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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JUN 28 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printers in 12 pitch. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name: MacGregor Ranch

other names/site number: Black Canyon Ranch

2. Location

street & number: 180 MacGregor Avenue

n/a not for publication

city, town: Estes Park

x vicinity

state: Colorado

code: CO

county: Larimer

code:069

zip code: 80517

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>28</u>	<u>13</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>  1</u>	<u>   </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u> objects
		<u>29</u>	<u>13</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0



6. Functions or Use	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
<u>DOMESTIC/single dwelling</u>	<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE/animal facility</u>	<u>AGRICULTURE/animal facility</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding</u>	<u>AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuilding</u>
<u>AGRICULTURE/irrigation facility</u>	<u>AGRICULTURE/irrigation facility</u>

7. Description	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
<u>OTHER: VERNACULAR WOOD FRAME</u>	foundations: <u>STONE</u>
<u>OTHER: RUSTIC</u>	walls: <u>WOOD/weatherboard</u>
	<u>WOOD/log</u>
	roof: <u>WOOD/shingle</u>
	other: <u>METAL</u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The MacGregor Ranch was begun in 1873 by Alexander and Clara MacGregor, and was operated as a cattle ranch by three generations of the MacGregor family for nearly one hundred years. The 1200-acre ranch encompasses forty-one buildings and one irrigation ditch system. Of these forty-one buildings, twenty-eight, or sixty-eight percent, contribute to the MacGregor Ranch historic district. The Black Canyon ditch contributes to the district as an historic structure. Many of the buildings on the MacGregor Ranch were constructed prior to 1900; the earliest buildings date to 1873. The ranch, which has a period of significance of 1873-1939, has retained a high degree of historic integrity, and is an excellent representation of settlement-era, high-country ranching in the Rocky Mountain West. As early as the 1860s, the Estes Park/Rocky Mountain National Park area was acclaimed for its scenic beauty and became a popular tourist resort. Typical of many other high-country ranches in the area, the MacGregor Ranch provided tourist accommodations and is also significant for its early associations with tourism.

Since 1973, the MacGregor Ranch has been operated as a living history museum. The property is managed by the Muriel L. MacGregor Charitable Trust, which has restored the ranch to its 1900 appearance. The main ranch house, constructed in 1896, now serves as a museum, displaying the furnishings and personal memorabilia of the MacGregor family. The family's herd of Angus cattle continue to be raised on the property. Hay is also cultivated on the ranch. As a result, the ranch's historic agricultural buildings are still in use and continue to be maintained. Historic agricultural equipment is also on display throughout the ranch complex.

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Although privately owned, the MacGregor Ranch is located within the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park, which acquired a conservation easement of the property in 1983. The ranch is situated just north of the town of Estes Park, approximately sixty-five miles northwest of Denver, Colorado. Located at the eastern base of the Continental Divide in north-central Colorado, the elevation of the ranch ranges from a height of 7600 feet above sea level at the ranch's Devil's Gulch entrance, to 9000 feet along the ranch's northwest border. With the rugged Front Range and Mummy Range in the background, the ranch is located in an open, high-country meadow, commonly referred to as a "park."

The MacGregor Ranch land is gently sloping; most of the land has a grade of eight percent or less. The eastern one-third of the ranch is made up of rock outcroppings and mixed species timber stands. Ponderosa pine trees dominate the northern and western borders of the ranch. The southern section is predominantly Douglas fir forest land with significant patches of meadowland. The land contiguous with the eastern boundary of the ranch is made up of dry land meadows, fairly dense forest stands, and rock outcroppings. Black Canyon Creek divides the ranch approximately in half, running from the ranch's northwestern corner to the entrance on Devil's Gulch Road. Black Canyon Ditch, which draws water from Black Canyon Creek, provides irrigation to the ranch's meadowlands. MacGregor Mountain, located northwest of the ranch, was named after the MacGregor family.<sup>1</sup> The ranch's natural setting has remained unchanged over the years, except for the density of the forest areas. Photographs of the MacGregor Ranch taken in the early 1900s show that the forest areas were not as dense then as they are now.

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<sup>1</sup>Although the mountain is still shown as "McGregor Mountain" on current U.S.G.S. maps, the park service has agreed to change the spelling to "MacGregor."

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The historic resources within the Estes Park/Rocky Mountain National Park area reflect a typical sequential pattern of frontier use. The area's brief mining history was quickly followed by cattle and tourism industries. With its park setting, mountain backdrop, and proximity to an established town, the MacGregor Ranch is typical of many settlement-era, high country ranches in the Rocky Mountain West. The MacGregor Ranch was unique, however, in having Rocky Mountain National Park as its neighbor. Rocky Mountain National Park, established in 1915, long before Estes Park's post World War II boom, helped protect the MacGregor Ranch's historic setting from being destroyed by encroaching development. As a result, there are few intrusions upon the ranch's scenic vistas. The ranch's spectacular views of Long's peak to the south, and Lumpy Ridge to the north create a strong sense of closure and location.<sup>2</sup>

The main entrance to the MacGregor Ranch is located off of Devil's Gulch Road, on the southeastern corner of the property. This entrance is open to the public, as the MacGregor Ranch provides access to hiking trails within Rocky Mountain National Park. The park's Twin Owls trailhead is located just north of the ranch's northern boundary. The boundaries of the MacGregor Ranch are marked by rail fences which, although historic in character, have been replaced as needed.

The buildings on the MacGregor Ranch can generally be classified as being either residential or agricultural. The residential structures housed the MacGregor family, their hired hands, and the paying guests. The agricultural structures are associated with the ranching and farming operations of the ranch. The earliest buildings are of crude log construction, which were soon followed by vernacular, wood frame structures. A dirt road leads to the main ranch house, which is surrounded by agricultural outbuildings. These buildings are clustered on the eastern half of the property. The tourist cabins are generally located on the outskirts of the ranch property. All of the buildings on the MacGregor Ranch are wood with stone foundations. Many of the buildings are constructed of wood which came from Alexander MacGregor's water-powered sawmill, which was in operation as early as 1876.

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<sup>2</sup>G. Bradford and M. Meacham, "The MacGregor Ranch, An Historic Structural Review of The Black Canyon Ranch," 1987, files of the MacGregor Ranch Museum, 3.

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Most of the residential buildings were covered with building paper over which unhewn log strips were applied in decorative horizontal, vertical, and X-patterns to achieve a rustic appearance. On the main ranch house, now used as the MacGregor Ranch museum, the log strips were applied in a pattern to replicate the MacGregor family's XIX brand. The A. Q. MacGregor house has clapboard siding. Many of the bunkhouses and summer cabins have shiplap siding. Historic photographs show that most of the buildings had wood shingle roofs. The residential buildings are generally surmounted by gable roofs; many have one or more shed or gable-roofed additions. The ranch's agricultural structures, such as the barns and loafer sheds, are generally covered with rough-sawn board and batten planking and have shed roofs.

The MacGregors lived in several residences on the property. In 1873, the family built a log cabin on the property which was used as a summer home. In 1875, a larger log cabin was built which served as the family's first year-round home. In 1880, the family enlarged the 1873 cabin into a larger home, now known as the A. Q. MacGregor House. In 1882, the 1875 cabin was also expanded into a larger home, now used as the museum office. The family built its last and largest ranch house in 1896. This building, now used as the museum, served as the family home until the death of Muriel MacGregor in 1970.

Some of the ranch buildings, particularly the rental houses, have been remodeled over the years. Generally, however, if the additions were added during the 1873-1939 period of significance, the buildings were still found to be contributing. The most common form of remodeling was the addition and enclosure of porches on the buildings. The agricultural outbuildings are very intact and have retained a high degree of historic integrity.

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New buildings on the property include recently-constructed agricultural outbuildings and a new educational shelter building. The new agricultural buildings have been constructed in a similar design and with similar materials as the ranch's historic buildings. In the case of the smokehouse, the new building is a replica of the original building. While these newer buildings were found to be noncontributing because they fell outside the period of significance, they detract little from the overall integrity of the ranch.

