

**HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT**

**BIRCH CREEK RANCH**

**HISTORIC RURAL LANDSCAPE**

**MALHEUR COUNTY, OREGON**



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Vale District Office  
100 Oregon Street  
Vale, Oregon 97918

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Dr. Leland Gilson, PhD  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1115 Commercial Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97310

Dear Dr. Gilson:

Enclosed is the Historic Structure Report, Birch Creek Ranch Rural Landscape, Malheur County, Oregon, prepared by Heritage Research Associates to guide the BLM as they maintain and repair the contributing and non-contributing structures at the ranch.

Please review the document. If you concur with its findings and measures, the BLM will adopt it as the standard of non-intrusive repair and maintenance, in keeping with the historic values of the ranch.

If you have questions or require more information, please contact Alice Bronsdon at 541/473-3144.

Sincerely,

*Cathy B. Wilbanks* ACTING

Jerry L. Taylor  
Jordan Resource Area Manager

Enclosures (as stated)

# HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT

BIRCH CREEK RANCH  
HISTORIC RURAL LANDSCAPE

MALHEUR COUNTY, OREGON

by

Jill A. Chappel

Submitted to

Bureau of Land Management  
Vale District Office  
100 Oregon Street  
Vale, Oregon 97918

under terms of  
Purchase Order No. 1422H020-P5-0049

Heritage Research Associates, Inc.  
1997 Garden Avenue  
Eugene, Oregon 97403

March 15, 1996

Heritage Research Associates Report No. 188



## *ABSTRACT*

This document presents technical data obtained through field observation of the materials, construction, and condition of selected buildings and structures within Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape, a National Register property managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River corridor in southeastern Oregon. The report serves as a management tool in the agency's effort to preserve, in a way that is consistent with the property's National Register status, those buildings that presently contribute to the National Register significance of the Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape. In addition, it will guide the BLM in maintenance and repair of the historic fabric of the buildings and preservation of their historic character.

The organization of this Historic Structure Report is consistent with the format currently used by the National Park Service, and one that is recommended by NPS for use by all federal agencies. The document is comprised of three main sections: Developmental History, discussing the historic context of Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape, the chronology of development and use of each building, and a physical description of each building; Treatment and Use, which identifies the causes of materials deterioration, suggests preservation treatment, and identifies how the buildings will be used in the future by the BLM; and Record of Treatment, which stresses the need to document all preservation work conducted on the buildings and offers recommendations for future preservation work at the Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape property.

## *PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

Preparation of this report was carried out under the terms of Purchase Order No. 1422H020-P5-0049 between the Vale District Office, Bureau of Land Management and Heritage Research Associates, Inc. (HRA) of Eugene, Oregon. Alice Bronsdon, Cultural Resource Specialist, served as the Contracting Officer's Representative, while Jill A. Chappel served as Principal Investigator for HRA. All portions of this report were written by Jill A. Chappel. Maps and measured drawings were prepared by Kevin McCornack and Jill A. Chappel. Fieldwork was conducted September 5-9, 1995 by Jill A. Chappel.

HRA thanks the BLM ranch caretakers at Birch Creek, Paul and Rita Krause, for their contribution of knowledge about the history of the property, their ambition to collect important historical information from local citizens, and their overwhelming hospitality. Alice Bronsdon helped the fieldwork run smoothly by offering maps, historical documentation, and lodging. Additional thanks are extended to Stephen Dow Beckham, Department of History, Lewis and Clark College, for sharing his fieldnotes from the 1988-89 National Register nomination work and to Donald Peting, Department of Architecture, University of Oregon, for technical assistance regarding materials deterioration. Lisa Sasser, Assistant Chief Historical Architect for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., gave some of her precious time to answer questions regarding format and content of this Historic Structure Report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape, situated on the Owyhee River in central Malheur County, Oregon, is a National Register eligible *rural historic landscape* owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The property was acquired under the stipulations of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as part of a program to protect outstandingly remarkable resources of historic value within the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River corridor. The property is comprised of two separate historic ranches encompassing 288.11 acres, 122.63 of which define the Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract) and 165.48 acres of which define the Morrison Ranch (Lower Tract). For management purposes, they are collectively referred to as "Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape" by the BLM.

The property is located in T27S, R43E, Sections 6, 7, and 18 approximately 35 miles northwest of the town of Jordan Valley, the nearest commercial center (Figures 1 and 2). The property has limited accessibility by roadway, the only direct route being the Jordan Craters Road. This road is a gravel and dirt byway that traverses the rolling Owyhee Plateau and Jordan Craters lava field, then drops down dramatically into the Birch Creek drainage (an elevation decrease of 1,900 feet) to the creek's confluence with the Owyhee River. Access to the ranch is also achieved by boat via the Owyhee River or by horseback. The physical environment is characterized by the erosive effects of the river and fairly recent volcanic activity. Nestled in the heart of the Owyhee Canyon with its steep walls of weathered ash and lavas, Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape is surrounded by colorful geological scenery formed by episodes of intermittent volcanic eruptions and later occurrences of block-fault uplifting (Orr et al. 1992:98-99). The Birch Creek and Morrison ranches are watered by year-round flowing streams, thus creating a verdant oasis of brilliant green in contrast to the browns, tans, and pinks of the canyon walls.

As mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Executive Order 11593, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the BLM is required to protect and manage cultural resources on public lands in their jurisdiction. The National Historic Preservation Act in particular orders federal agencies to assume responsibility for historic properties preservation. This is accomplished through a program of identification, evaluation, and stewardship of all cultural resources on public lands. Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape was formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in January 1992; thus the BLM must ensure the future protection and preservation of the ranch property (Beckham 1989; Bronsdon 1992).

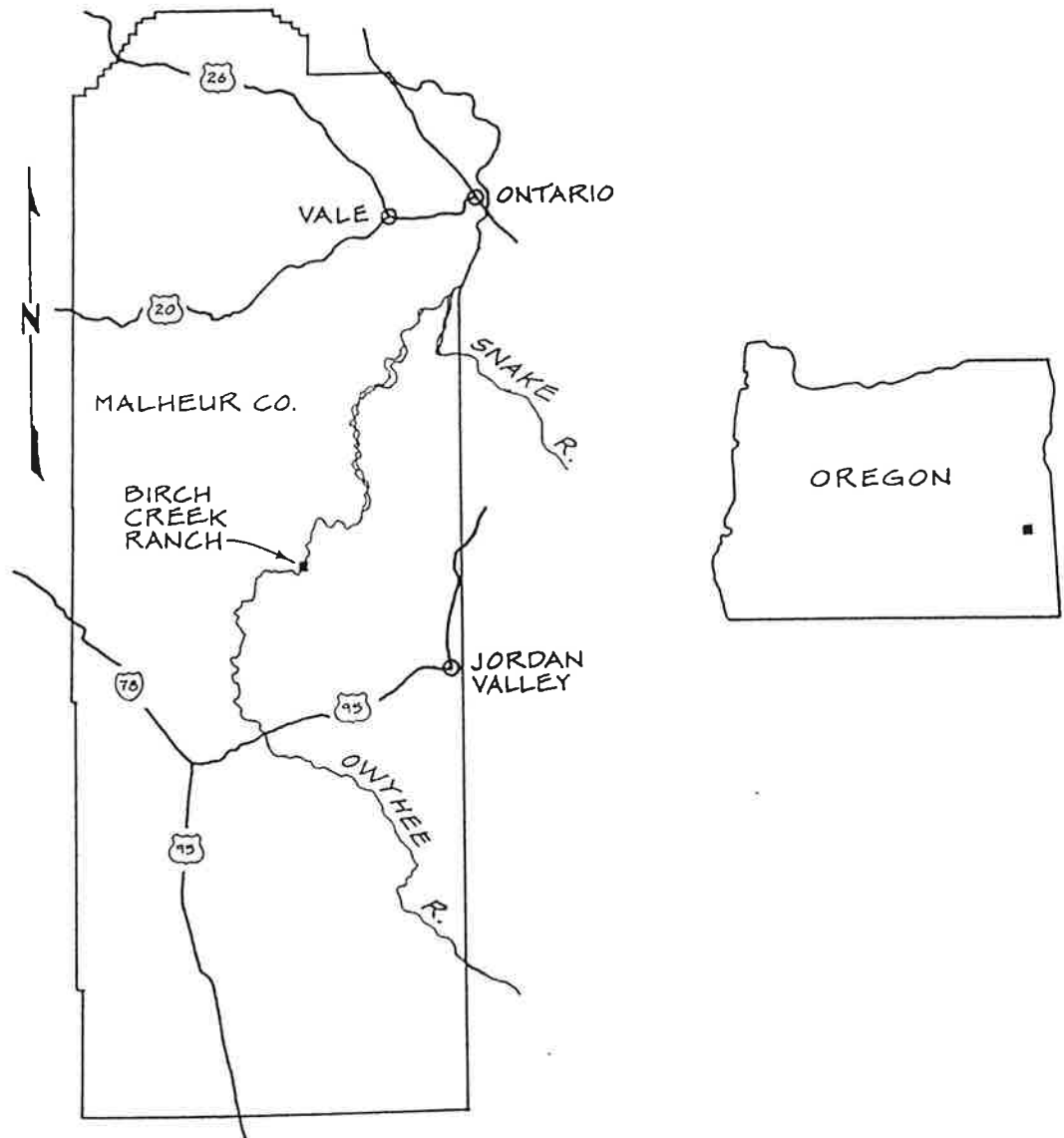


Figure 1. General location of Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape in Malheur County.

