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

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Bald Eagle Ranch House

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 511 Crawford Road | N/A | not for publication

city or town Modesto | X | vicinity

state California code CA county Stanislaus code 099 zip code 95356

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**

Jenan Saunders, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer — Date 11/25/13

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official — Date

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:)

for Edson W. Beall — 1-15-14

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
	1	objects
1	3	**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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN / QUEEN ANNE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK, CONCRETE
walls: WOOD: Weatherboard
WOOD: Shingle
roof: Was WOOD: Shingle
other: Roof now ASPHALT: Shingle
Chimneys BRICK

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.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bald Eagle Ranch House sits on a little over one acre and is located at 511 Crawford Road, right off McHenry Avenue, just north of Modesto, California. It faces south. The house was built according to George F. Barber catalogue mail order architectural plans and finished in 1893. The style is Late Victorian Queen Anne; the house has a steeply hipped roof with six lower cross gables. The house has two stories, and the square footage is 3,600, which includes a full basement and a full attic. A significant interior feature is a large keyhole-shaped stained glass window, and the front façade presents a wide and deep front porch. The house is painted sky blue, light yellow, and white. The landscape around the house is full and lush, with many mature trees, a sweeping front lawn, flower and vegetable gardens, and a wooden sided, grass bocce court. A half circle driveway and large circular pond with an old fountain statue face the house. Behind the house are a swimming pool, a garden shed, and a garage. Currently surrounded by orchards, fields, and residential neighborhoods, the house retains historic integrity, as it originally sat in the center of the Bald Eagle Ranch, a farming operation of over 4,000 acres, stretching to the Stanislaus River. The house has had very little structural change, retains most of its original elements, and is in very good condition, and it conveys its integrity in all seven aspects.

Narrative Description

The Bald Eagle Ranch House was built according to mail-order architectural plans supplied by George F. Barber, and the Late Victorian Queen Anne style house follows Design No. 36.[1] (See Figures 3 and 4 for drawings, complete description, and floor plans of Design No. 36 from this catalog.) Work began on the house in 1891, and construction finished in 1893.

The house has a balloon frame construction resting on a brick foundation with some cement. In 1973 for termite protection, a visible concrete sill was added all around the house to separate the wood from the earth.

The house has two stories, and the square footage is 3,600, which includes a full basement and a full attic. The basement has four separate rooms. One room has shelves on each wall and hooks on all the beams on the ceiling. This was obviously a food storage room with shelves for canned goods and hooks to hang hams and spices and vegetables that could be dried. Another is the furnace room, which now contains an oil burner for hot air supply to the basement and first floor. A third room has a bar and sink and holds a full size pool table. The fourth room, toward the back of the house, has shelves and access to the back yard through two slanting cellar doors. Accessed through a door and narrow stairway from the second floor, the finished attic has wide floor boards, a new electrical box, and an area with wallpaper that has been a separate room in the past but now is part of one large room. There are four windows that provide adequate light. There are two standing brick chimneys out of the four present originally on the house.

[1] Barber, George F. *The Cottage Souvenir No. 2: A Repository of Artistic Cottage Architecture and Miscellaneous Designs*, 1891. (New York: American Life, 1982), 78-79.

The house was most recently painted sky blue, light yellow, and white in a nine-year painting project (1992-2001), and its extensive gingerbread trim is highlighted by these contrasting colors. Originally, iron cresting and decorative wooden finials topped all the gables and roofs, and exterior wooden shutters were present.

Setting

Currently, the landscape surrounding the house is full and lush, with four very mature palm trees, two deodar cedars, orange, fig, and plum trees; a sweeping front lawn bisected by a cement path; long flower borders on either side of the property; a rose garden and a small herb garden on the west side; and a large vegetable garden in the back. The east, shady side features a wooden sided, grass bocce court. A half circle driveway and large circular pond with an old water fountain statue face the house. Behind the house are a large, old swimming pool and outbuildings including a garden shed and a garage. On all sides of the property are cherry and walnut orchards.

Exterior–South (Front) Façade

Vertical boards with a carved repeated flower and leaf pattern surround the bottom three to four feet of the house, fastening the porch to the ground. Much of the exterior surface is redwood horizontal simple drop boards with some tongue and groove joint vertical boards along the bottom. Cornices or flat horizontal boards divide levels. Spindlework ornamentation is used lavishly. The house features a wide and deep front porch covering the front entrance and all of the front façade. Stairs are wide, and there are seven steps. Turned balusters ornament the top and bottom porch railings, and this balustrade surrounds the veranda porch area. The two bottom newel posts are thick with an unusual "comma" shape at their top.

Delicate turned porch supports join the balustrade to the porch ceiling, and ornamentation includes sunburst design brackets, carved cornice boards, pendants, and a spindlework frieze. The semi-glazed front door has a simple surround. The door's top half has one large beveled window under two smaller beveled windows, and the bottom half has decorative wooden trim panels including a sunburst design.

The roofline of the house has three steep, ornamented, lower cross gables and one decorated dormer. There is an asymmetrical arrangement of these four. All four have decorated bargeboards with round relief bulls-eyes and deep horizontal carving. Directly over the porch stairs is a dominant, front facing gable, featuring a large triangular pediment with checkerboard relief. The second story balcony or recessed porch is supported by a checkerboard box, and originally was surrounded by a balustrade matching the one on the porch. Directly above the balcony and echoing the porch elements with its attached spandrel, cornice, sunburst, and pendants, is a medium sized gable, its pediment ornamented by a decoratively carved cornice, fishscale shingles, and a sunburst. To the left is another gable of the same size, its pediment decorated with two windows with lights and surrounded on the three sides with fishscale shingles; this gable is held up with seven brackets and bulls-eye ornaments. In the middle of the roof, there is a high attic dormer which has a window with colored lights and fishscale shingles.

A total of eleven double hung sash windows with simple surrounds are visible on the front of the house. The windows have colored glass lights around a clear pane on six of the first, second, and attic floor windows. A few of these colored glass pieces have been damaged and replaced, but almost all are original to the house. Originally the house had exterior wooden shutters on many windows, in which the top part opened up, and the bottom parts opened laterally. They were slatted wood in a wooden frame. The composition shingle roof

(originally wood shingle) is steep hipped with a ridge. Originally it was topped by cresting and decorative finials.

Exterior—East Elevation

Much of the exterior surface is redwood horizontal simple drop boards with some tongue and groove joint vertical boards along the bottom. Cornices or flat horizontal boards divide levels. Vertical tongue and groove redwood boards mark off the whole bottom three to four feet of the house, which is the upper part of the basement. Four basement windows are showing. There is a keyhole-shaped, mostly red stained glass window on the first floor; five other windows are visible on this floor, one with colored lights. There are three second floor windows, one with colored lights, and old photographs show that these windows used to be covered by shutters.

Two gables can be seen on the east side of the house, and they are decorated with fishscale shingles, bulls-eyes, carved bands, and hanging pendants. The smaller gable has the chimney coming from the top. The larger gable has a small attic window with colored lights and an ornament. Decorative brackets with bulls-eyes encircled by dots are also visible. A white painted brick chimney is visible rising from the ground floor and is red brick when it protrudes from the roof, ornamented with incised rectangular panels.

