NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

093

FEB 01 2011

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name The Gus Nelson Homestead

other names/site number 24FR402

2. Location

street & number Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1 west side of river ☐ not for publication

city or town N/A ☐ vicinity

state Montana code MT county Fergus code 027

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** x **local**

Signature of certifying official — Date January 19, 2011

Robin L Burgess, Preservation Officer

Title Bureau of Land Management — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

[signature] — Date 10/21/2010

Signature of commenting official

State Historic Preservation Officer — Montana Historical Society/SHPO

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

[signature] — 3·24·11

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property

Fergus Co., Montana
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [ ] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [X] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- [ ] building(s)
- [X] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4		buildings
		district
2	2	site
		structure
		object
6	2	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling, secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: Agriculture Outbuilding

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: Not in Use
RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Western Stick
OTHER/Log Building
OTHER/Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: WOOD: log
roof: WOOD: log, plank; EARTH: sod
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Gus Nelson Homestead consists of the remains of a homestead near the Missouri River in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. It is located in Township 23 North, Range 22 East, Sections 17 & 18 in Fergus County, Montana. It is near the mouth of Woodhawk Creek and south of Cow Island. The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument is 149 square miles of land along the Missouri River in North Central Montana. The property consists of four buidings and two sites. This homestead lies within the south flood plain of the Missouri River. It sits at an elevation of approximately 2,100', with sandy to clay soils. West of the site the breaks rise sharply to an elevation of more than 2700 feet. Flora in and around the Gus Nelson homestead includes a variety of short grasses such as buffalo grass, needle-and -thread, western wheatgrass, green needle grass, blue grama, prairie junegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and threadleaf sedge. Forbs include milk vetch, blue bell, yarrow, cudweed sagewort, and fringe sagewort. Prickly pear cactus and sagebrush are also dominant on the site. Along the Missouri there are cottonwoods with ponderosa pine, juniper, and Douglas fir. Big game in the area includes elk, mule deer, whitetail deer, antelope, and Rocky Mountain bighorn Sheep. The Nelson Place exemplifies the rural lifestyle of the area with an emphasis on farming and stock raising. The buildings and structures convey a sense of homestead life and the associated hardships such a life entailed.

Description of Resources

Building 1 (contributing): The large main cabin built between 1916 and 1918, is approximately 16'x 22' and is constructed out of cottonwood saddle-notched, unhewn logs. The roof is gabled and sodded. The doors and windows are plainly trimmed. Windows are casement type, and doors are batten type. Walls and ceilings are mud daubed. There are two rooms in this building and a cellar. The cellar is accessed through the front room. In the early 1990s, the BLM repaired this structure as part of a cleanup effort. They repaired the roof, floorboards, and replaced logs on the west side of the building. Part of the repairs also included placing a layer of commercial landscaping fabric on the roof to protect the wood under the sod. They also stabilized the floor joints to ensure the safety of people visiting the site. The BLM used local cottonwood trees for the replacement logs and took great lengths to preserve the integrity of the structure. The structure is in excellent condition.

Building 2 (contributing): This is a small cabin built in 1916. This may have been the original cabin when Nelson established his homestead claim. Nelson moved to the River Property in 1916, and lived in a small cabin (likely this building) until the main cabin was built. Building 2 measures 11' by 14' in size. A flagpole/meatpole is attached to the northeast elevation of the building. The building is constructed of saddle-notched, unhewn cottonwoood logs. The roof is gabled and sodded, and like Building 1, landscaping fabric has recently been added to the roof. The door is batten type and plainly trimmed. Walls and ceilings are mud daubed. The structure is in excellent condition.

Building 3 (contributing): This henhouse, built between 1916 and 1918, follows the construction techniques of the other buildings utilizing cottonwood saddle-notched, unhewn logs, a gabled and sodded roof, and mud daubed ceiling and walls. The door is wired shut.

There is a small opening for chickens in the door. The roof, as with buildings 1 and 2, was repaired in the 1990s with the addition of landscaping fabric. The building is in good condition.

Building 4 (contributing): This building is a mostly collapsed wood frame privy. The privy had been a small (approximately 4' X 5') enclosure with two holes. While the material is decaying, this two hole privy may still be valuable from an archaeological standpoint as privies often yield archaeological deposits.

Site 1 (contributing): A scatter of historic farm equipment reflecting the period the homestead was occupied comprises Site 1. The area of the concentration measures 65' x 33' in size. Equipment includes a John Deere seeder/drill with metal wheels and a wooden hopper, two disks, a John Deere horse drawn spring seat cultivator with metal wheels, a rubber tire fertilizer, a plow with metal wheels, a furrower, a rubber-tire tractor, a ditcher, a shovel plow with metal wheels, a horse drawn shovel plow, and a harrow. These pieces of equipment date to the historical occupation of the site and contribute to the rural farm setting of the Missouri River homestead.

Site 2 (contributing): Site 2 consists of an historic trash scatter located near the main cabin. The area of the concentration measures 23' in diameter. Materials noted encompass artifacts from decades of occupation including china, battery cores, stove parts, sanitary cans, broken glass, and box springs. This scatter contributes to understanding the lifestyle of historic occupation the Gus Nelson Place.

Sites 3 and 4 (non-contributing): Sites 3 and 4 consist of the remains of a cowshed and corral that were originally associated with the property. Built in 1918, the cowshed measured 30' x 40' and was constructed from saddle-notched, unhewn logs. The roof was gabled and sodded. The walls and ceiling were mud daubed (Bass 1983). Bass (1983) recorded both the cowshed and the corral during a visit to the property in the early 1980s. The corral was still visible in 1989 photographs of the property. Both the cowshed and the corral were removed, likely as part of the BLM's effort to clean up the site. The majority of the material from the corral and cowshed are likely in clean up piles (sites 2 and 3) seen in sketch map.

Integrity

The Gus Nelson Homestead retains good integrity best reflected in its unchanged rural location and intact architectural materials. Feeling and setting remain unchanged from its period of significance of 1916 to 1951. The contributing resources of the homestead retain their original locations and association to each other and the surrounding landscape. The historic isolation and severe environment of the Missouri River Breaks area serves as an indelible backdrop to the realities of homesteading in this area. Lack of modern development due to the isolated nature of the area contributes to the integrity of the landscape. Cultivated fields have been replaced by sagebrush and native vegetation.

The homestead's historic features display quality of design, material and workmanship, with much of the original construction unchanged. The stability of the buildings remains intact despite years of exposure to the harsh environment. Rehabilitation and maintenance of the buildings using sympathetic materials has slowed deterioration. The Gus Nelson Homestead provides an unembellished view of homestead life along the Missouri River in the Missouri River Breaks in the early 1900s. It provides a reminder of the people who came to this area to eke out a living, become landowners, and neighbors. It was not the easiest place to practice agriculture, but the people who setted this area perservered and left their mark on the land.

Few homesteads with above-ground buildings and structures still remain within the Missouri River Breaks area. Collapsed buildings, and old fencelines are all that remain of most of these types of properties.

The Bureau of Land Management undertook cleanup and maintenance of the property in the early 1990s. In December of 1989, Chuck Otto, Bureau of Land Management Area Officer for the Judith Resource Area, sent a letter to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office outlining repairs and clean up at the Nelson Place. The letter proposed repairs to the property including: replacing rotted logs in the west end of Building 1, repair of the roof, and replacement of broken floorboards and broken windows. The BLM proposed using local cottonwood trees to supply the wood needed in the repairs, replacing the rotted wood with original building material. The letter also proposed cleaning up of some of the "hazardous trash" including a building that had fallen into disrepair and become a haven for rattlesnakes. The BLM sought advice from the Montana SHPO as the property had been recommended as potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. The SHPO concurred with the assessment and recommended the Nelson Place as eligible under criteria A and C. They also agreed that the proposed clean up and repairs would have no adverse effect. The BLM commenced work on the property which resulted in the removal of the cowshed and corral.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- [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
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- [ ] A owed by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE; EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

1916-1951

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

August "Gus" Nelson

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encompasses the construction and use of the Gus Nelson Place through 1951. The closing of significance of this site correlates with the Death of Gus Nelson. The site is known in the area by locals as the Nelson Place.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Gus Nelson homestead is significant at a local level and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historic association with land settlement in the early 1900s along the Missouri River. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C as a good example of vernacular architecture common to early homesteads that once dotted the banks of the Missouri River in this area. The property has existed in rural isolation, retaining the integrity of a Missouri River Breaks homestead with very limited accessibility. Few homesteads from this period exist within the Missouri Breaks area which are in as good condition.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The Gus Nelson Homestead is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its embodiment of agricultural settlement along the Missouri River and across much of central Montana in the early 1900s. Visually, little has changed in terms of the buildings or the landscape since the construction of the homestead, which easily conveys the harsh realities associated with living in the Missouri River Breaks.

Gus Nelson settled this claim in 1916, and soon realizing the initial land grant would not be enough acreage to grow crops to provide a self sustaining profitable agricultural enterprise, he began using other federal land grants to enlarge his holdings.

The Gus Nelson Homestead is also significant under Criteria C as an excellent representation of vernacular architecture using locally available cottonwoods in the building construction.

The Gus Nelson Homestead is one of the best preserved of the eight or nine remaining homesteads along the Missouri River in the Missouri River Breaks. The mostly complete homestead stands as a stark reminder of the often extremely difficult and lonely agricultural history of this remote area. Today, people visit the homestead to enjoy the visual aspects of the river breaks and learn about the local history.

Developmental history/additional historical context information

Prior to the settlement of the Missouri River Breaks of Montana by emigrants such as August "Gus" Nelson and other emigrants into the Missouri River Breaks, Native Americans occupied the region. The occupants of this area, prior to contact with Europeans, were a diverse group of peoples whose languages, world-views, and life-ways varied. In the early nineteenth century Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Crow, Gros Ventre, Plains Cree, Plains Chippewa,Salish, Arikera, Shoshone and Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota all occupied the area of the Northern Plains and traveled across the area DeMallie 2001). Within each of these larger tribal groupings were various bands and societies, as well as additional kin and social groups, which create a complex set of internal and external tribal variation. The Blackfoot Confederacy alone had thirty-three separate bands and numerous societies across the three main Blackfoot tribes; the Pikuni (Piegan), the Kainah (Blood), and the Siksika (Northern Blackfeet) (Dempsey 2001:608). Beyond all the variation in groups, certain traits were shared across the area, which created a distinct Plains Indian Culture type (Beck et al. 1995; Mails 1995; Scott 1911). Not least conspicuous of these shared traits was the reliance on bison hunting (DeMallie 2001; Frison 1991; Kornfeld 1997). Material culture during the Pre-Contact Period on the Northern High Plains consisted of the use of

a variety of organic materials including wood, horn, antler, shell, bone, vegetable fiber, and inorganic materials consisting of stone and minerals.

Beginning in the 1800s, Americans began exploring the area. Gus Nelson was one of many individuals who immigrated to Montana from all over the world to find a better life.

