DRAFT

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Oct. 1990)

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: Vogt-Nunberg Farm

other name/site number: John and Charlotte Vogt Homestead; Alfred A. and Victoria O. Nunberg Farm; Alfred J. and Shirley Nunberg Farm; Nunberg's N Heart Ranch Bed and Breakfast

2. Location

street & number: Hwy 7 not for publication: n/a

city/town: Wibaux vicinity: X

state: Montana code: MT county: Wibaux code: 109 zip code: 59393

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _X_ 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 _X_ meets __ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant __ nationally __ statewide _X_ locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property __ meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
__ entered in the National Register		
__ see continuation sheet		
__ determined eligible for the National Register		
__ see continuation sheet		
__ determined not eligible for the National Register		
__ see continuation sheet		
__ removed from the National Register		
__see continuation sheet		
__ other (explain):		

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: District

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	1	buildings
2	0	sites
2	5	structures
0	0	objects
13	6	Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
DOMESTIC/single residence
AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuildings

Current Functions:
DOMESTIC/single residence
AGRICULTURE/agricultural outbuildings

7. Description

Architectural Classification:
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/
Craftsman

Materials:
foundation: CONCRETE
walls: WOOD
roof: ASPHALT/shingle; METAL
other: BRICK; METAL

Narrative Description
(see continuation sheet)

Setting

The Vogt-Nunberg Farm Historic District is located in eastern Montana seven miles south of Wibaux, in the Beaver Creek Valley, only 6 miles from North Dakota. The farm lies in the semi-arid northern Great Plains in a region devoted to stock raising and grain growing. The landscape is comprised of low rolling fields and meadows, occasionally broken by sandstone capped buttes and flat upland surfaces. The major waterways in the area are the Yellowstone River and Beaver Creek, which is a tributary of the Little Missouri River.

Farm Description

The house and farm buildings stand along the east side of Montana Highway 7 just north of a bend in Spring Creek, a small tributary of Beaver Creek. The farm buildings are accessed by a short driveway off the highway. Mature deciduous trees, evergreen trees and shrubs border a manicured lawn that surrounds the farmhouse on all sides. Spring Creek meanders along the south side of the property, separating the farm buildings from a hay field to the south and east. A dense shelterbelt of Chinese Elm trees lines the northern boundary of the farm yard.

The farm consists of 10 buildings, 2 sites, and 7 structures, including the house, barn, chicken coop, oil house, shop, granary, bunkhouse, truck shed, round-roof shed or Quonset shed, hog farrowing shed, dam, garden area, agricultural fields, corrals and fencelines, and modern feed bins. The house and Quonset shed stand closest to the road, on opposite sides of a central driveway. Behind the house there is a central farm yard with outbuildings arranged in a roughly rectangular pattern around the yard. Fenced corrals and feed lots lie to the east and north of the central yard buildings.

The feed bins and Quonset shed are considered non-contributing elements of the Vogt-Nunberg Farm Historic District given that they are not yet 50 years old and do not possess exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration E.

The feed bins are standard cylindrical structures sheathed with ribbed sheet metal and covered with a conical metal roof. There are five in total, one on the north side of the farm near the truck shed and four to the south of the farmhouse near the creek. The Behlen metal Quonset shed was constructed in the 1970s. It is rectangular in plan with a concrete foundation, jointed metal siding, and a half-

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria:	A	**Areas of Significance:**	AGRICULTURE; ETHNIC HISTORY
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):	n/a	**Period(s) of Significance:**	1911-1958
Significant Person(s):	n/a	**Significant Dates:**	1911, 1929, 1958
Cultural Affiliation:	n/a	**Architect/Builder:**	Builder - Joe Novatney

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Nunberg Farm Historic District is an important example of an early twentieth century diversified farming operation in eastern Montana. John and Charlotte Vogt, natives of Illinois, successfully began developing the property near Wibaux in 1911, and like many immigrants to the region enjoyed several good farming years. Farming conditions grew worse throughout the drought-stricken years of the 1920s, and Vogt eventually sold out in 1929 to Alfred A. and Victoria O. Nunberg, Polish-immigrants from nearby St. Philips, Montana. When the Nunberg family acquired the property they continued the pattern of agricultural production and persevered through the dry and dirty 1930s and into more favorable farming years after 1940. Alfred retired in 1958 and passed the family business to his son Alfred J. or Fred, who continued to raise cattle and grain until he retired in 1995. Fred and his wife Shirley still live on the property today and have again continued to diversify the operation, opening the farm to the public as a bed and breakfast inn. The extant resources, including buildings, structures, and sites combine to effectively tell the significant history of local agricultural patterns in the Beaver Valley of eastern Montana. For these reasons, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A. The district does not need to meet Criteria Consideration B (Moved Properties) because the only moved building within the building cluster, the hog farrowing shed, is part of the historic complex but is of less significance than the remaining (unmoved) buildings.

Settlement of the Beaver Creek Valley

The rolling plains and rough badlands of east-central Montana have been occupied by humans for at least 11,500 years. Archaeological evidence at the Hagan site near Glendive reveals human habitation in the remains of an ancient village of earthen lodges where early farmers cultivated tobacco and squash. Later, Blackfeet, Crow, Assiniboine, and Sioux hunted the valley.[1] There is some evidence to suggest that Euroamericans were in the Wibaux area as early as 1790. In the 1950s, the Baird family discovered sandstones with writings apparently etched by members of a white settlement in 1790-1791, indicating that they had attempted to farm the land but that most of them had been killed in Indian raids.[2]

Famous explorers and trappers like Sieur de la Verendrye and Francois Laroque passed through the area in the early 1800s. William Clark camped near the mouth of Glendive Creek on August 1, 1806 as the Lewis and Clark Expedition returned from the Pacific. The trappers and traders who followed up the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers likely passed through the Beaver Creek Valley. Other early travelers such as John James Audubon and Father Pierre John DeSmet noted the areas abundant game and the unique badlands formations. Military expeditions up the Yellowstone in the 1860s brought Captain William Reynolds, Lieutenant H.A. Maynadier, and Lieutenant John Mullan to the Beaver Creek area, as did expeditions related to Indian uprisings, which brought generals George Sully in 1864 and George Custer in 1876.[3]

While early trappers and explorers commented on the favorable conditions in the area for settlement and stock growing, such as the tall blue-joint and bunch grasses, the readily available coal deposits, and what appeared to be sufficient water supplies, early white settlement in the Beaver Creek Valley was curtailed by the Sioux Indians living there, the lack of transportation, the large herds of roaming buffalo, and its proximity to the badlands and its generally inhospitable name.[4]

(see continuation sheet)

[1] *A Guide to Historic Glendive*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1998), 2.
[2] Irene James Jones, *Trails Along Beaver Creek*, (Wibaux: Wibaux Pioneer Gazette, 1976), 10-11.
[3] William Babcock," Historic Resources Survey, Wibaux," (Wibaux Planning Board, 1987), 9.
[4] Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographic References

(see continuation sheet)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:
___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 120

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing	(NAD27)
A	13	560888	5192563	
B	13	561762	5192561	
C	13	561750	5193172	
D	13	560889	5193173	

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): T13N, R59E, N1/2 of the S ½ of the NW 1/4 LESS 4.17acres of highway in Sec. 13

Verbal Boundary Description

T 13N, R59E, N1/2 of the S ½ of the NW 1/4 LESS 4.17acres of highway in Sec. 13. The boundary is further defined by a quadrangle with the following UTM points: A 13/560888/5192563; B 13/561762/5192561; C 13/561750/5193172; D 13/560889/5193173. See attached map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn, according to legally drawn lines, to include the building cluster and surrounding agricultural land that convey the property's historic use and setting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christine W. Brown
organization: CW Brown Consulting date: August 30, 2007
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Funding for this nomination provided by
organization: Montana Land Title Association Foundation
street & number: 5 West Sixth Ave/Power Block, Suite 41, PO Box 6322
city or town: Helena state: MT zip code: 59604

Property Owner

name/title:
name/title: Fred and Shirley Nunberg
street & number: HC 71 Box 7315 telephone:
city or town: Wibaux state: Montana zip code: 59353

Description of Resources

round roof structure. The interior is accessed by a central green fiberglass garage door on the south elevation, as well as a wood hollow-core pedestrian door to the east of the garage door.