As part of the nomination process, the MacGregor Ranch was field surveyed in October, 1988, and February, 1989, by historians Christine Whitacre and R. Laurie Simmons. The most significant and representative of the ranch buildings were photographed by Roger Whitacre. Information on dates of construction were provided by the MacGregor Ranch staff and the Larimer County Assessor's Office. Historic photographs of the ranch also helped establish dates of construction. Two documents on file at the MacGregor Ranch supplied much of the historical and architectural information used in this nomination: "The MacGregors and Black Canyon Ranch, Three Generations of Tradition" by Clare Arthur; and "The MacGregor Ranch, An Historic Structural Review of the Black Canyon Ranch" by G. Bradford and M. Meacham. The MacGregor Ranch is the repository of the MacGregor family papers, which include diaries, personal papers, and legal documents. Although these papers were not examined during the nomination process, they were the primary source material for Clare Arthur's manuscript, which was the major source of historical information for this nomination. Museum Administrator Orpha Kendall, a personal friend of Muriel MacGregor who assisted in the collection and organization of the family papers, was also an important source of information.

The Black Canyon Ditch system is approximately nine miles in length, and originally included a fifty-foot long flume. The ditch, which may have been built as early as 1873, has an appropriation date of 1879 and

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originally had eight laterals. Although the Black Canyon ditch is still in use, it is not shown on current U.S.G.S. maps. MacGregor Ranch staff, who continue to maintain the ditch, indicate that the Black Canyon ditch has retained its historic integrity. The Black Canyon ditch contributes to the MacGregor Ranch historic district as an historic structure.

Following is a list of all buildings and structures located within the MacGregor Ranch historic district. The buildings are identified by the names they have been given by the MacGregor Ranch Museum staff. The numbers correspond to the numbers on the sketch map accompanying this nomination.

- 1) The A. Q. MacGregor House, 1873 (remodeled 1880) (photo #11)  
CONTRIBUTING

The oldest portion of the A. Q. MacGregor House was constructed in 1873 by Alexander MacGregor. The bedroom of this building, which is approximately ten feet by fourteen feet, was constructed as a log cabin and was used by the MacGregor family as a summer home before their permanent move to Estes Park in 1875. The log construction can still be seen on the interior of the bedroom. In 1880, the cabin, which is believed to have been located on the site now occupied by the museum, was moved to its present location and expanded.

After it was moved, the A. Q. MacGregor House was enlarged with clapboard sided, wood frame additions. A photograph of the building taken in the 1890s shows that by that time both the south and east porches had been added, as well as the bay window on the southern elevation. The bay window features decorative pierced wood brackets, and a six-light center window flanked by narrow, one over one windows. At some later, unknown, time, the south porch was extended to wrap around to the western elevation of the building. The south porch walls were also a later addition. The building exterior has also been altered by the addition of a new chimney, and the building's clapboard siding is now painted pink. The interior of the building was recently renovated; the walls and ceilings were repainted and wallpaper was replaced. With the exception of the log bedroom, the interior walls are lath and plaster.

Despite the porch additions and new chimney, the exterior of the A. Q. MacGregor house has retained its basic historic character and integrity. With the exception of the porch walls, the building facade (southern elevation) has changed little from the time it was photographed in the 1890s.



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- 2) A. Q. Guest House, 1880 (photo #11)  
CONTRIBUTING

This small building was constructed in 1880, at the same time the A. Q. MacGregor House was being enlarged. The building was used as guest house by the MacGregor family. The side-gabled building is of frame construction with clapboard siding, now painted pink. Like the A. Q. MacGregor house, the building has a wood shingle roof, which does not appear to be historic. The front porch of the building, which faces south, has been enclosed and remodeled with picture windows. The house has a small bay window on the eastern elevation, and a shed addition on the rear. The dates of construction of the additions are unknown, but appear to have been built within the 1873-1939 period of significance.

- 3) A. Q. Bunkhouse, c. 1880  
CONTRIBUTING

This small building was used as a bunkhouse for the MacGregor family's hired help. A shed attached to the building was used to store a horse and buggy. The residential portion of the building has shiplap siding, now painted brown. An open shed porch is located on the front of the bunkhouse, which faces west. The shed portion of the building has board and batten siding. The building appears to be unaltered.

- 4) A. Q. House Privy, c. 1980s  
NONCONTRIBUTING

Recently constructed, this small building falls outside the 1873-1939 period of significance.

- 5) MacGregor Ranch Office 1875 (remodeled 1882) (photo #12)  
NONCONTRIBUTING

The original portion of the MacGregor Ranch Office was constructed in 1875 as a cabin. Alexander MacGregor detailed the construction in his 1875 diary:

Feb. 23, "...finished snaking logs for house."

Feb. 24, "...worked on house this afternoon & got all but 4 logs up."

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Feb. 26, "Put a pole & bough roof on Kitchen of house  
put in door and window."<sup>3</sup>

The one-story, cross-gabled building has a raised stone foundation, and was originally sided with vertical, unhewn, log strips. The front gable end on the southern facade of the building originally featured the MacGregor's brand, XIX, created by patterning the log strips.

The building was partially destroyed by fire in 1981, at which time the original log section was destroyed. The building has been altered with a new facade, new windows and doors, and porch enclosures. The facade has also been altered by the addition of a new entrance on the southwestern corner of the building. The interior of the building was also entirely remodeled after the fire. While the museum office does not contribute to MacGregor Ranch, neither does it intrude upon the integrity of the district.

- 6) Bunkhouse Behind Office, c. late 1870s (photo #12)  
CONTRIBUTING

This building was constructed as a bunk house for the MacGregors' hired hands. The bunkhouse construction is typical of the other bunkhouses on the property, in that it appears to be two shed-like structures adjoined back to back, to form one very low-gabled building. The bunkhouse has overhanging eaves, exposed rafters, vertical plank siding, and four-pane windows with simple wood surrounds.

- 7) MacGregor Ranch Museum, 1896 (remodeled in the 1920s) (photos #1-5)  
CONTRIBUTING

The building now used as the MacGregor Ranch Museum was constructed in 1896, as the family's last and largest residence. Alexander MacGregor had begun the construction of this building, but died before its completion. The building later served as the home of Donald, Maude, and Muriel MacGregor. Muriel MacGregor lived in the home until her death in 1970. Since 1973, the building has served as a museum, displaying clothing, furniture, and artifacts representing the MacGregor family's life on the ranch.

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<sup>3</sup>Clare Arthur, "The MacGregors and Black Canyon Ranch, Three Generations of Tradition," 1984, files of the MacGregor Ranch, 4.

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The MacGregor Ranch Museum is a one-and-a-half story building with a partial dirt basement. The building has a single ridgeline running along the long axis of the house, creating gables at the eastern and western ends. The main section of the building has full-length, enclosed, shed porches on the front (south) and back (north) sides. The front porch wraps around to the eastern elevation of the building. Historic photographs indicate that the porches were always at least partially enclosed. Stone veneer covers the building's raised log on stone pier foundation. The side-gabled, wood-shingled roof has overhanging eaves with exposed rafters.

The MacGregor Ranch Museum is sided with unhewn log strips. The MacGregor cattle brand, XIX, was replicated by some of the log stripping and can be seen on the facade of the building. The three rooms on the western elevation of the building were later additions, added in 1900. The southwest corner of the addition is notable for its curvilinear wall with five windows. The two most lateral windows are casement type; the three center windows are fixed sash. The western elevation features a small triangular pediment above the center window. Below the window an "X" has been patterned into the log siding. The building has two new brick chimneys.

The museum building can be entered through both the front and eastern porches. The first floor interior of the building contains the enclosed porch, an office, two bedrooms, a closet, a bath, a dining room, a parlor, a kitchen, and a pantry. The floor plan is original. A center stairway in the building leads to the second floor, which consists of two rooms, and was originally used a sleeping area.

The interior has retained its historic integrity, and has been restored to its 1900 appearance. Family antiques and memorabilia are displayed throughout the first floor. The basement and second floor are currently not open for viewing. Among the many items on display are Clara MacGregor's paintings, Muriel MacGregor's childhood saddle, articles of clothing, and the family desk and Bible.

All the rooms in the original portion of the house have board walls covered with wallpaper, and feature exposed, wooden, ceiling beams. The office and the parlor are located in the front, southern half of the original portion of the house. The office is wallpapered; the parlor is covered with a plaited straw covering. The rear half of the building contains a bedroom, a dining room, and a kitchen. A door off the kitchen leads to the back porch/pantry. The kitchen has

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been wainscotted and painted. The dining room and bedroom have wallpaper. Both the kitchen and dining room have corner cabinets. The dining room has a pass-through to the kitchen along the east wall. The kitchen floor has been covered with vinyl flooring. The other rooms in the earliest part of the house feature their original wood flooring. All the rooms have simple wood trim, sometimes painted. The rugs and furnishings in the house are original.