Exploration and the Fur Trade 1803 - 1859

The expansion of European-Americans into the west really began with the idea of Manifest Destiny. In Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* he writes, "we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman. It is best then that all our citizens should be employed in its improvement ...Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God" (Kurland and Lerner 1987:118). Thus, the philosophical framework for the expansion of the west was set. Jefferson famously commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to lead the Corps of Discovery in the Louisiana Territory. Lewis and Clark reached the Upper Missouri in 1805, camping at many locations along the river and writing descriptions of the fauna and flora found in the region. Manuel Lisa and a crew of men followed up the Yellowstone in 1807, and quickly American fur companies and traders were competing with Canadian representatives of the British Hudson Bay Company and the Scottish North-West Company who were already establishing relations and agreements with the Native Americans, who controlled the resources of the west (Montana Historical Society 1976).

The early trade was in beaver and other fine furs. The French and Canadian traders set out to establish forts or posts, conducting commerce by waiting for Indian peoples to bring the furs to them. Lisa's approach was different. Lisa attempted to bypass the Native Americans in the trade and instead placed white trappers and hunters in direct competition with the Indian hunters (Oglesby 1963). Predictably, the competition for resources led to an increase in Anglo - Indian conflict. Thus, as traders and explorers began to establish themselves in the west, the military followed to protect expanding American interests.

The Missouri River was particularly important in western expansion, because it provided the easiest access to the resources of the west. Upon their introduction, the traders quickly employed steamboats as an easier method of transporting large quantities of goods on the Missouri, as the large keelboats previously used were dangerous and labor intensive. The *Independence* was the first steamboat up the Missouri in 1819, and by 1829, Kenneth MacKenzie had established Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone River for the American Fur Company, and it was here the steamboat entered into the fur trade (Lepley 2001). The steamboat on the Missouri accelerated trade because of its increased cargo capacity. Fort Benton became the premier trading post on the Missouri River, and thousands of people began traveling up the Missouri. Not only did steamboats tramsport goods and materials, they increased people's awareness of the abundance of land along the Missouri.

Early settlement in the late 1850's and the Open Range

The United States Government needed to address the movement of peoples into the western lands. The House of Representatives Public Land Committee declared that squatting on public lands "was inevitable and even desirable" in 1828 (McQuillan 2001:75). The process began for the legalized settlement of public lands. A number of acts finally resulted in the Federal Homestead Act of 1862. Abraham Lincoln signed the act into law on May 20, offering 160 acres of publicly owned land to anyone who claimed and occupied an area for five years while making improvements on it, prompting more and more people to move west (Kunhardt Jr. et.al. 1992:180). However, free land was not the only reason for people to move west.

Events culminated in the 1850's and early 1860's that lead to increased populations in the west. In 1855, the Blackfeet signed a treaty with Governor of the Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, at the mouth of the Judith River laying the groundwork for the railroad to cross through the country (Dempsey 2001). Joining the Blackfeet at the Judith were represenatives from the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Nez Perce, and Broken Arm and his band of

Cree (Hungry Wolf 2006). The United States also began to see immigration on a large scale with the population tripling in the years from 1850 to 1900, with many emigranting west (Toole 1959).

Furthermore, the territory's residents began to see the effects of the gold rush. In July of 1862, miners made the first large strike in the area later known as Montana, at Grasshopper Creek in the southwest portion of the state resulting in the first gold camp in Montana (Montana Historical Society 1976). The gold discovered in Bannack caused a rush, similar, though somewhat smaller in scale to those that had already hit California, Colorado, and Nevada. The discovery of gold resulted in the first major Euro American migration into the area. Settlement occurred as a result of the fur and hide trade, as trappers would "look for a little color" in the streams in their spare time (Cascade County Historical Society 1981).

As the emmigration increased, the country was involved in conflicts on several fronts. Tension between Anglos and Indians increased as more and more miners and settlers moved onto Indian lands. Displaced tribes in the east were being pushed west, causing wars between different Indian tribes. The Civil War divided the country; an unpopular war that undoubtedly saw many people choose to leave the states for the west. Following the Civil War there were many volunteer military regiments that headed west and began to propagate the interest of the United States Government, protecting white settlers in Indian Country and setting the stage for the Indian Wars in the west (Fowler 2001).

The time of trappers, traders, and explorers gave way, as immigrants arrived to live and raise families. Settlement in the breaks had begun as Woodhawkers, like Mose La Tray, began to settle along the river cutting wood and selling it to steam ships in the 1860's (Deal and McDonald 1976). Cow Island, one mile north of the Gus Nelson Homestead, was important along the river. Because the Missouri River was unpredictable and not easy to pilot, many of the steamboats had problems reaching Fort Benton with the result that the southrn end of Cow Island was often the farthest point that riverboat captains could navigate. Boats were unloaded there and freighters, took shipments overland on the Cow Island Trail. The Cow Island trail was about 120 miles long; going up Cow Creek and then west across Bullwhacker Coulee toward Warrick, then south of the Bear's Paw and the big northern bend in the Missouri and finally turning south toward Fort Benton (Arthur 1988).

One of the biggest problems confronting early small farming/ranching operations was the small size of the average farm or ranch. While 160 acres may have been enough land to make a living in Virginia or Illinois, the harsh "American Desert" was unforgiving. In the area soon to become Western Montana, people made a living from the extraction of resources such as precious metals and lumber, along with merchants, ranchers and farmers. However, the eastern and central portion of the territory "depended on grass, weather, and luck" (Toole 1959:141). Small homesteaders had trouble getting a foothold in the eastern portion of the territory, and cattle became the driving force of the economy in the area. With few regulatory factors and even less real enforcement, the cattlemen soon began to control large portions of the territory in order to maintain their growing herds. The government gave right of "prior occupation," granting an additional 640 acres to the original homesteads in the Desert Land Act of 1877; however, it was still only for "a few hundred acres" - even for those with herds of cattle in the tens of thousands (Toole 1959:141).

Early on, cattle proved a lucrative way to make money. The Montana Territory was the last of the open range, and by the 1870's and 1880's the cattlemen sought to take advantage of the opportunity (Presser 1997). Men, such as Johnnie Grant, in the Deer Lodge Valley in Southwest Montana, Con Kohrs who started as a butcher and who eventually owned land and ran cattle all over Montana (Cascade County Historical Society 1981), Robert and Clifford Tingley, who settled in the Big Sandy area about 65 miles northwest of the Nelson Homestead (Lawrence 1963), and Robert S. Ford, a freighter over the Mullan Trail, who moved 1412 head from Colorado in 1870 to the Sun River area (Cascade County Historical Society 1981) Soon Ford and others were trailing many more herds into Northcentral

Montana. The vicinity along the river had plenty of water and good grass for feed. Ranchers along the Sun River formed the first Montana stock association in 1874 (Lepley 1999). On the Missouri River, some of the large ranches ran a thousand cattle at a time in the breaks (Abbot 1976). In 1884, Granville Stuart, Teddy Roosevelt, and a number of other ranchers formed the Montana Livestock Association, in part to organize against the growing number of cattle rustlers in the area, declaring "outright war," on the cattle rustlers - who hid out in the Missouri River Breaks (Centennial Book Committee 1989).

One of the biggest ranches founded along the Missouri River was the Powers Norris Ranch, a ranch that employed the trapping talents of Gus Nelson. The ranch headquarters were located about 32 miles west of the Gus Nelson homestead at the confluence of the Judith and Missouri Rivers. This was an important location along the Missouri reflected by the occupation of the area throughout prehistory and history. Native American peoples had trails, residential sites, and burial grounds located in this area (Monahan and Biggs 1997). Additionally, Judith Landing had been the location of Fort Chardon in 1844 - 1845, Camp Cooke in 1866, and T.C. Power's built Fort Claggett in the same location in 1869, and in 1872, Power moved the post a quarter mile up the Judith where he established the stone trading post and the Powers Norris Ranch operation (Arthur 1997; Monahan and Biggs 1997). The Powers Norris, or PN, employed many cowboys from all over the country. The PN trading post was an important feature on the river serving as a store, restaurant, and post office (Presser 1997; Culbertson 1976). The place also was the location of the PN Cable Ferry, which ran from 1880 to 1908 (Monahan and Biggs 1997).

Ranchers continued to move more and more cattle into the area, despite the lack of legal claim to the land. Overgrazing occurred as cattle herds grew in size. In the breaks, ranchers would move their cattle out in the winter and allow them to feed on the "home ranches" farther back from the breaks (Abbot 1976:23). In 1885, a drop in cattle prices resulted in many cattlemen holding off shipping their cattle east; however, the drop in prices was followed by the devastating winter of 1886 - 1887 (Toole 1959). The tough winter in 1886 and 1887, immortalized by Charley Russell's "Last of the 5000" or "Waiting for A Chinook," resulted in the loss of thousands of cattle.

The elimination of the bison by the late 1880s (Lawrence 1963) was significant because bison was a staple for tribes in the area, and a source of competition for rangeland resources needed by cattlemen. Pressure also increased on Indian people by U.S. military after the Battle of the Little Big Horn. In 1877, the year following the Battle of Little Big Horn, a group of Nez Perce, led by Chief Joseph, crossed the Missouri at Cow Island, just two miles north of the future location of the Nelson Homestead. The Nez Perce, who were fleeing to Canada, engaged in a small skirmish before American soldiers caught Chief Joseph's group just south of the modern location of Chinook (Toole 1959).

Many Indian people near the Missouri River began the long process of settling into reservation life. Just as the absence of the bison on the plains left a niche that livestock filled, the forced removal of Indian peoples left the area open to further settlement. The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, divided reservation lands into individual allotments (Toole 1959:135). The Euro-American population long attempted to compel the concept of personal land ownership on Indian people. The Dawes Act shifted the system in Indian Country from tribal ownership to individual Indian ownership, and left all "unclaimed land" opened to white settlement. The cattle industry, coming off a desperate time in the "Last of the 5000" winter, eagerly began to move into the area for free grass. Along with more land opening for homesteading, new means of transportation came into the area.

On April 2, 1887 James Hill, of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway (which was reorganized in 1890 as the Great Northern Railway), began laying track in Minot, North Dakota. By September 28, the crew passed through Fort Benton, 85 miles west of the the Nelson Homestead, and on October 15, the railroad had reached Great Falls (Vichorek 1993:14). Mining companies had utilized the railroad in the southwest portion of the territory for several years before to great success. The introduction of the railroad into

north central Montana was one of the most significant changes in commerce of the area since the arrival of fur traders. The cattle business continued to grow and by 1890, individual herds estimated at up to 25,000 head at a time forded the river at the Judith Landing (32 miles east of the Gus Nelson Homestead) on the Missouri (Cheney 1983). Railroad and cow towns sprang up quickly, and as the means for transportation improved, riverboat traffic slowed. Cities like Malta, Big Sandy, Glasgow, Roy, Winifred, Chinook, and Wolf Point began to thrive as shipping locations for sheep and cattle. Montana officially became a state in 1889. Statehood meant several things to Montana and its settlers including the end of the "take what you want" type of land acquisition.