House (A)

The two-story Arts and Crafts style farmhouse was built in 1911. The house sits on a concrete foundation, has lapped wood siding, and a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The foundation was replaced in 1972, and the addition on the west side of the house was built in 1974. A brick chimney rises from the center of the roof.

The general plan of the house is rectangular with a shed roof back porch on the east elevation, and a central entrance addition on the north elevation. Decorative elements include wide wood siding on the first story, a wide wood belt course at the second story level, and smaller lapped wood siding on the second story. Triangle brackets are located in the eaves on the gable ends and exposed rafter ends are visible in the eaves on the side elevations.

The west elevation has been somewhat altered by the one-story addition added in 1974. It has a concrete foundation, wood siding to match the house, and a gable roof with asphalt shingles. This addition replaced the one-story shed roof porch with battered columns and covered the original entrance door and three-part picture window. On the west elevation there are sliding sash basement windows at the foundation level, one three-panel crank-out sash to the north and a single crank-out sash to the south. On the second story, there is one original one-over-one double-hung sash on the north and the matching window to the south has been sided over. In addition, the original 16-light attic window has also been sided over. The north and south elevations each have one single panel crank-out sash window.

The south elevation of the house has a central garden level entrance door. To the east of the door is a modern vinyl-clad sliding sash window, which has replaced two of the original one-over-one double-hung sash windows. Other openings include an original one-over-one sash west of the door, and two one-over-one double-hung sash in the second story.

The east or rear elevation consists of the one-story shed roof back porch and second story windows. The back porch was added in the 1930s and does not appear to have been altered substantially since then. There is an entrance door with concrete steps and a wood railing on the south with two evenly spaced three-over-one sash to the north. On the far north end of the wall a modern vinyl basement entrance door has been added. The second story of this elevation has two evenly spaced one-over-one sash windows.

Lastly, on the north elevation there is a projecting one-story side entrance addition located in the center of the elevation. It has a concrete foundation, wood siding to match the house, and a side gable roof. The entrance door and side window are modern vinyl units. The original paired one-over-one double-hung sash flank the entrance addition and the second story has three original one-over-one double-hung sash windows.

Barn (B)

This classic red cattle barn is an original feature of the Vogt-Nunberg family farm and the centerpiece of the agricultural complex. Built in 1911 by builder Joe Novatney, the barn rests on a concrete foundation, has drop lap wood siding, and a gambrel roof clad with sheet metal. The balloon-frame barn measures 73-feet long and 35-feet wide. Two matching gambrel roof ventilators are centered on the roof. The barn is painted red with white corner boards and window trim.

The north elevation facing the farm yard consists of a central sliding door on a metal track flanked by single four-light sash. There is a diamond-shaped window above the central door and directly below the hayloft door. The hayloft door slides up and down on a metal track and is sheltered by a pointed hood. The simple rectangular barn door and hayloft door are sided with the same siding as on the body of the barn. Single diamond-shaped windows flank the hayloft door. There is also a small metal grain elevator attached to this elevation to the east of the door. The south elevation is nearly identical to the north elevation; however, it has a small hinged loading door directly above the central door, and no hayloft door, hay hood, or elevator attachments.

The east and west elevations are also nearly identical. Each elevation consists of eight evenly spaced four-light sash that illuminate each interior stall. The east elevation has a wood-sided pedestrian door on the south end of the wall, whereas the west elevation has no entrance door.

The interior of the barn is arranged around a central alley. A room located at the northeast corner of the barn houses grain bins and other historic agricultural equipment, including a grain separator of Alfred A. Nunberg's design. South of that room is another tack room, followed by open stalls. Stalls fill the spaces across the north half of the west wall. A steep step ladder leads to the loft from the southwest area of the barn. The loft is enormous, and open to the intricate truss system. Massive milled timbers circumnavigate the room at the roof-wall junction, adding considerable support to the framing system.

Historically the interior of the barn was used to house work horses and dairy cows. Alfred Nunberg kept 12 to16 dairy cows at one time. Box stalls were built specially to hold the stallions and there was also a tack room and a milk separator room. Hay was stored above in the second story hay loft. During the 1930s, the loft was often used for community barn dances. Then, in the 1940s, as grain prices rose and crop yields increased, the barn stalls were converted to hold grain. In the 1970s, steel grain bins were built nearby and the barn was no longer used for storage of grain or cattle. It was used for calving in early spring, incubating chicks, housing a few sheep in winter, farrowing pigs, and occasional shelter for llamas.

Chicken Coop (C)

The original chicken coop was built around 1911 and is in good condition. The one-story building is rectangular in plan with a concrete foundation, drop lap wood siding, narrow corner boards, and a brown metal-clad saltbox type roof. The building is painted red with white trim on the windows, corner boards, and doors.

The entrance door is on the east elevation and is constructed of the same shiplapped wood siding on the building. Above the door in the gable end there is a small diamond-shaped window surrounded by a wide wood frame.

The south elevation consists of a central three-part window made up of a narrow rectangular fixed sash flanked by matching four-light sash. On each side of the central window is a four-over-four double-hung sash window. The west and north elevations do not have openings.

The building is used for storage.

Oil house/Feed Shed (D)

The oil house/feed shed is one of the oldest buildings on the ranch, built sometime between 1911 and 1913. The simple wood-frame building is rectangular in plan with a wood sill foundation, unpainted lapped siding, narrow corner boards, and a side-gable roof with only remnants of wood sheathing remaining intact on the north slope. The south elevation consists of a wood-sided door west of center and two rectangular window openings both to the east and west. There are no openings on the north, east, or west elevations.

Shop (E)

The shop building was built in 1911. It is a one-story wood-frame building, rectangular in plan, with a wood sill foundation. The walls are clad with drop lap wood siding and narrow wood corner boards. It has a saltbox type roof, which has collapsed into the interior of the building.

On the south elevation there is a drop lap sided door at the east end next to a two-over-two double-hung sash. Just west of the window is another small four-light square sash. The east elevation also has several openings, including an entrance door, a square two-light sash, and a diamond-shape opening with wide wood trim in the gable end. None of the window openings on the east elevation retain glass, and the entrance door is also missing. The west elevation has a square sash opening and a diamond-shaped window opening with wide wood trim in the gable end. There are no door or window openings on the north elevation.

Hog Farrowing Shed (F)

The hog shed is original to the Vogt-Nunberg property, though it has been moved to several different locations within the property. Mostly used for hogs, it is a one-story rectangular building with no foundation, drop lap wood siding, corner boards, and a gable roof

with deteriorated sheet metal cladding. The entrance door is centered on the west elevation. There are no other openings on the east, south, or north elevations.