Exterior – North (Rear) Elevation

Much of the exterior surface is redwood horizontal simple drop boards with some tongue and groove joint vertical boards along the bottom. Cornices or flat horizontal boards divide levels. At ground level are double entry doors to the basement. Seven cement steps lead to a door, half glazed with one window, to the back porch. There is one other window on this level in addition to two cobalt windows on the back porch. The second floor has two windows. One gable is visible and has bargeboards decorated with bulls-eyes and deep horizontal carving.

Exterior – West Elevation

Much of the exterior surface is redwood horizontal simple drop boards with some tongue and groove joint vertical boards along the bottom. Cornices or flat horizontal boards divide levels. At ground level on the west elevation, one window to the basement can be seen. Protruding from the main house is a rectangular "sun porch," not in the original Barber plans, but an early addition to the house. We know that the sun porch was added by 1919 because it was remembered by Barbara Jean McHenry Pauley Pagen. She was born in 1914 and lived in the house until she was five years old. She told us in a 1995 visit that she remembers the sun porch being used as a sick room when she was ill as a child, perhaps in the 1918-1919 flu epidemic. Eight push-out windows face the west, and four are on either side of the sun porch. Further down the west side of the house is another projection, "a back porch" or "utility room," also an addition and not in the original plans. This back porch has five windows facing out and two on either side; all are cobalt blue glass. The roofs on both the sun porch and back porch are composition shingle shed roofs. The main part of the house has two windows on the first floor and three windows on the next, second floor. One dormer is visible and has bargeboards decorated with bulls-eyes and deep horizontal carving. The area under the bargeboards and directly under the peak of the dormer is decorated with carved boards, an ornament, and small pendants. The pediment under the bargeboards has a row of nine graduated bulls-eyes of five sizes, fishscale shingles, and in the center a small attic window with colored lights. A brick chimney decorated with incised panels protrudes from the roof just to the right of this dormer.

Interior—Floor Plan

The house follows the Barber First Floor and Second Floor plans for Design No. 36 with some changes. (See Figures 3 and 4 for the floor plans.) The main entry is through the porch (labeled piazza on the plan) on the south side of the house. According to the plan, the front entrance opened into a vestibule next to a nook which had seating on two sides and an arch entry, and both of these small rooms originally opened onto the sitting hall; however, it is not known if this was originally followed in the construction of this house. Currently the front door opens directly onto the sitting hall. As seen in the plan, the sitting hall opens west into the parlor, and north is a hallway with a north door to the bedroom. At the present time this hall is shorter and goes just to the base of the second floor stairs. The plan shows a west door to the dining room from this hallway, but this does not exist. From the parlor directly north is the dining room separated by pocket doors. West from the dining room is a sun porch, added onto the house early. According to the plan, a china closet was situated on the north wall of the dining room, but it exists on the west wall.

Leaving the dining room and going north, there is a swinging door that leads to a hall which to the east has a door to a bedroom. To the west, the hall first has a door to a narrow back stairway with fifteen steps leading to the second floor. Then there is a door to a large closet with an outside window. Originally the plan shows that this hall went right through to the outside window and turned right, north, and had a door that opened onto a back porch, which had a door to the back stairs. Back to the east from this hall coming from the dining room, is a bedroom on the east, the cellar door on the left, and across from it the door to the bathroom. Going north is the kitchen. The plan shows a door to a pantry, but the pantry does not have a door now. From the kitchen to the west is a door to the back porch. This back porch has been widened but still has a back door and steps leading to the ground as indicated in the plan.

From the sitting room on the first floor, six steps lead up to a small landing with a stained glass window and then turn left. Eleven steps lead to the second floor. The layout of the second floor closely follows the original plan with a few modifications. The top of the stairway opens onto a landing or hall with a door on the left which opens into a front bedroom with a fireplace and a door on the right which opens into another bedroom and a door in front of the hall which opens into yet another bedroom. At the south end of the hall is another bedroom, and at the north end of the hall is a door opening into a hall going east and west. That hall ends at the east in a second door that goes into the east bedroom, and to the north of the hall is the door to the back stairway leading down to the first floor. To the west end of the hall to the right is a door which is an up stairway to the attic. At the very west end is a door to a second floor bathroom. Going east into the large east bedroom, there are two doors to the left. One door opens to a closet. The other door goes into a bedroom not shown on the plan. This bedroom is directly above the downstairs kitchen, pantry, and bathroom and has two windows on the north and walls that are slanted inward at the top as they follow the roofline.

Interior—Details of First Floor

On the first floor, there is original oak flooring in the front sitting room, dining room, and parlor. Similar white oak flooring was installed in the kitchen a few years ago, replacing asphalt tile. The sun porch and downstairs bedroom have asphalt tile flooring. Tile recently was installed to replace asphalt tile in the downstairs bathroom.

One of the more decorative details of the house is the cherry wood fireplace in the parlor; all of its parts are original to the house and in excellent condition (See Photograph 0017). The fireplace itself is small and was built to burn coal. It has a decorative, carved metal frame and matching summer piece cover. The fireplace slip

features decorative tile in muted green and brown tones with matching tile on the hearth. The cherry wood frieze has a carved design, and the overmantel has spindle-decorated shelves and mirrors.

The front or entry door to the house has one large beveled window under two smaller beveled windows, and the bottom half has two carved rectangular panels. Most of the other main doors throughout the first floor feature a five-panel carved design; over all the doors are adjustable transom lights. There are two large pocket doors between the dining room and parlor; they are both decorated with seven rectangular panels on each side. These pocket doors have original hardware, are recently repaired, and are in good working order. Almost all door hardware throughout the house—including doorknobs, locks, escutcheons, finger plates, and hinges—is original. A pair of small glass French doors leads from the dining room to the sun porch. Throughout the house are double hung sash windows; all are in good working order. The three windows on the southwest side of the parlor form a bay as do the three windows in the east bedroom. The sitting room and parlor each feature a large window with colored glass lights (rose, orange, green, blue, violet, amber, and brown) around a clear pane. A few of these colored glass pieces have been damaged and replaced, but almost all are original to the house. Original decorative casing, with a pattern of lines and then bulls-eyes in the upper corners, surrounds all the windows and doors in the house.

There is one original closet in the downstairs bedroom. The dining room features an original built-in china cabinet that has four leaded glass doors over two cupboards and five drawers (See Photograph 0021). In the bathroom can be found a tiny cupboard which opens to a laundry chute leading to the basement.

The cherry wood finish staircase is an open-string type on one side and wall string on the other. At the bottom of the stairs is a turned newel post with an unusual and original electrified lighting fixture (See Photograph 0019). The fixture screws into the newel. Beneath the fixture, at the top of the newel post, is a small plaque naming the lamp: "L'Industrie." The lamp itself is a bronze statue of a bearded man wearing a blacksmith's apron, holding a sledgehammer, and getting ready to pound iron on the nearby anvil. Rising from the back of the man are three branches, each adorned with metal leaves. At the end of each branch is a tulip shaped bracket holding a teardrop light bulb. The lighting fixture measures 24" in height. The stairway features cherry wood finish turned newels and stair railings. The turned balusters are painted a cream color. There is one cherry wood finish hanging drop or pendant on the underside of the stairway.

