NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Cant Ranch Historic District

other names/site number Sheep Rock Unit, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument

2. Location

street & number Oregon Hwy. 19 not for publication ___

city or town Dayville vicinity _x__

state Oregon code _OR___ county Grant code _023___ zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ _____
Signature of certifying official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
____ removed from the National Register _____ _____

____ other (explain): _____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
___ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
_x_ public-Federal

Category of Property
___ building(s)
_x_ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
__11_	__1__	buildings
___8_	_____	sites
___5_	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
__24_	___1_	total

Name of related multiple property listing
_____NA_____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __20__

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
____AGRICULTURE_____	____animal facility_____
_____	____irrigation facility_____
_____	____agricultural field_____
_____	____agricultural outbuilding_____
____DOMESTIC_____	____single dwelling_____
_____	____secondary structure_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
____LANDSCAPE_____	____park_____
_____	_____
____RECREATION & CULTURE___	____outdoor recreation_____
_____	_____museum_____
_____	_____
____AGRICULTURE_____	_____agricultural field_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
_____LATE 19TH/EARLY 20TH CENTURY_____
_____Other: patternbook_____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation _____CONCRETE_____
roof _____Shingle_____
walls _____Weatherboard_____
_____
other __foundation: STONE_____
__walls: Log_____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

_X__ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

____ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

_X__ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period,or method of construction,or represents the work of a master,or possesses high artistic values,or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object,or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

____AGRICULTURE_____

__EXPLORATION / SETTLEMENT___

____ARCHITECTURE_____

_____

_____

Period of Significance

_____

____1890 - 1948_____

_____

Significant Dates __1890__
__1910__
__1918__
__1946__

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

_____

Cultural Affiliation

_____

_____

Architect/Builder

__Andrew Cress & Clarence Bisbee, builders_____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
_X_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # ___OR-142_
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
_X_ Other
Name of repository: ____John Day Fossil Beds National Monument_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __approx. 200_____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	__	_____	_____	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

SEE ATTACHED

_X__ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title____Compiled by Florence K. Lentz_____

organization__Cultural Resource Consulting_____ date___December, 1998_____

street & number____107 E. 17th Ave._____ telephone___509-935-3944__

city or town____Ellensburg_____ state_WA_ zip code __98926_____

Additional Documentation

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number_____ telephone_____

city or town_____ state_____ zip code _____

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

This amended nomination has been compiled from several previous National Park Service studies. The original nomination for the James Cant Ranch Historic District was prepared by Dr. Stephanie Toothman of the Pacific Northwest Region in 1983. Donald Peting authored an Historic Structures Preservation Guide for the Cant Ranch in 1986, and Gretchen Luxenberg completed HABS documentation for the property in 1988. In 1996, Cathy Gilbert and Terri Taylor produced a Cultural Landscape Report: Cant Ranch Historic District. New information contained in these and other studies has now been incorporated in the amended nomination. Key primary sources are listed in Section 9, Major Bibliographical References.

The Cant Ranch Historic District lies within the boundaries of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in north central Oregon. The paleontological wealth of the John Day River Basin has long been acknowledged. Congress established the monument in 1974 to preserve, protect, and interpret the rich fossil resources of the region. The Cant Ranch, a primary cultural resource within the park, is one of the most intact examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century ranching operations remaining in the valley. Since 1977, the ranch has served as the location for visitor services and interpretation, for National Park Service (NPS) administrative offices, and for maintenance facilities associated with stewardship of the monument.

Approximately two-hundred acres of the Cant Ranch are now included within the boundaries of the historic district. In its heyday, however, the ranch was much larger, consisting of 6500 acres of deeded land, and 4500 acres of grazing land leased from the Bureau of Land Management. The National Park Service initially purchased 878 acres of the ranch in 1976. At the core of this acquisition were the ranch complex and the agricultural fields along the John Day River, now a part of the designated historic district.

As a district, the Cant Ranch encompasses some twenty-four contributing resources: eleven buildings, eight sites (including some landscape features), and five structures. Many of these elements have been restored to the sheep-ranching period of the 1920s. A number of buildings have been adapted for new use in support of the primary interpretive mission of the monument. The ranch has been, to some degree, incrementally modified over the past twenty years to accommodate visitor, administrative, and maintenance functions, but the overall organization of the historic landscape, and the structural fabric of the ranch have been largely preserved. As a whole, the district still displays strong integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Existing Setting

The Cant Ranch is situated along the bottomlands of the John Day River in a natural basin traditionally called Turtle Cove, and more specifically Butler Basin. The property's irrigated fields extend for a little over two miles north from the river's exit at Picture Gorge, a steep basalt canyon known for its aboriginal pictographs. North of the gorge, the narrow valley floor varies in width from four hundred to eighteen hundred feet. Escarpments of basalt and multi-colored ash beds border the bottomlands to the east and west. Beyond these ridges are elements of the Blue Mountain Range which rings the basin. The most dramatic local prominence is Sheep Rock, rising 3360 feet directly southeast of the ranch complex.

The ranch's structural center - the heart of the historic district - is located on the west side of the John Day River along Oregon Highway 19 (See map #1). The Cant House itself was completed in 1918, and served as the primary family residence from that point forward. This substantial two and one-half story dwelling has been restored to its 1920's appearance. It now functions as the monument's visitor center, housing NPS offices and interpretive displays.

North of the Cant House is the main entry and visitor parking lot. Additional parking for recreational vehicles and buses lies adjacent to the entry, along Highway 19. A landscaped lawn surrounds the house and is fenced on three sides, offering shady picnic tables for summertime visitors. Historic ornamental vegetation consists of mature black locust, white

poplar, and Chinese elm trees, along with lilac shrubbery and flower beds. South of the house a small spring waters a grove of native black cottonwoods and willows.

To the rear of the main house are various outbuildings, including a log cabin and feed shed which date from the Floyd Officer homestead period, prior to the arrival of the Cant family in 1910. Later structures include a bunkhouse, a chicken house, and a small shed, all simple wood-frame buildings with gable or shed roofs. The log cabin has been restored and is actively used today for fossil exhibits and educational programs. The bunkhouse has been adapted for use as a multi-purpose room. Together with the remnants of an early Officer-era fruit orchard east of the house (known as the Lower Orchard), this cluster of contributing features helps to interpret the domestic history of the ranch.

Remnants of a second orchard, planted by the Cant family in the 1930s or '40s (known as the Upper Orchard), still stand northeast of the house adjacent to the barn complex. Along the east end of that orchard, early Cant family farm implements are displayed to explain the story of ranching in the valley. The orchard is considered part of the primary visitor use area, and is visually tied to the Cant House and its dependencies by an extension of the irrigated lawn.

North of the house, and partially separated from it by the visitor parking lot, is a second building cluster historically devoted to the livestock operations of the ranch. Visitor access to some of these buildings is limited. The main barn, built about 1920, is a one and one-half story wood frame structure with vertical siding. It has been stabilized and restored on its exterior, and is currently used to house the monument's paleo-preparation laboratory. An open sheep-shearing shed to the north is now devoted to storage. Three historic corrals, a feed rack, and associated outbuildings remain standing around the barn, including a workshop, a privy, a watchman's hut, and the remnants of a sun shed. The workshop is now used as a paleontology research center, and the others for interpreting the history of the working ranch.

North of the barn cluster, at a somewhat lower elevation, is a recently-completed maintenance facility. Because of its siting and its design, this large building is not generally visible to the visiting public and does not intrude upon the historic scene.