Granary with Shed (G)

The granary/tractor shed was hauled in from another ranch, when a tornado destroyed the original shed. It is made up of two shed roof buildings – the south facing granary and the tractor shed connected on the north. The granary building is rectangular in plan with a wood sill foundation, drop lap wood siding, wood corner boards and trim, and a shed roof clad with sheet metal. It is painted red with white trim. South elevation openings include a central door constructed of vertically nailed siding and flanked on each side by two small square grain loading doors positioned at the ceiling level. There is a single square sash on the east elevation and a grouping of three square single sash windows on the west elevation.

The tractor shed was attached to the north elevation in the 1940s. It is about one-foot shorter than the length of the north wall and does not have a foundation. The walls and gable end are clad with vertical board siding and the shed roof is clad with sheet metal.

Granary/Bunkhouse (H)

This granary/bunkhouse is a one-story wood-frame structure, rectangular in plan with drop lap wood siding, wood corner boards, and a slightly rounded roof clad with rolled asphalt roofing material. The exterior is painted red with white trim. On the east elevation there is a central door sided with drop lap siding and a small square window opening to the north. The north, south, and west elevations do not have openings. The build date is unknown, but it was originally used as a granary and later as a bunkhouse.

Truck Shed (I)

The truck shed or garage, built in the 1940s, consists of the front garage building, and a rear shed-roof shop building. The shed is rectangular in plan with ship lap wood siding, wood corner boards, and a gable roof clad with weathered wood shingles. Most of the shingles on the rear shed roof over the shop area are now gone, although the framing remains intact. The building is painted red with white trim.

The garage faces south and has wide double doors hung on a metal sliding track. The doors are constructed of vertical board siding and trimmed with wide wood boards. There is also a shallow awning just above the doors. The siding on the lower half is nailed horizontally and the gable-end siding is nailed vertically.

Openings on the east elevation include a central square window opening, now boarded, and an entrance door to the north. The entrance to the rear shop building is at the north end of the east elevation. The large door, constructed of ship lap two-by-twelve wood siding, has an angled top to match the slope of the shed roof and large strap hinges. There are no openings on the north or west elevations. It appears that the west elevation was sided with asphalt “Insul-Brick” at some time; however, much of it has deteriorated and fallen off, exposing the ship lap wood siding underneath.

Granary/Oil House (J)

This building is similar to the granary/bunkhouse on the east side of the truck shed. It is a one-story wood-frame structure, rectangular in plan with drop lap wood siding, and a slightly rounded roof clad with rolled asphalt roofing material. The building is unpainted, although remnants of the original red paint are visible. The south elevation wall consists of a door to the east and a small rectangular opening to the west that has been boarded over. The door is constructed of vertical boards, hung with strap hinges, and surrounded by simple wood trim. There are no other openings on the east, west, or north elevations. The building was used as a granary and oil shed. It was originally located across the highway from the farm, but was pulled into the farm yard when Alfred Nunberg, Sr. retired and moved into Wibaux.

Corrals and fencelines

The arrangement of buildings in the farmyard, together with corrals and fencelines, define the use of space. Post and rail fences create squared corrals at the northeast corner and east side of the building cluster. Jackleg fencing follows the west bank of Spring Creek and the small reservoir. Metal post and wire fences define the garden area and spaces surrounding the barn. Together, these structures convey historical patterns of use in the district.

Dam

A large earthen dam, faced with rock across its west side, is located across Spring Creek east of the building cluster. The dam was constructed in the 1930s by Alfred A. Nunberg to improve water management in the farmyard and the agricultural fields. The resultant small reservoir provided ice during the winter months.

Agricultural Fields

Surrounding the building cluster are agricultural fields that remain in production. Both the Vogts and the Nunbergs raised grains, including oats, wheat, barley, and hay. At one point during the mid-twentieth century, the Nunbergs had over 4000 acres in production. Today, Fred Nunberg leases the more than 100 acres of productive lands on the "home place" he still owns to local farmers, who sow and harvest the fields in wheat. The fields follow the section line at the north and west sides, but follow the topography of Spring Creek and the hills, and therefore are not rectilinear in appearance.

Garden Area

The garden is a rectangular site located off the southeast corner of the house. Wire fencing and a wagon-wheel gate, together with furrowed, turned earth, define its boundaries. Here, the Nunbergs raised vegetables for family use.

Integrity

The Vogt-Nunberg Farm was a working farm for over 80 years, continually producing cattle and grains under only two family names. This continuity of use has ensured the preservation of the agricultural resources that comprise the farm complex, as each building and structure on the property continued to serve a clear purpose in livestock and crop raising operations. As a result, the Vogt-Nunberg Farm agricultural complex displays strong integrity, its setting, feeling and patterns of use still reflecting the traditional, family-run approach to diversified farming that took hold here a century ago.

There are 10 buildings, 2 sites, and one structure within the complex that contribute to the integrity of the farm, with the historic wood frame barn a principle and dominant building. The integrity of design and materials are well preserved on the barn and the other contributing resources, reflecting functional considerations and construction methods of the period. The integrity of location and the historic spatial relationships between various buildings on the property today convey a clear understanding of the historic associations of the property, and the patterns of use and function that were incorporated into the farmstead's design.

Where alterations have been made to contributing buildings, the modifications have not greatly changed the historic character of the building or the relationship to the original farm plan as a whole. The west façade of the farmhouse, for example, has been altered with a one-story addition which has changed the public view of the ranch house, but the house continues to reflect its original vernacular Arts and Crafts character in that the original siding, decorative eave brackets, and roof plan are intact, and the façade facing the ranch yard – the primary family entrance/exit point to the outbuildings – is essentially unchanged from its original design. Similarly, the barn retains integrity of construction given that the basic framing plan, foundation, siding, windows, and doors are unchanged and well maintained. Although the 1970s sheet metal roof represents a non-historic change to the building, it serves to protect the entire structure from weather and does not detract from the overall excellent integrity of the barn.

Nearby, buildings such as the chicken coop, oil shed, shop/truck shed, and granary/bunkhouses stand in a somewhat deteriorated condition, but retain their original siding and window and door locations -- main features that reflect historic character and clearly define the historic uses of the buildings that sheltered the livestock and housed the people and machinery of this farming operation.

Beyond the built improvements to the property, the farmland itself and patterns of use reflected by the dam, pastures, corrals and crop fields reflect the property's broad agricultural context and family-centered management. The continued use of the property for agricultural purposes has resulted in a farmstead that strongly conveys the setting and feeling associated with the development of farming and ranching in the early-twentieth century in Eastern Montana.

Statement of Significance

Barriers to settlement began to lift slowly in the early 1870s when Colonel David S. Stanley led a surveying party to map the route for the Northern Pacific Railroad across Beaver Creek. However, the financial panic of 1873 halted construction of the line and the ensuing Indian wars further delayed construction until 1879. With the defeat of the Sioux and other tribes that year, the Northern Pacific Line was completed through the Beaver Creek area in 1880 opening the door to white settlement and open range cattle grazing. The last task was to clear the land of the vast buffalo herds.[5]

Beginning in 1881 and until 1884 buffalo hunters exterminated some 100,000 animals, their robes and bones sold as coats and fertilizer in eastern markets. Simultaneously large cattle outfits began to ship in cattle to take advantage of the prime grazing land. Many of the early outfits were financed by capital from the eastern and southwestern United States and foreign countries, especially England and France. They invested considerable sums, and by 1884, had claimed most of the prime grazing land in the Little Missouri River and Beaver Creek drainages. The most important early rancher to influence the area's history was Pierre Wibaux from Roubaix, France, of whom the town and county were later named.[6]

In 1883, Pierre Wibaux left France and claimed land in what is now Wibaux County 12 miles northeast of Wibaux (then Keith) and went into business with a fellow Frenchman, Gus Grisy. They claimed the valley of Beaver Creek "starting ten miles below the Northern Pacific tracks and reaching its mouth" and proposed to put 10,000 cattle on the range. The brand was the G Anchor W on the right side.[7]

