

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



### 1. Name of Property

historic name: Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn

other name/site number:

### 2. Location

street & number: 247 Shields River Road East

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Clyde Park

vicinity: X

state: Montana code: MT

county: Park

code: 087

zip code: 59047

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register  see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register  see continuation sheet
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson A. Beall

Date of Action

9/15/04

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property:</b> Private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Category of Property:</b> Building	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> n/a	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

**6. Function or Use**

<b>Historic Functions:</b> AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility	<b>Current Functions:</b> AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility
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**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification:</b> OTHER/Gothic Arch Roofed Barn	<b>Materials:</b>
	foundation: CONCRETE
	walls: WOOD
	roof: ASPHALT
	other:

**Narrative Description**

In southcentral Montana, the Shields River flows southward, watered by abundant creeks from the mountains to the east and west, to join the Yellowstone River. Above the willows and cottonwoods near the confluence of Falls Creek and the Shields River stands the Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn. This gothic roofed barn dominates the landscape along the east side of the Shields River and is strikingly visible from as much as 15 miles distant. The closest town to the nominated property is Clyde Park, approximately five miles to the northwest.

The Bonnell Barn is situated within a farmstead on the east side of the Shields River Valley in southcentral Montana. The Crazy Mountains loom in the background to the northeast, the Paradise Valley and the Absaroka-Beartooth Mountain Range are visible in the distance to the south and southwest and the Bridger Mountains on the distant horizon to the west. Falls Creek flows from the east along the lower edge of the property to join the Shields River immediately south of the farmstead. The agricultural landscape surrounding the Bonnell Barn in all directions generally retains its farming character.

The Bonnell Barn, built in 1922, dominates the farmstead, standing on a rise above the domestic unit to the south. The domestic unit consists of a late 1950s one-story farmhouse and its associated garage and workshop. The barn stands separated from the other buildings with an associated 1940s milkhouse positioned approximately 30 feet directly to the east. The remainder of the agricultural unit consists of an assortment of historic outbuildings that stand to the north of the barn within or adjacent to the corral system. These outbuildings are of varying dates of construction and include a granary, chicken coop, slaughterhouse and loafing shed. To the east, across the Shields River Road from the farmstead, is an abandoned and deteriorating building complex that apparently once served as the original homestead.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This property is currently under different ownership.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1922

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1922

Architect/Builder: unknown

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn is significant under Criterion C as an excellent and rare example of the Gothic arched roof style in Montana. Barns of such magnitude are rare, with only ten such gothic roofed barns presently known in Montana. The Bonnell Barn is the only Gothic roofed barn known in Park County. The Gothic Arch Roofed barn marks the culmination of the evolution of barn architecture from the simple gable to the popular gambrel roof to the impressive gothic roofed style. The exposed structural framework of the Bonnell Barn is an exceptional example of the cut-rafter version of the laminated arch roofed barn. Functionally, the Gothic arched roof presents an unobstructed haymow historically used to hold loose hay.

Further, the Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn is significant under Criterion C because it exemplifies barn architecture built in the early twentieth century, undoubtedly influenced by the promotional literature on farming practices brought to rural communities during the 1920s and 1930s by federal, state and local government agencies. Built in 1922 as a dairy barn, the two-story Bonnell barn illustrates the form and design recommended for dairy barns, including features like the row of windows for good lighting, cupolas for ventilation, ample loft space for storage and concrete floor with gutters for sanitation.

Barn architecture today is a threatened resource that is rapidly disappearing on the American western landscape, replaced with non-descript prefabricated metal buildings. The Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn stands as a testament to our image of barns, "a sense of tradition and security, of closeness to the land and community with the people who built them." The Dailey family in their efforts to maintain the Bonnell Barn are helping preserve our "temples of abundance" and traditional rural values found in the Shields River Valley.<sup>2</sup>

Lower Shields River Valley Historical Overview

Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition explored the Yellowstone region in 1806 on his return journey to meet Meriwether Lewis on the Missouri River. Reaching the Yellowstone River not far from the present-day town of Livingston, Clark continued down the Yellowstone and passed the Shields River, named by Clark after John Shields, the gunsmith of the party. Clark wrote:

. . . this river is 35 yards wide deep and affords a great quantity of water it heads in those Snowey Mountains to the N W . . . it contains some Timber Such as Cotton & willow in it's bottoms, and Great numbers of beaver the river also abounds in those animals as far as I have seen.<sup>3</sup>

(see continuation sheet)

<sup>2</sup> Auer, Michael J, "The Preservation of Historic Barns" *Preservation Briefs 20* National Park Service, Washington, D. C. (October 1989); Jim Doherty, "A Barn is More Than a Building, it is a Shrine to Our Agarian Past," *Smithsonian* (August 1987), 31.

<sup>3</sup> Gary E. Moulton, editor, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Vol. 8, June 10-September 26, 1806, 186.

**Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn**  
Name of Property

**Park County, Montana**  
County and State

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

(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**

**Acreage of Property:** less than one acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	12	538972	5070832

**Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):** Township 1 North Range 10 East, Section 33, NW ¼ NW ¼ SW ¼

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary corresponds to the 36-foot by 80-foot rectangular footprint of the barn, centered on the following UTM point: (Zone 12) 538901E, 5071034N.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is drawn to include the architectural elements essential to conveying the property's significance under Criterion C.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Michael and Susan Dailey and Joan L. Brownell  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_ date: April 2004  
street & number: 247 Shields River Rd East telephone: (406) 222-0523  
city or town: Livingston state: MT zip code: 59047

**Property Owner**

name/title: Michael C. and Susan C. Dailey  
street & number: 247 Shields River Rd East telephone: (406) 222-0523  
city or town: Livingston state: MT zip code: 59047

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Page 1

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

---

Gothic Arch Roofed Barn

The barn measures 36 feet north/south by 80 feet east/west with an arched hayloft covering the entire structural footprint. The entire building is clad with tongue and groove eight inch drop siding and painted white. The barn sits on a concrete foundation under the south and north walls. Nineteen four-pane awning windows span each side wall and open inward against the ceiling. Each end wall holds a centered large eight by ten feet sliding door with a sliding screen door on the same track. On both loft end walls, there are two narrow vertical windows high on the wall and a lower hay door above the first story entrances. The eastern end has a large bottom hinged door covered by an extended peak at the ridge for bringing in the hay on the typical full-length track bolted from the ridge. The hay track is still in place.

The barn is framed from rough sawn 2 x 6 studs on 24-inch centers. The 80-foot long walls are balloon framed standing approximately 13.5 feet high with the joists set at ten feet above the floor. This allows for a 3.5-foot wall on each side of the loft prior to beginning of the roof framing.

The main level has a ceiling height of ten feet and has two rows of supporting beams with headers approximately eleven feet from each side wall. The vertical posts are placed on ten foot centers. These posts support the loft floor framing of rough sawn 2 x 10's 24-inch on center.

This transverse barn has a center driveway that measures 14 feet wide between the beams. The driveway is poured concrete that has been edged and finished into seven-inch squares providing additional traction for dairy cows and other stock. A continuous concrete gutter for waste removal flanks each side of the driveway and drains to the west and outside the barn.

The north side of the barn was used for the milking stations (all stanchions have been removed) with the cows facing outward towards the north. A raised concrete walkway and feeding trough runs the length of the north wall in the front of the stanchion area. The south side of the barn interior contains a feed room in the southeast corner of the barn and several stalls or pens running the length of the building. The loft is reached by a narrow stairway in the southeast corner of the feed room.

The loft or hay mow roof is supported by a series of laminated, curved beams built from five rough sawn 1 x 12's that have a radius cut on the outer edge. This radius is estimated to be about 36 feet or the total width of the barn. These laminated supports have rough sawn 2 x 4's placed horizontally within them at 30-inch centers running upward to the ridge. Over these 2 x 4's is a layer of 1 x 4's applied vertically on 24-inch centers. These 1 x 4's provide the surface for the horizontal one inch sheathing consisting of boards of varying widths from six inch to twelve inch.

The length of the laminated curved beam from the wall line to the ridge is estimated to be 35 feet. This arched design provides a ridge height of over 34 feet from the hayloft floor and approximately 45 feet from the ground level. It would be expected that during the construction the sheathing was applied from the ridge downward in order to provide the workers a way of staying on the roof on such a vertical pitch. The widths and spacing of the boards somewhat supports this theory.

The roofing originally was wood shingles later covered with a layer of asphalt shingles. In keeping with the present owners' rehabilitation of the barn and in consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office architectural historian, both layers have recently been removed and replaced with architectural two-ply asphalt shingle. Two large

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 2

---

cupolas are located on the ridge for ventilation. The cupolas have gabled roofs and louvers on all sides. The lower edge of the roof is flared to divert water beyond the wall line below.

Integrity Statement

Whereas most barns have been constantly modified and altered to function within a changing agricultural landscape, the Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn, both exterior and interior, retains an exceptional high degree of integrity, both structurally and functionally. It is rare to find an 82-year-old barn that retains such excellent architectural integrity.

The barn dominates the farm and serves as its focal point although the immediate setting has evolved over time as expected within a working farm. Historic photographs from the 1920s indicate some modifications to the barn design and materials that have occurred over the years. The south wall originally held a side entrance and only four windows along one-half of the wall where now a continuous row spans the entire wall. Sliding doors have replaced the original double doors on the front end wall. The roof has been recently re-roofed and entire barn painted as part of the preservation efforts undertaken by the Dailey family.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Page 1

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

---

The immense wealth of furs reported by Lewis and Clark stimulated the development of the Upper Missouri Fur Trade, despite Indian hostilities. Trappers called the Shields River "Twenty-Five Yard" Creek.

