

1177

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP - 8 2005

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: John Hepburn Place

other name/site number: 24PA1136

2. Location

street & number: 626 East River Road

not for publication: n/a

vicinity: n/a

city/town: Emigrant

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Park

code: 067

zip code: 59027

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.

Mark F. Faunberg/SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

September 6, 2005
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
Edson R. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
10.19.05

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:	Private	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property:	Building	Contributing	Noncontributing
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:	n/a	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u> building(s)
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> sites
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> structures
Name of related multiple property listing:	n/a	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>2</u> TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:	Current Functions:
DOMESTIC/single dwelling	DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures	DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/energy facility	INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/energy facility
OTHER/rock polisher, trailer	OTHER/rock polisher
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum	

7. Description

Architectural Classification:	Materials:
OTHER/Rustic	foundation: CONCRETE
	walls: WOOD/half-log, weatherboard
	roof: ASPHALT; METAL/Tin
	other: METAL/steel

Narrative Description

The John Hepburn Place is located in the upper Yellowstone or Paradise Valley of south central Montana. The valley lies between the Gallatin Range on the west and the Absaroka Range on the east. The Absarokas are the western end of the Beartooth Plateau. The Paradise Valley is a broad, north-south trending valley that is delineated by canyons on the north and south ends. The valley was formed around 40 million years ago and, until recently, was filling with sediment that was a part of the Renova Formation. The Renova Formation is characterized by deep deposits of sediment that began accumulating in the Paradise Valley during the Oligocene Period. The Yellowstone River has cut an "erosional valley into the upper part of the valley," exposing white bluffs of Renova Formation on both sides of the river. From 8 to 25 million years ago, periodic basaltic flows from volcanoes located in Yellowstone National Park capped the Renova features, providing outstanding basalt cliffs in the vicinity of the John Hepburn Place. In addition, outcrops of Hepburn's Mesa Formation also dot the landscape in the valley with one located in close proximity to the site. The formation is paleontologically rich and provides an excellent source of Miocene fossils. A passionate rock hound and amateur paleontologist, John Hepburn specifically located the site to take advantage of the surrounding geological features. Unfortunately by 2003, the Yellowstone River had eroded the river bank behind the John Hepburn Place to where it is now less than 25 yards from the western boundary of the property (historically it was more than 100 yards away from the site. Rip-rapping to the north and south of the site have forced the channel to move toward the property.¹

¹ David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press, 1986), 20-22, 203-205.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a
Significant Person(s): n/a
Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Areas of Significance: ENGINEERING,
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE
Period(s) of Significance: 1935-1959
Significant Dates: 1935, 1940, 1959
Architect/Builder: John Hepburn

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary:

Because of the property's association with the Great Depression-era and post-World War Two Montana tourist industry, the John Hepburn Place is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A. The property gains additional significance as an excellent representative example of a mid-20th century rural museum site with ancillary outbuildings. It still represents its origins as a roadside attraction associated with Yellowstone National Park. The property gains additional significance under Criterion C, for its associations with Rustic architecture. The 1950 Spartanette Tandem Travel Trailer reinforces the property's associations with recreation and is eligible under Criterion C as an excellent representative of that property type. The trailer was moved to the property after 1960, post-dating the period of significance. It is a portable resource, however, and because it was moved within its natural setting – in proximity to Yellowstone National Park and within the tourist travel corridor – and is eligible under Criterion C, it does not need to meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration B.

Historic Context:

Despite the crippling effects of the Great Depression, the tourist industry flourished in Montana beginning about 1934. Although many Americans were either unemployed or earning minimal wages, many other Americans were still able to take annual vacations and visit local attractions and the national parks. To that end, the Montana Highway Commission formed a unit to advertise the state through promotional literature, colorful highway maps, a network of roadside interpretive markers, museums, and informative ports of entry stations on the major highway leading into the Treasure State. Additional federal funding also allowed the state to significantly improve its highways, thereby improving access to sites that might be visited by out-of-state visitors. Roads that led to the national parks were also targeted by local entrepreneurs as worthy of exploitation as they sought to supplement their incomes by creating attractions that tourists might find tempting. U.S. Highway 89 (now Secondary 540) between Livingston and the north entrance to Yellowstone National Park at Gardiner was a potential goldmine for cash-strapped residents living along the highway. The John Hepburn Place is associated with the tourist industry.

A long time rancher in the Paradise Valley who had recently retired, John Hepburn realized the opportunity presented by Highway 89. To that end, he built a museum adjacent to the highway and charged admission for those who wanted to see his amazing collection of geological specimens, fossils, and local artifacts. Hepburn's museum included a wide variety of artifacts, including Miocene fossils acquired from the nearby Hepburn Mesa Formation, geological samples taken from Yellowstone Park and its vicinity, Indian artifacts, historical photographs, and locally significant historical items. The museum was a landmark on the highway until the mid-1950s, when the road was relocated to the west side of the Yellowstone River by the Montana Highway Department. At the time the museum was constructed, moreover, it was located in a remote site in the Paradise Valley, far from connections to electrical power lines. Consequently, John Hepburn and his son, Ralph, installed a wind-powered Jacobs generator system to provide electricity to the museum and its outbuildings. That system was developed in eastern Montana to supply electricity to remote homesteads on the northern Great Plains. The original wiring, circuit boards, circuit breakers, and gauges are still intact and functional. The valley's infamous wind was also harnessed to power a homemade rock polisher built by John and Ralph. The rocks polished by the contraption were sold to museum visitors and tourists who stopped at the site. The rustic appearance of the site compelled the curious to stop, pay money, and examine what was truly a unique collection in Montana.

