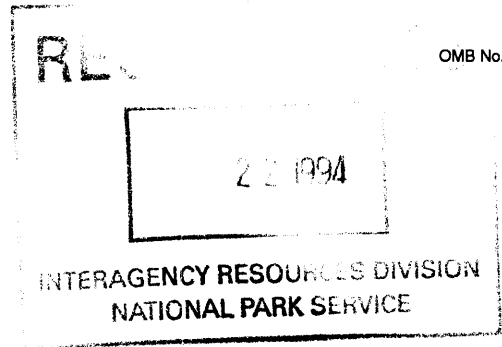


1505

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Vance Lodge

other name/site number: 24FH

2. Location

street & number:

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: X

city/town: Polebridge

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Flathead code: 029

zip code: 59928

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide X locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Marvella Shroy 11-16-94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 12-29-94  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the  
National Register

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## 5. Classification

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<b>Ownership of Property:</b> Private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
	Contributing	Noncontributing
<b>Category of Property:</b> Building(s)	<u>4</u>	<u>    </u> building(s)
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> 0	<u>1</u>	<u>    </u> sites
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> structures
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> n/a	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u> TOTAL

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## 6. Function or Use

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**Historic Functions:**

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, hotel, secondary structure

**Current Functions:**

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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## 7. Description

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**Architectural Classification:**

Other: Rustic  
Early 19th and 20th Century American  
Movements: Craftsman

**Materials:**

foundation: concrete  
walls: log  
roof: metal  
other:

### Narrative Description

The Vance Lodge is a rural property located on the outskirts of the tiny settlement of Polebridge, Montana. Polebridge is located along the North Fork of the Flathead River, opposite Glacier National Park. The Vance property is located away from the water, in the river floodplain, in a setting of aspen groves and meadows.

### Contributing Resources

#### Lodge

The main building on the property, the Vance Lodge, was constructed in 1920. It is a two story, rustic cabin, built of square notched logs, chinked now with cement. The T-form plan involves a two-story, main rectangular mass with a gable roof, with a gabled single story wing. Of rustic log design, it exhibits some influences of Craftsman styling as well, with the broad gables, shingled gable ends, exposed rafter tails, and multi-pane windows.

An open living room and dining room occupy much of the ground floor, with the kitchen projecting out to the rear. Two bedrooms are tucked under a stairway to the upper floor in the southwest portion of the first floor. Upstairs, a central hall continues off the stairwell, accessing four bedrooms. The bedrooms still retain heavy historic wallpaper on the walls and ceiling.

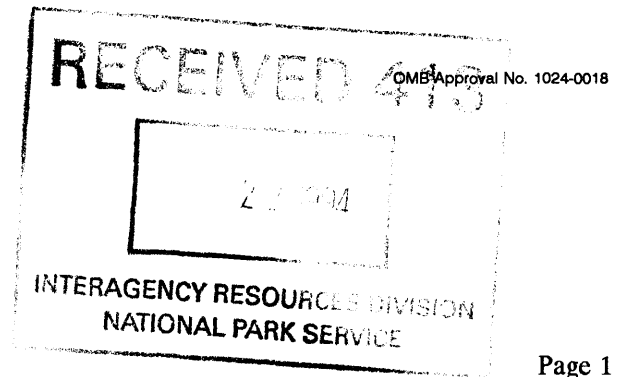
Craftsmanship on the stairway is worth noting, for here the Craftsman influences are again apparent in battered and panelled newel posts and simple, blocky railings and newel caps. The floors at the foot of the stairs are laid to interlock in a herringbone arrangement. All skilled finishing touches on this log building demonstrate the abilities of the owner and builder, Andy Vance.

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### Garage

The garage (now used as a shed) was constructed ca. 1930. It is a one-story, square massed building with a gable roof. The roof is covered with ribbed metal roofing. Double plank doors swing open on the front of the building. On the interior there is a dirt floor.

### Chicken Coop

A chicken coop was constructed on the edge of the meadow ca. 1920. A traditional shed-roofed form, it is built of square-notched logs which rest on the ground. Log purlins overhang the front of the building and support a roof constructed of poles and covered with wood shingles. A single plank door is located on the front. The adjacent rectangular front window opening is now boarded over.

### Outhouse #1

A four-hole, wood-framed outhouse is located just north of the garage. Built ca. 1920, it is a gable-roofed building with no windows, with plank walls and skirted with wooden shingles. A single plank door swings on metal hinges; the interior is lined with plywood. A storage loft is built into the gable. A split log plank privacy screen shields the front.