Two reasons for the name: its width, which isn't twenty-five yards, but much less; and the asserted fact that it rises only twenty-five yards from the source of another stream, which I can neither affirm nor deny. Many sharp conflicts occurred here in older times between the resolute trappers and bands that were want to frequent the locality and the vengeful Blackfeet who then lorded over it."<sup>4</sup>

Osborne Russell in the late 1830s wrote of coming down the Yellowstone with Jim Bridger and other trappers. While the majority of the party camped at the mouth of the Shields River, Russell trapped beaver upstream about twenty-five miles on the Shields. He described the country as "...mostly comprised of high rolling ridges thickly clothed with grass and herbage and crowded with immense bands of Buffaloe intermingled with bands of antelope . . ." The following year Russell attempted to trap up the Shields but "found this part of the country had recently been trapped by the Blackfeet."<sup>5</sup>

The Shields River served as part of the western Crow Territory boundary and separated Crow Territory from Blackfeet Territory under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. This treaty designated Crow Territory from the headwaters of the Yellowstone River down to "the mouth of Twenty-five Yard Creek [Shields River]; thence to the head-waters of the Muscle-shell River to its mouth . . ." extending to the Powder River to the east and extending south into the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming. Under the Stevens Treaty of 1855, lands west of the Shields, defined as Blackfoot Territory under the Fort Laramie Treaty, were designated "common hunting grounds" for all tribes.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of these designations, advancing expeditions, explorations and eventually emigrant trains invaded the region, especially along the Yellowstone River. The lower Shields River became one of the transportation corridors used to enter the Gallatin Valley.

In 1859-60, Captain William R. Raynolds led a government expedition to explore the Yellowstone River and adjacent regions. A detachment under the command of Lieutenant Henry E. Maynadier traveled along the Yellowstone and up the Shields River to cross over the mountains into the Gallatin Valley.<sup>7</sup>

In 1863, James Stuart, an early Montana pioneer, led a group of men to explore for gold in the Yellowstone drainage. They arrived at the Yellowstone after traveling down the east bank of the Shields, which Stuart described as a "beautiful tableland on the east side of the river, and low, broken hills to the west." They prospected briefly and "found a good color of gold on the river but not enough to justify us to stop and prospect thoroughly."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bradley, Lieutenant James H, *The March of the Montana Column*, edited by Edgar I. Stevens, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961): 29.

<sup>5</sup> Osborne Russell, *Journal of a Trapper*, edited by Audrey Haines, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965): 47.

<sup>6</sup> Charles J. Kappler, compiled and edited, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* Volume 2, September 15 1851, 11Stat.595 (Washington, D. C. Government Printing Office (GPO) 1904).

<sup>7</sup> H. W. Maynadier, "Report on route between the Yellowstone and Platte rivers," in Gen. W. R. Raynolds, *Report on the Exploration of the Yellowstone River*, (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1868): 140-142.

<sup>8</sup> James Stuart, "The Yellowstone Expedition of 1863," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana* Vol. 1, (Helena, MT: Independent Publishing, 1902): 142-144.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 2

In the early 1860s, the discovery of placer gold on Grasshopper Creek in now southwestern Montana and subsequent discoveries at Alder Gulch and Last Chance Gulch necessitated the development of travel routes to the newly discovered gold fields. Overland routes between 1864 and 1866 traveled along the Yellowstone River with the mouth of the Shields River serving as the diversion point between the Bozeman and Bridger trails. Jim Bridger guided emigrant trains northward up the east side of the Shields for approximately 10 to 12 miles, crossed the river and then traveled over Brackett Creek and Bridger Canyon into the Gallatin Canyon. John Bozeman and John Jacobs favored a route that crossed the Shields River near its mouth and ascended over the trail known as Bozeman Pass, directly west of present-day Livingston.<sup>9</sup>

With the expanded traffic through the Yellowstone Valley, Indian depredations increased. After the death of John Bozeman in 1867, the local citizens organized the Montana Militia for the protection of settlers in the Upper Yellowstone and the Gallatin Valley. These volunteers spent the winter of 1867-68 near the mouth of the Shields River at Camp Ida Thoroughman. Fort Ellis was established east of Bozeman, MT in 1867 and troops briefly patrolled the Shields and Upper Yellowstone area.

Efforts to remove native peoples brought further reductions of Indian Territory. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 reduced Crow Territory to lands south and east of the Yellowstone River, opening lands north of the Yellowstone, including the Shields River Valley, to settlement.<sup>10</sup>

In 1872, a supply and trading post and ferry north of the Yellowstone called Benson's Landing served the Upper Yellowstone region, the newly established Crow Agency on Mission Creek and travelers along the Yellowstone River. The town of Livingston, a few miles further upstream, replaced Benson's Landing with the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883. Livingston became the county seat in 1888 after Park County was created out of Gallatin County in 1887.<sup>11</sup>

The General Land Office (GLO) surveyed the lower Shields River in 1873. The GLO map for the township where the Bonnell Barn is located shows a road along the east side of the Shields River. The surveyor described the lands in this township consisting of rolling hills and bottom lands. The rolling hills are "covered with luxuriant growth of grass affording an excellent range for stock while the bottom lands are well adapted to farming."<sup>12</sup>

Originally, most lands in Park County north of the Yellowstone were considered open range. Nelson Story, who drove the first cattle into Montana from Texas in 1866, had a cattle camp near the present-day town of Livingston and wintered his cattle in the region, including up the Shields. Stock raising continued as the primary industry into the 1900s with large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle ranging in all directions from Livingston.

