) From a peak commercial acreage of 380 acres in 1948, by 1989 Jackson County reported just 26 acres of commercial groves producing 15 tons. Even that amount dropped more than 50% by 1991 to just 12 acres with production of only 5 tons.

Post 1949:

Shortly after the death of her husband in April 1949, Josephine Foss sold the 25 acre Beeson-Foss Ranch to M. J. and Jessie Kounz. (JCD 372:302-4) Marty Joseph Kounz and his family continued to operate the walnut orchard and also produced a small crop of filberts. "We processed them, dried them, sacked them and shipped them in gunny sacks

¹⁶ Mrs. Louise Gleim Helmer, personal communication with the Author, 5-May-1998.

¹⁷ Berry, op cit.

¹⁸ Berry, op cit.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 12

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

all over Oregon and into California.”¹⁹ Beset by a series of health problems, the Kounz family kept the property for only three years before selling the entire acreage to Calvin O. and Martha Webber in 1952. (JCD 372:302-4) The Webbers continued the walnut operation, but on a somewhat reduced scale. “Cal didn’t trust the old dryer on the place so he used to cart his crop up to Sutherlin and have them dried in a prune dryer up there. He just let that old dryer go and didn’t take much care of it.”²⁰ Between 1967 and 1969, partially so that they could gift a small corner parcel to a child, Webber divided the original single parcel into the present three tax lots before selling out to Paul O. and Irene Van Auken. Mr. Van Auken rebuilt the old dryer and returned to on-site processing of the walnut crop. “Mr. Foss must’ve been a genius or something, the way he’d designed that system. When I started working on it, the entire process, the elevators up to the tippy top and everything, were all run on one motor!” (Van Auken, 1998) The Van Aukens converted the old repair shed into use as a store and it was under their ownership that the Beeson-Foss Ranch came to be known as “The Nut Ranch.” In 1987 the Van Aukens sold the property to the present owners, who continue to market their own walnuts and other crops from an on-site sales outlet.

SUMMARY:

The twenty-five acre Beeson-Foss Ranch includes four historically significant resources dating from 1863/1890 to 1911, all of which successfully relate the settlement of the rural Wagner Creek area and its establishment as a hub of agricultural development in southern Oregon. The main house is significant architecturally as the remaining portion of the 1863 Octagon dwelling built for Welborn Beeson and retains extremely high integrity in setting, feeling and location. In design, workmanship, and use of materials it effectively documents the 1893 partial demolition and reconstruction of the front half of the dwelling as a vernacular I-house by Julius Foss. Along with the locally unique 1911 Nut Dryer/Processing Barn, the orchard landscape and irrigation features of the Beeson-Foss Ranch, including the water tower, blacksmith shop and feed barn, represent the single best identified example of an early 20th

¹⁹ Mrs. Joan Kounz, personal communication with the Author, 28-April-1998. Mrs. Kounz, the daughter-in-law and M. J. and Jessie, lived on the ranch with her husband Mack and his parents. She worked in the walnut operation and provided wonderful information regarding the operation in the immediate post-Foss period.

²⁰ Mr. Paul Van Auken, personal communication with the Author, 5-May-1998. Mr. Van Auken, who worked with Calvin Martin at the telephone company, later purchased the Beeson-Foss Ranch.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 8 Page: 13

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

century commercial walnut ranch in the region. The Beeson-Foss Ranch is nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under both Criterion "A," for its association with the development of the walnut ranching in the region and Criterion "C," for its elements of the 1863 octagonal Beeson House and the 1892 Italianate-inspired remodeling for Julius Foss. All the identified historic resources and landscapes of the Beeson-Foss Ranch retain very high integrity to their period of development and admirably relate the associations for which they are significant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 9 Page: 1

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

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BEESON-FOSS RANCH
Name of Property

Jackson County, Oregon
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 25.3 acres (combined total of tax lots 300, 301 and 303)

UTM References

A 1/0 5/1/7/0/2/0 4/6/7/5/7/6/0 **B** 1/0 5/1/7/2/5/0 4/6/7/5/7/6/0
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

C 1/0 5/1/7/3/8/0 4/6/7/5/4/5/0 **D** 1/0 5/1/7/3/1/0 4/6/7/5/1/8/0

E 1/0 5/1/7/1/9/0 4/6/7/5/1/8/0 **F** 1/0 5/1/7/0/2/0 4/6/7/5/4/2/0

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George Kramer, M.S.

