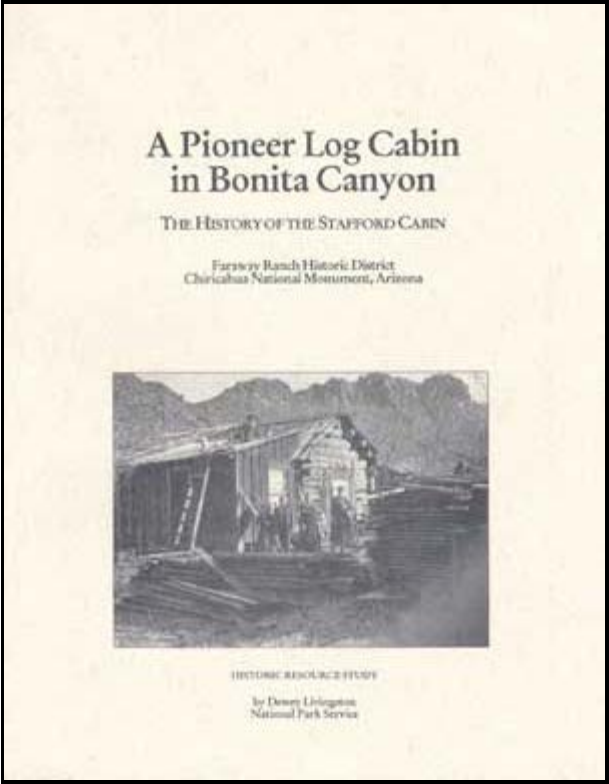


CHIRICAHUA

A Pioneer Log Cabin in Bonita Canyon
The History of the Stafford Cabin



A PIONEER LOG CABIN IN BONITA CANYON:

The History of the Stafford
Cabin

Faraway Ranch Historic District
Chiricahua National Monument,
Arizon

HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

By
Dewey Livingston
Historian
Point Reyes National Seashore,
California

1994

National Park Service
San Francisco

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Key to abbreviations used in photo and graphic credits:

BLM Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix
CHIR Chiricahua National Monument
WACC Western Archeological and Conservation Center, Tucson

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I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper began as the Historical Data Section of a Historic Structure Report that was never completed. Research and two drafts of this history section were complete by early 1991 when the project was shelved, although restoration work was accomplished at Stafford Cabin. Thanks to the perseverance of a number of individuals, the history of this important and fascinating little pioneer house is now presented to the public.

The author would like to thank the many people who helped with the creation of this document. Christine Rhodes of the Cochise County Records office was especially helpful, as were the staffs at University of Arizona, Tucson, the Arizona State Archives, and the Arizona Historical Society. The staff at Chiricahua National Monument were most helpful, especially Superintendents Dave Moore and Carol Kruse, Chuck Milliken, Dick Alexander, and Debbie Sanders. At the National Park Service's Washington Office, Chief Historian Edwin C. Bearss offered vital commentary and advice; at the NPS Western Regional Office, Thomas L. Mulhern, Chief of Historic Preservation Division, provided the opportunity to pursue this project, and Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian, and Craig Kenkel, Regional Historic Architect, gave me valuable guidance; at Point Reyes National Seashore, Don Neubacher, Chief of Interpretation, supervised the project, and Terry Edinger was always there for technical, creative, and moral support; and at Western Archeological and Conservation Center (WACC), Archivist Lynn Mitchell took me through the vast Faraway Ranch Papers with knowledge and patience.

Also at WACC, VIP/Historian Richard Y. Murray was especially helpful with his detailed knowledge of the subject, reading the manuscript a number of times and making hundreds of essential corrections and comments. Dick patiently clarified issues and offered excellent overall advice for which I thank him very much.

I am especially grateful to members of the Stafford Family, who opened their homes and offered information about the Staffords which could not be found elsewhere. Tom Kelly, who lives adjacent to Fort Bowie, and Dr. Edward Wheeler of Dallas, Texas, put a great deal of energy into the project and had impressive patience with its delays; I also appreciate Stafford descendants Helen Kenney of St. David and Donald Riggs of Tempe, as well as Rose Bree of Willcox, for allowing my numerous questions.



