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United States Department of the National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER (ES	May 1 4 1996		
REGISTRATION FORM		364	REGISTER OF HISTORIC NATIONAL PARK SERVI	PLACES CE	
I. Name of Property					
nistoric name: Wurtz Homestead			<u> </u>		
other name/site number:					
2. Location					
treet & number: North Fork Road, 7	wo Miles North of Ford		νμημα ^μ ατικό το μ ^α τη τη του μ ^α τη τη του μ ^{αμ} ατικό το τ	not for publication:	
ity/town: Polebridge				vicinity	
tate: Montana code: MT	county: Flathead	code: 029	zip code: 59928		
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - Federal Category of Property: Building(s) Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0 Name of related multiple property listing: n/a	Number of Resources within Property Contributing Noncontributing		
6. Function or Use			
Historic Functions:	Current Functions:		
Domestic: single dwelling	Vacant/not in use		
7. Description			
Architectural Classification:	Materials:		
Other: Rustic	foundation: wood, stone		
	walls: log roof: metal		
	other: n/a		

Narrative Description

Physical Description

The Wurtz Homestead is located in the valley of the North Fork of the Flathead River, just seven miles south of the Canadian border. Bordering the east side of Glacier National Park, the drainage is steeply incised and heavily forested. The Wurtz property is located just east of the river and the Eastside road, a gravel road which winds for some 50 miles along the river to the border. Settlement is strung along the fringes of the forested river bottom, and is currently a mixture of early homestead buildings and more recent homes scattered on inholdings within the surrounding national forest. Only an intrepid few reside in the North Fork year round.

Today the Wurtz Homestead includes five buildings. Of these, the 1917 homestead cabin, the 1920 family home, and the 1944 root cellar all contribute to the significance of the property. Two others, the Wurtz garage built in 1954 and a sauna constructed by later owners during the 1970s, are not historic and do not contribute to the homestead's significance.

The Wurtz Homestead encompassed 160 acres, and in 1913, the year of filing, Frank Wurtz constructed the first building on the property. Located on the bench above the slough, the **original homestead cabin** was a 12' x 16' one room dwelling built of log with a dirt floor. Split logs were used for the roof with moss tamped into the cracks as a sealer. The logs were scooped out in the centers with the bottom half facing split side up. The top row overlapped, and faced down to fit tightly together making a wonderfully waterproof roof.

The Wurtz family lived in the original cabin for three years, until the spring of 1917 when Frank Wurtz built a new cabin on the bench. Located just past the brow of the hill, the **1917 homestead cabin** was a two room cabin, built of log with a shake roof, and measuring 12' x 14'. The original homestead cabin no longer is extant, and the logs may have been reused to construct this building. It remains on the property, but was dismantled and moved down off the bench by Frank and Leonard Wurtz ca. 1944. They placed it near the Wurtz family home, and used it as a barn until remodelling it back to NPS Form 10-900-a. (8-86)

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a guest cabin during the early 1950s.

The 1917 cabin is constructed of planed logs, joined with lap-notching and chinked with cement. The log walls rise up into the gables, and are squared off at the corners. The gable roof is very wide, with deep projecting eaves. The roof is supported by four purlins and a ridgepole, and projects on the east end to cover the entrance. The entry area is currently enclosed on two sides with a pole and wooden shake wall which appears to have been added when the building was moved. Originally roofed with wood shakes, the roof has been covered since at least the 1940s with sheet metal. The interior is illuminated by large multi-paned windows set in the north and south walls. A wooden door with an upper glass panel serves as the primary entrance on the east end. On the west end, an original doorway has been infilled with split log pieces and a small fixed single pane window was installed in the upper portion of the opening.

A single hole, shed roofed outhouse stands a few yards east of the 1917 cabin. It has a wooden door and wooden lap siding.

By 1919, with an expanding family, the Wurtzs began work on a new larger cabin about 750' southeast from the original building site. The **1919 cabin** measured 18' x 24', and was built to last using only the best timber. The logs were hewed inside, the sill logs were of tamarack, and the walls and beams were of lodgepole pine. The roof was covered with hand split shakes, and windows from the 1917 cabin were to be used in this building. Tragically, this home burned in July 1919, and no trace was found of two of the Wurtz children -- Marie and Harold -- following the fire.

The following spring, Frank Wurtz began constructing the fourth residence on the homestead. The **Wurtz family home** is a one and a half story log house, measuring 28' x 32'. The heavy logs used to construct the walls are square hewn, carefully fit and joined with dovetail notches. The gable roof is steeply pitched, and originally was covered with wooden shakes. Wood shingles finish the gable ends. Cracks between the logs were filled with metal nails and chinked over. The inside chinking is a mixture of flour and sawdust, the outside chinking was originally of mud mixed with moss. In later years, chinking on all but the west wall was replaced with cement.

