

Death Valley Ranch Garage/Long Shed/Bunkhouse
Death Valley National Monument
Inyo County
California

HABS No. CA-2257 C

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PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DEATH VALLEY RANCH GARAGE-"LONG SHED"-BUNK HOUSE
(Scotty's Gastle, Motel-Garage)

HABS No. GA-2257 G

Location: National Park Service Route 5 (commonly known as the North Highway), 25 miles west of the junction of US Route 95 with Nevada State Route 267 (commonly known as Scotty's Junction), Death Valley National Monument, Inyo County, California.

Present Owner: National Park Service.

Present Use: Motel - Employee housing and maintenance storage.
Garage - Gift shop and snack bar.

Significance: The Garage was the first building designed and constructed at Death Valley Ranch and one of the first few that were designed by Johnson himself. It housed a wide variety of vital functions that ranged from living and office space to religious services. The Bunk House and "Long Shed" were added to the Garage in response to the constantly expanding plans for construction and the growing need for additional living and work space. They, unlike most of the adjoining Garage, were not remodeled in the "Spanish Mediterranean" style and illustrate the original finishes and strict rectangularity conformed to by Johnson.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Note: For general information on the Death Valley Ranch complex, see HABS No. GA-2257.

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection:

- November 1922 - Johnson designed the Garage.¹
- January 1923 - Johnson designed the Poultry House.²
- November 1924 - Johnson designed the Shed.³
- February 1926 - The Bunk House complete enough for occupancy. The concrete slab roof of the shed poured.⁴
- March 1926 - Water pipe into the bunkhouse and the shed completed.⁵
- By March 1929 - The remodeling of the Garage in "Spanish Mediterranean" style completed.⁶
- 1979 - With NPS approval, TW Services remodels the interior of the Garage to accommodate a Gift Shop and Snack Bar.⁷

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2. Architect: Albert M. Johnson designed the original structures and Charles Alexander MacNeilledge designed the remodeling of the Garage. He also designed the few window and door trimmings that were added to the Bunkhouse. TW Services, the park's concessionaire, sponsored the interior remodeling of the Garage. The architectural firm of Hansen, Murakami, Eshima, Inc., Oakland, California, designed new doors, windows and infill for the doors and windows that were removed from the Garage. They also redesigned the interior of the Bunk House. Ganteen Corporation, Chicago, Illinois, redesigned the interior of the Garage for use as a Snack Bar and Gift Shop.⁸
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

Albert Mussey Johnson (c.1922-1948)
Gospel Foundation (1948-1970)
National Park Service (1970-Present)
4. Builder, suppliers:

General Superintendent - M. Roy Thompson
Building Superintendent - F. W. Kropf (1922-1924)
F. X. A. Kreil (1926-1927)
H. B. Brown (1927-1930)
5. Original plans and construction: Johnson had been visiting Death Valley and its environs since 1906. His accommodations at that point consisted of tents or wooden shacks. In 1915 he began purchasing land and by 1922 started constructing more permanent structures.

The Garage, the westernmost part of the L-shaped structure, was designed by Johnson in November 1922. It was the first building constructed at the Ranch. The Reference Library has several original drawings of the Garage in Johnson's handwriting which are dated November 1922.⁹

What was originally designed to be a Poultry House was built soon after construction of the Garage, but was used as a Bunk House for the workmen instead. The Bunk House is the easternmost part of the structure. One drawing for it in the Library's collection is dated January 1, 1923.¹⁰ Another is undated and calls the building "Chicken Coop."¹¹

Johnson originally intended the Bunk House to be the Chicken Coop and it is so labeled on the drawing.¹² However, by the time it was completed the need for employee housing was so great that workmen moved in before it was fully completed.¹³ Instead of having the chicken coop as a separate structure, Johnson

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incorporated it into the design for the "Long Shed" immediately to the west of the Bunk House.

The "Long Shed" spans the area between Garage and the Bunk House. Two designs for the "Shed" are signed by Johnson and dated November 19, 1924.¹⁴ An examination of the building fabric itself indicates that the first four bays of the "Shed" were left open to the air and were infilled with wood and later plastered over. The next two rooms to the east were originally closed and probably either devoted to construction work or storage.

6. Alterations and additions: Three of the four open bays were closed at a very early date, probably in the late 1920s. By 1929 the Garage and minor parts of the Bunk House and "Long Shed" were remodeled in the "Spanish Mediterranean" style similar to the other buildings at the Ranch. In the 1930s the "Long Shed," the Bunk House, and many of the rooms of the Garage were used as a Motel. Rooms were numbered from one to ten and ran from west to east. It might have been at this time that the auto pit of the one bay left open was infilled with concrete.