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I. HISTORY OF THE STAFFORD CABIN

A. INTRODUCTION

The Stafford Cabin is a log and frame building located in Bonita Canyon, a small drainage from the west side of the Chiricahua Mountains into the dry but productive Sulphur Spring Valley in Cochise County, Arizona. The cabin is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (March 31, 1975) and is also contained in the Faraway Ranch Historic District (August 27, 1980), part of Chiricahua National Monument. It is managed by the Superintendent of the Monument.

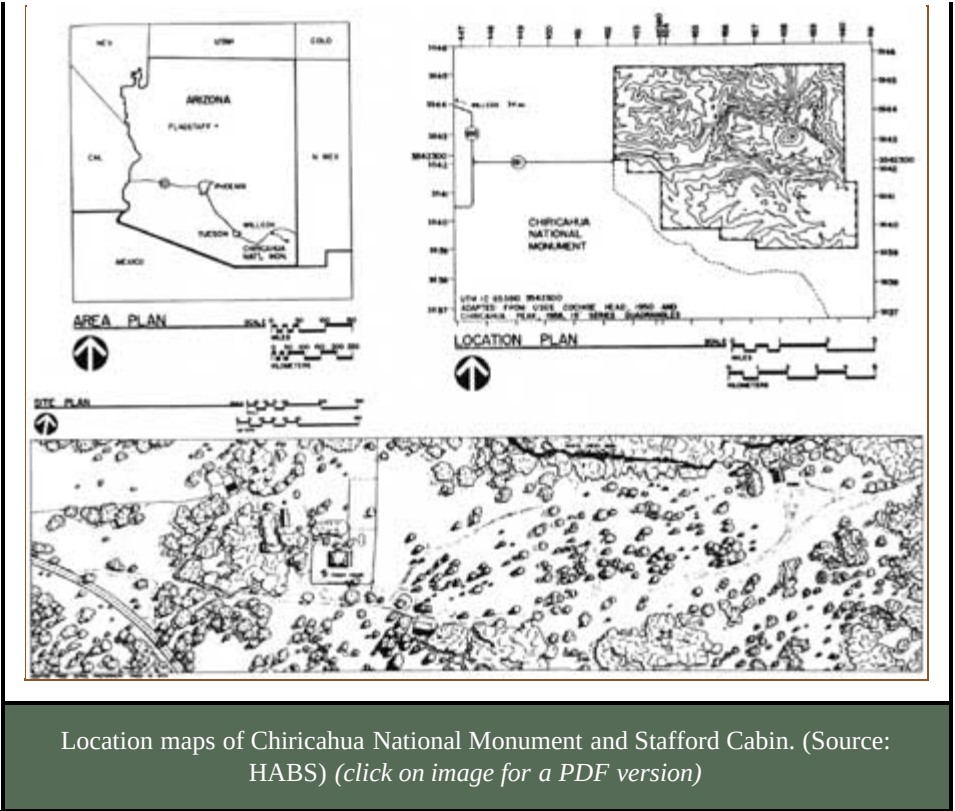
Chiricahua National Monument, established in 1924 to protect the unique rock formations popularly known as the "Wonderland of Rocks" which adorn the upper reaches of this section of the mountains, is surrounded on three sides by the Coronado National Forest, and on the fourth, or west side, by Sulphur Spring Valley, most of which is privately owned.¹

¹Sulphur Spring Valley is commonly referred to as Sulphur Springs Valley, but the official U. S. Geological Survey name is used throughout this report.

The 110-year-old homestead cabin and surrounding land became part of Chiricahua National Monument in December, 1968. The structure is a two-room log cabin with a stone fireplace and chimney, a shed-roofed "kitchenette" and bathroom addition, an open porch, and an attached garage. The cabin sits on a flat expanse of the canyon once occupied by an orchard, from which a few trees remain. Bonita Creek is located a short distance north of the cabin.

The history of the Stafford Cabin involves a number of facets, from a homestead claim during the Apache resistance to family life in a pioneer environment to its last decades as a guest cottage at a modestly popular dude ranch. Perhaps of foremost significance is the pioneer era, or the Stafford years, 1880-1918, a time when the earliest settlers appeared in the area and developed a ranching and agricultural legacy in the Sulphur Spring Valley. This document will hopefully shed new light on the significance of the Stafford Cabin in the history of the Southwest.