The front facade (west elevation) was originally spanned by a single-story, shed-roofed wooden porch; it was replaced in 1960 with the current gable roofed porch. The porch is partially enclosed with narrow, square-notched logs and is supported with square log posts. A shed-roofed porch with wooden decking projects from the rear (east) of the building. Originally open and supported with log poles, this porch was enclosed with vertically-placed logs sometime during the 1950s or 1960s.

Original fenestration is mixed, but characterized by double-hung windows in wooden frames, placed singly or in pairs. Units include single-pane, 2-over-2, and 6-over-1 arrangements. On the first story, heavy wooden shutters swing to cover the windows.

In 1940, a **root cellar** was cut into the hillside behind the house. The cellar has a double wall of square-notched logs filled with dirt, and a doubled roof filled with dirt for insulation. A ditch was dug through the center of the building for a drain. The gable roof is very broad and gently sloped; it projects at the front to cover the entrance.

In 1954, a garage was built northeast of the house. It is log-framed, and sided with vertical boards. A gable roof, covered with sheet metal covers the building. An outside storage area on the north side of the building is framed with log.

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During the 1970s, a sauna was added to the homestead. Built to complement the other Wurtz buildings, it is a gableroofed building framed with log. The roof projects at the front to form an open porch entrance and the walls are enclosed with vertical logs.

Integrity

The Wurtz Homestead property retains a very high level of historic integrity, tracing development and use of the homestead through the early and middle years of the 20th century. The 1917 cabin and 1920 family home are both well preserved, affording a comparison between early and latter building periods in North Fork history. Although the porches have been altered to some degree, other aspects of the original designs are intact and provide an excellent representation of the period of construction.

The setting and feeling of the homestead are little altered, although building placement has changed somewhat. The 1917 cabin is a moved building, but this occurred during the historic period, and relates to changing usage of the property. The additions of the garage and the sauna are non-contributing; however, they are highly compatible with the primary historic buildings on the property and do not detract from the homestead's historic character.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C	Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement, Architecture
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): B	Period(s) of Significance: 1913-1945
Significant Person(s): n/a	Significant Dates: 1913, 1914, 1915, 1919
Cultural Affiliation: n/a	Architect/Builder: Frank Wurtz

Narrative Statement of Significance

One of the best-preserved westside homesteads in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley, the Wurtz Homestead harkens to the settlement era of this remote and rugged part of northern Montana. Reflecting log building traditions common in this forested region, the buildings are a good representation of local building practices and construction methods of the early 20th century. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

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 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

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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.¹

Wurtz Homestead Historical Background

Frank N. Wurtz was born in Strawberry, Kansas on February 28, 1890. In the spring of 1911 his father Peter Wurtz and he left Nebraska, and travelled by train westward to the Flathead in hopes of finding a better home for the family. Frank's brother Charlie had severe arthritis, and his doctor recommended a northern environment.

Peter Wurtz was interested in the large herds of buffalo that roamed Montana, and Frank was curious about land that was available for a homestead under the Homestead Act of 1910. Land in the Flathead, then known as the "Blackfeet National Forest" was plentiful, and it was free to anyone interested in making an agricultural home. Together Frank and his father agreed that the Flathead had what they wanted, and upon arriving they immediately fell in love with the valley.

While Frank took a job on a ranch in Ronan, his father went back to Nebraska to retrieve sister Emma, brother Charlie, and Grandma Wurtz. Two of the boys, Anthon and Ed stayed in Nebraska. The family settled in Kalispell near the Ashley Creek bridge. Peter took a job in Polson, Charlie opened a grocery store close to the family home, and Frank went to work at the flour mill in Kalispell.

While working at the mill, Frank met Ella Hanes, his future wife. Ella was born February 8, 1893 near Columbus, Ohio. In 1910, her family moved to Montana, arriving in the Flathead at approximately the same time as the Wurtz family. The Hanes family included a sister Jessie, and a brother Homer. Although both families had lived only a few miles apart in Arapaho, Oklahoma, their paths had not crossed.

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

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Frank and Ella were married at the City Hall in Kalispell on February 27, 1913, then moved to Ashley Creek in Kalispell. Shortly after their marriage, Frank heard of homestead land available up the North Fork of the Flathead River. He and his father Peter went there, and Frank selected 160 acres of land in the spring of 1913 to claim. Coincidentally, Ella's father, Archibald Lewis Hanes filed for a homestead, both registering their claims in March of that year.

In late August of 1913, the Wurtz's left Kalispell with an eight month old baby, Louise Kathryn, and headed for their new homestead on the North Fork with a team of cayuse horses and covered wagon. The trip took about a week from Kalispell, and was inordinately difficult over a road that had been hacked out of the brush to traverse Glacier Park. Extremely narrow stump-filled, steep, and deeply rutted, the road went high on the cliffs above the river in Bad Rock Canyon. In places the wagon had to be hauled up with block and tackle. It took both Frank and Ella to get it over the worst places, and Ella was forced to leave baby Louise alongside the road while she helped with the wagon.

