

# Intensive Level Cultural Resources Survey

## Baca National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters and Cattle Headquarters Complexes

Prepared for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Winter 2013





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# Project Team

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## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to:

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## Introduction

### **Project Background and Purpose**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) contracted with the Center of Preservation Research (CoPR) at the University of Colorado to complete an intensive-level survey of two building complexes at the Baca National Wildlife Refuge in Saguache County: Home Ranch (where the refuge office is currently located) and Pure Bred Place. The project was carried out under the Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Units Network.

Located at the northern end of the San Luis Valley, near the town of Crestone, the Baca National Wildlife Refuge was created in 2000. The refuge encompasses more than 92,500 acres, incorporating most of the 100,000 acres of the Baca Grant No. 4. Commonly referred to as the Baca Ranch, the Baca Grant passed through a variety of owners, mostly corporations, before being acquired by the USFWS. No significant alterations have been made to the ranch complexes since the refuge was established, and most of the buildings are currently vacant. The goal of the project was to provide building evaluations to guide future site planning and development. The survey project included researching history and ranching context of the Baca Ranch and determining the National Register eligibility of the two building complexes. Throughout the remainder of the report these two building complexes will be referred to by their historic names: Home Ranch for the original ranch headquarters and Pure Bred Place for the cattle headquarters.

### **Project Dates**

The intensive level survey began in September 2012 with a site visit to the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The survey report and forms were completed in March 2013.

### **Project Area**

Two building complexes were surveyed at the intensive level. Both lie along Crestone Creek at the northern end of the refuge. The Pure Bred Place is located approximately 10 miles east of Moffat County, just south of County Road T. The complex is visible from the county road and accessed via a dirt drive. The Home Ranch, also visible from the county

road, is located about half a mile east of the Pure Bred Place and is also accessed via a dirt drive. Survey boundaries were drawn to incorporate all visible manmade features associated with the complexes. At the Home Ranch 23 acres were intensively surveyed; at the Pure Bred Place 12 acres were intensively surveyed. The survey team also conducted a reconnaissance-level survey of six historic cattle camps located on the refuge: Shed's Camp, Shipping Corrals, Willow Creek Camp, Cottonwood Camp, January Camp, and Deadman Camp. A map showing the location of these camps can be found on page 60 and 61.

### Project Description

The Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place were surveyed at the intensive-level with an Architectural Inventory 1403 form completed for each complex. Each complex was evaluated as a potential historic district; the potential for individually eligible buildings was also considered. The intensive-level survey revealed that the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place also have the potential to be eligible as part of a Rural Historic Landscape district. A reconnaissance-level survey of the land immediately surrounding the complexes as well as six historic cattle camps on the ranch was conducted and a Historic Cultural Landscapes form 1404 was completed. The survey results, along with additional context on the ranching industry in Colorado, are presented in this report.

### Project Staff

The survey project was completed by the Center of Preservation Research (CoPR) in the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado Denver (UCD). A university research center, CoPR preserves the past and examines the present to prepare for the future of our cities, suburbs, ranchlands, and wildlands—through education, research, and practice. CoPR Director Ekaterina Vlahos was the principal investigator for the project. Abbey Christman (Survey Coordinator) and Melanie Short (Assessment Coordinator) conducted the field survey and completed the survey report and forms. UCD graduate student Sarah Rosenberg (Project Assistant) completed the site maps and assisted with research.

### Funding Source

This survey was funded in full by the USFWS.

### Summary of Results

A total of twenty-three buildings were surveyed at the intensive level: twelve at the Home Ranch and eleven at the Pure Bred Place. The buildings can be divided into the following historic building functions:

- 9 Domestic: Dwelling
- 7 Agricultural: Storage
- 5 Agricultural: Animal Facility
- 2 Domestic: Secondary Structure/Garage

Some of the functions have evolved over time, adapting to the needs of a working ranch. The USFWS has converted one of the dwellings at the Home Ranch to an office.

The Home Ranch and the Pure Bred Place were determined eligible for listing as historic districts. They are both eligible under Criterion A for Agriculture and Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance for the Home Ranch district extends from c. 1870 when the first documented structure was erected and George Adams began leasing the land for cattle grazing to the purchase of the ranch by the Arizona Land and Cattle Company in 1962. The Home Ranch district consists of nine contributing buildings and three non-contributing buildings. Two of the non-contributing buildings were constructed after the period of significance; the other has been extensively altered. The office/bunkhouse and feed and seed building are potentially individually eligible for their association with the nineteenth century establishment of the ranch and the high degree of craftsmanship displayed their adobe and log construction.

The period of significance for the Pure Bred Place district extends from the establishment of the complex in 1927 until the purchase of the ranch by the Arizona Land and Cattle Company in 1962. The Pure Bred Place district consists of seven contributing buildings, two contributing structures, and four non-contributing buildings. The non-contributing buildings were all added to the complex after the period of significance. The auction barn is potentially individually eligible as the key building associated with Alfred Collins' nationally recognized pure bred Hereford cattle herd. Both the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place are also likely eligible as part of a larger rural historic landscape district but additional intensive-level survey is needed to identify boundaries for a rural historic landscape district.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Fall 2012



## Project Area

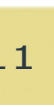
### San Luis Valley

“The San Luis Valley, Colorado, is a stretch of level plain about as large as the state on Connecticut, lying between surrounding ranges of lofty mountains and watered by the Rio Grande river and a score or more of small tributary streams” (Denver & Rio Grande Railroad 1904, 17).

The San Luis Valley has a distinctive identity based on its location, landscape, and cultural history. The valley is one of Colorado’s mountain parks, high altitude grassy basins enclosed by forested mountains. Though arid, mountain streams provide water to the parks. This environment is ideal for grazing. Before becoming key to Colorado’s ranching industry, the mountain parks were used by nomadic hunters such as the Apache, Kiowa, and Ute, who depended on their abundant wildlife.

The Valley consists of four distinctive geologic divisions, the Alamosa Basin, the San Luis Hills, the Costilla Plains and the Culebra reentrant. The Baca Ranch is located in the Alamosa Basin, a large alluvial fan of the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande’s headwaters are located in the southern valley, while the northern valley is a closed basin from which no water drains. Two large perennial streams, Saguache Creek and San Luis Creek, cross the northern Alamosa Basin. Artesian water wells are common in the San Luis Valley and are found throughout the Baca Refuge. Water enters the ground along the alluvial fans at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and accumulates in porous rock layers below the valley surface. Those layers, which are sandwiched between impenetrable clay layers, slope toward the valley floor. Since the water enters the ground at a higher elevation than it comes out, it flows naturally without being pumped. Some of these artesian wells are geothermal.

The San Luis Valley is bordered by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the east and the San Juan Mountains on the west, but open to New Mexico to the south. Due to this geography, the valley has developed in semi-isolation and retained strong ties to New Mexico and Hispano culture. The valley was administered as part of the Spanish, and then Mexican, territory of Nuevo Mexico. Most of the valley’s early settlement was under the Mexican land grant



system. San Luis, Colorado's oldest town, was established in the southern part of the valley in 1851. San Luis was part of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, originally owned by Charles (or Carlos) Beaubien and settled by the fifty families he persuaded to move to the valley. The Sangre de Cristo grant extended from the crest of the Sangre de Cristo Range eastward for around 50 miles and as far south as Taos, New Mexico. Today, the San Luis Valley has the largest native Hispano population in Colorado, including many direct descendants from the original settlers.

Anglo settlers began arriving in the valley following the gold rush of 1859 and increased in number following discoveries of gold in the San Juan Mountains during the 1860s and 1870s. Some came to try mining in the San Luis Valley while others established ranches and farms to supply the prospectors. The valley also attracted land speculators hoping to make a profit on a land rush or mining boom. The new arrivals looked for land along waterways and avoided the drier parts of the valley. By 1870, the population of the valley was close to 5,000 with around sixty percent Hispanos from New Mexico (Wycoff 1999, 193). The following decades saw increased commercial development of agriculture in the region with extensive irrigation development. Early production focused on wheat, barley, oats, hay, field peas, clover, and alfalfa. Some early farmers attempted dryland farming, but they soon realized that irrigation was essential to crop production in the valley. Potatoes were introduced in the late nineteenth century and found to be ideally suited to the valley's warm sunny days and cool nights. Today the primary crops are potatoes, alfalfa, hay, barley, and wheat. Vegetable crops including spinach, lettuce, and carrots are also produced. Stock raising continues in the valley, but the expansive spreads of the past are gone and stock is raised on smaller farms and ranches.

The Baca National Wildlife Refuge is located within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, which was designated in 2009. The heritage area celebrates four themes that reflect the history of the San Luis Valley:



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Pure Bred Place.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge access road.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge with the Sangre de Cristo mountains in the background.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Fall 2012.

- The unique geography and biodiversity of the valley which has been created by the delicate interplay of wind, water and sand
- The importance of the valley as a seasonal hunting ground providing abundant water and wildlife to prehistoric and Native American cultures from more than 11,000 years
- The valley's role as a historic crossroads that saw the interweaving of peoples and traditions over thousands of years, including the intermingled traditions of Hispanos, Native Americans, Mormons, Amish, Japanese-Americans and Anglos
- As a center of Hispano culture, folklore, religion and language within Colorado

Although currently closed to the public, the Refuge, once opened, will be a contributing feature of the heritage area.

### **Baca Ranch/ Baca National Wildlife Refuge**

The Baca National Wildlife Refuge consists of more than 92,500 acres in the northern San Luis Valley, including land in Saguache and Alamosa Counties. Authorized in 2000, the Baca National Wildlife Refuge is administered by the USFWS, Department of the Interior. The Refuge boundary includes most of the Luis Maria Baca Grant No. 4, later known as the Baca Ranch. The primary land uses on the Baca Grant have been livestock grazing (mainly cattle with some sheep) and irrigated agriculture (hay and other forage). Mining also occurred on the Baca Grant, but primarily on the eastern edge of the grant, which is not part of the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The USFWS has continued to carry out some livestock grazing and irrigated hay production on the former ranch land as part of the land management of the refuge.

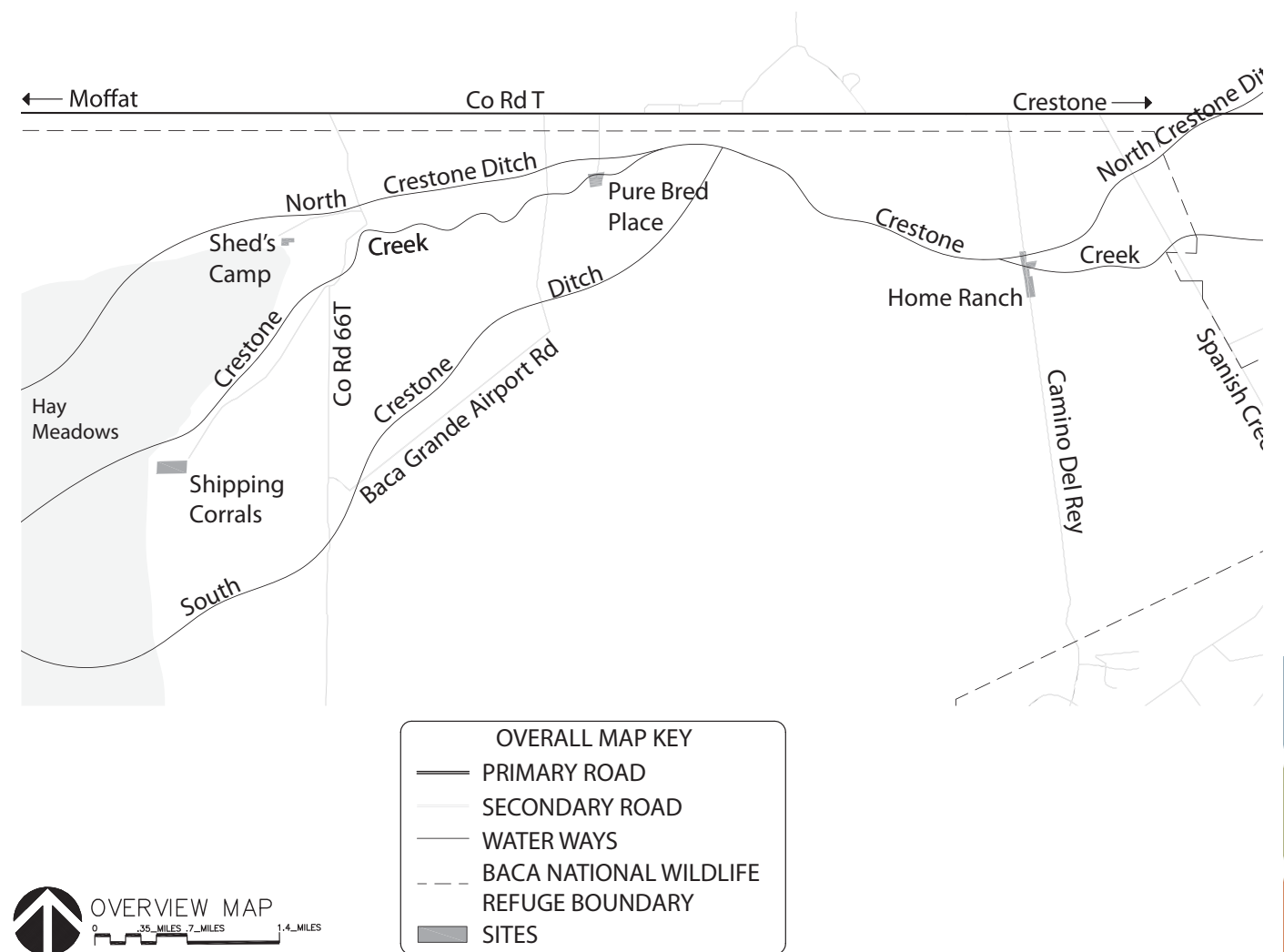
The authorizing legislation focused on protecting the region's hydrology as well as its ecological, cultural, and wildlife resources. The purpose of the Refuge is "to restore, enhance and maintain wetland, upland, riparian and other habitats for wildlife, plants and fish species

that are native to the San Luis Valley, Colorado. Management of the refuge will emphasize migratory bird conservation and will consider the refuge's role in broader landscape conservation efforts" (USFWS 2005). Other conservation entities, including The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, the Forest Service, and the Colorado State Land Board, own much of the surrounding land. These lands, totaling more than 500,000 acres, contain one of the largest and most diverse collections of wetland habitats remaining in Colorado.

Though located in a high altitude desert, which only receives an average of seven inches of rain per year, numerous mountain streams flow and aquifer fed artisan wells provide water to support a wide variety of plant and animal life. The elevation of the relatively level valley floor averages 7,500 feet. The refuge is located near the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, which rise quickly to more than 14,000 feet.

The Refuge contains a diverse mix of habitats including shrublands, grasslands, wet meadows, playa wetlands, and riparian areas. The shrublands and grasslands are widespread in the dry areas of the refuge. The dominate vegetation in the shrublands include rabbitbrush, greasewood, four-wing saltbrush, shadscale, and winterfat and take up approximately 77 percent, or over 71,700 acres of the refuge. Greasewood thrives where the water table is shallow and covers most of the floor of the valley. Native grasses include Indian ricegrass, alkali sacaton, western wheatgrass, and blue grama. These grasses are abundant due to being drought resistant and tolerant to a range of soil salinity. Bunchgrasses like alkali sacaton are resistant to close grazing and trampling and provides good forage for cattle. Wheatgrass is most common on moist, clay soils but can tolerate alkali and drought. It provides highly nutritious forage for cattle and sheep and remains green for a long time. Some invasive plants have also entered the area including Canada thistle, tall whitetop, Russian knapweed, and salt cedar. Wet meadows cover over 10,000 acres of the refuge and are more prominent in the central and northwestern portion as well as the southeast portion along the Sand Creek and the Big Spring Creek. Playa wetlands are located to the west of the wet meadows along the Saguache and San Luis Creeks. In the wetlands, a variety of greasewood, rabbitbrush, saltgrass, and wheatgrass thrive. The riparian areas go long seven main creeks, North Crestone, South Crestone, Willow, Spanish, Cottonwood, Deadman, and Sand Creeks that run north to south and flow from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Riparian habitats are rich with trees, particularly narrowleaf cottonwood and red-osier dogwood, and shrubs.

Species common to the refuge include large mammals such as elk and bison along with small mammals such as the silky pocket mouse and the thirteen-lined ground squirrel. Bird densities are limited by the often sparse vegetation, but include horned lark, mourning dove, western meadowlark, loggerhead shrike, the burrowing owl, mountain plover, long-billed curlew, and several sparrow species. Throughout the wetlands, numerous species of waterfowl can be found including the sora, the Virginia rail, white-faces ibis, American avocet, Wilson's snipe, Wilson's phalarope, and sandhill cranes.







## Research Design and Methodology

### Previous Surveys and Designations

The Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place have not been previously surveyed, though USFWS staff Ernie Husmann and Meg Van Ness completed an internal engineering and cultural resource review of the complexes in September 2007. The report included a brief description of buildings, an assessment of condition, and recommendations for preservation, rehabilitation, or removal. Recommendations for the Home Ranch included the potential restoration/renovation of the main house, office/bunkhouse, feed and seed storage building, equipment storage and tack building, and barn. The removal of the headquarters/office and bunkhouse was advised. The north house, Butler building, lambing sheds, garage/bunkhouse, and pump house were not included in the report. Recommendations for the Pure Bred Place included the preservation of the auction barn and further evaluation of the house, garage, ranch barn/loafing shed, storage building/ pigeon coop, and horse/mule barn to determine significance and future use before investing in repairs. The removal of the storage building (possibly used for meat processing) was recommended due to its poor condition. The modular residence was also determined to be in poor condition and its replacement was suggested. The Butler building was determined to be in good condition with no action needed. The grain bin, trailers, and corrals were not included in the report.