Beyond the structural complex, four historically irrigated fields within the boundaries of the historic district illustrate the large-scale agricultural operations typically associated with

ranches along the John Day River. The two earliest fields lie west of the river. These were watered by the Rock Creek irrigation ditch and first cultivated by the Officer family prior to 1910. Two fields on the east side of the river were put into production by the Cant family after construction of the Titanic irrigation ditch in 1912.

Currently, all four fields are under cultivation, as part of an NPS historic property leasing program initiated in 1984. Portions of the Rock Creek ditch remain functional. The Titanic ditch still irrigates Fields No. 3 and 4, but has been abandoned from its original intake at Picture Gorge to the first pump site at the south end of Field No. 3. Besides important components of the historic irrigation system, the agricultural fields retain significant cultural features such as cable car crossings along the river, and the remnants of haystack yards.

Evolution of the Ranch

Officer Homestead Era: 1890 - 1910

The land which would later become part of the 6500-acre Cant Ranch was first homesteaded by Floyd Lee Officer beginning in 1890. The twenty-year-old son of an early Grant County rancher, Officer was already experienced in the livestock business when he laid claim to his own place at Butler Basin. The site was still extremely primitive and difficult to access - no wagon road yet existed along the river through Picture Gorge.

Little is known of Officer's early development of the ranch. Only one historic photograph dating from the late 1890s has emerged from the record. It shows the basic layout of a subsistence farm in place, some aspects of which remain recognizable even today. There were two clusters of buildings. At the south end of the complex was a simple wood-frame dwelling situated a few yards from a spring, in a grove of black locusts and white poplars. A rough cellar, a log cabin, and another unidentified structure were grouped around the house. At the north end of the site was a rudimentary cow barn with a shed roof, a workshop, a chicken house, a six-pole corral, and post and wire fence enclosures.

An irrigated hay field east of the building complex (now Field No. 1) is depicted in the photograph. Rock Creek irrigation ditch was in place by 1899, when Floyd Officer filed for the first water rights on that stream. This permit allowed irrigation, for agricultural purposes, of fifty-five acres of bottomland. Presumably what is now Field No. 2, further upstream to the south, was also under cultivation by this time. The Officer family planted an orchard with apple, peach, pear, plum, and apricot trees down a slope to the east of the house. In 1902, they acquired water rights for the use of a spring west of the ranch for domestic irrigation of nine more acres of land.

Cultural components of the Officer homestead still identifiable today include the two distinct building clusters, the log cabin and feed shed, the Lower Orchard, the alignment of Rock Creek ditch, and cultivated Fields No. 1 and 2.

Cant Sheep Ranch Era: 1910 - 1945

In 1910, the Floyd Officer family moved to the nearby town of Dayville and sold the ranch, including 677 acres and two-thirds interest to the water rights and irrigation ditch of Rock Creek. Scottish immigrant and sheep rancher James Cant Sr. and his partner John Mason were the new owners. Though greatly improved by the Officers, the ranch at Butler Basin was still very isolated, all easy access blocked by the formidable Picture Gorge some two miles up river.

At first James Cant and his wife Elizabeth made use of the existing Officer family structures, landscape features, and irrigation system. As the sheep herds grew, however, significant changes were made to the property. In 1912, the Cants doubled the land available for cultivating hay for feed by constructing a new irrigation ditch, dubbed the Titanic, on the east side of the river. The hand-dug ditch ran the length of property from its south end just below the mouth of Picture Gorge, over two miles to the downstream end of Field No. 4.

The growing Cant family, and their increasing numbers of visitors and boarders, soon required a larger house. Work on a new dwelling was begun in 1917, based on patternbook designs by the Radford Architectural Company of Chicago. Local carpenters Andrew Cress and Clarence

Bisbee took charge of the project, aided by ranch hands and family members. The new house was located just north of the older Officer home, near the spring.

The ranch experienced a period of prosperity and rapid growth through mid-1920s with the acquisition of more land and more sheep. Besides the construction of the house, an auto garage, a large barn with a shed for shearing sheep, a watchman's hut, and a small light plant were put up. Workers constructed a domestic water system from a large spring located about a half mile southwest of the ranch, providing a ready source of water for indoor plumbing, and irrigation water for a lawn, shade trees, and ornamental plantings. A stone entry gate, concrete walkways, and decorative wire fencing enhanced the domestic complex, and separated it from the cluster of working ranch structures to the north. A large vegetable garden was planted in the open area between the house and barn.

Another important development of the 1920s to affect the ranch was the construction of Oregon Highway 19, the first road through Picture Gorge. In its earliest alignment, the gravel road passed just to the west of the Cant House, past the garage, and turned east through the open area north of the barn.

The Cant Ranch reached the peak of its physical development in the early to mid-1930s. As the size of the sheep operation increased, the barn complex became more elaborate. It came to include an ice house, a blacksmith's shop, three long sun sheds used during lambing season for shade, a sheep-shearing shed attached to the main barn, and corrals surrounding the barn on the north, east, and south sides. The Cants planted a second orchard, called the Upper Orchard, irrigated by the spring. There was a secondary work area west of the highway with a large corral, and later a vegetable garden. In 1932, a small cabin was built on the east side of the John Day River across from the ranch complex. Built for the Cant's daughter Christina as a homestead cabin, the structure reverted to use for storage when the claim was never filed. Beginning in 1930, Highway 19 was paved and straightened past the ranch.

As the size of the sheep herd increased, the agricultural fields continued in intensive use. The two original west side fields, watered by flood irrigation from Rock Creek ditch, were expanded by twelve acres with the addition of "the Morrison Field" to the north. The Cants increased their production of hay to the maximum. The primary hay crop was alfalfa, rotated every third year with barley and oats. Four fence-enclosed haystack yards were put up on the east side of

the river, up slope from the Titanic ditch. Normally there were two to three cuts of hay per season, yet still, the Cants had to buy additional hay from area ranchers in order to feed their livestock through the year.

The Cant Ranch operated as a sheep ranch for more than thirty years during its formative period. Many landscape features, buildings, and structures from the sheep-ranching era remain extant at the ranch today. These include the Cant House, the barn and sheep-shearing shed, the watchman's hut, the bunkhouse, the chicken house, the sun shed ruins, the Titanic ditch, the earlier of the two cable cars, the hay stack yard ruins, much of the ornamental vegetation in the yard, and various sections of fencing. Because of these surviving resources, the sheep-ranching era remains the most visible of the several types of ranching represented in the historic district.

Cant Cattle Ranch Era: 1946 - 1975

By the end of World War Two, shifting market conditions, the depletion of grazing land, and increasing competition for land and water brought an end to profitable sheep ranching. The Cant family converted to a cattle-ranching operation in 1946. This activity continued for the next thirty years. The cattle-ranching era also had some lasting effects on the functional aspects and the physical appearance of the ranch, many of which may still be noted today.

During these later years, the family's use of the domestic complex - the house, the garage, the bunkhouse, and the storage cabin remained the same. But in the 1950s, son Charles Cant undertook some minor building repairs, relocations, and modest new construction. The chicken house and storage shed (the old Officer cellar) were moved to the northwest corner of the Lower Orchard. The light plant shed was removed when the house was connected to outside electricity, and the ice house was taken down. A new blacksmith shop and privy were put up just west of the barn. The sheep pens and sun sheds were used for storage, but the latter fell into disrepair in the 1960s. To accommodate cattle, all the corral fences were built higher and cattle loading chutes were added near the highway.

The agricultural fields remained in use for cultivating hay, and the haystack yards still operated. A second cable car was added at the south end of the fields. The two early irrigation systems continued to be maintained and used.