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III. HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Stafford log cabin is known to be the earliest extant pioneer home in Bonita Canyon and the area surrounding it. Ja Hu Stafford and his young wife Pauline, beginning in 1880, built the cabin and developed a viable commercial vegetable farm and fruit orchard on their 160-acre homestead, providing much-needed fresh produce to nearby military units, residents, and towns. Mrs. Stafford bore seven children, five of whom survived; a number of descendants still reside in the area.

The Stafford family occupied the cabin and worked the homestead for 37 years until 1917, when Lillian Riggs purchased the property and transformed it into a part of "Faraway Ranch," a popular early Arizona guest ranch. For the next 51 years the cabin, the historic core of which remained in place, served as a rustic guest cottage for visitors from around the country. Sold to the National Park Service in 1968, the cabin was subsequently listed on the National Register of Historic Places both individually in 1975 and as part of Faraway Ranch Historic District in 1980.

The Stafford Cabin has significance in architectural, agricultural, pioneering, business, and social history, both locally and regionally. The somewhat crude double log cabin, that has nonetheless withstood well over one hundred years of use and weather, is apparently the earliest remaining example of a pioneer log cabin in the area. The cabin's agricultural significance results from Stafford's contributions to the region as one of few suppliers of fresh produce to the people of the area, and as an important supplier to the Tenth Cavalry troops in Bonita Canyon, the garrison at Fort Bowie until 1894, and elsewhere in Cochise County. In pioneering history, Ja Hu Stafford, a military veteran (1852-1857), and his wife, daughter of Mormon immigrants, were among the first whites to permanently settle the eastern Sulphur Spring Valley.

In business and social history, the cabin is significant for its owners' contribution to the area in providing agricultural products and the services of a guest ranch. Both had significant contributions by a number of people including these women: Pauline Stafford and her daughters, especially Clara, who had important functions at the homestead, and Lillian Erickson Riggs, known nationally as the "Lady Boss of Faraway Ranch," who was the co-founder and operator of one of the early 20th century guest ranches in Arizona.

The significant elements include not only the log cabin but the remaining orchard, baby's grave, rock walls, and remains of Stafford's irrigation system. All contribute material evidence of a significant era and place in Cochise County, the State of Arizona, and Southwestern history.

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Helen Kenney, St. David, Arizona, November 15, 1990*
Richard Y. Murray, Tucson, May 16 and 23, 1990
Donald Riggs, Tempe, Arizona, May 23, 1990
Dr. Edward N. Wheeler, Dallas, Texas, November 14, 1990*

*by telephone

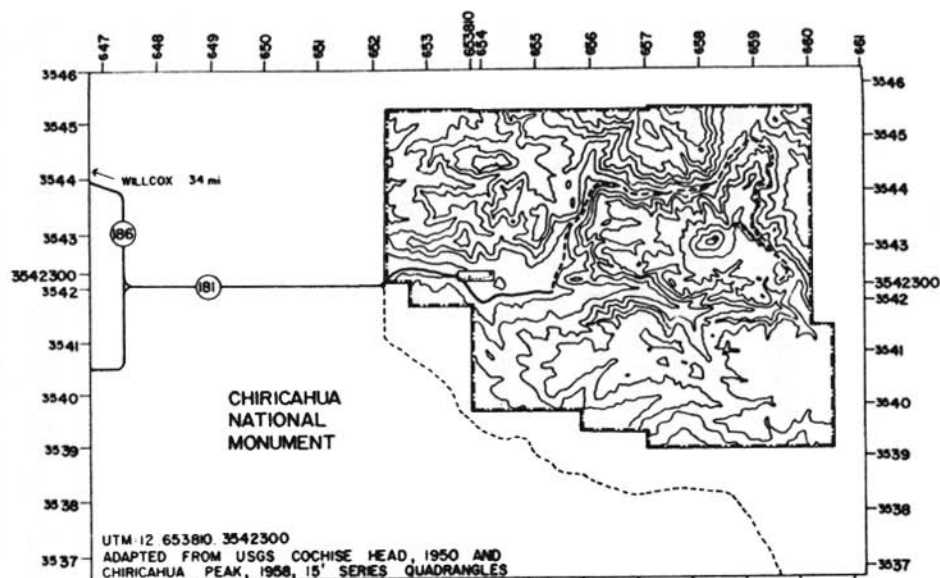
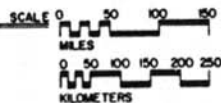
Correspondence