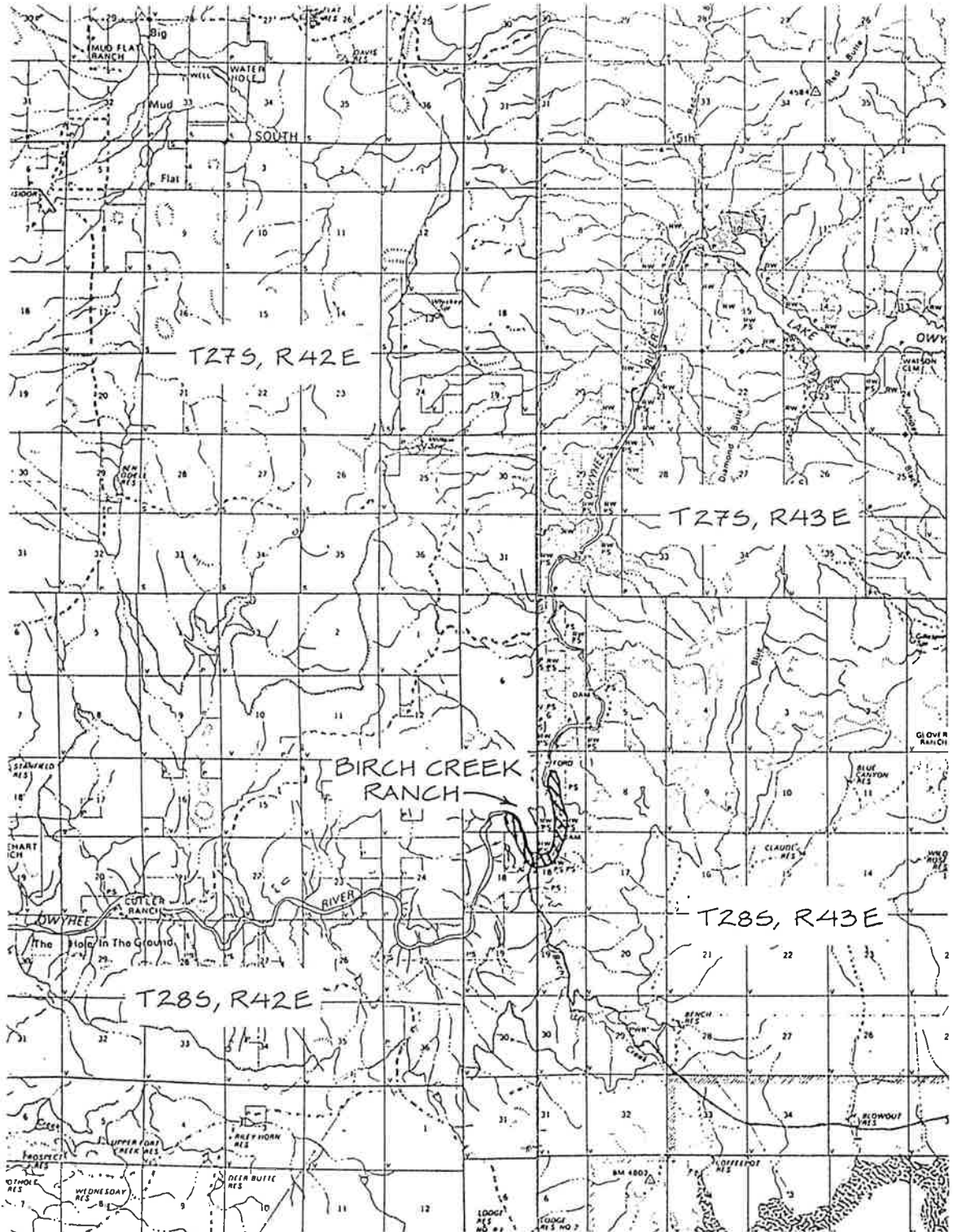


Figure 2. Location of Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape on the Owyhee River.

One of the objectives of the BLM's cultural resource management of Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape is to maintain the buildings in a manner consistent with the National Register status of the property, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the historic context of the ranch. The BLM has an additional obligation to manage the historic property in the best interests of the public, including maintaining certain health and safety requirements, accessibility, and providing interpretation of the ranch's history. In partial fulfillment of these goals, the BLM has undertaken a historic structures investigation to guide the agency in the preservation and appropriate treatment of specific buildings and structures that contribute to the National Register significance of the property. It is this goal of long-term preservation of contributing architectural features that has driven the BLM to request the drafting of this Historic Structure Report. It is one part of the three-phase program of research, planning, and stewardship that contributes to the preservation of historic buildings and structures by documenting and maintaining the historic character of architectural resources and by attempting to retard the processes of deterioration that eventually lead to the loss of historic fabric and historic character.

The National Park Service, the authority on the preservation of historic buildings, specifies that a historic structure report is prepared to "minimize loss of character-defining features and materials whenever existing information about the developmental history and condition of the historic structure does not provide an adequate basis upon which to address anticipated management objectives, whenever alternative courses of action for impending treatment and use could have adverse effects, or to record treatment" (National Park Service 1995:125). A historic structure report typically combines archival research with on-site investigative research and records the construction history, modifications in construction and use that have taken place through time, and the current condition of the structural system and materials through written descriptions and graphic documentation. The report lists any problems in a building caused by materials deterioration and structural inadequacy, evaluates those problems, and recommends treatment procedures to remedy the problems. The standards presently used by the National Park Service for historic structure reports are found in Appendix B. Photographic documentation for this report is provided in a separate volume.

This document is not intended to be a complete report for all contributing cultural features within Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape. As noted, only certain buildings and structures are addressed at this time, and the BLM should keep this document open-ended so that comparable data on the other contributing features at the ranch can be added to this report.

## 2. DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Establishing a historic context for Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape is important for understanding the development and characteristics of the built environment at the ranch, especially in prescribing treatment and appropriate uses for the buildings and structures. Knowledge of local settlement patterns, economics, and building traditions will aid the BLM in their overall management and preservation effort of the property. The developmental history of the buildings and structures in the Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape documents not only how the buildings were constructed, but also reports on their current condition and causes of deterioration that can be identified through physical examination.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape property is comprised of two separate ranch complexes about a mile and a half distant from one another and linked by a historic road along the Owyhee River (Figure 3). Birch Creek Ranch, also referred to as the "Upper Tract," is located at the mouth of Birch Creek and was first settled by a Basque sheepherder (Domingo Lequerica) and subsequently operated by other Basques in the sheep industry (Donato Uberuaga and Simon and Mercedes Acordagoitia) through the historic period (Figure 4). The Morrison Ranch (the "Lower Tract") was settled by cattle and horse rancher James Morrison (Figures 5 and 6). Both properties were homesteaded between 1899 and 1901. The property was used as the headquarters for livestock ranching operations throughout the historic and early modern periods until 1968-1971 when the ranches were sold to Martin Rust II, who used the property strictly for recreation purposes. Both Birch Creek Ranch and the Morrison Ranch were acquired in 1988 by the Bureau of Land Management and were combined as one unit under a National Register of Historic Places eligibility study in 1988 that culminated in a formal determination of eligibility by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a *rural historic landscape*.

#### Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract)

The exact date when Domingo Lequerica initially came to Birch Creek and the Owyhee River is not known, but he and a friend, Martin Achavia, were the first Basques to come to the McDermitt, Nevada country looking for work in the late 1880s (Hanley and Lucia 1980:194). Domingo Lequerica arrived in New York City in 1886 and found his way to northern Nevada. It was in this country that Lequerica first