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<sup>9</sup> The authority on the Bozeman Trail is Susan Badger Doyle, *Journeys to the Land of Gold*, 2 vols. (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2000). Many of the journals mention making camp at the mouth of the Shields.

<sup>10</sup> Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* Volume 2, May 7 1868, 15Stat. 649, 1008-1011.

<sup>11</sup> Livingston became a railroad division point with machine and repair shops. Livingston also became the entrance to Yellowstone National Park with the completion of the Northern Pacific Yellowstone Branch line in 1883.

<sup>12</sup> U. S. Surveyor General, General Land Office 1873 Survey Map and Notes T1S R10E, Microfiche, Records Room, Bureau of Land Management Regional Office, Billings, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Page 3

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Land settlement in the lower Shields River Valley was stimulated by the checkerboard pattern that resulted from the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR) land grant by which the NPRR acquired lands to either side of the right-of-way. After the issuance of patents from the government, the NPRR or its land department, the Northwest Improvement Company, could legally sell their land to interested buyers. The NPRR received 50% of all patented land in the township (T1N R10E) where the Bonnell barn is located. The earliest sale of railroad lands occurred in 1885 and sales continued until 1913. Generally within this township, the railroad sold an entire section or sections to an individual.<sup>13</sup>

Settlement of non-railroad lands in the township (T1N R10E) spans from the early 1880s to the mid 1920s and reflects a steady patenting of land rather than boom periods. Excluding railroad lands, homestead patents were the most important patenting process in the township, as it was for most townships in the Shields Valley. Desert Land patents followed and then Cash patents. The amount of acres obtained fluctuated depending on the particular land patenting process utilized and ranged between 40 and 360 acres.<sup>14</sup>

Development of the Shields River Valley was deterred for “. . . the only bugbear to a more rapid settlement of this region is its distance from market and railway facilities, consequently stockraising is the leading industry.”<sup>15</sup> The opening of the Shields River Branch line of the Northern Pacific to Wilsall in 1909 increased settlement and farming in the Shields River Valley. The town of Clyde Park became a trading center for the Lower Shields Valley (approximately five miles northwest of the barn location). Chadbourn, a rail stop on the branch line across the river and slightly north from the Bonnell farm, secured a post office in 1914.

By 1900 agriculture was gradually developing in the Shields River valley bottoms. As early as 1904, the Lower Shields River Canal Company was formed in which Oliver Bonnell was a stockholder and by 1909, many private companies irrigated farmlands. Alfalfa was recognized as the principal crop in addition to oats, wheat and barley.<sup>16</sup>

In 1910, state promotional reports encouraged diversified farming in Park County. The Shields Valley experienced increased settlement, as did much of Montana, augmented with the introduction of dry land farming on the benchlands. After years of successful crops, the drought years began in 1917 and production decreased. Economic depression followed and by 1923, state reports suggested stock raising as being more suitable for the region except in the well irrigated valleys of the Yellowstone and the Shields.<sup>17</sup>

Although the late 1920s saw a brief period of prosperity, it was short-lived and in 1929, the lower Shields Valley like the rest of Montana saw the beginnings of “drought, depression and depopulation.” Montana experienced severe drought and economic depression that lasted until the 1940s, creating reduced circumstances and decreasing the number of farms.

<sup>13</sup> Deed Books, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Park County Courthouse, Livingston, MT.

<sup>14</sup> U. S. Bureau of Land Management. General Land Office Records, Microfiche, Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management Regional Office, Billings, MT. For a discussion on land settlement of five townships including T1S R10E, refer to Joan L. Brownell and Kenneth W. Karsmizki, “Historic Properties Cultural Resource Inventory For Three Candidate Gwen Sites in Park County, Montana,” Prepared for SRI International by Western History Research, Bozeman, MT, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> *Livingston Enterprise*, “Historical, Biographical and Scenic Description of Park County, Enterprise Souvenir,” Livingston, MT:

<sup>16</sup> Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, “Reports” 1900, 1906, 1909 (Helena, MT: Independent Publishing Co.).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 1910, 1923.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 4

Improved climatic conditions combined with improved farm prices due to World War II brought another agricultural boom period to Montana. In Park County between 1940 and 1945 the number of farms and ranches remained fairly constant.

In 1951 there were 564 farms in Park County, half of them irrigated along the Shields River Valley and the Yellowstone River Valley. The major industry continued to be livestock raising, primarily cattle. Major crops in the early 1950s included winter wheat, spring wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa hay and grass hay. Most hay and some grain was used for winter feeding.<sup>18</sup>

The railroad branch line to Wilsall stopped service in the late 1950s that undoubtedly affected the economy and population of the Shields Valley. Throughout the last half of the twentieth century, agriculture in the lower Shields Valley and much of Montana can be described as an "unpredictable livelihood," due to fluctuating farm prices and cyclical climatic conditions.<sup>19</sup> Farm and ranch sizes increased during the latter half of the twentieth century, while the total number of farms decreased. In the first few years of the twenty-first century, the lower Shields Valley has managed to retain its agricultural landscape although encroaching subdivisions are a constant threat.