### Barn site

Historically, a log lean-to barn stood at the north end of the building complex but it burned down during the 1940s. It was a log building set upon the ground. Faint impressions of that former building consist of depressed and raised ground surfaces. It appears from those imprints to have measured about 20' E-W x 50' N-S. A few metal scraps from farming implements remain yet, scattered and half buried in the vicinity of the barn.

### Irrigation system

Early in the history of this homestead, an irrigation system was created by running a ditch from a seep on nearby Vance Hill eastward and then southward across the meadow where native grasses and timothy were cultivated. Today the imprint of this agriculture is visible in the remains of the old ditch, overgrown but discernable, and in the meadow east of the lodge where naturalized timothy evidences historic cultivation practices.

### Non-contributing Resources

#### Outhouse #2

A small, wood-framed outhouse is located north of the lodge. A building moved to this location during the mid-1900s, it originally was a one-hole Forest Service privy. It is a shed roofed building clad with tongue-in-groove siding. Although compatible with the rustic architecture of the Vance complex, it was not historically associated with the property and is a non-contributing resource within the property.

#### Shower

A small building of post and beam construction, this too was originally a Forest Service outhouse, at Akokala Creek. Now converted into a shower, the building has a gable roof and wood shingle siding, and rests on a concrete block foundation. A split log stairway and planked platform were added above the roof for the shower.

#### Wood Shed

A small log wood shed was formerly located just north of the lodge. It collapsed and was torn down during the early 1960s.

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### **Integrity**

The Vance Lodge is a wonderful example of rustic architecture, and has been lovingly preserved. It retains an excellent level of integrity, conveying most accurately its associations with the early history of the North Fork region. The barn and woodshed are no longer extant but other buildings in the complex represent the historic activities at the homestead, and the rural/subsistence lifestyle of the residents. Along with the highly preserved design, workmanship and materials, the setting and feeling of the property are all intact, evoking a strong feeling and understanding of its history.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C	Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement Architecture Entertainment/Recreation
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a	Period(s) of Significance: 1920-1944
Significant Person(s): n/a	Significant Dates: 1920
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder: Vance, Andy

### Narrative Statement of Significance

The North Fork of the Flathead River has long been one of most remote, wild and mountainous parts of Montana. Settlement in this area was characterized by subsistence homestead development along the river, mainly in small meadows and open bottomland. The Vance Lodge is a well preserved representative of the homesteads which proliferated along the North Fork during the very late 19th and early 20th century. Reflecting patterns of settlement, and embodying elements of Rustic design, and Craftsman styling, it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C.

### Historic Context: North Fork Settlement

Located in the extreme northern reaches of western Montana, the North Fork drainage of the Flathead river is a rugged and remote part of the state. Fed by crystalline glacial waters from lakes in the surrounding mountains, the North Fork River carves a valley between the Continental Divide Range and the Whitefish Range of the northern Rocky Mountains. The area is wet, heavily forested and still very wild. It is one of the last bastions of the grizzly bear in the lower 48 states.

Settlement came comparatively late to the North Fork drainage, following the founding of Columbia Falls and completion of the Great Northern Railway across Marias Pass in 1891. It was the prospects of coal mining at Coal Creek and logging around Sullivan Meadow, followed by oil seeps near Kintla Lake that first sparked interest in the resources of the drainage. Federal government land survey of two North Fork townships spurred speculation and allowed for legal preemption claims beginning in 1893. The earliest settlement concentrated at Sullivan Meadow; claims were immediately filed there and at Coal Creek and Coal Banks. However, transportation difficulties and widespread depression dampened early hopes. Most of the early settlers, in fact, lived a subsistence existence hunting and trapping, and raising gardens.

The government withdrew the North Fork area from further entry in 1897 and designated it a Forest Reserve. Timber investors consolidated existing patented claims around Sullivan Meadow. Speculation in the North Fork was reinvigorated when Butte Oil Company investors built the first road into the valley in 1901, connecting Belton to Kintla Lake. However, after a few years of drilling, two competing ventures, Kintla Oil Company and Kintla Lake Oil Company, ended in failure. In 1906, restrictions on homestead entry were lifted and lands east of the North Fork were included in the new Blackfeet National Forest. Homestead entry began anew in the area, and small enclaves, most notably, a cluster of homesteads at Big Prairie emerged. Located mid-way between Belton and Big Prairie, Sullivan Meadow remained a hub of local activity, with the opening of William Adair's store there -- the area's principal business -- in 1904.

