

THE HORSE RANCH, AIRSTRIP
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Eagle Cap Wilderness Area
Joseph vicinity
Wallowa County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-165-AI

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Columbia Cascades Support Office
National Park Service
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
THE HORSE RANCH (Red's Horse Ranch), Airstrip

HABS NO. OR-165-AI

Location: The Horse Ranch is located within the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The ranch lies in a valley along the Wild and Scenic Minam River in Wallowa County. It is approximately nine air miles northeast of Cove, Oregon and thirteen air miles southwest of Enterprise, Oregon. SE 1/4 of the NE 1/4 and the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of Section 36, Township 2S, Range 41E, Willamette Meridian.

The airstrip is located along the western side of the site running on a northwest/southeast axis.

Significance: The airstrip is significant as it relates to the operation of the Horse Ranch as a dude ranch. The addition of the airstrip greatly improved the commercial viability of the Horse Ranch since a long rough trail ride (or hike) was the only other way of traveling to the ranch. Without the airstrip, it is doubtful the ranch would have survived as a dude ranch for as many years as it did. As vacations have grown shorter over the years, the short plane ride kept the ranch accessible to many visitors. A fly-in dude ranch is unusual not only in Oregon but in other states. This fact makes the Horse Ranch more significant.

According to the Determination of Eligibility for the National Register (letter dated, May 1, 1996) between the State Historic Preservation Office and the U.S. Forest Service, the airstrip is a primary feature within the Horse Ranch complex.

Description: Prior to the 1930s, pilots landed in the open meadow adjacent to the Horse Ranch. When the Hudspeth brothers took over operations in the 1930s, they built a 1700' airstrip which extended south from the barn to the end of the clearing. When Red acquired the property he extended it to its current length of 2800' in 1947-48. The extension ran north from the barn to the Minam River. The fill dirt came from the land adjacent to the strip.

Historical Context:

Prior to the 1930s, pilots occasionally landed in the open meadow adjacent to the Horse Ranch. When the Hudspeth brothers took over operations in the 1930s, they built a 1700' airstrip which extended south from the barn to the end of the clearing. When Red Higgins acquired the property, he extended the airstrip to its current (1996) length of 2800'. The airstrip was extended in 1947-48; the new section went from the area west of the barn, north to the Minam River.

Sources: Cason, Richard, 8/12/96, Elgin, Oregon, former wrangler and pilot for Red's Horse Ranch, interviewed by Kimberly Lakin. Womack, Bruce, 8/96 and 10/96, Enterprise, Oregon, Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, National Register Determination of Eligibility. Site analysis by Kimberly Lakin and Sally Donovan, August 1996.

Project Information:

In 1994, the Horse Ranch (Red's Horse Ranch) was acquired for inclusion in the National Wilderness System by the USDA Forest Service. As a result of the property acquisition, the USDA Forest Service is preparing an Environmental Analysis Report and Future Use Determination for the site. This process will enable the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to establish management direction and priorities for the property. As part of the environmental analysis, a Determination of Eligibility report was completed in the spring of 1996.

Project Supervisors: Contracting Officer R.A. Cunningham, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and Bruce Womack, Contracting Officer's Representative, Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

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