

Wyoming Historic Site Inventory Form

Teton County Historic Site Survey

1. **Site Name:** American Legion Building

Historic names of property:

2. **Location:**

Street and Number: southeast corner, Cache and Gill
City Jackson State WY Zip: 83001

3. **Property Owner:**

Address: American Legion Post #43
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
Phone:

4. **Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

5. **Category of Property** (Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

6. **Number of Resources within Property**

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects

1 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing): N.A.

National Register Status:

Eligible x Unevaluated
Not eligible District Potential

7. Function or Use

Historic Function

Current Functions

Meeting hall

meeting hall

8. Description

Architectural Classification

Materials

 vernacular log

Foundation concrete

Roof metal

Walls log

Other

9. Describe present and historic physical appearance:

This handsome log structure remains essentially unchanged since its original construction in 1929. It is a single story structure, with a basement, configured in a cross shape with metal-roofed gables on each wing, and has overall dimensions of approximately 66' on the east and 60' on the north. The main entrance is in the center of the west elevation. Set back from the sidewalk and street, with a low profile and dark color, and with trees and a post fence separating it from road and pedestrian traffic, the building is unobtrusive and inconspicuous. It remains, however, an outstanding example of log construction in addition to its historic importance.

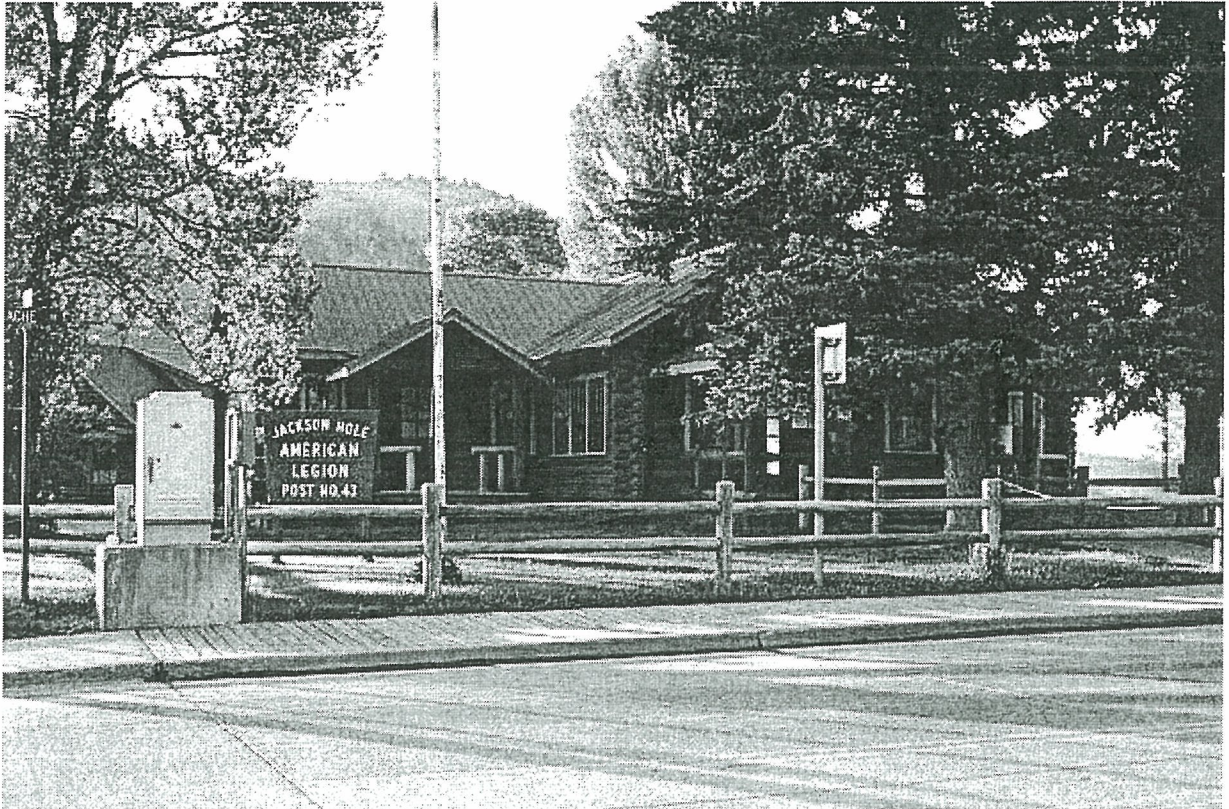
The west elevation is actually complex, consisting of three parts with the central portion projecting (one part of the cross) and flanked by matching entrances into the rooms formed by the north and south wings, under smaller gable canopies. Vertical log posts support the canopies and the posts are connected to the building by log rails. Thus, in addition to the main entrance under the canopy in the center of the west elevation, two other entrances open into the side wings from the west. The central, or main, entrance is flanked by two vertical double-hung windows (with six lights up and six lights below), one on each side. A set of similar windows in a grouping of three open into the north and south walls of that central projection. Likewise, the west entrances to the north and south projections are flanked by the same kind of double-hung windows, one on each side of the door. Then the north elevation of the north projection contains a pair of the same windows.