Events of almost two decades focused early settlement along the east side of the river and by 1910, there were 44 homestead claims laid to lands east of the North Fork, compared to only 14 on the west. That year, Glacier National Park was created, and homestead settlement east of the North Fork River was halted. Although area homesteaders protested the creation of Glacier National Park and petitioned for exclusion of the North Fork tract from the park, the river boundary held. Park managers viewed the private inholdings as a headache, and from that time forward, policy has been to return the private inholdings to the public domain as the opportunity arose. Meanwhile on the west side of the river, Forest Service policies fostered local settlement. They built roads and bridges, and allowed for hunting, trapping, grazing, and timber cutting. This occasion rebalanced North Fork settlement; from that time on, settlement and community shifted to the west.

Between 1910 and the beginning of World War I, about 100 homesteads were settled west of the North Fork river. A road

See continuation sheets

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up the west side was begun in 1912. The following year William Adair moved his store from Sullivan Meadow to Polebridge. (The settlement was named for the 400' long pole bridge constructed by area homesteaders to access Big Prairie on the east side of the river. Although the bridge lasted only a season and was replaced by the county in 1916, the name stuck.) A tent set up near Indian Creek housed the first North Fork school in 1913; in 1915, local residents built a log school building at Big Prairie. But with more children from the west than the east side attending, "some westsiders came over one dark night and removed all the desks, etc." and moved the school across the river to Red Meadow.

The shift to the west continued; during the teens approximately 80 new homesteads were claimed west of the river. In 1918 a road along the west side between Columbia Falls and the Canadian border was finished. By 1920 there were two mercantiles located at Polebridge. Ben Henson's store housed a post office, and a second post office was opened at Trail Creek. Meanwhile, the eastside community declined, and Glacier National Park increasingly bought out private inholdings through the 20th century. By the late 1930s, few of the original homesteaders remained, the last year-round eastside resident was taken out during the winter of 1954.

Economically, most North Forkers remained highly subsistent; hunting, trapping and gardening continued to sustain many residents. A few homesteaders ran cattle. Glacier National Park presented additional opportunities to earn money, and many supplemented their income by working seasonally in the park, or outfitting and guiding when they could get the business. Hay was the principal crop in the area, most for sale to the Park Service, Forest Service, tourists or neighboring ranchers.

Socially, the community was centered in the hearts and homes of the people of the valley. As in many rural communities, dances and picnics were the main group entertainments. All night dances were held regularly at peoples homes or at the Adair store. After 1920, the Vance Lodge became a regular host to such parties.<sup>1</sup>

### Historic Significance

The history of the Vance Lodge and Homestead fits well the historical profile of early 20th century North Fork settlement. Built in 1920, the Vance Lodge was constructed by Andy Vance, an Iowan born in Hamilton County. A rugged outdoorsman and adventurer, Andy Vance came west with his brother Theodore James Vance to Montana via Nevada. They left that state in 1879, and arrived on the Yellowstone in 1880 where they spent time with Clement Edward Pierce, hunting buffalo to feed the Northern Pacific Railroad workcrews. A Huffman photograph taken near Miles City depicts the two in a dugout hunting camp during this period.

He married Ella Blanch Willcutt, a fellow Iowan, at Rosebud, Montana on July 16, 1884. In the years that followed, they remained at Rosebud, Montana and had two daughters Maud and May Lenore. In 1890 they moved to Livingston where Ella ran a boarding house and Andy worked as a guide for travellers to Yellowstone Park.

In 1898 Andy and Theo Vance followed the gold rushes into the Yukon Territory to Bonanza Creek. Their venture was successful; however, they sold their claims after their dredge froze. They travelled on horseback to Nome, Alaska, and in 1902, they returned to Montana.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This context on North Fork Settlement is condensed from Homesteading on the North Fork in Glacier National Park, by Patricia Bik.

<sup>2</sup>Tripp, Betty pp. 2 - 8.

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In 1914 Andy and Ella Vance staked a 160 acre homestead claim near the North Fork of the Flathead River. Andy worked trail crew in Glacier Park, working on early trails, including those around Bowman Lake, the Kintla Road and the trail to upper Kintla Lake about that time. Andy also ran a small sawmill nearby (up the road near the present Stepler cabin). It was a subsistence existence for many in the North Fork during those years; Ella grew a big garden and Andy hunted and trapped for food.