The western addition to the building contains a bedroom, a closet, and a bath. The bedroom is located in the rounded, southwest corner of the building. The bath, in the northwest corner, contains a radiator, a toilet, sink, and cast iron tub. A small, walk-in closet separates the bedroom and bathroom. All of these rooms are noteworthy for their exposed sloping ceiling beams, with shingles between the beams, and their wood paneling, which is original.

8) Milk House, c. 1877 (photo #6)  
CONTRIBUTING

The milk house is located just east of the MacGregor Ranch museum. Built c. 1877, the milk house was used to keep milk cool. The building is a simple shed structure of plank on frame construction, covered with horizontal log slabs. The log slabs have been arranged in a decorative "X" pattern on the east elevation of the building, and in a rectangular pattern on the west elevation. The building has a full-width, open, shed porch supported by stripped log posts. The milk house's spring fed cooler is still intact.

9) Root Cellar, c. 1875 (photo #7)  
CONTRIBUTING

The root cellar was constructed c. 1875, and was used to store fruit and vegetables. Constructed of irregularly coursed stone, the front-gabled root cellar was built into the hillside behind the MacGregor ranch house. The building has overhanging eaves, exposed rafters, a corrugated metal roof, and board and batten siding in the gable ends.

10) Mausoleum, 1951 (photo #14)  
NONCONTRIBUTING

The MacGregor family mausoleum was constructed in 1951, following the deaths of Donald and Maude MacGregor. Also interred here are the remains of Muriel MacGregor, who died in 1970. The mausoleum is located just west of the MacGregor

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Ranch Museum building. The mausoleum is constructed entirely of native stone and has a flat roof. The building originally had an entrance, but was entirely sealed up after the death of Muriel MacGregor in 1970. The mausoleum falls outside the period of significance.

11) Carriage House, 1875-1900  
CONTRIBUTING

The carriage house is a one-story, front-gabled building with vertical board siding, a corrugated metal roof, and a small shed addition on the western elevation.

12) Smoke House, 1986  
NONCONTRIBUTING

This building was constructed in 1986, to replace the original smokehouse constructed c. 1877. The smoke house had been used by the MacGregor family to smoke meat and poultry. Although the building is a replica of the original building, it is noncontributing because it falls outside the period of significance.

13) Outhouse, c. 1985  
NONCONTRIBUTING

The outhouse, constructed of wood c. 1985, falls outside the period of significance.

14) Main Barn, post-1896 (photo #9)  
CONTRIBUTING

The main barn, and most of the surrounding agricultural buildings, were built sometime after 1896, as they do not appear in early photographs of the 1896 ranch house. The buildings were probably constructed by Donald MacGregor, who took over the ranch in 1896 and expanded its agricultural operations. The barn is of post and beam construction with board and batten siding. A narrow, gabled, wood-sided dormer runs the length of the roof ridge, flanked by low-pitched slopes covered with corrugated metal. The barn's upper level is a loft for loose hay; the lower level contains livestock stalls. Attached loafer sheds are located on the northern and southern elevations. (Loafer sheds are three-sided sheds used to protect livestock from bad weather.)

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- 15) Calf Shed, post-1896  
CONTRIBUTING

The calf shed, with attached loading chute, is located on the south side of the main barn.

- 16) Shed, c. 1980s  
NONCONTRIBUTING

Recently constructed, this small shed falls outside the 1873-1939 period of significance.

- 17) Chicken House, post-1896 (photo #8)  
CONTRIBUTING

The chicken house has a shed roof, and is of frame construction with vertical planks. The building has a corrugated metal roof. Two rows of windows, with simple wooden frames, are located on the southern elevation. A glassed-in, hot house of stone construction is also located on the south side.

- 18) Tack Room/Barn, post-1896 (photo #8)  
CONTRIBUTING

This shed structure has vertical, rough hewn, log slab siding.

- 19) Bunkhouse, c. 1875 (photo #8)  
CONTRIBUTING

Constructed c. 1875 as a summer cabin, this building was later used as a bunkhouse for hired hands. The building has horizontal wood siding, and a very low gabled roofline.

- 20) Loafer Shed, post-1896 (photo #8)  
CONTRIBUTING

This loafer shed is partially enclosed and was also used for hay storage. The building has a stone foundation, vertical plank siding, and a corrugated metal roof.

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- 21) Shed, post-1896  
CONTRIBUTING

Small shed with horizontal board siding and a corrugated metal roof.

- 22) Shed Complex, post-1896 (photo #9)  
CONTRIBUTING

Constructed c. 1880-1900, this complex of sheds includes two loafer sheds, a tack room, and a granary. The buildings have vertical board siding and corrugated metal roofs.

- 23) Loafer Shed #1, 1983 (photo #9)  
NONCONTRIBUTING

Located directly north of the main barn, this building was constructed in 1983 to replace the original loafer shed on this site. Although this shed has been built to replicate the original building, it is noncontributing because it falls outside the period of significance.

- 24) Mobile Home  
NONCONTRIBUTING

Mobile home used as caretaker's residence.

- 25) Shed, c. 1980s  
NONCONTRIBUTING

New shed which falls outside the period of significance.

- 26) Shed, c. 1980s  
NONCONTRIBUTING

New shed which falls outside the period of significance.

- 27) Blacksmith Shop/Hotel, c. 1875  
CONTRIBUTING

Part of this building was constructed c. 1875 as a hotel for summer guests at the MacGregor Ranch. The hotel is believed to have originally been located in

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the meadow west of its present location. The building was moved to this location and attached to another cabin, at which time it was used as a blacksmith shop. The date of the move is unknown, but it is believed to fall within the 1873-1939 period of significance. The hotel portion of the building has a gabled roof, is constructed of logs covered with slabs, and has four over four windows. The building attached to the hotel has a shed roof, is covered with corrugated metal, and has four-pane windows. The two buildings now form one L-shaped building. A small board and batten shed addition is located on the western elevation.

28) Paint Shed, pre-1885  
CONTRIBUTING

The paint shed is a small building with a gabled roofline, vertical board siding, and a corrugated metal roof.

29) New Machine Shop, 1983  
NONCONTRIBUTING

This recently-constructed building falls outside the period of significance.

30) Machine Shop, 1880-1900  
CONTRIBUTING

The machine shed, which is in deteriorated condition, is open on one side to allow for storage and repairs. The building has vertical board siding and a corrugated metal roof.

31) Tin Shed, 1875-1880  
NONCONTRIBUTING

This shed was originally located elsewhere on the ranch was moved to this location. The wood frame building has new metal siding, a new metal door, and has lost its historic integrity.

32) Loafer Shed, pre-1900 (photo #10)  
CONTRIBUTING

This loafer shed has a corrugated metal roof, exposed rafters, and vertical plank siding.



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- 33) Loafer Shed, pre-1900 (photo #10)  
CONTRIBUTING

This loafer shed has a corrugated metal roof, exposed rafters, and vertical plank siding.

- 34) Birthing Shed, c. 1900 (photo #10)  
CONTRIBUTING

The cattle birthing shed is a partially open building with a shed roof and vertical board siding.

- 35) Turkey House, 1875-1885 (photo #10)  
CONTRIBUTING

The turkey house is a front gabled building with vertical board siding.

- 36) The Quiner House, c. late 1870s  
CONTRIBUTING

The Quiner House was built as a summer home for Emily Quiner, a cousin of Alexander MacGregor. The building is a one-and-half-story log structure, which has had several frame additions covered with log siding. A full-width front porch dominates the facade of the building. Although the building has been added on to several times, the additions were made during the 1873-1939 period of significance. The building still retains its basic historic character and contributes to the historic district.

- 37) Education Shelter, 1988  
NONCONTRIBUTING

Open, three-sided shelter constructed in 1988 as a demonstration/exhibit area for school groups visiting the museum.