Perhaps the most distinctive original interior detail of the house is an ornate, keyhole-shaped stained glass window over the landing before going left up the stairs (See Photograph 0020). The window is seven feet high and mostly red and rose colored glass with some blue, yellow, and cream. The window has some buckling and cracking and a few small chipped-out pieces of glass from pecking birds, but mostly it is in very good condition. This decorative window is immediately visible upon entry into the house and from the sitting hall and parlor, bathing the rooms in a soft glow. Next to the stained glass window is a small interior niche in the wall.

The walls in the sitting room and parlor have five electric wall bracket lights, probably dating from the 1920s. Each has a peach glass sconce against a metal backing. The sitting room and parlor also have matching hanging metal light chandeliers with five glass shades each (See Photograph 0018). The dining room has a small wall bracket light using two teardrop bulbs in a candlestick style. All lights are in good working order.

The ceilings in the sitting room, parlor, dining room, and downstairs bedroom have large ceiling medallions.

Interior—Details of the Second Floor

The second floor features softwood flooring throughout. There is a small fireplace in the northeast bedroom; the fireplace slip has decorative green and brown tile with matching tile on the hearth. The wooden chimneypiece has a carved frieze, a simple mantel shelf, and small side shelves. There are original closets in three of the upstairs bedrooms. Three of the windows in the southwest bedroom form a bay as do three windows in the east bedroom; these two bedrooms feature large windows with colored glass lights. Also, there are large ceiling medallions in three of the bedrooms.

Integrity

The Bald Eagle Ranch House, inside and out, is in very good condition, having been owned by only five different families over the last 120 years, and it retains historic integrity in all seven aspects of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The house originally sat in the center of the Bald Eagle Ranch, and as can be seen in Figure 2, the house was surrounded by housing for workers, agricultural buildings, and other markers of the thriving ranch operation during a period of important agricultural expansion and innovation from irrigation. The house is still located on its original site, but the ranch property was subdivided in 1921. Now surrounded by orchards, fields, and residential neighborhoods, the house is all that is left of the ranch, once called the "the best managed and most thoroughly modern farm in the State."[2]

In its central setting on the Bald Eagle Ranch, the house was lived in and enjoyed by the McHenry family for many years. Built in 1893, the house became the residence for Oramil, his wife Louise, and eventually their four children. Local newspaper articles describe festive parties and gatherings that were held at the house and other buildings on the ranch, such as the drying shed. In 1886, after his parents had died, Oramil inherited and moved into the McHenry Mansion in downtown Modesto. But Oramil was very much in charge of the ranch during this time of agricultural expansion, and the well-maintained house might have been used as office space for Oramil and his managers or the venue for family visits to the ranch. Upon Oramil's death in 1906, his sons Bob and Albert inherited the ranch, eventually moved in, and lived in the house until it was sold in 1932.[3]

The Bald Eagle Ranch House is an excellent example of the Late Victorian Queen Anne style. The house closely followed Barber Design No. 36 in its construction. The sun porch (added by 1918) and back porch are the only additions. Most of the exterior trim elements and gingerbread details are original and match what can be seen in Barber's line drawing for Design No. 36 (Figure 3); however, the roof cresting and shutters seen in Figures 1 and 3 no longer exist. Significant interior features such as the fireplace, pocket doors, built-in china cabinet with original leaded glass windows, and large keyhole shaped stained glass window are original to 1893 and convey the Late Victorian Queen Anne style. With the exception of needed repairs, paint, and some changes in flooring and lighting as were previously described, there has been very little alteration to the house since its construction.

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[2] "Model Farm of California." *Modesto Evening News*, June 30, 1902.

[3] Bare, Colleen. *Early Modesto and Nearby Towns: Stories Published in the Modesto Bee*. (Modesto: The Press and Publications Board of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society, 2010), 152.

Not only the design and plans, but also the materials and workmanship were products and skills typical of 1890s California, when redwood was an inexpensive building material. All of the Bald Eagle Ranch house is made of redwood, including walls, trim, and rafters. The house features lavish trim pieces and ornamentation, mostly original to 1893, and thus the house retains integrity of materials and workmanship. All repairs have been made with great care and attention to preserving the integrity of the house. During the painting and repair project that took place from 1992-2001, much care was taken to replace anything damaged with carefully made, handmade new materials. For example, when it was discovered that a few of the bulls-eye trim pieces were missing or damaged, a local carpenter made new pieces. Looking at Photographs 0004 or 0014 and comparing them to the original house photo (Figure 1) shows how the integrity of materials, design, and workmanship were maintained in those bulls-eye trim pieces. Another similar example of how integrity has been maintained concerns the restoration of the decaying redwood gutter system during the same painting project. Heavy timbers of redwood were hollowed on top to create the gutter channels and placed around much of the house and porch. The channels on the gutters were lined with sheet lead to preserve the wood. Then the water could be released to the ground through original vertical tin pipes.

A feeling of age is expressed in the landscape and setting of the Bald Eagle Ranch House. This can be seen by again comparing Figure 1 and Photograph 001. In its original setting, photographs show that the house sits in a tree-less, flat area of the ranch; vegetation is sparse. But current photographs show tall, old trees and mature shrubbery, expressing an atmosphere of age and solidity. Together with its current large front lawn, curved driveway, and front water fountain statue, the setting of the Bald Eagle Ranch House expresses its historic character through both nature and architecture. Although the historic Bald Eagle Ranch operation is gone, the house still stands, a Victorian Queen Anne farmhouse that has been surrounded by fields and orchards for the last 120 years. The Bald Eagle Ranch House has retained its integrity in feeling and association, and as can be seen by comparing Figure 1 and Photograph 001, it looks very much the way it did in the 1890s. In its exterior and interior details, in both design and materials and workmanship, the Bald Eagle Ranch House is very much a product of its time and place. It is and has always been a gracious, grand place to live.

Non-Contributing Resources

Facing the house is a large, old circular pond made of brick with a cement overlay. It is topped with a cement statue depicting a child. The statue functions as a fountain, and water comes from the child's head and arcs down to the pond below. The pond does not appear in the earliest photographs of the Bald Eagle Ranch House, and the fountain does not appear in any of the photographs during the McHenry time and was thus constructed after the period of significance.

Behind the house are two outbuildings. One is a two-room wooden shed, formerly a living structure with plumbing; now one room is used as a shop and the other as a garden shed. The other outbuilding is a brick garage with a concrete floor and asphalt shingle roof. These buildings do not appear in early photographs and were constructed after the period of significance.

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture
Architecture

Period of Significance
1893-1921

Significant Dates
1893 date of house construction
1921 date of Bald Eagle Ranch subdivision

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned 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.