In 1920, Andy Vance set about building the present lodge and a number of outbuildings on the homestead. The lodge was a two-story rustic log building designed to accommodate the Vance family as well as guests whom Andy packed into the wilds of northern Montana and Canada. Ella Vance, who was known for her cooking skills, prepared the food for the pack trips and guests. A big cast iron kettle for preparing and canning food still remains in the lodge.

Andy Vance was hit by a train near Belton in 1924 and died; his wife Ella, died in 1929.

The Vance's daughter May married Ben Hensen, Sr. Ben Hensen ran a store just north of Polebridge. In 1929 or 1930, the local post office was moved from nearby Adair to the Vance Lodge. At the time, Ben Hensen was the youngest U.S. postmaster in the country. Their son, Ben Hensen, Jr. married Ann Hensen, present owner. Ben Jr. and Ann relocated to California, where he worked for Texaco Oil and later as a tree surgeon. Since 1937, the lodge has not been occupied year-round, although the Hensens have continued to use it annually since then as a summer home.<sup>3</sup>

The Vance Lodge has remained in the Vance/Hensen family. Though threatened by the 1988 forest fires which raged all around the property and destroyed many nearby cabins, the Vance Lodge was saved by a retardant drop. Retardant from that event still splatters some of the windows, a reminder of the fire and the good fortune that the Hensens feel to have had their lodge saved.

### **Architectural Significance**

During the settlement of the North Fork, log was the building material of choice, and was used to build every kind of structure from houses and outhouses to barns and root cellars. Many of these rustic early buildings were constructed by a handful of men, resulting in great consistency of design and construction. It wasn't until 1922, two years after the Vance Lodge construction, that the first frame building was erected.

The log buildings of the North Fork were built to last and to withstand harsh winters. Home designs generally featured gable-roofed cabins, built of logs planed on top and bottom for tighter fit. Logs infilled the gable ends up into the peak. The roofs were covered with extra long (2 1/2 - 3') split cedar or tamarack shakes. Earliest residences were simple one or two room cabins with saddle- or lap-notched corners. Steeply pitched roofs, rock foundations, small multi-paned windows, plank or hewn flooring, and hewn interior walls characterized these buildings.

With time, many homesteaders sought to expand these small homes. Rather than adding on, many built new, larger log dwellings. These later houses were larger, generally 1 1/2 - 2 stories, with larger multi-pane windows.<sup>4</sup> Outbuildings and fencing continued to be done with log.

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<sup>3</sup>Hensen, Ann Interview.

<sup>4</sup>Bik pp. 50-57

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The Vance Lodge fits the pattern of homestead building replacement, and reflects local building methods, while at the same time exhibiting influences of Craftsman design. Built in 1920 to replace an earlier cabin, the lodge is built of log, 2 stories high, with large multi-pane windows. At the same time, Craftsman influences are apparent in the basic lines of the broad gables, shingled gable ends, exposed rafter tails and interior handling of the woodwork.

Rooted in the log building traditions of North Fork settlement, yet also demonstrating an awareness of popular architectural style of the early 20th century, the Vance Lodge symbolizes the emergence of the North Fork: from remote, frontier beginnings to a close knit community aware of and connected to the world outside the valley.

Today, in many ways the Vance Lodge and its owner Ann Hensen are still very much at the heart of the North Fork community. Though the dances and big social gatherings at the Vance Lodge are now a thing of the past, the Vance Lodge continues to be a place of community and friendship. An area resident most all of her long life, Ann Hensen, with the help of her daughter Iola and family, continues to entertain visitors throughout the summer who drop by daily to visit the old Lodge and reminisce on local history.



Vance Lodge  
Name of Property

Flathead 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: 140 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	11	698540	5406430
B	11	699120	5406460
C	11	699120	5406100
D	11	699480	5406100
E	11	699500	5405700
F	11	698570	5405630

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): SW 1/4 and SW1/4, SE1/4 of Sec 22, T35N, R21W.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the Vance Lodge are as depicted on the accompanying map.

### Boundary Justification

These boundaries encompass the buildings, fields and surrounding natural area, which comprise almost the entire original homestead claim filed by Andy and Ella Vance in 1914.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Chere Jiusto  
organization: State Historic Preservation Office date: October 1993  
street & number: 1410 8th Avenue telephone: 406/444-7715  
city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59620

### Property Owners

name/title: Ann Hensen  
street & number: 9214 Olive St.  
city or town: Fontana state: CA zip code: 92335

name/title: Iola and Lewis Mason  
street & number: 5500 Highway 93 telephone: 406/862-3436  
city or town: Whitefish state: MT zip code: 59937

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Tripp, Betty Simpson, "The Willcutt, Newton and Simpson Families of Livingston, Montana," unpublished manuscript, 9349 Iowa St., Livonia, MI 48150, August 1992.