- 38) Black Canyon House, post-1900 (photo #13)  
CONTRIBUTING

This building was one of the rental properties on the MacGregor Ranch. Built into a bluff overlooking Black Canyon Creek, the one and one-half story

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house has clapboard siding and has had several additions, most within the period of significance. The additions to the building demonstrate the changing needs of the ranch during its development. Alterations to the building include roof dormers, and a deck on the eastern elevation. The foundation level of the building is sided with rough hewn log slabs, patterned to replicate the XIX MacGregor brand. A wrap-around enclosed porch dominates the front, northern, facade of the building. The building is now used as staff housing.

39) Black Canyon House Bunkhouse/Barn, post-1900 (photo #13)  
CONTRIBUTING

This one-story, wood frame structure is made up of a small bunkhouse with two large, open, shed additions on the northern and southern elevations. The bunkhouse facade faces east.

40) Loafer Shed, c. 1900  
CONTRIBUTING

Located approximately one half mile northwest of the MacGregor Ranch museum, this loafer shed has vertical plank siding.

41) Loafer Shed, c. 1900  
CONTRIBUTING

Loafer shed with a shed roof and vertical plank siding.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: \_\_\_ nationally  X  statewide \_\_\_ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  X  A \_\_\_ B  X  C \_\_\_ D  
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance Significant Dates

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

1873-1939

1873, 1875, 1877

AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

1880, 1896

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alexander Q. MacGregor

Donald MacGregor

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

The MacGregor Ranch meets criterion A for its significance in the exploration and settlement of the Estes Park area and for agricultural significance

The MacGregor Ranch, begun in 1873 by Alexander and Clara MacGregor, is representative of early high country ranching in the Rocky Mountain West. The ranch, privately owned but located within the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park, was operated as a cattle ranch by three generations of the MacGregor family for nearly one hundred years. The MacGregor Ranch is also significant as a representation of early tourism in the region. By the early 1860s, the Estes Park area had earned a well-deserved reputation as one of nation's most scenic areas, and the MacGregors, like many other pioneer settlers in the area, offered tourist accommodations on their ranch. Rocky Mountain National Park once included several examples of these early "dude ranches," most of which have been removed. The MacGregor Ranch survives as one of the earliest and most intact examples of these tourist and resort ranches. Because the ranch buildings have architectural significance as rare representations of 19th century high country ranching and tourist accommodations in the Rocky Mountain National Park, the MacGregor Ranch meets criterion C.

Included within the MacGregor Ranch are forty-one buildings, and the Black Canyon irrigation ditch. Of the forty-one buildings, twenty-eight contribute to the historic district. The Black Canyon irrigation ditch contributes to the district as an historic structure.

X  See continuation sheet

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The period of significance for the MacGregor Ranch historic district is 1873 to 1939. The 1873 date represents the founding of the ranch. The 1939 date was selected because it is in compliance with the requirement that any historic property listed on the National Register be at least fifty years old. At some future point, the period of significance could be extended to 1970, which marks the death of Muriel MacGregor and the end of the family ownership of the ranch.

Since 1973 the MacGregor Ranch has been operated as a living history museum. In 1983, Rocky Mountain National Park Acquired a four million dollar conservation easement on the MacGregor Ranch, and the ranch is owned and operated by the Muriel L. MacGregor Charitable Trust.

Native Americans and Early Explorers in the Estes Park/Rocky Mountain National Park Area, pre-1860

Various Indian tribes were among the first inhabitants of the area surrounding the MacGregor Ranch. Abner Sprague, who settled in the Estes Park area in the 1870s, remarked: "That the Indians made Estes Park a summer resort there is no question, as evidence of their summer camps were everywhere." The Utes, who occupied all the mountainous lands in Colorado, had the longest and strongest claim to the area. Hunters and gatherers, the Utes spent the summer months traveling through their customary hunting territories, which included the high mountain valleys in what is now Rocky Mountain National Park. In the winter, they would migrate to lower, warmer elevations. Several historic Indian trails have been located within Rocky Mountain National Park.<sup>4</sup> Other tribes who may have frequented the area include the Shoshoni, who dominated the mountain range north of what is now Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Arapahoe, who were often at war the Utes.<sup>5</sup> Although little supporting evidence exists, the Estes Park/Rocky Mountain National Park area was reportedly the site of several

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<sup>4</sup>J. Donald Hughes, American Indians in Colorado (Boulder: Colo.: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977), 27; C. W. Buchholtz, Rocky Mountain National Park, A History (Denver: Colorado Associated University Press, 1983), 8; and Betty Yelms and Ralph L. Beals, Indians of the Park Region (Rocky Mountain Nature Association, July 1934), 6.

<sup>5</sup>Hughes, 33; and Buchholtz, 22.

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battles between these warring tribes.<sup>6</sup>

The earliest European explorers in Colorado were Spanish who, beginning in the sixteenth century, traveled northward out of Mexico. There is, however, little evidence that they entered the area around Rocky Mountain National Park. By the beginning of the 1800s, fur traders and trappers were actively working in the area, and a number of trading posts were built along the South Platte River in the plains east of Estes Park. In 1820, Major Stephen H. Long led an expedition that scouted the base of the Colorado mountains. Although they did not enter what is now Rocky Mountain National Park, the expedition surveyors were able to identify from a distance the park's highest mountain peak, which was later named Long's Peak.

The first documented report of the Estes Park area was written by Rufus Sage, who visited the area in 1843 and wrote of its spectacular scenic beauty.<sup>7</sup> As part of the Colorado Scientific Exploring Expedition of 1868, John Wesley became the first "official" surveyor to explore the area. Within the next several years, several other government surveys entered the region. Both Arnold Hague's expedition, a subdivision of the King's Fortieth Parallel Survey, and the U.S. Geological Exploration survey team, under the direction of Clarence King, entered Estes Park in 1871. The U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, led by Ferdinand Hayden, followed in 1873.<sup>8</sup>

America's westward expansion, accelerated by the gold rush to California in the 1840s, ended the traditional lifestyle of Colorado's Native Americans. Although an 1849 treaty assured the Utes that they would be able to stay in their "accustomed territory," the Colorado gold rush of 1858 put even more pressure on Colorado's tribal lands.<sup>9</sup> New towns sprang up in the mountains and plains, on land that had been promised to the Indians. Under the Great Ute Treaty of 1868, the Utes gave up claim to their lands in north central Colorado, including those

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<sup>6</sup>Buchholtz, 22-24.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 57-60.

<sup>9</sup>Hughes, 54.

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surrounding what would in a few short years become the MacGregor Ranch.<sup>10</sup>

Pioneer Settlement of the Estes Park area, and the Development of Cattle Ranching and Tourism, 1860-1900

In 1860, Joel and Patsy Estes established the first permanent residence in the mountain park that would later bear their name. A native of Kentucky, Joel Estes had originally traveled west during the California gold rush, temporarily settling in Oregon and California. In 1859, the Estes family followed the gold rush to Colorado. The following year, Joel Estes explored the Estes Park area, which he saw was suited for raising cattle. The Estes family took possession of the land, using the frontier custom of squatting upon and claiming vacant land. By the end of 1860, the family had built a home and established a herd of about sixty cattle on their land. But the Estes family soon became discouraged by the weather. The winter of 1864-65 was especially severe and, shortly thereafter, the family left in search of a milder climate.<sup>11</sup>

Before Joel and Patsy Estes left, however, they had planted the seeds of what were soon to become Estes Park's two major industries: cattle ranching and tourism. The Estes family often accommodated tourists who visited the area during the early 1860s, particularly climbing parties attempting to scale Long's Peak. Mrs. Estes would prepare meals for the guests.<sup>12</sup> Among the family's guests was Rocky Mountain News editor William N. Byers, who spent two nights with the family during a climbing expedition up Long's Peak in the summer of 1864.<sup>13</sup> Byers, who was one of the state's most aggressive boosters, later wrote glowing reports of Estes Park's natural beauty and encouraged others to visit there.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 56-57, 62-63.

<sup>11</sup>June E. Carothers, Estes Park, Past and Present (Denver: The University of Denver Press, 1951), 17; and Buchholtz, 45-48, 55.

<sup>12</sup>Buchholtz, 71.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>14</sup>Clare Arthur, "The MacGregors and Black Canyon Ranch, Three Generations of Tradition," 1984, files of the MacGregor Ranch Museum, Estes Park, Colo., 1.