A COMPASS search revealed that cultural resources surveys were conducted elsewhere on the refuge in 2006 and 2007 as part of compliance for proposed mineral exploration. Identified resources included prehistoric lithic scatters and irrigation canals and ditches. An excerpt from the report can be found in Appendix A. The only other property surveyed within the refuge was the White Ranch (5SH.1484) property, which was surveyed in 1995 (Mabry et al. 1997). The White Ranch is located outside the boundaries of the Baca Grant. The survey was focused on prehistoric archaeology and recorded 64 new sites, two previously known sites, and 83 isolated finds, many of which were recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The ranch's building complex was not determined eligible.

The Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place are located in Saguache County and several other ranches within the county have been surveyed: Cochetopa Canyon Ranch (5SH.1223), Long Gulch Ranch (5SH.1228), the previously mentioned White Ranch (5SH.1484), and the Jose Prudencio Garcia Homestead/ Coleman Ranch (5SH.1906). None of these properties were

determined eligible for listing on the National Register. Nine sites in Saguache County have been listed on the National Register, but none are directly related to the region's agricultural history: Carnero Creek Pictographs (5SH.48), Crestone School (5SH.1014), First Baptist Church of Moffat (5SH.1020), Indian Grove (5SH.1035), Old Agency Fortified Site (5SH.49), Saguache Flour Mill (5SH.408), Saguache School and Jail Buildings (5SH.3633) and Sargents Water Tank, Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Western Line (5SH.3633). Five properties in Saguache County are listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places: Dunn's Block / Means & Ashley Mercantile Company (5SH.1901), Saguache County Courthouse (5SH.1392), Saguache Elementary School (5SH.1393), St. Agnes Mission Church (5SH.1658) and Sargents Schoolhouse (5SH.1485).

The closest comparable National Register listed properties to the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place would be the Medano Ranch Headquarters (5AL.301), Trujillo Homestead (5AL.706), and the Zapata Ranch Headquarters (5AL.297) in Alamosa County. These ranches were all established in the 1870s, like the Baca Ranch, and illustrate the development of cattle raising in the San Luis Valley. These properties are all owned by the Nature Conservancy.

### Research

Project research was completed by Abbey Christman, Melanie Short and Sarah Rosenberg. The project began with general background research to place the property in context including the Baca Grant, San Luis Valley agricultural, ranching, and mining history, and the creation of the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. Melanie Short then focused on the detailed history of the development of the Baca Ranch while Abbey Christman focused on placing the ranch within the larger context of agricultural development in the San Luis Valley, the settlement of Saguache County, and the evolution of the ranching industry in Colorado. Since the mining operations on the Baca Grant/ Baca Ranch were found to be located outside the current refuge boundaries, no additional research related to the mining context of the region was completed though more information is available. Some context for the Hispano history and culture of the San Luis Valley was provided but this was limited since the Hispano settlement and influence was much more dominant in the southern portion of the valley than in the northern portion where the Baca Ranch is located.

Research locations included the Western History and Genealogy Department at the Denver Public Library, the Stephen Hart Library at History Colorado, and the Auraria Library Archives. The Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection was also referenced for primary source accounts of the happenings on the grant from 1872 to 1951. Historic photographs were located in the Western History and Genealogy Department digital collection, as well as in some of the books, brochures, and maps referenced in the report bibliography. These have been included in the report for reference.

A search of the property location was performed in the General Land Office (GLO) records available through the Bureau of Land Management's website (<http://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/>). The GLO record indicates that the patent for the land wasn't acknowledged by the US Government until 1900, although other records indicate that the land was granted in 1860 by the Mexican Government to Luis Maria Baca. The BLM serial number for this entry is COCOAA 036194. The property is one of a few in Colorado that is not a part of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). According to the [nationalatlas.gov](http://nationalatlas.gov) webpage:

"Certain lands were excluded from the public domain and were not subject to survey and disposal. These lands include the beds of navigable bodies of water, national installations such as military reservations and national parks, and areas such as land grants that had already passed to private ownership prior to subdivision by the Government. France, Spain, and Mexico all conferred land grants in territory they claimed; many of these grants were confirmed by the U.S Government when the territory in which they were situated was acquired by the United States, and the land was then excluded from the public domain."

The survey team also used Ancestry.com to retrieve U.S. census records available related to the ranch owners and managers. Information available through census records included year of birth, place of birth, family members, occupation, county of residence and others living at the same address. This information was used to correlate the ownership information from other sources.

Oral history of the ranch was provided by Ron Garcia, and included information he had collected through conversations with locals, some of whom had worked on the ranch. Jim McCalpin of the Crestone Historical Museum also provided suggestions for research.

The major research issue encountered was considerable contradictions in the early accounts of the development of the ranch. Dates of buildings, ownership records, and dates of other development varied across the newspapers, first-hand accounts, later publications, and USFWS records. The survey team attempted to the best of their ability to use information which had confirmation from more than one source, or noted within the text that these contradictions occurred. Much of the information discovered was anecdotal and not published or self-published, which also makes verification challenging.

### Survey Methodology

All survey work was completed in accordance with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation's Colorado Cultural Resources Survey Manual (2007). Intensive-level surveys were completed for the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place. Survey boundaries were drawn



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Pure Bred Place complex.

to include all visible built features associated with the complexes. Whenever possible the survey boundaries followed existing fence lines. The survey included an architectural and landscape evaluation; no archaeology was included in the project. The survey team included an architectural historian (Abbey Christman) and an historic preservation architect (Melanie Short). The Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place were each evaluated as historic districts; each building within the potential districts was also evaluated for individual eligibility. Each complex was recorded on an Architectural Inventory 1403 form.

The biggest survey challenge was determining building construction dates. The survey team combined a visual analysis of building materials and construction methods with their knowledge of Colorado vernacular architecture and available research materials to establish a likely date of construction for each building. Several sources were utilized. The primary source was USFWS building files. However, the original source of these dates is not known, and the internal cultural resources review completed by the USFSW questioned the veracity of some of these dates. The survey team used these dates when there was no conflicting building evidence or research materials. Key sources for alternate information on the construction and development of the ranch complexes were R. Shellabarger's notes about the Baca grant written in 1949 and a term paper by Ms. Evelyn D. Mayer written in 1938 which detailed the history of the Baca Ranch.

A reconnaissance-level survey of the landscape immediately surrounding the two complexes as well as six surviving cattle camps was conducted in order to determine the potential eligibility to include the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place within a larger Baca Ranch Rural Historic Landscape district. A Historic Cultural Landscapes 1404 form was completed.

### Photography

Photography was taken by Abbey Christman and Melanie Short using digital cameras. The photographs used in the survey report are from both photographers. Selected photographs were printed on black and white paper and placed in archival sleeves to accompany the inventory forms.

### Mapping

Field measurements were taken with a rolling tape measure and handheld tape measure. These measurements were used to develop site maps for the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place in AutoCAD 2013. Google Earth and USGS topographic maps were used identify and map landscape features. During the reconnaissance-level survey, a hand held GPS was used to record the location of the cattle camps. The UTM locations were verified using Google Earth. This location information along with landscape and road features obtained from Google Earth and USGS topographic maps was used to create an overview map of the refuge in AutoCAD. A more detailed map showing northern end of the refuge and the land immediately surrounding the Home Ranch and Pure Bred Place was also produced. Sketch maps for each of the camps were also produced in AutoCAD. No field measurements were taken of the camps; the maps are based on Google Earth imagery.

### Graphic Design

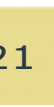
The survey report was designed using Adobe InDesign. Graphic design was done by Melanie Short and Sarah Rosenberg.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge bunkhouse at the Home Ranch complex.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Home Ranch barn.





## Historic Contexts

The Baca Ranch, once known as the Crestone Estate, has both an exceptional history and one that reflects trends in regional and Colorado agriculture. The most outstanding feature is its continuity, retaining its size, agricultural use, and water rights for more than 150 years. It also contains an exceptional mix of ecosystems, combining irrigated hay meadows with dry pastures. But the factors influencing the development of ranching on the Baca Ranch are those that impacted ranchers across the state including demand for beef, access to markets, access to water, outside investment in ranching, and evolving agricultural practices.

### **Development of the Ranching Industry in Colorado**

In 1858, William Green Russell found traces of gold at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, where Denver City was soon established. News of the discovery spread quickly, inspiring prospectors to rush to the Rockies. Denver City's placer deposits proved disappointing, and the search for gold soon extended west into the mountains, with discoveries in Gilpin County, Clear Creek County, and Park County. Denver City soon evolved from a mining camp to a transportation and supply center.

The development of the ranching industry in Colorado followed quickly on the heels of the mining industry. There was a high demand for meat in the mining camps. Some miners turned to ranching after their prospecting attempts were unsuccessful. Others saw the potential to make a profit in supplying prospectors. Early ranchers found Colorado to be ideal for stock raising. Though much of the states' rugged and semi-arid landscape was unsuitable for farming, it could provide nutritious grazing for livestock. Much of the natural prairie grass was buffalo grass or grama grass. These short hardy grasses could withstand trampling and drought and provide winter forage even when dormant. Colorado's climate was generally mild enough that cattle could be left out on the range during the winter, though blizzards were always a threat.

Publications promoting Colorado soon lauded the state's stock raising potential along with its mineral wealth. Colorado was celebrated as the land of free grass, with vast ranges of public, unclaimed lands available to any rancher who wanted to use them. The quality of the state's forage and hay was also praised. Open Range ranching was promoted as a relatively easy way to make a profit:

"Stock growing in Colorado has ever been a sure and remunerative avocation. It has grown in proportions until hundreds of thousands of cattle and sheep are shipped eastward or to the mountains annually. But little care or expense is incurred in this business. The expense of shepherds is small as they are not required in winter. At that season stock was usually allowed to roam at will, on the vast pastoral lands of the plains, and thrive and grow fat on the nutritious grasses that there abound" (Fossett 1871, 444).

Many of Colorado's settlers were drawn by its advertisement as a health destination. The health benefits of abundant sunshine, high altitude, and dry air were widely praised, especially for those suffering from respiratory ailments. These benefits were also believed to extend to the livestock bred and raised in Colorado, producing livestock with larger hearts and lungs and less disease.

The Open Range era in Colorado flourished from the 1860s until the early 1890s. Cowboys began trailing through the state in 1859, bringing herds from Texas to Colorado for fattening. The Goodnight-Loving Trail was developed, herding cattle across the plains of eastern Colorado and up to Cheyenne, Wyoming. Colorado ranches were also established to take advantage of the vast ranges. Early ranchers acquired land with reliable water sources by homesteading or purchase and could then use adjacent unclaimed lands for additional grazing land. Cattle were fed on green grass during the summer and dormant forage during the winter, with cowboys moving them between ranges, generally higher mountain ranges in the summer and the plains in the winter. On the lands of the public domain, it was not uncommon for cattle from various operations to mingle. To distinguish them, cattlemen used a system of brands in which a symbol specific to each ranch was burned onto the hides of that ranch's cattle. Brands were designed so that reading them was a specific skill: It was said that in the early days of the open range, cowboys who could neither read nor write could nevertheless read brands. In the spring, cowboys convened their herds and branded the steers and heifers that were no longer small enough to be identified with their mothers. Steers were also castrated at this time, making them easier to handle. Ranches became known by their brands.

The early cattle in Colorado were primarily Texas longhorns, and there was little concern for breeding or quality. Open range also resulted in over grazing as there was no range management or incentive for conserving rangelands that were open to anyone to use. In 1867, ranchers formed the Colorado Stockgrower's Association to establish brand inspection and advocate for better range management. The cattle industry got a boost with the arrival of the railroad in Denver in 1870. Access to rail lines for shipping opened up new markets for ranchers, making ranching more profitable and convenient. During the 1880s, the cattle business became more established and corporate ranching was introduced. Ranchers also started fencing their land (utilizing barbed wire that was just becoming available) to protect their claims to land and water.

Ranching was a risky venture with blizzards, droughts, disease, thieves, and predators threatening livestock and unstable prices threatening profits. However, several outstanding individuals, dubbed cattle barons, found great success. John Wesley Iliff came to Colorado with the Gold Rush of 1859, opening a general store in Denver. He sold the store a couple years later, established a ranch on the South Platte River, and began building a cattle herd. Iliff's operation grew quickly, selling cattle to the government to supply army forts and to the railroad

for construction crews. Iliff's ranch holding eventually grew to include a hundred miles of land along the South Platte River from Julesburg to Greeley. John Wesley Prowers first came to Colorado working as a freighter on the Santa Fe Trail. He started his cattle operation in 1862, importing cattle from Kansas. Prowers became a successful stock raiser and dealer, importing Hereford cattle to improve his herd's breeding. He eventually acquired more than forty miles of river frontage, controlling enough grazing land to support a herd of 10,000. The success of Iliff and Prowers inspired many to try ranching which likely included George Adams who developed the Baca Ranch. The Colorado ranching industry also began attracting East Coast and foreign investors. The Prairie Cattle Company was organized in Scotland in 1880, which established headquarters in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, holding more than five million acres.

Open Range ranching came to an end in the 1890s as the amount of available grazing land declined. There was increasing competition for grazing land, leading to overgrazing and overstocking. The depletion of pasturage led cattlemen to dump their livestock on the market, quickly depleting prices. Finally, the Panic of 1893 drove the price of beef down and drove the cost of producing it up. Ranchers were also in competition with homesteaders, who were claiming and fencing land previously used for grazing. The construction of new irrigation systems for farming also obstructed the movement of cattle.

The 1890s was an important decade for the development of Colorado's ranching industry as it transitioned from Open Range into more closely managed herds. Cowboys and cattle barons were replaced by stockmen and farmers. With the amount of open range decreasing, ranchers began enclosing cattle during the winter and providing supplementary feed. The trend was towards smaller herds and improved breeding. Longhorns were replaced by Herefords, Shorthorns, and Polled Angus. Herefords became the most popular range breed, praised for their hardiness and ability to mature and put on weight quickly. Some ranchers specialized with purebred herds that could be sold as breeding stock, while others just worked to improve the quality of their range stock through interbreeding.

Several types of cattle operations developed. The most common was cow-calf with the ranchers maintaining a permanent herd of cows to produce calves for later sale. The ranch herds consisted mostly of adult female cows, their calves, and young female heifers that would produce calves when they reach breeding age. Calves were often sold when weaned, though some ranchers raised them longer. Other operations focused feeding rather than breeding. Some ranchers purchased calves and grazed them for a year or two before selling them on as feeders for further fattening. Others purchased feeders and finished them for slaughter. Several factors influenced the type of operation. The conditions for cow-calf operations were more favorable in southern and eastern Colorado where the temperatures are likely to be better when the calves are born and there is less likelihood of heavy snows. The size of the property and availability of grazing land either on the farm or nearby was also important, especially for cow-calf operations which generally primarily depend on grazing. The local availability of feed, either from hay meadows or nearby farms, could make feeding cattle more attractive.

In the early twentieth century, ranching increasingly emphasized effective range management. In 1906, the U.S. Forest Service began charging fees for grazing within the newly established National Forests in an effort to prevent overgrazing on federal lands. New extension programs studied grazing practices and published bulletins with recommendations to prevent overgrazing. Technological improvements allowing for the inexpensive, mass-produced of barbed wire and windmills were critical to this. Barbed wire, invented in the early 1870s, was an efficient way of fencing in areas where wood posts and rails were too expensive or largely unavailable. Although in the days of the open range, ranchers had understood barbed wire as "the Devil's Rope," used by homesteaders to fence cattle out of their crops. This divided



the range and homesteaders later fenced their own holdings, not just their water sources, in order to keep their privately held grazing land to themselves. The second innovation, the windmill, allowed ranchers to access underground aquifers and fill stock ponds and tanks for watering livestock.

To offset the diminished access to and reduced viability of public lands, some of the more successful ranchers expanded their holdings by buying out failed homesteaders. But the massive (more than a million acres) ranches of the nineteenth century were mainly a thing of the past. Agricultural products were in high demand during World War I, but after the war there was a glut and prices collapsed, resulting in the sale and division of ranches. By the 1920s, the majority of beef produced in Colorado was actually produced by ranchers with no more than 150 head of cattle or famers raising cattle in addition to crops.

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 created public grazing districts, allowing local ranchers to lease public lands by purchasing permits. The Taylor Grazing Act's regulations aimed to restore the depleted range by dictating grazing seasons and pasture rotation. It also stipulated that public grazing leases preferably should be given to ranchers who owned, homesteaded, or leased privately held land contiguous with the public land, thereby preserving public lands for use by local ranchers. Although some ranchers opposed the idea that the federal government could regulate their use of public lands, many western ranchers themselves were the strongest supporters of the Taylor Grazing Act. They knew that sustainable use depended on controlled access to the public domain; ranching had no future without stewardship of the land.