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: approximately 1.5 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing (NAD27)

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Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): Lots 6 and 7 of NW¼ SE¼ SE¼ of Section 23, T6S, R7E

Verbal Boundary Description

The site is located on the west side of Montana Secondary 540 at about Milepost 3.95. The legal location for the site is Lots 6 and 7 in the NW¼ SE¼ SE¼ of Section 23, T6S, R7E. The existing highway right-of-way fence provides the eastern boundary of the site, which is almost entirely delineated by barbed wire fences. From the driveway approach to Secondary 540 proceed northerly approximately 400-feet. The boundary then proceeds northwesterly to the Yellowstone River. The river provides the western boundary of the site. At the driveway the property line for the southern boundary angles northwesterly 200 feet to the Yellowstone River.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to include the land surrounding the building cluster that has been historically associated with the building and conveys the property's historic setting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	Jon Axline	date:	26 January 2004
organization:	Montana Department of Transportation	telephone:	(406) 444-6258
street & number:	2701 Prospect Ave.	zip code:	59620-1001
city or town:	Helena state: MT		

Property Owner

name/title:	Bob Cartier	telephone:	(408) 482-8006
street & number:	496 North 5 th Street	zip code:	95112
city or town:	San Jose state: CA		

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The John Hepburn Place consists of eleven features, including a residence (F-1), windmill (F-2), garages (F-3 and F-7), a tool shed (F-4), generator house (F-5), smokehouse (F-6) and a privy (F-8). A circa 1955 house trailer is also located on the property. Located on the west side of the highway, the site faces east toward Secondary 540.

Residence (F-1; one contributing building)

The residence is a one-story building constructed in 1935 in the Rustic style. Intersecting gable roofs cover a T-shaped plan. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles and interior brick and concrete block chimneys. The building rests on a concrete foundation with obsidian cobbles and other mineral specimens embedded in the concrete. The walls of the residence are sheathed in wood with half-log veneer. Vertical half-log veneer are on the north and south gable-ends, while diagonally placed half-logs are placed on the west gable-end. Half-logs also function as corner boards. The overhanging eaves have boxed-in exposed rafters and beveled soffits. There are extended purlins at the gable peaks. There are fixed diamond-shaped windows on the north and south gable-ends. There are two 3/1 double-hung windows on the north and south elevations; all are framed-in by half logs. A full-width, open-air porch covers the façade of the dwelling. The porch is enclosed in screens on the east, north and south sides; the screens all have decorative muntins. The roof of the house is extended to cover the porch, which rests on a concrete pad foundation. There are vertically oriented half-logs on the lower zone of the porch. The entry is central to the façade; it has a screen door with decorative spindlework. The primary entry to the residence is reached through the porch. It has a centrally located entry with a wood-paneled door. The door has three vertically oriented fixed lites. The entry is framed by half-logs. Paired 3/1 double-hung windows are located to the left of the entry and a single 3/1 double-hung window to the left of the entry.

The rear section of the residence opens to the north and is covered by a gable roof. The gable roof is extended on the north to cover a screened-in, open-air porch. The design of this porch is similar to the façade porch and is framed-in with logs. An entry is reached through the porch. The porch is accessed from the north. The entry is left-of-center and flanked by screened-in windows. The porch wraps around on the west. It has decorative half-log siding on the lower zone of the porch and the screened-in windows have decorative wood muntins. The west façade of the rear section has a 3-lite casement window and there is a 3/1 double-hung window on the south elevation. The southwest wall of the front section of the house has a small 3-lite casement window. At the junction of the front section and rear section on the southwest corner there is a small shed-roof structure with an entry on the west. The roof is sheathed in corrugated metal, and the walls are comprised of half-logs with log corner boards. An entry is located on the west elevation. It has a wood-paneled door. A boarded-over window is located on the south elevation. Mature juniper trees obscure the façade of the residence.

Windmill (F-2; one contributing structure)

The structure is a "Jacobs' brand electricity generating windmill. It is located to the south of the residence. It was installed in 1935 and, along with a generator for emergencies, has provided electrical power to the property since then. The tower is approximately 50-feet in height with a base width of 10.5-feet by 10.5-feet. The tower is comprised of angle sections with cross-braces riveted to the frame. The windmill has three blades with "Jacobs Wind Electric Co., Inc./Minneapolis, patented" written on the "tail" of the windmill assembly.