Homestead Boom 1910 through 1919

The early 1900's witnessed the decline of the cattle business in Montana, and the emergence of agriculture as the main industry in eastern Montana. The cattle had overgrazed, in a decade, land that had supported millions of bison for millennia (Toole 1959). The railroad companies had made a substantial investment in the rail through Montana, and were not going to let their investment go to waste. The Great Northern needed people to keep their trains full, and in 1909, they began to promote the area with vigor. Jim Hill, "the empire builder," began to travel throughout the world propagating his vision of dry-land farming with a "family farm on every 160- or 320- acre tract on the high plains" (Presser 1997:5). Montana was portrayed as the promised-land - "a land where a poor man could make his fortune on his own land, his plow literally turning over the coin of prosperity" (Montana Historical Society 1976:169).

In 1909, the government aided Hill's cause by passing the Enlarged Homestead Act, increasing the number of acres on a homestead from 160 to 320, and in 1912 they further augmented the act by reducing the time it took to "prove up" from five to three years (Toole 1959). In 1910, the government passed an act allowing for homesteading on known coal lands. Several farming and ranching operations in the Missouri River Breaks benefited from this and had coal operations supplement their livelihood. The homestead boom was on, with over 42 percent of Montana's land settled, and most of it in the eastern part of the state (Miller 1977).

People began to trickle into Montana for the last of the free land in 1909 and 1910, and by 1911, homesteaders were pouring in. Many people came on emigrant trains or cars. The homesteader would purchase transport on a railroad car where they could pack all of their possessions and go west. The homesteader would be met at the train by a "locator" who would whisk them out in the countryside to look at land. The land was flat and to the people from a humid area the fact that there were no trees and no water did not always seem like an immediate problem (Toole 1959). However, the arid Montana prairie proved too difficult for many.

Deception about the fertility of the land and the promise of new dryland farming techniques during the second decade of the twentieth century ran rampant. Initially the weather cooperated. From 1910 to 1917, farms were productive in both relation to the weather and the price of grain. In 1916,the year Gus Nelson settled at his Missouri River homestead, Northern Wheat sold for $1.05 a bushel, Hard Montana Wheat for $1.04 a bushel, flax for $2.10 a bushel, oats commanded $1 a bushel, eggs sold for 15¢ a dozen, and butter sold for 35¢ a pound (Wood 1999). However, while many early homesteaders were grain farmers, "stock remained the big economic factor in the mountains and along the Missouri River" (Lawrence 1963:33). In 1916, the Government further helped the homesteading cause by passing the Stock Raising Homestead Act, which gave a homesteader up to 640 acres. The government designed the Stock Raising Homestead Act specifically for lands that were chiefly valuable for grazing and required residency and one dollar and twenty-five cents worth of improvements per acre. The railroads began to expand into areas such as Lewistown, 60 miles south of the Gus Nelson Homestead, to provide services for the budding communities and to ship goods out of the state.

The Depression and the years 1919 through 1945

Many of the homesteads established in the early portion of the second decade of the twentieth century quickly disappeared by the late teens. Many of the men from the Missouri River Breaks area served in World War I. Some of the veterans of the War could not keep up with the improvements required to keep their homestead and they had to leave. Some never wanted to come back and made their living elsewhere. Others managed to get their time in the service to count toward their time to prove up on their homestead.

The war elevated the price of wheat, and many homesteaders, seeing prices climb, began to invest in new equipment and land. People began to buy cars, and seemingly, the homesteaders were going to be able to make a good go of it, but as the war ended, prices for grain began to fall, and land that had been producing twenty five bushels an acre was now only producing two and a half bushels an acre (Toole 1959). Many people had over-extended financially on the premise of high yields and high prices, taking out loans against their land. The end of the war corresponded with environmental disaster in Montana in the form of drought. Those homesteaders who came found they did not have enough land to make it and many just starved out, simply turning loose their livestock and walking away (Deal and McDonald 1976).

In addition to the poor productivity of the badlands, many of the homesteaders were inexperienced at farming and ranching. Emigrants came to the area with the promise of good fertile free land, but many were from European cities and had no idea how to farm, and the isolation of the river proved to be too much for many. Many of those who homesteaded along the river did not speak English. Scores of those who had been barrowing money against their land, in hopes of the next big crop, lost it to the bank a few years later. Some of the people who left went to Butte and worked in the mines, others went to work for the railroad or to neighboring towns and settled, and several left Montana completely. Montana's government attempted to minimize the effects of the drought. The Billings Chamber of Commerce, fearing news of the drought would ruin Montana's reputation as a stable farming and ranching area, stated, "industries are being discouraged by grossly exaggerated reports of failure and ruin in this state" (Dalich 1968:6). There is no accurate account of the influx of people into Montana during the second decade of the nineteenth century as many of the homesteaders came after the 1910 census and fled before the 1920 census.

The agricultural community began to make a slight recovery in the 1920's, but the drought that had begun in 1917, continued for the most part into the 1930's. The largest exodus from the Missouri River country was in 1919 (Lawrence 1963). Around 1920, the winds began to blow. Since much of the land had been cultivated and there was no grass to hold down the soil, much of the topsoil blew east into North Dakota (Toole 1959). Further complicating problems, grain prices continued to drop. Wheat that was $2.34 a bushel in 1919, was down to 92 cents in 1922; likewise, from 1919 to 1921, cattle dropped from $9.92 per hundred pounds to $5.42, sheep fell from $9.92 per hundred pounds to $4.49, and wool dropped from 58 cents to 19 cents per pound (Lawrence 1963). Many homesteaders were barely hanging on, borrowing money against the land for seed and hoping that the next crop would be the one that saved them. In 1921, wheat stem maggots, grasshoppers, mormon crickets, and continuing drought combined sending more homesteaders away (Lawrence 1963). Often homesteaders would prove up on their land, acquire the deed, borrow money against it from a loan company, usually about $3000, and walk away (Arthur 1988). In 1929, during these tough times, the stock market crashed signalling the official beginning of the Great Depression.

As elsewhere around the country, the 1930's were hard times in the Missouri River Breaks. Many people had a "we are all in this together" attitude. The agricultural community, which was Montana's leading industry, lost nearly 53 percent of its annual revenue between 1930 and 1932. In addition, between 1930 and 1940, 5,672 Montana farms went bankrupt (Loken 1993). The Government sought to provide relief to the nation in a variety of ways.

Roosevelt came forth with his New Deal. Programs like the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) sought to give relief to struggling Montana farmers by subsidizing their incomes, and reducing the acreage they needed to farm (Loken 1993). In 1933, Roosevelt established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). These groups put people in the Missouri Breaks region to work on a variety of projects ranging from planting trees to the building of dams. The construction of Fort Peck Dam in northeast Montana, while displacing many people who were living on the river, put more than ten thousand people to work (Spritzer 1999). People worked on building highways, with 33.5 million dollars going to improve and build 2,756 miles of highway in Montana (Loken 1993). Young men working for the CCC were paid thirty dollars a month and families received a twenty-five dollar allotment (CCC Alumni 2004). Times were especially hard in 1937, and as cattle prices fell and farmers continued to struggle, the government passed the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, allowing the government to buy back many of the private lands deemed agriculturally unfit.

WWII and After

World War II was a significant event to those living in the Missouri River Breaks in several ways. Most of the New Deal projects lasted through the thirties and up to 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and America's entrance into World War II. In the early 1940's, Montana's unemployment rate had hit a ten-year low, with only 9000 unemployed, as Montana and the nation began to recover from the depression (Loken 1993). The WPA, the CCC, and other programs, while not officially eliminated, had their funding canceled as the country entered into the war. Before the war, the country was still struggling to recover from the Great Depression, which had hit the area of the Missouri River between 1915 and 1920.

Following the Second World War, people were able to get higher paying jobs; many who had been living hand to mouth suddenly had cash for purchases. The increased cost of labor made it more expensive to run an operation, especially a large one. The rising cost of labor may also have fueled the mechanization of farms. While the price of cattle or grain was at the mercy of the market, labor is a controllable cost, and mechanization allowed farmers and ranchers to cut labor costs. In 1945, the average size farm had grown to over 1,500 acres and a full 64 percent were using tractors, compared with 36 percent in 1930 (Loken 1993). Mechanization allowed the farms and ranches to increase in size and increase in production. Family farms and ranches were beginning to be divided generation after generation, and many farmer's children were leaving to find work elsewhere or go to school. As a consequence many of the farms and ranches were sold to neighbors allowing for the consolidation of land. Farms and ranches continue to consolidated and grow as the "ma and pop" farm or ranch becomes, more often, the corporate industry.

Missouri River Breaks Homesteaders

In most respects, the settlement of the Missouri River bottoms and breaks followed the basic patterns experienced in eastern Montana. What differentiated them from the "typical" homesteaders was the lack of a communal identity. The river did not provide the cohesion many homesteaders elsewhere created at supply towns and railroad landings. Settlers were all identified as Missouri River Breaks homesteaders, but they did not unite as a "Breaks" community. The river united them in their geographic identity, but it did not unite them as a community with a central gathering point. Early in the river's settlement, steamboats and barges would drop off supplies and mail, as well as the news of "happenings" along the river and the rest of the world. People on the river were far from the communities of Winifred, Fort Benton, Geraldine, and the no longer extant communities of Eagle Butte and Graceville. Amenities common in these towns were not had on the river: no school or post office, store or barber to serve all the settlers. To take advantage of these resources, settlers ultimately had to leave the river.

As a fringe population, Missouri River Breaks homesteaders, generally speaking, were single males. Couples and families also lived along the river, but compared to the

general homesteading population, the male to female and single to family ratios were disproportionately weighted in favor of the former. Single women were not attracted to the isolation, hardships and lack of community that the river bottoms offered. Consequently, many of the men who settled on the river were middle-aged single men who never married after homesteading on the river.

Numerous homesteaders came to the Missouri River during the boom, but the Missouri breaks area presented unique problems for the early settlers. One of the most crucial differences in the breaks was the isolation. While gatherings for dances and card games occurred, the rugged topography of the breaks greatly restricted casual travel. The deep valleys and coulees were geographical barriers that would isolate neighbors, which may account for the many single male homesteaders as opposed to families in the breaks. While several families did homestead along the river in the breaks area, like the Sanfords (approximately 60 miles to the west), Kipps (five miles to the north), Jones (five miles to the north), and Hagadones (approximately 30 miles to the west), many homesteaders were single middle age men. Many of these men like Jack Ervin, George Middleton, and August "Gus" Nelson never married. Some people were complete hermits. There were "a number" of people, likely all men, in the Missouri River Breaks who "for reasons known only to themselves, forsook civilization and choose to live a single, solitary existence by means known only to themselves" (Eigell 1987:304). The breaks, in addition to being geographically isolating, also cut back on productivity of lands on a homestead. There was not enough room to have a useful grain farm, even on the fertile lands along the river. Many people went into ranching; horses were popular as were cattle and sheep.

