

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

DEC 12 1988

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Brannin Ranch
other names/site number Sweet Grass Ranch

2. Location

street & number Melville Route, Box 161 n/a not for publication
city, town Melville vicinity
state Montana code 030 county Sweetgrass code 097 zip code 59011

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>17</u>	<u>4</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u>2</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>17</u>	<u>6</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Maurell Shuff 12-2-88
Signature of certifying official Date
SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Alvarado Byrum Entered in the National Register 1/13/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation

Domestic

Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: Western Rustic

foundation stone, concretewalls log

roof shingle, asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Brannin Ranch, at an elevation of 6,100 feet, was constructed on the east slope of the Crazy Mountains in a large open meadow within Sweet Grass Canyon. Surrounded by Hell Roaring, Sunlight and Brannin peaks, which rise to almost 11,000 feet, and adjacent to the boundaries of the Absaroka National Forest, the ranch provided guests with ready access to the splendid scenery, lakes, clear trout streams, glaciers and waterfalls of the Crazy Mountains.

The main buildings of the dude ranch, consisting of the main lodge, spring house, guest cabins and bunk house, are placed in a crescent oriented toward the north. A small tributary to Sweet Grass Creek runs directly behind these buildings, while the Creek, itself, forms the eastern boundary of the nominated property. The northern boundary of the nominated property is marked by a pole fence and the main gate to the ranch complex. Other fences within the district separate grazing land from domestic space and surround the ranch garden, and a complex pole corral is located adjacent to the bunkhouse.

The construction of the guest facilities at the Brannin Ranch was completed over the course of a decade, beginning in 1922. Most of the building materials were gathered on the ranch property and the fir used to make the tongue and groove flooring and bead board ceilings was cut on the Brannin land and planed in the family mill. The primary builders of the guest ranch were three Brannin brothers, Dick, Gus and Barney Brannin. They also built most of the Rustic style furnishing, including the pole beds used in the guest cabins, the dining tables, and other decorative pieces. Numerous neighbors and friends also were involved in various aspects of construction.

#1 Main Lodge, 1922-1925 (contributing)

The main lodge is a 15-room, Rustic style log and frame building set on a stone and concrete foundation with a partial cellar. Built in three or four stages beginning in 1922, the lodge appears to have been finished in its present configuration by 1925. The lodge was used as the residence for the Brannin family, consisting of 13 children, with six extra guest rooms.

The original portion of the lodge was likely the west wing, which is a one story log building featuring flat corner notching and a large, protruding, half-hexagonal bay window on the west elevation. Windows are 4-light sliding sash. This portion of the lodge continues to be used as the living room for the dude ranch guests and measures 20' x 36'. The interior finishes and furnishing retain excellent historic integrity and this room is one of the finest examples of Rustic styling in the State. Exposed log framing is used to divide the beaver board covered walls and bead board ceiling. A large, river rock fireplace is set against the east wall in the center of the room, with the ranches two brand (UX and A4) set in pebbles under the mantle. Irregular
burled wood is used to form the balustrade to the
upstairs, corner detailing at the bay angles, and in

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the construction of much of the original furnishings, including a Rustic style desk, corner cupboard, coat rack and picture frames. Slab log siding decorates the large window seat in the bay. The room is decorated with mounted game heads, Indian rugs, and framed historical photographs.

The central portion of the lodge is of frame construction, two-stories in height, with a gabled roof covered with rolled asphalt roofing. Sheathed with ship lap siding, this section of the building was likely constructed within a year of the first log building. The windows are 6-over-6 double hung units. A two-story, hip-roofed, log-framed porch graces the front (north elevation). Early photographs of the ranch show a one-story porch, which was enlarged with the balcony above ca. 1925. Decorative burlled wood forms the upper balustrade. This portion of the building houses the dining room and the lodge kitchen. The dining room measures 24' x 26' and seats 40 people. The room is finished with fir woodwork, an oak floor, Indian and fur rugs, and the original Rustic style, burlled wood tables. The upper floor is accessed by the stairway at the south end of the living room and features a double-loaded corridor of eight rooms that are finished with bead board ceilings.