In 1976, the NPS purchased core acreage of the Cant Ranch, including the structural complex and agricultural lands along the river, as a part of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. A year later, the ranch was designated the primary visitor contact point for the entire Monument. Since that time, most of the surviving buildings, structures, and landscape features of the ranch have been restored and/or adapted for new use. Some buildings in ruins were removed, including the garage, the fuel storage shed, the old blacksmith shop, the hog pen and shed, one feed rack, and the sheep corral north of the barn.

The Cant's gravel driveway and informal parking area were paved for visitor use, and the lawn expanded to encompass both orchards and an old corral and garden area. A new water and sewer system was installed to accommodate visitors and NPS staff. The orchards were retained, and are now being maintained for longevity. Since June of 1984, the four agricultural fields have been made available for lease in an effort to preserve the ranch's historic landscape character and its traditional agricultural operations.

Description of Extant Resources

Contributing Buildings

- **Cant House**

1918

This substantial two and one-half story wood-frame farm house is said to have been based on several plans found in the pattern book *The Radford American Homes*, published in 1903 by the Radford Architectural Company. Locally-milled lumber and local carpenters were employed. The house was designed to accommodate the large Cant family and their many visitors. The ground floor contained a parlor, living room, dining room, kitchen, office, washroom and one bedroom, and the upstairs included six bedrooms and a bath. Interior walls

were of 12-inch boards finished in cloth and wallpaper. The house was heated by three big wood stoves, with a cook stove in the kitchen. A 110-volt Kohler generator provided power to the house, which was wired for electricity from the outset. In the early 1920s, indoor plumbing was installed. Few other alterations were made during the Cant family's ownership. In the 1930s, however, a second story sleeping porch was enclosed above the porch on the main (west) elevation. The family used the attic story as a schoolroom and dance hall.

The Cant house rests on a concrete perimeter foundation, and measures approximately 40 feet by 45 feet in plan. The house features a hipped roof with cedar shingles and three dormers, beveled shiplap siding, and two bay windows at the ground floor level. The exterior is dominated on its west facade by an open, full-width front porch with a second-floor deck and balustrade, and by screen-enclosed porches that wrap around the other three sides of the house. Windows are fitted with one-over-one double hung sash. The main front door has sidelights and a single upper pane of etched glazing depicting a young girl holding a lamb.

Since May of 1977, the Cant house has served as the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument visitor center. The house has been reroofed, painted, rewired, and insulated. The Cant family's sleeping porch addition was removed in order to return the house to its 1920s appearance. On the interior, visitor restrooms were created out of the old ranch office and washroom; sheetrock and paneling cover some original wall surfaces; and a rear bedroom has been converted into a small kitchen for NPS staff. The ground floor is given over to exhibits, and the second floor to NPS offices (see photos # 1 - 6).

- **Log Cabin**

Late 1890s - early 1900s

The log cabin located just east of the main house is one of only two buildings in the historic district to survive from the Officer homestead period. The original use of the cabin is uncertain, but the Cant family used it for storage of supplies and foodstuffs during both the sheep and cattle ranching eras. Pack horses were tied up here to be loaded with provisions for the sheepherders. The cabin was originally built over a dirt-walled cellar. By the time of NPS acquisition, the cabin had been roofed with corrugated metal.

A one-room, one-story log structure measuring approximately 12 feet by 17 feet, the cabin has vertical board and batten in the gable ends. In 1983, the NPS completed stabilization and rehabilitation of the cabin. Some partial concrete footings were installed, visible only from inside the cellar. The cabin was reroofed with cedar shingles and its deteriorated logs and chinking replaced. Currently, the cabin is used to interpret the ranch and functions as a fossil demonstration lab (see photos # 4 - 6).

- **Bunkhouse**

Early 1930s

A one-story, wood-frame structure with horizontal beveled siding, the bunkhouse is located southeast of the Cant house. It was built by Charles Cant in the early 1930s to house the hired hands who worked the ranch. At the time of NPS acquisition, the interior of the bunkhouse featured horizontal tongue-in-groove boards finished with wallpaper, a wood slat ceiling covered with cardboard, and linoleum flooring.

Rehabilitation work in 1981-82 consisted of reroofing with cedar shingles, installing wood sills and concealed concrete foundation blocks, and creating a new ceiling, walls, and floors fashioned of rough-sawn lumber from neighboring structures (see photo # 6).

- **Shed**

c. 1950

The shed is a small wood-frame, shed-roofed structure approximately 6 feet by 4 feet in dimension. It has vertical, board and batten siding and a cedar shingle roof. This outbuilding is thought to have been built c. 1950 and used as an incubation shed, at the same time as the chicken house was moved to its present location north of the orchard.

- **Chicken House**

c. 1910s - 1920s

The chicken house was built during the Cant sheep ranching era and was first located somewhere near the barn. It was later moved southeast of the main house and finally to its

present location at the northwest corner of the lower orchard, in the 1950s. At that time it was also reduced to half its original size.

The chicken house is a simple wood-frame structure with a shed roof, vertical board siding, and cedar shingle roofing restored in 1982. It measures approximately 4 feet by 16 feet in plan. In the 1980s the NPS housed chickens there and, while this is no longer the case, the outbuilding still contributes to the interpretation of the ranch (see photos # 7 and 8).

- **Feed Shed**

c. 1890s - 1910

Situated next to the chicken house, the feed shed is believed to date from the Officer homestead era at the ranch. Originally the building served as the Officer family's cellar and was located west of the main house. Then it was moved north of the log cabin during the Cant sheep ranching period and converted to storage. Finally, during the cattle ranching era, it was relocated to its present spot and used as a feed shed.

The feed shed is a one-room gable-roofed structure with horizontal board and batten siding. Its dimensions are 7 feet by 12 feet, and its cedar shingle roofing was restored by the NPS in 1981-82. The feed shed is actively used for interpretation and storage (see photos # 7 and 8).

- **Barn and Sheep Shearing Sheds**

c. 1920s

The main ranch barn stands north of the house. Built during the sheep ranching era, the barn is of timber-frame construction, and rests on a stone and wood post foundation. Its dimensions in plan are 66 feet by 120 feet. Historically, the twelve-bay interior contained horse and mule stalls, a tackroom, and milking stations on the southwest side. A loft in the southeast corner was used to store grain, and the loose hay was stacked in the center of the west half of the barn. Along the north side was "sheep alley," with pens for ewes and single lambs along the outer wall and larger pens for ewes with twins across the aisle. Outside along the northwest side was a chute for loading sheep, no longer extant.

The exterior of the barn today retains its 1920's massing, vertical board and batten siding, gabled wood-shingled roof and ridge vents, and multi-paned windows. Attached to the north elevation are sheep shearing pens housed in a one-story, open-walled structure 20 by 60 feet in dimension. Ten shearing stalls and a waiting aisle flank a central alley. The sheep-shearing pens are believed to be among the best-preserved resources of their type in the region. Besides their present-day functions as interpretive components of the ranch, the barn's interior has been converted for use as the monument's paleontology laboratory, and the sheep shearing pens are used for NPS storage (see photos # 9 and 10).

- **Watchman's Hut**

c. 1920s

A small, crudely built shelter for the use of hired hands during lambing season, the watchman's hut measures approximately 6 by 12 feet. It is believed to have been built around the same time as the barn. The hut has cedar shingle roofing and board and batten siding. Today the structure is used for interpretive purposes (see photo # 11).