Besides the effect on community, the special geographic setting differed from homestead experiences elsewhere on the Plains. Homesteaders along the Missouri River also developed and modified the landscapes of their claims to fit their unique environment. According to K. Ross Toole, the typical Montana homestead residence was "a wood shack covered with tar paper on the outside and newspaper on the inside" (Toole 1979: 231). For the most part however, settlers on the river used resources more readily available. Supplies for a frame house could be transported by barge on the river, or even hauled down the breaks from neighboring towns, but most Missouri River homesteaders opted to construct homes, barns, and other outbuildings with cottonwood and pine logs cut along the river and in the surrounding hills. Often when homesteaders first arrived on the river they did not have the resources or the time to construct a permanent residence. Breaking the land and planting crops was a higher priority. George Middleton's experience exemplifies the transitional living common for some of the homesteaders. Middleton, who lived about eight and a half miles east of Gus Nelson's place along the river, initially lived in a tent when he arrived in 1913. The bachelor then constructed a dugout where he lived until 1918. Many other homesteads along the river had dugouts, cellars, or caves on their homesteads, many of which served as residences until cabins or houses could be built. In August of 1918, Middleton completed his log house and moved out of his dugout which then served as a root cellar (Monahan 1997: 157). The conversion of a dugout to a root cellar was a common practice employed by many river settlers. Some of these dugouts were dug into the level ground, but the majority of them were located in the hillsides or the faces of coulees bisecting the homestead claims. Facades on dugouts and houses consisted of milled lumber, salvaged timbers from steamboat and barge wrecks, timber from the surrounding hills, and stone. The material used varied with the availability as well as the skills of the settlers.

The availability of water tended to be a deciding factor in the location of homesteads, and the order in which they were selected. Most homesteaders settled along springs, streams and rivers. Many others dug wells to supply their domestic needs. Missouri River homesteaders had plentiful water for their livestock and crops, but the muddy Missouri was not the most palatable water. The amount of capital required to purchase a pump might have been a factor in limiting the number of people who filed desert land claims along the river. Perhaps conditions were such that settlers did not feel the need to irrigate their crops; the early years were relatively lush years. Of all the claims

patented along this portion of the Missouri River, only five were desert land claims. Most of the bottoms where homesteaders settled have coulees bisecting them, channeling seasonal alkali streams through their land. Others on the river either were forced to get drinking water from the river or catch it during snow and rain storms. Few springs have been identified along this stretch of the Missouri. Rain barrels were probably common sights along the river.

The isolation faced by Missouri River homesteaders rivaled any of those endured by homesteaders settling in other parts of eastern Montana. The monotony associated with settlers on the Great Plains, with nothing to block their view but miles of open prairie, compares with Missouri River life, with nothing to see but the Breaks and the river disappearing around the bend. Even with homesteaders claiming neighboring river bottoms and terraces, visual isolation still existed. In addition, the elements were as unrelenting on the river as on the Plains. Winters were harsh and cold, and summers were unbearably hot. Settlers all along the river lost homes, fences, and fields to the river. Erosion ate away the banks and channeled deep coulees through claims. The flood of 1908 destroyed houses up and down the river. Like elsewhere, some people persevered and rebuilt while others cashed in and moved away.

In the end, the Missouri River set these settlers apart from other Montana homesteaders. It defined them, they did not define it. Settlers were dependent upon the river for communication and supplies, and always for water. Little is left of homesteaders' efforts along the Missouri; a dilapidated cabin at one site, a collapsed dugout down the river. Homesteading history spans a brief period of Missouri River history often overlooked by river promoters and tour guides. Fortunately, physical evidence from the homesteading period still exists, allowing us a glimpse into a period less glamorous than explorers, steamboats and military exploits, yet equally as representative of settlement of the American West. While remnants of other homesteads within the breaks area still exist, the Nelson Homestead provides one of the better collections of extant homestead buildings.

The Gus Nelson Homestead

Two Gus Nelsons lived in the Missouri River Breaks area - White Gus and Black Gus or Dirty Face Gus (Berry et. al. 2004; Bergum and Bergum 2004). Both were Scandinavian and moved into the country from "Kansas or someplace," and came in as government wolfers (Norskog and Norskog 2004). Both lived on the south side of the river near Winifred. Black Gus spent only a short period of time in the area but gained a reputation for walking everywhere he went (Norskog and Norskog 2004). The Gus Nelson associated with this homestead nomination was known by others living in the River Breaks as White Gus.

Gus Nelson was born on March 7, 1870 in Krisianstad, Sweden. He moved to Montana and became a naturalized citizen in 1902 in Lewistown. Gus entered Montana as a government "wolfer" (Arthur 2003). The Register of Bounty Certificates Issued by County Clerk, Fergus County, Montana, indicates Gus Nelson typically brought in his pelts in the spring of the year. Being employed in such a position allowed Gus access to markets restricted to most people; as a result, Gus earned a good living hunting and trapping wolves, other furbearing animals, and predators. In addition to collecting governmental bounties, Gus often collected $25 bounties from the PN Ranch to the east, and the Shonkin Ranch to the west, and sell the hides independently (Arthur 1988).

> To go out and shoot a deer wasn't easy to do. You worked at it. You might hunt for days to get a deer. I know he (Nelson) trapped beaver. He trapped beaver along the river, and he'd take them beaver pelts prepare em' for sale. I think some muskrat, he probably done some muskrat trappin'. Those old guys did that kind of thing, you know, that's what they lived off of (Arthur 2003:142, 143).

To further augment his income, Gus drove stage between the PN Ranch, approximately 32 miles east of his homestead, and Big Sandy, approximately 65 miles northwest of his homestead (Smith 1986; Arthur 1988).

This lucrative trade enabled Gus to quickly enter the cattle business (Arthur 2003:145, 146).

> ...he went right into cattle. Even when he first settled there I'm sure he got right into cattle and was doing this wolfing and everything. He had an advantage over everybody else, because he knew how to go about marketing wolves and how to get his bounty and all that type of stuff, that a lot of guys didn't have (Arthur 2003:145, 146).

Around 1916 or 1917, Gus began erecting the buildings on his homestead. Gus built the main part of the cabin, though the south half was later added by Tom Kjorlein. Gus and Kjorlein were friends; however, no information exists indicating the construction date of the addition. By 1918, he had further developed the homestead by building another log cabin, a log barn, storehouse, henhouse and cowshed. Between 1916 and 1919, Gus cultivated an average of about 12 acres of oats a year along with a few acres of rye and alfalfa that he cut for hay (Nelson 1919).

Just shy of his 50th birthday, on February 21, 1920, Gus received Patent #735815 for his 144.65 acre homestead located in T23N R22E Section 17. Five years later, Gus received a supplemental non-coal patent, Patent #963150, for 128.04 acres in T23N R22E sections 18 and 19. Finally in 1933, Gus received Patent #1066753, a supplemental non-coal patent, for 105 acres in T23N R22E Section 17.

Some discrepancy exists from sources regarding the period of occupation. While official patents show occupation of the property by Gus Nelson, the General Land Office (GLO) map dating to 1917 indicates habitation by "Watson." This discrepancy is yet to be explained but could be the result of Nelson supplying a false name to surveyors, a mistake by the survey crew, or the occupation of the property by squatters prior to its habitation by Gus. The survey of the township began in June 1916 and was completed in October; it is possible Gus moved onto the property subsequent to the completion of the GLO survey.

Stories about Gus Nelson indicate he was not a man with which to be trifled. An ongoing problem confronted by many homesteaders along much of the Missouri River in the Breaks area in the early 1900s was river pirating. One story relates an encounter between Gus and river pirates:

> He always told a story, I don't know if your interested in this, but I'll tell it to ya. He said they were having a - and this is probably 1900 1910 somewheres in that area - they were having a get together up at Woodhawk, 4th of July. And he said they'd been having trouble with people coming down river in boats and stopin' and raidin' their camps, stealin' anything they could get their hands on you know, and go on down river with it and they were in and out and gone. They weren't able to do much with em'. Gus said, "I had that feelin' that mornin'" and he says, "it might just be a good day to stay at home," and said, "and skip the celebration." So he knew what was going to happen. He knew there was somebody goin' to try and come along raid his place cause they figured he'd be gone. He said he took his 30-30 rifle, crawled up on the roof of the old barn. He said, "It was a dirt roof, the sun was shinin' down. It was a nice day. I was layin' there kind a relaxin', waiting to see if anything was guna happen." He said, "Pretty quick I could hear oars hittin' the water on this boat. Pretty quick they close enough to where I could hear their voices." He says, "Yah, evidently he's gone on his celebration for the day," he says, "lets go in there and see what we can come up with." He laid there. He said, "I waited there for em' to get up to the cabin" and he said they went in and fixed themselves up a couple of nice boxes. Fruit, canned fruit, and tomatoes and anything else they

> wanted. Then they went outside and they took the new harness he had just purchased off the wall where it was hangin' and he threw it down there in a pile and they had everything all gathered up and they were ready to head for the river. He says, "I just leveled my 30-30 down in front of em', and he says, "I just squeezed the trigger off and I blew wood chips in their face and everything." And then he said the fun begin. He said, "Oh - oh well we didn't - we wen't gonna steal anything." He says, "Well how come you packed it out of the cabin." And he says, "All the time they was slippin' around tryin' to get the position" where they could get the draw on him ya know. He says, "I seen what was happinin'. If you guys want to draw another breath of air, you'll head back to your boat and get outa here - now, immediately." The story doesn't end there. Only a few days later these two bodies, of these two individuals, show up floatin' down the river. Now whether Gus killed em' and threw em' in the river or whether someone else did, nobody really knows. Gus never told the hole story. He never said he did anyway. A lot of speculation was he took care of that problem then and there. He was a tough guy. They lived a tough life - they had to live that way. That's the way it was (Arthur 2003: 142, 143).

Nelson was in many ways the quintessential Missouri River Breaks bachelor homesteader. He seemed to know everyone, and certainly everyone in the area seemed to know him, but at the same time he kept to himself. Jack Bergum (2004) recalled an incident with Gus Nelson that always stood out in his mind.

> "Jerry and I, my older brother, went down there and stayed overnight. We had gone hunting - well the day we got down there we went east and shot a deer down there, and the next day why Jerry and, I forget which one of the Smith kids it was, Bill I guess, went back with a horse and packed it out. Well anyways, that night we stayed overnight and Gus, he was an old wolf hunter in the early days, and he got up and he come to the breakfast table and says "Who stole my six-shooter. Which one of you kids stole my six-shooter." Well of course none of us dare touch his six-shooter. Cause he had it underneath his pillow I guess. He couldn't find his six-shooter, well they found it later I guess, it was under his bed, but it kind of scared the heck out of us kids, and it wasn't just "which one of you kids" - there was a little profanity in there."