The two-story east wing of the lodge is of log construction with flat corner notching and appears to have been constructed in two phases, as evidenced by the slight jog in the exterior wall in the center of the addition and an apparent break in the foundation at that point. A two-story, log porch extends the length of the north facade. The gabled roof of this wing is covered with cedar shingles. The windows are a combination of 6-over-6 double hung and 4-light sliding sash units. A false, 4-light window, glazed with galvanized tin, is set in the gable end of the east elevation for decorative effect. An exterior wooden stairway rises for the east end of the building to the second story of the porch, from which access to the guest rooms is gained.

A few alterations have been made in the upstairs where wood burning stoves that once heated the rooms have been removed, and some partitions have been taken out. In 1947, a door from the kitchen to the living room was walled in. In 1959, the back wall of the kitchen was opened up, joining the winter and summer kitchens as a single room. A door was cut between two upstairs bedrooms in 1965. Other than these minor alterations, the historic architectural integrity of the lodge remains intact.

#2 Spring House, ca. 1924 (contributing)

The log spring house, located directly behind the lodge, measures 12' x 35', and consists of three rooms: the butchering room, the separator room, and the generator room. The building was erected over a small branch of the Sweet Grass Creek, which was used for natural refrigeration. Much of the original equipment used by the Brannins remains in place, including the generator (now under the floor boards), the concrete butchering sink, and the hooks and pulley systems for hanging meat. The floors are of poured concrete, fitted with two drains. A louvered vent pierces the roof of the section of the building where the meat was hung. The gable roof of the spring house is covered with cedar shingles. A wooden porch with log roof supports wraps around the south and east elevations.

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The exterior of the building is sheathed with vertical log slab siding. The windows are 4-light fixed and sliding sash units. In 1987, a frame and plywood passageway was constructed to provide covered access from the spring house porch to the kitchen door of the lodge.

#3 Guest Cabin, ca. 1924 (contributing)

Set on a concrete foundation, this log cabin measures 13'6" x 15'. The building has a 5-panel wooden door centered on the north elevation, and is flanked by a fixed 4-light window and a double 4-light sliding sash unit. The round logs are set with saddle notch corner timbering, and the butt ends are cut at a flaring taper. The overhanging gable roof is covered with cedar shingles.

#4, #5, and #6 Guest Cabins, ca. 1925 (contributing)

These three guest cabins, measuring approximately 11' x 13', were constructed during the same year and are of the similar design and materials. All are of unhewn log construction with saddle corner notching and tapered butt ends. Where the lower butt ends of the logs have deteriorated, they have been cut flush with the side walls and small stone piers have been built to continue the line of the flare. The gable roofs protrude over small wooden decks that span the north facades. The roofs of cabins #4 and #5 are covered with rolled asphalt, while the roof of cabin #6 is covered with cedar shingles. Each cabin features a board and batten or tongue and groove wooden door and a single, 4-light window on the front facade. Cabins #4 and #5 have a single, 4-light window on east elevations, and cabin #6 features a double 4-light sliding unit in this position.

#7 Shower House, 1929 (contributing)

This building, measuring 18' x 23'5", is of rough sawn frame construction that is sheathed with vertical slab log siding on the exterior. Set on a concrete foundation, the shower house also has a concrete floor. The water line from a spring 1/4 mile up on the ridge was laid in 1922. The building is divided into rooms for men and women and features lavatory stalls, sink areas, two shower stalls, and a room for water heaters on each side. The shower house has 5-panel wooden doors and double, 4-light, sliding sash windows. The asphalt covered gable roof extends out to form an overhang on the north elevation. In 1987, the area that housed the large, wood-fueled water heater on the ladies' side was converted into a laundry.

#8, #9, #10 Guest Cabins, ca. 1926 (contributing)

Measuring approximately 11' x 13', these three log buildings are very similar in terms of design and construction to cabins #4, #5 and #6. Each cabin has a tongue and groove fir floor. The only windows found on these three cabins are the double 4-light sliding sash units set in the east walls. The doorways in the gable ends of the north elevations are placed off-center east.

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#11 and #12 Guest Cabins, ca. 1928 (contributing)

These two cabins are the largest guest cabins, measuring 13'5" x 15'2". Constructed in the same manner as the other guest cabins, these two were joined recently by a bathroom addition set between the two cabins. This noncontributing addition is of frame construction, sheathed with T-111 siding. The two historic cabins continue to read as separate buildings. The gable roofs has recently been recovered with cedar shingles. Cabin #12, located at the end of the line of historic guest cabins, served as the upper Sweet Grass Canyon school house for a number of years during the early 1930's.