The east elevation, including the eastern exposures of the north and south projections of the cross, is fundamentally simple with another pair of double-hung windows on the east elevation of the north projection, three separate double-hung windows on the north elevation of the east projection, and a set of three double-hung windows centered in the east elevation of the east projection. An external entrance to the basement, however, creates an additional element where the east and north portions of the cross converge. A shed canopy that slopes to the north, supported by three vertical log posts, covers the entrance to the basement on the eastern extreme of the east projection. Because the surrounding yard slopes to the east, the foundation actually rises several feet above the adjacent yard and allows room for casement windows into the basement on each elevation; this appears to be an addition since the original construction, but the date is not certain. More significantly, the building itself has been enlarged on the south side of the east projection and on the east side of the south projection. Small rooms have been added in those enlargements. While they are noticeable because of the alteration in the symmetry (though not a compromise of the general configuration of the structure), the additions blend well because of the extension of the gables, because of the use of a similar colored log-siding, and because of an effort to continue the lines of the existing logs into the siding. The tell-tale signs are the absence of chinking (quarter-round chinking in the original portions) and the boxed corners (compared with the saddle-notched corners in the original building). These additions have one double-hung window

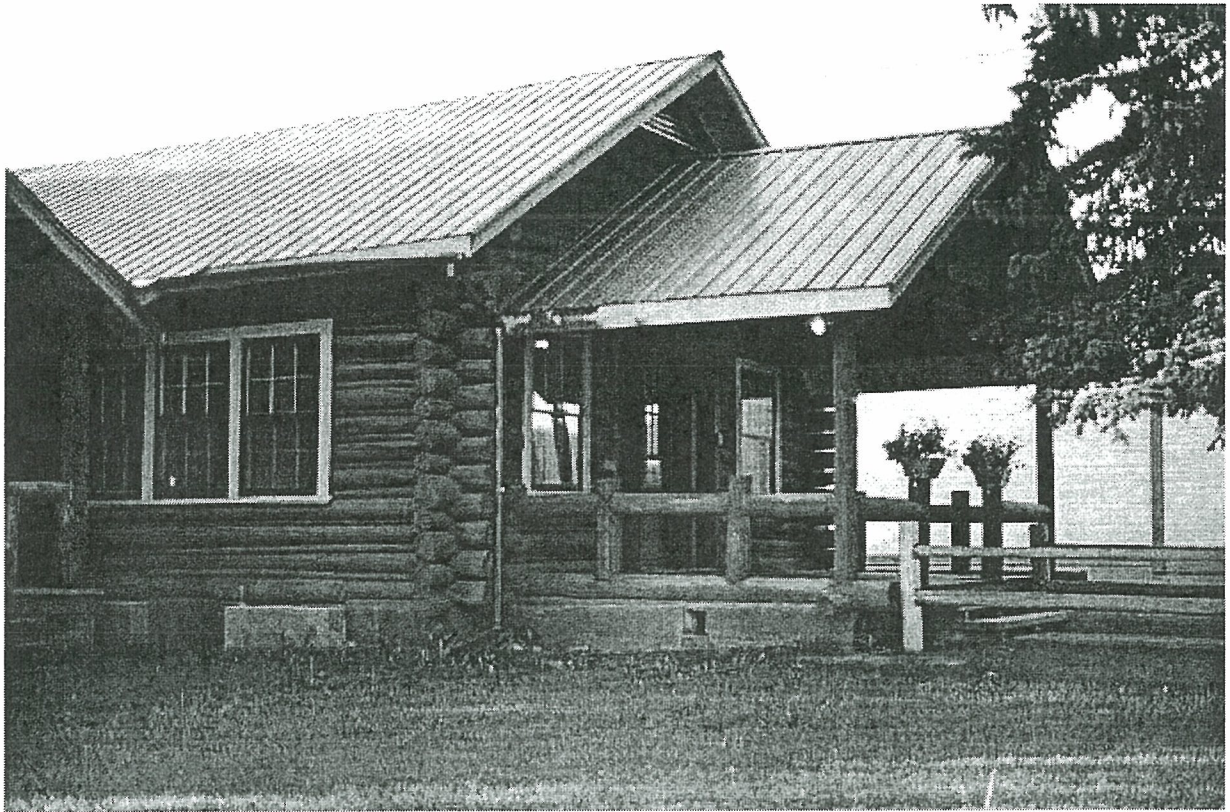
on the east elevation of the east projection and one on the south elevation of the south projection. In the original portion of the east elevation a pair of double-hung windows are centered. Thus the building has been altered from its original 1929 construction, but the alterations have been in keeping with the original design and appearance.