### **Ranching in Colorado's Mountain Parks**

Ranching thrived in Colorado's mountain parks. These high altitude basins consist of mostly treeless plains surrounding by forested mountains. Ranching developed in these areas in conjunction with mining; ranchers initially supplied mining camps and were later able to ship further when railroads were built to the mines. Though the parks were semi-arid, mountain streams provided water for irrigation. Irrigated meadows were an essential feature of the ranch operations. Irrigation systems were generally simple, developed and constructed by ranchers. Water was diverted from streams into earthen canals via simple diversion structures and head gates. The earliest settlers had the advantage when it came to acquiring irrigation water since Colorado water law is based on "first in time, first in right." The first water user acquires a prioritized right to use a set amount of water and they can obtain that water before anyone with later water rights. In order to establish and maintain a water right, a water user had to demonstrate an intent to use the water, establish a physical diversion to carry water from the natural watercourse, and put the water to beneficial use.

Irrigated hay meadows furnished hay for winter feeding as well as grazing. Cattle grazed on the hay meadows in the spring. Branch canals carried the water to irrigation ditches and water was then spread onto meadows via flooding. Irrigation began after the cattle were moved to semi-arid pastures. Hay was harvested mid-summer, and cattle could be grazed on the stubble before being moved to winter pasture.

Cattle in Colorado generally do not need substantial or expensive structures, but they do need some shelter from wind, which can be very strong in the parks. In exposed areas, ranchers needed to construct some form of shelter, such as partial dugouts or loafing sheds. Windbreaks were also planted or constructed.

Ranch tasks included moving cattle between pastures to prevent overgrazing, providing hay to the cattle during the winter, maintaining fences and water sources, branding, and castrating. Though cattle did not need to be as closely watched as sheep, it was generally recommended to check on the herd every two to three days to identify and look after sick or injured cattle.

### **Sheep Raising**

Stock raising in Colorado was not limited to cattle; sheep were also a major industry. Before cattle were introduced from Texas in the era of open range ranching, Hispano settlers moving north from New Mexico onto Mexican grants brought flocks of churro sheep. Sheep operations could be very large, with herders handling 2000 to 3000 sheep. Sheep were also an essential part of the subsistence agriculture practiced in the San Luis Valley. Sheep ranching expanded quickly in Colorado's early decades. In 1868 there were around 300,000 sheep in the state; by 1886 there were two million sheep (Ubbelohde 2001, 173).

Though some ranchers raised both sheep and cattle, there was often tension between sheep and cattle ranchers. As homesteaders claimed lands that had been part of the public domain, competition increased for land. The New Mexican shepherders began to encounter conflicts with Anglo-American cattle ranchers. In the early 1880s, many Hispano shepherders were driven out of the state by Anglo cattlemen who saw sheep as agents of destruction on the land, and who saw Hispano shepherders as somehow foreign, although at that time Hispanos established successful cattle operations and worked alongside Anglo cattlemen throughout the region. The sheep raisers' persistence, combined with steady markets and the compatibility of sheep with the native grasses on the range, kept sheep raising strong in the area. Sheep proved more likely to survive the extreme weather conditions than cattle, and the industry persisted even after the harsh winters of 1886 and 1887.

The sheep industry was hampered by the depression of wool prices in the late 1880s and early 1890s, due first to an economic downturn and later to the 1894 lifting of wool tariffs. After the turn of the twentieth century, the sheep industry—although still viable—experienced a long lull in growth. Nationally, the number of sheep dropped from a high of 54 million in 1884 to 37 million head in 1923. The industry bounced back, however, and an all-time high of 56 million head nationally was reached in 1942, in response to the United States military's demand for meat to feed the troops during World War II. Following the Second World War, however, a confluence of events led to the decline of the sheep industry and by 2007 the national sheep inventory was only 6.2 million. This loss has been attributed to many factors, among them shifting consumer trends and preferences, increased competition from foreign wool production, and changes in subsidy and incentive payment programs. Locally, many ranchers abandoned sheep because of difficulty finding herders.

### **The San Luis Valley**

Located in Southern Colorado, the San Luis Valley is a mountain park roughly sixty miles wide and a hundred miles long. The elevation in the park averages 7,500 feet high, with the peaks of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain to the east rising more than 14,000 feet, the Sawatch Mountains lie to the west. The valley is a desert receiving less than eight inches of rain per year, though run off from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains supports irrigation in the valley. Even railroad promotional brochures felt that potential settlers needed to be prepared for the sparse vegetation:

"The Eastern settler who reaches this place expecting to see a vast plain covered with green grass and blooming flowers will find himself disappointed. On the river and creek bottoms and in places along the foothills, the grasses do grow naturally and luxuriantly, furnishing nutritious food for stock the year round. But on the plains or prairies there is no grass to speak of, and the natural production is grease wood and chico—a kind of evergreen shrub growing from a few inches to three or four feet in height" (Denver and Rio Grande Railroad 1904, 21).

Saguache County, where the Baca Ranch is located, lies at the northern end of the valley. The county was created in 1866 and its early settlers were primarily prospectors and cattlemen. In 1871, Saguache County was described as the most sparsely settled county in the territory, though one likely to start attracting more attention:

“It is a fertile and finely watered region, and offers inducements for stock raisers and farmers, elsewhere unequalled. Its valleys are great natural meadows, covered with the richest vegetation, and its table lands afford the finest natural pasture lands in the world. The mountain scenery, hemming it in on three sides, is grand in the extreme” (Wallihan 1871, 58).

Nineteenth century settlements included the county seat of Saguache; the mining towns of Bonanza, Orient City, and Crestone; and Moffat, which served as a transportation and supply center. The mining efforts in the county made some profits, but never the celebrated success of other regions of Colorado. Orient City was devoted to iron mining while other settlements were focused around gold and silver mining.

**Hispano Heritage**

The San Luis Valley retains a strong Hispano heritage. Ethnicity is important to consider when describing the history of a region because it tells us much about the ways people create and use the resources at their disposal. As different groups encountered one another, they often incorporated ways of living from other cultures into their own, blending building methods, foodways, and clothing styles.

Southern Colorado has long been a borderland. It was part of Mexico until 1846, when the U.S. acquired it during the Mexican American War. The San Luis Valley was initially organized into the New Mexico Territory, but became part of the Colorado Territory when it was established in 1861. Hispanos from New Mexico were the valley’s first settlers. In order to encourage settlement of its northern frontier the Mexican government offered large land grants to



Range Cattle c.1930; L. C. McClure Collection 1890-1935; DPL #MCC-3107



Don Luis Maria Baca Ranch c.1930; L. C. McClure Collection 1890-1935; DPL #MCC-4152



Water Trough c.1930; L. C. McClure Collection 1890-1935; DPL #MCC-31062012

individuals who would promise to improve, develop, and defend the land. The patron, or principal land owner, then recruited groups of settlers. Soon nodes of New Mexican settlers moved into southern Colorado, establishing small village-like settlements known as “plazas,” in which an extended family and other associated families occupied a series of rooms and dwellings around a central open area. Plaza residents farmed communally, employing a widely varied approach to making a living from the land that included raising sheep and farming melons, beans, pumpkins, and chilies. The Baca Grant, however, was not a typical land grant and was never settled under this system. The Baca Grant was awarded to settle a dispute over a grant awarded to Luis Baca in New Mexico. It was created from public lands in 1860.

Prior to the gold rush, the San Luis Valley had the largest non-Native American population in what would become the Colorado Territory. In 1870, approximately sixty percent of San Luis Valley residents were from New Mexico. The influence of the Hispano heritage can be seen in the architecture and culture of the San Luis Valley. Settlers brought traditional construction methods such as adobe. Developed in a similar climate, these methods were also well-suited to the San Luis Valley. Adobe construction techniques in the southwestern United States combined Native American (Pueblo) and Spanish traditions. Adobe is a natural building material made from a mix of sand, clay, water and some kind of fibrous or organic material, commonly straw or sticks. Wooden molds are used to create uniform adobe bricks. After shaping, the wet adobe is left in the sun for a couple weeks to dry and is then ready to use. The availability, durability, and warmth of adobe structures made adobe an attractive choice for settlers. If properly cared for with regular repair and re-plastering, adobe structures can stand for hundreds of years. Used as mortar for stone buildings, applied as stucco, or shaped into blocks and dried under the sun, adobe became a common building material throughout southern Colorado in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

This heritage can be seen in several adobe buildings at the Baca Ranch headquarters. In 1881, Crofutt’s Grip Sack Guide described the residents of Saguache County as about half Spanish-Mexicans who lived in adobe houses. The guide describes the Baca Ranch as a place “where sheep and cattle range at will, the care of which is the principal occupation of the few settlers, most of whom are Spanish-Mexicans” (Crofutt 1881, 139).



Cattle on the Range c.1930; L. C. McClure Collection 1890-1935; DPL #MCC-3106



## Development of the San Luis Valley

The potential of the San Luis Valley was debated in the early years of the Colorado Territory, with some believing that irrigation could make the desert productive while others remained skeptical. Despite the skepticism, the Valley soon drew the attention of land speculators and investors, such as William Gilpin who purchased the Sangre de Cristo land grant in 1863. Many hoped to find mineral riches but there was also increased agricultural development as the economy began to transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture. The many mining camps and new towns springing up across Colorado provided demanding markets for grain, meat, and wool. Agricultural settlement remained focused along waterways in the bottomlands. George Adams, who would later purchase the Baca Grant, came to Colorado in 1869. After trying prospecting unsuccessfully, he decided to homestead in the San Luis Valley. He claimed land on Rito Alto Creek (about four miles northeast of Crestone) around 1870. He began leasing the Baca Grant for grazing in 1871. During the early 1870s, the grant was the focus of real estate speculation, transferring between various property owners. Prospectors also started squatting on the grant and began mining operations. But the population was still sparse. In 1871, the Rocky Mountain Directory and Colorado Gazetteer described Saguache County:

"The population of Saguache, chiefly adventurous Americans, with their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, numbers between 300 and 400. A few are engaged in cultivating vegetables and the cereals, and find ready market for their produce in the mining settlements along the upper Arkansas, etc. It is a beautiful county, and cannot fail to be densely populated at no distant day" (Wallihan 1871, 59).

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad arrived in the valley in 1877. The railroad ran from Fort Garland to Alamosa on to Antonito and then branched to go south to New Mexico or west to Durango. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was first established by Colonel William Palmer, who completed a north-south line from Denver to Pueblo in 1872. In the nineteenth-century American West, the railroads were the primary agents of modernity, forever changing the ways the citizens of the new country lived. The relationship between railways and settlements was reciprocal: railroad companies fed the growth of existing settlements by bringing goods and services, but they also platted and named towns where previously there were none in order to serve their stations. Railroads also brought increased standardization of the built environment, making milled lumber and other building materials more readily available.

During the 1870s, Anglo-American settlement in the valley increased. The region was promoted for its healthy climate, grand scenery, and development potential. A combination of settlement patterns developed with Hispano plazas interspersed with railroad towns and real estate developments. New settlers homesteaded, bought state land or purchased from earlier settlers. The Hispano influence remained strongest in the southern San Luis Valley while the northern valley became more Anglicized. Commercial agriculture continued to expand, assisted by the new market connections offered by the railroad. The 1870s saw increased irrigation development and more commercial crops. Irrigation was promoted as a way to defy drought and have a good harvest guaranteed:

"Here is the beauty of irrigation farming. No fear of wet or dry weather. The farmer doesn't care for the weather, be it one way or the other. He has in his own control all the elements of growth; and though it may be somewhat more of trouble than a natural rainfall, yet he is always sure of returns if he knows his own business and attends to it properly" (Denver and Rio Grande Railroad 1904, 21).

Artesian wells were dug to access underground aquifers for irrigation. Promoters ignored the possibility of freezing weather or hail to destroy crops or that droughts could result in a lack of water in the streams used for irrigation and lower water tables. Hispano settlers increased the size of their sheep herds and Anglo-Americans introduced cattle herds. Dryland wheat farming was also attempted. Miners heading to the gold rush in the San Juan Mountains created a demand for food.

During the 1880s and 1890s, irrigated agriculture continued to expand, becoming key to both crop and livestock production in the valley. Wheat, barley and oats were the dominant food crops while irrigated hay was supplemented with sweet clover and alfalfa. By 1891, there were 74,400 acres under irrigation in Saguache County and 117,075 acres in pasture. There were more than 27,000 head of cattle, 16,000 sheep and 5,000 horses (Union Pacific Railroad 1891, 94). George Adams played an active role in developing the cattle industry in the region through his involvement in the American Hereford Association and Colorado Cattle Growers and tenure on the State Cattle Inspection and Roundup Board. At Adams death in 1904, the ranch herd consisted of 4,000 pure bred and mixed Herefords.

The Valley Line through Saguache County was completed in 1890, stimulating development and connecting Saguache County ranchers to wider markets. The Valley Line crossed Poncha Pass to Villa Grove and then ran south to Alamosa. The railroad stopped at Moffat, which within a few years was described as having "fine depot buildings, a large hotel and a number of mercantile houses" and serving as the "shipping point for stock and produce from the Crestone estate" (Hall 1895, 307).

The Crestone Branch, a 17 mile narrow gauge spur from the Valley Line to Cottonwood, was constructed in 1901 by the Rio Grande Sangre de Cristo Railroad for the D&RG. The primary shipments were copper and precious metals from the Cottonwood mine. The branch did not operate for long; by 1923 it was only running to Crestone and in 1929 the branch was abandoned. The Valley Line ceased operation in 1951. The rail lines and depots in the region generally did business until World War II, after which better roads and increased truck transport weakened the reciprocal relationship between small towns and their railroads.

The early twentieth century saw large scale irrigation development in Alamosa, southern Saguache County, eastern Rio Grande and central Conejos counties. Development patterns reflected the availability of water with denser settlement in the irrigated parts of the valley and sparse settlement in other areas. Adams sold stock in the ranch to the San Luis Valley Land and Mining Company (later the San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Company) in 1900. After Adams death, the company purchased the remaining stock to take over the ranch and leased the land for both cattle and sheep grazing. The Baca Grant Development Company, a subsidiary, developed a scheme to subdivide and sell the ranch, creating a statewide controversy over what was perceived as false promotion.

In the 1930s, Alfred M. Collins, a major stockholder of the San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Company in moved to the ranch to take over operations. He focused on developing the purebred Hereford herd and further developed the ranch through the construction of additional irrigation ditches and artesian wells. The San Luis Valley fared better than much of Colorado during the 1930s, with its irrigated agriculture producing harvest while dryland crops in eastern Colorado failed. The Resettlement Administration moved some failed farmers from the plains to the San Luis Valley.

Surface flood irrigation was the primary method of distributing water to the field during the period from the 1890s to the early 1960s. In the 1960s, center pivot sprinkler systems started to replace most of the surface flood irrigation by tapping the aquifers located beneath



the valley. In 1982, quinoa was successfully grown for the first time outside of South America and has been commercially grown since 1987. Today agriculture is concentrated around the towns of Alamosa, Monte Vista and Center. The crops grown in these fields were mainly potatoes and alfalfa with some lettuce and spinach as secondary crops. These main crops continue to be grown to this day. Ninety percent of the potatoes grown in Colorado are grown in the valley. It is the fourth largest potato growing region in the United States. Alfalfa hay is the second largest dollar producing crop, three cuttings a year are typical. Potatoes, lettuce and spinach are primarily produced for the national market. Alfalfa is grown for the dairy farms in New Mexico and Texas. Malt barley Morovian 14 is grown in the San Luis Valley and is the main supply for Coors beer. Less favored areas with a shorter growing season and less access to water are devoted to alfalfa and grazing. The cattle empires of the late 1800s have given way to smaller ranches and farms. Other enterprises include bee keeping for honey production, tilapia farming and free range bison. By 1950, the valley was served by the Denver Rio Grande Western Railroad, Frontier Airlines, several bus lines and a number of truck lines both scheduled and unscheduled. Transportation continues to play an important role in the valley, bringing in tourist dollars and shipping out the agricultural goods.

**Table of the Agricultural production of Saguache County 1883-1997**

Saguache County	1883	1893	1919	1924	1935	1945	1954	1964	1974	1982	1997
<b>Farms &amp; Farm Operators</b>											
Number of Farms			341	346	697	359	302	237	207	244	248
<b>Farm Acreage, Value, &amp; Land Area</b>											
Approximate Land Area in Acres					2,005,120	2,012,160	2,012,160	2,012,160	2,012,288	2,026,886	
Land in Farms (Acres)							523,685	473,399	485,403	481,541	
Value of Farms Per Acre (In Dollars)					12.97	14.25		61.84	135	567	644
Acres Under Irrigation	32,129	132,980					68,639	101,299	99,140	128,326	207,200
Acres In Pasture	125,046	298,429					28,105	55,083			
<b>Farm Land According to Use</b>											
Hay: Total Acres	11,902	25,383	34,307	69,491		58,512	58,626	40,794	48,611	36,080	77,719
Hay: Total Tons	9,860	22,230				67,215	49,088	50,751	65,130	54,738	139,152
<b>Livestock Amount</b>											
Cattle	13,404	22,207	34,526	32,473	35,173	24,957	32,400	38,053	38,163	32,193	46,308
Horses	1,953	5,024	4,138	2,935	3,452	2,425	1,115		735	770	737
Sheep	19,739	31,792	93,821	39,585	67,802	65,283	61,181	33,619	14,101	7,369	2,512

**Chronological History of the Baca Grant Ownership**

**Luis Maria Baca Grant No. 4**

The origin of the Baca land grant dates to approximately 1823 and was located in northern New Mexico encompassing the modern town of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Luis Maria Cabeza de Baca had applied for the grant, and the provincial deputation of Durango awarded him the land, in 1823. The Baca Grant was ratified to Luis María Baca and his 19 sons in 1825. In 1835, the same tract of land was awarded to Juan de Dios Maiese and 27 others. This caused a dispute when land grant claims were adjudicated under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo after the U.S. took control of the area in 1846. The conflicting claim to the 496,447 acres was settled when the Baca heirs agreed to take an equivalent amount of land in five other parcels. Of the five parcels swapped for the New Mexico land, this 100,000 acre plot of land in the San Luis Valley of Colorado was the fourth and the only one in Colorado territory. Although some sources have the Baca family residing on the land, it appears the Baca family never lived there. Shortly after being awarded the grant, the land was deeded to their lawyer to compensate for back payment of fees. In early 1862, that lawyer, John S. Watts, agreed to sell it to Territorial Governor William Gilpin for the price of thirty cents an acre, to be paid in five annual installments.