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The adventurous English traveler Isabella L. Bird also visited Colorado in 1873. Her best-selling account of that journey, A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains, was published in both New York and London in 1879. Bird, who was a critical observer, described Estes Park as "one of the most entrancing spots on earth."<sup>15</sup> "I have just dropped into the very place I have been seeking," she wrote, "but in everything it exceeds all my dreams."<sup>16</sup>

The publicity, the scenery, and the healthful climate drew increasing numbers of adventurers to the Estes Park area. Like the Estes family, local ranchers opened their homes to travelers. Isabella Bird stayed on the "dude ranch" of Griff Evans, who offered accommodations as early as 1872. By 1874, Abner Sprague, who homesteaded along Big Thompson Creek, had also opened his home to paying guests.

Another English adventurer impressed with the natural beauty of Estes Park was Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, otherwise known as the Earl of Dunraven. The English nobleman first came to Estes Park on a hunting expedition in 1872, returning again in 1873 and 1874. An enormously wealthy man, the Earl of Dunraven was so impressed with Estes Park's rugged scenery and plentiful game that he began purchasing almost the entire area. While his original intent was to build a private game reserve for the use and pleasure of himself and his friends, the Earl soon realized and took advantage of the increasing number of tourists in the area. In 1876, he commissioned the internationally renowned artist Albert Bierstadt to paint a landscape of Estes Park and Long's Peak. While Bierstadt was working on the painting, Dunraven asked the artist to help him select a hotel site in Estes Park. When Dunraven's Estes Park Hotel opened in 1877, Estes Park's place as a major tourist resort was secure.<sup>17</sup> By 1900, tourism had become a way of life for ranchers and settlers in the Estes Park area.

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<sup>15</sup>Isabella L. Bird, A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains, 1960 edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 116.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 73

<sup>17</sup>Buchholtz, 66-72; and Carothers, 36.

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The First Generation of MacGregors: Alexander and Clara

In 1872, the same year that the Earl of Dunraven made his first hunting trip to the area, Alexander MacGregor and Mariae Clara Heeney also visited Estes Park for the first time. MacGregor and Heeney were drawn to Estes Park for the same reason as the English nobleman, by the area's spectacular scenic beauty. And, like the Earl, MacGregor and his future bride would soon make plans to acquire land in the area.

Alexander Quiner MacGregor was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1846. He moved to Colorado in 1869, and by 1872 was advertising his legal services in Denver newspapers.<sup>18</sup> Clara Heeney was also a native of Wisconsin, but apparently she and MacGregor had never met in their home state. A student of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Clara came to Estes Park in the summer of 1872 as a member of an art sketching group. Alexander MacGregor was also visiting Estes Park that summer, and he and Clara apparently became acquainted. Clara returned to Wisconsin in the fall of 1872, and she and MacGregor were married in Wisconsin in 1873. Soon after their marriage, the newlyweds, accompanied by Clara's mother, Georgianna Heeney, returned to Colorado. The 1873 Denver City Directory indicates the MacGregors were living in Denver, with Alexander working as a clerk in the Probate Judge's Office. The 1874 and 1875 directories list his occupation as a lawyer.<sup>19</sup>

Alexander MacGregor began his active life in Estes Park by constructing a toll road into the area. The early road into Estes Park was narrow and difficult, little more than a trail up the Saint Vrain River. In 1874, the Park Road Company petitioned Larimer County for permission to operate a toll road from St. Vrain to Estes Park. Whether or not MacGregor was involved in the initial phases of that project is unclear, but by the end of the year he had taken over construction of the road. MacGregor also hired several men to begin construction of a road from Glenn Evans, just north of present day Lyons, to Estes Park. This route, which is now U.S. 36, follows the North Fork of the St. Vrain River and the Little Thompson River. MacGregor's mother-in-law, Georgianna Heeney,

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<sup>18</sup>The Rocky Mountain News, 15 February 1872, 1; and 18 January 1873, 1.

<sup>19</sup>Clare Arthur, "The MacGregors and Black Canyon Ranch, Three Generations of Tradition," 1984, copy in the files of the MacGregor Ranch Museum, Estes Park, 1-2; and the Denver City Directories, 1873, 1874, and 1875.



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invested ten thousand dollars in this second undertaking, which MacGregor incorporated as the Estes Park Wagon Road in 1875.

MacGregor's toll road formally opened on 28 July 1875. However, despite the fact that it was the first good road into the area, MacGregor's road was plagued with difficulties. Maintenance of the road, aggravated by rock slides and washouts, was a continual problem. The toll was also apparently extremely unpopular; between October 1876 and January 1877 the toll gate had to be replaced twice, having been destroyed by vandals. In 1882, MacGregor sold the road to a group of Longmont businessmen.<sup>20</sup>

Settlement and Ownership of the MacGregor Ranch, 1873-1970

While his family remained in Denver, Alexander MacGregor began construction of the MacGregor Ranch in Estes Park. MacGregor had, apparently, been acquiring land in the Estes Park area as early as 1873. During this time, western settlers were given two options for acquiring federal lands. The 1862 Homestead Act allowed the head of a family to claim up to 160 acres of surveyed land by settling and cultivating the land for five years, after which time he or she would receive title. The Pre-emption Act of 1841 allowed anyone twenty-one years or older to settle up to 160 acres as a squatter. Once the land was settled and improved, the settler could purchase it at a minimum of \$1.25 per acre.

Alexander MacGregor was an alert and clever businessman, who closely followed the status of lands in the Estes Park area. Using both the Homestead and the Pre-emption Acts, as well as other purchase methods, MacGregor, his wife, and his mother-in-law began acquiring lands surrounding Black Canyon Creek, facing Long's Peak. Land titles were not received upon settlement, and it is difficult to determine exactly when family members first claimed the land. They may have filed as early as 1873, although MacGregor first received title to a portion of the ranch on 5 February 1878. MacGregor family tradition also holds that the ranch was begun in 1873. The filing decree of the Black Canyon Ditch, which is located on the property and was constructed by the MacGregors, states that the construction of the ditch began on 15 May 1873, which would indicate

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<sup>20</sup>Arthur, 2-4, Carothers, 47.

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that they had already claimed the property.<sup>21</sup> The MacGregor family also acquired property through tax sales. From December, 1883, to March, 1893, Alexander MacGregor purchased fourteen claims from the Larimer County Treasurer's Office by paying back taxes on the land, often for as low as \$2.00 a claim.<sup>22</sup>

On 22 May 1875, the MacGregor family began moving to Estes Park. Alexander MacGregor noted the move in his diary: "Left Denver with wife & Baby, 2 trains loaded with furniture for Estes Park." The move was slow and difficult, and the MacGregors did not actually move into their house until the ninth of June.<sup>23</sup> The MacGregors' first son, George, had been born 22 January 1875. Their child's impending birth was, no doubt, the reason for the family's delay in moving to Estes Park. The MacGregors' second son, Donald, was born in 1878. Their youngest son, Halbert, was born in 1888.

Even before moving his family to Estes Park in 1875, MacGregor had built a summer cabin on the ranch in 1873 and had begun assembling a herd of cattle. In November 1874, the MacGregor's XIX brand was recorded. This brand, the design of which was incorporated into some of the ranch buildings, is still in use today. The cattle were raised for both beef and dairy production, and appear to have been mainly the responsibility of Clara MacGregor. Beef cattle were sold to individuals in Estes Park; dairy cows were often rented, especially to families with babies. Mrs. MacGregor also sold dairy products.<sup>24</sup>

Native meadow grass was cultivated to provide hay for cattle feed during the winter months. Additional grains were also grown, with oats proving to be the most profitable. The MacGregors maintained a kitchen garden, which supplied various vegetables including peas, lettuce, and potatoes. This garden, located in front of what is now the ranch museum, is still being cultivated by MacGregor Ranch staff and volunteers. Irrigation was provided by the family's Black Canyon Ditch, which drew water from the Black Canyon Creek and from eight springs

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<sup>21</sup>Filing Map of the Black Canyon Ditch, State Engineer's Office, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>22</sup>Arthur, 4-5.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 5-6.

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located on the property.<sup>25</sup> Ice was also an important cash crop for the MacGregors; an ice house, no longer standing, was built on the ranch in 1874.

