Moses B. Stevens Homestead
(High Point)
Pinon Canyon
In the southern portion of Red Rocks Canyon
approximately 19 miles east of U.S. Highway 350
Model Vicinity
Las Animas County
Colorado

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED MEASURED DRAWING

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287
MOSES B. STEVENS HOMESTEAD (High Point)

HABS No. CO-94

For more information about other structures at the Moses B. Stevens Homestead, see:

- HABS No. CO-94-A: Moses B. Stevens Homestead, Residence
- HABS No. CO-94-B: Moses B. Stevens Homestead, Wagon Shed
- HABS No. CO-94-C: Moses B. Stevens Homestead, Barn
- HABS No. CO-94-D: Moses B. Stevens Homestead, Outbuilding
- HABS No. CO-94-E: Moses B. Stevens Homestead, Residence

Location: In the southern portion of Red Rocks Canyon, approximately 19 miles east of U. S. Highway 350, Model vicinity, Las Animas County, Colorado, the original claim included the S 1/2 of the SW 1/4 of Section 22, the NW 1/4 section of the NW 1/4 of Section 27, and the NE 1/4 section of the NE 1/4 of Section 28 (160 acres total), Township 29 South, Range 57 West. The ranch is located within the United States Army's Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site and within the HABS district Pinon Canyon (HABS No. CO-96).

UTM Reference: 13, 607320, 4150400

Present Owner: United States Army

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The Moses B. Stevens Homestead is an outstanding example of stone vernacular architecture found in the Pinon Canyon area of Las Animas County, Colorado. The ranch consists of five structures: two residences, one of which was reused as a barn, a wagon shed, a barn, and the ruins of a fifth building. These sandstone structures are distinctive for the massive size and patterning of the stones incorporated in their walls. The size of the one-and-one-half barns is also notable. No other stone structures over one story high exist within a twenty-mile radius. The five vernacular structures at the homestead make use of the most easily available building material and utilize the material in such a way that it remains a part of the natural setting. In addition to its use in the structures, stone has been utilized extensively to build walls and fences around the outbuildings and in the canyon below.
Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Dates of Erection:

During testimony to get his homestead claim approved, Moses Stevens and his witnesses, Asa T. Haines (see Asa T. Haines Homestead, HABS No. CO-92) and Lyman M. Plimpton, stated that all structures built by Stevens in 1886 were of jacal. The stone structures were most likely erected by the Swink family who gained possession of the land in 1900 and built the structures soon thereafter.

2. Original and Subsequent Owners:
(Source: Las Animas County Land Records on file at the Trinidad Abstract and Title Co., Trinidad, Colorado.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Filed</th>
<th>Owner:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 1900</td>
<td>Moses B. Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11, 1900</td>
<td>Lewis Swink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11, 1913</td>
<td>[ack] M. Bawman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 1917</td>
<td>Mary Reynolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22, 1922</td>
<td>J.M. Bawman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10, 1930</td>
<td>A.S. Kitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(purchased from E.A. Duling, Sheriff)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 1954</td>
<td>James Paul Kitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18, 1979</td>
<td>Joe, Michael, Nicholas, and Ray Faris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 13, 1979</td>
<td>Paragon Resources, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 13, 1979</td>
<td>Michael, Gary, and Patrick Oberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 11, 1983</td>
<td>United States Army</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 National Archives, Washington, D.C. Certificate No. 4197 filed by Moses B. Stevens of Las Animas County, Colorado under the Pre-emption Act in 1886 and patented on March 5, 1890 by the Pueblo, Colorado Land Office. Stevens and his witnesses stated only 1/4 mile of fence was built of stone.

2 According to Robert Hill, a local rancher, the Swink family had the help of local jailers brought over from the town of Swink. Hill received his information from "Skinny" Jennings, the former foreman for Sam Kitch, who purchased the Stevens homestead in 1930. Interviews by Al Wiatr and Michelle McFadden, July 27, August 16, 1989.
B. Historical Context:

Moses B. Stevens, a cattle rancher, began residing on the land he homesteaded in December, 1883. He entered a claim on the 160-acre tract of land under the Pre-emption Act and received a patent on March 5, 1890. Lester Swink acquired the property two weeks later and it became part of a 320-acre parcel of land he used for cattle grazing. The Swink family was involved in farming in and around Rocky Ford, Colorado. The family helped to found the town of Swink which became a sugar beet-processing center. Their involvement with cattle may be due in part to the sugar beet tops which make excellent fodder for stock. The Swinks sold the land in 1913; little is known about J.M. Bawman or Mary Reynolds, who held title for the next decade. The Stevens Homestead was purchased by Sam Kitch in 1930, during the period in which he began buying land for a ranch which eventually encompassed more than 50,000 acres. Kitch also owned the Haines Homestead (see HABS No. Co-92.) The Kitch family sold the land in 1979 and various owners had possession until the Army acquired it in 1983.