Bonnell Family History

According to Park County history, Oliver Bonnell, born in New Brunswick, Canada in 1856, came to Park County in the early 1890s from South Dakota where he had operated a trading post. He arrived in Livingston with his second wife, Lucy Somers Bonnell and a family of seven children. Mr. Bonnell partnered with fellow Canadian William Hamilton and opened the Red Boot Store. The store, located on Main Street in Livingston, made and sold handmade boots. They sold the business in 1900.<sup>20</sup> Both men then came to ranch in the Shields River Valley in close proximity to one another.<sup>21</sup>

However, it was Lucy Bonnell, not Oliver, who acquired title to all of Section 33 (640 acres) in T1N R10E from the NPRR in March 1905 (where the farmstead is located). She also purchased 80 acres under a Cash patent in 1915 several miles to the north of the farmstead. Several of the Bonnell children received homestead patents to lands adjoining Lucy's land north of the original farmstead around the same time period. This family clustering was a common occurrence in the West.<sup>22</sup>

It appears that Oliver Bonnell first ran cattle and in the early 1920s operated a small dairy and also opened a supply store in Livingston. In 1918, Oliver Bonnell is listed in the local Polk's Directory as a rancher at Chadbourn, the closest post office to the ranch and in 1922 is listed as a farmer. His wife Lucy is always listed residing in Livingston. As with many ranching families, the Bonnell family maintained a house in town for their children to go to school. By 1925, Oliver

<sup>18</sup> Montana State Engineer, "Park County Montana," *Water Resources Survey* Vol. 1 (Helena, MT: State Engineer's Office, 1951): 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang, *Montana A History of Two Centuries*, Revised Edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 320.

<sup>20</sup> Park County Historical Society, *Park County History*, (Dallas, Taylor Publishing Company, 1984):112; 233.

<sup>21</sup> William Hamilton purchased the Dabney ranch in Sections 30, 31 and 32, T1N R10E, adjacent to Section 33 owned by the Bonnell's.

<sup>22</sup> Deed Records, Park County Courthouse, Livingston, MT; see also [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov). During the homesteading years in Montana, clustering of families, especially in isolated regions, helped assure the success of the various family members. Often families would then combine their land acquisitions for a larger operation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Page 5

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

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operated a feed, flour, grain and hay store in Livingston that by 1927 just sold hay, grain and feed. Two of his sons served as drivers for his business. The 1927 directory is the only one that lists both Oliver and Lucy Bonnell with their home address at the eleventh mile on the Shields River Road.<sup>23</sup>

Across the Shields River Road, east of the present farmstead, is a group of buildings that includes an old deteriorating house and several outbuildings. It appears that the Bonnells originally lived here until they built their main ranch house across the East River Road to the west. A 1920s historic photograph shows the main ranch house as a wonderful one-story gable roofed dwelling with a screened-in porch across the front. The present late 1950s house stands in the same location as the original main house.

According to Betty Kirsher, granddaughter of Oliver and Lucy Bonnell, the barn was built in 1922 after the ranch house and constructed as a dairy barn with loose hay stored above. Approximately 25-30 cows were hand milked. She can remember that her grandmother, Mrs (Lucy) Bonnell complained that Mr. Bonnell and his sons would play the card game pitch in the morning and evening to determine who would do the milking while Mrs. Bonnell thought it would be easier just to go milk rather than play the card game. Betty remembers that her grandmother would drive into Livingston to the creamery every morning with the milk from the night before.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Kirsher also remembers they occasionally had dances in the barn for extra money, not just for the sake of the community. A door on the south side wall (now sided over) provided direct access to the loft from the existing interior stairs.<sup>25</sup> Bill Gibson of Clyde Park remembers going to the dances at the barn as a young boy where there were "a lot of very drunk people" which he found exciting since his parents were teetotalers. Although the Woodrings, subsequent owners, didn't have dances, they had four boys who would play basketball in the loft.<sup>26</sup>

#### Subsequent Owners

The Bonnells sold the farm to Noble and Clara Erwin in February 1929 and moved to Livingston. The sale included all of Section 33 and portions of Sections 32 and Section 4 in T1N R10E, totaling 879 acres. Arnold Woodrings, the son of Ralph Woodrings who owned the property after the Erwins, remembers that the place was known as Erwin's Jersey Dairy. However, it appears Mr. Erwin was better known for his still on Falls Creek. Both Bill Gibson and Leon Sarrazin remember one story told by Lennie Gibson, Bill's brother, who worked for Erwin during Prohibition. Supposedly, federal investigators showed up at the ranch one day when Erwin had barrels of whiskey in the wagon. They covered the wagon

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<sup>23</sup> R. L. Polk and Company, *Livingston City Directory including Big Timber, Park and Sweet Grass Counties*, (Helena, MT: R. L. Polk and Company, 1918, 1922, 1925-1926); R. L. Polk, *Polk's Livingston (Montana) Directory including Park County*, (Butte, MT: R. L. Polk, 1927).