The Wurtz's arrived at their new homestead after being on the road nearly a week, and Frank immediately began to construct a shelter. He worked with primitive hand tools to build the first home which was located east of the road on the bench above the slough. Measuring 12' x 16', it consisted of a one room log cabin with dirt floor. It was early fall, and there was not enough time to get an adequate shelter built before snowfall that year. The Wurtz family spent the winter of 1913 at the Knudtson homestead about a mile south of their homestead. Frank snowshoed to his place and worked on the cabin a little each day. It took a strong back to lift the logs into place, and Frank placed each one alone. It was May before he could once again begin to clear the land for cultivation, but that spring saw the one room cabin completed, and the family moved.

In April of 1915 the Wurtz family moved into Kalispell, to be close to the doctor for the birth of their second child. Frank took a job at Kalispell Lumber Company, yet made several trips back to the homestead, spending a week or two at a time between May and November, to clear the 20 acres required to prove up on the property. The Wurtz's headed back to their homestead in late December of 1915 after the birth of Fairy Marie Wurtz, October 27, 1915. That spring, the snow lingered into the first part of May.

In the spring of 1917 with a third child on the way, Frank Wurtz built a new cabin on the bench past the brow of the hill. Measuring 12' x 16', it was slightly smaller than the original cabin, but had two rooms. On June 22, 1917 Harold Frank Wurtz was born in the two room cabin, the first birth on the North Fork to a non-Indian family. Frank Wurtz acted as midwife because there was no one else in the area who could help.

The summer of 1917 saw another ten acres harrowed and seeded, however about 75 trees per acre remained. It provided good pasture for the horses, but did not qualify for land being cleared and cultivated. The summer of 1917 was dry with many forest fires in the area, and when fall came it began to rain heavily. Clearing the essential acreage to prove up on a homestead was a difficult task in the North Fork. On July 6, 1917, an examination of the property was made by Forest Ranger George R. Steppler, followed by a hearing to determine the validity of the claim. It was considered that not enough land had been cleared and cultivated to establish proof to the claim, and it was suggested that proceedings be directed against the claim to homestead on grounds of insufficient cultivation. Charges were drafted in July of 1918, and on October 30, 1918, a meeting was held in Kalispell to reduce the area to be cultivated. The land was heavily timbered, and contained glacial drift formation making cultivation impractical. Investigations were made as to whether an ablebodied, industrious homesteader of honest intent, in the same locality, could do better than Frank Wurtz had done. Neighbors attested to the fact that the Wurtz's were living on their claim in good faith, and from the appearance of the improvements, were honest in their efforts to make an agricultural home. The acting Forester found that a substantial effort to reclaim the required 20 acres had been made, and recommended that the application for reduction of area

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Wurtz Homestead Flathead County, Montana Page 3

cultivated be allowed. On April 12, 1919, the Assistant to the Solicitor withdrew the protest against the Wurtz claim to the land, closing the case, and on the 12th day of February, 1920, the land was officially transferred into the Wurtz name.

An end to the problems with the Forest Service and the United States Land Office allowed Frank and Ella to direct their attention to other matters. By 1919, with three children in the family, they decided to build a new larger cabin. They picked a spot where water was more accessible about 750' southeast from where they were, and there Frank began building a structure that measured 18' x 24'. The logs were hewed inside, the sill logs were of tamarack, and the walls and beams were of lodgepole pine. Frank spent endless hours working on the new home during the spring of 1919, building it to last, using only the best timber. This was to be their final cabin, and when it was completed there would be time to really clear the land properly and put in a crop of timothy and red clover.

When the roof was three quarters of the way covered with hand-split shakes, the Wurtz family moved in. Frank and Ella spent a great amount of time that spring and summer finishing the home. They were working to remove the windows in the two room cabin to be used in the new building the morning of July 8, 1919. Shortly after 1:00 p.m. the new cabin mysteriously caught fire. Four year old Marie was napping, and two year old Harold was outside in the front yard playing. Nothing could be done to save the cabin.

The next day when the embers had cooled enough to permit, Frank found a gas funnel strainer where the center of the cabin had been. From the heat of the fire, and with this new evidence, it became apparent that the house had been burned on purpose. No bones were found of either of the children, and the shod tracks of a horse were found behind where the cabin had been. Foul play was suspected. The family to this day wonders if the children were abducted by a young couple in the valley that summer who had wanted to adopt Marie and Harold.