**Territorial Governor William Gilpin and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Investors**

Gilpin’s interest in purchasing the Baca Grant and his ownership of a 1/6 share in the neighboring Sangre de Cristo land grant soon attracted the attention of Charles (or Carlos) Beaubien, who offered Gilpin the opportunity in late in 1862 to buy another half interest in the Sangre de Cristo Grant for about four cents an acre, considerably less than the agreed upon Baca price. Payment was to be complete by March 1863, according to the agreement to purchase. Foregoing further attempts to buy the Baca Grant, Gilpin had difficulty in raising even the cash required for the Sangre de Cristo. By late summer of 1863, after traveling from coast to coast in search of investors, Gilpin was able to close the deal. Gilpin eventually gained control of the entire Sangre de Cristo grant (Simmons 1999, 145-146). Watts continued to try and close the Baca deal, offering up deeds in 1864 and 1867, but Gilpin would not complete payment claiming that the deed was defective.

In 1870, the Baca Grant was finally sold to investors in the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) lead by Alexander Hunt, former US Marshall, Territorial Governor, Judge and Territorial treasurer of Colorado Territory. J. H. Hutchinson purchased the grant for outstanding taxes in 1870, but Hunt redeemed the property later in the year and assigned it to David Moffat. In late 1870, David Moffat received the assignment of a Saguache County certificate of tax sale for the property for \$571.20 of unpaid taxes. He later assigned it to Wilson Waddingham, a land owner from New Mexico. Hunt, Moffat and Waddingham were all experienced real estate speculators, so this back and forth assignment must have served some greater purpose for the benefit of all of them.

**George Adams – Millionaire Entrepreneur**

During the 1870s, the D&RG group leased the grant to local ranchers for running cattle. One of these men, George H. Adams, became manager of the estate. By the early 1870s, the grant was being taken over by squatters intent on mining, while small herds of cattle grazed the land. Of several squatters towns, Cottonwood and Duncan were two of the

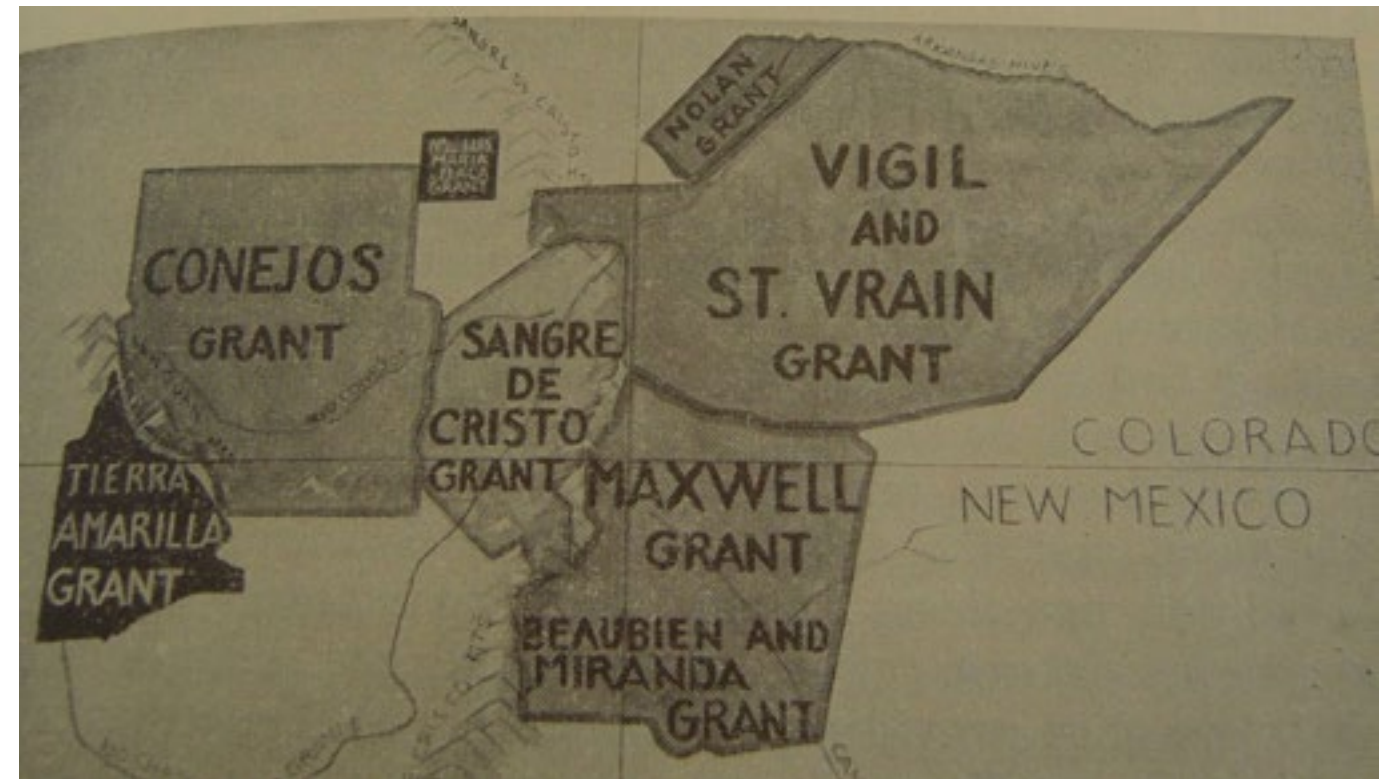


Illustration of Mexican Land Grants in Colorado, from Carr, Ralph L. Private land claims in Colorado. SSER Colorado Magazine: Volume 25, no. 1 (pg. 10-30), 1948.

largest. Cottonwood was established in 1876, and irrigation ditches providing the town with a reliable source for water were dug. In 1877, Gilpin bought the grant from the financially strained D &RG investors now led by Waddingham; he renewed the old cattle lease with Adams but retained all mineral rights, allowing mining to continue and receiving royalties on all minerals extracted. He encouraged further mineral exploration. In 1883, Gilpin mortgaged the grant to Charles B. Kountze, a Denver banker, for \$50,000. In 1884, Gilpin borrowed an additional \$30,000 from him using the grant lands as collateral (Colwell 1959, 260).

George Adams had leased the grant for cattle ranching since 1871. He owned several other properties in the San Luis Valley, both singly and with partners. Adams was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1845. He served in the Army and was honorably discharged in 1865. Returning to Milwaukee, Adams became money receiving clerk for the United States Express Company, which, in 1867, sent him to Kansas as messenger between Kansas City and Fort Ellsworth, the terminus of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. In the spring of 1868 he returned to Milwaukee, where he was superintendent of the Goodrich Express Company until 1869, when he resigned to come to Colorado. The trip was made via Cheyenne to Denver and from there to California Gulch (now Leadville), where he engaged in prospecting for two months, before heading in December to the San Luis Valley. Back in Wisconsin in 1878, Adams married Addie J. Bertschy, of Appleton, Wisconsin. They had one child, Florence P.

When George Adams bought the Baca Grant for \$250,000 in 1885 from Gilpin, he apparently did not have the capitol to close the purchase on his own. He borrowed the \$250,000 from Quincy A. Shaw, a prominent Boston financier and copper mine investor. Adams promptly removed the numerous trespassers and the Baca mining boom abruptly ended. He later attempted his own mining operations with limited success (Simmons 1999, 185). The towns of Cottonwood and Duncan were inside the grant, and their citizens were squatters. Adams contended that he not only owned the land grazing rights, but mineral rights as well. A legal battle over land and mineral rights



The famous Baca land grant: in the sunny San Luis Valley, Colorado. Denver, CO: Clason May Company, 1908.



Clason May Company, 1908.



Clason May Company, 1908.



Bassford. They call it Baca Grant. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1945.

ownership ended up in the courts and the ruling was in favor of Adams and Shaw. In 1887, Adams sold the grant to Shaw for \$100,000, and Shaw returned the grant to Adams via a quit claim deed in 1899. It is unclear exactly how much Shaw and Adams had invested in the property at the time of Adams subsequent sale of the property, but various accounts have him as owner or just as agent for Shaw.

In 1896, George Dimick and Charles Matheson leased the area near Cottonwood from Shaw and proceeded to develop the Independent Mine. This lease was terminated in 1899, but Dimick and Matheson refused to give up the mine and the issue went to court. It was settled in February of 1900 that Dimick and Matheson's lease was valid and they were allowed to continue. In 1900 the citizens of both Cottonwood and Duncan were evicted by U.S. Marshals. Home owners were compensated by the Baca Grant at \$125 for each structure and were subsequently allowed to buy back their homes for \$10 providing that they moved them off the grant. All of Cottonwood's and Duncan's buildings were either razed or moved except for the John Duncan cabin. It was converted for use by the ranch and is now located on U S Forest Service land (Jessen 2011).

Adams made his headquarters at the Home Ranch (Shellabarger 1949, 7). By 1890 the grant had become known as "Crestone Estate" (Simmons 1999, 238). Adams and Isaac Gotthelf, a local entrepreneur and cattle rancher with no known interest in the Baca grant, erected 140 miles of fencing in 1881. This was the first extensive use of barbed wire in the valley. The barbed wire was sourced from Fort Garland and hauled in by George Clark according to Mayer. By 1895, Adams had divided the interior into 8 sections, each of which most likely aligned with one of the cattle camps. (Hall 1895, 307). During the 1880s Adams extensively improved on the natural irrigation features found on the property and dug irrigation ditches, built sheds, corrals and branding chutes, and established eight cattle camps in addition to Home Ranch.

The Sheds, Willow Creek, Cottonwood, Deadman, January and Alpine camps all had families which lived at them at least seasonally according to Sisemore. Adams created 110 miles of irrigation canals and ditches for watering the hay meadows, which equaled 28,000 acres. He dug dozens of artesian wells. These items were called for in the lease which began in 1881 and gave him three years to conduct the improvements (*Colorado Weekly Chieftain*, 1878, 3).

Also a condition of the lease was the construction of a four room adobe house, outbuildings, corrals, granaries, barns and stables, and the planting of shade trees along the north property line (Colwell 1959, 257). Adams interbred his pure bred Hereford cattle with western range cattle to create a hardy, in-demand range animal and also raised purebred Herefords under the LC brand. With mining and ranching combined on the grant, this property became a major asset.

Adams moved to Denver around 1900. According to his obituary, published in one of the Denver papers June 15, 1904, George H. Adams was a millionaire cattleman and owner of the Adams hotel in Denver Colorado.

"A prominent Denver citizen, Mr. Adams' business career consisted of one of the most remarkable instances of the adaptation of Colorado the cattle industry. Embarking in business as a stock-raiser in 1869, he bought the two first thoroughbred Shorthorn bulls ever in the San Luis Valley. He has been a pioneer in the introduction of Herefords, which exclusively stocked his ranch from 1878." (obituary, George H. Adams, on Findagrave.com)

The obituary included a detailed description of Adams ranch, stating that it:

"covered more than four townships of land, embraced twelve and one-half miles and in extent comprised one hundred thousand acres, watered by eleven streams and lakes, and bordering on the western slope of the Sangre de Cristo Range. The entire tract is fenced in pastures with eighty miles of substantial fencing, while one hundred and forty miles of ditches furnish water for the irrigation of hay and the range. The herd consisted of four thousand head of pure-bred and high-grade Hereford cattle in 1904. From the ranch, cattle are sold and shipped to Old Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Oregon, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, Idaho, Kansas and Nebraska for breeding purposes." (IBID)

The obituary also included a long list of achievements and praise for Adams' successes:

"A pioneer in the San Luis Valley, he homesteaded one hundred and sixty acres on Rio (or Rito) Alto Creek and embarked in the stock business. In 1871 he entered the employ of a cattle company as foreman on Baca Grant No. 4, and later became proprietor. In 1878 he brought to his place eighty full-bred Hereford bulls and devoted his attention to the raising of pure-bred and high-grade Herefords. He was a director in the American Hereford Association, was a member of the Colorado Cattle Growers' and National Stock Breeders' Associations, and, under appointment by Governor Pitkin, served for eight years as a member of the State Cattle Inspection and Roundup Boards. In April, 1895, Governor McIntire appointed him president of the board of trustees of the State Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, to serve for six years. In Saguache County he held the office of county clerk for one term and was also justice of the peace and sheriff of the county. By service upon the school board he advanced the educational interests of his community." (IBID)

His place in the history of cattle ranching in Colorado seems secure:

"There have been so many successful cattlemen in Colorado that it may not be considered a more than ordinary statement to speak of Mr. Adams as one of the most successful, as he is also one of the most extensive. But when we consider that he came to the state with comparatively little capital and with no experience in the cattle business, his present position is remarkable. By dint of industry, executive ability and determination, he has risen to rank among the foremost cattle breeders of the state and may appropriately be termed the "Hereford king" of the west." (IBID)

### San Luis Valley Land and Mining Company Era

Adams' exploration in to the mineral discoveries, in addition to the cattle, enhanced the value of the grant enough that he incorporated the grant to cash in on this potential. In 1900, Adams sold 40 percent of the stock in the property to the San Luis Valley Land and Mining Company, (which changed its name to the San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Company (SLVLC) in 1922). It was a subsidiary of the United Gas Improvement Company of Philadelphia, PA. This purchase was negotiated by Shaw. It appears that their interest was primarily in the mineral rights, and Adams continued his interest in the cattle ranching aspects of the grant. Adams and Shaw subsequently attempted to lease a large portion of the mining development rights, giving preference to those who had previously spent money mining the area (Aspen Weekly Times 1901, 4). In 1901, the Rio Grande Sangre de Cristo Railroad constructed a train spur from Moffat to Crestone to facilitate this mining exploration. It is unknown how many of these leases were acted upon.

After Adams' death in 1904, SLVLC purchased the remainder of the property from his wife for the sum of \$1,400,000, although some sources attribute this purchase to the 1900 transaction (Colwell 1959, 261). The SLVLC leased the ranchland to Millet Rhodes & Sloan (1905-1908), Tomkins (variously Thompkins) Cattle Corp. (1908-1916) and Yates & McClain (exact dates unknown) for running cattle. In 1909 Jay. B. Lippincott and Joseph Harrison acquired a controlling interest in SLVLC and developed a subsidiary company by the name of the Baca Grant Development Company and attempted to subdivide the ownership of the ranch into 9,200 contract holders distributed via land auction. These contract holders had the choice to purchase irrigated farm or fruit land, grazing land or timber and mineral land, and for each tract of land purchased, received additional town sites. The land contracts were to be sold for \$249, \$10 down and \$10 a month for 23 months. The whole undertaking was highly controversial and elicited editorials across the state. Critics accused the developers of over-selling the potential of the land, especially with regards to orchards and farming. The land auction never came to pass (Colwell 1959, 270).

The mineral land of the grant extends along the Sangre de Cristo range for 12 miles. The largest mine was the Independent mine, yielding more than \$300,000 in ore by 1908, and in 1908 there were 30 developed and partially developed mining claims in the grant. Placer mining took place for free gold along the south east portion of the grant. Ore ranged in quality greatly and included gold, copper, iron and other base metals. Timber and water needed for successful mining was also found in great abundance. Unfortunately, the cost of extraction was high and refining and smelting were distant and expensive, so the mining attempts were less than successful, and those that produced, did not do so for long.



L. C. McClure collection 1890-1935, Colorado Ranch house on the Baca ranch, c. 1930. DPL #MCC-3108.

## General Managers of the Grant

During this time, while the focus was on mineral extraction, the remainder of the grant was leased to local cattlemen to run cattle (Clason May Co. 1908). P. M. McGeorge was the general manager from 1900 to 1905 after George Adams moved to Denver. He resigned in 1905 and Addie Adams, widow of George Adams, was appointed general manager of the grant from 1905 until around 1909, although she was managing for SLVLC, it is unclear why she returned to the ranch during this time. It is possible that George Adams had retained a partial share in the ranch, but records are unclear. B. F. Tipton managed the ranch for the stockholders of SLVLC, the majority of whom still lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 1910 until his death in 1928. His son, Harry Tipton, managed the grant from that time until 1934. B.F.'s older son, Royce, was the chief engineer of the SLVLC from 1919 to 1922 (<http://www.colorado.edu/engineering>). The Tipton family ran sheep on the ranch during the summer in the rough part of the grant not used by the cattle (Mayer 1938, 8). The sheep were only on the property for several years, they were closed out to make room for the growth of the cattle herds. From 1934 until 1936, the manager of the ranch was Tom Watson. In 1936 Oscar Coleman became the manager. He was followed by Walter Oldland in 1940 and A.C. "Red" Allen in 1942.