- **Workshop**

1950s

The workshop was built during the Cant cattle ranching era, in a spot where an earlier blacksmith shop had been located. The building is a wood-frame, gable-roofed structure with horizontal beveled wood siding and wood shingle roofing. It measures approximately 19 by 33 feet in plan. Until the recent completion of the monument's new maintenance shop, this building served as the primary NPS maintenance facility. It now houses a paleontology research center, with offices and a library for visiting and resident researchers (see photo # 12).

- **Privy**

c. 1950s

A small wood-frame structure with vertical board and batten siding and a shed roof, the privy is thought to have been moved to the ranch from the nearby town of Dayville. It stands directly

west of the workshop where it served as part of the barn complex. The privy has been restored as an interpretive component of the site.

- **Christina's Cabin**

c.1932

This small wood-frame structure with vertical board siding stands on the opposite bank of the John Day River from the ranch complex. It was built as a homesteading cabin for the Cant's daughter Christina. Although the homestead claim was never filed, the cabin is known to have been used in later years for storing agricultural equipment. The cabin was restored in 1986 and is used to interpret the history of the ranch.

Contributing Sites

- **Sun Shed Ruins**

c. 1920s - 1930s

The remnants of one of three original sun sheds, used as shelter from the sun during lambing season, still stand at the far north end of the complex. It marks the location of what was once a large sheep corral north of the barn. The sun shed was a rough wood-frame structure with vertical boards and a shed roof. The shed was approximately 6 feet high and 8 feet wide (see photo # 13).

- **Yard and Vegetation**

1890 - 1940s

Both the Officer family and the Cant family planted ornamental vegetation in and around the ranch house complex. Some native riparian vegetation in the form of cottonwood trees also remains at the spring along the south edge of the yard. Black locusts and white poplars from the Officer era, and elm trees, lilacs, spirea, and flower beds from the Cant period are still extant. Most of the trees show evidence of pollarding, a form of heavy pruning commonly practiced in the John Day Valley. The lawn around the main house dates to the Cant era, but has been greatly enlarged by the NPS (see photos # 1 -7).

- **Lower Orchard**

1890 - 1910

During the Officer homestead era an orchard was planted downslope (east) of the ranch house. This was later referred to as the Lower Orchard. Around fifteen of the original peach, pear, plum, apple, and apricot trees still survive (approximately one-third of the orchard's original size). Since NPS acquisition, dying trees have been removed, and twenty new fruit trees planted. During the summer months, the Lower Orchard is used to pasture sheep for interpretive purposes (see photo # 14).

- **Upper Orchard**

1910 - 1940

Planted by the Cant family during the sheep ranching era, the Upper Orchard stands south of the barn. It consisted historically of about twenty-seven apple, peach, and plum trees, one-third of which remain standing. Interpretive displays of Cant family ranching equipment are now arranged along the north side of the orchard (see photos # 7 and 8).

- **Field No. 1**

c. 1900

This early field was established by the Officer family c. 1900, and has remained in continuous use since that time. The 17-acre field is located directly north and east of the structural complex, on the west side of the John Day River. Rock Creek ditch borders the west side of the field, historically providing its irrigation water. Currently the field is in full agricultural production of alfalfa, clover, and grass hay. Due to ditch failure, it is now irrigated by sprinkler (see photos # 15 and 19).

- **Field No. 2**

c. 1902

This is the second oldest of the agricultural fields associated with the ranch, established by the Officer family in 1902. It is the southernmost field in the historic district, situated on the west side of the river. Twelve acres in size, the field is irrigated by Rock Creek ditch on the west and is leased for the cultivation of hay. Near the north end of the field is the later of two cable car river crossings constructed by the Cants.

- **Field No. 3**

c. 1925

This 29-acre field lies on the east side of the John Day River. It was first used by the Cant family around 1925, or perhaps earlier. The field is currently leased for the cultivation of hay, and is irrigated by the restored Titanic ditch (completed in 1912). The field has three haystack yards, and a 1940s cable crossing to Field No. 2 (see photo # 16).

- **Field No. 4**

c. 1925

This 16-acre field is located on the east side of the river, opposite the ranch complex. It was first used by the Cant family c. 1925, maybe earlier. Historic features within the field include Titanic Ditch, a haystack yard up slope of Titanic ditch, Christina's cabin, and the earliest of two cable car river crossings installed by the Cants. The field is leased and has been reseeded in alfalfa, clover, and grass. It is irrigated with sprinklers, pending the restoration of the ditch (see photos # 15 and 18).

Contributing Structures

- **Feed Rack**

1920s - 1930s

One of two wooden feed racks survives from the Cant sheep ranching period. It is located west of the barn, and measures 9 feet by 16 feet. Another feed rack stood north of the barn but has recently collapsed (see photo # 9).

- **Fences and Gates**

1890 - 1947

Fences were used throughout the historic period to delineate corrals, haystack yards, cattle chutes, and boundaries. Various fencing types were used, of which many examples remain today within the historic district. These included wooden post and pole (rail), post and horizontal board, vertical board, picket, wood post with wire mesh, and wood post with barbed wire. Often these fences were rustic in appearance, built of whatever materials were available and readily adapted to new use. The house itself was surrounded with a wood post and wire mesh fence, with an entry gate flanked by stone pillars constructed by local mason Angus Morrison.

Since acquisition of the ranch in 1976, the NPS has removed some early fencing, and created a few new enclosures with non-historic fencing. Many original fences and gates have been retained and repaired in styles used during the ranch's operation. Features still standing today include corrals of several different fencing types near the barn, a cattle chute along Highway 19, the wire fence enclosure and stone gate pillars around the house, and remnants of the four haystack yards (see photos # 2 and 17).

- **Cable Cars**

1920s - 1940s

Two wood and metal cable cars, still extant, provided passenger access across the John Day River. Both are metal frame structures with metal pulleys on wire cables. The earliest, built during the Cant sheep ranching period, stands just south of the structural complex and connects to Field No. 4 on the east side of the river. It has wood sides, floorboards, and seats, as well as a wooden landing platform on either bank.

The second cable car, thought to have been built in the 1940s, provides access from Field No. 2 to the south end of Field No. 3. It has metal mesh sides and flooring, with wooden seats. Both cable cars are still operable (see photo # 18).

- **Rock Creek Ditch**

c. 1899

Two primary irrigation ditches extend the length of the historic district on the east and west sides of the John Day River. The earlier of the two, Rock Creek ditch, originated at the confluence of Rock Creek and the river and continued past the Officer family homestead north to Goose Rock on the Finlay Morrison homestead. The hand-dug ditch followed the base of the hills and alluvial fans that bordered the river valley, with lateral ditches carrying water to the fields.

Various improvements were made to Rock Creek ditch over the years. Portions of the south half of the ditch are concrete-lined. To maintain the viability of continuing irrigation of the west side fields, the NPS has recently installed buried PVC piping along a segment of the ditch just south of the Cant ranch structural complex, following the historic ditch channel. Rock Creek Ditch is now operable to the north end of the ranch complex (see photos # 19 and 20).

- **Titanic Ditch**

1912

A second irrigation ditch was constructed on the east side of the John Day River by the Cant family in 1912. This ditch, dubbed the "Titanic" after the sinking of the ship that same year, increased the ranch's cultivated land by some seventy-three acres. The ditch was constructed by hand using a V-shaped plow. Owing to the steep topography, a considerable amount of cutting and berming was required to create a useful grade. This ditch was used to irrigate Fields No. 3 and 4 throughout the Cant cattle-ranching period, and into the NPS era under the Agricultural Lease Program.