Col. (ret.) Tom Kelly
Richard Y. Murray
Dr. Edward N. Wheeler

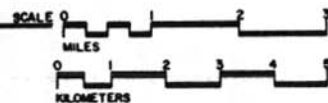
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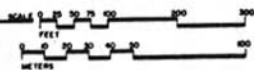
AREA PLAN



LOCATION PLAN



SITE PLAN



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I. HISTORY OF THE STAFFORD CABIN *(continued)*

B. SULPHUR SPRING VALLEY AND BONITA CANYON TO 1880

Sulphur Spring Valley is a wide semi-arid region in the southeastern corner of Arizona bordered on the east by the Chiricahua Mountains. It is noted for cattle ranching and farming with irrigation. Chiricahua Indians, an Apache tribe, inhabited the valley and the mountains from the 1700s until 1876 when after years of warfare and four years of uncertain peace, U. S. troops removed those who did not flee to the San Carlos reservation to the north. However, not until 1886 did the troops succeed in subduing this troublesome band, led by Naiche and Geronimo. During their heyday Indians congregated at Bonita Canyon's spring where they found not only sustenance but a pass over the Chiricahua Mountains, a route that also afforded numerous hiding places.²

²Robert M. Utley, A Clash of Cultures, Fort Bowie and the Chiricahua Apaches. Washington: National Park Service Division of Publications, 1977, pp 9-20; Martyn D. Tagg, The Camp at Bonita Canon, a Buffalo Soldier Camp in Chiricahua National Monument, Publications in Anthropology No. 42. Tucson: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, 1987, p. 22.

The threat of Apache attack kept Spanish explorers and missionaries away from the region, and after the Gadsden Purchase from Mexico in 1853-54 settlers were still somewhat discouraged from entering the valley. Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke and his "Mormon battalion" opened a wagon road via San Bernardino and Tucson some years earlier and the Butterfield Overland Mail operated in the area from 1858 to 1861. During the 1850s relations with the Chiricahua Apaches remained fairly peaceful. A number of government survey parties crossed the valley between 1851 and 1855, including one survey of the Mexican border and another seeking a transcontinental railroad route. Evidence of pioneer cattle ranches were found by members of the former expedition.³

³Utley, A Clash of Cultures, pp. 14, 17-20; O. E. Meinzer and F. C. Kelton, Geology and Water Resources of the Sulphur Spring Valley, Arizona. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913, p. 11.

As tensions between Indians and the military and civilians increased, coming to a head at the battle of Apache Pass in 1862, the United States Army established Fort Bowie at the northern end of the Chiricahua Mountains on July 27 of that year. The fort dominated not only the pass but the source of water at Apache Spring, and provided troops to help make the region safe for white settlers, an often difficult and sometimes impossible task.

Colonel Henry Clay Hooker, who had arrived in the Tucson area with his livestock in the summer of 1869, established the first permanent cattle ranch in Sulphur Spring Valley in

1872, the Sierra Bonita Ranch located northwest of today's Willcox. During the late 1870s a small number of settlers entered the valley, including Louis Prue and Brannick Riggs, both of whom founded ranches in the vicinity west and northwest of Bonita Canyon. By 1880 the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad reached the northern part of the valley, where merchants and settlers established the town of Willcox.⁴

⁴Louis R. Caywood, The Archaeology of the Sulphur Spring Valley, Arizona, Thesis, University of Arizona, 1933, p. 14-15; Roscoe G. Wilson, Pioneer Cattlemen of Arizona, Phoenix: The Valley National Bank, 1951; Meinzer and Kelton, Geology and Water Resources, pp. 12-14.

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I. HISTORY OF THE STAFFORD CABIN *(continued)*

I. STAFFORD CABIN AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service began to add the historic Stafford homestead into Chiricahua National Monument on December 20, 1967, when the 80-acre Silver Spur Guest Ranch was purchased from Silver Spur Ranch, Inc. Next, the Park Service bought the Stark parcel of 26.04 acres, on December 19, 1968. A day later, on December 20, Lillian Erickson Riggs sold 47.9 acres of the Stafford homestead, including the Stafford cabin and remains of the orchard. Mrs. Riggs sold the remaining 6.06 acres to the National Park Service on October 8, 1974.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Ibid.