Garage 1 (F-3; one contributing building)

The garage is located south of the Residence and shows influences from the Rustic style of architecture. It faces east onto Highway 540. Built in 1935 or 1936, it is wood frame with half-log veneer. It has a half-log gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal. The logs are chinked with cement mortar. The half-logs are square notched at the corners with shims to level each row of logs. A bay entry is central to the façade; it has a two-leaf wood door comprised of vertical boards. There are paired 4-lite/6-lite sliding casement windows on the south and north elevations. Entries are located at the rear of the elevations and both have vertical board doors.

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Tool Shed (F-4; one contributing building)

Built in 1935, the tool shed is located just northwest of the residence. It is oriented north and south and opens to the south. It has a gable roof with purlins covering a rectangular plan. The roof is sheathed in corrugated metal. The walls are clad in a combination horizontal boards and one-half log siding. A 2-lite window with a screen is located on the north. An entry is located on the left of the east elevation.

Generator House (F-5; one contributing building)

The generator house was constructed in 1950 and is located adjacent to the tool shed on the north. It is oriented north and south and opens to the south. The gable roof covers a rectangular plan. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles and it has exposed rafters. The walls are clad in horizontal board siding (former bridge timbers) with corner boards; vertical board siding is on the north and south gable-ends. The building rests on a concrete pad foundation. The primary entry is on the east of the south façade and has a wood door with a screen addition. A single fixed-lite is located left of the entry. A horizontally oriented window is centrally located on the east elevation; it has a single fixed lite. A window is located slightly on the west of the north façade. There are two fixed lites on the west elevation.

Smokehouse/Cattery (F-6; one contributing building)

Built about 1942, the former smokehouse that has been converted to use as a cattery. Located north of the Generator House, it is oriented east and west and opens to the east. The gable roof covers a square plan. The roof is sheathed in corrugated metal with soffits, and has exposed rafters on the overhanging eaves. The walls are clad in horizontal boards with corner boards. The east façade has an entry on the north. The door is comprised of vertical boards with exterior braces. A vertical full-length fixed-lite window is located slightly off-center on the south elevation; it is of relatively recent vintage. A portion of the rear façade is clad in coffered tin that originally came from Bangee's Saloon in Gardiner. A window is centrally located on the west (rear) façade. It is partially screened to allow access for the cats that live at the site.

Garage 2 (F-7; one non-contributing building)

Built about 1980, the garage/outbuilding is located north of the Smokehouse/Cattery. It is oriented north and south and opens to the east onto Secondary Highway 540. The structure has a shed roof sheathed in rolled asphalt with an interior metal smokestack. The walls are clad in vertical board and batten siding on the south elevation and the façade. The building rests on a concrete foundation. The façade has bay entries on the right and left. The left bay has a double-leaf board door with six fixed-lite windows on each door. The right bay has diagonal board and batten with exterior braces. An entry is located on the left of the south elevation. It has a wood door with a screen. A 12-lite fixed window is situated to the east of the door. On the rear façade, the roof has exposed rafters. And the walls are clad in plywood sheets. Three 12-lite fixed windows are evenly spaced on the rear façade. A vintage 1935 granary is attached to the north elevation of the building. It is oriented east and west and faces east. It has a gable roof sheathed in asphalt. The studs are exposed on the walls indicating its original function. The entry is to the east on the north elevation. A shed roof addition is attached to the rear of the granary. Its entry is located on the right of the north elevation. Both entries on the granary have vertical wood doors. This structure is attached to the garage by a shed roof addition. The addition has a centrally located wood paneled door.

Privy (F-8; one contributing building)

The privy located to the east of the Residence. It is oriented east and west and opens to the west. The building has a has a gable roof sheathed in wood shingles. The overhanging eaves on the east and west have exposed rafters. The walls are clad in horizontal board siding with corner boards. The entry is off-center on the façade; it has a screen door. A shelter

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wall extends from the façade on the north. The privy was built in 1935 and is original to the site. The interior is gaily decorated with postcards, colorful prints, and other paper ephemera to make one's experience there more enjoyable.

Ostrich Pen (one non-contributing structure)

The Ostrich Pen is located east of the Residence adjacent to the Privy. It is 12-ft x 10-ft and is enclosed by a wire mesh fence attached to wood posts. A shed roof plywood shelter is located on the north side of the pen. The enclosure was built in the late 1990s. At the time of the survey, the pen contained three adult ostriches.

Rock Polisher (one contributing structure)

The structure is a wind-generated Rock Polisher was designed and constructed by the property's original owner, John Hepburn. It is located south of Garage 1. It is oriented east and west and opens to the north. Exactly how the mechanism operated is unknown and Hepburn's grandson could not provide any details. A horizontal wheel with buckets attached caught the wind and powered the polisher. The dimensions of the structure were roughly 12 x 12 feet. It was constructed sometime between 1935 and 1940. The structure is deteriorated and its individual components are difficult to ascertain.

Travel Trailer (one contributing object).

The object is a circa 1955 Spartanette-style travel trailer. The trailer was manufactured by the Spartan Aircraft Company and has an aluminum exterior. It was likely surplused from Yellowstone National Park in the 1960s and has been located at this site ever since.

