

Teton County Historic Site Survey

1. Name of Property

historic name Bruce Porter House

other name/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 185 E. Hansen not for publication

city or town Jackson vicinity

state Wyoming code WY county Teton code 039 zip code 83001

3. Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

4. Category of Property

(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

5. Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>3</u>	_____	Total

Property Owner

name/title Jeannine Gill and Roberta Brazelton

street & number P. O. Box 128 telephone _____

city or town Jackson state WY zip code 83001

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

National Register Status:

- Eligible
- Not Eligible
- Unevaluated
- District Potential

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single residence

Horizontal lines for text entry under Historic Function.

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce / Trade: business

Horizontal lines for text entry under Current Function.

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other

Horizontal lines for text entry under Architectural Classification.

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls siding

roof metal

other

Horizontal lines for text entry under Materials.

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

Social History
[Blank lines for text entry]

Period of Significance

c. 1922-1955

Significant Dates

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Bruce Porter

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

[X] See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS) with checkboxes.

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data with checkboxes.

Jackson Hole Historical Society

[X] See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/2 5/1/9/4/8/6 4/8/1/3/7/7/9
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/2 ////// //////
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/2 ////// //////
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/2 ////// //////
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Maps**
- **Photographs:** Representative photographs of the property.

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Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 409

Bruce Porter House

Narrative Description

The Bruce Porter House is located at the northwest corner of Hansen and Willow in a residential area where several of the largest historic homes in Jackson Hole can be found. One rough shorthand method often used by locals to assess the age of a property at a glance is the size of the trees on the lot, and the spruce, fir, and cottonwoods at the Bruce Porter House are huge. The house, which draws upon several stylistic influences, is also large and the wood frame two-story building is one of the most imposing and impressive in the community.

The Porter house is a two-story building that fronts to the south on Hansen. The house was probably built around 1922 but appears to have been enlarged in several stages in the years following. The core of the building is a one and one-half story gabled building with ridge on a north-south axis. Early photos show a small shed dormer on the west slope of that roof. To that core the larger shed dormers on the east and west have been added and so too the gabled dormers that currently give the building its cross-gable appearance. Plus, the area that originally served as a front porch on the east side of the south elevation has been enclosed to make the south wing of the building with the main entrance. Those additions, however, appear to have come prior to the end of the period of historic significance so they do not compromise the integrity of the building. The south wing of the building is under a steeply-pitched gable roof on an east-west axis, but the entryway on the south projects forward and is itself gabled with the entrance on the west elevation of the projection. The east elevation, on Willow, shows some of the real size of the building as well as its general design. The south section of the west elevation includes a ribbon of three double-hung windows on the south and a large native stone chimney north of the windows that rises the full two-story height of the building; to the north of the fireplace is a bay window which is then followed by smaller windows toward the rear (north) of the house. Above the bay and the additional windows, a shed dormer stretches from the north slope of the roof on the front section of the building almost all the way to the north elevation and contains two pairs of double-hung windows. The west elevation contains the same general design as the east, but there is no fireplace and the dormer is slightly shorter with only one pair of windows. A deck / porch extends to the west near the north extreme of the elevation and is accessed from the house by a pair of French doors. Additional entrances are located on the north elevation and on the north end of the east elevation.

The property is fenced with a combination of stone (on the west) and other fencing materials. At the northwest corner of the lot is a garage / barn that is a simple rectangular structure with a sliding door on the north (alley) elevation that dates from the period of significance and at the northeast corner is another garage. A second garage at the northeast corner of the lot may have been added after the period of significance, but that has not been ascertained yet and, pending further investigation in case of a nomination, is currently being considered a contributing feature.

There is also a gazebo, or roofed sitting area, in the backyard that is not considered contributing or noncontributing because of its size.

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Bruce Porter House

Integrity note: One of the necessary qualities a historic property must possess to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places is integrity of structure, materials, workmanship, location, appearance, feeling, and association. National Register Bulletin #16A defines integrity as “authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic or prehistoric period.” The Bruce Porter House obviously retains most of those characteristics, but the siding that currently clads the exterior of the house is not a historic material. It is important to recognize that there are those reviewers who would object to the building’s integrity on the sole grounds of the modern siding it now has. Even so, Section VIII of the National Register Bulletin, HOW TO EVALUATE THE INTEGRITY OF A PROPERTY, notes that:

If the historic exterior building material is covered by non-historic material (such as modern siding), the property can still be eligible if the significant form, features, and detailing are not obscured. If a property's exterior is covered by a non-historic false-front or curtain wall, the property will not qualify under Criteria A, B, or C, because it does not retain the visual quality necessary to convey historic or architectural significance.

This house is therefore considered contributing to the eligibility of the property.

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Bruce Porter House



Bruce Porter House, Jackson, Wyoming. Looking northeast. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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Bruce Porter House



Bruce Porter House, Jackson, Wyoming. Looking northwest. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

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Bruce Porter House



Bruce Porter House, Jackson, Wyoming. West elevation, partial view, looking east. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

Teton County Historic Site Survey Continuation Sheet

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Bruce Porter House



Bruce Porter House, Jackson, Wyoming. Garage / barn at northwest corner of lot, looking east.
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2005.

Teton County Historic Site Survey

Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8 Page 415

Bruce Porter House

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Bruce Porter House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B because of its association with a significant individual. It is probably also significant under Criterion A, in the area of Social History, but only Criterion B is addressed here.