In late 1974 or early 1975 Lillian Erickson Riggs entered a rest home in Willcox, leaving management of Faraway Ranch to her longtime foreman and companion, Andy Anderson. By this time the era of the guest ranch at Bonita Canyon was over. Mrs. Riggs died on April 26, 1977 at the age of 89.

After Mrs. Riggs's death the National Park Service began dealing with the heirs of the Ericksons towards the purchase of Faraway Ranch. The Erickson heirs preferred that the ranch be preserved and supported the park purchase, although Ben Erickson and Hildegarde Erickson Hutchison died before the transaction could be completed. Congress authorized the park expansion by public law 95-625 on November 10, 1978; the federal government purchased the property on July 27, 1979, and later purchased the historic furnishings and family papers. One of the last notes in the Faraway Ranch Papers concerned the Stafford cabin's closure:

Andy: 1. Remove personal objects from Stafford cabin. 2. Have power company remove wire and meterloop and meter from Stafford cabin. 3. Remove butane gas tank if owned by gas company -- if Lillian owned, leave in place. 4. Cleanup of burned down house -- Ray⁸⁵

⁸⁵Ray B. Ringenbach was the Superintendent at Chiricahua National Monument at the time the note was written in late 1968 or early 1969. Note in Faraway Ranch Papers, Series 11, Box 37.





Figure 24 — Stafford Cabin, circa 1950s. (WACC)



Figure 25 — Stafford Cabin, circa 1950s. (WACC)