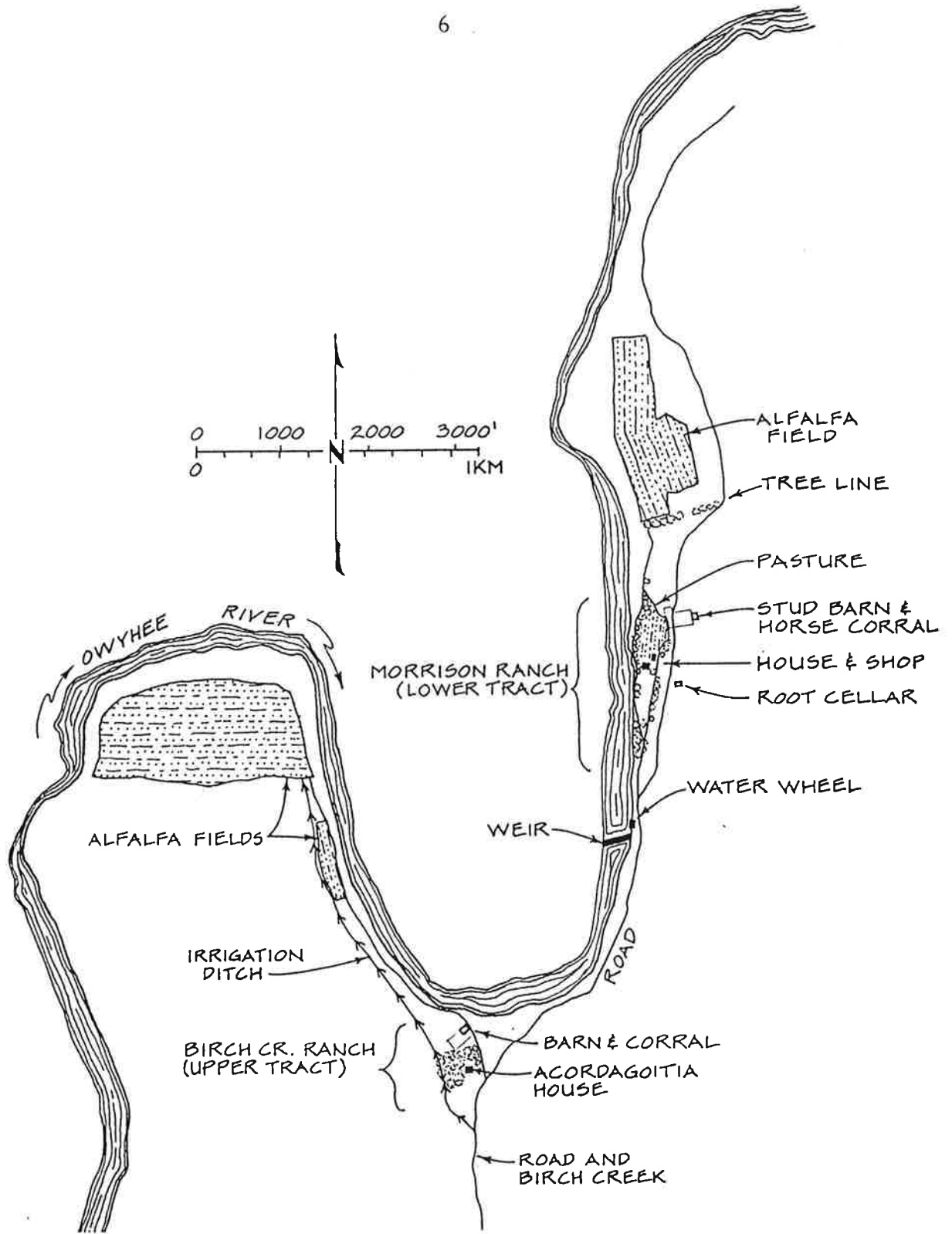


Figure 3. Spatial relationship between the two ranch tracts Birch Creek and Morrison.

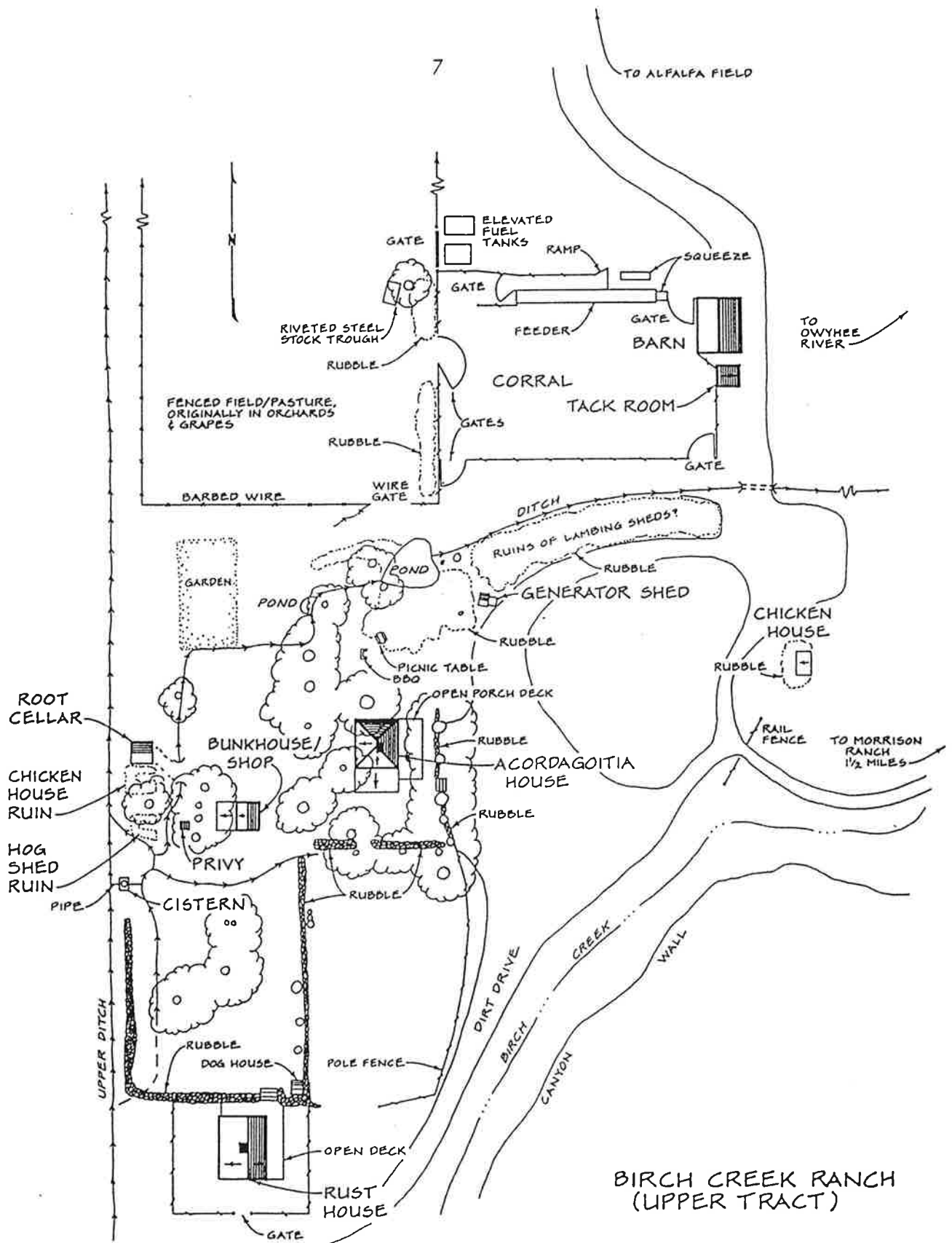


Figure 4. Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract) headquarters site plan (September 1995).