Bruce Porter was probably the single most powerful individual in shaping the course of the town of Jackson in the period of historic significance currently under discussion. While there is no absolute measure of power in the community, and while some would accord that distinction (in both its positive and negative attributes) to others, there is no doubt that along with physician and mayor Dr. Charles Huff and banker and developer Robert Miller, the three were the critical individuals in positions to determine the course of Jackson and Jackson Hole. Porter kept often a lower profile than Miller and he lived longer than Huff. Porter was involved in the building of the community in ways both bold and subtle, and while he is often thought of just as the man who ran the drugstore, Robert Bruce Porter was substantially more.

Porter grew up in Nebraska, trained to be a pharmacist in Omaha, and then went to Denver, but soon found himself in the new town of Jackson, where he went to work for Jim Simpson in the Jackson Drug Company and he was married to Ethel Callahan (sister of Walt Callahan in Wilson) in 1912. After returning from service in World War I, he purchased the drug company from Simpson (1919) and the store was located in the Clubhouse from 1923, perhaps earlier, until it moved to north of the square in 1937. From his position in the drug store, which sold not only pharmaceuticals but sundries as well, Porter moved in several important directions. One was to develop other businesses. After the flood washed out the bridge over the Snake River near Wilson, he and Chester Simpson established a commercial ferry to carry traffic across the river. In the early 1920s he opened a movie theater in the upstairs of the Clubhouse—which he owned—and which was a center of community activity and he then bought the Rainbow Palace in 1931. Just before World War II he built the Teton Theater behind his new rock drug store. And he operated the post office in the old drug store. In 1929 Porter invested in and became the Wyoming resident agent for what had been Ben Sheffield's Teton Lodge but which was now owned by the Snake River Land Company. He also began to acquire additional properties. According to his daughter Roberta, around 1926 he purchased his first ranch along the Snake River near Count's Hot Springs (which he also acquired later) and subsequently purchased others, including the Stephen Leek homestead ranch in South Park and, as she said in a 1994 interview, "he purchased several other ranches in the valley over a period of years and, eventually, got into the cattle business." Plus, he became one of the chief lenders for others who were acquiring land or businesses. One of the reasons for this no doubt was the prevailing high interest rate charged by Robert Miller and his bank; set at a constant 12%, the high interest caused some to call Miller "Old Twelve Percent." Porter, or anyone with liquid assets, could obviously provide a loan on a more favorable basis. His daughter recalled that "when he acquired a little money there were people that couldn't get money other places and he would stake them. A lot of people came to my father for advice. There would be a steady stream in there and they'd just sit down in a chair and talk to him. . . . Then when he got more money to loan more

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Bruce Porter House

people came to him.” Bruce Porter clearly had become one of the key individuals shaping the physical development of the town and valley. He also served on the school board for 13 years, on the city council for 6 years, on the Board of Directors of St. John’s Hospital, and in the Wyoming State Senate for 4 years. He also was an outspoken opponent—or, as his daughter Roberta termed it, “he was one of the violent protestors against the park,”—of the expansion of Grand Teton National Park by the acquisition of private holdings by the Snake River Land Company and then the creation of the Jackson Hole National Monument. Again, as his daughter recalled, “As far as I can remember we always hated the park.”

When he died in 1961, his obituary noted that “few people had a greater impact upon a country than did Bruce. With uncanny ability to sense opportunity, his counsel was constantly sought. Helping financially, an amazing number owe their start to his aid and good judgment.”

For a property to be considered under Criterion B for its association with a significant individual, that property must be shown to be the most representative property and must be related to the activities that made him or her significant. In the case of Bruce Porter, there are many properties with which he was associated that reflect his involvement, but his own home was a special place to him, where he planted the trees and diverted water to assure their growth, and it was also probably the longest associated with him. He purchased the property in 1922 just as he was becoming active in the business community of Jackson. The house was probably built by Henry Crabtree, but this is not a documented fact. Porter did purchase the property in a complex arrangement with Rose and Henry Crabtree, and certainly Crabtree was active in the building business and was capable of a house like this; plus, it does not bear the distinguishing marks of Charles Fox the other leading candidate for constructing the house, although that possibility should not be dismissed.

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Bruce Porter House

Bibliography

- "Bruce Porter, Pioneer Jackson Businessman, Rancher, Philanthropist, Called by Death," *Jackson Hole Guide*, March 23, 1961.
- Daugherty, John. *A Place Called Jackson Hole* (Moose, Wyoming: Grand Teton National Park, 1999).
- Land Records, Office of the County Clerk, Teton County, Wyoming.
- McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 2000).
- Nelson, Fern. *This Was Jackson's Hole: Incidents & Profiles from the Settlement of Jackson Hole* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1994).
- Porter, Roberta. Interview with Jo Anne Byrd, October 20, 1994, in Jackson Hole Historical Society oral history collections.
- Righter, Robert. *Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park* (n.p.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982).
- Telephone Directories, Mountain States Telephone Company, 1946, 1948, 1953, 1955, 1964.

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Bruce Porter House

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

This property consists of part of lots 9, 10, 11, block 8, 2nd Cache Creek Addition, Town of Jackson, Wyoming.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Bruce Porter House.

Bruce Porter House