<sup>24</sup> Betty Bonnell Kirsher, Interview by Mike Dailey, March 3, 2004, Polson, MT.

<sup>25</sup> Kirsher Interview.

<sup>26</sup> Kirsher Interview; Bill Gibson, Interview by Mike Dailey, March 4, 2004, Clyde Park, MT; Arnold Woodrings, Interview by Susan Dailey, March 6, 2004, Townsend, MT. The Park County historical tour of the Shields River Valley commented on the large barn on the East River road where dances were held in the 1920s. Park County Historical Society, "A Collection of Historical Tours of Park County and The Surrounding Areas," typed manuscript, 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour, July 30, 1988, on file Livingston Public Library, Livingston, MT.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Page 6

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

with hay and pulled the wagon into the barnyard. Then they sat and had lunch with the Feds with the barrels of whiskey under the hay on the wagon. Another story is that a whole train car of sugar was hauled from Livingston for the still.<sup>27</sup> The Erwins divorced in 1938 and eventually Clara Erwin sold the farm to Ralph and Alma Woodrings in March 1944.

Mr. Woodrings ran the place as a Grade A Dairy. The milk was hauled to the Windsor Livestock and Dairy on Convict Grade (west of the Shields near Sheep Mountain) and later to the Farmer's Creamery in Livingston.<sup>28</sup> The Woodrings did not process the milk at the ranch. When government restrictions became overbearing, Mr Woodring told his six sons that "they would either have to have 100 cows or quit" so they decided to quit the dairy business.<sup>29</sup>

The Woodrings sold the entire farm to August and Margaret Sarrazin in June 1954. The Sarrazins ran the place as a cow/calf operation. After the Sarrazins sold the property, ownership changed several times and eventually the original acreage was divided. Mike and Susan Dailey have owned 160 acres including the farmstead since May 2003. Sue teaches at the Clyde Park School and Mike is an appraiser. They have horses and lease their land for pasture and hay to Joe Sarrazin, the nephew of Gus and Margaret Sarrazin, the former owners.<sup>30</sup>

Gothic Arch Roofed Barns

Gothic arch roofed barns mark the culmination of the evolution of barn architecture. By the second decade of the twentieth century, barn engineering had reached its most specialized form with the gothic arch. Barns are the "centerpiece of the farm operation" and the gothic barn, as it rises above the rural landscape, exemplifies the vision of a cathedral of the countryside.<sup>31</sup>

Historically, barns fill the need for animal shelter, grain and feed storage and housing for machinery. Early barns in Montana utilized locally accessible materials of log and stone to construct buildings with low pitched roofs constructed of log ridgepole, purlins and often cross braces. In forested regions, heavy timbered framing with brace support members served to protect animals and store feed but provided little interior roof space.

The gable roof, defined as "two inclined roof surfaces of equal dimension," was the most common roof style used by early settlers and is still the most prevalent roof style across Montana today. A fairly simple form, the gable roof required a support system that filled most of the interior roof space.<sup>32</sup>

The evolution in roof styles corresponds with the change to diversified farming. In Montana, the beginnings of diversified farming began after the "Hard Winter of 1886-1887" when extreme winter conditions caused the deaths of thousands of

<sup>27</sup> Deed Book 55, Page 468, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Park County Courthouse, Livingston, MT; Gibson Interview 2004; Woodrings Interview 2004; Leon Sarrazin, Interview by Mike Dailey, March 4, 2004, Clyde Park, MT.

<sup>28</sup> Deed Book 74, Page 48, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Park County Courthouse, Livingston, MT; Woodrings Interview. The Farmer's Creamery held the contract for all dairy products for Yellowstone National Park and the Hamilton Stores from 1928 until the 1980s thereby providing a market for local dairies.

<sup>29</sup> Deed Book 99, Pages 63-65, Office of Clerk and Recorder, Park County Courthouse, Livingston, MT; Woodrings Interview, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Sarrazin Interview, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> "Barns of North Dakota," at [www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/newsite/Collections/exhibits/barns.html](http://www.lib.ndsu.nodak.edu/newsite/Collections/exhibits/barns.html)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 7

cattle on the open range. Cattlemen came to recognize the importance of winter feed and water. Increased production of hay called for greater storage capacity on both farms and ranches.

The gambrel roof with its increased roof space, first appearing in the Midwest in the 1880s, replaced the gable roof. The gambrel roof consists of two roof slopes on each side of the ridge of equal size and allows for a diminished roof support system and thereby increased loft space.<sup>33</sup>

Several factors contributed to the popularity of the gambrel roof in the early twentieth century. First, innovations in construction techniques like the introduction of balloon framing and lumber truss framing allowed for modifications to barn construction. Secondly, lighter dimensional lumber, available at local lumber yards or brought in by rail, further reduced structural systems and allowed the gambrel roof to create a large usable space in its hay mow. These barns also proved more economical to build with the new techniques.<sup>34</sup>

The Department of Agriculture and state agricultural experiment stations and extension service agencies also became involved with barn construction. Montana agencies, like many states, disseminated a wealth of information to farmers on numerous topics and promoted the gambrel roof in the early twentieth century with its light construction methods and self-supporting truss for the open loft. Professional and popular journals further supported these new building techniques.<sup>35</sup>