In 1983, use of the original diversion point was discontinued due to washouts and erosion problems, and a new pump was installed at the south end of Field No. 3. Some time around 1990, the entire historic ditch was abandoned, and a new, much shorter ditch dug along its base to irrigate Field No. 3. Today the Titanic ditch is unused, and sections of it are in poor condition.

Non-Contributing Building

- **Maintenance Shop**

1996

In 1996, the NPS completed construction of a new maintenance shop north of the historic ranch complex. The shop is located adjacent to and below the grade of Highway 19, and is not visible from the visitor center. The building is a single-story, wood-frame building with board and batten siding, and a low-pitched, standing seam metal roof. Irregular massing, multi-paned window sash, and muted colors ensure the building does not detract from the character of the historic district (see photo # 21).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This amended nomination has been compiled from several previous National Park Service studies. The original nomination for the James Cant Ranch Historic District was prepared by Dr. Stephanie Toothman of the National Park Service Pacific Northwest Region in 1983. Donald Peting authored an Historic Structures Preservation Guide for the Cant Ranch in 1986, and Gretchen Luxenberg completed HABS documentation for the property in 1988. In 1996, Cathy Gilbert and Terri Taylor produced a Cultural Landscape Report: Cant Ranch Historic District. New information contained in these and other studies has now been incorporated in the amended nomination. Key primary sources are listed in Section 9, Major Bibliographical References.

The Cant Ranch Historic District contains the core two-hundred acres of an early twentieth-century sheep ranch in the John Day River Valley of north central Oregon. Since its acquisition by the National Park Service (NPS) in 1976, the ranch has been a part of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Congress authorized creation of this monument in 1974 for the purpose of preserving and interpreting the extensive Tertiary Period fossil record found in the geologic formations of the area. Today the monument comprises three noncontiguous units: the Clarno and Painted Hills Units in Wheeler County, and the Sheep Rock Unit in Grant County where the Cant Ranch Historic District is located. The Cant Ranch serves as administrative headquarters for the entire monument, and as its primary point of visitor contact. Interpretive displays and programs, visitor services, NPS offices, and maintenance facilities are all located within the historic ranch complex.

Since the turn of the nineteenth century, the larger John Day River Basin has been internationally recognized as a preeminent paleontological resource area. Sculpted exposures of volcanic rock in the John Day River Valley contain some of the richest fossil beds in the world. This record of evolutionary change, exceptional in its continuity and duration, reveals coherent evidence of diverse plant and animal life, ancient habitats, and the dynamic processes that shaped them. Four consecutive geological epochs spanning some forty million years of

earth's history are represented within the 14,400 acres of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

The monument also contains natural and cultural features significant at a regional and local level. However, because the primary interpretive emphasis at the monument is centered on its remarkable paleontological values, the Cant Ranch has been adapted to function in part as a center for the demonstration, preservation, and curation of fossils. These activities are conducted by park staff in the various agricultural outbuildings. The ranch nonetheless remains an important local landmark and agricultural landscape in its own right. The surviving buildings, structures, and landscape features of the historic district serve to illustrate over one-hundred years of ranching tradition in the John Day country.

National Register Criteria

The Cant Ranch Historic District is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history, adding to our understanding of settlement and agricultural development in the John Day River Valley of north central Oregon (Criterion A).

Two primary Euro-American settlement patterns in the region are aptly represented by the two families who owned and developed the ranch over its eighty-five year history. The Floyd Officer family exemplifies the post-1860s eastward migration of second and third generation Oregon pioneers from the Willamette Valley, and the subsequent development of livestock ranching east of the Cascade Mountains. The James Cant family typifies the somewhat later influx of first generation Scottish immigrants into the upper John Day Basin. These newcomers were experienced sheepherders and came to participate in the boom years of sheep ranching, from 1890 to 1910.

The property further illustrates the dramatic evolution of agriculture in the region between 1890 and 1950. The development of the ranch reflects larger economic cycles and shifting land use patterns in north central Oregon agriculture during this time period - from subsistence homesteading and the grazing of livestock on public lands, to the profitability of specialized sheep ranching and the cultivation of riverine hay crops, to the resurgence of cattle ranching

around World War Two. Beginning as a remote and rudimentary homestead with a self-sufficient economy, the Cant Ranch was adapted and greatly expanded in the early decades of the twentieth century to become one of the most successful sheep ranching operations in the valley. The ranch also reflects a third era of valley livestock ranching in the post-1946 years, when the family business converted exclusively to the raising of cattle.

As a historic district, the Cant Ranch embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction (Criterion C). The physical remains of the Officer homestead era and the Cant sheep ranching era - are overlaid by evidence of the most recent period of cattle ranching. Both the structural fabric of the ranch and the features of its larger landscape illustrate deliberate design decisions common to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century ranching operations in central and eastern Oregon. Ample evidence remains - of overall landscape organization, response to natural features, land use, circulation, vegetation patterns, structures, and small scale features - to visually convey the story of the ranch over time. Even with recent adaptations by the NPS to accommodate visitors and to interpret the paleontological history of the area, the ranch still presents a significant and distinguishable entity and evokes a strong sense of time and place.

Settlement in the John Day Valley

Native peoples have lived in what is now Oregon for more than 10,000 years. The upper John Day Basin is a transition zone between two traditional culture areas defined by physiography and linguistics - the Columbia Plateau and the Great Basin. Although territorial boundaries fluctuated over time, the Tenino, the John Day, and the Wyampam Indians - collectively known as the "Western Columbia River Sahaptins" - and the Northern Paiute are thought to have been most closely connected with the lands now a part of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. The land that became a part of the Cant Ranch is within territory ceded by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs by treaty in 1855.

A gold strike on Canyon Creek in 1862 first drew miners to the upper John Day Basin. The towns of Canyon City and John Day took shape as local service centers for mining activity in the Blue Mountains. The demand for provisions resulted in limited settlement along the route of

The Dalles Military Road, a hastily-built supply line between the mining region and the Columbia River. When the gold boom subsided in the late 1860s, the area's population declined. Most settlers to Oregon Territory still preferred the fertile Willamette Valley west of the Cascades.

The Homestead Act of 1862 spurred new settlement throughout the inland West and in eastern Oregon. Word soon spread of the abundant grasslands in Grant and Wheeler Counties, and of their suitability for stock-raising. Euro-American settlers had reached the vicinity of what is now John Day Fossil Beds National Monument by 1868. From about 1870, second generation Oregon settlers from the Willamette Valley migrated to eastern Oregon, bringing with them herds of livestock for fattening on the lush native grass. Many immigrants to north central Oregon had their origins in the Ohio Valley and upland South. By 1880, census records indicate that a majority of the area's residents were born in Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois and Ohio. They brought with them agricultural backgrounds and affiliations with the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. A second wave of newcomers to the upper basin from 1890 to 1910 came to work as sheepherders directly from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Germany.

The land along the John Day River north of Picture Gorge was particularly difficult to access and for this reason was bypassed by The Dalles Military Road. In 1864, local resident Sam Snook led Thomas Condon, a geologist and Congregational minister from The Dalles, on a fossil hunting trip into two remote natural basins just north of the gorge. Condon named the area Turtle Cove. Through Condon, leading paleontologists continued to explore Turtle Cove from the 1870s on, but settlement came slowly to these hidden pockets of the valley. William R. Mascall and Frank Butler were two of the earliest permanent white settlers to the area. In 1890, Floyd Lee Officer homesteaded the land which became part of the Cant Ranch.