organization Historic Preservation Consultant date 1-August-1998

street & number 386 North Laurel telephone (541)-482-9504

city or town Ashland state Oregon zip code 97520-1154

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name R. Scot & Joanne Varley

street & number 6897 Wagner Creek Road telephone (541) 535-2688

city or town Talent [vicinity] state Oregon zip code 97540

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: 10 Page: 1

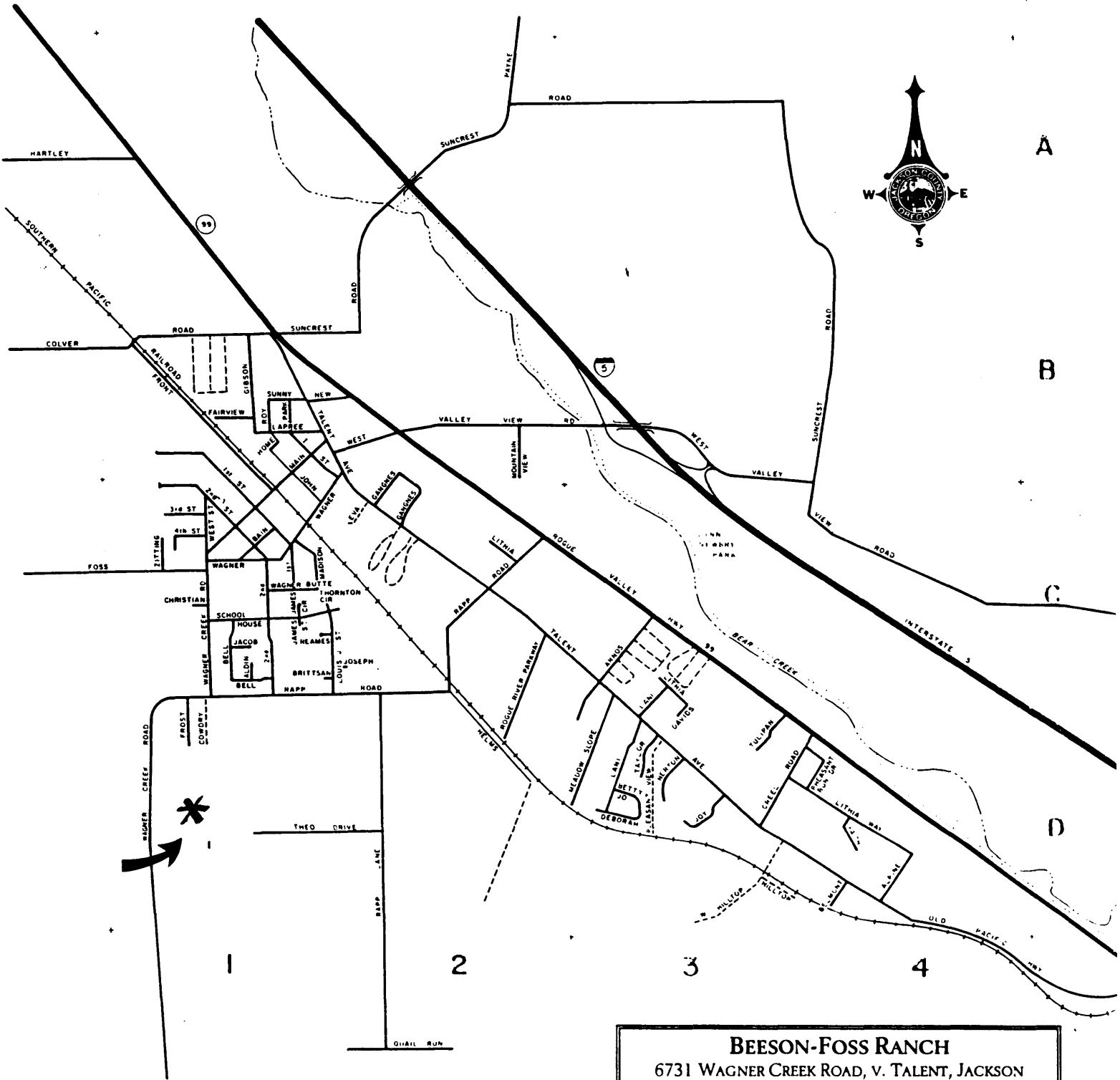
Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property area includes all of tax lots 300, 301 and 302 and shown on Jackson County Assessor's Plat 38S-1W-26C, encompassing a total area of 25.3 acres located east of Wagner Creek Road, in an unincorporated area of Jackson County, south of the City of Talent.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated area includes all the lands transferred from Welborn Beeson to Julius Foss in 1890 via Jackson County Deed 21:49 except for the small portion separated in the late 1960s and now designated as Tax Lot 400. The nominated area encompasses all of the extant built resources and site improvements that were associated with the ranch during the period of significance, and including the surrounding walnut orchard areas and related agricultural landscape that effectively convey the agricultural use.

