

DESERT LUREM INN, TACK HOUSE  
Joshua Tree National Monument  
Joshua Tree, Calif.  
San Bernardino County  
California

HABS NO. CA-2347-F

HABS  
CAL  
36-TNPALV,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Building Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### DESERT QUEEN RANCH--TACK HOUSE (William F. Keys Ranch--Tack House)

HABS No. CA-2347-F

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- Location:** Joshua Tree National Monument, Twentynine Palms vicinity, San Bernardino County, California.
- Present owner:** National Park Service; Joshua Tree National Monument.
- Present Occupant:** Unoccupied.
- Present Use:** Restoration of site; occasional summer tours.
- Significance:** The Keys Desert Queen Ranch in the Joshua Tree National Monument is an outstanding historical site of desert-based vernacular technologies displaying a range of architectural and engineering artifacts associated with the Euro-American era of settlement in the Mojave desert. The site is largely intact with nine buildings and four ore mills surviving. The Tack House is currently used to store tack equipment such as bridles and harnesses, but originally it was a tank of cyanide used in the processing of gold ore.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** mid-1930s.
2. **Original and subsequent owners:** original owner not known; subsequent owner was William Keys.
3. **Original plans and construction:** originally two cyanide vats.
6. **Alterations and additions:** opposite ends of vats joined together. Tin roof applied and two openings cut into sides by William Keys.

##### B. Historical Information

For more information on the Desert Queen Ranch, see HABS No. CA-2347.

The origin of the cyanide tanks seems to be the ranch itself. In the early days of the ranch, when the McHaneys ran it, tailings from the five-stamp mill on the ranch were processed with cyanide. The McHaneys probably had two tanks and perhaps two to three others; they had made an ore hopper out of one of them for the little steam mill that was near the stamp mill. When Keys acquired the ranch he did not do any cyanide processing but he needed something

for a chicken house. He took two of the vats, turned one on top of the other, put a doorway and a couple of windows in it, and that became a chicken house. The vats were made out of redwood because that is the best wood to hold up in conditions where it is dry and then wet.<sup>1</sup>

Although called the Tack House, it historically did not have tack in it, according to Phyllis Keys Meidell. It was used as a chicken coop, while the old adobe barn was used to store the tack. The tack may have been moved there after the adobe barn started to come down. Phyllis seems to think that the tack house has been moved slightly, though it is unclear from where to where. Originally the tack house was surrounded by a wire fence to keep the chickens and turkeys in and to keep out skunks, weasels, civet cats, ringtail cats, badgers, raccoons, wild cats, and possibly mountain lions (which were extremely rare).<sup>2</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. **Architectoral character:** The redwood tank is constructed like a barrel with staves and hoops for support. William Keys took two tanks and joined the narrow ends together. The door cut into the side is made of wide pieces of planks nailed together with many nails.
2. **Condition of fabric:** In relatively good condition.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** 9'-5" in diameter; 7'-5" high.
2. **Foundations:** None.
3. **Walls:** Made of staves approximately 6" thick.
4. **Structural system, framing:** The staves provide the shed its exterior and interior wall.
5. **Openings:**

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<sup>1</sup>Willis Keys, son of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis at Joshua Tree National Monument, July 8-9, 1993, and at North Fork, CA, July 16-18, 1993, tape 2A.

<sup>2</sup>Phyllis Keys Meidell, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, CA, August 24-25, 1993, tape 7B.

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- a. **Doorways and doors:** One door on the south side about 5'-6" high is made of 3" x 6"s (thicker than the walls), of haphazard construction from pieces of wood of various lengths.
  - b. **Windows and shutters:** Two circular windows and one rectangular window, of the same material as the walls; hinged on the outside and opening out.
6. **Roof:** A circular flat tin cap over the top.
- C. **Description of Interior:**
1. **Floor Plans:** One open space.
  2. **Flooring:** 2" x 12"s (ten parallel boards)
  4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Stained, possibly from cyanide.
  5. **Hardware:** Hoops and turnbuckles on the exterior; door hinges set on the outside (unmortised).

**PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.