Part II. Architectural Context

The Moses B. Stevens Homestead Site is located above Red Rock Canyon and accessible by a dirt track road which extends northeast from a dirt track road which extends south from Pinon Canyon Road 1 (see HABS No. CO-94-1 and -2.) The northeast dirt track road passes through tall fence posts; the sign on the north fence post is no longer readable.

The original structures built by Stevens were constructed of jacal. Jacal, a method and material first utilized in southeastern Colorado by Hispanic immigrants, was a popular construction technique used by settlers because it does not require the time-consuming manufacture of adobe bricks.\(^3\) Juniper (which was referred to as "cedar" in the Stevens claim) posts were embedded in the ground as the walls of a structure. The spaces between the wood posts were chinked with wood and adobe mud, then plastered with various materials. Moses B. Stevens built a "dwelling house of cedar pickets, ... a cedar post corral large enough for 200 head of cattle, a stable of cedar logs, and a wagon shed of cedar logs."\(^4\) The residence, described as "a comfortable house during all seasons of the year," was a one-room building with a dirt


\(^4\)National Archives, Certificate No. 4197. These improvements were worth about $400. Although Stevens distinguishes between the "pickets" used in the residence and "logs" in the outbuildings, Haines and Plimpton, the witnesses, do not, with the exception of the stable. Haines states it was constructed of "poles," indicating the structure was probably not horizontal log construction.
floor and roof, one door, two windows, an iron cookstove, a fireplace, a chimney, and plastered walls.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Swinks constructed buildings of stone, thus replacing the early construction technique, jacal, with a more durable one. The site is composed of four structures and the ruins of a fifth located on a ridge above the south side of a canyon which runs east-west. From the west, there are ruins of a one-room building; a barn, a wagon shed, and a horse barn, which form a tight circle; and a residence 200’ to the east. All of the buildings are constructed of sandstone, and are impressive for their masonry work. Sandstone was a common building material in the area, utilized by homesteaders in for both residences and outbuildings.

The residence, which has a segmentally-arched roof over the two south rooms, is the largest structure on the site and measures approximately 35’ wide x 15’ deep. This type of roof, derived from Anglo Plains architecture, was common in the Pinon Canyon area. The layout of the ranch shows a sharp spatial distinction between work and residence structures. The outbuildings are erected very close to one another. One or possibly both of the barns were originally constructed as residences; their front doors, window openings, and gable roofs are features typical domestic buildings.

Several stone walls extend beyond the wagon shed and barns to form enclosed areas for animals. The walls also extend down the slope of the canyon, and there is one wall on the opposite side of the canyon. These walls kept the cattle within the canyon. Also located down the canyon slope is a spring with a low concrete catch pond. The site does not have electric service or plumbing. The site is in poor condition as all of the buildings are collapsing.

Part III. Sources of Information

A. Bibliography


B. Supplemental Material

National Archives, Washington, D.C. Certificate No. 4197 filed by Moses B. Stevens of Las Animas County, Colorado in 1886 and patented on March 5, 1890 by the Pueblo, Colorado Land Office.

Prepared by: Michelle McFadden
Al Wiatr
Historians
National Park Service
October 1989

Note: For Historical and Architectural Overviews, see also HABS No. CO-96.

Part IV. Project Information

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) team of the Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service, under the direction of Senior Historian Gregory Kendrick and Historical Architect Thomas G. Keohan. Documentation was completed during the summer of 1989 at the HABS field office in Pinon Canyon, Colorado, by project supervisor Alfonso Narvaez, architectural technicians Jim Duran, John Kirkpatrick, and Eric Miller, and project historians Michelle McFadden and Al Wiatr.