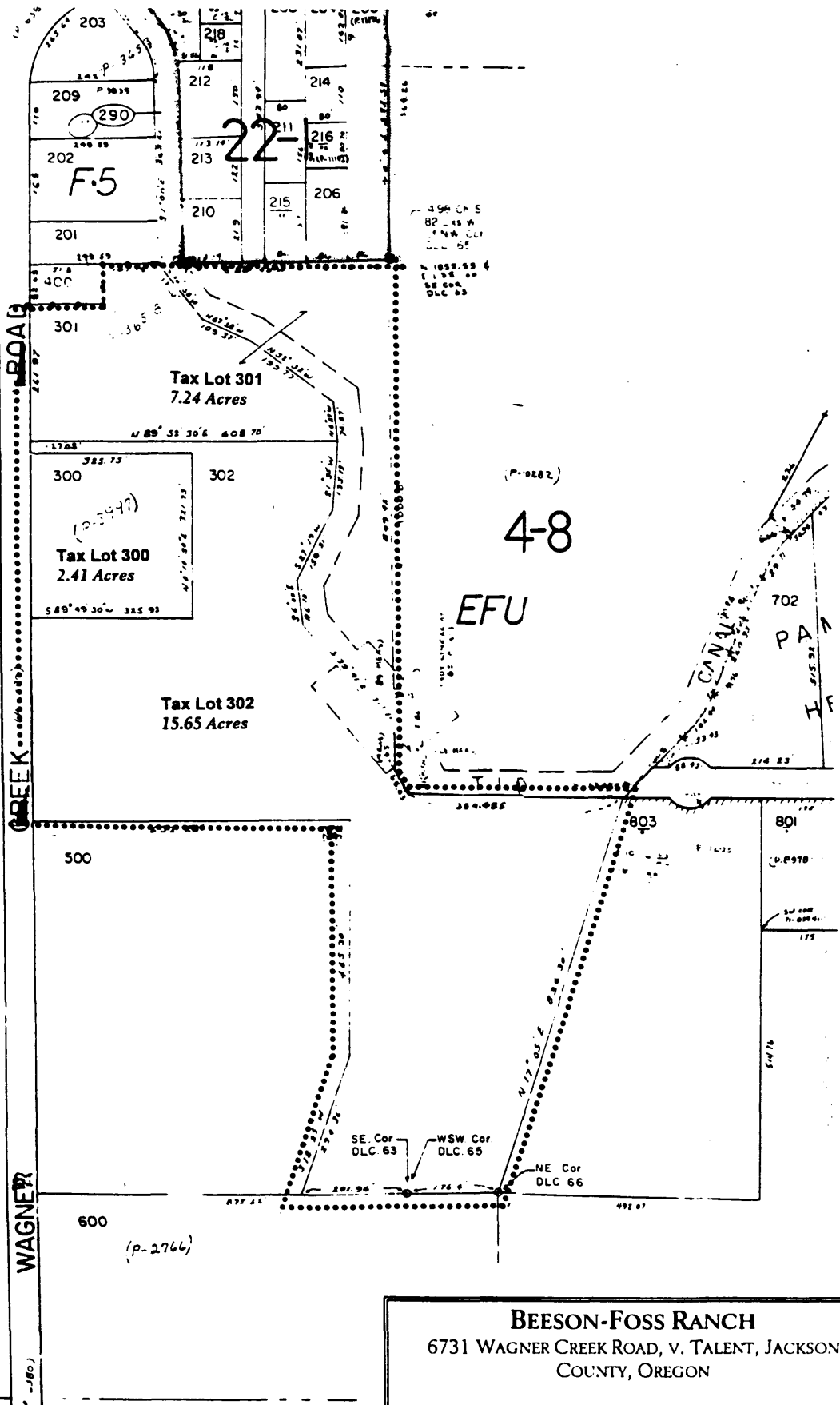


BEESON-FOSS RANCH
 6731 WAGNER CREEK ROAD, v. TALENT, JACKSON
 COUNTY, OREGON

VICINITY MAP

*SOURCE: HIGHWAY & STREET GUIDE FOR JACKSON
 COUNTY, OREGON [OREGON PATHFINDER MAPS/JACKSON
 COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS]*