Photos: Please attach black and white photos

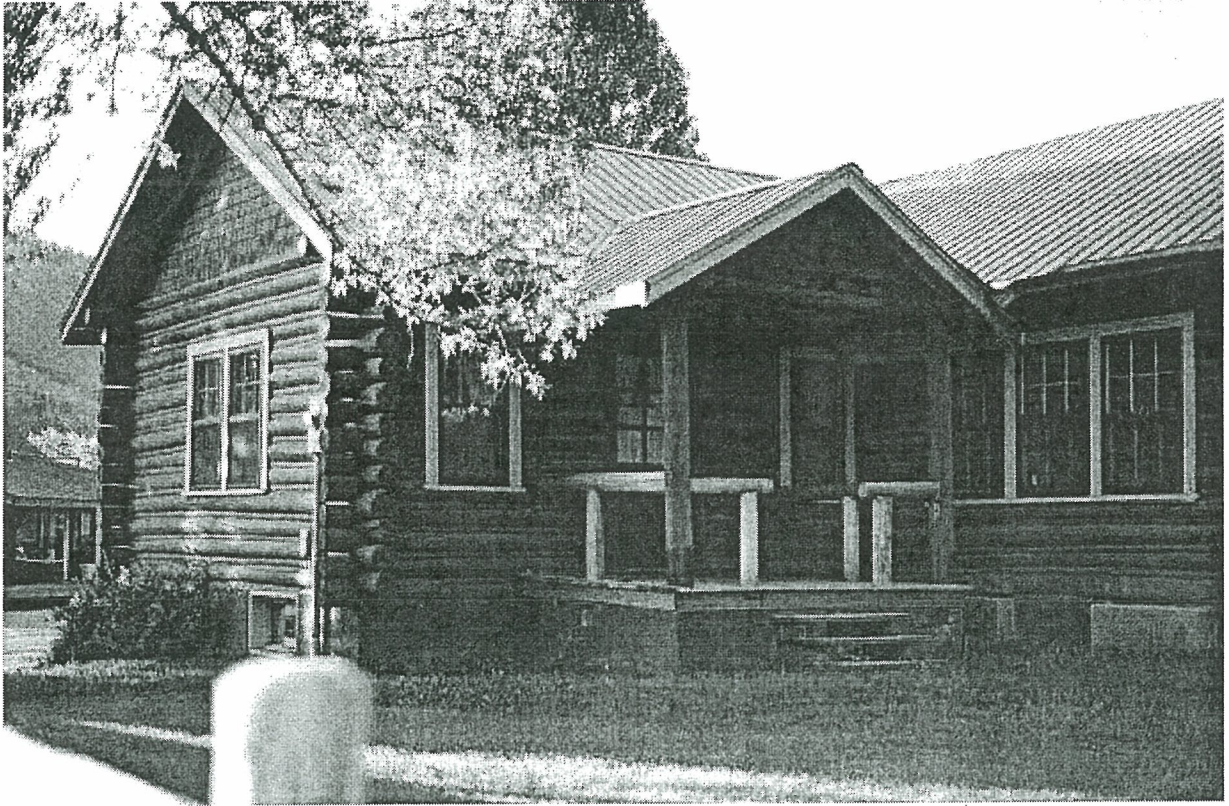
American Legion Building. West Elevation. Photograph by Michael Cassity.