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Barber, George F.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from 1893, the year the property was constructed, to 1921, when the ranch began to be subdivided.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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

The Bald Eagle Ranch House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with one of the largest and most successful farming operations in California, and it is eligible under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it is an example of late Victorian architecture built from catalog mail order plans. The Bald Eagle Ranch, once over 4,000 acres, illustrates the importance of irrigation in the Central Valley, and how it led to late 19th century agricultural improvements and productivity, moving from growing wheat to growing a great variety of crops. The ranch was much like a small town, with agricultural outbuildings, workers' quarters, and such amenities as a post office and extensive telephone service. The house, once the center of the thriving ranch operation, and still on its original site, is all that survives of the Bald Eagle Ranch. Additionally, the house is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style of architecture built according to catalogue plans designed by architect George F. Barber.

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

History of Ownership

1891-1893	House was built by Oramil McHenry.
1893-1896	House was lived in by Oramil and his family. Oramil's mother Matilda died in 1896. Oramil moved to McHenry Mansion.
1906-1932	Oramil died in 1906. Sons Bob and Albert inherited the house, lived in it with family members, and sold it in 1932.
1932-1954	John Skittone and Family owned and lived in house.
1954-1956	Robert Longstreth and Family owned house.
1956-1973	Ernest B. Nelson and Family owned and lived in house.
1973-present	Eric Christopherson and Family own and live in house.

As the history of ownership shows, the Bald Eagle Ranch House has been owned and/or lived in by five different families.

Criterion A: The Bald Eagle Ranch, a Model of Agriculture in the Central Valley

The Bald Eagle Ranch House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the agricultural development of the Modesto area. The house, located on its original site and now surrounded by a few orchards, is the surviving building and what is left of the Bald Eagle Ranch, at one time an operation of over 4,000 acres that was important in the history of the city of Modesto, the county of Stanislaus, and the Central Valley of California. In a panoramic photo of the Bald Eagle Ranch taken about 1900 from the top of the huge, nearby drying shed (see Figure 2), it can be seen that the house sat in the middle of an extensive, advanced ranch operation, which included many agricultural buildings and housing quarters for workers. The story of the Bald Eagle Ranch, from its beginning by Robert

McHenry to its improvements from son Oramil McHenry and ultimately through grandsons Robert and Albert McHenry, illustrates how many California ranchers started as wheat farmers, fought for and benefited from irrigation, expanded into mighty agriculture operations, and finally subdivided their property.

Robert McHenry, "came to Stanislaus County and acquired 2,640 acres of land along the Stanislaus River that later came to be known as the Bald Eagle Ranch."[4] Robert McHenry married Matilda M. Hewitt in 1859, and they settled somewhere on the ranch near the river where he began growing wheat.

The McHenry land at that time would have resembled what can now be seen in the foothills of the Coast Range to the west and the Sierra Nevada to the east: in the spring, the rains come, and the slopes and hills are lush and green, which facilitates grazing and the cultivation of wheat. But in late spring, the green turns to yellow, and plants that need rain die. What Robert needed on the Bald Eagle Ranch was a yearlong supply of water that would make the rich valley soil as productive as it could be. The soil was fertile and flat and had no rocks to make plowing difficult. Growing wheat on the ranch was good and profitable for many years. There was a great need for wheat starting in the mid-1860s, and "For several years, California was the largest wheat producing state in the nation, with Stanislaus County contributing a significant share," but by the mid-1880s, wheat had become less profitable.[5] Robert saw that growing wheat in the Central Valley was not the best use of this flat alluvial soil. He was an important figure in Modesto history; in addition to running his ranch, Robert was a prominent banker in Stanislaus County. He also turned his attention to the need for irrigation.

Houses for the McHenrys

The exact location of Robert and Matilda's home on the Bald Eagle Ranch is unknown although it is thought to have been near the Stanislaus River.[6] In 1861, son Oramil was born, and he lived on the property until he was eighteen, when Robert moved his family moved off the ranch and into town, probably in 1879; the McHenrys built a new house downtown in 1883, and this came to be known as the McHenry Mansion.[7]

Oramil married Louise Bilicke on March 3, 1886 and, like Oramil's parents had, the couple settled at the Bald Eagle Ranch property. But an August 7, 1891 newspaper, reports that a "handsome two story residence on the Bald Eagle Ranch" was to be built, and the couple were entertaining in their new home in 1893.[8] Thus the newly built Bald Eagle Ranch House became the residence for Oramil, his wife Louise, and eventually their four children. Local newspaper articles describe the festive parties and gatherings held at the house and other buildings on the ranch. Oramil's father Robert died in 1890, and his mother Matilda died in 1896. Oramil inherited the McHenry Mansion as part of his mother's estate, and at some point, he moved into the Mansion in downtown Modesto. Like his father, Oramil was a banker, but he also continued to actively expand, improve, and entertain on the Bald Eagle Ranch even after moving.

Oramil had the Bald Eagle Ranch House built in the middle of the large farming operation, lived in the house with his family, and entertained there. As Modesto historian Carl P. Baggese says in his book *Images of*

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[4] Bare, Colleen Stanley. *The McHenry Mansion, Modesto's Heritage*. (Modesto: McHenry Mansion Foundation Press, 1985), 13-14.
[5] Bare, Colleen Stanley. *Modesto Then and Now*. (Modesto: McHenry Museum Press, 1999), 13-14.
[6] Bare, *Early Modesto,* 19.
[7] Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 39.
[8] Quoted in Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 41.

America: Modesto, "Ora's house was the beginning of an expansion at the ranch."[9] In many ways the Bald Eagle Ranch house is a lasting emblem of the many achievements of Robert and Oramil as well as indicative of the agricultural expansion throughout the Central Valley that was enabled by irrigation.

Irrigation

For agriculture and population to grow, bringing water to the parched California Central Valley by the late 1880s was imperative. As former Modesto mayor and historian Sol Elias reports, "More romantic than imaginative fiction and fully as interesting as any of the other achievements of Stanislaus in the realm of civic or agricultural progress is the story of the development of the irrigation movement in this county."[10] The Wright Irrigation Act was passed in 1887, and "It allowed for the creation of local irrigation districts that would be owned, financed, and managed by the people."[11] Both Robert and his son Oramil were active in the drive to bring irrigation. Robert was elected as first president of the Board of Directors of the Modesto Irrigation District in 1887 and held this position almost until his death.[12] Oramil provided financial support, both in his role as local banker and with personal action. Elias comments on this in the two passages below:

> The employment of an engineer to make surveys for the canals to be built under the terms of the compromise agreement was necessary. It was important that these surveys be made in order to estimate the costs involved. Realizing the poverty of the district, the people petitioned the board offering to raise by popular subscription the funds necessary to employ the engineer and pay the cost of the surveys. This proffered assistance was accepted. Ora McHenry, popular rancher, president of the First National Bank, son of Robert McHenry, first president of the board of directors of the Modesto Irrigation District, and an ardent irrigationist, led the subscription list with a donation of $500.[13]

> A large number of individuals and firms undertook the construction of the canals, many farmers receiving contracts for various units of the work. Among these were . . . Ora McHenry. In many instances the farmers arranged to construct the canals through their own property. To all of these local contractors Ora McHenry rendered valuable financial aid and assistance.[14]

Oramil understood the ultimate importance of irrigation; discussing his ranch, he said in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1896, "This is one of the greatest apricot soils in the world, and when we get water all over the county new blood will come here—men with money, industry, and ideas."[15] Oramil knew that irrigation would allow farming operations—like the Bald Eagle Ranch—throughout the Central Valley to provide food for the world and expand California's importance and wealth.