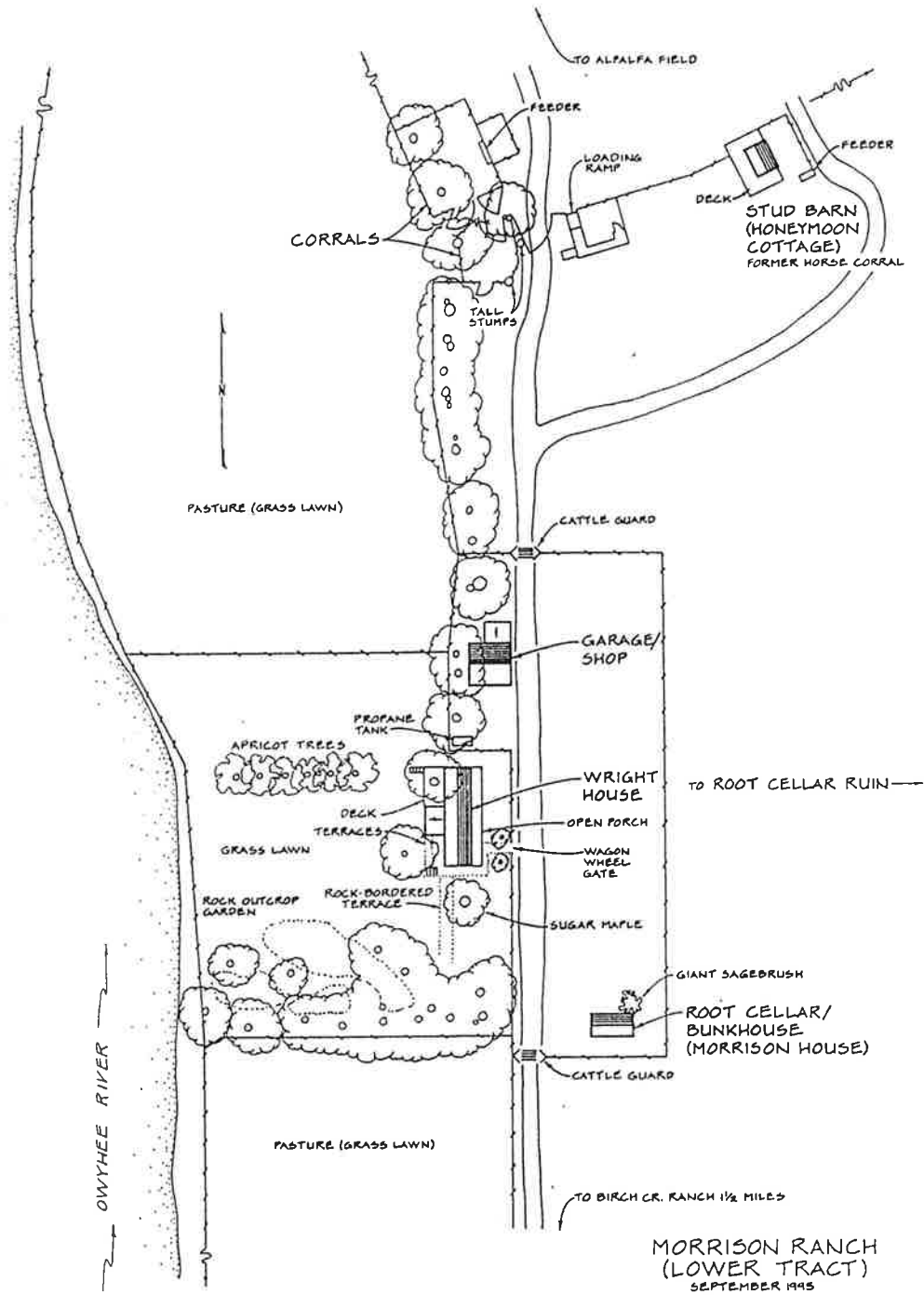


Figure 5. Morrison Ranch (Lower Tract) headquarters site plan (September 1995).

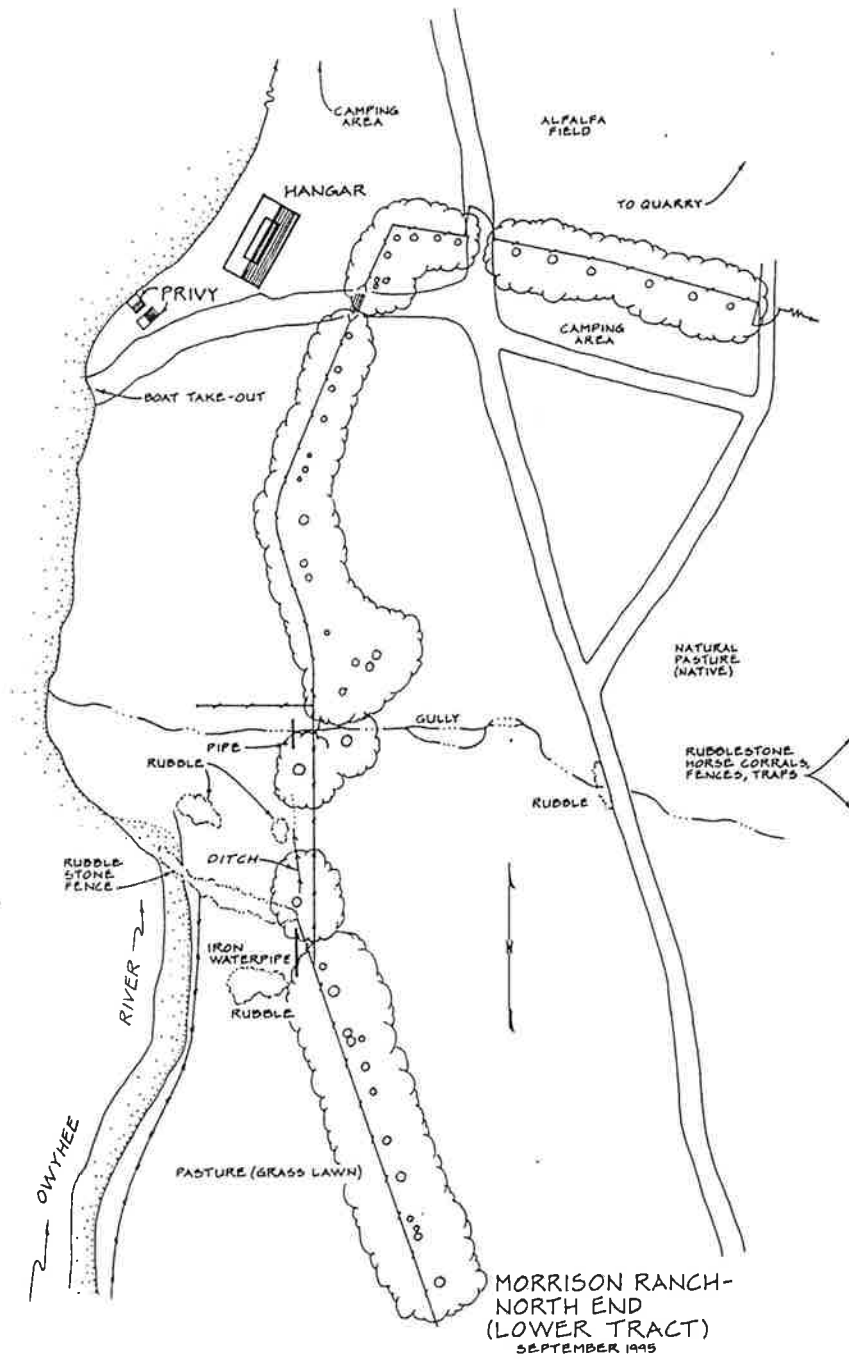


Figure 6. Morrison Ranch (Lower Tract) site plan of north end (September 1995).

learned the trade of sheepherding. He and his companion were originally hired by James Pickens "Pick" Anderson, one of the most influential cattle and sheep ranchers in the Winnemucca and Jordan Valley regions at that time (Hanley and Lucia 1980:103).

By 1889-90, Basques were migrating to the Snake River Valley and the Jordan Valley area to work in the nearby Idaho mines and in the sheep industry (Beers 1982:35-38). This migration was quite heavy throughout the 1890s until just after World War I, and Domingo Lequerica joined this movement into the Owyhee country at the turn of the century. Lequerica apparently lived in northern Nevada through 1898, returned to Spain following the Spanish-American War, and came to the Jordan Valley area shortly thereafter (Baker 1972:28). He was already established in the sheep industry and had staked a Desert Land Claim in the Owyhee Canyon on Birch Creek before 1903, because he had sent word back to Vizcaya, Spain for his son, Timothy, to join him. It is assumed then that Domingo Lequerica was living at Birch Creek Ranch probably no earlier than 1899. Tim arrived in the United States in 1903, but before Domingo could be reunited with his son, he was killed in a wagon accident descending the treacherously steep grade to Birch Creek Ranch (Beers 1982:52; Hanley and Lucia 1980:194-95).

J. R. Blackaby, local real estate promoter and owner of Blackaby's Mercantile in Jordan Valley, was designated as the administrator of the Lequerica estate and was thus assigned to dispose of the property. Tim Lequerica married in 1909 and went into partnership with Antonio Azcuenaga, one of the first Basques to settle in the Jordan Valley area, managing 12,000 sheep at Azcuenaga's ranch near Cow Lakes (Beers 1982:52; Hanley and Lucia 1980:187, 196). His father's Birch Creek Ranch was sold, along with water rights, in 1909 to Donato Uberuaga, one of the area's most respected sheep men, and Simon Acordagoitia. When the 1910 U.S. Census enumerator ventured into the Owyhee River canyon, Uberuaga--acknowledged as a "farmer"--and Acordagoitia--a "herder in sheep camp"--were the only two living at Birch Creek (Bureau of Census 1910). Uberuaga's involvement with the ranch property lasted only three years before he sold his share of the investment to Acordagoitia for nearly \$1,100 in 1912.

During the fall of that year, the federal cadastral surveyors of the General Land Office made their way through the Owyhee country noting the improvements Simon Acordagoitia and his wife Mercedes (who had then joined him at the ranch) had accomplished in the few years since settling on the property in 1909-10. These improvements included 40 acres of alfalfa, a half-acre of fruit-bearing orchard, over an acre of vegetable garden, and architectural improvements including a house, barn, sheds, and corrals (Collier and Joselyn 1912). The government surveyors specifically mentioned the extensive ditch system existing at Birch Creek Ranch for irrigating the

alfalfa field, orchard, and garden as well as a large current-driven water wheel and flume that was once located on the property. It was, for a large part, this watering system that made the ranch a success.

The Acordagoitias raised six children at Birch Creek Ranch before leaving the Owyhee River canyon in the late 1930s. The Depression was felt hard by the Basque people of the Jordan Valley vicinity, and a number of sheepmen lost all or most of their investment in the industry (Gaiser 1944:85). When the Bank of Jordan Valley failed during the 1930s, the ranching community's economic base was severely undermined. The sheep industry itself was declining even before the Depression hit, and the final blow, the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934, forced sheep ranchers to abide by rigid range restrictions and pay grazing fees. The Acordagoitias may have been one of those Jordan Valley area families economically affected by this turn of events when they sold their 123-acre Birch Creek Ranch for a mere \$2,000 in 1937.

