

Lamar Buffalo Ranch
Yellowstone National Park
East of Tower Roosevelt on Northeast Entrance Road
Canyon Village Vicinity
Park County
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-104

HABS
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15-CANVILY
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Rocky Mountain System Support Office
National Park Service
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LAMAR BUFFALO RANCH

HABS No. WY-104

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Location: Lamar Buffalo Ranch, 10 miles east of Tower Roosevelt and 19 miles southwest of Northeast Entrance on Northeast Entrance Road, Yellowstone National Park, Canyon Village Vicinity, Park County, Wyoming.

Significance: The Lamar Buffalo Ranch, located where Rose Creek drains into the Lamar River in the northeast corner of Yellowstone National Park, is significant for its role in the preservation of the bison herds that have become characteristic of the park today.

Description: The complex consists of a ranger station, a bunkhouse, a maintenance residence, a horse barn, and a corral. Also in the area are 18 rustic cabins moved to the ranch from the Fishing Bridge area in 1981 to house members of the Yellowstone Institute.

The ranger station is a one story L-plan structure constructed of horizontally placed logs with trough type false cornering and concrete chinking. It has four sided, cedar shingled roof with a brick chimney extending from the peak. A gabled extension of the roof covers the kitchen and storage area. A framed-in porch has been added as well as a shed porch on the rear. The structure is on a concrete foundation.

The bunkhouse is a rectangular log structure with the dimensions of 25'6" x 73'6". It is a double saddlenotched structure with a wood shingled gable roof. It is on a cobblestone foundation and has a shed porch on its west end.

The maintenance residence is a one story L-shaped log structure with four rooms and a bath. The structure measures 48' x 19' with the extension measuring 9' x 18'. It has a wood shingled gable roof with a stone masonry chimney. The structure rests on a stone faced concrete foundation.

The horse barn is a one and one-half story log structure with a rectangular plan. It measures 31' x 51' and has double saddlenotched logs chinked with sapling and mortar up to the roof eaves. The barn has a wood shingled gambrel roof with a log pole ridge cap. The eaves have no chinking between the logs in order to provide ventilation for stored hay in the loft. The east and west facades have vertical board barn doors with wrought iron hinges and hardware. The north and south elevations contain five venting windows each. The interior contains several horse stalls at ground level. The barn is on a capped rubblestone foundation and has wooden planked floors.

History: In 1902, Congress allocated money for the maintenance of a bison herd in Yellowstone National Park. This herd was originally kept at Fort Yellowstone. In 1907, the park's domesticated bison herd had outgrown its corral at the fort. Consequently, twenty-eight bison were moved to a corral in the Lamar River Valley near Rose Creek. This was the former site of squatter Buckskin Jim Cutter's homestead. Thus began the history of bison management in the Lamar River Valley.

The ranger station was constructed in 1915 and rangers began an extensive wildlife management plan in relation to the bison. Initially the bison were managed using traditional cattle ranching techniques. The valley near the ranch was planted and maintained for grazing. The ranch workers would inoculate, castrate, and round up bison in the process of preserving the herd. The work was dangerous as the bison had a wilder nature than did cattle. However, no fatalities were ever reported.

In 1927 the barn was constructed and in 1929 the bunkhouse was added by the National Park Service. Operations continued and expanded as the park's wild herd was allowed to breed with the domesticated animals. Following 1930, the focus gradually shifted from cattle ranching techniques to preservation in the animals natural habitat. Bison were allowed to graze all summer. Roundups were phased out. In 1939 the roundups ended and the bison were attracted by baiting the area with hay. The last baiting occurred in 1952.

Several structures were moved to the ranch from other areas of the park. In 1938 the maintenance residence was moved to the ranch from the Soda Butte area. It had previously been used as a ranger station. Its date of construction is unknown. In 1981, eighteen cabins were moved from the Fishing Bridge area to house members of the Yellowstone Institute. The Yellowstone Institute currently uses the cabins and the bunkhouse for educational programs. The Lamar Buffalo Ranch, with the exception of the added 18 cabins, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Sources: Mary Shivers Culpin, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Lamar Buffalo Ranch," National Park Service, 1982.

Aubrey L. Haines, The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two, Colorado Associated University Press, 1977.

Historian: Michael J. Smith, HABS Historian, 1996.