

Green Meadow Ranch  
Helena Vicinity  
Lewis and Clark County  
Montana

HABS No. MT-35

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MONT,  
25-HEL.V,  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GREEN MEADOW RANCH

HABS No. MT-35

ADDRESS: N.W. of Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Montana

OWNER: W. J. Harrer & Sons, Inc.

OCCUPANT: W. J. Harrer

USE: Stock Ranch

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Harry W. Child arrived in Helena, Montana, in 1878 to stay with his uncle, W. C. Child (MON-30). He was first an agent for a stage line to Corinne, Utah, then became involved in mining and smelting operations.

In 1887, acting as trustee for a group of business men in St. Paul who were associated with the Northern Pacific Railroad and a few Helena men, Child purchased the Fant and Benedict Ranches just outside Helena for speculative purposes. A few months later the land was sold to the St. Paul and Helena Land and Improvement Company for \$250,000.

With S. S. Huntley and E. W. Bach, Child organized the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company in 1892, and later the Yellowstone Park Hotel Company. Huntley was manager until 1901, when Child took over and held the position until 1917.

In 1914, Child purchased Green Meadow Ranch from the St. Paul and Helena Land and Improvement Company, and developed it as a stock ranch. A residence, a large barn and several smaller buildings were distinctively designed by Robert Reamer, an architect working for the Yellowstone Park Hotel Company. Reamer was the architect for Old Faithful Inn and a number of other buildings built in the Park during this period.

The house and the big barn have burned, but the granary and blacksmith shop of similar design, though smaller, remain.

#### HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Harry W. Child reached Montana in 1878, coming to stay with his uncle, W. C. Child, (MT -30) who was one of the early pioneers in the state. He was the agent for the Gilmore and Saulsbury stage line to Corinne, Utah, for a time, then became associated with various mining operations.

He was the general manager for A. J. Seligman (MT -24) for his mines in the Closter district 26 miles northwest of Helena and for the Gregory Consolidated Mine and Works. Later he moved to Great Falls for a short period to serve as manager of the smelting operations of the newly-built Great Falls Reduction Works.

On May 19, 1887, the Helena Weekly Herald broke the news that Harry W. Child had purchased the 300 acre Fant Ranch, acting as trustee for T. F. Oaks, vice president and general manager of the Northern Pacific; N. C. Thrall, his private secretary; J. T. O'Dell, assistant general manager of the eastern divisions of the road; E. D. Betters, lawyer and capitalist of New York; and E. D. Edgerton, S. S. Huntley and E. W. Bach of Helena. The purchase price was \$30,000, \$100 per acre.

On June 16, 1887, the same paper reported that Child and his associates had also purchased the Benedict Ranch. It adjoined the Fant Ranch and added another 320 acres to their holdings. The purchase price was again \$100 per acre. The Lewis and Clark County Deed Book for 1887 shows that on August 15, 1887, Harry W. Child sold the "Fant Ranch" to the St. Paul and Helena Land and Improvement Company for \$250,000. The Fant-Benedict ranches became Green Meadow Ranch.

During this period, Yellowstone Park was becoming increasingly popular. To cater to the demand for facilities there, Child, together with S. S.

Huntley and E. W. Bach, organized the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company in 1892, and later the Yellowstone Park Hotel Association. The two were finally merged into the Yellowstone Park Company. Huntley was president from 1892 to 1901, and Child became president in 1901 and served until 1917. The company was responsible for the construction of the big hotels and other tourist facilities in the Park during these years.

In 1914, Harry W. Child, in the name of his wife Adelaide, bought back Green Meadow Ranch from the St. Paul and Helena Land and Improvement Company. Robert Reamer, an architect working for the Yellowstone Park Company, designed a house, a large barn, a granary and a blacksmith shop for the ranch. Reamer had also designed Old Faithful Inn and a number of other structures in the Park.

The house burned in 1924, and the large barn in 1956, but the granary and blacksmith shop remain. They were built in the same Swiss style as the house and barn.

J. E. O'Connell purchased Green Meadow Ranch from the Child estate in 1944, and sold it to W. J. Harrer, the present owner, in 1947. The Green Meadow Ranch is noted today for the fine Aberdeen Angus cattle bred there.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND REFERENCES

- Beal, Merrill D., Story of Man in Yellowstone, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1949.
- Campbell, William C., Quarries of Last Chance Gulch, Montana Record Publishing Co., 1952, vol. I, pp. 79, 129, 205.
- Helena Weekly Herald (newspaper), Helena, Montana, May 19, 1887; June 16, 1887.
- Leeson, M. A., History of Montana 1739-1885, Warner, Beers & Co., Chicago, 1885, pp. 662, 757.
- Lewis and Clark County Deed Books, 1887, 1914, 1944 and 1947.
- Lindley, Vi, "Green Meadow Ranch Holds First Production Sale", Montana Parade, Great Falls Tribune (newspaper), Great Falls, Mont., August 8, 1953.

Montana Record-Herald (newspaper), Helena, Montana,  
February 4, 1931.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Only two relatively small buildings, a blacksmith shop and a granary, remain today of the complex of four buildings that architect Robert Reamer designed for Harry W. Child. The handsome residence burned in 1924. The huge barn, some 450' in length and 40' to the ridge, was in constant use until another fire, believed man-caused, destroyed it together with saddles, bridles, farm equipment and twenty head of prize stock in 1956.

Designed in a Swiss chalet manner, with steep gable roof, heavy timbered supports and stone veneer walls backed with concrete, the barn was a show-place for over forty years. The huge barn had three cross passageways large enough to drive a team and wagon through. The building had three lofts. The first, or front, loft was utilized for dancing, the others for necessary farm activities. The front portion of the building on the ground floor was used for cattle, tack room, then came an area for the horses, another tack room, next a space for an attendant, and then at the far end was space for buggies and wagons.

Of special interest was the curving of the wood shingle slabs over the gable ends and eave ends of the barn (and also the other three buildings) to a depth of approximately 18". The timbers used were all heavy hand-hewn members, the window frames hand made and elaborately carved with birds, horses heads, etc., and the hardware was hand forged.

An examination of the remaining buildings reveal heavy timber vertical corner beams 11" x 12". The horizontal roof beams are 9" x 9", extending quite a distance out from the building and supported by knee braces 9" x 9". The first floor walls, between the upright structural timbers, are stone veneer backed with concrete and are 12" to 14" in depth. Diagonal cross bracing between the vertical timber members are "surface" supporting boards, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

deep and  $7\frac{1}{4}$ " wide (exposed). The upper portion of the gable ends has vertical boards  $11\frac{1}{4}$ " wide and  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " thick, braced on the inside by battens.

Today a much smaller and more modest barn stands on a fraction of the original foundation. Also visible still are the foundations of the original ranch house.

Prepared by, John DeHaas  
December 1967  
Reviewed by Eleni Silverman, HABS  
September 1983