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[9] Baggese, Carl P. *Images of America: Modesto*. (California: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 22.
[10] Elias, Sol. *Stories of Stanislaus*. 1924. (Evansville: Unigraphic, 1979), 11.
[11] Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 31.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Elias, 107.
[14] Ibid., 108.
[15] "Modesto's Outlook is a Cheerful One." *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 25, 1896, 11, Newspapers.com (#27509146)

Finally, as Modesto historian Colleen Bare so aptly describes it, "in late 1903, the first water trickled onto the land of three farmers, one of whom was Ora McHenry. By the 1904 growing season, the irrigation system was ready to go."[16] With year round water available, the stage was set for agricultural growth—and Oramil was ready.

The Mighty Bald Eagle Ranch

From Robert to Oramil, the Bald Eagle Ranch had developed into a mighty agricultural operation. (See Figures 1 through 12 for original Bald Eagle Ranch photographs.) Various newspaper articles of the time describe the Bald Eagle Ranch as a model operation of what could be achieved throughout the Central Valley. For example, the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1896 described "Ora McHenry, whose Bald Eagle ranch is an object lesson of what may yet be done all over this wonderful valley. He had sense enough to try diversified farming on a wide scale and his ranch is today a marvelous example of what may be done when farmers learn that the era of great fortunes in wheat is over."[17] Similarly, the *Modesto Evening News* reported the following in 1902: "the Bald Eagle ranch . . . is the best managed and most thoroughly modern farm in the State. The Bald Eagle ranch comprises 4,360 acres of very fertile soil and is the property of Ora McHenry, the millionaire president of the First National bank of Modesto."[18]

Some of the following were grown on the ranch: French prune trees; white Adriatic fig trees; apricots; muscatel raisin grapes; pear, apple, olive, peach, olive, almond, and walnut trees; wheat, barley, and alfalfa. The 1902 *Modesto Evening News* article explained, "No green fruit is marketed from the ranch but the whole product of the orchard and vineyard is dried in the $30,000 drying and packing houses near the center of the ranch."[19]

The extensive Bald Eagle Ranch and its remarkable features are best described in this important passage:

> The ranch buildings located near the ranch's center compose a whole that has all the appearance of a small country town. A few of the many up-to-date appointments of the barns, warehouses, drying houses and surrounding properties, are: a complete telephone system connected with every building and with the office in this city; every building is lighted with the gas manufactured at the ranch; oiled barnyards with hard and dustless roadways; a complete slaughter house and cold storage annex with electric cranes for handling beeves; a large new automobile for rapid transit to and from the ranch; thirty vehicles; incubating and brooding buildings with 2,500 chickens; a combined harvester that is run steadily for two months every year to harvest the grain on the three ranches; an artificial lake for cattle to cool themselves in during the warm season; water pipes running to all parts of the ranch; pipes running along the eaves of the slaughter house for the purpose of cooling the atmosphere inside the building by simply turning on a water spray; a sub-station post office with a daily service; a large bell tower to mark the meal hours of the 150 employees on the ranch; a sewer system to drain the slaughter house and cattle pens which are floored several

[16] Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 50.
[17] "Modesto's Outlook is a Cheerful One." *San Francisco Chronicle, February 25, 1896,* 11, Newspapers.com (#27509146)
[18] "Model Farm of California," *Modesto Evening News*. June 30, 1902.
[19] Ibid.

> feet above ground with continual currents of air underneath; an oil house to store the two carloads of oil that are used every week at the pumping plants; 10,000 fruit trays for use in the drying vaults of 75 tons capacity and a dairy building with skimming and separating machinery to handle the product of the 150 cows on the ranch.[20]

As stated in the previous passage, employees on the ranch numbered up to 150 during busy times, and impressive housing on the site of the Bald Eagle Ranch was provided for many of the workers. The largest building for workers was described this way:

> Ora Louse McHenry Condrey, Ora's granddaughter who was born at the ranch and spent her early childhood there, described this building during an interview. It was like a hotel, with about 100 rooms upstairs and a large deck surrounding the building. Parties and dances were sometimes held downstairs, which had hardwood floors and was completely open. The building housed employees from other ranches, as well as those from the Bald Eagle, who came during the harvest.[21]

Even before the irrigation battle was won, the ranch was utilizing powerful pumps to procure and disperse well water to thirsty new plantings, and as was stated, two carloads of oil per week were needed. But irrigation made the watering process much less expensive, and together with a long growing season and mild winters, allowed the Bald Eagle Ranch to plant even more peaches, apricots, grapes, and plums that were dried in the sun. Walnuts and almonds were also planted instead of wheat which had suffered in dry seasons. The nuts and dried fruit were high profit crops which were loaded onto railroad cars that arrived in the packing shed on a spur track from the main railroad line. The following passage illustrated the drying operation in 1899:

> As the years have come and gone, the establishment at Bald Eagle has grown and expanded. Mr. McHenry has here at present one of the largest fruitdrying plants in the State. He dries not only the product of this ranch, but the product which he buys from other places. Fully 500 acres are now gleaned of their fruit for the annual pack at Bald Eagle, which amounts to forty carloads per year. The packing house is a structure 400 feet long, two stories high, filled with the most approved appliances for caring for the fruit.[22]

The packing house can be seen right next to the house in Figure 9.

Oramil was actively running and expanding the ranch during and after the time that he was actually residing in the house. However, the operation was large and took a superintendent and three foremen.[23] It is not known who lived in the house during the interim years of 1896 to 1908. It might be conjectured that his managers and perhaps Oramil himself used the house for office and/or living space, and the McHenry family might have used it for country outings. But we do know that the house remained intact and maintained in the middle of the busy,

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Bare, The *McHenry Mansion*, 55.
[22] "Bald Eagle Ranch, Modesto, Cal." *Pacific Rural Press*, October 21, 1899, California Digital Newspaper Collection (PRP18991021.2.13.1)
[23] Ibid.

productive ranch, and McHenrys were living in it again probably by 1908, when Robert began running the ranch.[24] In 1910 Robert married Marie Rodgers, and they took up married life in the Bald Eagle Ranch house.[25]

In 1904, Oramil began expanding his operation in new directions, forming the O. McHenry Packing Company and "building a $500,000 packing and slaughtering plant at the Bald Eagle Ranch."[26] *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported on this in October, 1904, saying the operation "will be the largest concern of the kind in the West."[27] The article goes on to say the following:

> This ranch is, perhaps, the best equipped in the State. It embraces some 1,500 acres of alfalfa and 350 acres in vineyard and orchard, the whole under irrigation. . . . On this ranch will be constructed, in addition to the present packing plant, a $500,000 abattoir. Work will begin at once. When completed there will be work on the ranch for from 250 to 350 men all the year round.[28]

Oramil's expansion of the agricultural operations from wheat to diversified crops and the raising of livestock and modernization were remarkable. But his success was echoed by other farmers throughout the Central Valley because water had become available year round. Together with his father Robert, Oramil's greatest contribution might have been his efforts as an irrigationist. An article in the *Modesto Morning Herald* on November 9, 1911 said that very thing:

> By his superior business tact and universal popularity as a business man, he was instrumental in bringing prosperity and contentment to hundreds of homes by distributing water on nearly 100,000 acres of fertile land, a large portion of which now blooms like a rose. To accomplish this great project, aided by a few heroic business men of the Modesto irrigation district who could see the incalculable benefits to be derived from irrigation, Mr. McHenry spent money with a lavish hand and talked irrigation to men of influence. The great work was finally put through and he proved himself a masterful leader in a great enterprise.[29]

Oramil died in 1906 at the young age of 44, and most likely he had agricultural ideas and projects that he was not able to fulfill. After Oramil's parents had died, the *Modesto News Herald* observed, "Of the men who made their influence in the development and upbuilding of Stanislaus County, none accomplished more than did the late Robert McHenry and his son, Oramil."[30] There is no doubt that both Robert and Oramil McHenry made important contributions to Stanislaus County and the Central Valley through their model ranching operation and their efforts for irrigation.

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24 Tinkham, George H. *History of Stanislaus County with Biographical Sketches*. (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1921), 448.

25 *Stanislaus Stepping Stones: Quarterly Bulletin of the Stanislaus County Historical Society* 8, no 2 (Summer 1984): 421.

26 Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 59.

27 "Local Packers to Have Rival," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 6, 1904, Newspapers.com (#27331814)

28 Ibid.

29 "M'Henrys Accomplished Much for Stanislaus," *Modesto Morning Herald*, November 9, 1911.

30 Qtd in Bare, *Early Modesto,* 140.

From Robert and Oramil to the McHenry Brothers

Oramil's sons Robert and Albert inherited the Bald Eagle Ranch, and Robert began running it in 1908. In 1910, Oramil's estate was officially settled, and his sons Bob and Albert took full ownership of the Bald Eagle Ranch, forming the "McHenry Brothers Company."[31] Parts of the property began to be sold after Oramil's death, and in 1911, it was reported that "the McHenry Brothers were closing out their stock-breeding interests and would be raising chickens on an extensive scale at the Bald Eagle Ranch."[32] The McHenry Brothers won prizes for their poultry operation and also had "the largest single fig orchard in the state."[33] But subdivisions of large properties had become lucrative, and with the headline "Great Bald Eagle Ranch Will Be Subdivided," it was announced in the March 1921 *Modesto Morning Herald* that the property was "to be sold in tracts of 20, 40, and 60 acres and upward at the rate of $400 per acre and upward."[34] According to the article, the ranch had "dwindled down to 620 acres," and of this the McHenry brothers would "retain 220 acres of fig orchard and the family residence as well as all the buildings" and a recently installed pumping plant.[35] According to Bare, sons Bob and Albert "lived in the Crawford Road home until its sale in 1932," but the years of the mighty Bald Eagle Ranch ended in 1921.[36] In its subdivision, the Bald Eagle Ranch is yet another example of what was happening across the Central Valley of California. As both the value of the land and population increased, ranchers began to sell off their large properties.

The Bald Eagle Ranch illustrates the agricultural advances and achievements of the 19th century that led to the California Central Valley becoming so important in food production. Neither the original ranch home built near the Stanislaus River, nor any of the other farming structures of the Bald Eagle Ranch has survived. However, the house, once at the center of the Bald Eagle Ranch, lives on, still surrounded by irrigated cherry and walnut orchards, a lasting tribute to what was once a 4,000 acre farming operation stretching to the Stanislaus River and people who fought for irrigation.

From McHenry Road Then to McHenry Avenue Now

The main entrance to the Bald Eagle Ranch originally was marked by two large concrete structures holding a sign proclaiming "Bald Eagle Ranch" with a large eagle at the top (See Figure 5.) One of these concrete supports still stands on one corner of Crawford Road and McHenry Avenue. The road that led from the Bald Eagle Ranch into town was originally called "McHenry Road" and "has probably been in use since the beginning of Modesto in 1870."[37] This roadway became central to the development of Modesto, eventually becoming its main commercial street. According to Bare, "A narrow rutted road soon evolved from the ranch into town, so that farm supplies purchased in the new village could be transported by wagon back to the ranch. It also afforded the farmhands a way to get to the town's many saloons and dance halls on Saturday nights. That trail to town became McHenry Road and eventually McHenry Avenue."[38] The name was changed to

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31 Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 72
32 Ibid., 74.
33 "Great Bald Eagle Ranch Will Be Subdivided." *Modesto Morning Herald.* March 22, 1921.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Bare. *Early Modesto*. 152.
37 Ibid., 155.
38 Ibid., 151.

McHenry Avenue in 1907.[39] The distance between the Bald Eagle Ranch House and the downtown McHenry house is now 5.6 miles and takes about twelve minutes, depending on traffic. In describing an 1894 party, Bare describes how "a merry group made the trip from town to the Bald Eagle Ranch, which reportedly took up to an hour by carriage, to surprise Mr. and Mrs. Ora McHenry."[40] McHenry Avenue is a busy, main road in Modesto, also called CA Hwy 108, and the many businesses located on the street and using the "McHenry" name are yet another sign of the lasting importance of the McHenry family to Modesto.

Criterion C: The Victorian Queen Anne of George F. Barber and Oramil McHenry

The Bald Eagle Ranch House meets Criterion C as an example not only of the Victorian Queen Anne architectural style with all of its appealing details, but also as a surviving example of such a house being built on a ranch in a rural, developing area of California through designs from a mail order catalog and the readily available materials of the day.

According to *A Field Guide to American Houses*, the identifying features of a Queen Anne style house are "Steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, usually with a dominant front-facing gable; patterned shingles, cutaway bay windows, and other devices used to avoid a smooth-walled appearance; asymmetrical façade with partial or full-width porch which is usually one story high and extended along one or both side walls."[41] By the 19th century, national catalogs were making it easy and appealing for owners and builders to order plans for such elaborate houses.