Integrity:

The Hepburn Place exists little changed from its appearance in 1950. The Rustic museum/residence building has not been altered since its construction in 1935. With the exception of the conversion of Feature 6 into a cattery in the 1970s, there have been no significant changes to any of the outbuildings since their construction. The original lay-out of the site is intact and unchanged. A circa 1980 garage (F-7) is located at the far north end of the site and does not visually intrude on the over-all appearance of the property. The John Hepburn Place retains remarkable architectural and historic integrity as a mid-20th century rural museum site with ancillary outbuildings that still represents its origins as a roadside attraction associated with Yellowstone National Park.

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During the late 1940s and 1950s, Hepburn's museum continued to function as an important roadside attraction on the road between Chico Hot Springs and the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park at Gardiner. The boom in the Car Culture after the war only made the museum more profitable as tourism skyrocketed. Throughout the post-war period, the elderly John Hepburn continued to scour the surrounding area for interesting minerals, fossils and Indian and historic artifacts for display in his museum. The museum also functioned as field trip destination for local schools. The museum closed in 1959 after the death of John Hepburn. His collection was dispersed to his surviving family members with many artifacts absorbed into other local museum collections. By February 2003, only a small part of the original museum collection was still located within the old museum. Because of Hepburn's association with the Great Depression-era and post-World War Two Montana tourist industry, the John Hepburn Place is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A.

The Hepburn Place exists little changed from its appearance in 1950. The Rustic museum/residence building has not been altered since its construction in 1935. The post-and-beam frame of the building has been sheathed in half-logs, an inexpensive alternative to full log construction that was indicative of the 1930s. The half-log exterior, while cheaper to build, still presents a rustic appearance that was the goal of John Hepburn, who wanted to attract customers to his museum operation. The plain T-shaped building is augmented by ornate detailing that enhances its rustic appearance, including decorative eave brackets, muntins, fixed gable-end windows, and purlins. As a testament to its origins as a museum and his interest in geology, John Hepburn embedded mineral specimens in the building's concrete foundation. The five contributing outbuildings constructed from 1935 to 1950, also exhibit that Rustic design that enhances the general feeling of the site and especially of the museum building. They are an eclectic collection of building materials, including bridge timbers.

The site is further enhanced by the presence of the original 1935 windmill that has always provided electricity to the site. Wind-powered electrical generators were once fairly common in the remote areas of the Paradise Valley. A cursory survey of the area suggests that this may be one of the first and could be one of the last sites powered by this method. Regardless, it is likely this is the last site powered by the original apparatus. The presence of the homemade, wind-powered rock polisher on the site also contributes to its historic significance. The original owner was an avid rock hound that exhibited mineral specimens in his museum and also sold samples to visitors. Although somewhat deteriorated the structure is an important component to the overall integrity and significance of the John Hepburn Place.

Hepburn Place Chronology

Section 25 was part of the 17 million-acre land grant given to the Northern Pacific Railway by Congress in July 1864. Prior to 1892, it was also part of the Crow Indian Reservation. By 1906, homesteaders had begun filing 160-acre claims in the townships surrounding the section. In June 1906, John Hepburn filed a Desert claim on a 147.48-acre homestead in Section 18, T6S, R8E just northeast of the property considered here. By 1909 he had acquired the property of Sheldon "Al" Lopher along the Yellowstone River about one-half mile north of the site. Hepburn continued to add land to his holdings, obtaining additional acreage surrounding his original homestead through cash entries and purchase. In November 1919, he purchased the 147.48 acres (Lots 6 and 7) that included this property, from the Northern Pacific Railway for \$400.19. A few months later, in April 1920, Hepburn sold it to Gallatin County residents John and Ena Ross. They sold it back to Hepburn in October 1929.²

Born in Ontario in 1869, John Hepburn emigrated to Kansas in 1884. The richness of the mines northeast of Cooke City drew him to Montana in 1888. He worked for a time as a "wood bucker" for Jack Allen's Metropolitan Hotel in Cooke City before taking over the reins as a stage driver on the road to Soda Butte and Mammoth Hot Springs. In 1891, Hepburn

² Michael Malone, Richard Roeder and William Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, Rev. Ed., (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), 173; Montana Land Tract Books, Volume 44; General Land Office Map, 1906; *History of Park County, Montana*, (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1984), 247; Deed Book 53: 402; Ibid 49: 290; Ibid 60: 419.

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went to work for Yellowstone National Park concessionaire Colonel Ela Collins Waters' Yellowstone Lake Boat Company. From 1891 to 1909, Hepburn was the captain of the *Zillah*, the first steamboat to ply the waters of Yellowstone Lake. In addition to ferrying sightseers around the lake, he also "proved up" on his homestead near Emigrant and added additional land to his holdings. Through purchases and homestead entries, Hepburn was one of the prominent ranchers in the upper Paradise Valley by 1921.³

In the early 1920s, Hepburn sold most of his ranch to Dr. George Townsend, a local physician. He retained 147 acres near the base of the chalk cliffs abutting Montana Secondary 540 (then U.S. 89) and built a wood frame residence between the road and the Yellowstone River in 1935, the year after his wife, Hilda, died. The cabin and garage were covered with half logs to simulate log cabins to make the site appear more rustic from the highway. Importantly, a windmill provided the cabin and outbuildings with electricity.