Floyd Officer was the grandson of James Officer and Evelyn Cooley Officer, early Oregon pioneers who settled in the Willamette Valley in 1845. Floyd's father, Eli Casey Officer, was one of the original settlers and livestock ranchers in the John Day Valley. Eli and his brothers had migrated east from the Willamette in 1861, bringing the first flock of sheep to the area and helping to organize and develop Grant County. On a claim one-half mile from the present-day town of Dayville, Eli Officer raised sheep and cattle, later relocating downriver into Butler Basin and establishing a second claim. Floyd Lee Officer learned the livestock business on the family

ranch. When he was about twenty years of age, he acquired his own land in Butler Basin in Section 6, T12 S, R26E, began to make the required homestead improvements, and built up a sheep and cattle operation. Seven years later, on January 30, 1898, he was issued his homestead patent (Serial no. 3131) for 160 acres.

That same year, Floyd Officer married Sylvia Fitzgerald, a widow with four children. Over the next decade, the family grew to include eight children. In 1910, after twenty years of work on the Butler Basin spread, the Officer family purchased and relocated to another livestock ranch closer to schools in Dayville. Like his father and grandfather before him, Floyd Officer was recognized in his own time for his substantial contributions to the settlement of Oregon, and for his role in the progress and development of Grant County.

James Cant, second owner of the ranch at Butler Basin, was born and raised in Scotland where he learned the livestock business in his family's butcher shop and stockyard. At the age of twenty-one he set out for Portugal and Argentina to purchase merino bucks for a Scottish stock company. In 1905, he emigrated to the John Day Country in eastern Oregon, and went to work for a fellow Scotsman, Alexander Murray. Like many of his countrymen, Cant gained a foothold in the business locally by working for an established rancher, taking part of his pay in sheep to build up his own band. During this period he sent for his Scottish sweetheart Elizabeth Grant, and they were married in Canyon City. In 1910, having acquired enough money and sheep to make a start in the business, James Cant and his partner John Mason purchased the Officer homestead.

James and Lizzie Cant and their four children were prominent members of the local Scottish community. Because of the strategic location and spaciousness of their home, the Cant Ranch was something of a social gathering place for travelers, visitors, and family. Elizabeth Cant was known for her hospitality, and for the ready help she extended to neighbors in hard times. James Cant was a reputable businessman and respected sheep rancher, as well as a founding member and active participant in community organizations such as the Oregon Wool Grower's Association, the Grant County Stockgrowers' Association, and the Cattle and Horse Raisers' Association. He was also a member of Grange No. 627, and served as District Clerk for the local school district. Upon their deaths in 1972 and 1973, both Cants were remembered for their long and significant roles in the settlement of the upper John Day Valley.

Agricultural Development in the John Day Valley

Early agriculture in Grant County took shape in the 1860s in response to a demand for provisions in remote mining communities such as Canyon City. A mix of livestock and grain production prevailed on each homestead, with families dependent upon some grazing animals, a kitchen garden, and a dooryard orchard. Limited access to markets created a largely local economy that slowed after the gold rush. But ranching revived by the late 1870s as news spread of the abundant summer grazing in the surrounding hills and mountains. In fact, livestock ranching grew so rapidly throughout the region that overgrazing began to take a toll on native grasslands. Until about 1890, cattle were more numerous than sheep.

Floyd Officer's early homestead reflected many of these aspects of self-sufficiency. The farm remained isolated, as no good road was cut through Picture Gorge until the early 1920s. Sylvia Officer made occasional trips to Dayville on horseback for minor supplies in exchange for butter and eggs produced on the ranch. Major supplies, however, had to be hauled in by horse and wagon from The Dalles or Heppner twice a year. Food for the family was largely grown at the ranch, from a large vegetable garden and an orchard of apple, peach, pear, apricot, and plum trees. Floyd Officer raised both sheep and cattle commercially, in addition to the pigs, chickens, sheep, and cattle grown for the use of the family.

Sheep ranching gained a firmer foothold throughout eastern Oregon after 1880, following the imposition of a tariff on foreign wool. In the 1890s and into the first decade of the 20th century, "stub lines" reached south into sheep territory from the Oregon Railway & Navigation Company's main tracks on the south bank of the Columbia River. An influx of European sheepherders in the upper John Day Basin around the turn of the century reflected the many opportunities opening in the local expansion of sheep operations. The height of sheep ranching as a predominant agricultural activity in the region occurred between 1890 and 1910.

Ranchers grazed their flocks on the public domain. At first, the plentiful bunchgrass on the open range made it unnecessary to bring the sheep to the ranch in the winter. Often the bands ranged far from the home ranch which was typically situated along the river, close to a spring or

tributary stream. Water rights were critical to controlling the surrounding land base. By 1900, sheep and cattle had seriously depleted the resources of the rangelands in the upper John Day Basin. This made necessary the cultivation of hay on bottomlands along the river. Simple flood irrigation systems were constructed by hand along the edges of the valley floor.

When Floyd Officer began to develop his Butler Basin homestead late in 1890, he brought with him both sheep and cattle. By the time he sold the ranch in 1910, however, his was clearly a commercial sheep operation. At that time he owned one band of sheep (1200 animals), some cattle, and 357 acres of land in Grant County. As the grasslands depleted, Officer cultivated hay fields along the west side of the river to provide supplemental feed for his livestock. To water the fields he acquired water rights for a diversion from Rock Creek in 1899 and constructed a ditch that ran north with laterals reaching down into the fields. These ditches were hand-dug using a sixteen-foot 2 x 4 with a level affixed to it to maintain the necessary gradient. Fifty-five acres of land were put into production, for hay and possibly for grain. In 1902, Officer acquired additional water rights for a spring west of the ranch for domestic irrigation.

James Cant arrived in the John Day Valley, and began his work in the sheep ranching business during its heyday in 1905. When he acquired the Officer homestead in 1910 for $4000, he brought with him his own sheep with the intent of specializing in this type of ranching. Cant soon doubled the irrigated acreage of the ranch by acquiring water rights for a diversion near the mouth of Picture Gorge. The Titanic ditch was hand dug along the east side of the river using a V-shaped plow. As on all ranches in the valley, maintenance of the irrigation ditches was a labor-intensive and never-ending task. The Cants grew alfalfa hay, rotated every third year with barley and oats. Two to three cuttings of hay were made each summer. Even with the majority of their irrigated bottomland in hay production, the Cants always purchased additional hay from local ranchers to feed their growing flocks of sheep over the winter months.

In order to stay in business in the twentieth century, many ranchers in the region greatly increased their numbers of livestock and vastly expanded the size of the ranch holdings. This practice was encouraged by the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, which allowed settlers to secure an additional 320 acres beyond their original claim, and the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916, which permitted filing on an additional 640 acres of the public domain. During this

time period, ranchers attempted to buy up failed homesteads and vied, sometimes violently, for control of water rights and diminishing access to strategic public rangelands.

James Cant, too, steadily increased the size of his flocks and his private land holdings. At the height of their operation, the Cants owned two bands of sheep, or 2400 animals. This was considered a moderate-sized operation for that area. Sheep ranching practices at the Cant Ranch were typical of other operations in the area. The yearly cycle, with both lambing and shearing occurring in the spring. After the Cants built their own sheep shearing pens, neighboring ranchers brought their flocks to the Butler Basin ranch as well. Sheep shearing crews of eight to twelve men were boarded at the Cant Ranch during this season. The wool was loaded on wagons or trucks and shipped to the railroad at Heppner, and later to Prairie City. In mid-June, all but the yearlings were trailed to Cant's leased forest allotment in the Aldrich Mountains for summer grazing. By late September, the sheep returned to the home range for the winter feeding.