In 1974 Jerry Hampton and Fred Siedentopf, NPS employees, designed and built a Ticket Booth just west of the Garage. The new structure was built over the concrete island, now incorporated into the present structure, that might have originally served as a base for the two gas pumps. Their design was modeled after a photograph taken in the 1950s of a gas station in the parking lot.¹⁵

In 1976 the roof of the Motel was covered with foam in an effort to waterproof it.¹⁶

In 1979 the interior walls of the Garage were completely removed to accommodate its use as a gift shop and snack bar. Many entrance and garage doors were removed and stored in the Barn.¹⁷ At approximately the same time wooden posts were introduced to support the end of the canopy provided by the concrete roof cantilevered over the walkway in front of the "Long Shed."¹⁸ The NPS built a wooden bench to cover the grease pit west of the Garage and a wooden containment area for garbage. The grease pit is now used for storage of soda by the concessionaire.

B. Historical Context:

At one point Johnson considered hiring Frank Lloyd Wright as the architect for what Wright termed "Johnson's Desert Dwelling." Wright prepared at least twenty different drawings for the compound, eight of which are in the Reference Library's architectural drawing collection at Scotty's Gastle. The remainder are in the possession of the Taliesin

Fellowship in Scottsdale, Arizona. Although Johnson decided not to give Wright the commission, it is possible that Johnson was influenced by Wright and his highly publicized cantilever designs. Johnson went to great lengths to include a 158' concrete slab roof that cantilevers over the walkway in front of the "Long Shed" as part of the design.

A possibility also exists that Wright was greatly impressed by his visit to Death Valley Ranch sometime before 1924. In his autobiography Wright mentions how as he drove to the site, "Nature staged a show for us all the way." In 1927 Wright established his own desert home, Ocotillo Camp, outside Chandler, Arizona. At first it too consisted chiefly of simple canvas and wood structures. Like Death Valley Ranch, it was an early stage for much greater aspirations. It formed the basis for his later design for Taliesin West, his home and studio for many years outside Scottsdale, Arizona.¹⁹

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The present structure is L-shaped in plan. It was built in three separate stages. The Garage was constructed first, followed by the Bunk House. The two were then connected by the third stage - the "Long Shed." Each stage is discrete and discernible from each other because of varying roof heights and wall setbacks. Most of the Carage and minor parts of the Bunk House and the "Long Shed" were remodeled by MacNeillidge in the Spanish style. The later buildings and one exterior section of the Carage retain the original plain white stucco finish and severe rectangularity imposed by Johnson's original design.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

Carage - 97' x 37' + Porch 16' x 8'.

Bunk House - 40' x 16'.

"Long Shed" - 158' x 22'.

2. Foundations: Concrete slab foundation. The "Long Shed" has a water table that steps up in height every forty feet because of the site's slope. It is very similar to the water table for the "Old Barn" also designed by Johnson at very nearly the same time.

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3. Wall construction, finish, color:

Garage - Most of the Garage has wood-frame walls covered with a brown and beige stucco finish. Only one section on the east side was left un-refinished. Round-arched niches have been carved out above the garage door openings of the north half of the Garage.

Bunk House and "Long Shed" - All the walls are wood frame and have a plain white stucco finish.

4. Structural system, framing:

Garage - Wood stud frame construction.

Bunk House - Wood stud frame construction.

"Long Shed" - Concrete post-and-beam construction with non-load bearing wood-frame walls. Each bay is approximately 20' wide.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Almost all the original doors are made of tongue-and-groove wood slabs and have hand-forged metal strap hinges and latches. The twin entrances in the center of the Bunk House have been trimmed with redwood and ornamented with a gabled over door with red-clay tile roof supported by carved brackets. The chicken coop of the "Long Shed" has three small hatch doors along the base of the south facade. Many of the original entrance and garage doors of the Garage have been removed and replaced with new doors and beaded board infill.

b. Windows:

Garage - The north end of the Garage has double 8-light metal-sash casement windows. The south end has double 2-light wood sash casement windows. Most of these have large redwood lintels and decorative gabled overhangs with red clay tile roofs supported by carved brackets and cross beams. All the windows on the south facade have plain wood-slab shutters.

Bunk House - Some of the windows are large 20-light wood sash type. Some are double 6-light wood-sash casement type. All are presently non-operable. All the windows of the south facade have decorative wood-slab shutters.

"Long Shed" - A wide variety of windows. The chicken coop has five evenly-spaced square windows on the south facade now boarded over on the inside with plywood and covered with copper screening on the outside. Rooms no. 7 and 8 have

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several square windows with double single-light wood-sash casement windows on the north side and larger rectangular windows of a similar type on the south. Rooms no. 5 and 6 have multiple-light metal sash non-operable windows on the north and the south. Room no. 4 has double wood-sash casement windows with single lights.

6. Chimneys: The Garage has a concealed brick chimney in the north end. It is surrounded by a circular stucco enclosure decoratively capped with brick.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

Garage - The north end of the Garage has a hip and gable roof covered with red clay tile. The south half is flat and covered with foam. The parapet walls have red-clay tile coping.

Bunk House - Flat roof covered with foam.