One of the most successful architects and designers that offered mail order house plans at this time was George Franklin Barber. His business, set up in Knoxville, Tennessee, offered architecture plans through a catalog where customers all over the United States could choose the houses they wanted. In selling the house plans, Barber stressed that alterations to specific house plans were possible, and he seemed keen to insure that his clients were satisfied.[42]

Oramil chose to have the Bald Eagle Ranch House built according to mail-order architectural plans supplied by Barber. According to Barber's *The Cottage Souvenir No. 2: A Repository of Artistic Cottage Architecture and Miscellaneous Designs*, the Late Victorian Queen Anne style house follows Design No. 36. (See Figures 3 and 4 for drawings, complete description, and floor plans of Design No. 36 from this catalog.) The Barber description specifies "Cost to build, as per description, $3,180."[43] The catalog Notes for Design No. 36 say, "This design has been arranged with a view of filling a universal demand for a house of this character. The exterior is all that any one could desire, the veranda especially forming a very important part in bringing out the true proportions of the structure."[44] The plans were sold for $40.00.[45] Work began on the house in 1891, and construction finished in 1893.

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39 Ibid., 156.
40 Bare. *McHenry*. 44.
41 McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 263.
42 Barber, *The Cottage Souvenir No. 2*, 9-10.
43 Ibid., 78.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., 168.

Barber produced many mail-order catalogues as well as a small book entitled *Appreciation*, which included many letters from satisfied owners of his building plans. Speaking of these "testimonials," Michael A. Tomlan says in his introduction to *George F. Barber's Cottage Souvenir No. Two*, "This provides some insight as to the kind of people who were purchasing designs from Barber. These were members of the rising middle class: the vice president of a small town bank, the railroad company treasurer, the hardware company executive, the young attorney or doctor, or perhaps the oyster packer and planter."[46] Tomlan adds, "… George Franklin Barber was not only an exemplar of the rising middle class of the era, but, more important, he helped to convey, solidify, and then materialize the American ideals of comfort and artistic taste."[47] It must be noted that in 1891, Stanislaus County was certainly growing but still a rural, agricultural area. Speaking of mail-order catalogues, Tomlan explains that Barber "knew their importance to small town residents and rural settlers."[48] Oramil McHenry expressed his satisfaction with his house plans in the following note he sent to Barber and which is included in *The Cottage Souvenir, Revised and Enlarged*:

> Modesto, Cal., April 18, 1892
> Geo. F. Barber & Co., Knoxville, Tenn.:
> Dear Sirs – Yours received, and in reply will state
> that the contractor stated that my plans and specifications
> were the most complete and accurate that he had ever worked from.
> Yours respectfully,
> O. McHenry, President First National Bank, Modesto[49]

Design elements as well as the extensive exterior gingerbread trim of the house reflect the taste of the Victorian era. On the subject of Barber's elaborate, detail-rich designs, Tomlan says the following: "Intersecting, multifaceted forms, with inset porches and projecting bays, replete with such details as buttressed, paneled and capped chimneys with inset sash, keyhole windows, and spool-like columns were employed to declare their owner's distinction and help secure his place in the community."[50] The house conveys its Queen Anne elements through its steeply hipped roof, crossing gables and a prominent, decorated front porch as well as such gingerbread trim details such as sunburst design brackets, carved cornice boards, pendants, and a spindlework frieze. Original to the house, the spectacular keyhole-shaped stained glass window on the east side along with the many decorated colored lights on windows all around the house add to its Victorian charm. Interior details such as the ornate fireplaces upstairs and downstairs, built-in leaded glass dining cabinet, and pocket doors that separate the parlor and dining room convey tasteful elegance as well as flexibility and ease of living and entertaining. From the interior decorated ceiling medallions and casing to the exterior fishscale shingles and bulls-eye ornaments, the Bald Eagle Ranch house was grand but not ostentatious. It was solid and well-built. It was perfect for a rising young entrepreneur such as Oramil McHenry.

The materials and workmanship of the house were also products and skills that characterize the Victorian time. In 1890s California, wood was cheap and plentiful, and redwood was the most available and inexpensive. All of the Bald Eagle Ranch House is made of redwood. In the basement and in the attic, it can be seen that

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[46] Ibid., 8.
[47] Ibid., 16.
[48] Ibid.
[49] George F. Barber. *The Cottage Souvenir, Revised and Enlarged.* (Knoxville: S.B. Newman & Co., Steam Book and Job Printers, 1892), 177.
[50] Barber, *The Cottage Souvenir No. 2*, 13.

everything is made of redwood. When the whole exterior was scraped during the painting project, it could be seen that that the entire house was redwood. Lumber yards had big circular saws for rapidly cutting boards; pattern copying saws made it economical to create multiple decorative pieces. The Bald Eagle Ranch House is ornamented lavishly with lathe-turned spindles, decorative paneling, and ornamented gables. Other technologies and techniques of the time were used on the house and can be recognized in this passage: "The balloon frame, made up of light, two-inch boards held together by wire nails, was rapidly replacing heavy-timber framing as the standard building technique. This, in turn, freed houses from their traditional box-like shapes by greatly simplifying the construction of corners, wall extensions, overhangs, and irregular ground plans.[51] The area between the studs on the frame of the Bald Eagle Ranch house was covered by unfinished lath and then overlaid by a particularly hard and stone-like plaster with animal hair mixed into it.

Manufacturers nationwide offered high quality, easily available locks, doorknobs, and other hardware. Indeed, the many original door fittings and hardware in the Bald Eagle Ranch House are so decorative and so well-made that we can admire them still hard at work today.

The house looks very much as it did when it was built. As discussed, there have been a small number of structural changes and additions. All repairs have been made with great care and attention to preserving the integrity of the house.

Very few historical buildings have survived in Modesto and even fewer Queen Anne examples. But the Bald Eagle Ranch House has survived, in remarkably good condition and with very little change. The Bald Eagle Ranch house is an example of fine Victorian architecture, emblematic of 19th century culture, and a local legacy of the McHenrys.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Connection of Bald Eagle Ranch House to McHenry Mansion

After establishing the Bald Eagle Ranch and living on it for several years, rancher Robert McHenry, who was also a prominent banker, built a new home in what was becoming downtown Modesto and moved into it in 1883. That house, built in the Victorian Italianate style, has been locally known as the McHenry Mansion.

From the time of his marriage in 1886, Oramil lived on the ranch in the house his parents had lived in, completing his own new home—the Bald Eagle Ranch house—in 1893. When his mother died in 1896, Oramil, himself now also a Modesto bank president as well as a rancher, moved into the downtown McHenry house and lived there until his death in 1906.

The McHenry Mansion was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. Bare says that, "the story of the McHenry Mansion reflects the history of Modesto, because the two evolved together. Today this restored Victorian home is almost all that is left of Modesto's historical past. Most of the buildings have been destroyed, and there is little remaining in this community to remind us of our heritage."[52] Although many old, historic Modesto buildings have been lost, the McHenry Mansion and the Bald Eagle Ranch House have

[51] McAlester, 239.
[52] Bare, *The McHenry Mansion*, 11.

remained intact, and they have always been linked. To travel between downtown Modesto and the house on the Bald Eagle Ranch, the road to take is and always has been McHenry Avenue, a main street of the city and county.