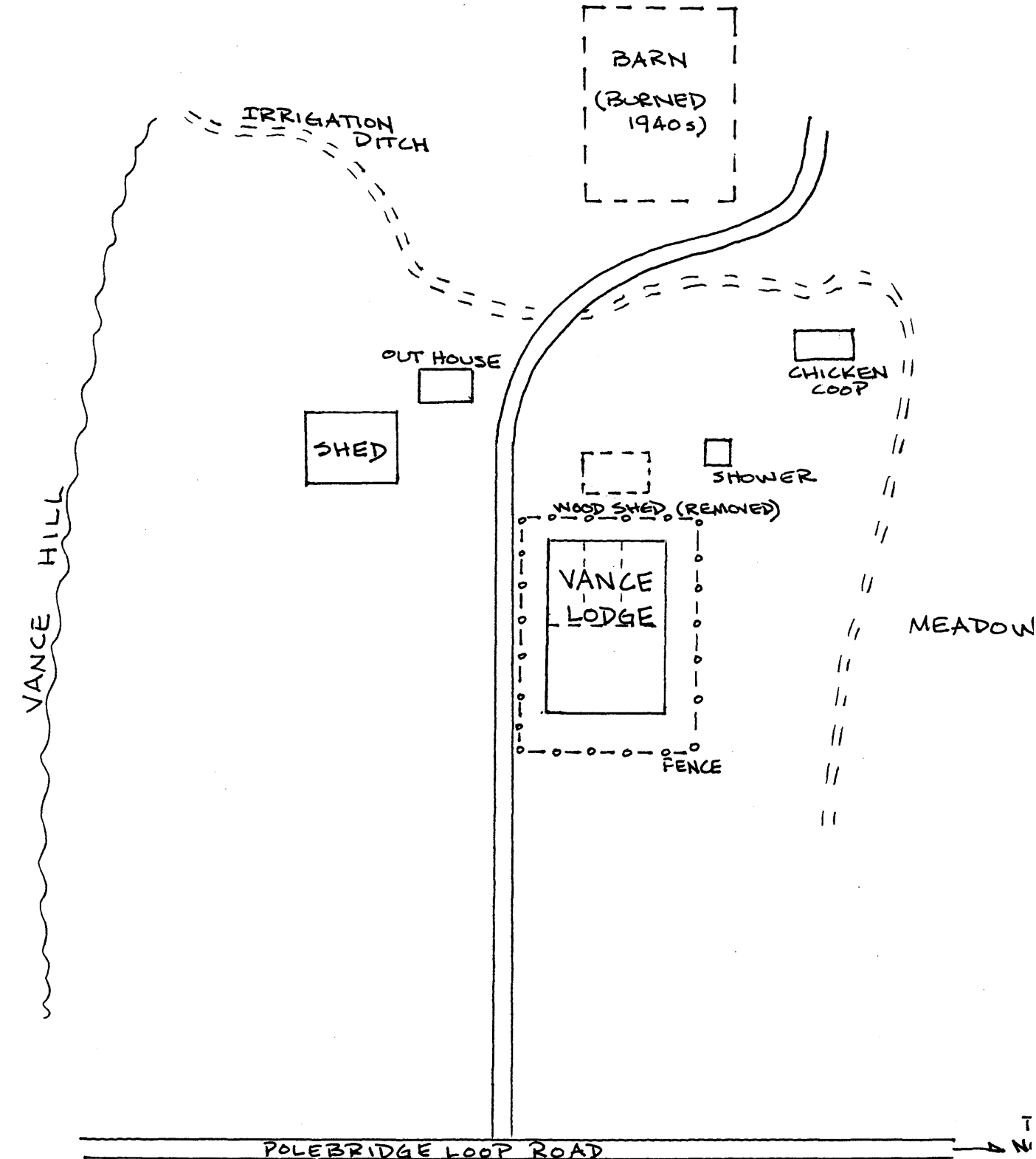
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U.S. Census Records, 1900, Livingston Township, Park County.

Unknown author Correspondence to great granddaughter Evelyn, December 20, 1992, December 28, 1992, January 4, 1993.

Unknown photographers Vance/Hensen family photographs, in possession of Ann Hensen, Polebridge, MT.

SKETCH MAP  
VANCE LODGE  
POLEBRIDGE  
FLATHEAD CO  
MONTANA



(NOT TO SCALE)