The remains of the Acordagoitia's ranching heritage can be seen today everywhere in the surrounding landscape of Birch Creek Ranch. Though the ranch house itself was resided and reroofed in the last 20 years, the house retains much of its historic character in exterior form and interior spatial arrangement. The original historic windows still exist, though the porches were changed to match the recent alterations to the exterior of the house. A number of other early buildings and structures exist in fairly good repair. In addition to standing structures, the remains of those no longer extant are in themselves significant character-defining cultural features of the ranch.

### Morrison Ranch (Lower Tract)

James Morrison, the owner and developer of the Lower Tract property, was born in West Virginia in 1876 and began a life of transience at the age of nine (Field n.d.:1). He was sent to live with his grandfather in 1885 a few years following the death of his father, and until he was old enough to set out on his own, he lived between Kansas, Illinois, and West Virginia. In 1891, at the age of 15, Morrison migrated to Sacramento, California, then to Carson City, Nevada, picking up what work he could. A few years later, he wound up in Harney County, Oregon, received an education (courtesy of his neighbors), and secured a job with the county superintendent setting type for the Burns *Times-Herald*. Morrison saved enough money to find a place of his own, and was off for Malheur County with the intent to homestead. He "struck the Owyhee" in 1899, and at 23 years old, began a solitary ranching career that was to last throughout the remainder of his life: "[The homestead]

happened to be a pretty good place. It was small, but I had cattle and horses. I had about 150 head of cattle at one time and about 100 range horses" (Field n.d.:3).

It may have never been Morrison's intention to permanently settle on the Owyhee River (he had been known to move around all his life) because he sold the ranch in 1919 to Tompie Scoggin for \$8,000, a deal that culminated in a lawsuit against the Scoggin family in 1923 for failure to pay up on the land:

I did get a couple thousand dollars out of them to start out. But they were people who couldn't do anything unless they were [on] horseback. They couldn't pay so I had to take the place back on a mortgage. Lost all my stock. One of my neighbors gave me a milk calf. It was the start of my new bunch of cattle. . . . Finally I got up to 75 head when I sold out this last time (Field n.d.:3).

Morrison then moved out of the Owyhee canyon to the Pasco, Washington area and bought land there on contract for a new ranch. He ranched and farmed for about 10 years, but the land was poor and his attempts to raise alfalfa for his stock ended in failure. In 1929, he once again obtained the title to the Owyhee River property from the Malheur County Sheriff and came back to his old ranch around 1932-33. He had his work cut out for him mending fences and repairing the irrigation water wheel that had fallen into disrepair while he was in Pasco, but money began coming in from the sale of his alfalfa hay. He proceeded to improve the property further by planting shade and windbreak trees and building up his stock herd.

James Morrison's original house is thought to be located a short distance downstream from the presently existing water wheel, between the river and the road. The remains of the foundation for some kind of a structure are still present at the site. Supposedly, when the house burned to the ground during the late 1940s, Morrison moved into the stone root cellar down the road and lived there until he sold the property in the 1950s to George Wright. In a conversation with Wright, the BLM ranch caretakers discovered that the core (now the kitchen) of what is presently known as the Morrison house is actually comprised of a house with several additions built upon it that was hauled upriver from the community of Watson, Oregon when the Owyhee Dam and reservoir were constructed between 1928-32 (Krause and Krause 1995). Wright said he added onto this smaller house at a later date (what is now the pantry and bathroom) and lived in this house, and that Morrison lived in the root cellar. When Martin Rust acquired the property in 1968, he completely renovated the house's exterior and interior and added the back bedrooms to Wright's construction.

The Morrison Ranch is rich in landscape features. The cadastral surveyors also noted that Morrison had an irrigation system comprised of a water wheel and ditches that supplied water to his pastures and alfalfa field. These are still intact on the property, as are the rows of mature locusts and elms Morrison planted some 60 years

ago. A number of other outstanding cultural features exist on the property, including the quarry where the building stone for some of the ranch structures was extracted, basalt rubble horse corrals and fences, wooden pole horse traps located high near the rim of the canyon, pastures, fields, and corrals all linking the human element of the landscape to the natural element.

## CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT AND USE

There are certain character-defining features to all of the architectural resources in the Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape, namely the use of indigenous building materials and the manner in which they have weathered through time, the organic forms the buildings and structures take on, and their siting in the landscape. Most of the materials used in the construction of the buildings and structures in the Birch Creek Ranch Historic Rural Landscape were acquired either on-site or within the vicinity of the ranch. There is no record of a sawmill at the ranch, and presumably lumber (as well as building hardware) was imported from Vale or Jordan Valley to the property for construction needs, while all other materials were locally procured. Fine-grained volcanic tuff and rhyolite building stone was quarried at the north end of the Morrison Ranch. Owyhee basalt was used for the stone fences, corrals, rubble foundations, and some wall material and, even today, is widely available throughout the property. Juniper for the corrals and fence posts came from the gulches leading into the canyon. Unfortunately, the juniper was virtually depleted by 1912, so black locust was planted at the ranch to provide a store of fence-building material for future needs (Collier and Jocelyn 1912; Beckham 1989). With the exception of milled lumber, construction materials were readily available within the boundaries of the Birch Creek and Morrison ranches and could be fashioned on location into suitable components for architectural uses.

The forms of root cellars constructed into the sides of hills and curvilinear fence lines and corral enclosures that seem to emerge from the ground itself demonstrate the builders' attention to working with the land in determining where to build and how to create the most functional and practical structures necessary to daily ranch operations. The buildings themselves, though of simple rectangular forms, are clustered together and hidden in mature groves of trees and mock the concentration of native vegetation growing along Birch Creek and the Owyhee. They almost seem to compliment the monolithic formations of the canyon that surrounds them. The buildings have weathered to organic hues that blend-in with the scenery to convey a sense of connectedness with the land. The cultural and aesthetic significance of the Birch Creek and Morrison ranch buildings lies in this display of these character-defining features.

The following discussion provides a detailed review of each building's construction, materials, history of use, condition, modifications, and causes of deterioration. The figures referring to the photographs used to illustrate the current condition of the buildings can be found at the end of this section beginning on page 36.

## Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract)

### Barn

*Physical Construction*--The Birch Creek barn is a rectangular, two-story, light wood-framed (balloon frame construction) building measuring approximately 33 feet north-south by 17 feet east-west (Figures 7, 8, 9). It dates to at least 1912, since the cadastral surveyors noted it during their visit to the property during that year. The building has been painted red in the past. The foundation is composed of dressed and coursed stone masonry and appears to rest on a bed of gravel. A 5x5 sill, lap-jointed and nailed at the corners, rests atop the stonework on a cement bed. The wall is constructed of 3x4 studs 24 inches on center with a 1x6 ribbon on the east and west walls on the lower floor and a 2x4 ribbon on the north and south walls in the upper hay loft, a double top plate of 2x4s, 1x12 diagonal interior wall sheathing on the lower floor, 1x7 horizontal interior wall sheathing in the upper hay loft, and 1x6 horizontal exterior shiplap siding with corner boards. A water table separates the two stories on the outside of the building. The floor system includes 2x12 and 3x14 flooring at the bottom floor, 2x8 floor joists at the second story with cross bracing, and 1x5 and 1x6 tongue-and-groove flooring in the hay loft. Juniper posts bolted onto the floor joists above help support the upper floor load. The gable roof is constructed of 2x4 rafters 24 inches on center, variable-width skip sheathing (1x6 to 1x12 planks), and wood shakes over an earlier wood shingle roof.

A wooden ladder in the northwestern corner of the barn leads up to the hay loft. There is a hay hood, but no opening, on the north side of the barn. No hay fork mechanism was noted inside the hay loft, and there was no evidence that one ever existed. On the west wall of the loft is a door opening, but half of the door is missing. There are two window openings without sash on the west elevation; a fixed, single-pane, wood sash window on the south; and a two-pane, wooden sash window without glass covered with chicken wire on the north. Z-braced, wooden batten doors exist on the south side at the southwest corner (single-width), on the east side, and the north side (both doors are double-width with large strap hinges--Figure 10). The door on the north side is a "Dutch" type, with the top half opening independently from the lower half, and is constructed of double thickness with a layer of newspapers between the two thicknesses of planks.

A corral, loading chute, squeeze chute, and water trough exist to the west of the barn. A separate tack and grain storage building lies on the south side of the building. The barn is situated on a flat site with the river bank gently sloping down to the north and into the water. A dirt road leading west and north to the upper alfalfa field lies on the north and east sides of the barn.