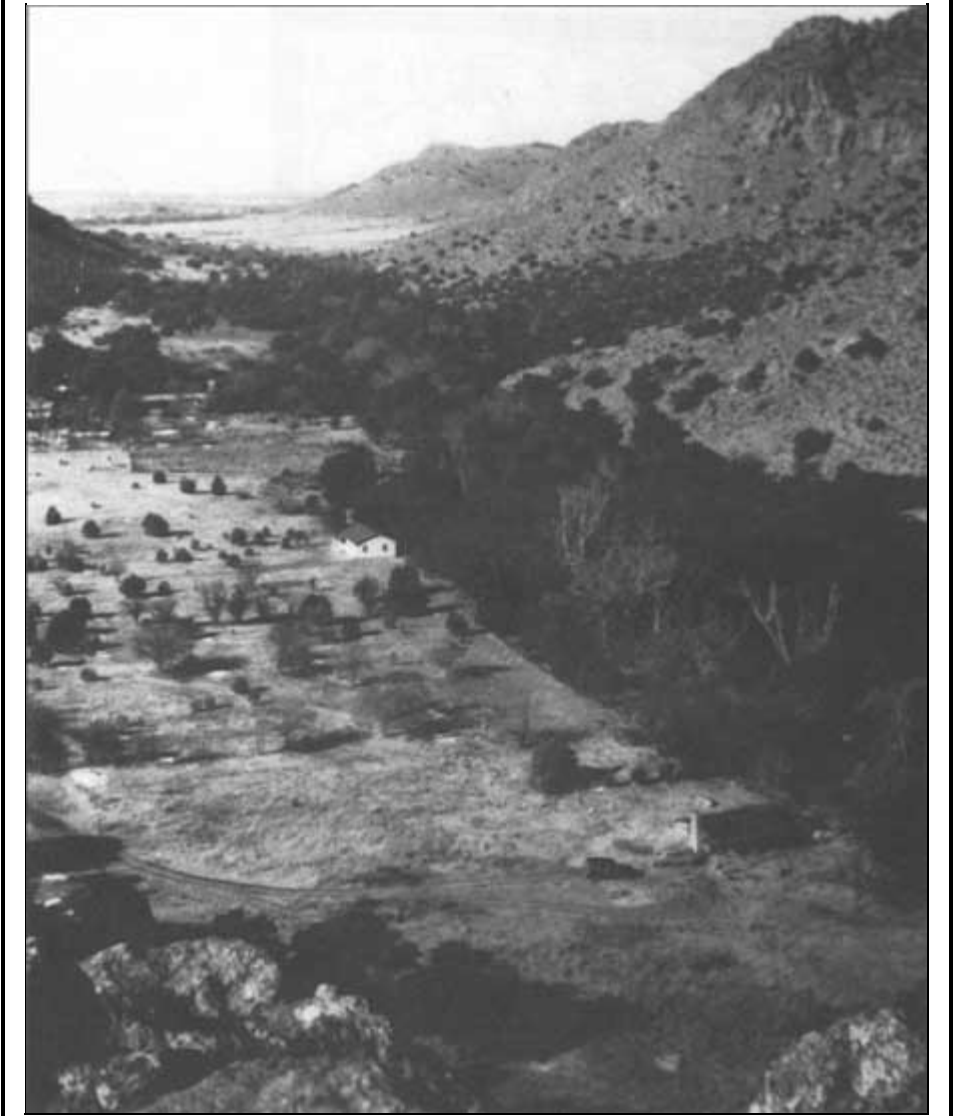


Figure 26 — Stafford Cabin, foreground, circa 1950s. (CHIR 7242)



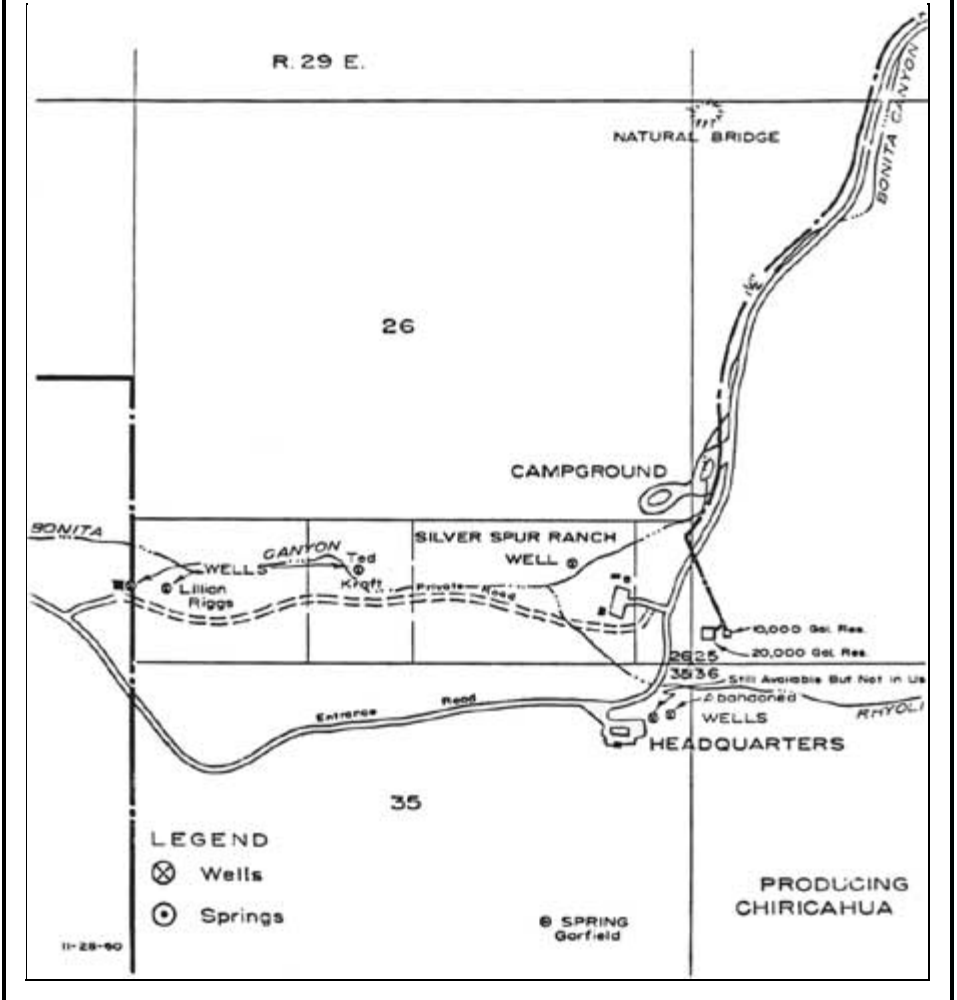


Figure 27 — Water source map, shows boundaries and subdivisions of Stafford homestead, 1960. (CHIR)