The wind-powered electrical system was developed by Jacob and Marcellus Jacobs in the 1920s and quickly became the standard throughout the industry. The Jacobs boys developed the system to provide electricity to their isolated eastern Montana ranch. In the 1930s, the brothers relocated to Minneapolis and formed the Wind Electric Company to manufacture wind-powered electric plants for isolated rural properties. The natural wind currents of the Paradise Valley along with his son Ralph's interest in the system influenced Hepburn to develop and construct a wind-powered rock polisher on the site. Indeed, Hepburn's fascination of the area's geology is also evident on the foundation of the residence (F-1) where he pressed locally available mineral specimens into the concrete for decoration.⁴

Hepburn and his son, Ralph, were avid rock hounds and fossil collectors. Born in Park County in 1903, Ralph left the Hepburn ranch in 1920 and took science courses at the Livingston high school. In 1921, he later went to work for the Yellowstone Park Company and later the National Park Service. In addition to his interest in the geology and thermal features of Yellowstone National Park, Ralph was also fascinated by electricity. Ralph installed and maintained the wind-powered electric plant at the site and later built the generator shed (F-5) in 1950. John transferred ownership of the property to Ralph in June 1939. He continued to live on the property until just before his death in 1959.⁵

John operated a road-side museum adjacent to U.S. Highway 89 (now Secondary 540) from 1940 to 1959 – even after the primary highway was relocated to the west side of the Yellowstone River in the late 1950s. The museum displayed an eclectic collection of Indian artifacts, photographs, railroad memorabilia, historic business signs, and historic artifacts from the area. The centerpiece of the collection, however, was the rocks, minerals and fossils assembled from the park and Paradise Valley. Of special importance were the fossils (including a petrified turtle) collected from the nearby Hepburn Mesa Formation located about a half-mile north of the site. In 1955, at age 85, John was still actively collecting fossils and minerals in the area. He died in April 1959. After his death, his collections were divided among the surviving family members and moved in 1960.⁶

³ *Park County News*, 15 December 1955; *Livingston Enterprise*, 9 April 1959; Doris Whithorn, *Paradise Valley on the Yellowstone*. Images of America Series, (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 58; Bill and Doris Whithorn, *60 Miles of Photo History: Upper Yellowstone Valley*, (Livingston: Park County News, no date), np; *History of Park County*, 247; Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, *History of Montana*, volume 2, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1913), 919-920; U.S. Census Records: Park County, 1900, 1910; Deed Records.

⁴ Deed Records; *Park County News*, 15 December 1955; Wind Turbine Industries Corporation, www.windturbine.net/history; *Livingston Enterprise*, 9 April 1959).

⁵ Whithorn, *History of Park County*, 247-248; *Park County News*, 15 December 1955; Deed Book 98: 205; Jim Hepburn Interview and Correspondence.

⁶ Whithorn, *History of Park County*, 247-248; *Park County News* 15 December 1955; *Livingston Enterprise*, 9 April 1959; Hepburn Interview and Correspondence.

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Ralph retained ownership of the property until March 1981, when he transferred an interest in it to his son, Jim. Ralph died in April 1986, leaving Jim the sole owner of the property. Jim sold it to the current owner, Bob Cartier of Los Gatos, California in September 2002. Cartier is an archaeologist and is currently restoring the site.⁷

Rustic Architecture

The "Rustic" style of architecture grew out of the ideological climate of the early twentieth century, and came to epitomize the architecture of western tourist destinations during the 1900-1950 period.⁸ The buildings and structures at the John Hepburn Place can generally be classified as "Rustic" in style. Popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and especially associated with wilderness tourist destinations, the Rustic Movement "was a natural outgrowth of a new romanticism about nature, about our country's western frontiers," according to National Park Service Historical Architect Merrill Ann Wilson. Fostered by a growing conservation ethic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Rustic style was architecturally "unique" in that, "for the first time in the history of American architecture, a building became an accessory to nature ..."⁹

The Rustic style is generally characterized by "the use of native materials in proper scale" and "the avoidance of rigid, straight lines, and over-sophistication," according to National Park Service Architectural Consultant Albert H. Good. Through these simple means, the style "gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools," and when "successfully handled," it "thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings, and with the past."¹⁰

In many respects, Rustic design was perfectly suited for tourist destinations in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. "Everywhere you go in the dude ranch country, you see log cabins," one observer noted in *The Dude Rancher* magazine, the official publication of the Dude Ranch Association (DRA). Testifying to the popularity of log cabin construction during this heady time in auto travel and western promotion, the DRA went on to celebrate the surprising fact that "more log cabins were built in the United States in 1933, than in any other year since Lincoln's time."¹¹