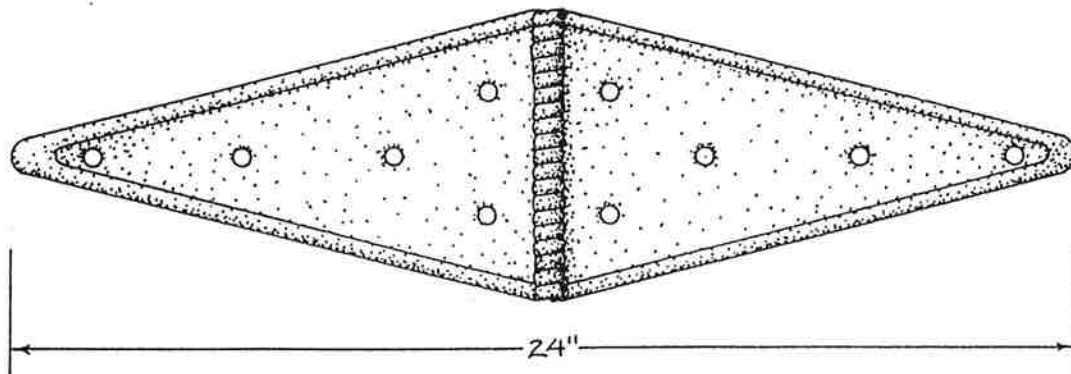


Figure 10. Typical strap hinge used in the construction of the barn.

*Use*--The lower level of the barn formerly accommodated the feeding and temporary sheltering of livestock and horses. A feed trough runs along the entire west wall of the barn, and two stalls are presently evident (there may have been a third stall at one time). A separate space occupies the south end of the barn and is closed off from the animal area by a horizontal board partition and a single-width door. This space was (and is still) used as a tack and grain room. Bridles, rope, barrels of grain, saddles, blankets, and saddletrees now occupy this space. The upper story of the barn was used for hay storage, and some hay is still stored in the loft.

### Tack Room

*Physical Construction*--The tack room building is a simple light-wood-framed, shed-roofed structure facing west into the corral area and measuring eight feet-six inches north to south by eight feet east to west (Figure 13). It appears to have been constructed from available materials on the ranch; some of these may have been recycled from buildings no longer standing. The building sits on a 2x6 sill and a basic foundation of dressed local stone and rubble stone footings. The walls and roof are framed with 2x4 studs and rafters. There is no exterior siding, but the interior walls and roof are sheathed with 1x5 tongue-and-groove horizontal boards. The floor is

plywood, and the roof is covered with newer wood shakes. Several flattened Prince Albert tobacco tins, tin can lids, and small pieces of sheet metal cover knot holes on the interior walls. A single Z-braced batten door is constructed of 1x3 vertical boards. Three four-inch-diameter cross-sections from small trees are nailed to the inside of the door for hanging bridles and rope.

The tack room lies within a few feet of the south side of the barn on a flat site and is incorporated into the space of the corral. The dirt road leading to the upper alfalfa field passes the building to the east.

*Use*--The tack room was initially used to store bridles and other tack. It is presently used to store barrels of grain, and all tack and saddlery have been moved to the tack room inside of the barn.

### Bunkhouse/Shop

*Physical Construction*--This gable-roofed, one-story, rectangular building is constructed of light-wood framing (stud wall) and rests on a rubble stone foundation (Figure 16). The exterior cladding is board and batten, and some square nails and what appear to be rosehead nails were used to attach the battens to the boards. The roof is covered with wood shakes over building paper on the main portion of the building and wood shakes over rolled asphalt roofing over the shop addition. The bunkhouse/shop was once painted red. The rafters are not exposed to the outside of the building but can be seen through a north gable entry to the attic. They are widely spaced, at least 36 inches on center. A shed-roofed addition, used as a shop, exists on the west side of the building and illustrates the use of box, or plank wall, construction (Figure 17). The entire building measures 22 feet east-west by 18 feet north-south with the rear (west) 12 by 18 foot shed addition. The gable ridge is oriented north-south.

The facade (east side) is adorned with a three-panel-and-light decoratively carved wooden door flanked by two wooden sash, horizontal slider windows: an eight-pane window on the south side of the door and a two-pane window on the north. Rubble stone is laid about three feet out from the front of the building and kept in place with railroad ties. A slab of cut stone functions as a step into the front entrance of the bunkhouse.

There is a wooden ladder leading to a small door in the north gable end of the bunkhouse/shop that leads to attic storage space. Another three-panel-and-light decoratively carved wooden door on the north side of the building leads into the shop area. A four-pane, fixed window exists on the west side of the shop addition (rear of the building), and a two-pane horizontal slider window is found on the south side. Mature trees surround the bunkhouse/shop on the south and west sides. On the south

side, near the southeast corner, is a propane tank and stove pipe. A water spigot lies off the southeast corner in front of the building.

Some of the original interior finishes of the bunkhouse/shop have been covered over through time. Both the walls and ceiling are covered with modern gypsum board. The floor in the entry room is covered with three-inch tongue-and-groove boards laid diagonally, while the floor in the side room to the north is covered with linoleum. A newer woodstove sits along the south wall of the main entry room.

The shop section of the building is divided from the bunkhouse by a stud wall and a Z-braced batten door constructed of tongue-and-groove lumber with a ceramic door knob. The shop has a dirt floor with a raised platform of plywood along the south wall. There is an old woodstove near the northwest corner on the north wall by the door. A blacksmith anvil and bellows still remain in the shop near the woodstove, and a workbench runs along the length of the west wall. Shelving and compartments to hold nuts, bolts, and other hardware take up half of the east wall from the southeast corner north. A newer plywood workbench runs along the south wall. The entire building is wired for electricity.

The bunkhouse/shop sits on a level site and is shaded all day by mature trees planted in a row behind the building. The surrounding yard is dirt. An irrigation ditch runs to the west of the building, and an outhouse (privy) lies just a few yards to the west, between the bunkhouse/shop and ditch.

*Use*--The bunkhouse/shop is thought to be the first dwelling erected at the Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract) and may be associated earliest with Domingo Lequerica. After the property was sold to Donato Uberuaga and Simon Acordagoitia in 1909, it is not known whether either or both men lived here before the large house was constructed to the east. Since Acordagoitia was married, he and his wife, Mercedes, may have had the large house constructed for them and Uberuaga may have lived in the bunkhouse. It is not known if the shop section of the building was always used as a shop. At present, the bunkhouse is being used as an office, and the shop is still used as a shop.

### Chicken House

*Physical Construction*--The chicken house is a shed-roofed, light-framed, wooden structure oriented north-south and measuring nearly 13 feet square (Figure 19). It is constructed at grade along the east (front) side, but the west side, northwest, and southwest corners are excavated into the ground. Local rubble stone was used for a foundation and a partial wall two to three feet high from the dirt floor. Rubble stone is mounded around the exterior of the structure as well. The framed portion of the

chicken house rests on large, saw-cut, squared sills measuring 10x10 on the north and south walls, 7x10 on the east wall, and 5x5 on the west wall. The west wall sill is also comprised of a five-inch diameter locust log. The north and south sills extend out from the structure one-and-a-half to three-and-a-half feet and are notched (sawn) to accept the east and west sill members. Anchor bolts were used to attach sills to bottom plates.

The framed portion of the chicken house walls are constructed with 2x4s using bottom and top plates and studs, except for the west wall. Nail holes in these and other 2x4 members in the chicken house strongly suggest they have been salvaged from another building and reused in the construction of this structure. The walls are composed of horizontal board sheathing and vertical board shiplap and matched board exterior cladding on the north and south sides. The west wall is constructed of vertical board sheathing and both horizontal tongue-and-groove and beveled shiplap siding. The roof is supported by 2x4 rafters 26 inches on center with 1x12 and 1x5 board sheathing. Remnants of asphalt composition shingles which once covered the roof are evident. An interior chicken roost constructed of three-inch diameter vertical poles atop stone footings and half-sawn horizontal poles helps support the roof structure.

The east elevation (front) of the chicken house is enclosed only with chicken wire attached to 2x4 studs. A single-width board and batten door with a top-hinged chicken door at the bottom exists at the northeast corner. The door is constructed of 1x7 and 1x9 vertical boards with 2x4 cross battens and fastened to the structure with standard, ferrous metal strap hinges. There are window openings on both the south and north walls. The windows are casement, but most of the sash is missing except for the casing where hinges are still attached. These hinges are of the same style as the chicken door hinges (Figure 20).

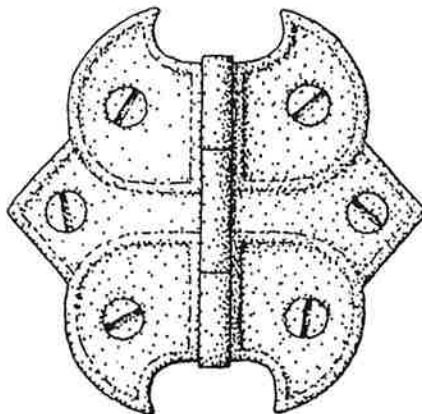


Figure 20. Type of hinge found on chicken house windows and hen doorway (not to scale).

Boards have been nailed across the windows on the exterior of the building. The chicken yard itself is no longer demarcated or discernable.

The chicken house is relatively isolated from the rest of the building group and is situated on an open, sloping site (downhill west to east) at the far eastern edge of the ranch complex. The dirt road leading to the upper alfalfa field passes the structure on the west side, and a small parking area lies to the north. The road to the Morrison Ranch is to the south a few yards away. Sagebrush and grass grow abundantly around the structure.