The MacGregor Ranch served as the first post office in Estes Park, established 2 January 1876.<sup>26</sup> The MacGregors also operated a general store for the community, providing flour, corn meal, sugar, salt, coffee, and other necessities. Another family source of revenue was Alexander MacGregor's water-powered sawmill, which was in operation as early as 1876 but which no longer stands. Many of the buildings on the ranch were constructed with lumber from this mill, and lumber was also sold to the community. A ditch led water "onto a bluff above Black Canyon Creek where it was collected in a penstock and dropped thirty feet upon a Leffel wheel, giving 18 horsepower for the saw mill."<sup>27</sup>

Tourism and the MacGregor Ranch

Very soon after settling in Estes Park, the MacGregors recognized and took advantage of the area's growing popularity as a tourist resort. Visitors pitched tents along Black Canyon or stayed in log cabins built on the hillside north of the creek, and were fed by Mrs. MacGregor. As early as 1876, the MacGregor family offered boarders a room, meals, and washing for seven dollars a week; horses could be stabled for fifty cents a day without feed. An 1878 visitor to the MacGregors' described the ranch:

"...there were many people on pleasure bent, some in tents or small cottages, and some in the main home building. The refined atmosphere of the house was most attractive.

"Mr. MacGregor had about twelve hundred acres in his ranch,

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<sup>25</sup>Black Canyon Ditch and MacGregor Springs filing decrees and maps, State Engineer's Office, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>26</sup>Bauer, William H., James L. Ozment, and John H. Willard, Colorado Postal History: The Post Office (Denver: J-B Publishing Co., 1971), 52.

<sup>27</sup>Arthur, 6.

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from which the table was supplied with fresh vegetables, eggs, butter, cream and other tempting viands."<sup>28</sup>

Several Denver newspaper accounts from 1881 also refer to the MacGregor's ranching operations and hotel. An 1899 Denver Times account called it "a favorite resort" in the Estes Park area.<sup>29</sup>

Muriel MacGregor, grand-daughter of Alexander and Clara MacGregor, recalled that many of the MacGregor Ranch tourists were annual, coming to the ranch year after year. "If they wished to build their own cabins, my grandfather gave them long term leases for a nominal sum on whatever plot they wished," she wrote.<sup>30</sup> Among the regular visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Washington McClintock of Denver, who first visited Estes Park in 1872 and who built a vacation home on a slope near the MacGregor Ranch house. The McClintock's daughter, Mrs. Charles A. Graham, also built a home on the ranch, as did Emily Quiner, Alexander MacGregor's cousin. Other regular visitors included Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Light, and the Reverend and Mrs. Charles H. Walker.

In addition to his ranching operations, MacGregor continued practicing law, often performing legal services for his Estes Park neighbors. His best-known legal action may be his involvement with the community fight against the Earl of Dunraven, some of whose land holdings in Estes Park had been acquired fraudulently. By checking the names on the Earl's claims, MacGregor found that "with the exception of the last one, the names of the parties proving up were all fictitious."<sup>31</sup> The Earl was pressured into surrendering much of his land. He eventually became disillusioned about his Estes Park venture, and left the area

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<sup>28</sup>Carrie Adell Strahorn, Fifteen Thousand Miles By Stage (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 66.

<sup>29</sup>The Rocky Mountain News, 17 February 1881, 4; The Rocky Mountain News, 2 August 1881, 4; The Rocky Mountain News, 18 June 1881, 8; and the Denver Times, 25 June 1899, 17.

<sup>30</sup>Muriel L. MacGregor, "Tales of Pioneer Days on MacGregor's Ranch," (Estes Park) Trail Gazette, 19 April 1935, pp. 10, 27-28.

<sup>31</sup>Letter from A. Q. MacGregor to James A. Jones, Special Agent, Interior Department, 23 July 1881, files of the MacGregor Ranch Museum.

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in disgust in the late 1880s.<sup>32</sup>

In 1882, Clara and Alexander MacGregor ended their permanent residence of their Estes Park ranch. In the early months of that year, the MacGregors apparently decided to make Estes Park their summer home, and rented out their ranch house. In February 1882, the family moved to a residence at 612 California Street in Denver. On 20 May 1882, Alexander MacGregor was appointed Larimer County Judge, and that summer MacGregor divided his time between Fort Collins, the county seat, and Estes Park, where his family returned to spend their summer.

In October, 1882, the MacGregors moved again, this time to Fort Collins, where they lived for at least three years. By 1887, and perhaps as early as 1885, the family had moved back to Denver, to which they had always maintained ties. An 1879 Denver newspaper article indicates that even while Clara MacGregor, who was a talented painter, was living in Estes Park, she maintained an art studio in Denver, noting also that she was "an old Colorado favorite."<sup>33</sup> The 1887 Denver City Directory shows Alexander MacGregor associated with the Denver law firm of MacGregor and Burton. Following their move to Denver, the MacGregors' first lived at 2836 Stout Street. By 1891, they lived at 513 Emerald Avenue in Highlands, then a suburb of Denver. By 1898, the family was living at 2816 West 25th Avenue in Denver, which is still in existence.<sup>34</sup>

Although Alexander and Clara MacGregor maintained Denver addresses for the rest of their lives, they continued to spend their summers in Estes Park. In January 1895, Alexander MacGregor was sworn in as Justice of the Peace for Estes Park, and the family may have returned to the ranch during this time. The MacGregors also continued to improve their Estes Park property. In the early months of 1896, construction of a third ranch house was begun.

Alexander MacGregor, however, never saw the completion of this house. While assessing a mining claim near Estes Park with his son George, MacGregor was

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<sup>32</sup>Carothers, 41.

<sup>33</sup>The Rocky Mountain News, 14 September 1879, 7.

<sup>34</sup>Arthur, 10-11; and the Denver City Directories, 1887-1888, 1891-1901. The name of Emerald Avenue was changed to West 25th Avenue and it is probable that these two buildings are one and the same.

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struck and killed by lightning on 17 June 1896. After Alexander MacGregor's death, his widow and family remained in Denver. However, Clara MacGregor continued to take an active interest in the ranch, adding two additional tracts of land to the ranch before her death in 1901.

The Next Generations of MacGregors: Donald, Maude, and Muriel

Upon Alexander MacGregor's death, management of the ranch passed to the MacGregor's eighteen-year-old second son, Donald. The new house, begun earlier that year, was completed. While the family members continued to divide their time between Denver and Estes Park, they hired help to maintain operations on the ranch. After Clara MacGregor's death, the ranch was leased to two brothers, Charles and Ed Johnson, who continued the cattle and crop production. Meanwhile, Donald lived in the MacGregors' Denver home, taking care of his younger brother Halbert and working as a pricing agent for the Denver firm of Hendrie and Bolthoff. On 27 January 1903, Donald MacGregor married Minnie Maude Koontz of Denver. Their only child, Muriel Lurilla MacGregor, was born the next year.

As the years passed, Halbert and George MacGregor spent less and less time at the family ranch, pursuing other career interests. By 1907 or 1908, Donald and Maude MacGregor were regularly spending their summers at the Estes Park ranch. By 1910, the ranch had become their permanent home.

Unlike his father, who divided his time between his legal career and the ranch, Donald MacGregor focused his attention on the ranch operations. A number of improvements were made on the ranch under Donald's supervision. In 1900, three rooms were added to the 1896 ranch house. Many of the agricultural outbuildings on the ranch were built by Donald MacGregor. In 1908, a hydroelectric plant was built in Estes Park, and the ranch is known to have had electricity by 1917. A telephone was installed by 1921. Between 1905 and 1910, Donald MacGregor increased the acreage of the farm, also increasing the size of the cattle herd. Although he began by raising a Polled red breed, he later changed to black Aberdeen Angus, which he decided were best for the ranch. Aberdeen Angus continue to be raised on the ranch today.<sup>35</sup>

Cattle production continued to be important on the ranch, as did a variety of cash crops, including hay, wood, and ice. In addition, the MacGregors sold

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<sup>35</sup>Arthur, 16-17.

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milk, cream, butter, eggs, and chickens. Maude MacGregor handled the sale of produce and dairy products. Visitors also continued to summer on the MacGregor property, mostly regular boarders who rented the same cabin from year to year. Summer renters included Eleanor Koontz, Maude's sister, and Elba Vivian, her half sister.