1/4 COR



1354.98' E of SW
Cor DLC 63

BEESON-FOSS RANCH
 6731 WAGNER CREEK ROAD, V. TALENT, JACKSON
 COUNTY, OREGON

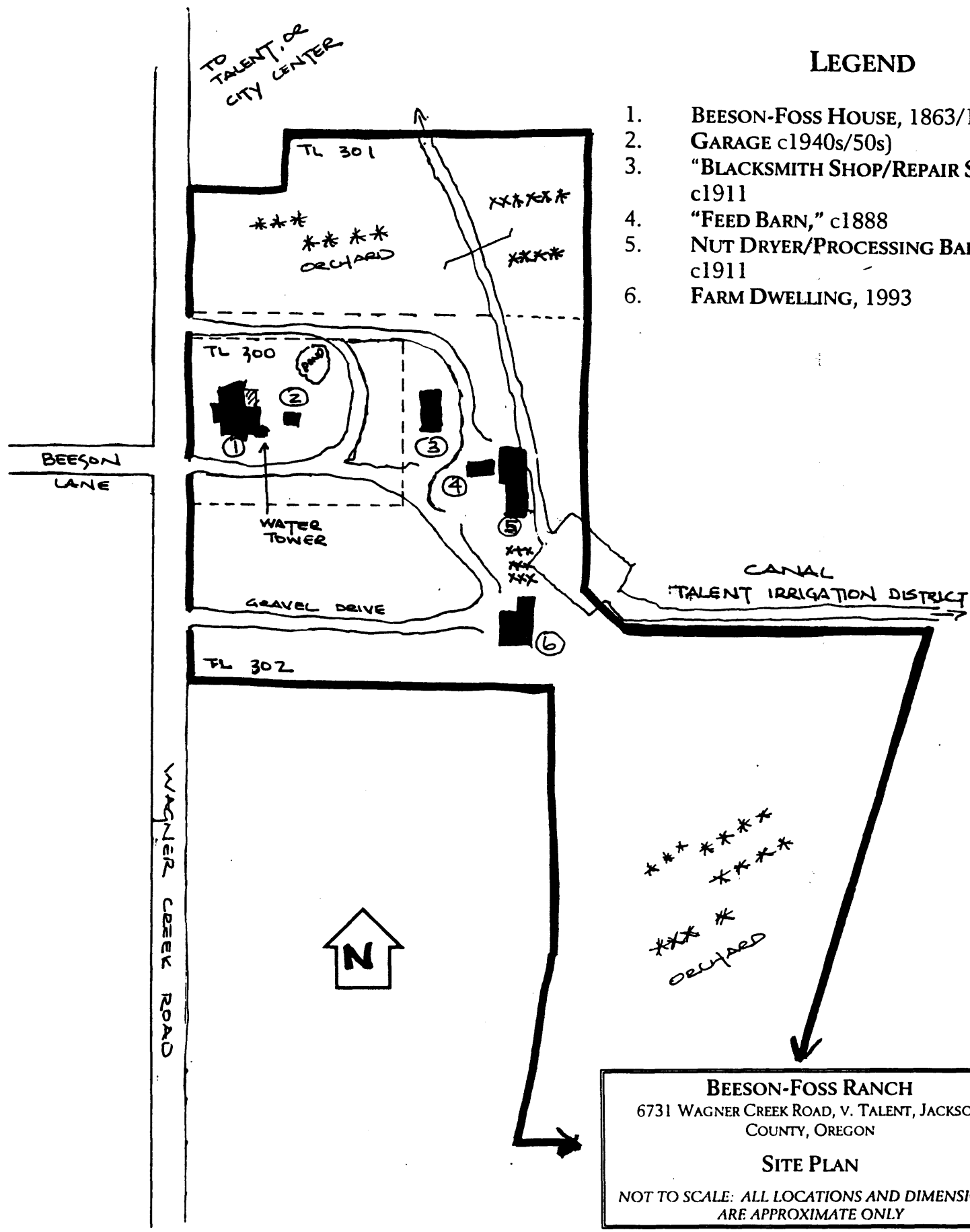
TAX LOTS
381W26C-300, 301 & 302

SOURCE: JACKSON CTY ASSESSOR PLAT

TO
TALENT, OR