*Use*--The chicken house is a later addition to the building group at Birch Creek Ranch and is the second to be constructed on the property. The original chicken house was located to the south of the root cellar (see Figure 4). Only a pile of rubble remains at this site. The BLM caretakers were told by informants that the sill members used in the construction of this building were salvaged from an old "rock boat" that was used to haul the rubble stone to various building sites, particularly the stone fences, around the ranch property (Krause and Krause 1995). They were told that this chicken house was constructed sometime during the 1940s to replace the earlier structure. Currently, the structure is not being used.

### Root Cellar

*Physical Construction*--The root cellar is a rectangular, gable-roofed, load-bearing masonry building 23 feet long (east-west) by 17 feet wide (north-south) with 24-inch thick walls (Figure 24). It is constructed into the slope of the hill to the west. Dressed and coursed local stone characterizes the front (east) of the building, while randomly placed rubble stone was used for the other three sides. The south side is almost completely hidden with the rubble stone from the adjacent chicken house ruin. The roof is constructed of two-inch dimension lumber for the top plate and rafters and one-inch lumber for the roof sheathing. The roof is covered with wood shakes. A square, wooden box vent exists atop the roof ridge near the west end of the building. The main irrigation ditch from Birch Creek leading to the upper alfalfa field far to the north runs along the contour of the hill slope just above the root cellar.

There is a single entrance on the east side with two separate board and batten doors, one on either side of the stone wall, creating a 24-inch dead-air space between the two doors. The interior door is covered with a single layer of black building paper. Between the doors is a four-foot high wood and wire screen door. A single window exists on the north side of the building that has been boarded over on the inside. Food storage shelving lines the inside of the building on the south, west, and north sides.

The root cellar is partially shaded by mature trees and sits on a gently sloping site to the north, west, and south and a steep slope up to the west. The structure blends in well with the surrounding landscape. Immediately in front of the building (to the east) the surrounding yard is dirt, but on the hillside behind it grows grass. There is another ditch in front of the root cellar that waters the garden to the north.

*Use*--This building is one of the earliest architectural features constructed at Birch Creek Ranch and probably dates to around 1910, shortly after Simon Acordagoitia acquired the property. It has always been used as a root cellar.

### Cistern

*Physical Construction*--The cistern is constructed of large aggregate concrete faced with rubble stone (Figure 28). The top of the structure is finished with cement parging and is shaped in a truncated pyramidal form. A wooden lid sheathed in galvanized sheet metal covers the cistern's opening at the top. The cistern is four feet square on the inside with walls one foot thick and is constructed into the side of the hill. The cistern's depth is 14 feet, though only seven feet of the wall (east wall) is exposed above ground.

The cistern is filled with water drawn from the main Birch Creek ditch located above and on the west side of the cistern from a PVC hose. The main out-take is a galvanized pipe fitted with a water-control valve on the east side near the bottom of the structure. An overflow pipe and hose of PVC exits the cistern on the east side just below the lid. The PVC hose empties water into the irrigation ditch system that meanders through the Birch Creek Ranch yard. The galvanized pipe is attached to other PVC hoses and metal pipes that distribute water to other portions of the ditch system. The flow of water is controlled by valves.

The cistern is shaded all day by young trees. Bushes and grass also grow around the structure. It is constructed on a steeply sloping site (uphill east to west) and blends in well with its surroundings.

*Use*--The cistern is part of the gravity-fed water system and is the primary supply tank formerly used for drinking water and irrigating the Acordagoitia house yard and garden. The date of construction is not known at this time but was likely built by the Acordagoitia family during the 1910s or 1920s. The cistern is used today for the storage of water only for irrigation and is an integral component of the irrigation works at the ranch.

## CISTERN-ELEVATION SEPTEMBER 1995

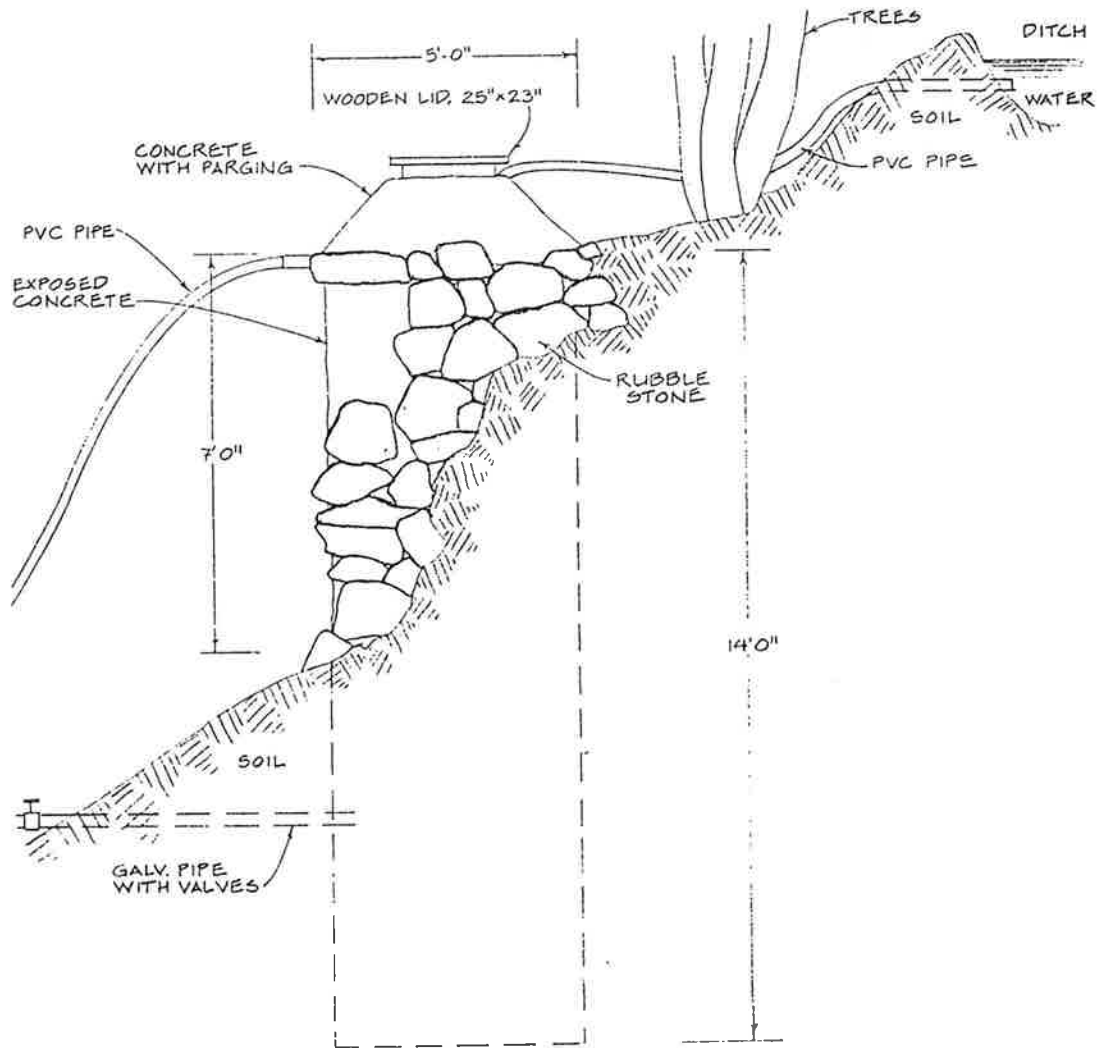


Figure 28. Birch Creek cistern, sketch of north elevation (not to scale).

### Generator Shed

*Physical Construction*--The generator shed is located on a slightly sloping site at the west edge of a rubble pile thought to be the ruins of old lambing sheds. A modern decorative pond lies about 25 feet off the northwest corner of the shed. Mature trees shade the shed's west, south, and north sides. This small, shed-roofed building is constructed of vertical boards and battens forming the walls, 2x4 rafters, beaded tongue-and-groove roof sheathing, a wood shake roof (over composition shingles), and plank flooring on 4x4 joists, a 3x10 sill, and a rubble stone foundation (Figure 31). The shed appears to have been constructed from recycled building materials. The building itself measures six feet by four feet with an additional four feet of floor deck outside of the entrance (east side). Its height is six feet on the east side and just under five feet on the west side. A single opening exists on the east side. There is wooden shelving on the inside along the south wall, a generator along the north wall, and 12-volt batteries along the west wall. The area around the generator is soaked with oil. A section of flexible metal conduit is attached to the generator and goes through a hole cut in the north wall to the outside of the shed where it is buried under rocks. Another hole is cut on the east side as a vent for the generator. There is a solar cell panel attached to the south wall just under the roof.

*Use*--Because of its rustic nature and construction materials, the generator shed was erroneously thought to date to the historic period at the time the National Register nomination was drafted. Subsequent to the initial investigations leading to the writing of the National Register nomination, it has been discovered that the shed may be a more recently constructed building at Birch Creek Ranch and is thought to have been built during Martin Rust's ownership of the property (after 1971). Mr. Rust supposedly had the shed erected exclusively for sheltering a modern generator that was used for electrifying some of the buildings at the ranch (Krause and Krause 1995). The generator is still in use today.