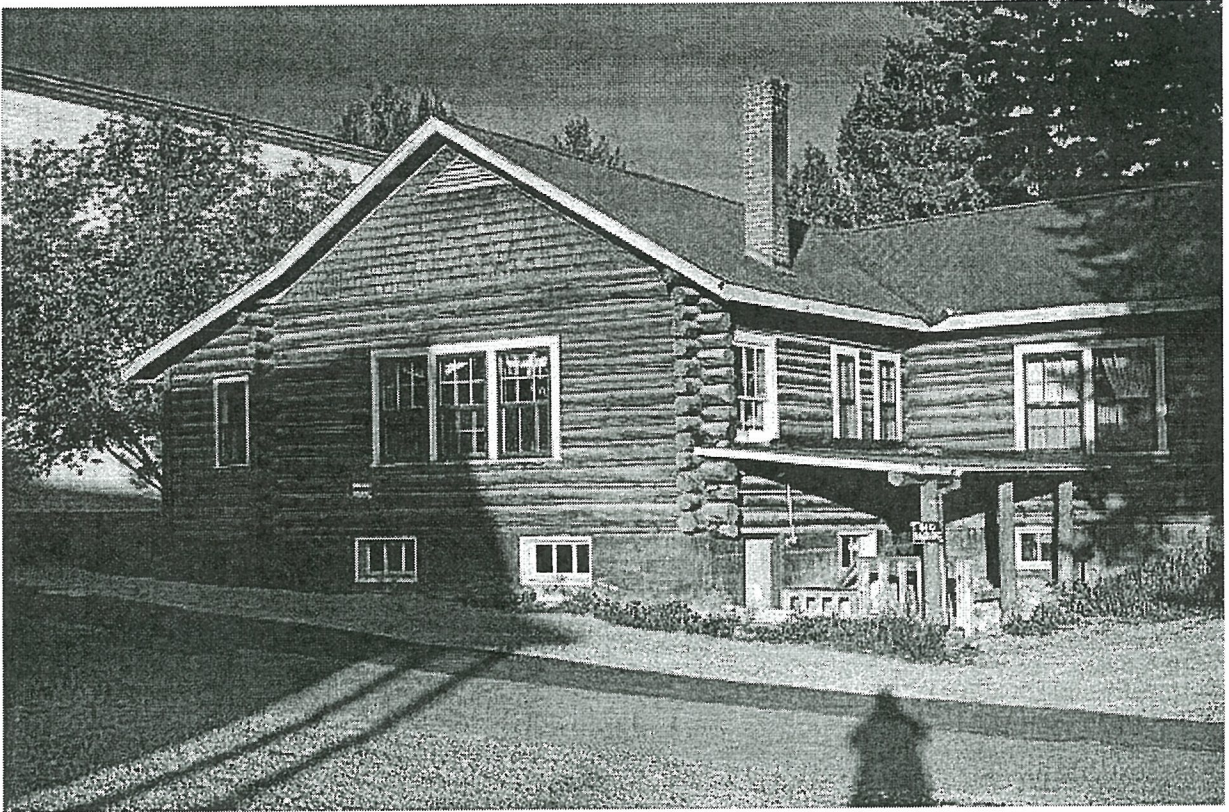
American Legion Building. Detail, main entrance, west elevation. Photograph by Michael Cassity.