Gus had difficulty giving up the "old ways." Jim Arthur (2003) recalled a visit from Nelson around 1950. Gus told Jim's Dad, Headley, "You know it is gettin' damn tough to make a living on fifty dollars a year anymore."

Gus Nelson spent his final years at a cow camp of Ervin Smith's (Arthur 1988). This place was above the river bottom towards Winifred several miles from Gus' River homestead. Ervin Smith was a friend of Gus. He purchased lands all over the River Breaks for the taxes due. Smith spent a lot of time with Gus. Gus became gravely ill and bedridden in 1951. Despite Smith's efforts to persuade Gus to go to the Lewistown hospital, Gus refused, preferring to die in the Breaks rather than a hospital bed (Smith 1986). One of Smith's ranch hands, Howard Skinner, was attending Gus the afternoon of March 21, 1951, when around 2:30 he heard a gunshot. Gus Nelson had taken his own life. The sound marked the passing of one of the Missouri River Breaks colorful figures and a bachelor to his final day. Gus loved the Missouri River Breaks and stated his desire to be buried there (Smith 1986).

After Gus's death, his river homestead was never officially occupied again. Title passed to Frips Ekegren who lived on the north side of the river but used the Nelson Homestead to raise hay. Ekegren sold the property to Ervin Smith who subsequently sold it to Tom DeMars. The Bureau of Land Management acquired the property in 1982 (Fulbright 1998).

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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
_X_ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: BLM Lewistown Field Office

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 42
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet) NAD 1983
Nad27

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	654918	5290679
B	12	654937	5290219
C	12	655636	5290700

Legal Land Description: Township 23 North, Range 22 East, Section 17, S ½ of SW ¼

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon on the USGS map Cow Island; MT 1954 and Baker Monument, MT 1954. The property is located on a terrace on the west side of the Missouri River.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary includes the house, outbuildings, farm implements, and the adjacent area that historically was part of the Gus Nelson Homestead and maintains the historic integrity. The Missouri River defines the east and south boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O'Boyle

organization Integrity Resources Archaeology date September 1, 2010

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city or town Potomac state MT zip code 59823

e-mail integrityresources@hotmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

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

Photographs: see continuation sheet

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus **State:** Montana
Photographer: (see Continuation Sheets)
Date Photographed: (see Continuation Sheets)
Description of Photograph(s) and number: (see Continuation Sheets)
1 of ___. (see Continuation Sheets)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement**: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. fo the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

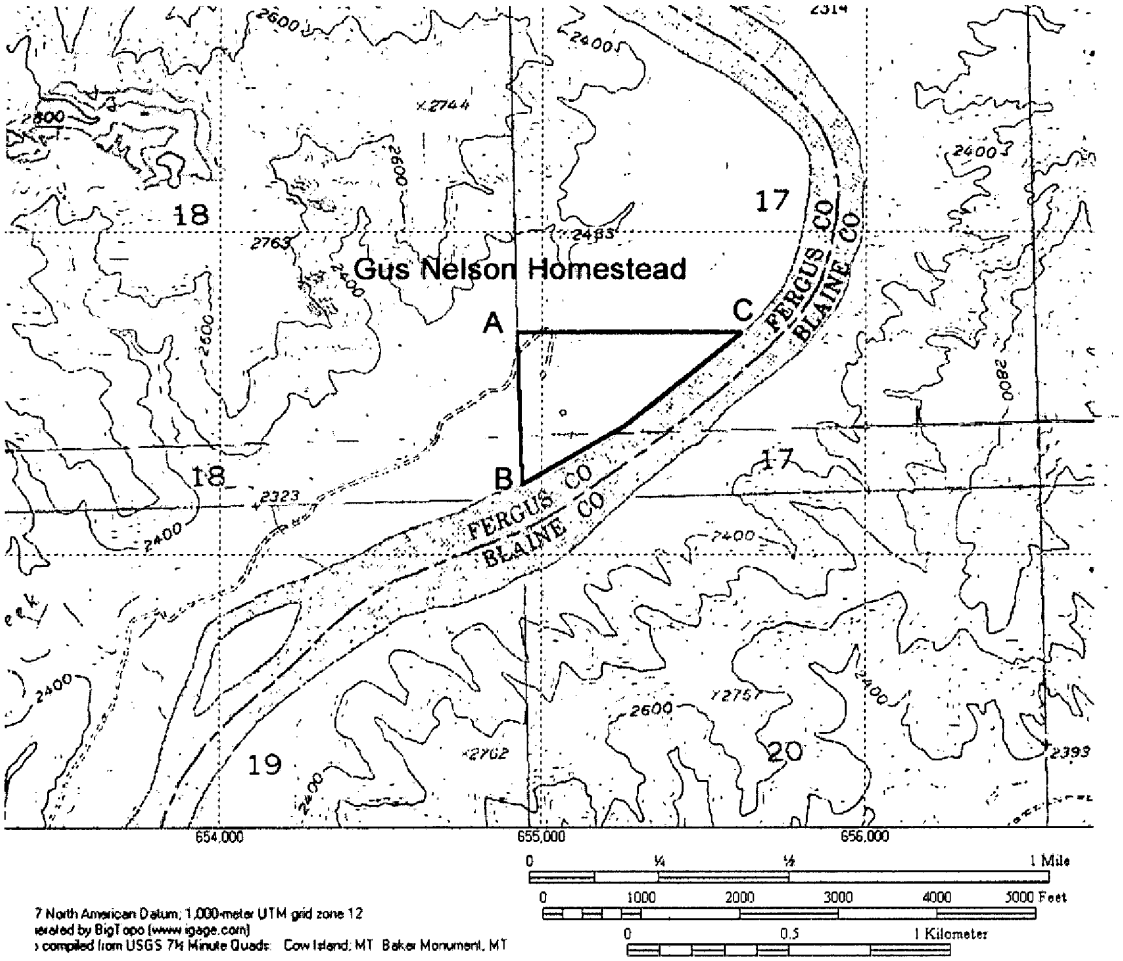
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Map of Gus Nelson Homestead on Cow Island, MT (1954)and Baker Monument, MT (1954) 7.5' USGS quadrangle maps (Please see Section 10 for UTM coordinates)



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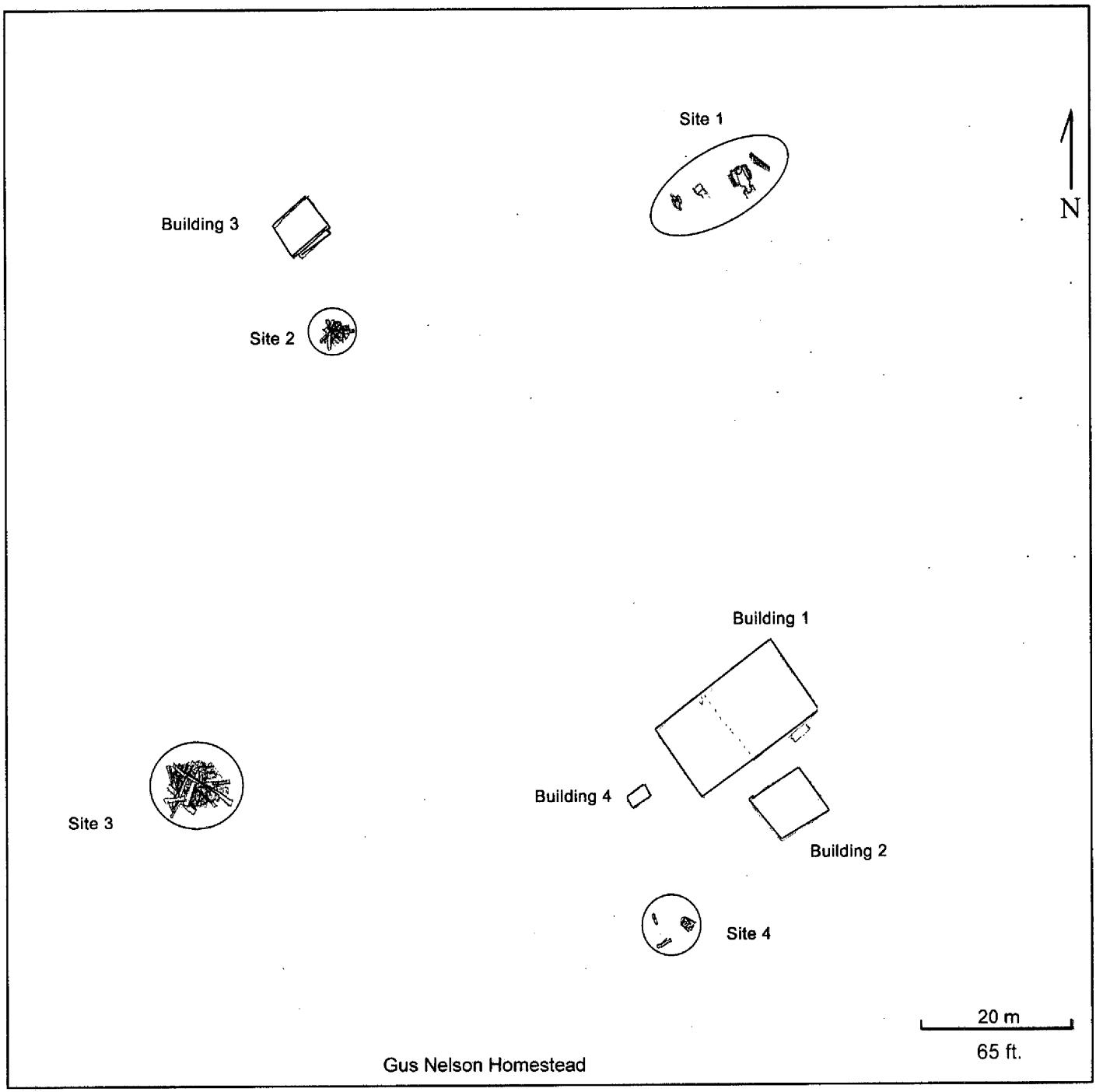
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Sketch Map of Gus Nelson Homestead Showing Building and Site Locations. Please see the Topographic Map for Overall Gus Nelson Homestead Boundary.