## Major Alfred M. Collins

In 1930, Major Alfred M. Collins became an on-site presence and moved into the President's house at Home Ranch. Born in 1876, Collins was a major stockholder in SLVLC due to an inheritance from his father and was a big game hunter, explorer, polo player and horse enthusiast. Upon visiting the Grant in 1929, Collins decided to find his fortune there and returned to Philadelphia to close out his business there. He was fifty-four years old. He had no training in management of a western cattle ranch.

He improved the land over the next ten years and by 1940, Hereford bulls from his herds were increasingly in demand. He oversaw the construction of 150 more miles of irrigation



Bassford. They call it Baca Grant. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1945.



Bassford. Baca grant: fabulous home of history, nationally known commercial and registered Herefords. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1950.



Bassford. Baca grant: fabulous home of history, nationally known commercial and registered Herefords. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1950.

ditches and head gates, dug 600 to 700 foot deep artesian wells, increased the amount and quality of the grass in the hay meadows, and bred for the efficiency of the cattle. He must have invested heavily in the Cattle Headquarters complex, during his time it became known as Pure Bred Place. In 1945, one of the largest Hereford and Hereford cross cattle auctions in the country was held in the auction barn at Pure Bred Place. Pure Bred Place is specifically important to the development of the Hereford breed in the west.

According to the Horned Hereford History on the American Hereford Inc. magazine's website, in the late 1870s the Herefords started to appear in the larger commercial herds as the cattle industry moved west with the settling of the western part of the nation. Previous to this time, mixed herds of cattle of all descriptions were brought from Mexico and the southwestern herds, in large cattle drives. Later the Shorthorn breed moved into the West and was crossed on the Longhorn and other "Mongrel" breeds. The Baca Grant had both of these types, with the pure bred registered herd of particular prominence.

The Baca pure bred Hereford cattle were used for breeding, sales and show. The Royal Domino line was developed here and prized throughout the nation for breeding stock. The world record Hereford sale was held in the auction barn in 1945. According to the San Antonio Express of September 27, 1945, Feme L. Pearson paid for Baca Duke 5th, a world record price for a 5-months old calf at the Baca Grant ranch Hereford sale. The Morning Avalanche on September 26, 1945 carried a similar article:

"A world record price for a five month calf was reported today as sales neared the million dollar mark in a mammoth sale of registered Hereford live stock on the Baca Grant ranch. Mrs. Feme L Pearson of Indianola, Iowa paid for Baca Duke 5th a price that Forrest Bassford editor of the Denver newspaper said was high for a calf of that age. The animal is the son of Baca R Domino which earlier in the day had gone over the auction block for top price in the sale The buyer was Albert Noe of the Farms of Pulaski, Tenn. Buyers from 15 states and Canada swarmed the ranch which sprawls across the floor of the San Luis valley and reaches an elevation of 14,000 feet."

In 1949, Alfred Collins was named "Cattlemen of the Year" by Record Stockman and he had created one of the finest ranches in the United States. He retired at 74 years of age and died the next year. In early 1950, SLVLC advertised that the herd was headquartered in "...a beautiful, modern setup of barns, sheds, corrals and pastures just a short distance up the road from the main entrance to Baca Grant. It is the central point of interest for Hereford breeders, large and small, thruout (sic) the nation. Almost any day you will find some breeder or several registered Hereford men from different parts of the country visiting the Baca Grant registered Hereford headquarters" (Bassford 1950). Thus, Pure Bred Place may have been more prominent to many of the cattle men than the Home Ranch.

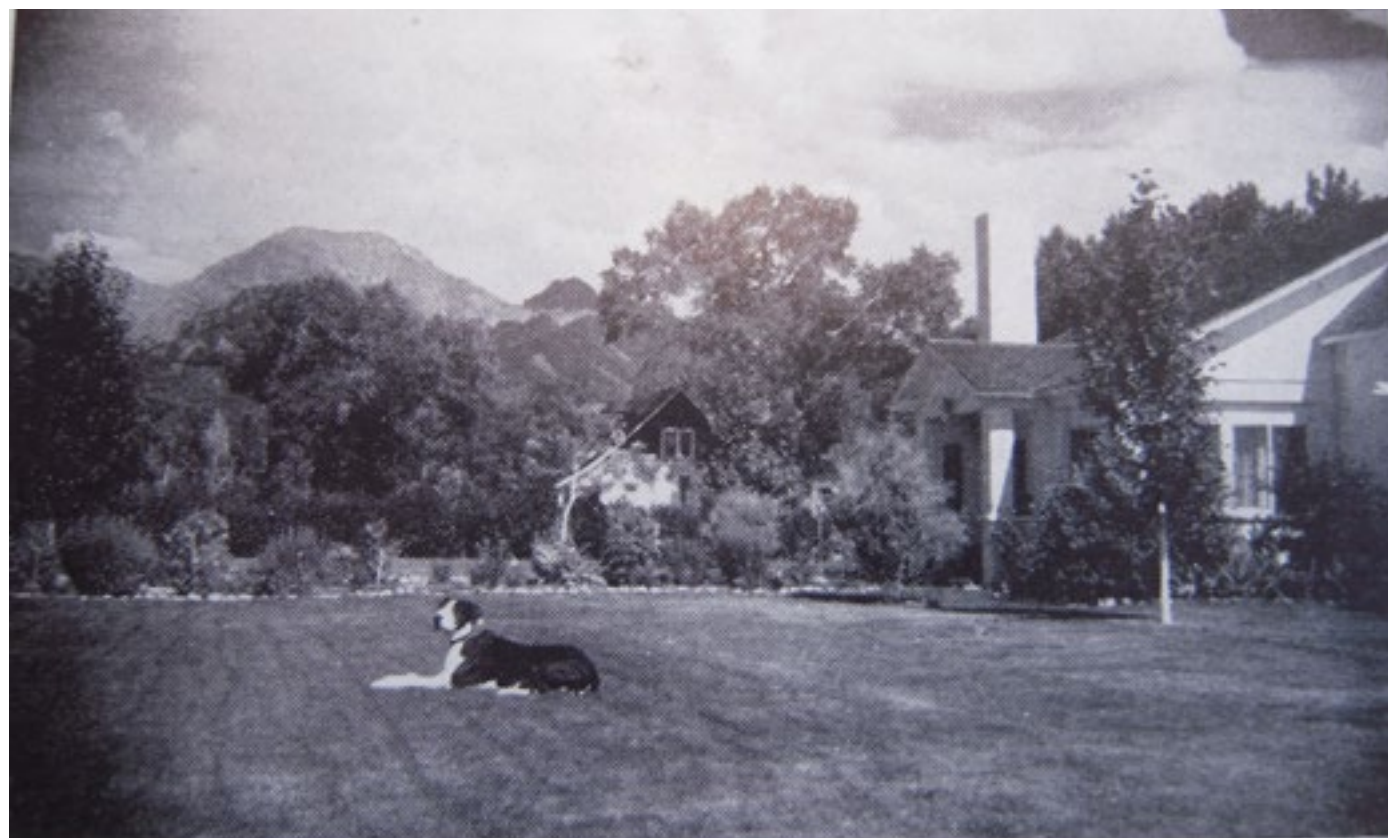
In 1950, the ranch was sold to Newhall Land and Farming Company of Arizona and California, primarily a land development company, most known for the development of the town of Valencia in California. Newhall Company paid \$1,000,000 for the land and \$750,000 for the commercial herd and continued to run cattle on the ranch. The Pure Bred Hereford cattle herds were sold following Collins' death in 1951 and set a world record for a cattle dispersal sale.

## Arizona-Colorado Land and Cattle Company and beyond

In 1962, the Arizona-Colorado Land and Cattle Company (AZL) acquired the Baca Grant from Newhall. They continued to raise cattle and were best known for the breeding of French

Limousin Cattle. The Baca Grant No. 4 is the only one of the five original Grants to have remained intact for over 100 years. AZL formed the Baca Grande Corporation (BGC) in 1971 and began to subdivide the ranch to create The Baca Grande, a recreation and leisure living community. This was the first time in the history of the property that all 100,000 acres were not retained by the same land owner. Land was sold in phases and north of County Road T a commercial strip was developed. BGC installed underground utilities and built roads to service approximately 10,000 lots. Sales were slow and by 1979, the developer considered the property a liability. AZL at one time was the largest integrated cattle/feeding/land company in the US. In 1979, the principal shareholder, Canadian oilman Maurice Strong and his fiancée Hanne Marstrand, visited the property and decided to create a world spiritual center there by granting pieces of land to various spiritual organizations. Strong also created a new company, American Water Development Inc. (AWDI). He intended to pipe water from the aquifer under Baca to the front range, but environmental organizations protested and the plan was abandoned.

Since the 1980s, members of The Nature Conservancy had been interested in the Baca Grant. The Baca Grant shares very similar qualities to the surrounding lands that are part of the Great Sand Dunes National Monument. 70 species of plants and animals make their sole home in the ecosystem that defines the Great Sand Dunes National Monument and the lands of the Baca Ranch (Seelye 2002, A23). Due to the environmental value of the land of the Baca Ranch, The Nature Conservancy, in tandem with residents of the San Luis Valley, was responsible for challenging the AWDI's right to relocate the water in the aquifer beneath the ranch. In 1994 the Supreme Court forced AWDI to relinquish its water rights to the Baca aquifer.



Headquarters and home of the historical Baca Grant, at Crestone Colo., in the San Luis Valley.

View of the Home Ranch main house and foreman's house. Bassford. Baca grant: fabulous home of history, nationally known commercial and registered Herefords. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1950.

The Cabeza de Vaca Land & Cattle Company LLC (CdV), an operation controlled by local entrepreneur Gary Boyce, purchased the ranch from AWDI. The ranch was managed independently as The Baca Ranch and in 1998 that portion of the Grant was sold to Gary Boyce. ([www.bacapoa.org](http://www.bacapoa.org)). CdV reassembled the Baca Grant to the greatest extent possible. Gary Boyce also explored ways of capitalizing on the water resource upon which the Baca Grant sits, but was unable to put together a plan. CdV financed a state-wide ballot initiative that would overturn the precedent set by the Supreme Court's decision. Over one million dollars were spent on attempting to sway the general populace to vote to allow CdV's access to the water under Baca Ranch. The ballot tally was 3-1 against the measure ([www.responsibleendowment.com](http://www.responsibleendowment.com))

### The Baca National Wildlife Refuge

Upon the failure of CdV's attempt to receive rights to the water in the aquifer, Vaca Partners LLC sold the land to the Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy and the National Park Service bought the majority of the Baca Grant that wasn't developed and transferred nearly all of that into the control of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the Rio Grande National Forest and the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. Congress authorized this land acquisition in 2000, but the land transfer was not completed until 2003. The Refuge has been closed to the public since then. The Fish and Wildlife Service is in the middle of a four-year process of adopting a long-term "comprehensive conservation plan" for the three San Luis Valley refuges. The Baca Refuge will not be fully accessible until this management plan, which will replace the interim management plan currently in place, is complete in early 2015. The ranch headquarters and some of the environment around it may be accessible when a planned visitor center is opened in late 2013. The USFWS continues to allow local ranchers limited access to grazing and haying operations on the ranch as a part of this management plan ([www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)).



View of Pure Bred Place with the Auction Barn and cattle in corrals. Bassford. Baca grant: fabulous home of history, nationally known commercial and registered Herefords. San Luis Valley: San Luis Valley Land and Cattle Co. 1950.



## Survey Results

### Home Ranch Historic District

The Home Ranch was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a district under Criterion A and C. The district includes twelve buildings: nine contributing and three non-contributing. The district includes two buildings—the office/ bunkhouse and feed and seed storage—that are potentially individually eligible for their association with the nineteenth century establishment of the ranch and the high degree of craftsmanship displayed their adobe and log construction respectively. However, all the contributing buildings within the district play an important role in telling the story of the development of the Baca Ranch and daily agricultural operations.

### Areas of Significance

**Agriculture:** The Home Ranch is eligible under Criterion A for Agriculture for its association with the development of the cattle industry in the San Luis Valley and Colorado from the 1870s through the 1960s. Though the ranch saw several shifts in ownership, the Baca Ranch was continuously operated as a cattle ranch from the 1870s until the establishment of the Baca National Wildlife Refuge in 2000. Remarkably, it retained most of its original 100,000 acres over this period. While ranches of this size were a key part of Colorado's ranching industry in the 19th century, this scale was exceptional in the 20th century as economic, agricultural, and development pressures led to the sale and subdivision of many large ranches. It is also one of the rare ranches to retain its original water rights. The Baca Ranch is an excellent example of a mountain park ranching operation, utilizing a mix of grasslands and irrigated hay meadows to support livestock. The ranch represents several trends in the evolution of ranching in Colorado including the shift from range cattle to pure bred Herefords and eastern investment in ranch operations.



Above: Entrance to the main residence.  
Below : Equipment storage and barn.



Feed and seed storage building with office/  
bunkhouse behind.

**Architecture:** The Home Ranch is also eligible under Criterion C for Architecture as an excellent example of a large western ranch headquarters complex. Ranch complexes are working landscapes that evolve to reflect changes in the ranch operations and larger agricultural economy. The construction dates of the contributing buildings ranges from the 1870s to the 1940s and reflect the growth and development of the ranch. Building alterations often contribute, rather than detract, from the significance of ranch complexes, representing the functional evolution of the site. The Home Ranch contains all the key functional buildings needed to represent ranch operations including single family dwellings, bunkhouses, a ranch office, a barn, feed and seed storage, equipment and tack storage, and lambing sheds. The ranch buildings are significant both as representative examples of ranch types and for traditional construction methods displaying exceptional workmanship. Nineteenth century components of the ranch include three adobe buildings and one hand-hewn log building representative of regional construction methods. In the twentieth century, frame buildings were added to the complex, reflecting standardized building materials and designs.

**Periods of Significance**

The periods of significance for agriculture and architecture extends from c.1870 to 1962. The period of significance begins with the estimated construction date of the feed and seed storage building c.1870 (believed to be the earliest surviving building on the ranch) and George Adams lease of the land for grazing. It ends with the sale of the ranch to the Arizona Land and Cattle Company in 1962. This period of significance for agriculture includes the establishment, development, and key operational years during which the ranch acquired its agricultural significance. The period for architecture extends over the same period since the Home Ranch complex was a working landscape that was continuously evolving to meet ranch requirements during this period. The period of significance is ended with the purchase by the Arizona Land and Cattle Company since this purchase represented a shift in operations and the subdivision and sale of some of the original land grant in order to create the Baca Grande community.

**Integrity**

When evaluating the integrity of the Home Ranch district, the key consideration was the ability of the ranch buildings to represent the agricultural and architectural history of the ranch. Many of the buildings have been altered, but if the alterations occurred during the district’s period of significance, then there is minimal impact on integrity.

**Location and Setting:** All of the surveyed buildings retain a high degree of integrity as related to location and setting. None of the buildings have been moved from their original locations. The setting, which includes topography, vegetation, the relationship between buildings, and view sheds, is remarkably intact. No new development is visible from within the Home Ranch district. When you look up at the Sangre de Cristo mountains or out across the rangeland, the view is the same as when George Adams or Alfred Collins looked upon these features.

**Design:** The buildings have a high degree of integrity as related to design. Design refers to the combination of elements that create the form, plan, structure, and style of a building or set of buildings. Many of the complex buildings have undergone little or no modifications since their construction. Those that have been altered generally reflect the evolution of a working property and were completed during the period of significance. The only exception to this is the Headquarters/Office. Elements such as spatial organization of the district and the buildings’ relation to one another are intact, and the two buildings added to the district after the period of significance fit the character of the district and do not detract from the historic layout.



View of the main house, landscaping and office buildings.



**Materials:** The integrity of the materials is moderate. The combination of materials selected for a building can reveal much about the preferences and backgrounds of those who constructed it, and can also indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. In areas such as the San Luis Valley, where most early buildings were built of indigenous materials such as cottonwood and pine or adobe block, materials can help define culture and regional identity. Most of the surveyed buildings are able to convey what the original materials were. The Bunkhouse and North House have been clad in modern siding but more intensive investigation might reveal the original construction materials beneath. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of the new siding since it is unclear whether it was done during or after the period of significance. Most of the buildings appear to retain their original windows, doors, trim and exterior cladding materials.



View of the headquarters/ office.

**Workmanship:** The integrity of workmanship is high. This refers to the evidence of crafts of a particular culture and is evident in an individual's skill in constructing, altering and adding on to a building or structure. In the surveyed resources, several instances of workmanship stand out including the hand-hewn log construction of the first floor of the Feed and Seed Storage and the adobe construction of the Main House, Office/ Bunkhouse and original portion of the Garage/ Bunkhouse.



View of north house.

**Feeling and Association:** The integrity of feeling and association is moderate. Though the complex still strongly conveys the Baca Ranch's agricultural history, it is no longer the center of operations for a large cattle ranch. The vacant state of all but one of the buildings and the absence of livestock detracts from the feeling and association of the district.