Dust bowl conditions prevailed in the arid West during the 1920s and '30s and prices dropped. Sheep ranchers struggled to survive, often through loans from the Production Credit Association, or through the unpaid labor of family members. Shifting market values, and the implementation of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 which favored cattle leases over sheep, influenced a gradual swing back to cattle ranching. By the end of World War Two, many ranchers in the upper John Day Valley had switched over to cattle, adapting their existing sheep facilities to new use.

The Cant family likewise changed from sheep to cattle in 1946, when they could no longer find skilled sheep herders and hired help. This new era of operation continued for nearly thirty more years. During this time, the ranch was modernized with commercial electricity and refrigeration, and highway access through the basin was improved. Hay production continued in the irrigated bottomlands. Soon after switching to cattle, the Cants traded their Aldrich allotment for another at Murderer's Creek, and continued to expand their own holdings to accommodate increasing herds and to avoid overuse of the land. By 1965, the ranch consisted of 6500 acres of deeded land, as well as 4500 acres leased from the Bureau of Land Management. At that time, the Cant Ranch produced five to six hundred head of cattle annually.

Ranches in the John Day Valley: Physical Form

The Cant Ranch Historic District physically illustrates the evolution of a typical John Day Valley ranch complex over several periods of time. Despite the overlayering of different eras of development, certain readable patterns of siting, organization, and land use reveal the critical determinants faced by all ranchers in the region.

The earliest era illustrated at Cant Ranch, that of subsistence homesteading between 1890 and 1909, is represented by certain remnants of the Officer family homestead which are still very much discernible. Factors which influenced the original site selection are intact and form the large-scale framework of the cultural landscape today. The siting of the homestead responded to natural resources necessary for survival - a structural complex built above the flood plain and adjacent to a natural spring, wood for the construction of structures, a hill for protection from winter storms, rich bottomlands for cultivation bordering the river, topography suitable for flood irrigation, and miles of nearby range lands for livestock.

The overall functional and locational organization of the main building complex was also established by Floyd Officer. This pattern determined all later development at the ranch, and remains in place today. Domestic agriculture and subsistence functions were grouped in a cluster at the south side of the complex, next to the spring and wooded ravine. These natural features, as well as a log storage cabin, cellar, and fruit orchard planted during that era, still survive. A second cluster at the north side of the complex related to the working operation of the ranch, and this pattern also endured through the Cant's ownership. Officer first cultivated the bottomlands on the west side of the river, now known as Fields No. 1 and No. 2, and he constructed the Rock Creek irrigation ditch. These features are prominent elements of the historic district.

Even more evidence remains of the Cant Family sheep ranching era, from 1910 to 1946. The spacious hipped roof ranch house has long been considered a local landmark in the John Day Valley. The fact that the design of the residence appears to have been based upon plans and elevations from a period architectural patternbook, still in the possession of the Cant Family,

demonstrates the widespread availability of these kinds of vernacular building aids in the region. Although larger than a typical family dwelling in this area, the Cant House illustrates the ranch's strategic location as a stopping point for travelers at the mouth of Picture Gorge, as well as the Cant family's reputation for hospitality. Also dating from this period are the barn and sheep shearing pens, believed to be among the best preserved examples of essential sheep raising functions in the region. A number of surviving outbuildings in the main structural complex clearly reflect the practice of sheep ranching in that era, including the watchman's hut, the bunkhouse, and the sun shed ruins.

Many additional landscape features depict ranch improvements and expanding land uses during the sheep ranch period. The second orchard was planted during this time, as was much of the domestic vegetation around the house. Shade trees typical of eastern Oregon ranches - elm, white poplar, and black locust - still survive, as do ornamentals such as lilacs, honeysuckle, and spirea. The same overall plant palette can be observed at other older ranches in the area. As their flocks grew, the Cants doubled their cultivated acreage with Fields No. 3 and 4 to increase their hay production capacity. Titanic Ditch was built to water those fields, and a cable car across the river constructed for better access to them.

Small scale features from the sheep ranching era can also be found throughout the historic district, each of them illustrative of important activities. Several styles of fencing and gates remain, built to delineate corrals and haystack yards, and to set off domestic areas. One feed rack close to the barn survives from this period. Evidence of the impact of Oregon Highway 19, built past the ranch in the mid-1920s, and its subsequent improvements in the 1930s, can be seen in the raised grade that cuts off use of the earlier ornamental stone gate at the front of the house, and in the remnant of earlier highway alignment that bends to the northeast, just past the barn.

The cattle ranching era at the Cant Ranch, from 1947 to 1975, left later buildings and features that depict post-war changes in the character of ranching in the region. Adapting existing sheep facilities to cattle use was the usual, thrifty approach. Moved and/or adapted outbuildings at the Cant Ranch include the chicken house, and the cellar (converted to a feed shed). New buildings were put up as needed, including a workshop, a privy, a new chicken house, and an incubation shed. Corrals were made taller, and cattle loading chutes built. A second cable car was added upriver to provide better access between Fields No. 2 and 3.

Later elements of the cattle-ranching era overlay the remnants of earlier periods, and do not detract from the overall integrity of the historic district. Together, they combine to offer visitors a rich physical record of the evolution of ranching in the John Day Valley.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

This nomination amendment is compiled from various National Park Service reports and studies:

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Toothman, Stephanie. "James Cant Ranch Historic District" National Register Nomination. Seattle, WA: National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region. 1983.

Key primary sources used in the original (1983) National Register Nomination include:

Grant County, Oregon. Deed Record Books K, p.263; 27, p.609; 3, p.388; and Mortgage Record Book I, p.162. On file at Grant County Courthouse, Canyon City, Oregon.

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Radford Architectural Company. *The Radford American Homes.* Chicago: 1903.

"James Cant Honored as Oldest Permittee." *Western Livestock Journal.* January 20, 1965.

Jackson, Royal G. Interviews with James and Freda Cant, Lillian Mascall, Eva Officer Murray, and Stella Pigg Monro, 1982 - 83. Transcripts on file at Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References:

Quadrangle: Picture Gorge West, Oregon (1: 24,000)

A. 11 - 290500 - 4936990
B. 11 - 291870 - 4933710
C. 11 - 290800 - 4933680
D. 11 - 290030 - 4935270
E. 11 - 289860 - 4937370

Verbal Boundary Description

The proposed boundary begins at the confluence of Rock Creek and the John Day River, crosses the river and proceeds generally to the north-northwest along the toe of the slope at the easternmost edge of the Titanic irrigation ditch, to a point directly east of Christina's cabin. The boundary then turns west along an old fenceline, crosses the John Day River, and continues along the western bank of the river to the northwest. At a point where the John Day River and Highway 19 meet, approximately 1600 feet north of the farmstead complex, the boundary turns south and proceeds to the south-southeast along the centerline of the highway to point of beginning at the confluence of Rock Creek and the John Day River.

Boundary Justification

This boundary reflects the maximum extent of irrigated lands at the Cant Ranch, from the date of construction of the Titanic ditch in 1912, until the close of the family cattle-ranching operation in 1975. Excluded from the district is the twelve-acre "Morrison Field," located over one-half mile distant to the north from the ranch proper, and separated from it by a narrow stretch of uncultivated land between the John Day River and Highway 19. Included in this amended nomination are all four haystack yards east of the river, three of which lie upslope of the Titanic ditch and were left out of the original nomination.

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS OF CANT RANCH HISTORIC DISTRICT

All photographs taken October, 1996, by Florence K. Lentz. Negatives on file at National Park Service, Columbia Cascades Support Office.