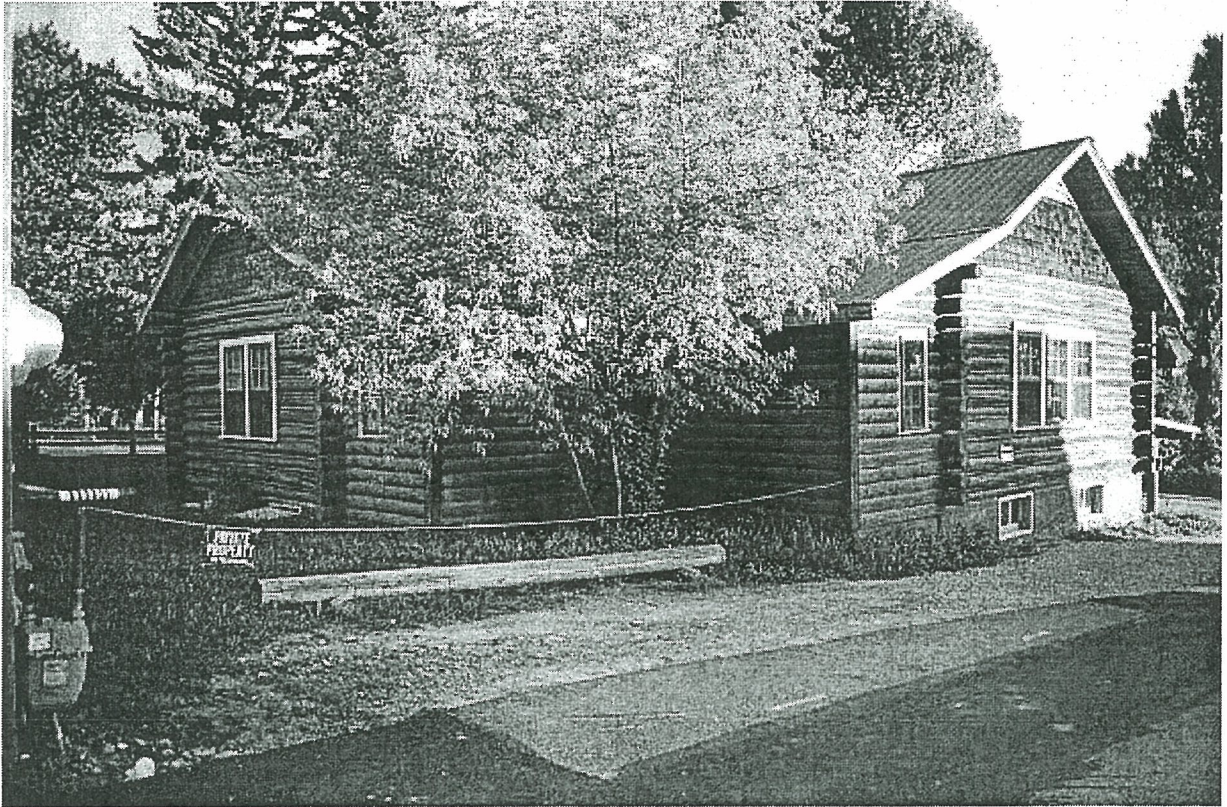
American Legion Building. Detail, west and north elevations of north projection of cross-shaped structure. Photograph by Michael Cassity.



American Legion Building. East elevation indicating basement entrance in north elevation of east projection and also addition on south elevation of east projection.



American Legion Building. South and east elevations indicating additions with boxed corners.



10. Statement of Significance:

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions). Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
 social development

Period of Significance
 1929-1950

Significant Dates
 1929

Architect/Builder _____
Associated Individual _____
Cultural Affiliation : _____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

In the large picture, the American Legion emerged after World War I as an organization that sought to bring veterans of the war together as a political and social force especially with the purpose of protecting their economic interests and influencing future decisions about armed conflict. The organization spread across the country in the 1920s and quickly became a powerful agency, especially in the enactment of legislation providing benefits for veterans of the recent war that would be distributed to them in their retirement years. At the local level the Legion usually served a broad social role, bringing together individuals who had served in the military and who now served their communities.