For over three decades, under Donald MacGregor's capable management, the MacGregor Ranch profited. But by the early 1940s, production began to decline. It appears that both Maude and Donald MacGregor developed health problems early in their lives, sapping their energy and productivity. Maude MacGregor's health had begun to decline in the 1930s, seriously affecting her mental capacities. As she grew worse, she needed more and more supervision. The MacGregors, who had always been a close knit family, grew more reclusive. By the late 1940s Donald's health was also quite poor. In the winter of 1949-50, Donald developed pneumonia from which he was unable to recover, and he died at his home on 13 March 1950. Maude MacGregor died 19 December 1950. As had been previously arranged, both Donald and Maude MacGregor were placed in a stone mausoleum built on the ranch.<sup>36</sup>

Upon her parents' deaths, the family ranch passed to Muriel MacGregor. Like the preceding generations of her family, Muriel MacGregor was intelligent and well-educated, and had interests beyond ranching. In 1925, Muriel MacGregor received a B. A. in mathematics from Colorado College. In 1931, she received an M.A. in history from the University of Colorado. And in 1934, she received her law degree from the University of Denver. On 13 March 1936, the Estes Park Trail Gazette noted that "Miss Muriel L. MacGregor was one of 15 successful applicants for admission to the Colorado Bar and the only woman admitted to practice by the Colorado Supreme Court..."<sup>37</sup>

Following her completion of law school, Muriel MacGregor returned to the ranch in Estes Park. In much the same way her grandfather had done, Muriel primarily used her legal skills for the benefit of the family's legal matters and for local friends and neighbors. Much of her work dealt with disputes over water rights. Like her grandmother and mother, she also was artistically creative, trying her hand at short story writing, music composition, and painting.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>37</sup>(Estes Park) Trail Gazette, 8 February 1980, p. 1.

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When, upon her parents' deaths, the full operation of the ranch fell upon her, Muriel MacGregor found herself cash poor and ill-equipped to manage the ranch alone. Bank statements reveal that each year Muriel MacGregor's available cash decreased, and the productive ability of the ranch began to deteriorate.<sup>38</sup> Instead of two hundred or three hundred tons of hay each year, the meadows around the ranch produced little more than pasture in the years after 1953. Fences, irrigation ditches, buildings and machinery fell into a state of disrepair.<sup>39</sup> Unable to cut hay, Muriel was, by 1960, purchasing all necessary hay and grain. She also discontinued all the other cash crops and no longer raised chicken or dairy cows, concentrating on beef cattle. But even cattle production was difficult. The ranch's deteriorating fencing, combined with the growing urbanization of Estes Park, resulted in wandering cattle and angry neighbors.

The town of Estes Park, always a popular tourist resort, experienced a period of tremendous growth after World War II. Although the MacGregor land was worth a great deal of money, Muriel MacGregor chose to hold on to the family's heritage and manage as well as she could. Still, in January, 1960, facing possible condemnation, she sold 1.16 acres and two easements to the Town of Estes Park. She also sold land to the Sombrero Stables, the KOA Camp, and a few individuals, all in an effort to remain solvent.

The roaming cattle, the mausoleum holding the bodies of her parents, and the fact that she was a single woman with a run-down ranch led to growing curiosity over her home.<sup>40</sup> Many viewed her as eccentric, and both she and her home were senselessly and cruelly victimized. On 4 July 1969, a large barn on the property was burned down by an arsonist. The MacGregor Ranch house was also vandalized, and several thousands of dollars of furniture, silver, and china were stolen. In the summer of 1970, Muriel MacGregor suffered a stroke, followed by a heart attack. Then, on 22 October 1970, Muriel MacGregor died. Her body was placed in the family mausoleum on the MacGregor Ranch.

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<sup>38</sup>Arthur, 27.

<sup>39</sup>Glenn Prosser, The Saga of Black Canyon. The Story of the MacGregors of Estes Park, n.p., 1971, 44.

<sup>40</sup>Arthur, 28.



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Establishment of the MacGregor Ranch Museum, 1973

Less than two weeks before her death, Muriel MacGregor wrote a will, and then a codicil, which provided for the continuation of MacGregor ranch operations with the proceeds to be used for charitable and educational purposes. Although the will was contested by distant relatives, plans were soon made to establish a museum on the site. A major obstacle, however, was the lack of money, both to pay the legal expenses of the contested will and to operate the ranch and proposed museum.

To cover expenses, the majority of MacGregor family belongings were sold in 1972. Family friends, however, had sorted through the belongings, saving items which would shed light on the family's history. In 1972, Orpha Kendall and Gladys Thomson began establishing a museum on the property. In May 1973, the MacGregor Ranch Museum opened, displaying furniture, clothing, and personal belongings of the family.<sup>41</sup> In 1973, a settlement was reached with contesting relatives, who received portions of land on the southeastern border of the property. The Muriel L. MacGregor Charitable Trust, as provided for in Muriel MacGregor's will, was established in 1978 to oversee the operations of the museum ranch.

In 1976, Rocky Mountain National Park purchased approximately four hundred acres of MacGregor Ranch land which had been located within the boundaries of the park since 1917. In 1980, Rocky Mountain National Park began negotiations to acquire the remaining 1200 acres of the ranch through a conservation easement. Under the proposed agreement, the MacGregor Ranch would be allowed to continue ranching operations. In addition, the agreement would guarantee the preservation of the ranch, and allow the federal government to purchase the property if it were put up for sale. After lengthy and complicated negotiations, an agreement was reached between the National Park Service and the MacGregor Ranch in 1983, when the park service paid four million dollars for the easement on the 1200 acres of MacGregor Ranch property.<sup>42</sup>

Today, the MacGregor Ranch serves as an educational and environmental

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>42</sup>"Memorandum of Understanding between MacGregor Trust and National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Department of the Interior."

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resource, operated by the Muriel L. MacGregor Charitable Trust. The ranch, which is being restored to its 1900 appearance, is operated as a living history museum. All ranch activities are carried out in much the same way as they were by the MacGregor family. Visitors can leave the ranch with an understanding of how pioneers lived and worked in the Rocky Mountains, an understanding which cannot be found in the undeveloped areas of the Park, or in the overdeveloped commercial areas that continue to grow around Estes Park. Ranch staff continue to maintain a cattle herd of about one hundred head, descendants of the cattle raised by Donald and Muriel MacGregor. A small hay crop is also grown. The MacGregor Ranch Museum is open regularly during the summer months and by appointment during the remainder of the year.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Arthur, Clare. "The MacGregors and Black Canyon Ranch, Three Generations of Tradition." TMs, 1984, MacGregor Ranch Museum files.

Bradford, G. and M. Meacham. "The MacGregor Ranch, An Historical Structural Review." TMs, 1987, MacGregor Ranch Museum files.

Buchholtz, C. W. Rocky Mountain National Park, A History. Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1983.

Kendall, Orpha. MacGregor Ranch Museum. Interviews, October and December, 1988.

Prosser, Glenn. The Saga of Black Canyon, The Story of the MacGregors of Estes Park. n.p.: 1971.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):  See continuation sheet

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acree of property: 1200 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1/3</u>	<u>4/5/2/4/6/0</u>	<u>4/4/7/2/2/8/0</u>	B	<u>1/3</u>	<u>4/5/7/3/0/0</u>	<u>4/4/7/2/2/8/0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

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Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Christine Whitacre and R. Laurie Simmons

organization: Front Range Research Associates, Inc.

date: March, 1989

street & number: 3635 W. 46th Avenue

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National Park Service

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UTM References

C <u>1/3</u> Zone	<u>4/5/7/2/9/0</u> Easting	<u>4/4/7/2/2/2/0</u> Northing	D <u>1/3</u> Zone	<u>4/5/6/6/6/0</u> Easting	<u>4/4/7/1/2/9/0</u> Northing
E <u>1/3</u> Zone	<u>4/5/5/6/2/0</u> Easting	<u>4/4/7/0/6/7/0</u> Northing	F <u>1/3</u> Zone	<u>4/5/4/3/8/0</u> Easting	<u>4/4/7/0/6/7/0</u> Northing
G <u>1/3</u> Zone	<u>4/5/2/4/6/0</u> Easting	<u>4/4/7/1/4/8/0</u> Northing			

Verbal Boundary Description

The MacGregor Ranch historic district includes all the land within Tract 10-106, MacGregor Property, Rocky Mountain National Park:

The following real property situated in Township 5 North, Range 72 West, Sixth Principle Meridian:

Section 18: W 1/2 SW 1/4 SW 1/4 (less amount to Bitner), also beginning at NW corner of SW 1/4, thence East 1320', South 1120', West 660', South 200', West 660', North 1320' to the point of beginning, also, beginning at the Northeast corner of the SW 1/4, thence South 460', West 660', South 660', West 660', North 1120', East 1320' to the point of beginning, and also commencing 663' East of SW corner North 20', East 828', South 20', West 828', to the point of beginning.