"Long Shed" - Flat shed roof covered with foam.

b. Cornice, eaves:

Garage - The north end of the Garage has open eaves and carved rafter ends. The parapet walls of the south end have red-clay tile coping and have been pierced with square drain spouts.

Bunk House - South parapet wall has red-clay tile coping. North and south side have square drain spouts.

"Long Shed" - South parapet wall has red-clay tile coping. North side has flat fascia with square drain spouts. A steel ring for an engine hoist survives over the open bay and auto pit.

c. Porches:

Garage - A 16'-wide porch covers the twin entries of the north facade. Features of the porch include novelty-sided sidewalls with delicately carved railings above, built-in benches, lathe-turned roof posts, carved rafter ends and red-clay covered roof.

"Long Shed" - The concrete slab roof cantilevers six feet beyond the building to create a canopy over the concrete walkway that runs in front. Concrete retaining walls border the walkway for part of its run. Wooden posts were added at different times over the years to prevent the continual sagging of the concrete.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: See measured drawings.
2. Flooring:

Garage - Snack Bar has linoleum tiling and the Gift Shop has carpeting over a concrete slab floor.

Bunk House - The bathroom and kitchen has linoleum tiling and the two bedrooms have carpeting over a concrete slab floor.

"Long Shed" - The Chicken Coop has a concrete slab floor, part of which has been scored to imitate tile and painted red. The other rooms have a combination of carpeting and linoleum tiling over a concrete slab floor.

3. Wall and Ceiling Finish:

Garage - Exterior walls are plaster and interior partition walls are gypsum board. All have been painted white. The dropped ceiling has acoustic tile and recessed fluorescent lighting.

Bunk House - The exterior walls are plaster. Interior partition walls are gypsum board. All are painted white. The east half of the ceiling is plaster, while the west half has had acoustic tile applied to it.

"Long Shed" -

Chicken Coop - Plain dull gray plaster finish on the walls and ceiling. Interior partitions consist of bare wood frame and chicken wire. Concrete roost platform runs the length of the north side. Hooks are imbedded in the ceiling along the north side of the ceiling.

All the other rooms have either plaster walls or gypsum board walls. All have been painted white. Ceilings are plaster and have had external conduit fluorescent lighting applied.

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4. Decorative Features: The concrete pavement around half of the Garage has control joints that form a "mosaic-like" pattern.
- D. Site: The Garage-"Long Shed"-Bunk House, the southernmost structure of the Death Valley Scotty Historic District, partially screens the Castle grounds proper from the employee parking lot and the main road beyond to the south. The site slopes upward slightly as it moves to the east, which accounts in part for the differing ceiling and roof heights.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Scotty's Castle Recording Project at Death Valley National Monument, California, was undertaken during the summers 1987-89 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) division of the National Park Service, and co-sponsored by the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of HABS/HAER; Kenneth L. Anderson, AIA, Chief of HABS and project leader in 1987 and 1988; and Paul D. Dolinsky, Principal Architect of HABS and project leader in 1989.

The recording teams were supervised in the field by Marlys B. Thurber in 1987, John White in 1988, and Joseph D. Balachowski in 1989. The written documentation was prepared by Richard A. Bernstein of Cornell University in 1987.

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The repository of nearly all of the sources of information is the Reference Library and Preservation Office, Scotty's Castle, Death Valley National Monument, California. Individual references take the form of endnotes, as follows:

1. Architectural drawings catalogue nos. 21324, 21325 and 21326.
2. Architectural drawing catalogue no. 21322.
3. Architectural drawings catalogue nos. 21296 and 21300.
4. Letters from M. Roy Thompson to Albert M. Johnson dated February 8 and 25, 1926. Manuscript 7, box 1.
5. Letter from M. Roy Thompson to Albert M. Johnson dated March 2, 1926. Manuscript 7, box 1.
6. Letter from M. Roy Thompson to Albert M. Johnson dated March 17, 1929. Manuscript 7, box 7.

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7. Historic Buildings File. Record group 1, box 5.
8. Record group 1, box 5.
9. Architectural drawings catalogue nos. 21324, 21325 and 21326.
10. Architectural drawings catalogue no. 21322.
11. Architectural drawings catalogue no. 21348.
12. Architectural drawings catalogue no. 21348.
13. Letters from M. Roy Thompson to Albert M. Johnson dated February 8 and 26, 1926. Manuscript 7, box 1.
14. Architectural drawings catalogue nos. 21296 and 21300. The drawings for the Stables are also signed by Johnson and are dated November 15, 1924. (See Death Valley Ranch Barn, HABS No. CA-2257 D).
15. Conversation with Don Creech, September 1987.
16. Historic Buildings File. Record group 1, box 5.
17. Ibid.
18. Conversation with Don Creech, August 1987.
19. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, In The Nature of Materials (New York: De Capo Press, 1979), 78.

ADDENDUM TO:
DEATH VALLEY RANCH, GARAGE-LONG SHED-BUNKHOUSE
Death Valley National Park
Death Valley vicinity
Inyo County
California

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