By the early 1920s in the Midwest, gothic roofed barns briefly became "the roof construction of choice." The gothic arched roof superceded the gambrel roof by opening up the entire loft space with no support members intruding upon the interior space. Although it reportedly originated in 1885 in Michigan, several decades of experimentation in roof design passed until the style was perfected. A Gothic arched roof means "one having rafters of a circular curvature meeting at a peak." Two type of Gothic arched roofs exist. The first is found at the Bonnell Barn and consists of a series of short laminated sections pre-cut to form the arch. The second type, known as the "Bent" arch, uses rafters "fabricated from longer sections bent to form the arch."<sup>36</sup>

Again, federal and state government agencies and commercial companies promoted this roof type for the "unobstructed loft, free from interior braces, had long been an ideal, and it reached perfection in the laminated gothic roof, a visually impressive structure." Gothic arch barns were also made available through private companies. Two companies from the Midwest designed and manufactured gothic barn rafters for distribution to lumber retailers. Pre-cut kit gothic and gambrel roofed barns could be purchased through mail-order catalogues like Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward. An advertisement for the "Cyclone" Sears gothic roofed barn declared it "offers great resistance to wind pressure and is designed principally for such sections of the country where storms and high winds are frequent." Anyone familiar with the winds of the Livingston area would be interested in such a claim.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lowell J. Soike, "Within the Reach of All: Midwest Barns Perfected," *Barns of the Midwest*, Allen G. Noble and Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 1985: 147-169.

<sup>35</sup> A review of Montana State College Extension Service Bulletins and Montana Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletins and Circulars reveals the vast amount of information available to the public during the early decades of the twentieth century.

<sup>36</sup> Soike, "Within the Reach of All Midwest Barns Perfected," 161.

<sup>37</sup> Lowell J. Soike, "Within the Reach of All: Midwest Barns Perfected," *Barns of the Midwest*, Allen G. Noble and Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 1985: 161; G. N. Brekke, "Bent, Glued Rafters Make Strong Barns," *American*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 8

The gothic roofed barn's "pleasing appearance and brace-free haymow seized the farmers' interest."<sup>38</sup> The aesthetic of the roof shape undoubtedly attracted Oliver Bonnell, but there is no documentation pertaining to the construction of the barn. There is no evidence that this was a Sears barn after an investigation of rafters and other features revealed no markings indicative of pre-cut kit barns. The rough cut lumber indicates that one of the numerous local lumber yards presumably cut the rafters. Bonnell probably hired experienced carpenters to erect the roof, which required some expertise compared to other roof types. One such carpenter, B. F. Eyman, lived up Falls Creek and built houses and other buildings for neighbors when his own farming operation permitted.<sup>39</sup>

Dairy barn

The Gothic Arch Roofed barn was also conducive to the Bonnell's new dairying operation. The design and form of the barn indicates that Mr. Bonnell, when he decided to begin a dairy herd, was probably influenced by the numerous promotional materials available in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Montana and other Agricultural Experiment Station bulletins provided guidance toward the management of dairy cattle, stressing the importance of comfort and sanitation. Barns were to be warm, well-lighted and properly ventilated. These informative bulletins also provided plans for barn construction that promoted both the gambrel and gothic roofed barns for dairy operation, providing a large hay loft required to feed and maintain the animals.<sup>40</sup>

Dairying in Montana originally was conducted by individual farmers who kept dairy cows to supply milk and cream to their family and animals. Excess cream would be stored and taken to a cream station in the nearest town. During the economic depression after World War I, dairying became a side-line for many farmers. Some farmers added dairy cows to their farming operation to provide supplemental income, particularly during the depression years of the 1930s.<sup>41</sup>

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Builder, (May 1937): 74; for information on Mail-Order barns, see Joy E. Sears, "Barns by Mile: Pre-cut Kit Barns by Mail-Order Catalog in the Midwest from 1900 to 1930," Master's Thesis, University of Oregon, 2001; the Sears barn advertisement found at [www.thebarnjournal.org](http://www.thebarnjournal.org).

<sup>38</sup> Soike, "Within the Reach of All: Midwest Barns Perfected," 161.

<sup>39</sup> *Park County History*, 190.

<sup>40</sup> For example, H. E. Murdock, R. M. Merrill and J. O. Tretsven, "Dairy Barns for Montana Farms," University of Montana Agricultural Experiment Station, Circular 130 (June 1925): 1-22; Iowa State College, "Care, Feed and Management of the Dairy Herd," Iowa State College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts Agricultural Experiment Station Circular No. 16, (March 1914).