#13 Bunk house/Saddle Shed, ca. 1929 (contributing)

This log and frame, gable-roofed building measures 23'6" x 67'6" and is composed of three separate sections: a log bunk house, a frame tack room, and a frame garage. The bunk house at the south end features a wrap-around porch with log roof supports. The interior face of the square notched wall logs were sawn to create a flat surface. In 1980, a bathroom was constructed at the rear (west elevation) using logs salvaged from a demolished horse barn on the property. The interior was originally open to the roof rafters and, in 1986, the ceiling was finished with tongue and groove pine and lowered to 8'. The windows are 4-light, sliding sash units and the 5-panel wooden door is set on the east elevation. The exterior walls of the adjacent tack room are of horizontally laid, rough sawn lumber covered with vertical log slab siding. The tack room has a 2" plank floor. A log wall, spiked into the wall framing, separates the tack room from the frame garage section at the north end of the building. The garage has a dirt floor and is accessed by large, sliding wooden doors.

#14 Milk Barn, ca. 1922 (contributing)

This ca. 14' x 24', board and batten, gable-roofed barn sets on a log sill foundation and houses stanchions for 2 cows and an area for pigs. The roof is covered with rolled asphalt roofing. The rough sawn lumber used in the construction of the barn was cut at the Brannin's sawmill up Sweet Grass Canyon.

#15 Original Homestead House, 1903 (contributing)

Set on a stone foundation, the hand-hewn log, one-story, two-room residence of the Brannin family is located at the north end of the ranch complex. A one-room, frame addition to the south, was likely built onto the residence prior to 1920. The present overall dimensions of the building are approximately 17' x 37'. During the early years, there was a large, L-shaped, extension to the rear of the house that was used for additional sleeping rooms and storage of supplies. This rear addition was demolished prior to 1960. Four-panel wooden doors are placed in the center of the east (front) and west elevations. The windows are 2-over-2, double hung units set to either side of the entrances and centered in the gable end. A 4'5" x 10'7" hipped-roofed porch is centered on the east facade. The roof is covered with rolled asphalt. Bits of the original wall papers and paint are still in evidence on the interior. The windows are now boarded up and the building is used to store old harnesses.

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#16 Animal Barn, ca. 1938. (contributing)

This large, 37'5" x 53'2" post and beam barn is sheathed with vertical board and batten siding. The gently sloping gable roof is covered with rolled asphalt. Large openings in the gable ends are without doors. The barn is completely open on the interior, except for the supporting pillars. The barn was originally used as the Angora goat shearing shed.

#17 Wool House/Granary, ca. 1936 (contributing)

Of typical "inside-out," horizontal plank, frame construction, the granary is set at the southwest end of the barn. The 13'9" x 14'7" structure is set on concrete piers approximately one-foot above the ground and has a plank floor. The gable roof is covered with rolled asphalt. Oral history informants state that this building was first used to store the wool sheared from the Angora goats in the adjacent shearing shed, and later was converted into a granary.

Noncontributing Buildings:

#18 Woodshed ca. 1940 (noncontributing)

This ca. 16'2" x 23'6" building was built of rough lumber and replaces an earlier woodshed that was directly adjacent to the rear door of the lodge. The gable roof, which is now covered with red metal roofing, features a 3-foot overhang on the north elevation.

#19 RX, ca. 1980 (noncontributing)

Although of recent construction, the RX is of compatible materials and styling and does not seriously detract from the overall integrity of the ranch complex. The building measures 20'6" x 25'8". Sheathed with vertical board and batten siding, this small building has a gable roof covered with rolled asphalt.

#20 Store, ca. 1980 (noncontributing)

Logs salvaged from a demolished horse barn were used to construct this 14'2" x 23'3", shed-roofed building. A full width porch with a 7'7" overhang extends across the south elevation. The building features flat notch cornering timbering and single-light sliding sash windows. Although a noncontributing building, the store is a compatible component of the ranch complex due to the use of historic building materials and the building's small scale.