Photo #1 - View of the Cant Ranch house and surrounding features from berm of Oregon Hwy. 19, facing east.

Photo #2 - Wire mesh fencing and gate, stone gate pillars, and lilac bushes at entrance to Cant House. Grade level below present-day roadway. Facing east.

Photo #3 - Primary facade of the Cant House (1918), now the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument visitor center. Facing east.

Photo #4 - View of the Cant House, lawn, and early log cabin from the visitor parking lot, facing south.

Photo #5 - Log cabin (c. 1900) and rear view of the Cant House with its screened porch. Facing southwest.

Photo #6 - View along south side of the Cant House, showing the log cabin and the bunkhouse (early 1930s). Facing east.

Photo #7 - View from the rear of the Cant House toward a mature elm, chicken house and feed shed, upper orchard, interpretive displays, and barn in background. Facing north.

Photo #8 - Close-up view of the feed shed on the left (1890s - 1910), and the chicken house on the right (1910s - 1920s). In the background is the upper orchard, NPS interpretive displays of ranch equipment, and the main barn. Facing northeast.

Photo #9 - Feed rack and barn (1920s), facing northeast.

Photo #10 - Sheep shearing pens on north side of barn, currently used for storage. Facing southwest.

Photo #11 - Watchman's hut located east of barn, facing southeast.

Photo #12 - Workshop (1950s) located north of the Cant House, west of the barn. Facing northwest.

Photo #13 - Sun shed ruins, facing east.

Photo #14 - View from Field No. 1 through lower orchard (1890s - 1910) to rear of Cant House. Facing west.

Photo #15 - View across Field No. 1 toward the John Day River, Field No. 4 in the distance, and Sheep Rock at far right. Facing southeast.

Photo #16 - View across John Day River to Field No.3. Facing south.

Photo #17 - Horizontal board fence delineating the northwest corral located adjacent to visitor bus parking. Facing northeast.

Photo #18 - Cable car river crossing (c.1930s) from the south end of Field No. 1 to Field No.4. Facing east.

Photo #19 - View across Field No. 1 looking north toward the ranch complex. Rock Creek irrigation ditch, now partially replaced with buried PVC piping, at left.

Photo #20 - View from Highway 19 at the far south end of the district, facing northeast across John Day River toward Sheep Rock Peak. Concrete lined portion of Rock Creek irrigation ditch visible between river and guardrail.

Photo #21 - NPS maintenance shed (1996) located just below Highway 19 at far northwest corner of ranch complex. Facing northwest.

INDEX TO MAPS OF CANT RANCH HISTORIC DISTRICT

Map #1 - Cant Ranch Historic District, Ranch Complex - Existing Conditions, adapted from: Taylor, Terri and Cathy Gilbert. *Cultural Landscape Report: Cant Ranch Historic District.* Seattle, WA: National Park Service, Columbia Cascades Support Office, 1996.

Map #2 - Cant Ranch Historic District, Agricultural Setting and District Boundaries, adapted from: Taylor, Terri and Cathy Gilbert. *Cultural Landscape Report: Cant Ranch Historic District.* Seattle, WA: National Park Service, Columbia Cascades Support Office, 1996.

Map #3 - USGS Quad Map, Picture Gorge West, Oregon
UTM coordinates, Cant Ranch Historic District

HIGHWAY 19

2280'
2250'
2240'
2230'
2210'
2200'

RV PARKING
LAWN
ELMS
LAWN
2-BLACK LOCUSTS
SPRING
WHITE POPLAR
PARKING LOT
PRIVY
VISITOR CTR. (HOUSE)
WORKSHOP (BLACKSMITH'S SHOP)
MAINTENANCE PARKING
FEED RACK
SHED
PALEONTOLOGY LAB. (BUNKHOUSE)
FOSSIL DEMO. LAB. (LOG CABIN)
ORCHARD
BARN
SUN SHED RUINS
COTTONWOODS
ELM
FEED SHED
CHICKEN HOUSE
LAWN
FARM MACHINERY DISPLAY
SHEEP SHEARING SHEDS
MAINTENANCE YARD
ORCHARD (LAWN)
CONCRETE LINED
WATCHMAN'S HUT
NATIVE GRASS FIELD

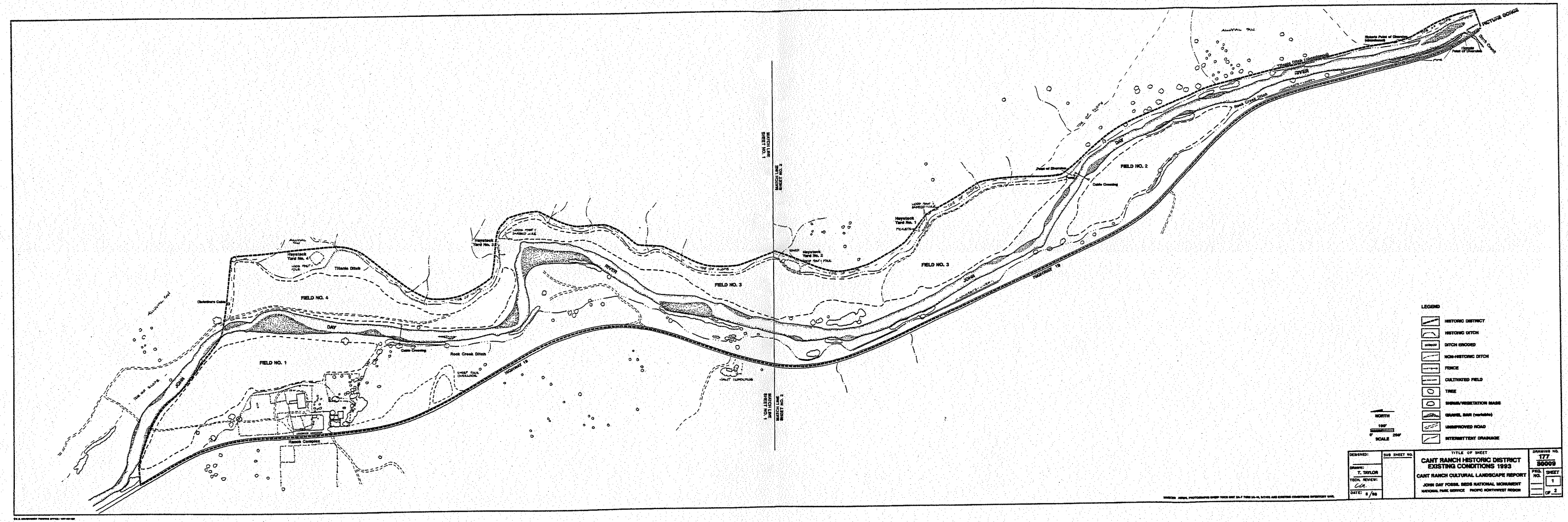
SOURCES: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS, ORAL INTERVIEWS, 1993 EXISTING CONDITIONS INVENORY, NPS MAPS

MAP #1

Structure	Dirt road
Irrigation ditch	Paved road
Intermittent drainage	Post & pole fence
Fruit tree	Horiz. board fence
NPS planted fruit tree	Post & wire mesh fence
Gate	Barbed wire fence
Sidewalk	NPS horiz. board fence
	Sun shed remnant/fence

CANT RANCH HISTORIC DISTRICT
Ranch Complex - Existing Conditions
John Day Fossil Beds National Monument
1993

NORTH
0' 35' 70'
SCALE



MAP #2

CANT RANCH HISTORIC DISTRICT
Agricultural Setting and District Boundaries
John Day Fossil Beds National Monument
1993