View of the lambing sheds.



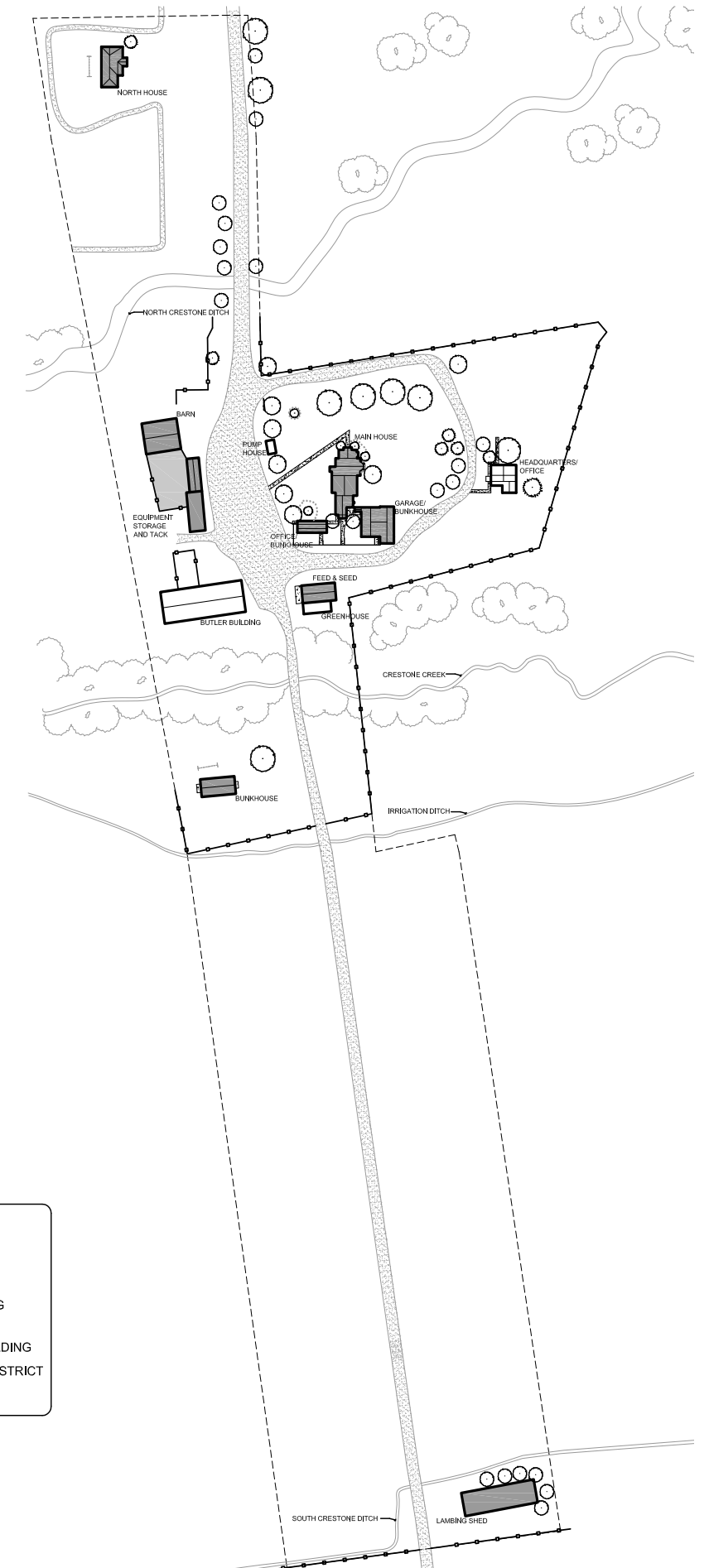
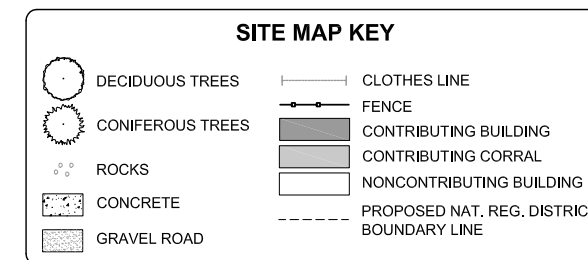
View of feed and seed, Butler building, equipment storage and tack, office/ bunkhouse and garage/ bunkhouse buildings with circular drive and mature landscaping.





# Summary Table of Survey Results: Home Ranch

Current Name	Historic Name	Construction date	Current use	Integrity?	Individually eligible?	Contributing to the district?	Significance to the district?
Baca HQ	Home Ranch						
Headquarters/Office	Foreman's House	c.1910	FWS office	Low due to extensive alterations	No	No- too altered	Not essential to the district since it is located on the fringes and was a secondary residence
Main House	President's House	c.1881	not in use	Medium- has numerous additions some of which appear to have been added after the period of significance	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as the ranch president's residence and for architecture for its adobe construction
Office/Bunkhouse		c.1881	not in use	High	Yes- retains high integrity and may be the original adobe ranch dwelling mentioned in historic records	Yes	Significant for agriculture for its association with ranch operations, serving variously as a dwelling and office, and for architecture for its adobe construction
Feed and Seed Storage		c.1870	not in use	Medium - greenhouse addition and porch appear to have been added after the period of significance but are reversible; frame second story and exterior paint appear to have been added within the period of significance	Yes- historic records and construction evidence indicates this is likely the oldest building on the ranch, constructed by the Wales brothers c.1870	Yes	Significant for agriculture as the oldest ranch building and for function as feed and seed storage and for architecture for its hewn log construction
Equipment Storage and Tack		c.1930-1942	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as an essential building within the core work area of the ranch complex that represents ranch operations and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Barn		c.1930-1942	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as an essential building within the core work area of the ranch complex that represents ranch operations and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Bunkhouse		c.1925	not in use	Medium- exterior cladding appears to have been added after the period of significance	No	Yes	Located south of the main building cluster, this bunkhouse is not as visually key to the district as some of the other buildings. However, it is significant to the district under agriculture for its essential role in ranch operations, illustrative of the ranch's labor needs and living conditions
North House		c.1910	not in use	Medium- exterior cladding may have been added after the period of significance	No	Yes	Located north of the main building cluster, this house is not as visually key to the district as some of the other buildings. However, it is significant to the district under agriculture for its essential role in ranch operations, illustrative of the ranch's labor needs and living conditions
Butler Building		c.1975	not in use	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	
Lambing Shed		c. 1910	not in use	High- though in poor condition, the lambing sheds appear unaltered	No	Yes	Significant under agriculture as representative of sheep operations on the ranch
Garage/ Bunkhouse		c.1881	not in use	High- though the adobe bunkhouse was altered by the addition of the residential garage all modifications appear to have occurred within the period of significance	No	Yes	Significant under agriculture as a key part of the ranch's central residential core used both as a bunkhouse and residential garage and for architecture for the adobe construction of the bunkhouse portion
Pump House		c.1970s	pump equipment	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	



## Cattle Headquarters or Pure Bred Place Historic District

The Pure Bred Place was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a district under Criterion A and C. The district includes eleven buildings: seven contributing and four non-contributing as well as two contributing structures. The district includes one building—the auction barn—that is potentially individually eligible as the key building associated with Alfred Collins' nationally recognized pure bred Hereford cattle herd. However, all the contributing buildings within the district play an important role in telling the story of the development of the Baca Ranch and daily agricultural operations.

### Areas of Significance

**Agriculture:** The Pure Bred Place is eligible under Criterion A for Agriculture for its association with the development of the cattle industry in the San Luis Valley and Colorado from the 1920s through the 1960s, particularly Hereford breeding. The Pure Bred Place was the headquarters for Alfred Collins' pure bred Hereford operation. Collins played an important role in the development of the Hereford bred in Colorado. Herefords were introduced to Colorado at the end of the nineteenth century and quickly became the states' most popular range breed, praised for their hardiness and ability to mature and put on weight quickly. Ranchers like Collins specialized with purebred herds that could be sold as breeding stock, while others worked to improve the quality of their range stock through interbreeding. The Record Stockman named Alfred Collins Cattleman of the Year in 1949, and he was praised as developing one of the finest ranches in the west.

**Architecture:** The Pure Bred Place is also eligible under Criterion C for Architecture as an excellent example of a western ranch headquarters complex. Ranch complexes are working landscapes that evolve to reflect changes in the ranch operations and larger



View of the house at Pure Bred Place.



View of the garage with the house in the background and mature landscaping.



View of horse, ranch and pole barns and corrals.



View of corral complex with Horse Barn and residence in distance. Ranch barn is to the left.

agricultural economy. The construction dates of the contributing buildings ranges from the 1920s to the 1940s and reflect the growth and development of the Hereford operation. Building alterations often contribute, rather than detract, from the significance of ranch complexes, representing the functional evolution of the site. The Pure Bred Place contains all the key functional buildings needed to represent the complexes operations as the headquarters for the pure bred operation including a house for the herd manager, an auction barn, horse barns, grain storage, and an extensive corral complex incorporating a loading chute and circular area for training horses. The complex buildings are significant as representative examples of ranch types and reflect standardized building materials and designs popular in the first half of the twentieth century.

### Periods of Significance

The periods of significance for agriculture and architecture extends from c.1927 to 1962. The period of significance begins with the establishment of the complex and the construction of the house, garage, and auction barn c.1927 (this date comes from the USFWS building records; no other information could be located to either support or contradict this construction date though Alfred Collins did not move to the ranch until 1930). It ends with the sale of the ranch to the Arizona Land and Cattle Company in 1962. The period of significance for agriculture includes the establishment, development, and key operational years of the complex. The period of significance for architecture extends over the same period as agriculture since the Pure Bred Place was a working landscape that was continuously evolving to meet ranch requirements during this period. The period

of significance is ended with the purchase by the Arizona Land and Cattle Company since this purchase represented a shift in operations and the subdivision and sale of some of the original land grant in order to create the Baca Grande community.

### Integrity

When evaluating the integrity of the Pure Bred Place district, the key consideration was the ability of the buildings to represent the agricultural and architectural history of the ranch. Some of the buildings have been altered, but if the alterations occurred during the district's period of significance, then there is minimal impact on integrity.

**Location and Setting:** All of the surveyed buildings retain a high degree of integrity as related to location and setting. None of the buildings have been moved from their original locations. The setting, which includes topography, vegetation, the relationship between buildings, and view sheds, is remarkably intact. No new development is visible from within the Pure Bred Place district. When you look up at the Sangre de Cristo mountains or out across the rangeland, the view is the same as when Alfred Collins looked upon these features.

**Design:** The buildings have a high degree of integrity as related to design. Design refers to the combination of elements that create the form, plan, structure, and style of a building or set of buildings. Many of the complex buildings have undergone little or no modifications since their construction. Those that have been altered generally reflect the evolution of a working property and were completed during the period of significance. Elements such as spatial organization



View of the auction barn.



View of storage building and grain bin with creek running behind.



View of storage building and the two newest trailers on site.



View of storage building and metal building with trailers in the background.



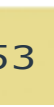
View of modular house and mature landscaping. This building is non-contributing.

of the district and the buildings' relation to one another are intact, and the four buildings added to the district after the period of significance are located on the southern edge of the district, screened by trees from view of the original residence and core agricultural building cluster, reducing their visual impact on the district.

**Materials:** The integrity of the materials is moderate. The combination of materials selected for a building can reveal much about the preferences and backgrounds of those who constructed it, and can also indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. Most of the buildings appear to retain their original windows, doors, trim and exterior cladding materials. Alterations have been made to the historic residence, and it is difficult to evaluate the impact since it is unclear whether the changes occurred during or after the period of significance.

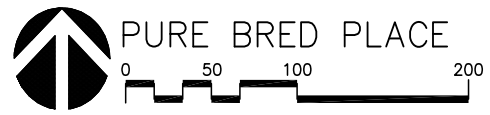
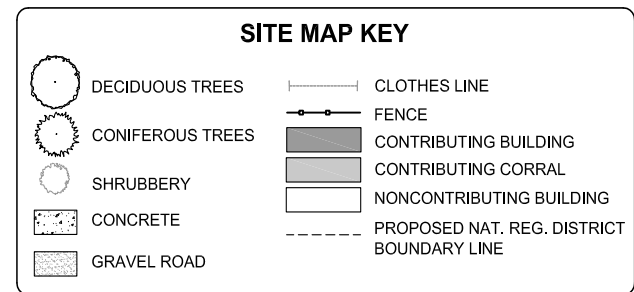
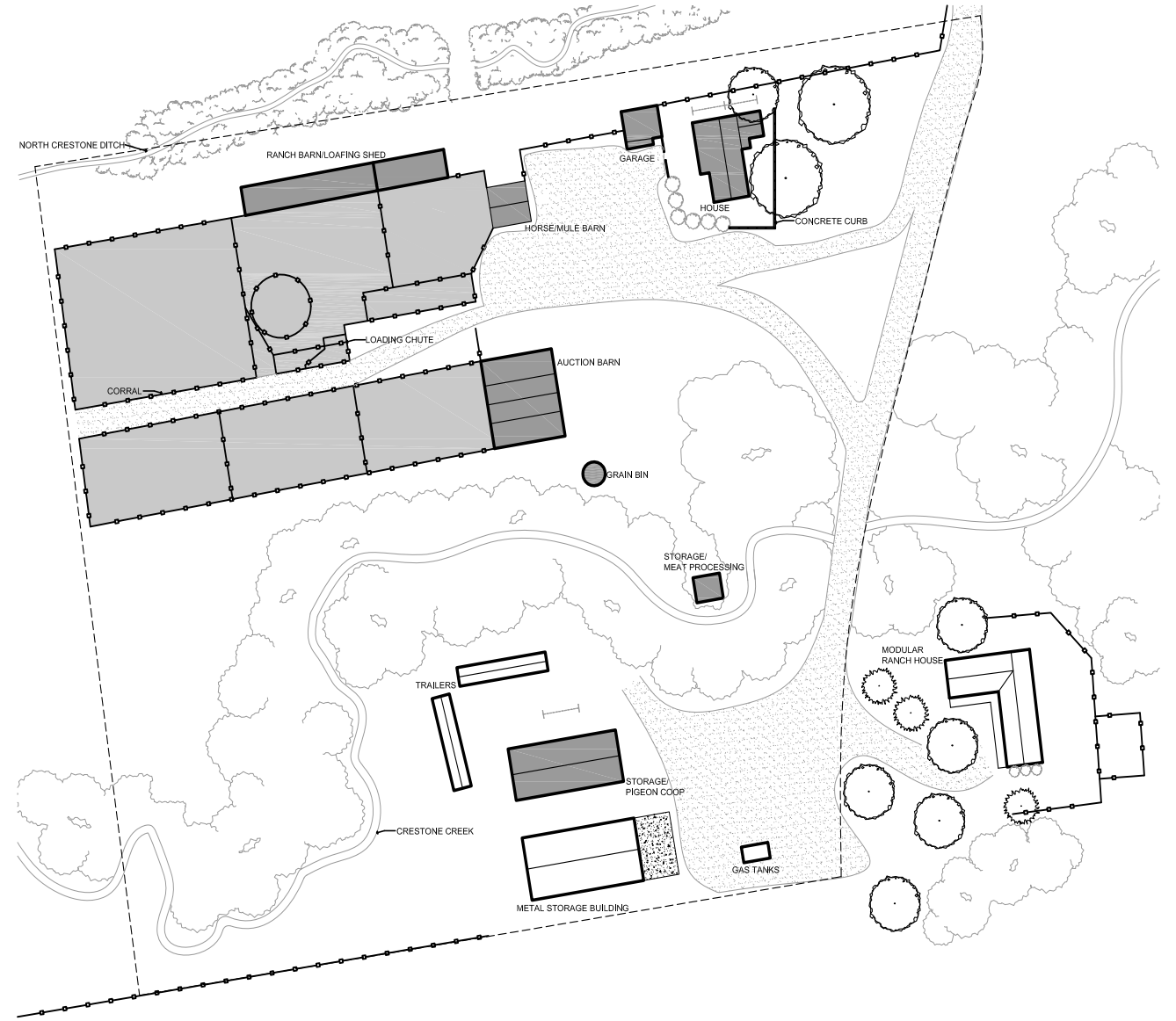
**Workmanship:** The integrity of workmanship is high. This refers to the evidence of crafts of a particular culture and is evident in an individual's skill in constructing, altering and adding on to a building or structure.

**Feeling and Association:** The integrity of feeling and association is moderate. Though the complex still strongly conveys the Baca Ranch's agricultural history, it is no longer the center of operations for a large cattle ranch. The vacant state of all but one of the buildings and the absence of livestock, detracts from the feeling and association of the district.



