

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Frank Norris's Cabin

AND/OR COMMON

Redwood Retreat

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

7155 L Redwood Retreat Road

___NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Gilroy

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California

VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

Santa Clara

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

___DISTRICT

___PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

___AGRICULTURE

___MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

___UNOCCUPIED

___COMMERCIAL

___PARK

___STRUCTURE

___BOTH

___WORK IN PROGRESS

___EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

___ENTERTAINMENT

___RELIGIOUS

___OBJECT

___IN PROCESS

___YES: RESTRICTED

___GOVERNMENT

___SCIENTIFIC

___BEING CONSIDERED

___YES: UNRESTRICTED

___INDUSTRIAL

___TRANSPORTATION

NO

___MILITARY

___OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Ardis Dawn

408-842-9767

STREET & NUMBER

7155 L Redwood Retreat Road

CITY, TOWN

Gilroy

STATE

California

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Santa Clara County Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

San Jose

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___FEDERAL ___STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The alleged Frank Norris Cabin is a two-room, one-story log cabin with stone-buttressed porch. The cabin, surrounded by magnificent Redwoods; is unchanged and intact. A circular seat, built of native stone, stands near the cabin and was erected by friends of the novelist as a memorial to him.

The building is occasionally used as a private summer residence. Access to the cabin is difficult. A visitor must first hike up a private, narrow and rough canyon road approximately one mile. Then an unmarked forest trail leads up the steep mountain slope one more mile to the cabin area.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Benjamin Franklin Norris has been called "the most stimulating and militant" of the early American naturalist writers.¹ An intellectual child of the 1890's Frank Norris's art reflects that sober period of American disillusionment and portrays the individual's loss of freedom and dignity in his struggle with complex forces of modern society. Two of his novels, McTeague (1899) and The Octopus (1901), still stand as great and distinguished landmarks in history of American literature.

History

Norris, Benjamin Franklin (Mar. 5, 1870-Oct. 25, 1902), journalist and novelist, known both in private life and in the literary world as Frank Norris, was born in Chicago, Ill., the son of Benjamin Franklin Norris and Gertrude (Doggett) Norris. His father, lame because of hip disease and consequently unfitted for the severe toil of a Michigan farm, became at the age of fourteen unpaid assistant to a village watchmaker, learned the trade, saw something of the world as itinerant clock-mender and pedler, prospered, and ultimately founded his own jewelry firm in Chicago. Frank's mother, born of mixed New England and Virginia ancestry on a Massachusetts farm, was before her marriage a teacher in the public schools of Chicago and an actress who had enjoyed considerable success on the professional stage. Of their five children, but two, Frank and a brother, Charles, eleven years his junior, also destined to win distinction as a writer, survived the perils of infancy and childhood.

In 1884, largely on account of the health of the elder Norris, the family moved to California, residing first at Oakland and a year later in San Francisco. Frank was sent to a school for boys at Belmont, some twenty miles south of the city. In 1886 he was kept out of school for a time by a fracture of the left arm, and to relieve the tedium of its convalescence he went to a local artist for lessons in drawing. He showed such aptitude that his father resolved to give him the best opportunities for its development. In 1887 the parents took their two sons first to London and then to Paris where Frank enrolled in the Atelier Julien. The family remained in Paris for more than a year and then returned to California, leaving the young artist to pursue his studies. But these studies came to an abrupt end in 1889 when the elder Norris, convinced, it is said, by the discovery of a serial romance with which Frank was entertaining his younger brother by mail, that his time in Paris was not being profitably employed, cabled him instructions to return home. The next year he

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definitely committed himself to literature rather than art by entering the University of California. In college he exercised his talents on student plays and class books, with an occasional story or poem. Having come under the influence of Zola, whom he read with the devotion of a disciple, he adopted realism as a creed and began the first chapters of a story of San Francisco to be later completed and published as *McTeague*. Prevented by unfulfilled requirements in mathematics from graduating with his class in 1894, he spent the next year at Harvard, as a special student in English, electing among others a course in English composition with Lewis E. Gates, who recognized and encouraged his literary ambition. Parts of *Vandover* and *the Brute* were written under this stimulus.

In the autumn of 1895 Norris went to South Africa with credentials from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, arriving just in time to become involved in Dr. Leander Starr Jameson's disastrous raid on Johannesburg. He was captured by the Boers and ordered to leave the country. A severe attack of African fever prevented him from doing so at once, and he was not able to return to San Francisco until the spring of 1896. There he was taken on the staff of a literary weekly known as the *Wave* and wrote diligently for its columns. "*Moran of the Lady Letty*," a tale of love and adventure at sea, based, it is said, upon material secured from a sailor in the coast guard, was written at this time. Within two years he was in New York City, where he was associated with McClure's Magazine. As correspondent for the same periodical he was in Cuba during the Santiago campaign and suffered there a severe recurrence of the African fever. Upon his recovery he returned to New York and in 1899 entered the service of Doubleday, Page & Company. He resumed his literary work, the quality of which speedily won him recognition as a novelist of unusual vigor and originality. *Moran of the Lady Letty* appeared in book form in 1898 and *McTeague* and *Blix* in 1899. *McTeague*, which some regard as his strongest work, is a tale of passion and violence, beginning in the office of a charlatan dentist in the older section of San Francisco and ending in the scorched distances of Death Valley. It is the stuff of romance realistically set forth in scenes new to most readers.

A less successful novel, *A Man's Woman*, a story of love and arctic exploration, followed in 1900, and then began a more ambitious undertaking, his "*Epic of the Wheat*." This was to consist of "*The Octopus*," a story of California and the growing of the wheat, "*The Pit*," a Chicago tale of wheat in the commerce of the world, and "*The Wolf*," which would show the wheat consumed as bread in some famine-stricken village of the old world. *The Octopus* appeared in 1901. It was a novel with a purpose, an ardent defense of the wheat-growers in their struggle against the dominating greed of the

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the railroad trust, and through it ran the epic story of the life-giving wheat, impersonal and irresistible, in the end engulfing the odious figure of the railway agent. The Pit was posthumously issued in 1903, and as a novel and as a play enjoyed a great success. A collection of essays, The Responsibilities of the Novelist, was published in the same year and Vandover and the Brute in 1914.

Norris was married Jan. 12, 1900, to Jeanette Black of California, and one child, a daughter, was born to them. Blix is said to be in some degree the story of his own wooing and of his struggle for literary recognition. He died in a hospital in San Francisco of peritonitis following an operation for appendicitis. He had returned to California in 1902 and had purchased a ranch near Gilroy, intending to make it his home. A projected trip to India for material for "The Wolf" and a second trilogy, to deal with the battle of Gettysburg, were frustrated by his death, which brought to a close a life of real literary promise. His works were published in collected editions in 1903 and 1928.