During this time, Wibaux and Grisy's herds made up a large percentage of the cattle shipped from Wibaux. In 1881 there was an estimated 74 head of stock in Dawson County. The number jumped dramatically over the next few years increasing to 341 head in 1882, 12,812 in 1883, and 32,495 in 1884. In 1885, 17,000 head were shipped from Wibaux alone, making it the top shipping point for cattle on the entire route of the Northern Pacific.[8]

By 1885, Grisy and Wibaux's priorities came into conflict and Wibaux was able to buy out most of Grisy's holdings. The following winter brought the notorious "hard winter" of 1886-1887 when thousands of cattle on the overstocked ranges starved or froze to death. Wibaux faired comparatively well during the winter and with the assistance of his brother Joseph who loaned him capital, he bought up remnants of the herds from discouraged ranchers and from eastern and foreign-owned companies looking to save their investments. By the mid 1890s, Wibaux owned one of the largest cattle herds in the United States -- some 65,000 cattle and 300 horses.[9]

The Wibaux area also became a significant sheep ranching area after the winter of 1886. The earliest sheep ranch was owned by Frank Smith, who located about 23 miles south of Wibaux on Beaver Creek. In the early 1880s, the Sheep Hook Ranch ran about 6,000 sheep, and at one time about 8,000 Rambouillet. The Glendive Livestock Company also had about 6,000 Rambouillet on C.S. Creek in the northern part of the county. In the 1890s, Allison Davis, one of Wibaux's early town fathers, bought out the Sheep Hook Ranch holdings and expanded the ranch to carry 15,000 head of sheep.

Agriculture in the Beaver Creek Valley 1890-1917

While large sheep ranches flourished in the 1890s in the Beaver Creek area, the large cattle herds of the 1880s were for the most part never re-established after 1887 and the open range was slowly divided up by 1900 as homesteaders established small diversified farms. This change in the agricultural economy – from vast open range cattle operations to small homestead farms – was brought about by several national developments, particularly the popularity of the dry-land farming movement, the effort of the Northern Pacific Railroad to encourage settlement of the area by farmers and to sell railroad lands to them, and the unusually heavy rainfall of the first 15 years of 1900 that resulted in better than average crop yields.[10]

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[5] Jones, 17-52.
[6] Babcock, 15-17.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Babcock, 17.
[9] Jones, 41.
[10] Babcock, 27.

Between 1900 and 1910, the number of farms in Dawson County increased from 259 to 1,947, and the population of the county increased by more than 10,000 people.[11] Many settlers were lured to the Beaver Creek Valley by the promise of dry-land farming. The dry-land movement began in the early 1900s and was popular through about 1915. The theory of the movement was that it was not possible to irrigate more than a small percentage of the lands open to settlement and was based on the belief that the lands in the semi-arid regions of the west could be successfully farmed through methods such as deep plowing and soil compaction. The early successes of some farmers in the area (due, in part, to several years of above average rainfall) and the theories advanced by the movement's spokesman, Hardy Webster Campbell, were effective in hiding the well known fact that eastern Montana was generally considered a desert.[12]

Cambell's dry-land farming theories were convincing and helped support aggressive efforts by the federal government, the railroads, and other land speculators to sell the land for development into hundreds of small farms. The federal government had opened up vast tracts of western public domain lands through the Homestead Act of 1862, the Desert Land Act of 1877, the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909, and the Three-Year Homestead Act of 1912. Simultaneously, the railroads welcomed the opportunity to unload large tracts of lands previously acquired from the federal government as inducements to build transcontinental railroads. For example, between 1900 and 1917, the Northern Pacific sold off all but 2.7 million acres of the 13.5 million acres it had originally owned. Wealthier ranchers like Allison Davis and Pierre Wibaux became land speculators at this time, buying up railroad lands and then selling to others, as it became less profitable and practical to raise the huge herds of stock they had previously owned in the 1880s.[13]

The railroads also led promotional efforts to attract settlers to the land in the early 1900s by promoting farming exhibits and competition and by distributing brochures and leaflets throughout the United States and Europe. They encouraged Europeans to immigrate to the Northern Plains by offering such inducements as low cost transatlantic fares and special train fares to the west. Immigrants to the Beaver Creek Valley came from Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Canada, Scotland and Europe. A large number of families of Polish decent migrated from Winona and Greenbush, Minnesota to the area 14 miles south of Wibaux, later naming it St. Philips. Other groups such as chambers of commerce, local newspapers, real estate agents, state departments of agriculture, and the state agricultural colleges and experiment stations joined in the promotional efforts.[14]

Founding of Wibaux

Despite the growth of the livestock industry near Wibaux in the 1880s and the importance of this rail shipping point to ranchers, the town itself did not develop appreciably until the mid 1890s. Wibaux, originally called Keith, McClelland and Mingusville, dates to 1881 when the Northern Pacific Railroad set up a box car on the west side of Beaver Creek to serve as a station. For many years, the town only consisted of the "railroad station", a section house, and a false-front hotel. There were few houses then as most ranchers only came to town at shipping time. Highly promotional local newspaper descriptions of the town paint it as a prosperous metropolitan business center, while at the same time personal accounts revealed it as "a lurid dive" and "one of the hell holes of creation."[15]

Whichever representation was true, the town did eventually take on a more civilized appearance at the hand of Pierre Wibaux. In 1892 Wibaux took an interest in the beautification of the town and constructed a residence and office on a large town lot that he had landscaped to serve also as a city park. That same year the Northern Pacific constructed a new and modern depot building. Not long after, in 1894, Wibaux began a campaign to change the name of the town from the homely Mingusville to Wibaux and also convinced the railroad to build new and larger stockyards. He also donated $2,000 in 1895 for the construction of St. Peter's Church.

The town grew steadily in the late 1890s and early 1900s as the regional economy shifted from large scale cattle grazing operations to smaller homestead farms and ranches. In 1909, the Northern Pacific built a spur line from Wibaux, establishing the town as a regional

[11] U.S. Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States,* Dawson County, Enumeration District 6, 1900, (Washington, D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901); U.S. Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census of the United States,* (Dawson County, Enumeration District 6, 1910).
[12] Babcock, 28.
[13] Jones, 39-41.
[14] Ibid, 45-48, 76.
[15] *The Glendive Independent*, November 1, 1884; Eric Thane, "Pierre Wibaux," newspaper clipping, December 5, 1935, Wibaux County Vertical File, Montana Historical Society, Helena.

hub for storage and loading of the region's agricultural products. At the same time, smaller communities, like St. Philips, Carlyle, and Edgehill developed along tributaries, wagon roads and rail stops as more settlers flocked into the area to claim homestead land.[16]

Settlement of St. Philip's, Montana

The town of St. Philip's emerged in the early 1900s as a large number of Polish families immigrated to the sections located about 14 miles south of Wibaux. They came from near Greenbush and Winona, Minnesota and from the Grafton area of eastern North Dakota.[17] According to census and cemetery records, there were about 45 Polish families that settled near the town.[18] Many of the names of the early settlers to St. Philips, including Alfred Nunberg, are listed on a plaque on the façade of St. Philips Church.

The town served as the social and commercial center for the area farm families who visited for church services, dances, mail, and supplies. John and Frank Losinski built a store in about 1906 and later added a post office in 1913. John Florek built a blacksmith shop and a general store with a dance hall attached. In 1909, the community rallied together to build a brick church costing $20,000. St. Philip's was named after a parishioner, Philip Wicka, who donated a large sum of money for the construction and also the money to purchase a statue of St. Philip to be placed inside the church. The land was donated by Henry Schuster and most parishioners volunteered their time on some aspect of the church construction. Soon after, the St. Philip's School was built nearby.[19] This tightly knit Polish community likely provided a strong incentive for other Polish immigrants looking to move west and make a new life in farming.

