

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

✓ NOMINATION: (Lava Rock Structures in South Central Idaho 7 R)
✓ SITE NAME: Laughlin, Ben, Water Tank House-Garage SITE NUMBER: 86
✓ LOCATION: ~~Approximately seven miles east of Jerome, Idaho, on Highway 25, and~~
~~approximately one and one-half miles south~~
OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Loyd A. & Betty N. Gage
4521 W. First Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Falls City, 7.5 minutes ACREAGE: 1 1/4 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

✓ The nomination includes the Ben Laughlin Water Tank House Garage and the property on which it stands in the W 1/2, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 6, T9S, R18E. Legal description on file at Jerome County Courthouse Jerome Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/714280/4727800

DATE OR PERIOD: 1927 ARCHITECT OR BUILDER: Ed Bennett

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture, agriculture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: local

CONDITION: good, altered, original site

DESCRIPTION:

The continuous facade of the Laughlin water tank house-garage is approximately 26 feet. On the left is a low, one-story garage about eighteen feet long with a shallow, shingled gable roof with close eaves and a narrow bargeboard. The garage part of the structure is about fifteen feet wide at the rear and extends about nine feet beyond the rear wall of the water tank house. The double, X-framed, wooden garage door the full height of the wall is offset to the right of the garage front. A plain narrow molding separates the horizontal planks in the gable from the one-story stone walls. A basketball backboard and hoop has been attached to the peak of the gable. The right section of the structure is an approximately nine-foot square water tank house with its lower facade wall continuous with the section of the garage wall beginning to the right of the double door. The water tank is approximately sixteen feet tall. It has a shingled pyramidal roof with close eaves. Both roofs have metal flashing on the ridge lines. Just below the midpoint on the facade of the water tank house is a centered, horizontal casement window placed at the inside of the wall opening. The window has a flush concrete lintel about eight inches wide that extends into the rock on each end about four inches. The outset, sloping concrete sill is narrower. The door to the chamber below the water tank is inside the garage. Originally a windmill provided the power for the well pumping mechanism. Most of the medium sized stones in the rubble wall have

relatively flat faces. Many are covered with lichen. Many of the stones are ox-eye shaped, but large, more rectangular stones are used as quoins. The darkened mortar in the joints has been tooled to produce an indented line that has been painted white, emphasizing to the curved joint lines. The left rear corner of the garage is of frame construction.

SIGNIFICANCE:

This structure is significant both as an example of rural vernacular architecture reflecting the decade in which it was built and as an example of work by mason Ed Bennett. The building combines the square variant of water tank house with a period garage. It was placed on a slight rise behind the residence and to the side of the farm buildings so that water would be available for both domestic use and for farm animals. The structure is evidence that by the late 1920's automobiles were becoming accepted as transportation for farmers, and also that farmers were becoming prosperous enough to purchase automobiles. This is the only water tank house discovered in the survey and known to have been built by Ed Bennett. This structure has his characteristic use of ox-eye-shaped stone with treatment of the mortar further emphasizing the rounded shapes of the stones. The pattern of lines in this structure has a decorative filligree or lace-like effect, lightening the heaviness of the dark stones. Bennett's careful attention to detail on small farm structures can also be seen in this building. Small farm buildings were sometimes hastily and roughly built by other masons or by farmers acting as their own masons. The structure was built for farmer Ben Laughlin in 1927. A Delco light plant was housed in the chamber below the water tank along with the well mechanism. The basketball hoop on the garage gable is a temporary addition; the frame section on the left rear corner is unobtrusive. Neither it nor the absence of the windmill detracts significantly from the integrity of this structure.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Laughlin, Marvin, interview with Marian Posey-Ploss, Shoshone, Idaho, Summer 1979.