Blending well with their scenic natural surroundings and pre-existing built environments, Rustic buildings celebrated the pioneer days and frontier living with a great deal of nostalgia, much like western tourists themselves. Widespread reliance on log construction, therefore, was more than merely convenient in the heavily forested Mountain West; it expressed a philosophical statement that grew out of ideological climate of the early-twentieth century. "Real log cabins represented more than artful simplicity," Peter Schmidt has noted. "They expressed an attitude toward life itself."¹²

Often to the chagrin of area dude ranchers, who catered to a more discerning public, the less authentic versions of Rustic style impacted the area. Too much standardization and auto-oriented commercialization—especially when it adversely impacted natural beauty or the preconceived romantic notions of tourists—was scorned by most dude ranch advocates as being counterproductive to the collective goals of the industry. As one promoter noted in a 1935 publication of the Dude Ranch Association:

⁷ Deed Microfilm Roll 34: 618; Ibid 177: 1037; *Livingston Enterprise*, 9 April 1959; Hepburn Correspondence.

⁸For a discussion of the character-defining features of rustic architecture see William C. Tweed, Laura E. Soulliere, and Henry G. Law, "Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942," National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Management, February 1977, 1-3. A comprehensive overview of the ideological and architectural influences that gave rise to the popular rustic style in America see Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service: 1916-1942* (Washington, D.C. National Park Service, 1993).

⁹ Merrill Ann Wilson, "Rustic Architecture: The National Park Style," *Trends*, (July August September, 1976), 4-5.

¹⁰Albert H. Good. *Park and Recreation Structures: Part I—Administration and Basic Service Facilities*, a reprint of the 1938 edition published by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999, 5

¹¹"Log Cabins," *The Dude Rancher* 4:7 (May 1935): 7.

¹² Peter J. Schmidt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969): 168.

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To me, one of the most distressing things in connection with Wyoming and Montana's adoption to the new order of things, is the abandonment of the native characteristic of the states. This is presented in a painful manner by the hodge podge of shacks that line our tourist lanes; some of the tourist camps, hot dog stands, and other structures erected along the highways to attract the pennies of the traveler. Many of these are of an incongruous type, completely out of line with the scenic beauties of these states. Why not tear down these horrible examples of architecture and erect buildings which will appeal to the eye and represent to a degree the rugged character of the mountains and plains, something rustic which will aid in carrying out the idea that Wyoming and Montana are states of supreme grandeur and not a Coney Island playground . . . The idea of keeping scenery inviolate should be uppermost in the minds of western people.¹³

Though John Hepburn used half-log novelty siding on his buildings, and might have been considered "less than authentic" by tourist-service elite, his buildings do show an understanding that he was catering to a public with preconceived notions of what "frontier," and "Western," and "resort" architecture should look like. The John Hepburn Place was consciously stylized and embellished in order to meet the preconceived notions of his clientele. Like many businessmen eager to profit from travelers, Hepburn sought to tap into and perpetuate "(a)n elaborate mythology and iconography" that, over time, became "associated in the popular mind" with wilderness architecture and the American West generally. This was not done willy-nilly, but rather consciously reflected a long tradition of rustic architectural influences and pervasive cultural perceptions of what life on the western frontier once was and should always be.¹⁴

Spartan Travel Trailer

Recreational travel trailers became a staple on America's roads during the 1920s. Increasing disposable income, more affordable and reliable automobiles, and better roads contributed to a boom in tourism after 1922. The first trailers resembled private railroad cars in both appearance and interior design. The similarity to railcars was also reflected in the high prices of the trailers. While a few companies, like Glen Curtiss, the Sherman Covered Wagon Company, and Pierce-Arrow manufactured travel trailers beginning in the 1920s, it wasn't until the early 1930s, that they became more affordable to middle-class Americans as more companies entered the market. By 1935, several companies manufactured travel trailers for American motorists, while others developed do-it-yourself plans for "backyard tourists." A large number of travel trailers, moreover, were designed to individual tastes or were built from plans obtained from popular hobby magazines. Despite the Great Depression, the travel trailer industry boomed during the 1930s. The boom coincided with a general increase in automobile tourism in the United States during that turbulent decade.¹⁵

The travel trailer at the Hepburn Place is known colloquially as a "canned ham" type trailer. The type first appeared in Great Britain in the early 1930s and was later promoted in the United States as kits in popular "do-it-yourself" magazines, such as *Popular Mechanics*. Canned hams are characterized by rounded edges and flat sides that gave it the appearance of a canned ham container available at grocery stores. The type was influenced by both the art deco movement and by a trend to streamline travel trailers to make them more visually appealing to buyers. The canned hams emphasized good looks and practicality: the built-in seating at the front and beds in the back were located where headroom was minimal, providing a maximum amount of headroom in the kitchenette and lavatory. By the start of World War II, travel trailers could be divided into three basic categories: the bread loaf, teardrop, and canned ham. The canned ham variety remained popular

¹³"The Individuality of the Dude Ranch," *The Dude Rancher* 4:7 (May 1935): 6 and 25

¹⁴Terry G. Jordan, Jon T. Kilpinen, and Charles F. Gritzner, *The Mountain West: Interpreting the Folk Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁵ Arrol Gellner and Douglas Keister, *Ready to Roll: A Celebration of the Classic American Travel Trailer*, (New York: Viking Studio, 2003), 9-11, 12-15, 17-19.