Agriculture during the Depression, 1917-1941

Efforts to sell lands in the Beaver Valley continued into the nineteen-teens even as most of the desirable (ie. tillable) lands were long sold off. A promotional brochure published under the auspices of the Wibaux County Development League, in about 1915, describes Wibaux County land as the last remaining acreage in the West that is fertile and affordable.

> There is as yet, but one 4th of this fertile valley broken, the remaining portion awaits the plow of the Easterner, who with his experience can carve for himself and family a comfortable home and a competency for the future, which the conditions of the east has made prohibitive.
>
> There are lands in this valley that sold ten years ago for $7 and $8 per acre, which to day [sic] can not be bought for $75. This increase in valuation has made men independently rich. There are no homesteads to be had in Wibaux County. But there is still some land that can be bought for $5 and $6 which will make good grazing for stock. And indeed, some of this is tillable.[20]

Despite hinting at the fact that only a small percentage of all the lands in the region were suitable for crop farming, the brochure goes on to boast the above average rainfall, the record crop yields for wheat, barley, and oats, and the potential for development of every possible farm product from poultry and pigs, to potatoes, dairy, and corn. These brochures went a long way in misleading farmers into thinking that farming in eastern Montana would be similar to farming in Illinois or Wisconsin. And for a while, farming conditions were much like the Midwestern states, until 1917 when the abundant rain of the previous 15 years just stopped.

After 1917, the rapid growth of Dawson and Wibaux counties fell off dramatically and never again recovered. Just as the U.S. entered World War I in 1917 the Northern Plains was at the beginning of a 5 year drought that caused bad crops, economic hardship, and mass exodus from the land that had so recently been the land of plenty. The drop in agricultural prices that occurred with the end of World War I added to the hardships.[21]

The hardest hit was the farmers who had so recently flocked to the area. Unlike the ranchers of the late nineteenth century, the "honyokers" had little experience in making a living on the land, and even if they had, the draught of the period was too much to

[16] Babcock, 29.
[17] Jones, 76.
[18] U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States,* (Wibaux County, St. Philips School, 1920).
[19] Jones, 76.
[20] *For Beaver Valley Montana Lands.* Promotional brochure. (Wibaux County Development League, 1915).
[21] Babcock, 53.

overcome. Persistent winds and grasshoppers added to the miseries and homesteaders began leaving the state in 1919, just after it was reported that one-fourth of all homestead filings in the country occurred in Montana. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, about 11,000 farms were abandoned in the eastern part of the state.[22] The number of farms in Wibaux County declined from 530 in 1920 to 469 in 1930. By 1940 there were only 373 farms remaining in the county.[23]

The farmers who did stay and persevere through the horrific conditions of the 1920s were not rewarded with better days for almost two decades. The end of the 1920s brought a devastating flood to the Wibaux area that destroyed many buildings in town and flooded farms for two to three miles on each side of Beaver Creek causing considerable loss of livestock. Matters became worse in the 1930s with new periods of draught and the national economic doldrums of the Great Depression. Farmers all over the west faced crop failures and collapsed agricultural prices, along with dust storms and grasshoppers adding to the tragedy.[24]

During the 1930s many government programs were created to encourage farmers to stay on their lands. The county extension service assisted in the construction of shelter belts in Wibaux County. The Agricultural Adjustment Act promoted programs for deferred grazing and stock water reservoir construction. The Act also initiated a program of reducing crop surpluses through a grain processing tax, and in 1936 the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act paid farmers to implement soil conservation practices. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 provided for acreage allotments and prices supports for farmers that kept within them.[25]

Agriculture after World War II

For those farmers who stayed on the land, better days finally came in 1941 when the U.S. entered into World War II. Montana saw an agricultural boom during the war years, a result of ample rainfall and high wartime demands and prices for food. Also, the farmers who had survived the Great Depression saw great changes in farming practices and technology. Increasingly farmers began to diversify their farm products, combining grain and crop production with the raising of livestock. Summer fallowing, or alternate-year cropping was used more and more as a way to build up moisture and fertility in the soil. At the same time, fortunate farmers had been able to acquire gas-powered farm machinery. By 1930 there were 19,000 tractors on 14,000 farms in Montana. By 1940, most had traded in their draft horses for tractors and trucks, thereby vastly increasing the acreage that one could operate efficiently. Since 1950, rising and falling prices and alternating years of wet and dry cycles have combined to make agriculture in eastern Montana an unpredictable livelihood.[26]

Farmers in Wibaux County very much followed state agriculture trends of mechanization and diversification, and since the end of World War II the number of farms in the county has steadily declined while average farm size has increased. U.S. agriculture census data taken in 2002 found 215 farms in the county with an average farm size of over 2,400 acres – much changed from 1920 when Wibaux County boasted over 500 farms and an average farm size around 600 acres. Additionally, farmers have limited their production to only the most profitable commodities, wheat, barley, oats and hay, and beef cattle, sheep, and pigs.[27]

History of the Nunberg Farm

The extant buildings and lands on the Nunberg farm reflect the agricultural history of the region and represent much of the life's work of the Vogt and Nunberg families. What is now the Nunberg farm was established in 1911 by John C. Vogt, a first-generation German-American. Born October 22, 1889, in Lockport, Illinois, John had arrived in Montana by 1910, together with his parents and siblings. His father, Nicholas Vogt, immigrated to the United States from Alsace-Lorraine in 1880, and owned a farm south of Wibaux in Township 14 North. John's older brother, Jacob Vogt, homesteaded and farmed the 240-acre property adjacent to John's

[22] Jones, 113, 121.
[23] U.S. Census Bureau. *Sixteenth Census of Agriculture* 1940. Volume 1 First and Second Series State Reports, Part 6 Statistics for Counties. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942).
[24] Jones, 117.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Michael P. Malone et al, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, Revised Edition, Fourth Printing, 1991), 308, 315-320.
[27] U.S. Census Bureau. *Census of Agriculture 2002*. State Summary Highlights. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, (Washington, D.C. National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2004).

farm, in section 14. Vogt was only twenty-one when he acquired the land in Section 13, Township 13 North, Range 59 East, from what had been part of the Northern Pacific Railroad land grant. He hired Joe Novatney, a local builder, to build the house and cow barn. Early in his tenure there, most of the buildings in the district were constructed. He married his wife Charlotte ("Lottie") Bott six years later, in 1917, when they were both 27 years old. Lottie was a first generation German-American from LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Her father worked as a trucker for the railroad.

John and Charlotte Vogt raised grain and stayed on the property through the drought-ridden years of the late 1910s and 1920s, until they sold to Alfred Nunberg, Sr. in April 1929.[28] Upon leaving Montana, the Vogts settled in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. There John found work as a grader in a lumber mill, while Charlotte worked in a confectionary. By 1936, they had settled in Boise. Their long tenure at the farm south of Wibaux, however, is still reflected in the built environment. The house, for example, displays Arts and Crafts style elements, popular during the 1910s, and made even more popular by widely-published catalogs and materials readily available via the railroad. The massive barn is an indicator of the prosperity and optimism of the 1910s, when large harvests required animal power and storage. The diversity and scale of the resources indicate the many activities required for a self-sufficient farm during the 1910s and 1920, such as a garden, chicken coop, oil shed, and bunkhouse. These valuable improvements were undoubtedly an incentive for Alfred Nunberg to purchase the land in 1929.

