

RAY R. JONES FARMSTEAD, TANKHOUSE
18 feet north of Salt Box Chicken Coop
West Jordan
Salt Lake County
Utah

HABS No. UT-134-B

HABS
UTAH
18-WEJO,
1B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

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RAY R. JONES FARMSTEAD,
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Location: Eighteen feet north of the Saltbox Chicken Coop.

Significance: This structure, constructed ca. 1920, is the only surviving building dating to the period prior to Ray R. Jones' obtaining possession of the property and constructing the current farm complex.

Description: The wooden tankhouse measures about 8 feet by 8 feet and is approximately 15 feet high. It consists of a rectangular novelty sided building with a pyramidal roof and exposed rafter tails. It rests atop a tapered base with the same siding. The base, in turn, rests on a poured concrete pad. The wooden base has a boarded up opening on its south side. The upper part of the structure has not openings on the sides, but does appear to have had a rectangular opening on the west side of the roof.

The tankhouse resembles a type identified in California as the truncated taper tower. This tankhouse type consists of a tapered walled tower which forms the base for a straight walled tankroom. This was a popular type in parts of California and was built there through most of the first half of this century. According to Pitman (1992):

A simple and well understood principle among the builders of tankhouses is that a structure shaped as a triangle or trapezoid will support more width than that of a rectangle or square. Tapering the top of the upright support posts inward to a position under the tank platform or to the roof eaves will support more weight than a structure having vertically straight support posts. Given the fact that a water tank containing 5,000 gallons weighs more than 20 tons, tapered towers were advised for the largest water tanks. Most farmers, however, had smaller tanks than that [as did the Ray Jones Farmstead], and the taper tower types on the whole were not necessary, nor were they everywhere the most favored.

However, Pitman also notes that circulars from windmill manufacturers in California during the 1870's and 1880's illustrated only taper tower type tankhouses, suggesting that the dealers recommended these for their weight bearing ability.

Regardless that such structures were only necessary for larger commercial tanks, the form was popularly transferred to even the smaller ones used by individual farmers.

History:

This wooden tankhouse structure was built prior ca. 1920. According to Merlin Jones (Personal communication 1995), the structure represents a water tank which provided culinary water for the residence and chicken coops.

The tankhouse, which still stands, is quite a unique and interesting part of the architectural landscape on the property. As mentioned, this structure was used to hold culinary water for the residence and for the chicken coops. The water to fill the tank was pumped from an adjacent water well. Originally, a windmill at the location pumped water into a circular redwood "tank" that was once located inside the visible rectangular building. From here, the water was redistributed by gravity. The redwood was later removed by Merlin Jones for use elsewhere. The windmill eventually proved inadequate, and a hand pump was placed there. Still later, an electric pump was installed. It is not known when the structure was abandoned.

Sources:

Merlin Jones (Personal communication 1995). The aforementioned information was obtained during a telephone conversation between the author and Mr. Jones concerning his father, Ray R. Jones, May 13, 1995.

Leon S. Pitman, *The Domestic Tankhouse as Vernacular Architecture in Rural California, 1992: Material Culture*, 24(1):13-32.

Historian:

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