The door of Building 1 is 875 feet north from the Missouri River

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National Park Service

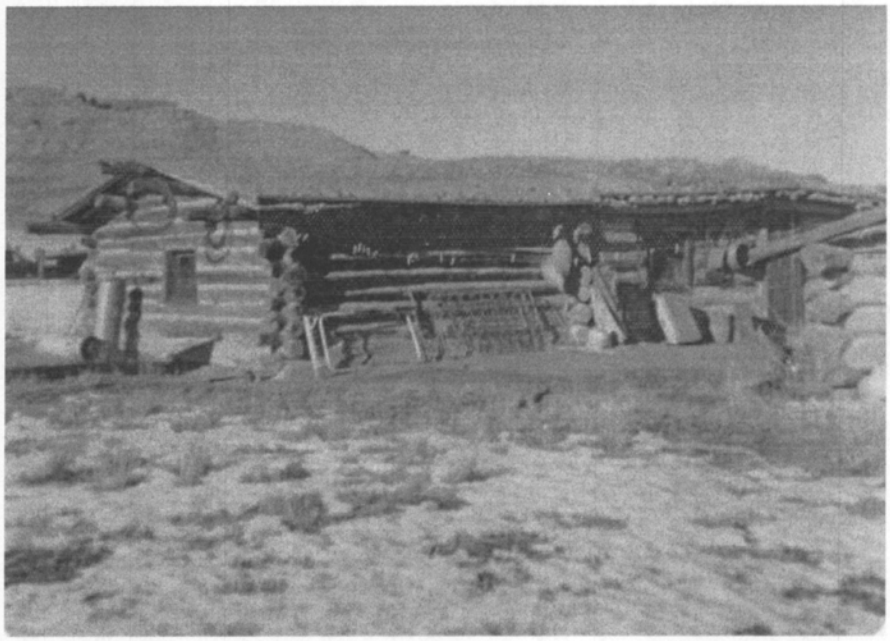
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 1

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photolog and Photographs



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: Bud and Virginia Norskog
Date of Photograph: unknown
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0001
Building 1, view to the NE

1917 General Land Office Map of Gus Nelson Homestead, shows "Watson" at Gus Nelson Place.

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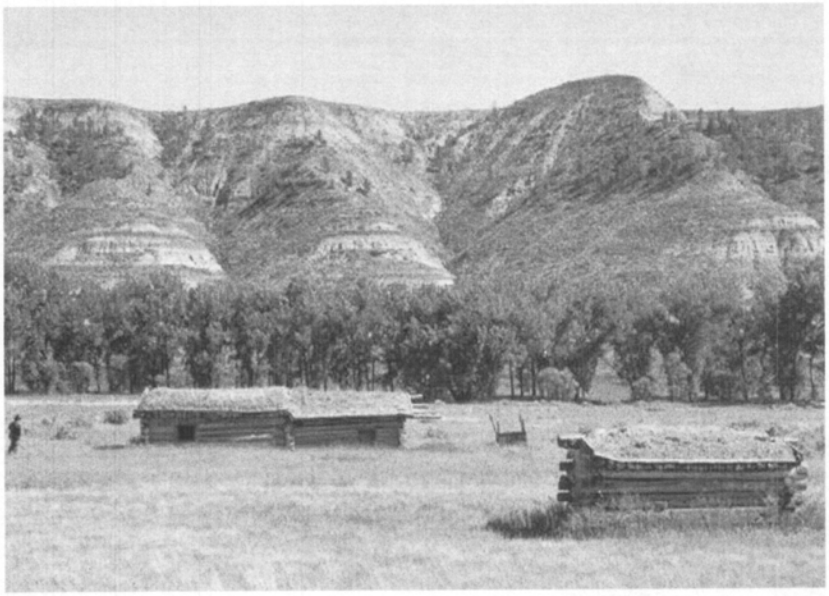
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 2

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0002
Building 1, view to the NE



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0003
Buildings 1 and 3, view to the S

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 4

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0004
Buildings 1 and 2, view to the SW

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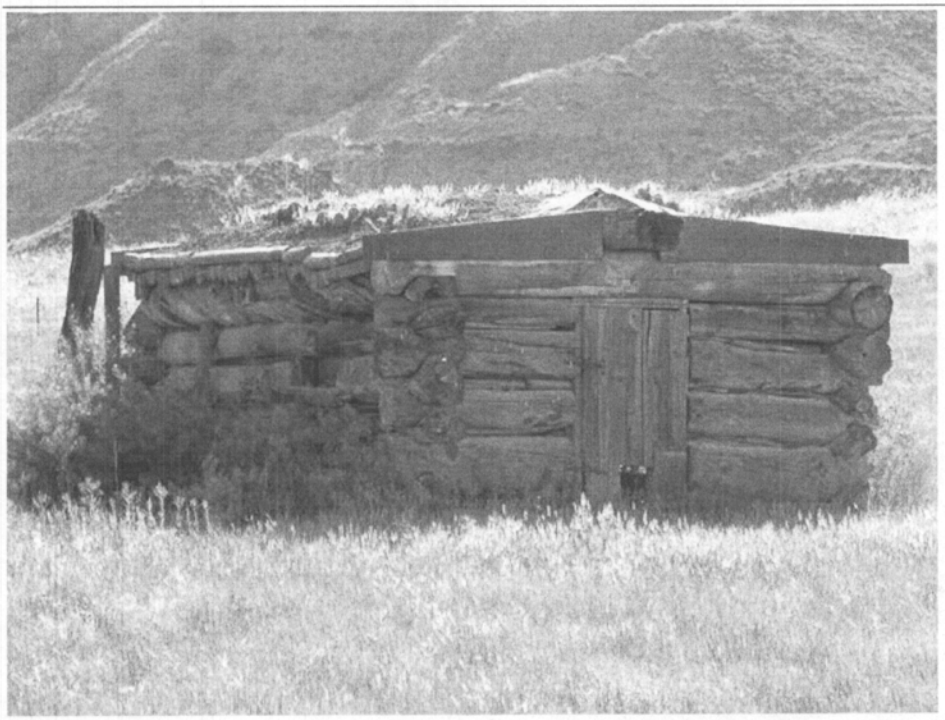
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 5

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0005
Building 3, view to the W

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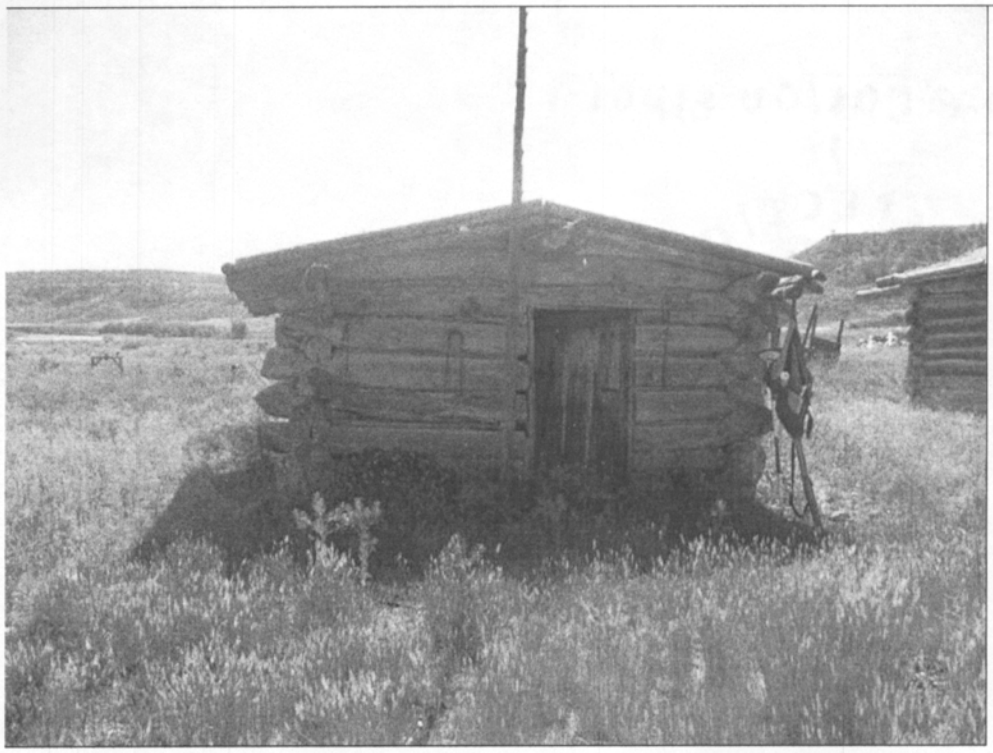
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 6

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0006
Building 2, view to the SW

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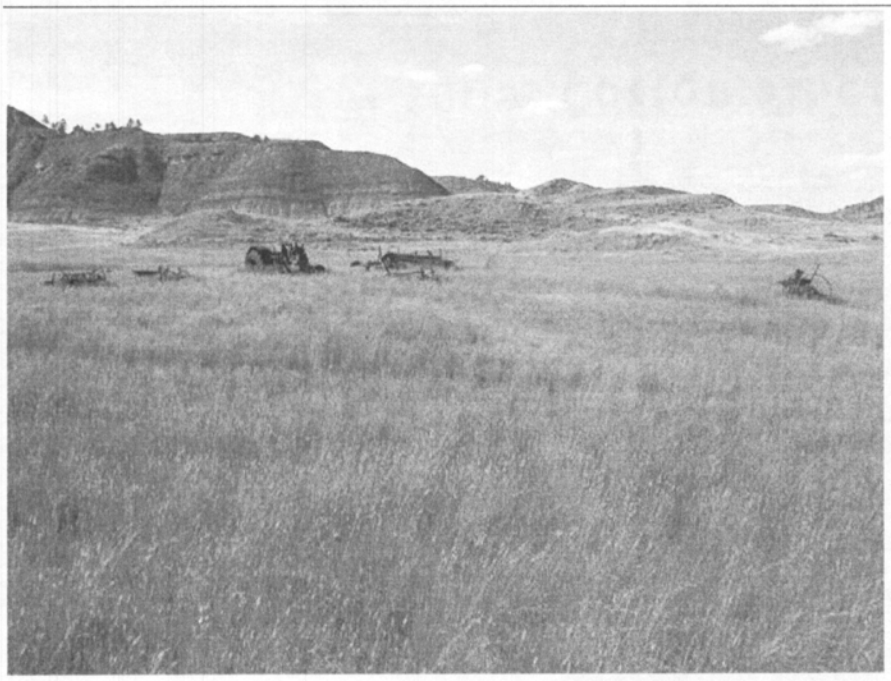
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 7

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0007
Site 1, view to the NE

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 8

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0008
Buildings 1 and 3, view to the SW

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 9

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0009
Site 3, Building 1 and 2, view to the E

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 10

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: V. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0010
Sites 3 and 4, view to the NE