Alfred Adolph Nunberg was born in Zukow, Poland. He was educated in Poland and served three years in the Austrian Army before coming to the U.S. in 1913 at age 24. He first located in Dickinson, North Dakota and worked as a cook for coal miners. There he met Victoria Olga Mogielnicka, also a recent Polish immigrant. They moved to the St. Philips area, south of Wibaux, Montana in 1915 and were married in St. Philips Church. Together they had 9 children between 1916 and 1930: Anton ("Tony"), the twins, Helen and Rose, Casmir ("Casey"), Hadwig ("Hattie"), Ted, Frances ("Frank"), Alfred ("Fred"), and Allie. The Nunbergs are listed as pioneers to the St. Philips area on a plaque on the front of the church, and participated in the church functions and upkeep. Alfred constructed pews for St. Philip's, and he and Victoria hosted the priests and sisters on a regular basis.[29]

Alfred and Victoria farmed two or three different locations in the area settling on the present day farm in 1929. Though they had bought this property at the height of the Great Depression, they managed to weather these hard years and expand the farm. Alfred ran a diversified operation raising pigs, chickens, sheep, beef and dairy cattle, wheat, barley, oats, and hay. Alfred, Jr. (Fred) remembers that the train stopped everyday in Wibaux to pick up the cream cans that were then shipped to the creamery at Mandan, North Dakota. From 1934 to 1938 the family hosted community barn dances on a regular basis to supplement the farm income. One of the bands that played the dances featured William Burns, Jr. who later went on to play with well known big bands like Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman. During the early 1940s, the drought and grasshoppers dissipated and Alfred enjoyed good years for grain growing. Much of the grain began to be stored in the barn, since the horses had recently been traded for a tractor.

Alfred, Sr. and Victoria retired in 1958 and moved to Wibaux. They left the farm operation to their son Fred, who had joined the army, but returned to help the family farm. Alfred worked the farm as a bachelor until 1967, when he married Shirley Lindstrom in 1967. Fred and Shirley had three children together in addition to raising two children from Shirley's previous marriage. They mainly raised beef cattle, wheat, barley, oats, and hay on 4,000 acres of owned and leased land. They also kept a few dairy cows, pigs, chickens, sheep, and a heard of llamas to supplement their income. In 1996, Fred sold his machinery and cattle and leased his acreage. Soon after, Fred and Shirley opened the farmhouse as a bed & breakfast inn.[30]

Conclusion

[28] Fred and Shirley Nunberg, interviewed by Kate Hampton, March 2007.
[29] "Nunberg Family Reunion: A Tribute to Alfred Adolph & Victoria Olga Nunberg." Family history book. Self published (St. Philips, Wibaux County, Montana, 1993), 4.
[30] Nunberg Farm. Montana Historic Property Record. (Helena, State Historic Preservation Office 2006).

The Nunberg farm today continues to evoke the image of an early twentieth century farmstead in eastern Montana. The farmstead buildings were constructed in 1911 during a time of heady optimism in eastern Montana when farmland was cheap and plentiful, rainfall was abundant, and the wave of immigrants heading west were eager to make their living off the land. Polish immigrants Alfred and Victoria Nunberg purchased the farm in 1929, and despite an unfavorable climate and a weak national economy, they persevered and improved upon it. As a family, the Nunbergs supported themselves on the farm through 1958, and then passed it on to their son Fred, who improved their diversified farming operation and maintained the historic buildings until retiring in 1995. As an excellent representation of the agricultural legacy in the Beaver Valley of eastern Montana from 1911 to 1958, the Vogt-Nunberg Farm Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