### Outhouse (Privy)

*Physical Construction*--The outhouse is a three-sided, shed-roofed, plank-framed building measuring four feet by three feet and is located behind (west of) the bunkhouse/shop, facing west (Figure 32). The site is flat, and the surrounding yard is dirt. A row of mature trees to the east shades the privy all day. The irrigation ditch that waters the garden flows a few yards to the west.

The outhouse does not appear to have ever had a framed door. The plank flooring, which extends beyond the walls, rests directly atop a rubble foundation, and additional rocks have been placed on top of the floor outside of the building to stabilize the structure. The roof is constructed of 1x12 planks and rolled asphalt sheets.

There is a bench with a conventional toilet seat and lid along the east wall. The walls, inside and out, as well as the floor have been painted white (or whitewashed). There are two rusted coffee cans on the bench to the north of the seat. Two sheets of plywood are nailed onto the front of the bench. Rolls of toilet paper are hung on wire high on the south wall. The outhouse may have been cleaned out regularly, since there is a small opening (now covered and nailed shut) at ground-level on the north wall near the northeast corner.

*Use*--The National Register nomination suggests this was the original Birch Creek outhouse, and no new information was found to negate this association. The building is not presently being used as a privy.

## Morrison Ranch (Lower Tract)

### Root Cellar/Bunkhouse

*Physical Construction*--This root cellar/bunkhouse, measuring 25 feet by 11 feet and oriented east-west, is constructed of masonry bearing walls of dressed and coursed local stone and random rubble stone (Figures 33 and 34). The craftsmanship of the dressed stone is very similar to that of the Birch Creek Ranch root cellar at the Upper Tract, and it is conceivable that both buildings are the work of the same mason. The building has a gable roof and wood-framed roof system, incorporating 4x7 purlins (rather than rafters), five-inch tongue-and-groove sheathing, and wood shakes. The roof rests on a cement mortar bed on top of the walls. The building is partially subterranean and is entered at grade on the north side near the northwest corner. The door is decorative, constructed of three-inch tongue-and-groove boards and wrought-iron-like strap hinges, door latch, and key hole plate. There is a concrete pad in front of the door and a decorative lamp to the side. Two modern single-pane, casement windows exist on the south side of the building. The sill for the window opening farthest to the east is fashioned from flat field stones. Two soil stacks and two heater ventilation stacks pierce the roof. A propane tank sits under the eave on the east side of the building.

The interior is divided into two rooms: a sleeping space with bunkbeds and a full bath. The floor is carpeted, but the walls in the sleeping room are exposed masonry. The masonry walls in the bathroom are covered with modern finishes. There is a small wood stove in the northeast corner of the sleeping room and propane lamps fixed to the walls throughout. The bathroom is modern and is equipped with running water. Both windows (one in each room) are operable.

The surrounding yard is nearly free of vegetation with the exception of a large sagebrush bush off the northeast corner. A pole fence exists 17 feet to the south and east of the building. The root cellar/bunkhouse is reached by a series of railroad tie steps from the road curving up to the building. The site gently slopes up to the south and east, down to the north and west. The land continues uphill to the east to the shear rock walls that characterize the canyon.

*Use*--This building is thought to have been originally used as either a root cellar and/or a bunkhouse for the Morrison Ranch. Though the construction is the same as the root cellar for the Birch Creek Ranch at the Upper Tract (the only type of building found on the entire property employing dressed masonry in its construction), the fact that this building has two window openings that appear to be part of the original design, and that it is not constructed more into the ground or in the side of a hill, leads one to believe that it was used as a bunkhouse rather than a root cellar. (Another root cellar of more typical construction and siting exists on the property above this building to the east at the base of the canyon. See "Stone Dugout/Root Cellar Ruin" section below.) George Wright, who purchased the property from James Morrison, told one of the BLM ranch caretakers that James Morrison himself moved into this building when his first house, which was located just above the river a short distance downstream from the water wheel, burned to the ground during the late 1940s (the foundation remains of this house are still visible). Morrison apparently lived here until he left the property for good around 1958 (Krause and Krause 1995). It is not known what the building was used for after Morrison vacated it, but it was completely rehabilitated to serve as a guest cottage soon after Martin Rust acquired the ranch in 1968. Mr. Rust replaced the door, windows, and entire roof system.

### Garage/Shop

*Physical Construction*--This gable-roofed, wood-framed building was constructed almost entirely from used and recycled building materials (Figure 37). It is framed with a variety of lumber, including 2x4 corner posts, girts, diagonal wall bracing, and rafters; 4x4 posts and top plates; 2x6 collar beams and roof ridge beam; 1x6 skip sheathing for the roof; and 1x12 vertical boards cut at five-foot lengths for the siding. A single juniper post in the center of the building helps support the ridge beam. The roof is covered with corrugated metal. The foundation is comprised of both rubble stone and dressed stone footings with a 4x6 sill, and the floor is dirt. There is a large sliding door hung on cast iron rollers on the east side, a three-pane window that slides to the side on the east wall, and one other four-pane window that slides to the side on the west wall. An array of deer and elk antlers adorn the east side of the building in the gable. A mummified steer head is mounted near the northeast corner on the north side as well. The building measures just under 19 feet square and is oriented east-west.

There is a work bench along the east wall between the door bay and the northeast corner of the building. Newer shelving exists along the north wall near the northeast corner, and other shelving exists on the south side of the building. Old horse tack, irrigation hardware, pulleys, and other older shop hardware are hanging on all of the interior walls. The year "1931" is painted in yellow on the south wall near the southeast corner next to a raised platform frame.

A shed-roofed addition, measuring six feet by 14 feet, exists on the north side of the garage/shop (Figure 38). It is minimally constructed of recycled materials (2x4 studs, girts, and rafters, cove/drop shiplap siding, skip roof sheathing, and wood shingles) and is completely open on the east side. The 2x4 sill plate appears to rest directly on the ground, however, footing stones may be buried underneath the sill. Two windows exist in this addition: a four-pane window on the north side that slides up, and a two-pane window on the west side that also slides up. Firewood and broken redwood patio furniture is piled along the west wall of the addition.

The building is situated on a flat site just north of the non-contributing building known as the "Morrison House" and is shaded by mature elm and locust trees lying within 10 feet of the west and north sides. A pole fence runs parallel to the west on the other side of the line of trees. The building site is level and is devoid of vegetation other than the trees. An old horse pasture (now an irrigated grass lawn) is to the west.

*Use*--James Morrison used this building as a shop and garage, and it is likely that he constructed it. Local informants have mentioned to the BLM caretakers that Morrison built the existing water wheel that is still intact upriver just outside of this building. The BLM is presently using the building as a workshop and for equipment and hardware storage.

#### Stone Dugout/Root Cellar Ruin

*Physical Construction*--This feature is comprised of the remains of a former root cellar (Figures 40 and 41). It is constructed of two masonry bearing walls (north and east) against the face of a rock outcrop (south) and an earthen berm wall (west). The interior space measures approximately 16 feet long by seven feet wide by eight feet deep. The exterior surface of the masonry walls is buried within an earthen berm. The structure no longer has a roof (no remains of the roof can be found around the cellar), but a cross-braced batten door and part of the door framing still exist in place on the north side. The door framing is bolted onto cut stone blocks. The floor of the structure is covered with grass and fallen rubble from the walls but appears to be of earthen construction. The lower masonry units are dressed and coursed local stone, while the masonry closer to the top of the structure is coursed rubble stone. The craftsmanship and materials are similar to other stone buildings at both the Morrison

and Birch Creek ranches. The masonry walls are nearly nine inches thick with an additional four feet of earth fill on the outside. There is a section of an eight-inch diameter cast iron pipe cemented to the rock face, the function of which is not known. Wooden poles, some with wire attached to them, lay in a small pile off the east side of the cellar.

The site is cool, damp, and well shaded for the majority of the day, and the building is well camouflaged by the surrounding landscape. Grass and sagebrush grow in abundance all around the building. The terrain is sloping down to the west and north and up to the east. The rest of the ranch buildings are approximately 400 feet to the west of this ruin.

*Use-*Based on construction and siting, this structure appears to have been used as a root cellar or store room historically. It has not been used in this capacity for the last 30 or 40 years and has been in a state of ruin since then.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Recording the physical description of each building and structure requires actual in-field inspection and involves a thorough documentation of present condition, structural adequacy, and causes of deterioration. Noting any modifications to the original design of the building (additions, replacement of historic fabric with modern materials, general building maintenance such as masonry repointing, etc.) is especially important, because these modifications could indicate an attempt at remedying previous structural problems or even the cause of present structural failure or the decay of historic fabric.

### Birch Creek Ranch (Upper Tract)

#### Barn

*Condition/Modifications-*Damage to the northeast corner of the barn was incurred during the March 1993 flood, and the foundation on the north side of the building was partially undermined, exposing the bed of gravel on which the foundation stones rest (Figure 11). According to the caretakers, the water level was up to four feet inside the barn. At the time of this writing, nothing has been done to repair this damage.

All modifications to the barn appear to have taken place during Martin Rust's stewardship of the property between 1971 and 1988. The barn is very sturdy and