Figure 28 — Sketch of Faraway Ranch made for a Christmas card used by Lillian Erickson Riggs between 1963 and 1966. The Stafford cabin is pictured in the foreground. (CHIR)

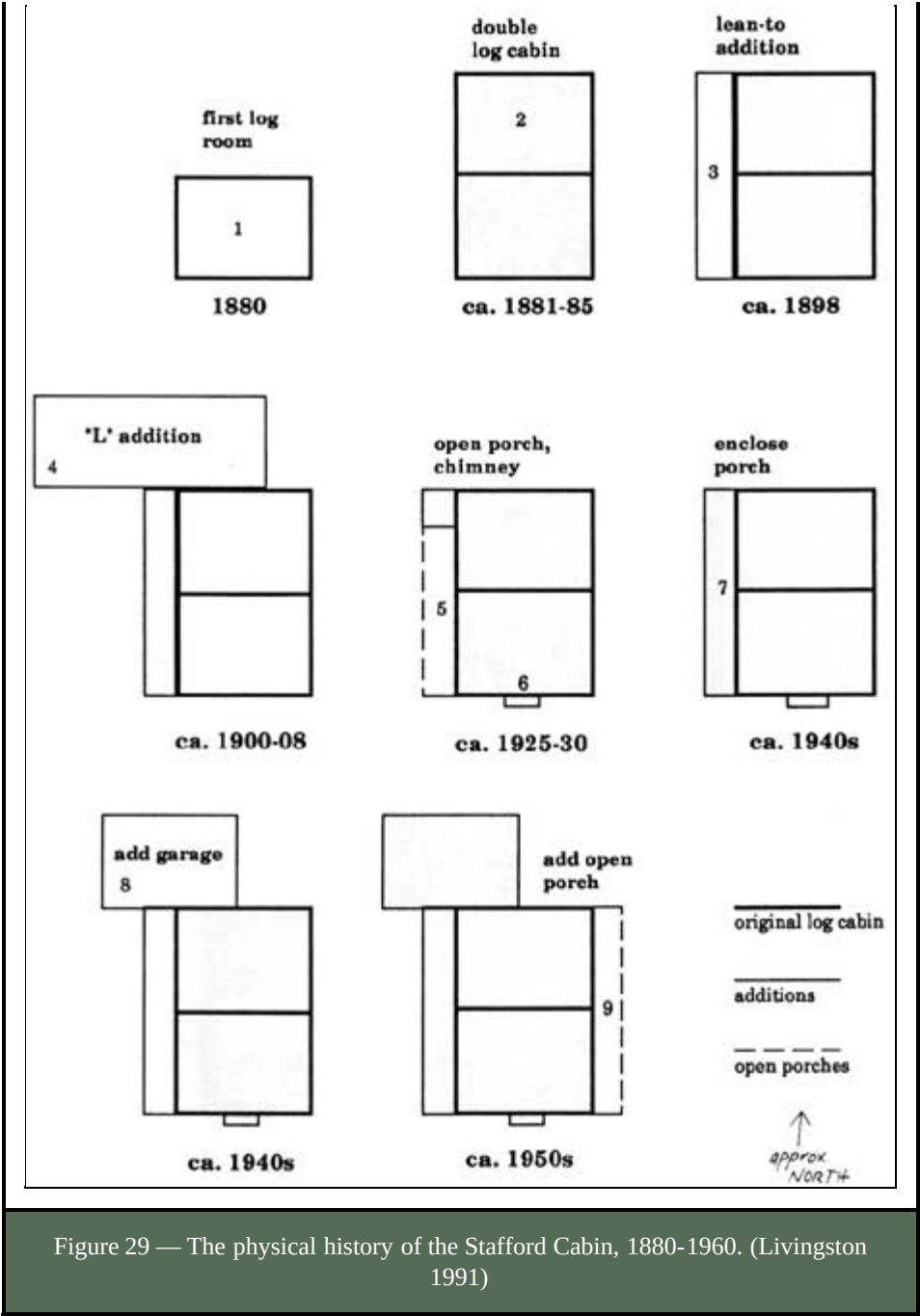


Figure 29 — The physical history of the Stafford Cabin, 1880-1960. (Livingston 1991)