Section 19: Beginning at the NW corner of the NW 1/4, thence East along the North line of said Section to Sullivans NW corner, thence South along the Sullivan tract 433', thence Westerly to a point 588' South of beginning, thence North 588' to the point of beginning.

Also, the following real property situated in Township 5 North, Range 73 West, Sixth Principle Meridian:

Section 13: S 1/2 less Book 1565 Page 146; Book 1651 Page 268; Book 1648 Page 859; Book 1691 Page 163, also Book 1109 Page 601

Section 14: S 1/2

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MacGregor Ranch

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Section 15: N 1/2 SE 1/4; SE 1/4 SE 1/4

Section 23: E 1/2 NE 1/4, NW 1/4 NE 1/4; NE 1/4 NW 1/4

Section 24: NW 1/4 less 3 acres identified in Book 1605 Page 887; 60 acres in the NE 1/4 lying N and W of Devil's Gulch Road less 3 acres, and also, beginning at the NW corner of SE 1/4 thence South 0 degrees 16 minutes West along the Quarter Section line 40 feet, South 89 degrees 58 minutes East 144.5 minutes North 72 degrees 31 minutes East 441.7 minutes North 89 degrees 1 minute East 254.5 minutes, North 4 degrees 1 minute West 275 minutes, North 85 degrees 43 minutes West 561.3 minutes, South 13 degrees 30 minutes West 276 minutes, South 16 degrees 20 minutes West 161.5 minutes, North 89 degrees 58 minutes West 75.5 minutes to beginning, and also Lot Six (6) of Mount View Park, a Subdivision of the N 1/2 of NE 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section Twenty-four (24), Township Five (5) North, Range Seventy-three (73) West of the Sixth Principal Meridian.

All of the foregoing property is situated in Larimer County, Colorado.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the MacGregor Ranch historic district include the entire MacGregor Ranch property, encompassing all the land acquired by the National Park Service through the 1983 conservation easement.

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Property: MacGregor Ranch Historic District  
180 MacGregor Avenue  
Estes Park, CO 80517

Photographer: Roger Whitacre

Date: October, 1988, and February, 1989

Negative Location: Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
1300 Broadway  
Denver, Colorado 80203

NOTE: The photograph numbers are keyed to one of the sketch maps which accompany this nomination.

<u>Photo Number</u>	<u>View</u>
1	MacGregor Ranch Museum (#7) Camera Orientation: northwest Date: October 1988
2	MacGregor Ranch Museum (#7) Camera Orientation: north Date: October 1988
3	MacGregor Ranch Museum, kitchen Camera Orientation: north Date: October 1988
4	MacGregor Ranch Museum, dining room Camera Orientation: northeast Date: October 1988
5	MacGregor Ranch Museum, parlor Camera Orientation: northwest Date: October 1988
6	Milk House (#8) Camera Orientation: northeast Date: October 1988

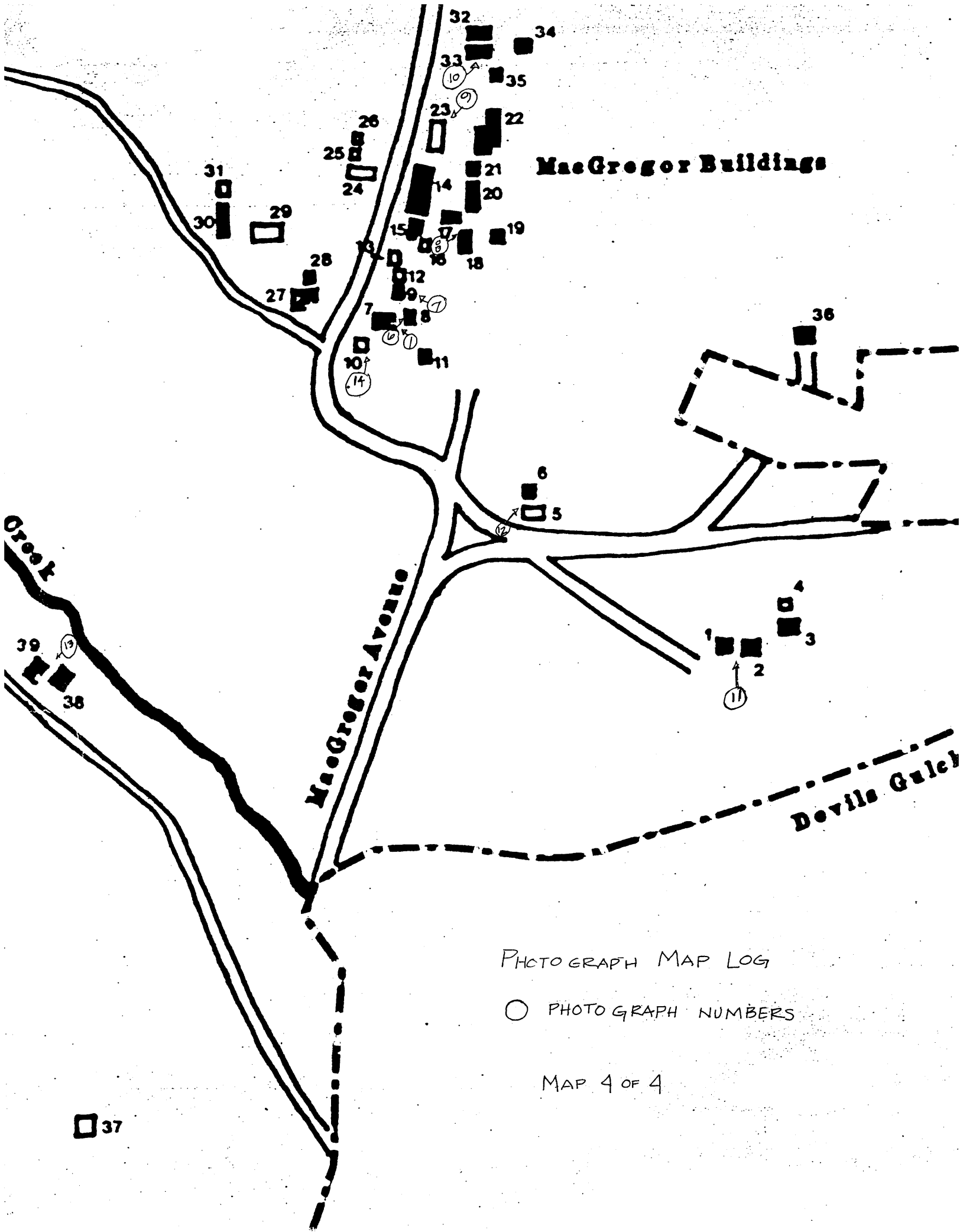
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<u>Photo Number</u>	<u>View</u>
7	Root Cellar (#9) Camera Orientation: northwest Date: October 1988
8	Outbuildings: chicken house (#17) in the center, tack room/barn (#18) and bunkhouse (#19) on the right; loafer shed (#20) in the background. Camera Orientation: northeast Date: October 1988
9	Barn and Sheds: shed complex (#22) on left; new loafer shed (#23) on right; barn (#14) in background Camera Orientation: south Date: February 1989
10	Outbuildings: birthing shed (#34) in foreground, two loafer sheds (#32 and #33), and turkey house (#35) (partially hidden) Camera Orientation: northeast Date: February 1989
11	A. Q. MacGregor House (#1) (left) and A. Q. Guest House (#2) (right) Camera Orientation: north Date: February 1989
12	MacGregor Ranch Office (#5) (right) and Bunkhouse (#6) (left, rear) Camera Orientation: northeast Date: February 1989
13	Black Canyon House (#38) and Barn (#39) Camera Orientation: southwest Date: February 1989
14	Mausoleum (#10) Camera Orientation: north Date: February 1989



**MacGregor Buildings**

**MacGregor Avenue**

**Oreck**

**Devils Gulch**

PHOTOGRAPH MAP LOG

○ PHOTOGRAPH NUMBERS

MAP 4 OF 4

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