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until the early 1960s.¹⁶

The Spartan Aircraft Company (SAC) of Tulsa, Oklahoma manufactured the trailer sometime between 1950 and 1953. Founded by millionaire Oklahoma oilman William G. Skelly in 1928, the company's early production consisted of open-cockpit canvas biplanes used by flight training schools, sportsmen fliers, and fixed-base operators. J. Paul Getty purchased the company from Skelly around 1938 and manufactured training aircraft for the military during World War II. The post-war economic boom convinced Getty that the company could fill a need by manufacturing trailers. The SAC produced its first travel trailer prototype in 1945 and followed it with general production of trailers in 1946. Getty resolved to "produce the best product on the market at that time."

True to their intent, Spartan spared no expense on their trailers. They were of the highest quality and sleekest design, employing the monocoque building technique used in airplane manufacturing. They were truly the "Cadillac of trailers."

The trailers were designed by G. R. Shutes, "a designer of national reputation," who incorporated art deco features in the trailers. The exterior of Spartan travel trailers were characterized by unadorned aluminum siding, while the interiors were influenced by a mixture of art deco and ranch-style designs typical of the 1950s.¹⁷

The sturdy aluminum exteriors of Spartan travel trailers and the utilitarian design of the interiors made them especially attractive for use as mobile offices at construction sites and for employee housing by the federal government. As early as 1941, the government had recognized the value of travel trailers as temporary employee housing at the beginning of World War II. From 1941 to 1945, it purchased over 35,000 travel trailers for use as shelter for military families and defense industry workers. Indeed, first categorized as a non-essential industry by the War Production Board, within a short time, the production of travel trailers became important to US war effort. The post-war economic boom created a need for both temporary housing and in automobile tourism. Consequently, the travel trailer industry boomed after World War II.¹⁸

The interiors of Spartan travel trailers generally included a sitting room at one end of the structure and a bedroom at the other end. The center portion (which required the most headroom) included storage, a kitchenette with stove, oven, and sink, and, in later models a lavatory. Spartan interiors were representative of fifties styling that included the liberal use of chrome and Formica, along with the rounded edges of the interior features. The streamlined appearance of the exterior was reflected in the interiors of the trailers. The compartmentalized lay-out made them functional as temporary accommodations in the nation's national parks and mobile offices at construction sites during the post-war boom years of the 1950s. Canned ham trailers could be stretched in length, while still maintaining the standard 8-foot width common to trailers during the 1950s. From 1946 until 1957, the Spartan Aircraft Company manufactured seven different models of travel trailers. The SAC stopped developing new travel trailers in 1957 and ceased its trailer sales in 1959. That year, the company got out of the trailer business altogether and, instead, began selling insurance under the name Minnehoma Insurance Company. Today, Spartan travel trailers are much sought after by collectors.¹⁹

The Travel Trailer at the Hepburn Place is a Spartanette "Royal" model. Manufactured from 1950 to 1953, it boasted twin beds in a separate bedroom along with a well appointed sitting room, and kitchen and dining table. The "Royal" also sported a lavatory with toilet, sink, and bath tub. A version of the Royal was available with tandem axles. The "Royal" was the company's mid-sized trailer. A 1953 advertisement for the "Royal" called it a "home of today," that could take the

¹⁶ Gellner and Keister, *Ibid*, 17-19, 67-68.

¹⁷ The *American Heritage Dictionary of the American Language* defines "monocoque" as "A metal structure, as of an aircraft or automobile, in which the covering absorbs a large part of the stresses to which the body is subjected." www.spartantrailer.com; Gellner and Keister, *Ready to Roll*, 70-71.

¹⁸ Gellner and Keister, *Ready to Roll*, 19.

¹⁹ www.spartantrailer.com; Gellner and Keister, *Ready to Roll*, 70-71, 76; Donald F. Wood, *RV's & Campers, 1900-2000: An Illustrated History*, (Hudson, WI: Iconografix, 2002), 19.

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owner where the “job pays best,” while living in an “easy-to-manage and easy-to-keep clean . . . [home].” The basic Spartanette “Royal” cost \$2,600 and could be purchased on credit. According to a former owner, the late Jim Hepburn, the National Park Service utilized this trailer in Yellowstone National Park where it functioned as employee housing. Sometime in the early 1960s, the NPS surplused the trailer, which was purchased and moved to this site by then-owner Ralph Hepburn. It then functioned as a recreational travel trailer and as a “guest house” for family members until “retired” by Jim Hepburn in the 1990s.²⁰

Conclusion:

The John Hepburn Place is a remarkable example of a mid twentieth century roadside museum. Its ties to the history of recreation and tourism during the golden age of auto travel are clear. The residence, outbuildings, and even the trailer are significant resources associated with not only the development of travel destinations, but also the architecture and engineering connected to that industry.

²⁰ www.spartantrailer.com; Jim Hepburn Interview.