CITY CENTER

LEGEND

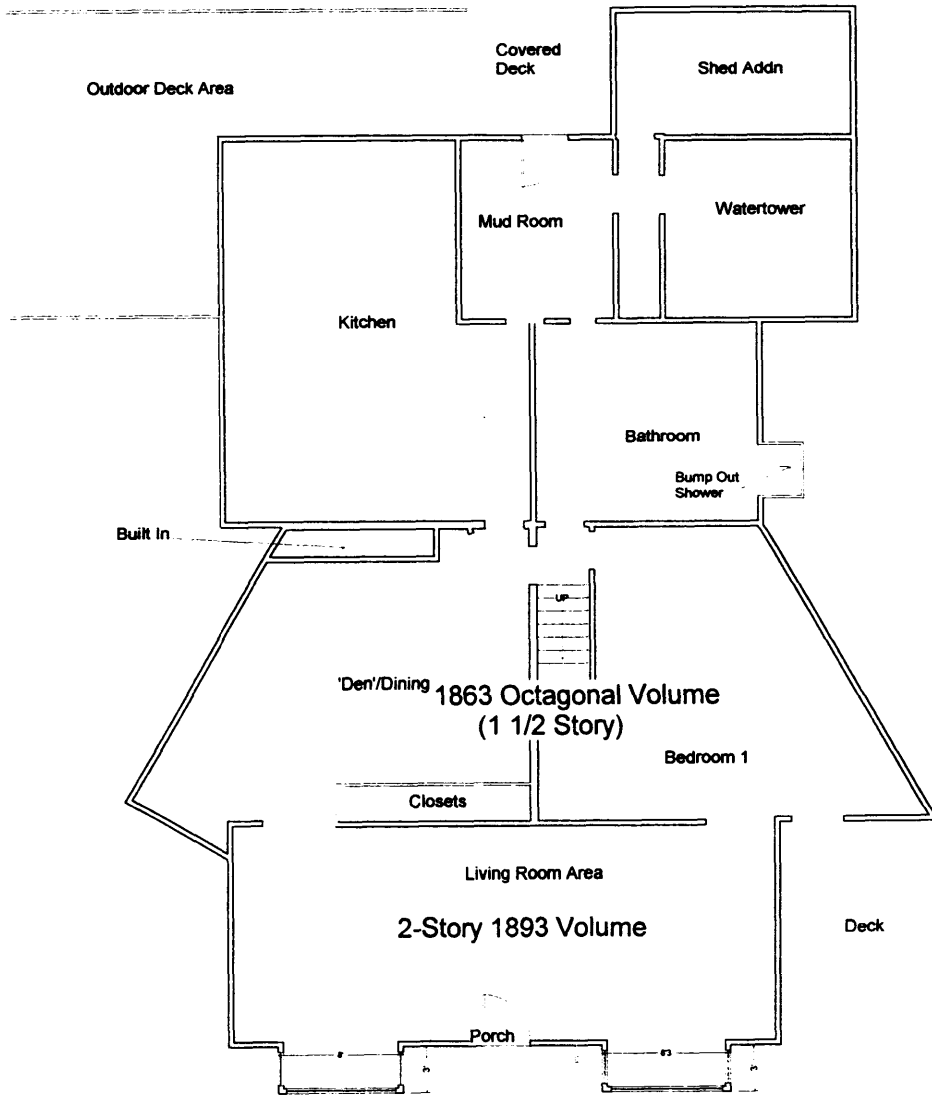
1. BEESON-FOSS HOUSE, 1863/1893
2. GARAGE c1940s/50s)
3. "BLACKSMITH SHOP/REPAIR SHED, c1911
4. "FEED BARN," c1888
5. NUT DRYER/PROCESSING BARN c1911
6. FARM DWELLING, 1993