United States Department of the Interior
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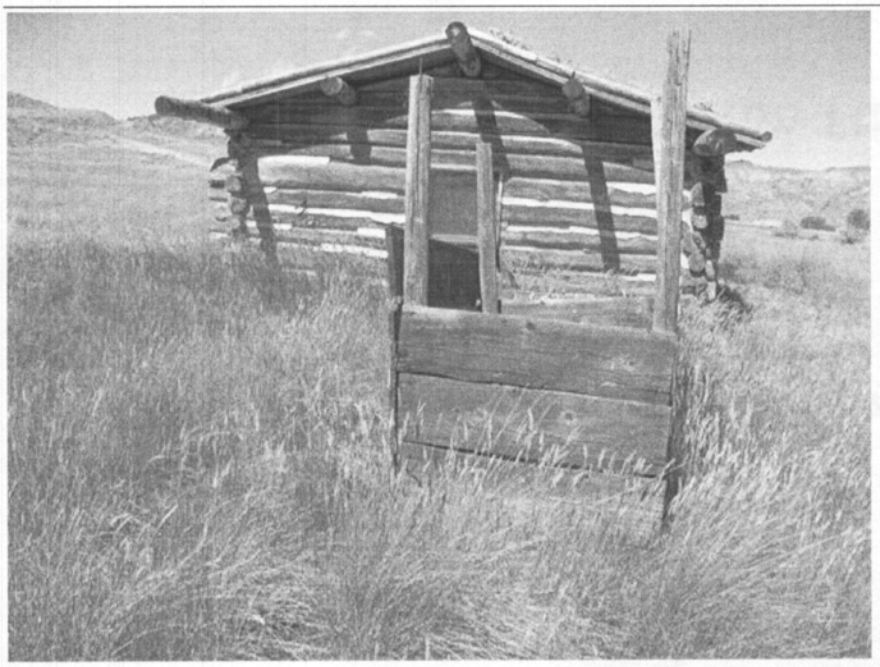
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 11

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0011
Building 4 and Building 1, view to the NE

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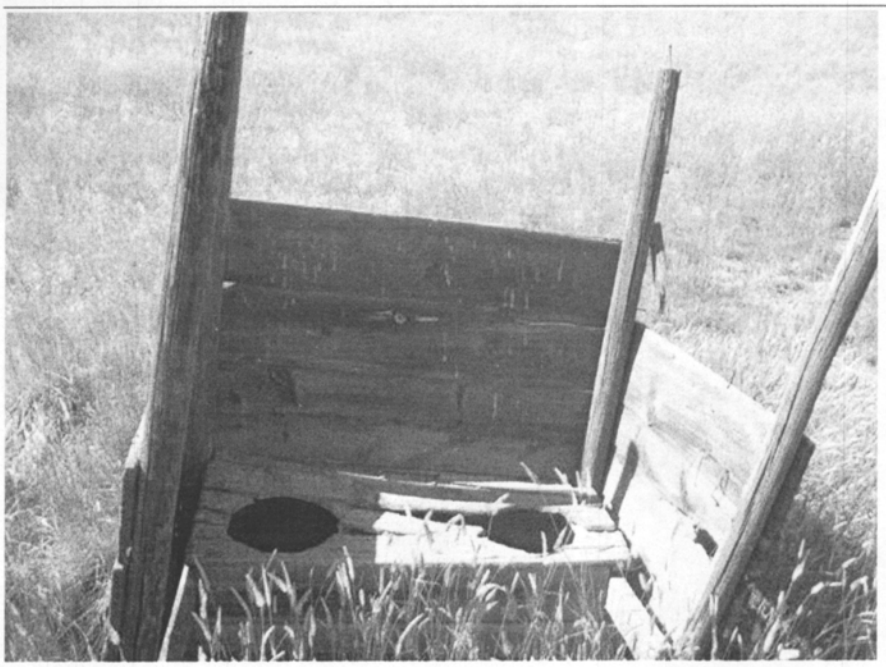
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 12

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



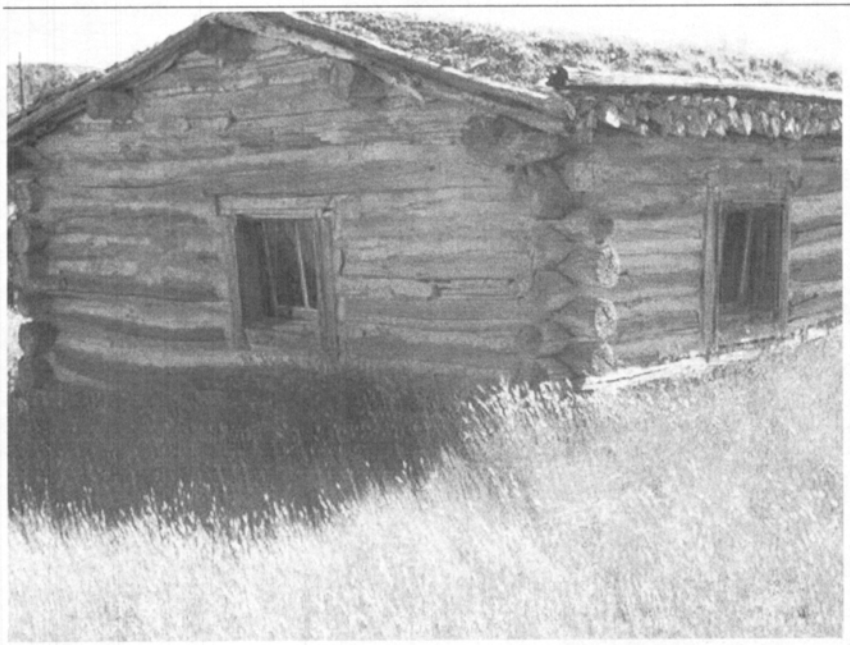
Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0012
Building 4, view to the NW

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

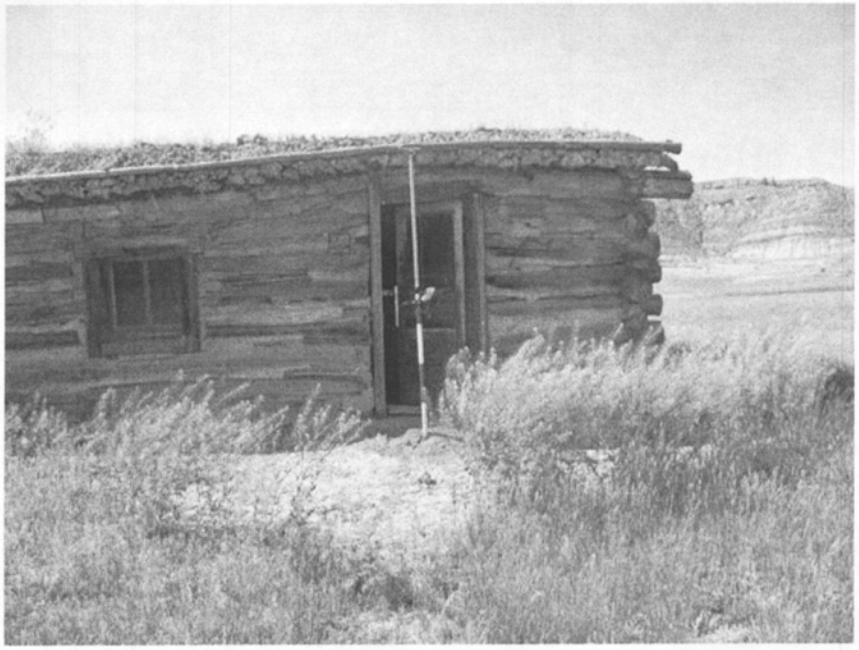
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 13

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0013
Building 1, view to the SW



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0014
Building 1, view to the NW

United States Department of the Interior
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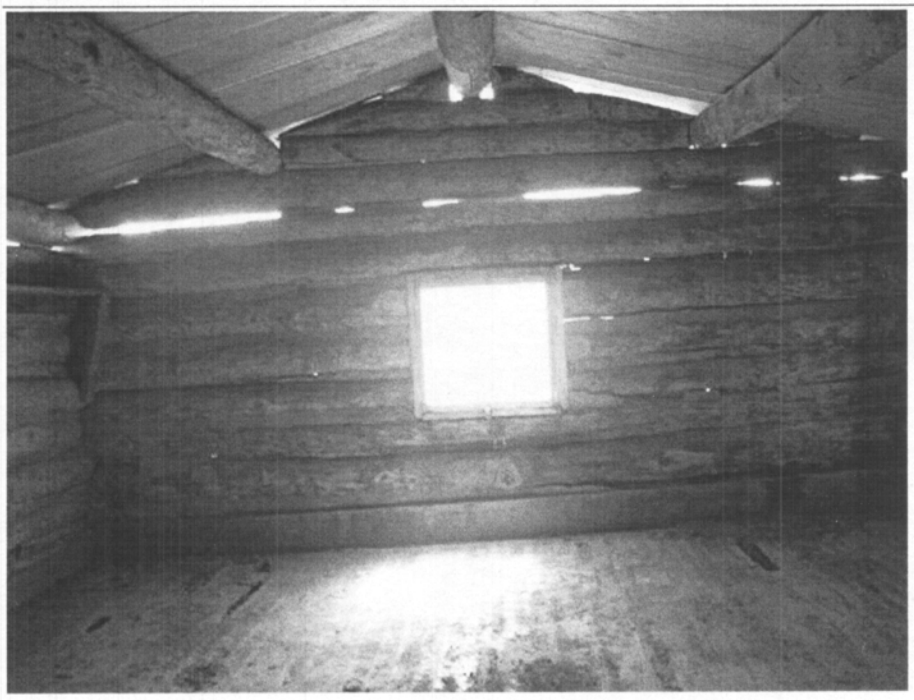
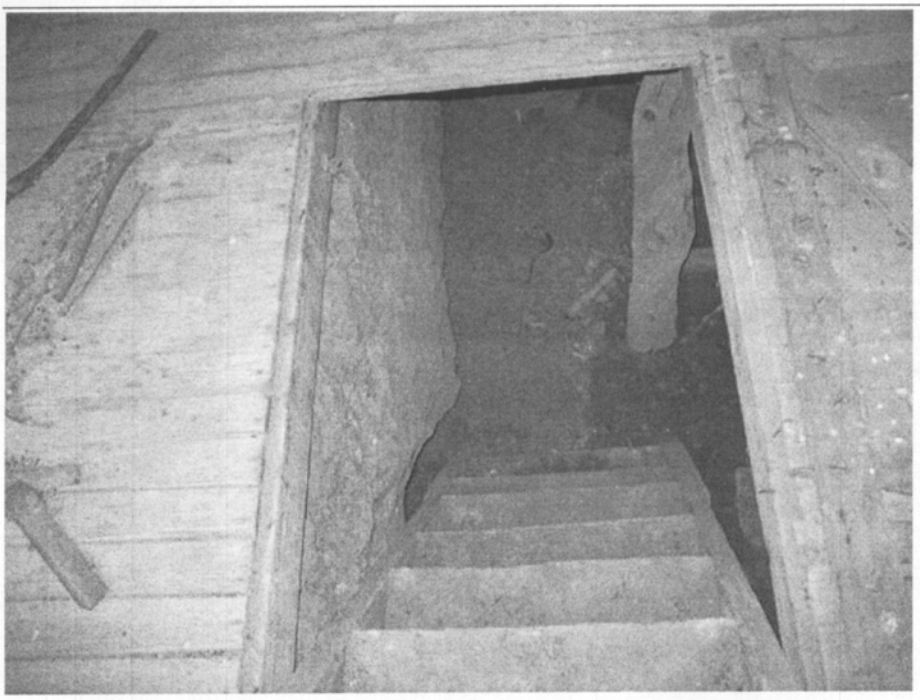
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 15