In the spring of 1920, Frank began work on his final house. The land was heavily forested then, and needed to be cleared. He set tamarack blocks and leveled the sill logs. This final house measures 28' x 32', and the logs were extremely heavy. Frank used skids with a rope and chain, and his team of horses to lift them into place. He carefully fit the logs after they were in place, using a dovetail notch characteristic of that era. The logs were not trimmed until years later. He had the walls completed, but Ella wanted to leave the North Fork. She had seen enough troubles, and wanted no more. The walls were all that stood in August of 1922 when they loaded the covered wagon, and headed for New Castle, Washington where Ella's sister lived. While in New Castle, a daughter Thelma was born July 12, 1924. From New Castle the family moved to Black Diamond, and there another girl, Dorothy Ellen was born June 15, 1926. Frank got his son when Leonard was born on February 6, 1929.

In 1932 Frank and Ella Wurtz, along with Thelma, Dorothy, and Leonard, returned to the homestead by auto. Upon arriving home, they discovered their cabin being used for a school. It had been used three or four terms by then, and the school board considered that the Wurtz's had abandoned the place. The locks had been replaced, and the Wurtz's possessions had disappeared. Having paid taxes on the homestead all the time the family was in Washington, Frank insisted the cabin was still his. After a time, the school board gave in, although the Wurtz's suggested that they continue school until the end of the term.

The Wurtz family spent that fall in Grandpa Hanes' cabin on an island in the North Fork of the Flathead River while Frank continued the construction of the house he had started in 1920. He put the rafters up, shingled the gable ends, and roofed it over before the winter snow. He cut the back door and the west window in the kitchen that fall. Having sat open to the elements ten years, the logs had twisted badly. Frank steamed the handle of an ax in a boiler of water, and in this way bowed the handle so he could stand alongside the log walls and hew their surfaces smooth. His ax marks remain today. When the rafters were in place and the roof had been finished, Frank made a paste of water, flour, and sawdust. United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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He placed hundreds of nails in the cracks between the logs, and with the flour paste he did the inside chinking which remains today. The outside chinking was done with mud and moss as a stabilizer, and was replaced with cement many years later. The west side of the house however has the remnants of the moss chinking, having never been finished with cement.

The root cellar was built in the fall of 1940 in the hillside behind the house with logs cut from the bench.

In 1960, Frank replaced the shed roof porch at the front of the house with a gabled porch that can be seen today. That year he also built the garage, and enclosed the back porch with slabs that he selected from the Sonderson mill. He also lifted the house that year, and was replacing the tamarack piling with rock when he had a massive heart attack. It nearly killed him, but he held onto the homestead until March 20, 1964, when it sold to B. James Jokerst and Carol O. Jokerst. They sold it to Richard G. Lawrence and Barbara K. on the 24th of June, 1974. From there Lawrences incorporated the land into the "Flying W-Z Ranch" in honor of the Wurtz name, and later sold the property to the Forest Service on May 7, 1990.

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 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 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 like the Wurtz's built new log dwellings. These later houses were larger, generally $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2 stories, with larger multi-pane windows. Outbuildings and fencing continued to be done with log.

The two residences on the Wurtz Homestead offer an informative comparison between these two periods of North Fork building construction. The 1917 cabin with its gable-roof, log walls rising into the gable ends, steep roof, and multi-paned windows is a good example of the type. Juxtaposed with this cabin, the 1920 Wurtz family home exemplifies the later building form. It is more spacious, 1½ stories high, and the larger window openings include multi-paned glazing.

Today, three-quarters of a century later, the Wurtz home stands yet in dignity by the roadside, as a silent tribute to the past when men were men. With sled and horses they faced the snows, as with horses and wagon they faced the river and early roads. This land has been good to the Wurtz family. The homestead was a labor of love, and it is with great love and respect they now nominate the Wurtz Homestead to the National Register of Historic Places.

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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- ____ Other State agency
- ____ Federal agency
- ____ Local government
- ___ University
- X Other Specify Repository: Wurtz Family

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 13 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A //	691400	5419460
	B //	691300	5419140
	C //	691490	5419135

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(a)): Located in the E½, SE¼, NE¼ of Section 11, T36N, R22W.

Verbal Boundary Description

(See boundry defined on attached topographic map.)

Boundary Justification

These boundaries follow natural contours, roadways and section lines to encompass the Wurtz homestead buildings in their historic setting just off the North Fork Road, at the base of Wurtz Hill.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gary L. Haverlandt organization: (Wurtz grandson) street & number: PO Box 8097 city or town: Columbia Falls with: Chere Jiusto, Montana SHPO staff date: June 1995/Jan 1996 telephone: (406) 892-2046 state: MT zip code: 59912

Property Owner

name/title: USDA Forest Service Region I Headquarters street & number: Federal Building, PO Box 7669 telephone: (406)329-3654 city or town: Missoula state:

state: MT

zip code: 59807

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

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Historic Photographs Wurtz Family collection. Various views of Wurtz Homestead taken in 1916, 1930s, 1970. In possession of Wurtz family.