# Summary Table of Survey Results: Pure Bred Place

Current Name	Historic Name	Construction date	Current use	Integrity?	Individually eligible?	Contributing to the district?	Significance to the district?
Cattle HQ	Pure Bred Place						
House	"man who cares for the Registered herd lived here"	c.1927	not in use	Medium/High- the house has been altered but it could not be determined if the alterations occurred during or after the period of significance	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as the residence of the caretaker of the pure bred Hereford herd. As the only historic residence on the complex, it is both visually and functionally key to the district
Garage		c.1927	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as a key part of the complex's residential core and for its association with the pure bred cattle caretaker
Ranch Barn / Loafing Shed		c.1934-1945	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the core livestock work area of the complex, connected to the large corral system, and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Horse/Mule Barn		c.1934-1945	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the core livestock work area of the complex, connected to the large corral system, and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Auction Barn		c.1927	not in use	High	Yes- this is the key building associated with Alfred Collins' nationally recognized pure bred Hereford herd	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the core livestock work area of the complex, connected to the large corral system, and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Storage Building	likely meat processing/ smoking building	c. 1927	not in use	High- though in poor condition, the building appears to be unaltered	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the core agricultural building cluster and representative of historic ranch operations
Storage Building	Pigeon Coop/ Storage Building	c.1934-1945	storage	High- the pigeon coop has been removed from the building but this appeared to have been a later addition to the building	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the cattle complex and representative of historic ranch operations and for architecture as a good example of a common ranch type
Metal Storage Building		c.1978	equipment storage and office	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	
Modular Residence		c.1978	not in use	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	
Grain Bin	Grain Bin	c.1934-1945	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as part of the core agricultural building cluster and representative of historic ranch operations
Trailer 1		c. 2003 (moved on site)	summer intern residence	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	
Trailer 2		c. 2003 (moved on site)	summer intern residence	n/a	No	No- added after the period of significance	
Corrals and Loading Chute		c. 1927	not in use	High	No	Yes	Significant for agriculture as an essential component of livestock operations within the core agricultural building cluster



## Rural Historic Landscape Evaluation

This project was focused on surveying and evaluating the Home Ranch and the Pure Bred Place. However, during the survey it soon became clear that in addition to being individually eligible as districts, the headquarters would also be contributing to a larger rural historic landscape district. It was impossible to survey all of the Baca National Wildlife Refuge within the scope of this project. This landscape evaluation is based what was observed while surveying the headquarters complexes and a morning spent driving around the refuge to visit the various cattle camps. This preliminary evaluation should be followed by an intensive-level survey.

The landscape of the Baca Ranch has been shaped by decades of agricultural and reflects several key trends in the evolution of ranching in Colorado:

- Mixing of New Mexican and Anglo-American cultural traditions
- Development of a system of ranching utilizing irrigated hay meadows in Colorado's mountain parks
- Efforts to improve the breeding of Colorado herds and the popularity of the Hereford breed
- Outside and foreign investment Colorado ranches and the development of corporate ranching

The National Register of Historic Places defines an eligible rural historic landscape as "a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possess a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features" (McClelland 1999: 1-2). National Register Bulletin 30, Guidelines for Evaluating Rural Historic Landscapes, defines four processes and seven physical components that are key features of rural historic landscapes.

### Land Uses and Activities

The Baca Ranch is located at the northern end of the San Luis Valley, one of Colorado's mountain parks. These high altitude basins



View of the circular drive at Home Ranch.



View of the working portion of Home Ranch.



View of drive, office and feed and seed at Home Ranch.



View from south of the bunkhouse back toward the center of Home Ranch.

consist of mostly treeless plains surrounding by forested mountains. Though the parks are arid, creeks flowing down from mountains provide water for irrigation. However, due to the elevation the growing season is short, restricting the types of agriculture that can be practiced. Early Colorado settlers discovered that the mountain parks were ideal for livestock grazing. The natural grasses provided hardy and nutritious grasses for livestock, while mountain streams could be diverted to create irrigation hay meadows, providing winter feed. The Baca Ranch has been used for cattle grazing since at least 1871. Irrigation development began in the 1880s and continued into the twentieth century. The Baca Ranch is significant in retaining its original water rights, allowing irrigation to continue today. In many other mountain parks, such as South Park, most water rights have been sold off, significantly altering the way ranching is practiced.

Though agriculture has been the primary land use on the Baca Ranch, mineral exploration and mining have also occurred on the ranch. The mineral potential of the area highly promoted, but mining efforts were never that successful, though copper and precious metals were produced. Several mining camps were once located on the ranch.

The Baca Ranch became the Baca Wildlife Refuge in 2000. Though agriculture is no longer the primary land use, the Fish and Wildlife has continued to graze cattle on the land as part of the range management for the refuge.

### Patterns of Spatial Organization

Patterns of spatial organization range from the relationship between the ranch and the surrounding area to the relationship between buildings on the ranch. Ranchers generally situate their holdings to take advantage of proximity to markets, transportation routes, and water sources. Most often ranches evolve organically, with the land owner gradually acquiring additional acreage as needed and as profits allow. The Baca Ranch, however, was formed as part of a legal settlement. The Baca Land Grant was created from government lands and awarded to Luis Baca



View of the auction barn from the entrance to Pure Bred Place.



View of the house, garage and barn at Pure Bred Place



View of the house at Pure Bred Place with the auction barn in the background and mature landscaping.

in compensation for lost land the Mexican government originally granted him in New Mexico. The Public Land Survey System (PLSS) divided the land of the west into a neat grid of land parcels ready to be disposed to the public. But because the Baca Ranch was a land grant, it was not surveyed and has no PLSS divisions. The 100,000 acre grant has retained its size and boundaries for more than a hundred years. Though created somewhat arbitrarily the Baca Land Grant soon attracted the attention of those interested in both ranching and mineral development.

Key features of the spatial organization of the ranch include its road systems, field and pasture patterns, and building clusters. Access to water often dictated the placement of buildings; both headquarters complexes are located on Crestone Creek. Cattle camps are scattered across the ranch, providing cattle facilities as well as housing across the large ranch. The landscape has also influenced spatial patterns with bottomlands used to cultivate hay and drier land used for grazing. Within the headquarters complexes, spatial arrangements continue to indicate building functions with clearly delineated residential and agricultural areas.

### **Response to the Natural Environment**

Natural features such as topography, climate, and water availability shape the types and methods of agriculture that can be practiced. The Baca Ranch is located in bottomlands at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Due to the arid environment, irrigation is essential to agricultural practice. The Baca Ranch has an extensively developed network of irrigation ditches to water hay meadows as well as artesian wells which fill water tanks for livestock. The natural environment of the ranch varies dramatically depending on the availability of water, ranging from lush meadows to dry scrublands. The building complexes were located on Crestone Creek. Clusters of trees define the complexes locations, composed of natural growth along the creek, including cottonwoods, and landscaping around the residential areas.

### **Cultural Traditions**

The culture of the San Luis Valley has been strongly influenced by the Hispanos from New Mexico who originally settled the area. The influence of New Mexican traditions can be seen in the adobe construction utilized for several buildings of the Baca Ranch Headquarters. Adobe construction was well suited to the dry climate of the San Luis Valley.

### **Circulation Networks**

Circulation networks include both transportation networks within the ranch as well as those connecting the ranch to the larger region. Paved highways border the ranch on two sides- County Road T on the north and Highway 17 on the west. The headquarters complexes are both visible from County Road T and are easily accessed via dirt drives leading directly south from the highway. A large network of dirt roads (some improved, others simple two-tracks) provides access to the various camps and pastures.

### **Boundary Demarcations**

There are several levels of boundaries defining the ranch. On the large scale, there is the boundary of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains which rise steeply to the east of the ranch. The ranch is also defined by the County Road T and Highway 17. Within the ranch, fences define the boundaries between pastures and vegetation defines land uses and ecosystems. Within the headquarters, landscaping, including plantings, sidewalks, decorative stones, and concrete curbing, are used to define the boundaries between residential and agricultural areas.

### **Vegetation Related to Land Use**

The vegetation of the Baca Ranch is well-suited to its use for livestock grazing. The Baca Ranch contains a diversity of wetlands, such as playa wetlands, wet meadows, and riparian areas that cover approximately 14 percent of the area. Wet meadows cover over 10,000 acres of

the refuge and are more prominent in the central and northwestern portion as well as the southeast portion along the Sand Creek and the Big Spring Creek. Playa wetlands are located to the west of the wet meadows along the Saguache and San Luis Creeks. The riparian areas go along seven main creeks, North Crestone, South Crestone, Willow, Spanish, Cottonwood, Deadman, and Sand Creeks that run north to south and follow from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Through irrigation, the agricultural productivity was dramatically increased allowing the ranch to support more cattle.

The vegetation includes a diverse habitat of semi-desert shrublands and grasslands. The semi-desert shrublands and grasslands are widespread in the dry valley since they don't require a vast amount of water. The dominate shrubs include rabbitbrush, greasewood, fourwing saltbrush, shadscale, and winterfat and take up approximately 77 percent, or over 71,700 acres of the refuge. Native grasses include Indian ricegrass, alkali sacaton, wester wheat grass, and blue grama. They are very abundant due to being drought resistant and tolerant to a range or soil salinity, conditions that are common on the valley floor. Some invasive plants, such as Canada thistle, tall whitetop, Russian knapweed, and salt cedar, have been introduced to the area.

### **Buildings, Structures, and Objects**

The buildings of the headquarters complexes and cattle camps date primarily from the late nineteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The nineteenth century buildings, located on the Baca Ranch Headquarters, are constructed of log and adobe. These buildings are representative of local vernacular construction techniques from the settlement period of the San Luis Valley. The majority of the buildings at the Baca Ranch Headquarters and Cattle Headquarters are constructed of frame and reflect national building trends and standardization. The uniform appearance and high quality construction of the agricultural buildings also reflects the outside investment in the ranch. The majority of family owned ranches have a more varied appearance, reflecting buildings constructed at varying times as well as numerous makeshift alterations and additions. The cattle camps have a more haphazard appearance, and incorporate many buildings moved to the ranch from elsewhere. These camps were purely functional. The headquarters, especially the auction barn at Pure Bred Place, were likely at least partly designed to impress visitors to the ranch, while no one but ranch hands would see the cattle camps. The ranch buildings provide a good representation of ranch functions. The numerous residences and bunkhouses indicate the scale of the ranch operation.

### **Clusters**

The Baca Ranch includes several distinct clusters: Home Ranch, Pure Bred Place, and the cattle camps. Each cluster was the focus of different activities. Home Ranch was the heart of the ranch, including the business headquarters and the primary residence. Pure Bred Place was home to the purebred Hereford herd and the sale barn. The cattle camps also had various functions such as calving at Shed's Camp and weighing and dipping at the Shipping Corrals.

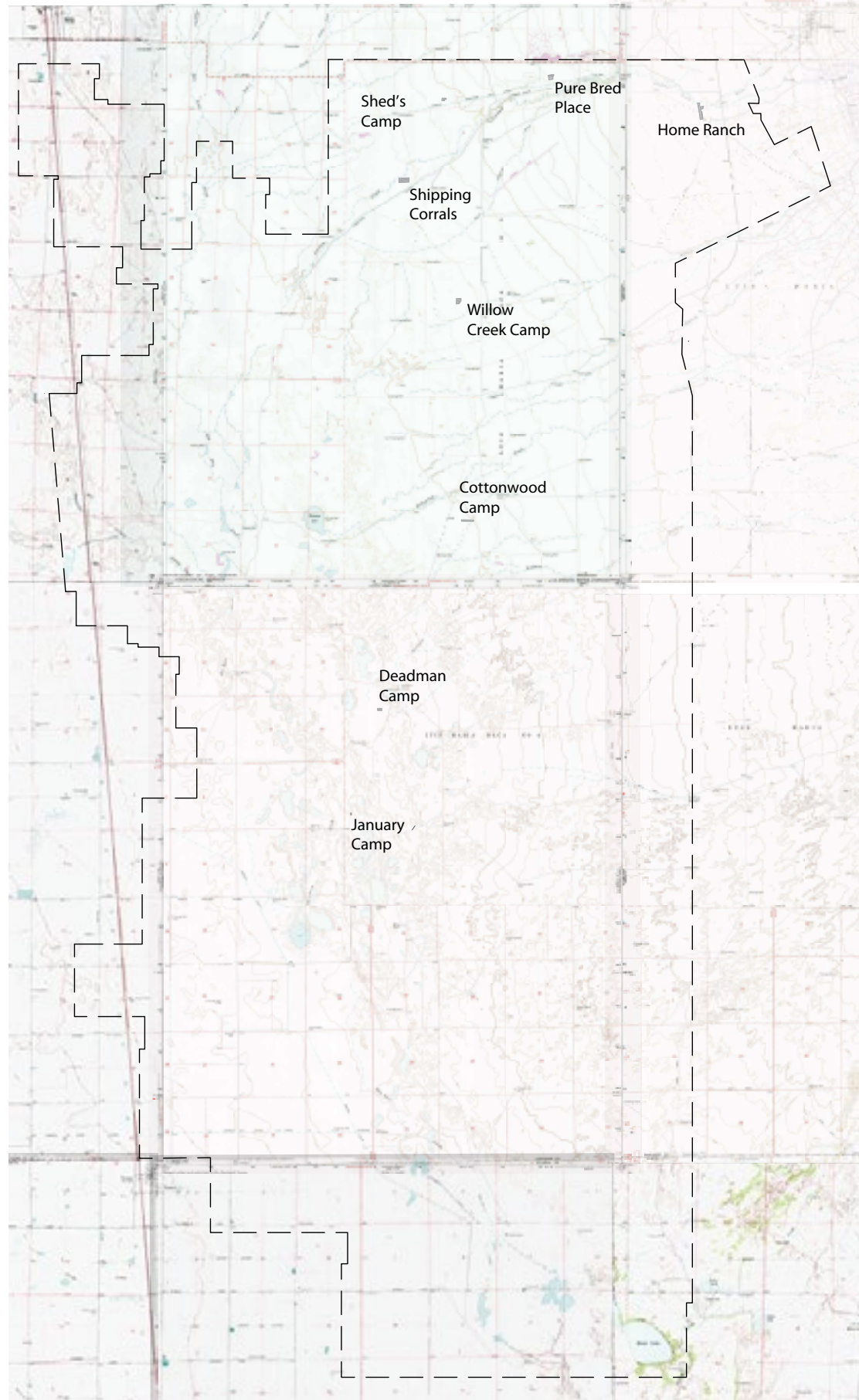
### **Archaeological Sites**

Archaeology is outside the scope of this project. There is likely a high potential for Native American archaeological sites on the ranch. There may also be historical resources associated with the mining camps.

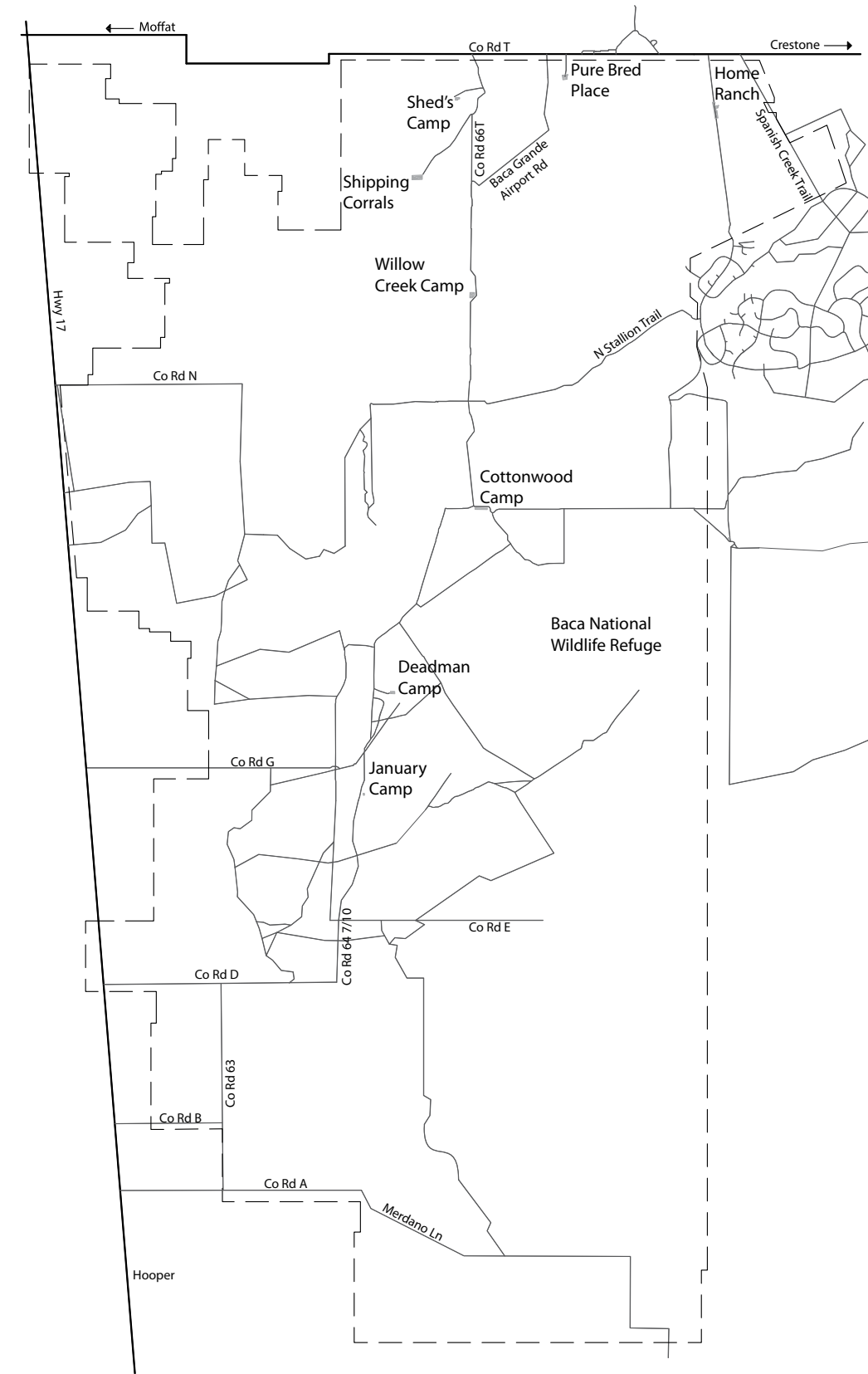
### **Small Scale Elements**

Small-scale agricultural features include fences, corrals, wells, and water tanks. Fences delineate ranch pastures. Most fencing is constructed of wire and vertical wood posts. Corrals are found at the ranch headquarters and at several of the cattle camps. There are also small-scale domestic features such as clotheslines, decorative fencing, and sidewalks.