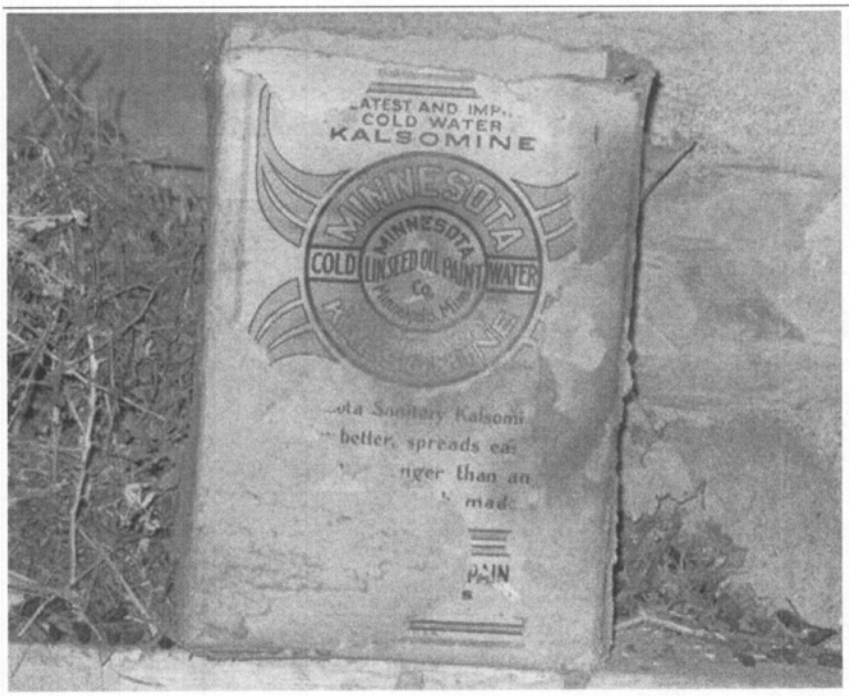
Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0015
Building 1 (interior), view to the SW



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0016
Building 1 looking downs staircase into cellar, view to the N/A



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0017
Paint Box inside of Building 1, view to the N/A

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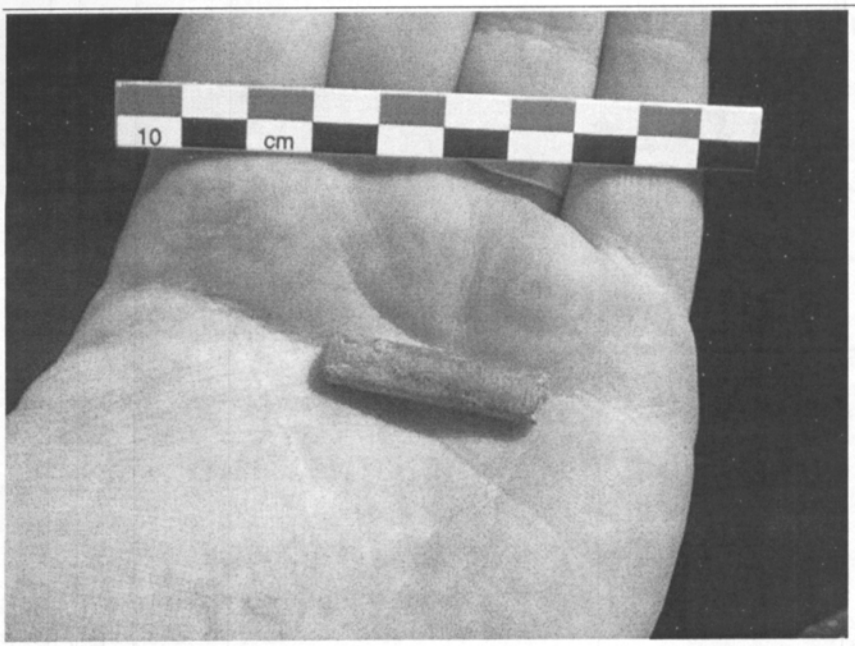
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 18

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0018
Battery Core, view to the N/A

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 19

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0019
Roof of Building 1, view to the NE

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 20

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0020
Foundation and Chinking of Building 1, view to the N

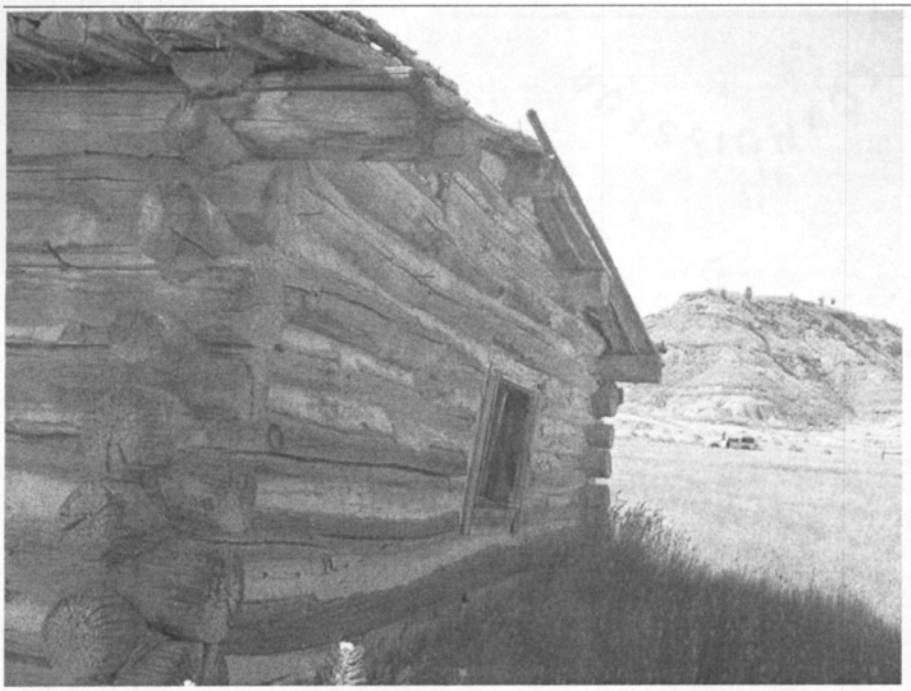
Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0021
Building 2, view to the NW

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 22

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



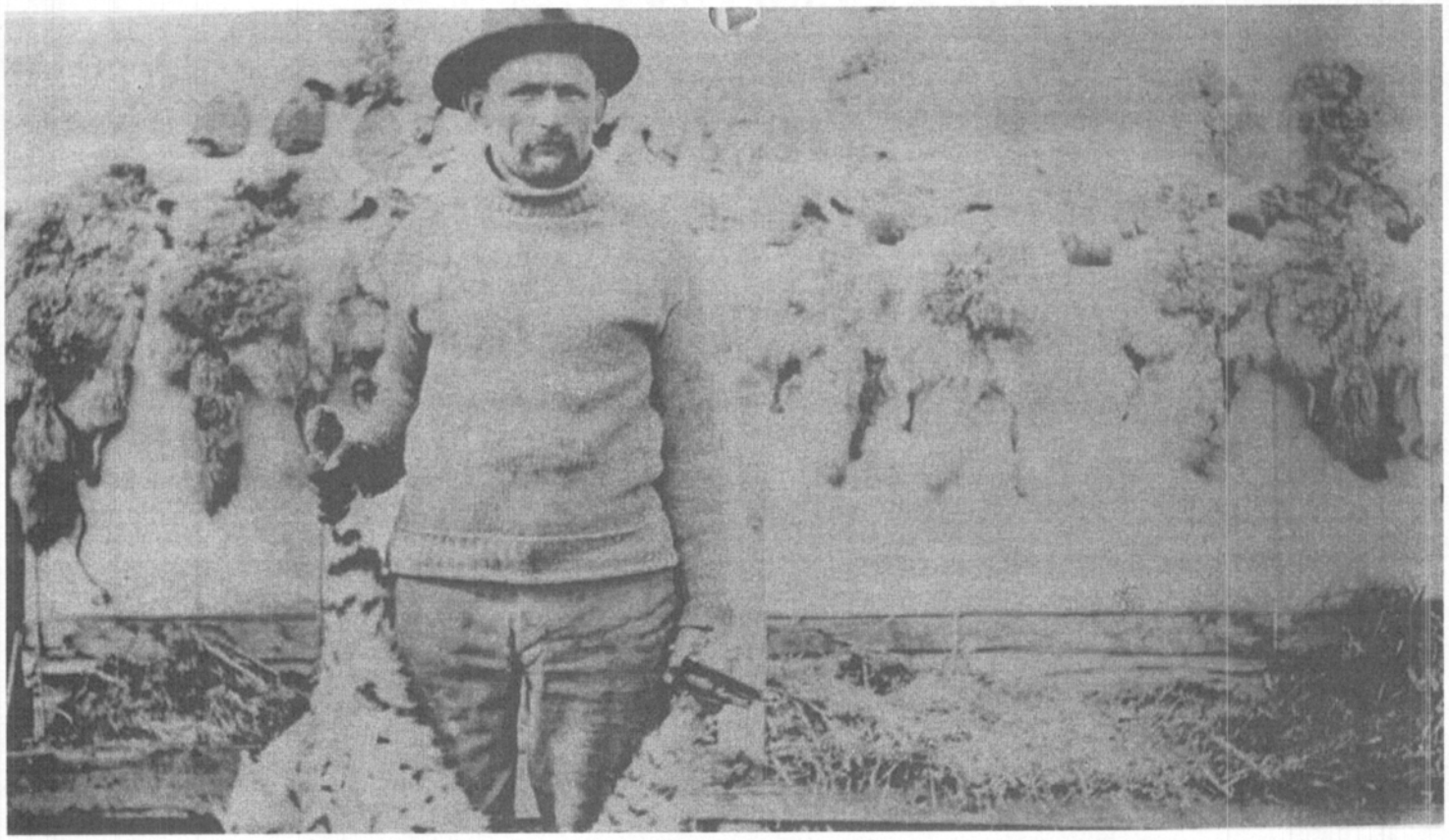
Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: R. O'Boyle
Date of Photograph: 2009
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0022
Building 1, view to the NW

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page 23

Gus Nelson Homestead
Name of Property
Fergus County, MT
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Name of Property: Gus Nelson Homestead
City or Vicinity: Missouri River, River Mile #129.4-131.1
County: Fergus
State: MT
Name of Photographer: Jack and Loraine Bergum
Date of Photograph: unknown
Location of Original Digital Files: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown Field Office
MT_FergusCounty_NelsonGusHomestead_0023
August "Gus" Nelson holding bobcat in front of wagon load of pelts, view to the N/A

ATEST AND IMPI
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MINNESOTA
MINNESOTA
COLD LINSEED OIL PAINT WATER
Co.
Minneapolis, Minn.
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Nels Nelson