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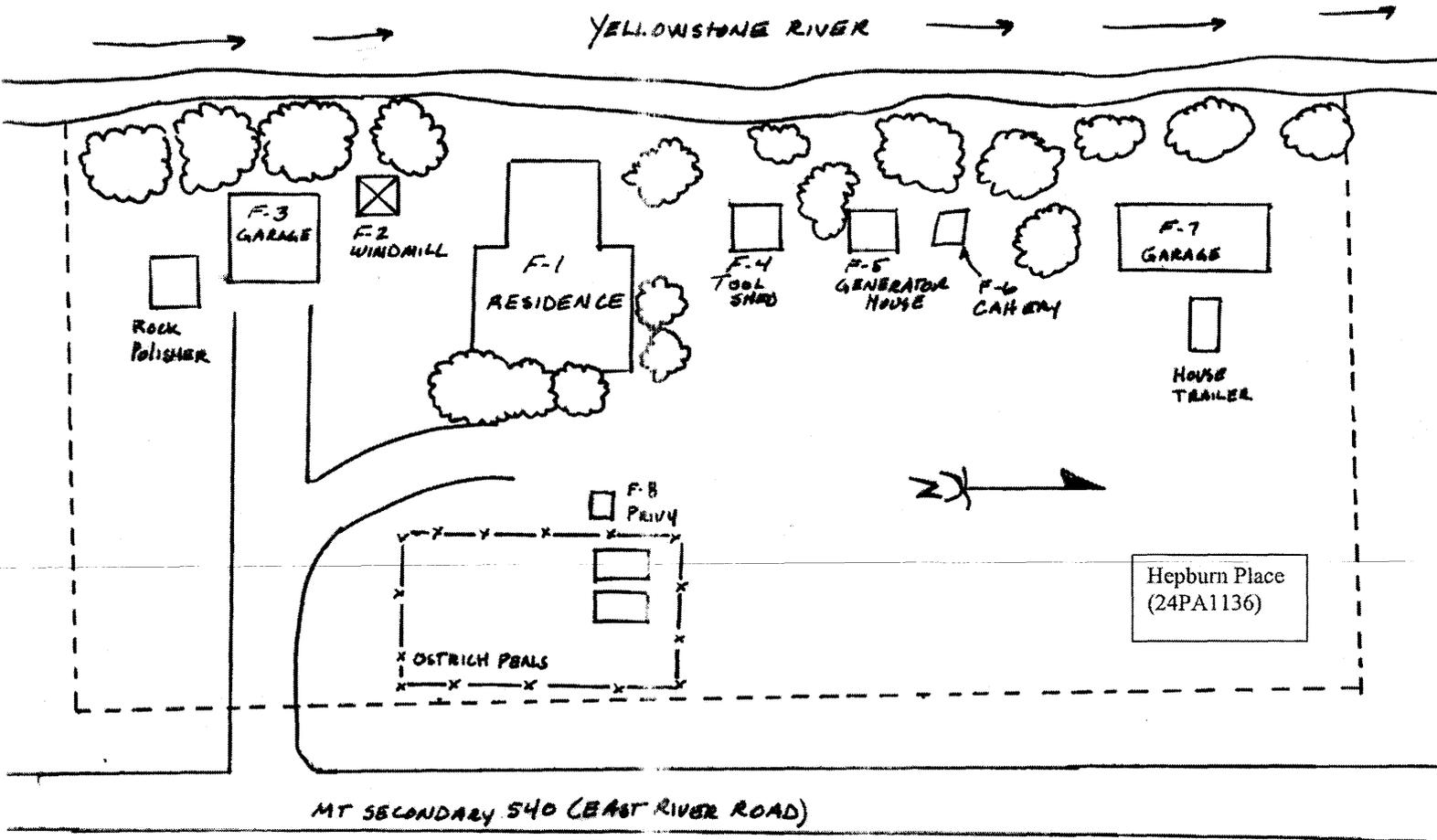
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Interior of John Hepburn's
museum/residence, May 1959.



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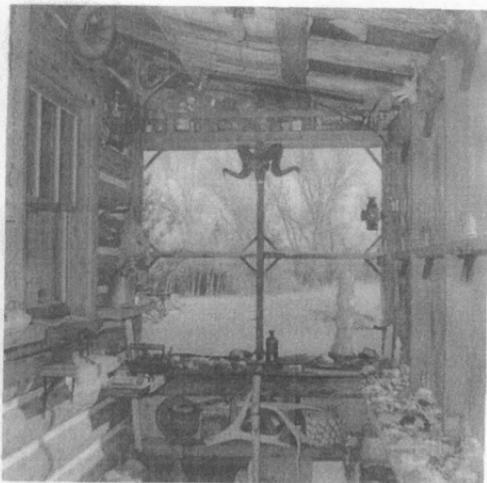
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Views from John Hepburn Place porch
August 1960.

AUG 60



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Interior of John Hepburn's residence/museum. Note the log rafters, and half-log novelty trim surrounding the door.
May 1959.

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c. 1950 Spartanette Tandem travel trailer (detail of NR photo #14)