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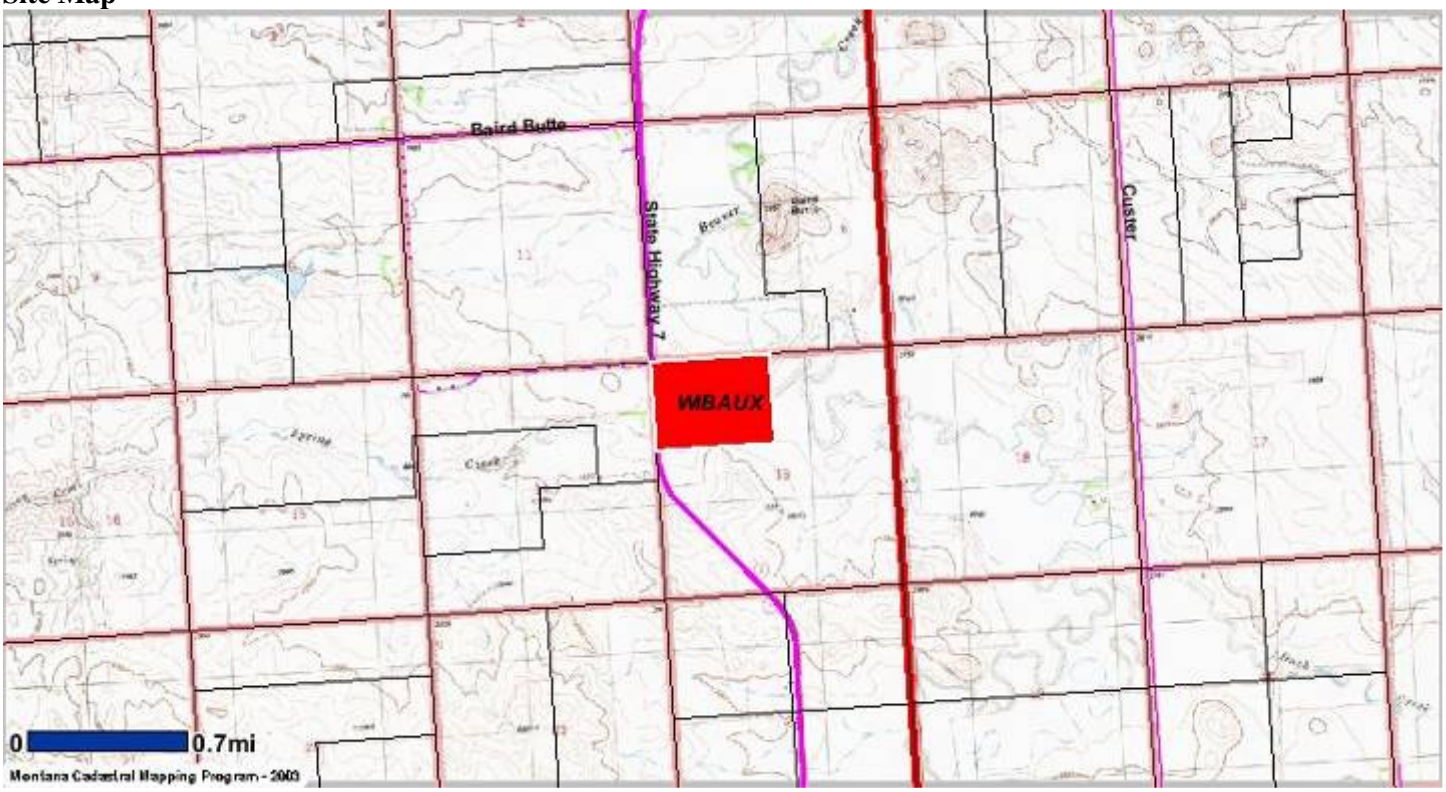
Site Map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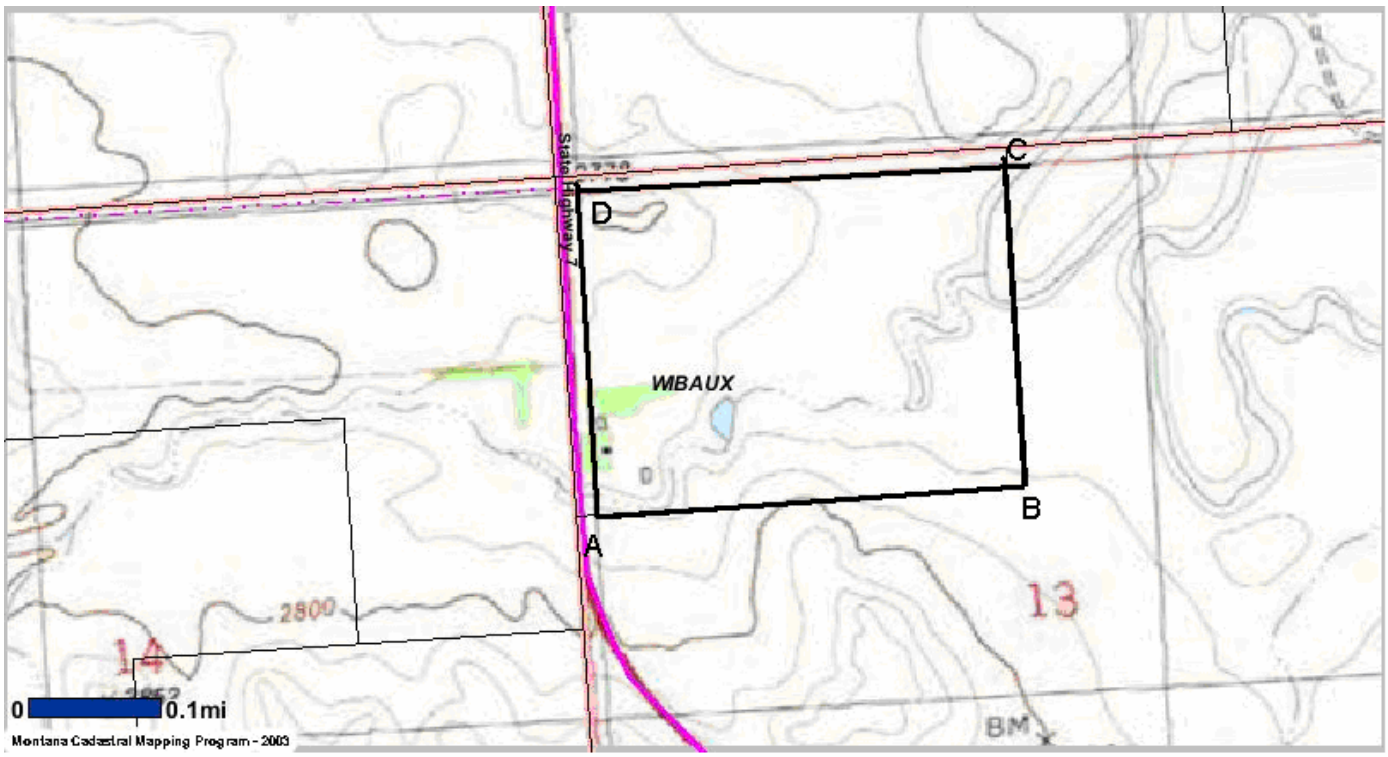
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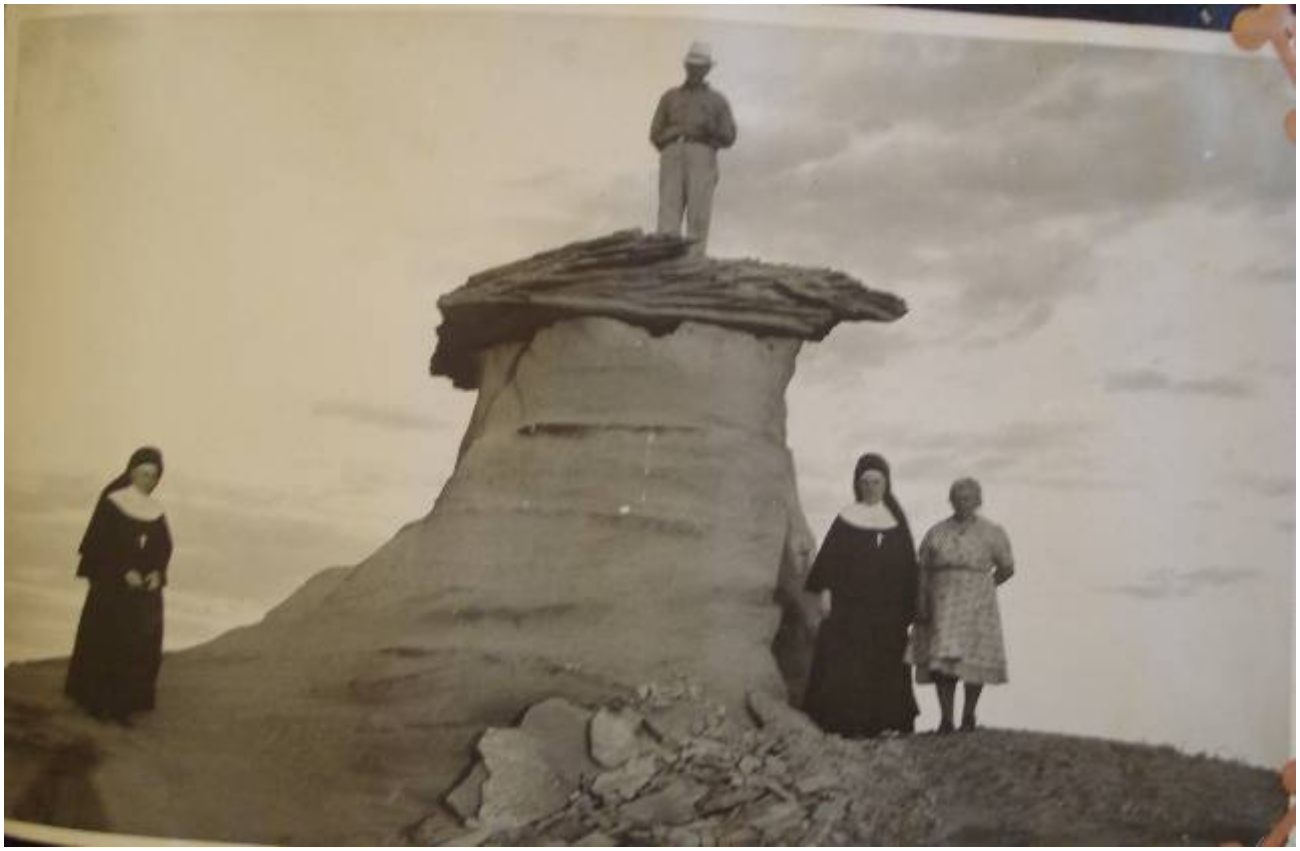
Aerial view of the farm's building cluster during the late 1970s, view to northeast.

Winter overview of building cluster, view to northwest.

Alfred A. and Victoria O. Nunberg on their wedding day, 1915.