#21 Guest House, 1970 (noncontributing)

This newer cabin measures 20'5" x 29' and is of frame construction. The gable roof is covered with rolled asphalt. The windows are fixed and sliding single-light units. The exterior is sheathed with vertical board and batten siding of rough cut lumber. Due to the moderate size, use of compatible building materials and the building's location at the end of the line of guest cabins, this newer guest house does not seriously detract from the overall historic feeling and association of the complex.

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#22 Ice House Ruins, ca. 1922 (noncontributing)

The remains of the historic ice house are located to the south of the spring house across the branch of Sweet Grass Creek. The ice house was of horizontally placed, rough sawn lumber construction. The roof of the building is no longer extant and the side walls are collapsing. Original dimensions of the ice house were likely 11' x 12'. No doors and windows remain, and the building appears to have had a dirt floor.

#23 Mink Shed Ruins, ca. 1930 (noncontributing)

Located in a grove of trees to the south of the main ranch complex, the ruins of the mink shed are scattered about a 100' square area. The shed was a large, gable roofed, board and batten sided building filled with animal cages constructed of dimensioned lumber and chicken wire. A number of cages are found in the surrounding woods. Although the basic framing of the building remains intact, numerous roof and wall boards are missing and trees have fallen across the roof ridge. The original dimensions of the building were likely 15'7" x 64'3".

9. Major Bibliographical References

Borne, Lawrence, "Dude Ranching in the Rockies," Montana Magazine of Western History, Summer, 1988, pp. 14-27.
Pioneer Reflections, History of Sweet Grass County, Montana, vol. 2
"The Brannin Ranch," brochure published by the Northern Pacific Railway, ca. 1934.
Interview with Dick Brannin by Michele Carroccia, 1966.
Interviews with Sid Brannin by Michele Carroccia, 1974-1984.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property approximately 63 acres

UTM References

A 1,2 56,17,6,0 5,10,81,5,0
 Zone Easting Northing

C 1,2 56,21,5,0 5,10,78,0,0

B 1,2 56,23,0,0 5,10,81,6,0
 Zone Easting Northing

D 1,2 56,16,6,0 5,10,76,8,0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary begins at the intersection of the north-south running 6000' elevation line with the east-west center line of Section 2, T4N;R12E; then, follows this section centerline to the east until this line meets Sweet Grass Creek; then, follows Sweet Grass Creek to the south and west to a point 1000' from the west edge of Section 2; then directly north to the 6000' elevation line, which is followed to the point of beginning

T4N; R12E; SW 1/4 Section 2

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to encompass all historic buildings at the Brannin Ranch. The ranch gate is located at the center of Section 2, T4N;R12E. The boundary follows the center of the section line to the 6000' elevation line to the west and Sweet Grass Creek to the east. The 6000' elevation line and Sweet Grass Creek were chosen to mark the boundary so as to include the immediate creek-bottom setting within the nominated area.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michele V.C. Carroccia

organization Sweet Grass Ranch date July 1988

street & number Melville Route, Box 161 telephone (406) 537-4497

city or town Big Timber state Montana zip code 59011

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years, held the position as local game warden, and worked as one of the most renown hunters for the State's predatory game eradication program. Gus and Dick Brannin served as the wranglers and guides, in addition to managing the family's stock ranching operation. About 150 head of cattle, 50 head horses and 300 head of Angora goats, mink and beaver were kept at the Brannin ranch. Dudes were usually welcome to take an active part in the ranching operation. The two-acre garden provided fresh vegetables and the butchering of cattle, sheep and chickens at the ranch provided fresh meat for the guests. According to the guest books, the majority of dudes attracted to the Brannin Ranch were business and professional people, college boys and girls, primarily from Minnesota, New York, Illinois and California.

The Brannin Ranch was open for guests year-round during the 1920's and early 1930's. Active members of the Dude Ranchers Association from 1930-35, the Brannins appeared to have geared their services more exclusively to outfitting by the late 1930's, taking only guests who learned of the ranch from friends, which made active involvement in the promotional Association less important.

There have only been three owners of the property since 1959. The ranch continues to operate as a cattle ranch, using the original "UX" brand, as well as a guest ranch during the summer months and hunting and outfitting camp during the autumn.