American Legion Post Number 43 in Jackson was chartered April 20, 1920. Its membership roster included a number of names of individuals and representatives of families that especially provided the core of leadership and commerce in the small town: Bruce Porter, Chester Simpson, Billy Mercill, Almer Nelson, Ray Reed, Henry Francis, Buster Estes, James Deloney, Felix Buchenroth, Brian Nowlin, Allen Budge, Fred Deyo, A. A. Bean, and Lester Leek. Significantly, the group reflected the town rather than the country, the commercial and professional rather than the agricultural, and the affluent rather than the marginal. In this way, the local American Legion post also contributed to the leadership of the community by its business elite. During the agricultural depression of the 1920s, that leadership likely proved critical as the area shifted gradually to a business-oriented economy instead of an agricultural economy. Holding its meetings in the Clubhouse on the square, in a manner not uncommon in Wyoming at the time, the American Legion became a community center of sorts that attracted townspeople for purposes that went well beyond the official purposes of the organization. Mardi Murie recalls that the American Legion dances were enormously popular in the valley and provided recreation that drew people from miles away. Indeed, at the American Legion dances Olaus and Margaret Murie met Buster and Frances Estes, owners of a dude ranch, who then assisted the Muries in their moose and wapiti projects. (Olaus Murie would become commander of Post No. 43 in the early 1930s.) The American Legion was more than just a meeting hall for veterans. By 1929 the post had prospered sufficiently that it was able to construct a building in which to have its meetings and conduct its business. The first issue of the local newspaper in 1930 proudly and graphically depicted the two major building accomplishments of the previous year—the Jackson – Wilson High School and the American Legion Home.

It was only appropriate, then, in 1933 that the American Legion Home served as the location of a critical event in the history of the valley. As it became clear that John D. Rockefeller had been secretly buying up properties in the valley with the intent of consolidating the lands and giving them to the United States, local ranchers and their allies, especially the Wyoming Congressional delegation, mobilized a vigorous campaign against the move that would ultimately turn agricultural and business land into a national park. Senator Robert Carey, in particular, called for an investigation into the activities of the Park Service and the Snake River Land Company as a political device to secure compromises from the

Rockefeller – National Park Service coalition. The conservation forces, however, welcomed such an investigation and the hearing took place August 7-10, 1933 in the American Legion Home of Jackson, Senators Carey, Norbeck and Nye in attendance. Much of the community also attended these pivotal hearings. Historian Robert Righter quotes Snake River Land Company agent Harold Fabian that during the hearings, “there wasn’t a dish washed in Jackson They were all in the hearing hall.” Although Carey’s negative position was reflected in the aggressive posture of the sub-committee’s counsel, the hearings proved no illegal collusion, no illegal actions, and in fact produced detailed information that generally exonerated the land-purchasing effort and the proposal to administer the lands by the Park Service. While this did not produce an end to the controversy or a solution to the problem, additional such hearings were canceled and the issue moved to a new level.

In subsequent years the American Legion post remained active and still maintains its building which it shares with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and also serves as a Christian Science Reading Room. The building, now dwarfed by larger and more extravagant structures in downtown Jackson, sits quietly and usually unremarked by passers-by except perhaps as a quaint log cabin put to social use. The significance of this grand building and of the hearings that took place within its walls remains powerful, though seldom examined.

11. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Jackson Hole *Guide*, April 25, 1968.

Jackson Hole *Courier*, January 2, 1930.

Robert Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park* (n.p.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982).

Lorraine G. Bonney, *Bonney's Guide to Jackson's Hole and Grand Teton National Park* (Revised Second edition; Moose: Homestead Publishing, 1995).

Margaret and Olaus Murie, *Wapiti Wilderness* (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1985).

12. Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other

Specific repository(ies)

Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum

13. Geographical data:

Acreage of property: less than one acre

USGS Quad or City Base map: Jackson, WY 1:24,000 Quadrangle

Section

Township

Range

UTM References:

12 519116E

4814177N

Verbal Boundary Description:

This property includes the entire lot situated at the southeast corner of the intersection of Cache and Gill, and thus the northwest corner of the block on which it is located.

Boundary Justification:

The historic property conforms to the physical and legal property descriptions.

14: Form prepared by: Michael Cassity, August 1, 1999

MICHAEL CASSITY HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND PHOTOGRAPHY
1101 DOWNEY, #1
LARAMIE, WYOMING 82072
307 / 742-8272

1532 NORTH RIVER WEST COURT #1A
MOUNT PROSPECT, ILLINOIS 60056
847 / 296-9947

MJCASSITY@AOL.COM