**Topographical Map with Cattle Camps Identified.**



----- Baca National Wildlife Refuge Boundary

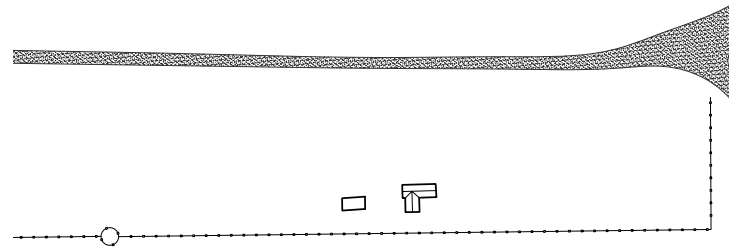


**OVERVIEW MAP**

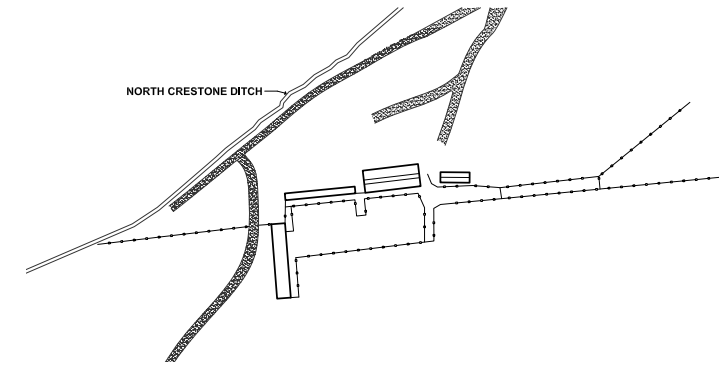
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**OVERALL MAP KEY**

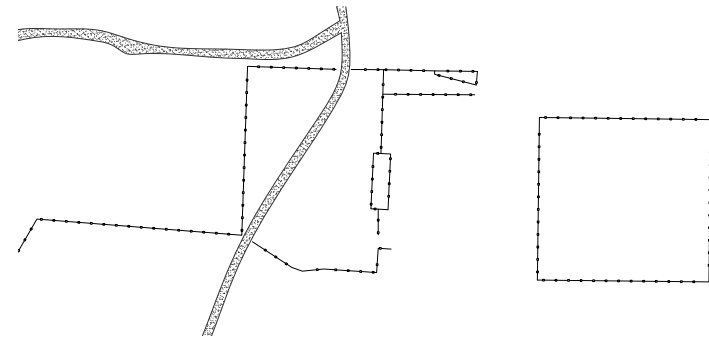
- PRIMARY ROAD
- SECONDARY ROAD
- BACA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE BOUNDARY
- SITES



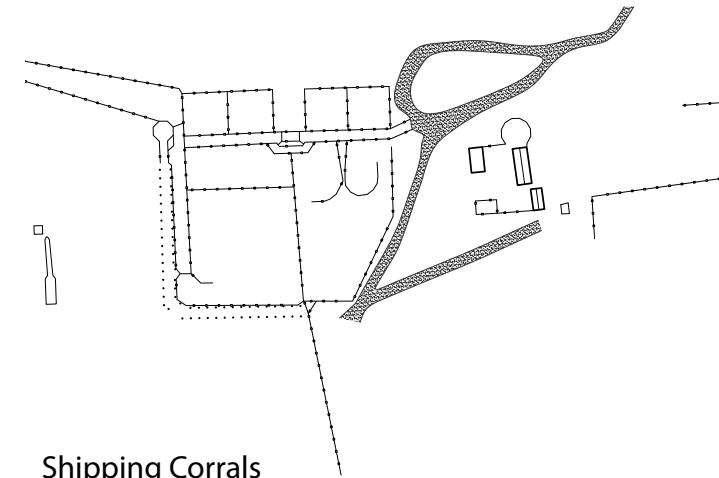
Cottonwood Camp



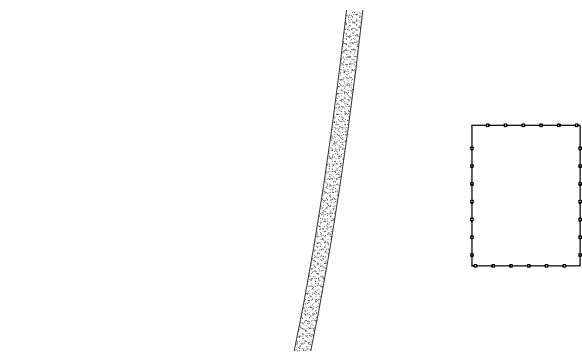
Shed's Camp



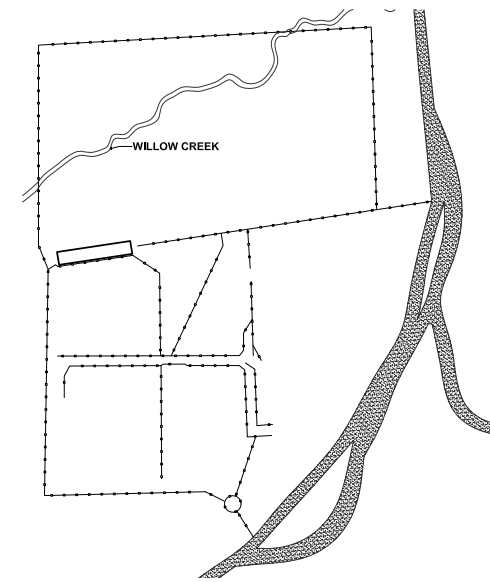
Deadman Camp



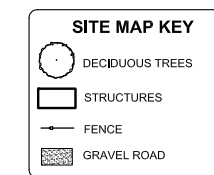
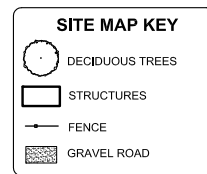
Shipping Corrals



January Camp



Willow Creek Camp







## Recommendations

### Future Preservation Priorities

Several of the buildings have the potential for reuse, but should have historic structure assessments completed to further clarify character defining features, construction methods, dates of construction and additions and appropriate rehabilitation strategies. An assessment will serve as a useful tool to assist the USFWS in making appropriate and informed decisions regarding future restoration and maintenance efforts. The buildings which would most benefit from a historic structure assessment include the main house, office/bunkhouse, feed and seed and garage/ bunkhouse in the Home Ranch District and the auction barn in the Pure Bred Place District.

Several buildings have immediate needs that should be addressed in order to maintain the integrity of the historic fabric. The equipment tack and storage building requires stabilization and/or replacement of the metal roofing. The barn at the Home Ranch should have a structural engineer consulted regarding foundation reinforcement. Windows and doors which are open to the elements should be protected to keep out weather, insects, and animals.

### Additional Survey and/or Designations

One reason these buildings have not been previously surveyed is that they have been a part of a large land holding which has been privately owned for over 100 years. The resources are slightly visible from public roadways, but the roads within the refuge are currently closed to visitors. With the USFWS now owning the buildings, survey and interpretation are possible. National Register nominations should be pursued for the two districts outlined above. The possibility of designating a large rural historic landscape district should also be considered. This district could encompass both headquarter complexes, a majority of the known cattle camps and features such as fencing, irrigation ditches and laterals and other improvements associated with the cattle ranching period. Interpretation of the historic districts, close-in cattle camps and other improvements such as irrigation, hay meadows, fencing and corrals would add another dimension of visitor benefit to the Refuge's mission which is to restore, enhance and maintain wetland, upland, riparian and other habitats for wildlife, plants and fish species that are native to the San Luis Valley, Colorado.

## Threats

The primary threat to the buildings surveyed is planned demolition or demolition through neglect. Two buildings are slated to be removed, one at each complex. The Headquarters/Office has been heavily modified and after much discussion within the survey team, was determined not contributing due to the significance of the changes to the exterior and interior outside of the period of significance. The second building, the Pure Bred Place main house, is a contributing structure to the district and its loss would have a significant impact on the integrity and interpretation of the complex. It appears there may be a way to save this building, while also meeting the needs of the USFWS in terms of square footage trade-offs. The modular 1970s home is a non-contributing structure of roughly the same square footage, and its removal would not impact the integrity and interpretation of this very unique ranching complex.

The other major threat is that the buildings, for the most part, do not have an adaptive reuse plan. Buildings with no use are under threat for demolition by neglect or are magnets for vandalism. It is also understood that the USFWS has a tight budget for the management of the Refuge and restoration, rehabilitation and upkeep of all of the buildings may be an unmanageable expense. An appropriate reuse plan, which restores and interprets key buildings at each complex, would allow the buildings to continue their service to the ranch and preserve them as important elements of the history of this place. These can be developed after historic structure assessments are completed on the key buildings in each district. Grants and other funding sources can be identified to help alleviate some of the financial concerns once the districts have been listed on the National Register. According to the USFWS's Interim Management plan for the Refuge, the protection of known culturally significant structures and sites will be a priority for refuge staff. The Service intends to coordinate with the NPS, TNC, and local law enforcement authorities to develop strategies to coordinate law enforcement activities to protect cultural resources.

One further potential threat is that Lexam Explorations (U.S.A.) Inc. is an owner of mineral rights below portions of the surface estate on the Refuge, and therefore is entitled to make use of the surface for exploration. Lexam acquired their mineral interest prior to acquisition of the surface estate in the Baca Ranch by the USFWS. With respect to State of Colorado law on subsurface mineral rights in Colorado, the subsurface mineral property owner has rights to pursue recovery of its minerals. They are required to complete environmental impact assessments, which do take into account cultural resources, but as energy prices continue to climb, the development of the mineral rights of the Baca grant lands could impact the view sheds, setting and integrity of the rural historic landscape.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge Sheds Camp Fall 2012



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## Appendix A

Excerpted from Final Environmental Assessment of Planned Gas and Oil Exploration, Baca National Wildlife Refuge, Saguache County, Colorado October 2008 prepared for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alamosa, Colorado.

*"Cultural studies were conducted in 2006 and 2007 and the results of those studies are discussed below.*

*In the fall of 2006, TRC Mariah Associates Inc. (TRC Mariah) conducted cultural resource investigations on portions of the Refuge on behalf of the USFWS, Region 6, and Lexam (TRC Mariah 2006). These investigations included Class I and Class III inventories. Class I inventories are a review of reports containing 3-41 October 2008 the results of previously conducted surveys in the planned project area, as well as library and archival sources for regional prehistory and history. Class III inventories are intensive field surveys of areas in which potential impacts are anticipated or are likely to occur.*

*On September 20, 2006, TRC Mariah conducted a Class I file search using the Compass on-line cultural resources database of the Colorado Historical Society. The file search indicated that no cultural resource inventories were previously conducted, and no sites have been previously documented within the APE. From September 29 through October 1, 2006, TRC Mariah conducted a Class III cultural resource inventory of the planned Baca #5 and Baca #6 (original location) well pads and access roads within the Refuge. The survey boundary consisted of a 10-acre block centered on the planned well pad location and a 100-foot-wide corridor centered on the access road centerline. A total of 37.6 acres was inventoried on federal land administered by the USFWS.*

*As a result of the Class III inventory, a total of two sites (5SH3146 and 5SH3147.1) and four isolates (5SH3148, 5SH3149, 5SH3150, and 5SH3151) were recorded. The sites included a prehistoric lithic scatter and historic canal. All of the isolates are prehistoric. Site 5SH3146 consists of a sparse disperse lithic scatter that included one basalt and four obsidian flakes. No features, diagnostic artifacts, or other unique artifacts were located during the inventory. Intensive inspection of the sand sheet in and around the site boundary did not reveal any evidence of buried cultural deposits or soils. Two shovel tests were dug within the site boundary to a depth of approximately*

20 inches. Neither shovel test encountered any buried cultural deposits or soils. As a result of the inventory and shovel testing, the site was recommended by the USFWS as not eligible for the NRHP, and in a letter dated December 7, 2006, the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the eligibility determination (Contiguglia 2006).

Site 5SH3147.1 is a canal that measures approximately 3 to 4 feet wide and 1 foot deep and will be crossed by a planned access road. The canal is a named, adjudicated canal listed in the 1901 Decree Book, Water District No. 25, Saguache County, Colorado, and is part of the irrigation system associated with the post-Spanish period settlement and homesteading of the San Luis Valley. The canal was recommended by the USFWS as eligible for the NRHP, and the SHPO concurred with the eligibility determination (Contiguglia, 2006).

Four isolates were located during the Class III inventory. Isolate 5SH3148 consists of a single piece of limestone heat-altered rock. Isolate 5SH3149 consists of a basalt projectile point base. The remaining two isolates, 5SH3150 and 5SH3151, consist of a white chert projectile point and a brown chert modified flake, respectively. All four of the isolates are not eligible for the NRHP (Contiguglia 2006). Subsequent to the Class III inventory conducted for the planned Baca #5 and Baca #6 well pads and access roads, TRC Mariah conducted a Class III inventory for Lexam's Baca 3D Seismic Project, which encompasses the currently planned well pads and access roads (TRC Mariah 2007). A total of 325.9 miles (2,607 acres) of planned seismic lines, access roads, and fence lines were inventoried within the Refuge. The inventory was conducted from mid-October to mid-November 2006.

A total of 61 sites and 96 isolated finds were recorded during the Baca 3D Seismic Project Class III inventory. A total of 39 of the sites are prehistoric open camps, 5 are historic sites (cow camp, bridge, and artifact scatters), 3 sites are multi-component sites containing both prehistoric and historic components, and 14 are segments of historic canal systems. The isolated finds primarily are prehistoric lithic, groundstone, or heat-altered rock remains, and a few are historic trash.

All of the canals segments were recommended by the USFWS as eligible for the NRHP. A total of 37 of the remaining 47 sites were unevaluated prehistoric sites and 1 was an unevaluated historic site. Additional data were recommended for these 38 sites in order to determine their NRHP eligibility. A total of 9 sites and the 96 isolated finds were recommended as not eligible for the NRHP. In a letter dated January 29, 2007, the Colorado SHPO concurred with the NRHP eligibility determination for the 9 sites and 96 isolated finds and that additional data were necessary to determine the eligibility of the 38 sites (Contiguglia 2007).

The 38 sites that were either eligible for the NRHP or needed additional data were avoided during seismic activities by rerouting those activities around the sites. To avoid impact to the NRHP-eligible canals by seismic vehicles, the vehicles were driven over the canals when the ground was frozen. This protection measure was reviewed by the USFWS and submitted to the SHPO for review and concurrence prior to initiation of seismic activities. In a letter dated January 29, 2007, the Colorado SHPO concurred that no adverse effects will occur to the canals since vehicular traffic would take place when the ground was frozen (Contiguglia 2007).

From September 24 to 27, Western Cultural Resource Management, Inc. (WCRM) conducted a Class III cultural resource study of the Baca #6 (amended location) A and #7 drill pads, two associated access roads and a water line route (Mehls and Lennon. 2007). The survey boundaries consisted of a 10-acre block centered on each of the planned well pads and a 100-foot-wide corridor centered on the access roads center line. A total of 46.6 acres was inventoried on federal land administered by the USFWS. As a result of the Class III inventory, eight new sites and five previously recorded site segments were documented. The newly recorded sites are laterals associated with three previously recorded irrigation ditches: the Willow Creek Ditch Lateral (5SH3336), the Baca Grant

No. 4, Ditch 17 (5SH3341), and the Baca Grant No. 4, Ditch 18 (5SH3342). These sites (5SH3336.2, 5SH3336.3, 5SH3341.2, 5SH3341.3, 5SH3341.4, 5SH 3341.5, 5SH3341.6, and 5SH3342.4) are recommended eligible to the NRHP as contributing elements in the overall ditch systems. These ditches are part of an active irrigation system.

The five re-evaluated segments had not been previously recorded as segments; the entire ditch had been noted (Byers 2006; Lowe and Schneider 2007). Where these ditches crossed the previous project area surveyed by TRC Mariah, they were not given official segment numbers. Rather, the entire ditches were identified; the ditches consisted of the Baca Grant No. 4, Ditches 15, 16, and 17. Subsequently, the entire ditches have been officially determined eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. The segments of the previously noted ditches located in the WCRM study area include: one segment of the Baca Grant No. 4 (5SH3339.10), three segments of the Baca Grant No. 4, Ditch 16 (5SH3340.2, 5SH3340.3, and 5SH3340.4), and one segment of the Baca Grant, Ditch 17 (5SH3341.7). The re-evaluated segments have been recommended not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP; they no longer have a physical presence in the locations where they were originally recorded and, as a result, do not contribute to the significance of their affiliated ditch systems."