<sup>41</sup> Raymond S. Lanier, "The Development of a Specialized Dairy Industry in Montana, 1919-1939," Master's Thesis, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, 1956.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 9

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At the turn of the century, Montana had approximately 48,500 milk cows and by 1929, had over 173,000. In 1926, Montana had 74 creameries, nine cheese factories and 228,000 milk cows. The largest cheese factory in Montana was located in Park County northwest of Wilsall in the Upper Shields Valley. Clyde Park had a creamery as early as 1908, which in 1914 made over 50,000 pounds of butter supplied by 200 cows with Livingston as its market. In Livingston, the Farmer's Creamery opened in 1922. In 1928 this creamery secured the contract to supply all the dairy products to all government and private companies in Yellowstone National Park. It is easy to assume that the majority of dairy products from the Bonnell farm supplied the Farmer's Creamery.<sup>42</sup>

The Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Gothic Arch Roofed Barn reflects the introduction of the dairying industry into the agricultural economic history of the Lower Shields Valley. It also serves as an excellent local representative of a Gothic Arched Barn, the final stage in the evolution of barn architecture. With the efforts of the Dailey family, the Bonnell Barn will continue to serve as a tangible reminder of our agricultural heritage that has survived basically unchanged for over 80 years.

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<sup>42</sup> U. S. Department of Commerce, Department of Census. *United States Census of Agriculture: 1925; 1930*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Page 2

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 3

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 1

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**Photographs**

Photographer: Michael C. Dailey  
Date: March 2004  
Negatives: Michael C. Dailey, Livingston, MT

Photo Number

Description

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | Barn, south and east elevations                |
| 2. | Barn, south and west elevations                |
| 3. | Barn, north and west elevations                |
| 4. | Barn, interior laminated arch construction     |
| 5. | Barn and milk house, south and east elevations |
| 6. | Barn and milk house, north and east elevations |

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

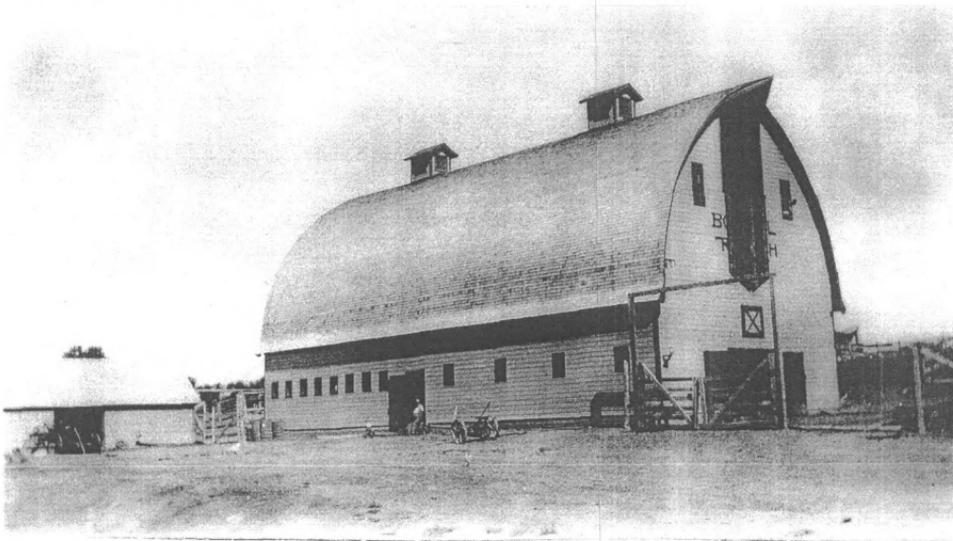
Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 2

*Oliver Bonnell in doorway  
Grandson Bob Bonnell on tricycle* 1928

BONNELL  
RANCH

*Seven-R brand*



South and east elevations of the Bonnell Barn in 1928.  
Oliver Bonnell stands in the doorway, and his grandson Bob Bonnell rides his tricycle.

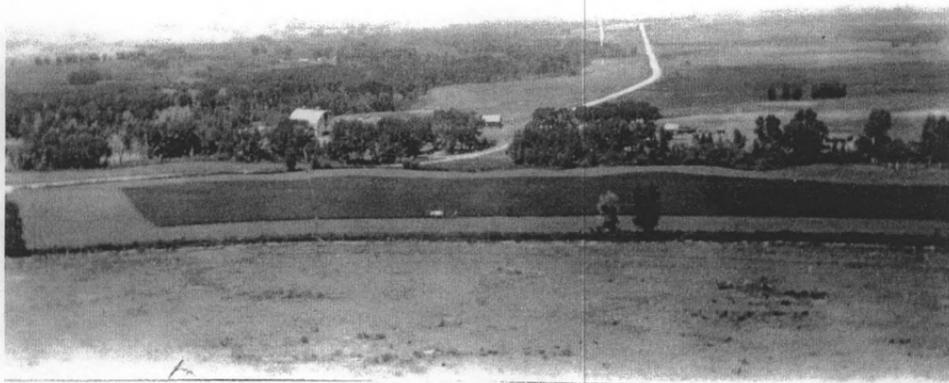
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 3



Overview of Bonnell dairy farm in 1928, view to the northwest.



Modern overview of barn and surrounding buildings, view to the west southwest.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

Page 4



Orthophotoquad, photo date 8/17/1999, Grannis Quadrangle

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Site Map

Page 1

Oliver and Lucy Bonnell Barn  
Park County, MT