BEESON-FOSS RANCH
 6731 WAGNER CREEK ROAD, V. TALENT, JACKSON
 COUNTY, OREGON

SITE PLAN

NOT TO SCALE: ALL LOCATIONS AND DIMENSIONS
 ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY

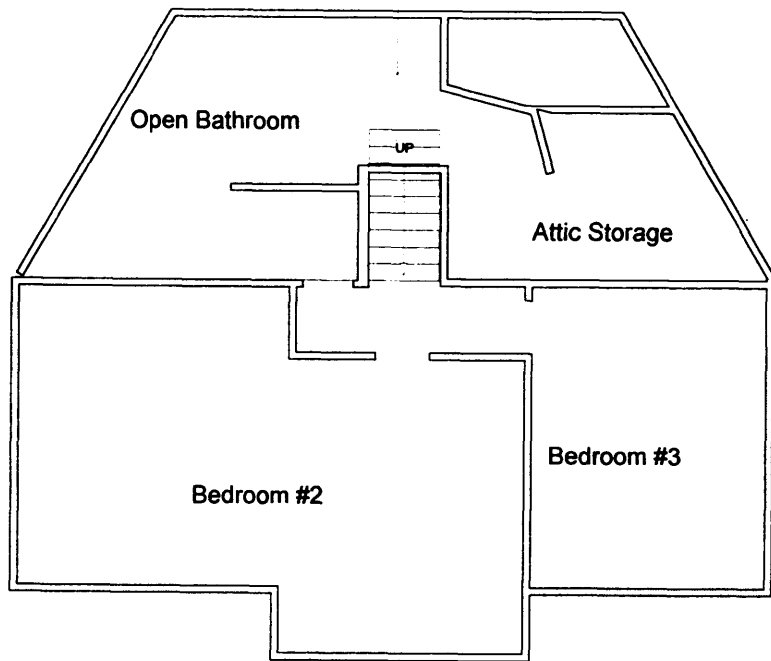


BEESON-FOSS RANCH HOUSE
 6731 WAGNER CREEK ROAD, V. TALENT, JACKSON
 COUNTY, OREGON

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

*NOT TO SCALE: ALL LOCATIONS AND DIMENSIONS
 ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY*

Dormer Area with interior
"skylight" above stairwell



BEESON-FOSS RANCH HOUSE

6731 WAGNER CREEK ROAD, V. TALENT, JACKSON
COUNTY, OREGON

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

*NOT TO SCALE: ALL LOCATIONS AND DIMENSIONS
ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: PHOTOGRAPHS Page: 1

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

1. Historic View: Beeson-Foss Ranch House
Looking: NE, from front yard
Photographer: Unknown
Date of Photograph: circa 1900
Negative: Image from Owner, copy neg. collection of G. Kramer (Neg 27)
2. Historic View: Beeson-Foss Ranch, showing water tower,
now demolished dwelling and site relationship to Wagner Creek Road
Looking: SE, from Wagner Creek Road
Photographer: Unknown, as published in "Life" Magazine, June 1908
Date of Photograph: before June 1908
Negative: Image from Owner, copy neg. collection of G. Kramer (Neg 28)
3. Current View: Beeson-Foss Ranch view
Looking: Looking NE from Wagner Creek Road.
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 22)
4. Current View: Beeson-Foss Ranch House and Water tower
Looking: NE, from front lawn area
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 3)
5. Current View: Beeson-Foss Ranch House and Water tower
Looking: NW, from central raised bed gardens
Photographer: George Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998 (Neg 6)
Negative: Collection of the Photographer
6. Current View: Beeson-Foss Ranch House
Looking: South
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 5)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Number: PHOTOGRAPHS Page: 2

Beeson-Foss Ranch, v. Talent, OR

7. Current View: Orchards, showing Blacksmith Shop in foreground
Looking: SE, from "pond" area
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 17)
8. Current View: Feed Barn (foreground), Nut Dryer
Looking: East, over central raised bed garden
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 11)
9. Current Detail: Blacksmith Shop/Repair Shed
Looking: West
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 9)
10. Current View: Nut Dryer/Processing Barn
Looking: NE
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 13)
11. Current Detail: Nut Washing Equipment, Nut Dryer/Processing Barn
Looking: NE
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 20)
12. Current Detail: Loading chutes, Nut Dryer/Processing Barn
Looking: SE
Photographer: G. Kramer
Date of Photograph: January 1998
Negative: Collection of the Photographer (Neg 21)