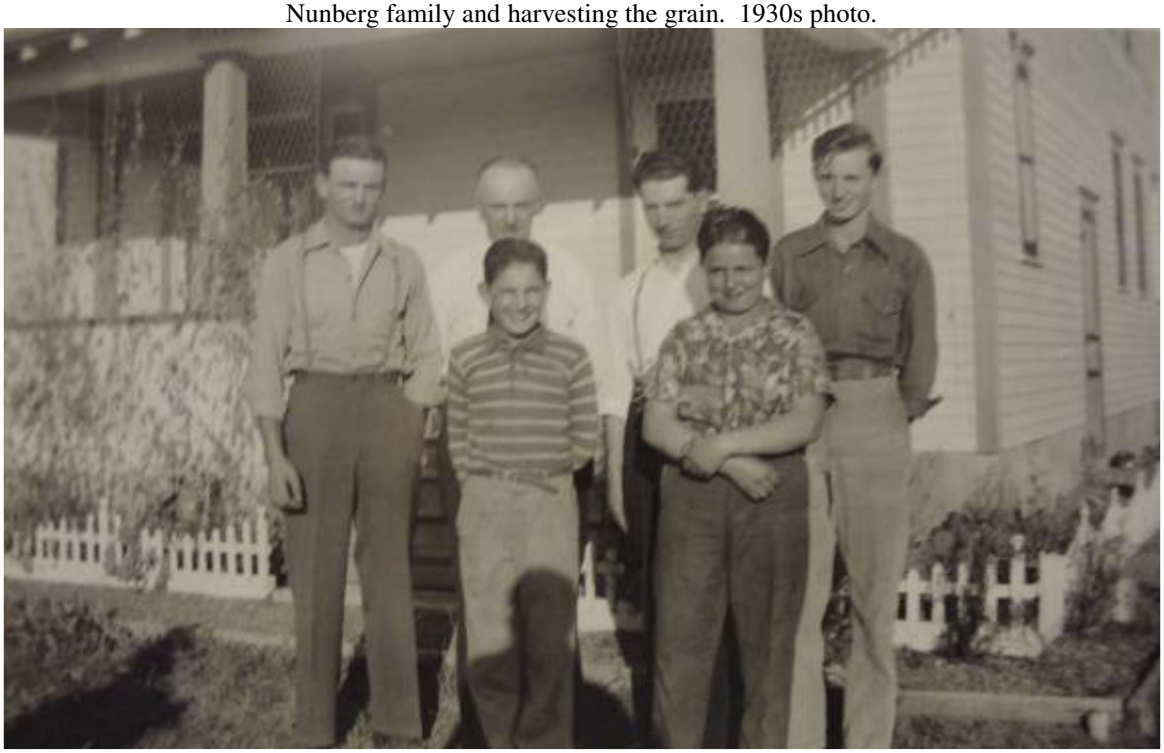
Alfred and Victoria Nunberg, on an outing with the Catholic sisters, frequent visitors to the farm, on the hill south of the house.

First communion day for Helen and Rose Nunberg at St. Philip's Church.

Alfred A. Nunberg in his barn, carving a pew for St. Philip's Church.
Soil Conservation Service photo, Northern Great Plains Region.

Nunberg family at their rear door at the southeast corner of the house, now enclosed. Back row, from left to right: Alfred, Victoria, Frances, Hattie. Front row from left to right: Allie, Fred, Anton, and his wife Joan.

Nunberg family and harvesting the grain. 1930s photo.



Alfred A. Nunberg with five of his six sons.
1940s photo at southwest corner of farmhouse.

The ladies on the farm.

Written up in the local paper for his innovative techniques for water management, Alfred A. Nunberg, like his predecessor, John Vogt, saw and took advantage of the perennial creek on the property. Here he stands atop the diversion dam and retaining wall.

The Nunberg family upon the frozen slough formed by the dam at the rear (east) of the barn. 1940s photo. In the winter, the ice was used for skating and cut for household use.

Alfred, Victoria and Fred Nunberg. Alfred and Victoria moved into town in 1958, leaving their son Fred to run the farm. Note the ivy-covered porch that functioned as an "outdoor room" during the summer months.

Fred and Shirley Nunberg on their wedding day, 1967.

New foundation installed, and front addition constructed, 1973.

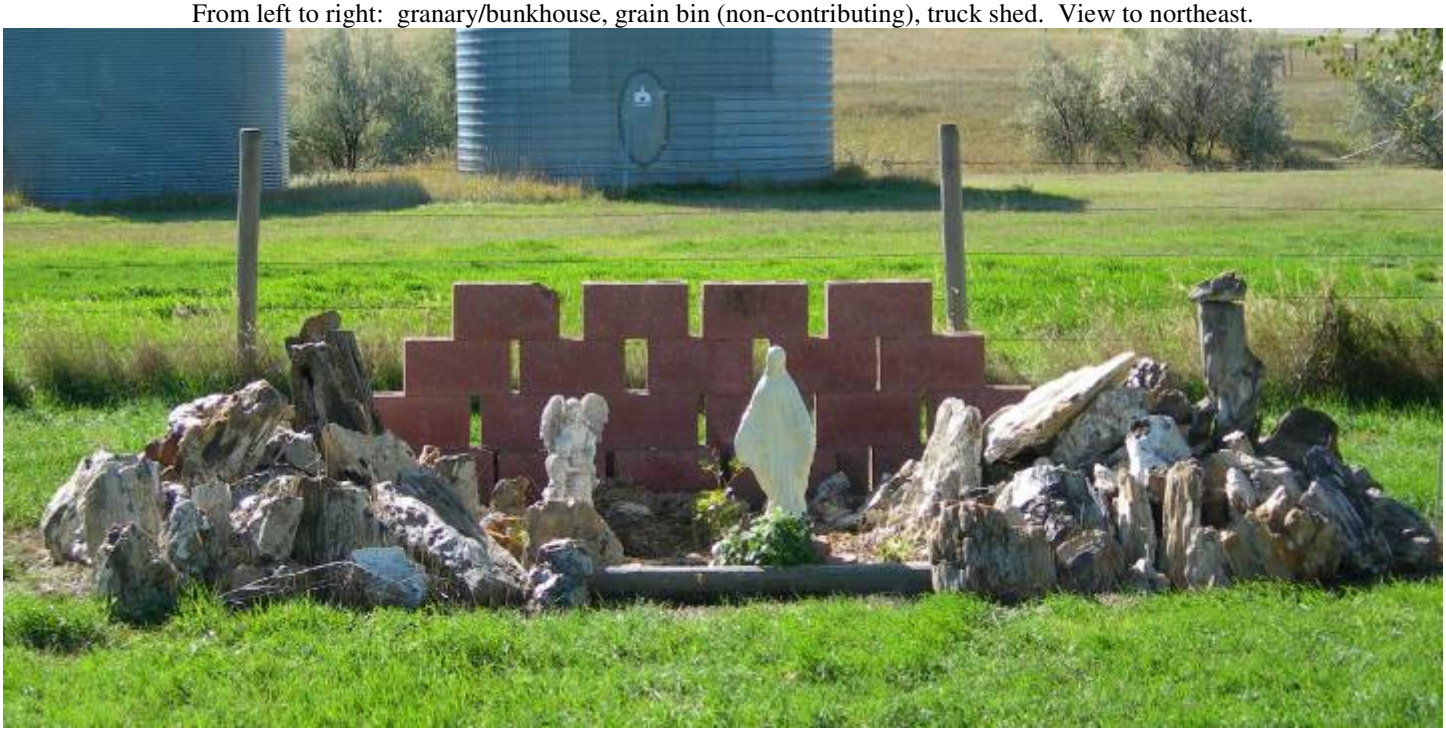
House, view to east-northeast.

Barn, view to northwest.

From left to right: oil house, chicken coop, and shop, view to north from barn.

Hog farrowing shed, located in corral at east side of building cluster, view to east-southeast.

From left to right: granary/bunkhouse, grain bin (non-contributing), truck shed. View to northeast.



Grotto in south yard, view to south.

Overview from southwest corner of district.
Modern, non-contributing grain bins at right, the house at left, and the chicken coop at right of center in background.