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Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

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 #_____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #_____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
_X_Local government
____University
_X_Other
Name of repository: McHenry Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.1 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
(Follow similar guidelines for entering the lat/long coordinates as describe on page 55, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* for entering UTM references. For properties less than 10 acres, enter the lat/long coordinates for a point corresponding to the center of the property. For properties of 10 or more acres, enter three or more points that correspond to the vertices of a polygon drawn on the map. The polygon should approximately encompass the area to be registered. Add additional points below, if necessary.)

Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: 37.718808 Longitude: -120.987427

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor Parcel Number 074-010-010-000, which corresponds to the attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the Bald Eagle Ranch House, outbuildings, and garden areas that currently make up the 1.15 acres of our property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eric and Michelle Christopherson
organization _____ date January 25, 2013
street & number 511 Crawford Road telephone (209) 523-2271
city or town Modesto state CA zip code 95356
e-mail christophersonm@att.net

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map in place of USGS map.

  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.)

Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map

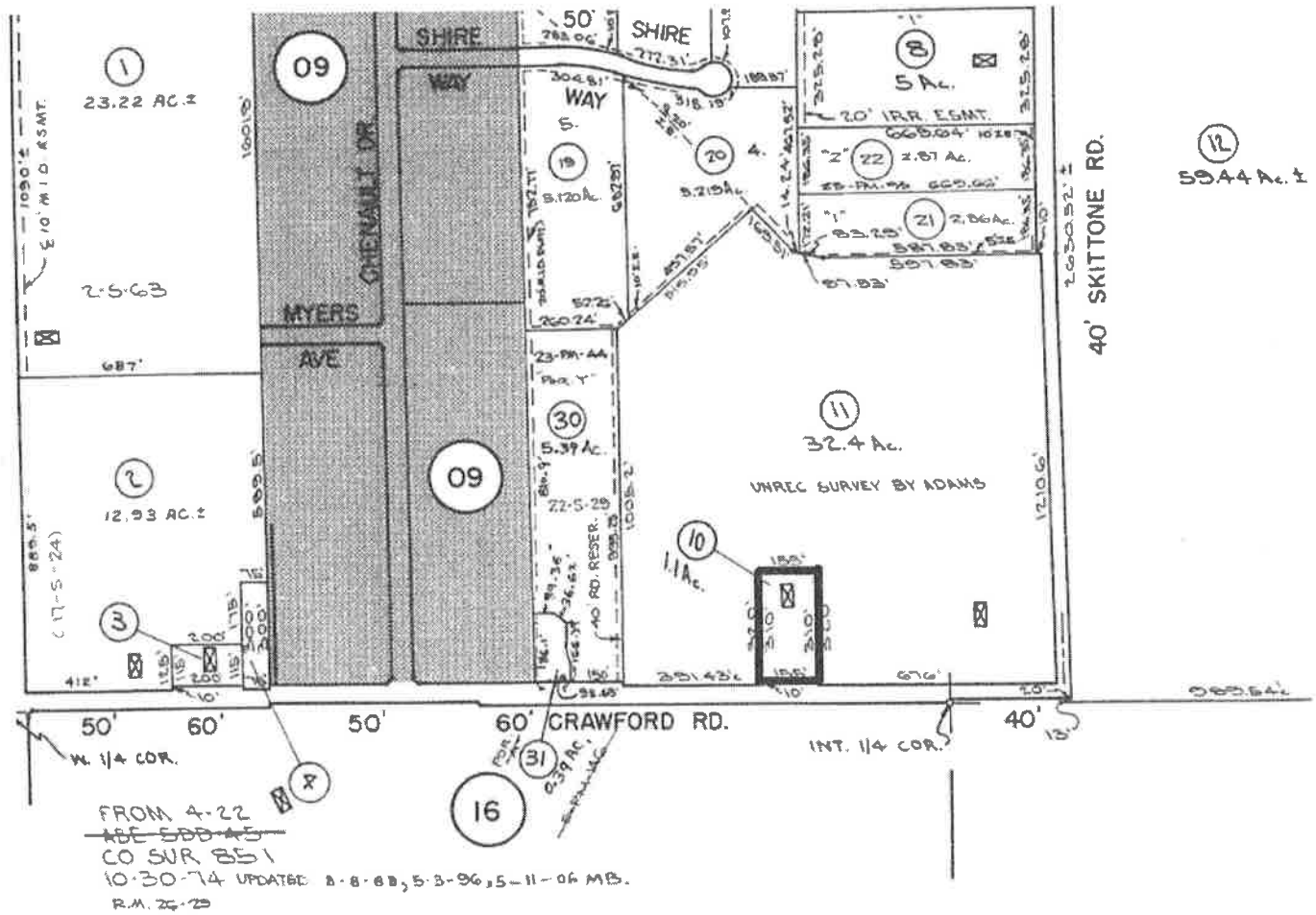
Latitude: 37.718808

Longitude: -120.987425

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Sketch Map



Property boundary outlined in bold.
Source: Stanislaus County Tax Assessor. Map Book 74, Page 10.

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive 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: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #1 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0001)
South façade, camera facing northwest
1 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #2 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0002)
South façade, camera facing northwest
2 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #3 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0003)
East elevation, camera facing northwest
3 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #4 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0004)
East elevation, camera facing west, stained glass window behind tree
4 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #5 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0005)
East elevation, camera facing west, detail of ornamentation
5 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: September 8, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #6 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0006)
East elevation, camera facing west, detail of ornamentation
6 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 20, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #7 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0007)
North elevation, camera facing southwest
7 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Date Photographed: September 30, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #8 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0008)
North elevation, camera facing south
8 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: September 30, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #9 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0009)
North elevation, camera facing south, back porch to right of steps
9 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 19, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #10 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0010)
West elevation, camera facing east, back porch with cobalt blue glass windows
10 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #11 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0011)
West elevation, camera facing east, rectangular sun porch visible
11 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013

Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #12 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0012)
Southwest façade, camera facing northeast
12 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #13 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0013)
Southwest façade, camera facing northeast
13 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: August 15, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #14 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0014)
South façade, camera facing northeast
14 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: August 7, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #15 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0015)
South façade, camera facing northwest, detail of sunburst design brackets
15 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 13, 2013

Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #16 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0016)
South façade, camera facing north, fountain statue in the foreground
16 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 4, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #17 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0017)
Interior, cherry wood fireplace in the parlor
17 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: December 26, 2012
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #18 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0018)
Interior, chandelier with glass shades in the parlor
18 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 6, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #19 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0019)
Interior, electrified lighting fixture on newel post
19 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: September 30, 2011

Bald Eagle Ranch House
Name of Property

Stanislaus, California
County and State

Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #20 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0020)
Interior, keyhole-shaped stained glass window
20 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Michelle Christopherson
Date Photographed: January 4, 2013
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #21 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0021)
Interior, china cabinet in the dining room
21 of 22.

Name of Property: Bald Eagle Ranch House
City or Vicinity: Modesto
County: Stanislaus State: CA
Photographer: Eric Christopherson
Date Photographed: September 30, 2011
Location of Original Digital files: 511 Crawford Rd., Modesto, CA 95356
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Photo #22 (CA_Stanislaus County_Bald Eagle Ranch House_0022)
Interior, kitchen
22 of 22.

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

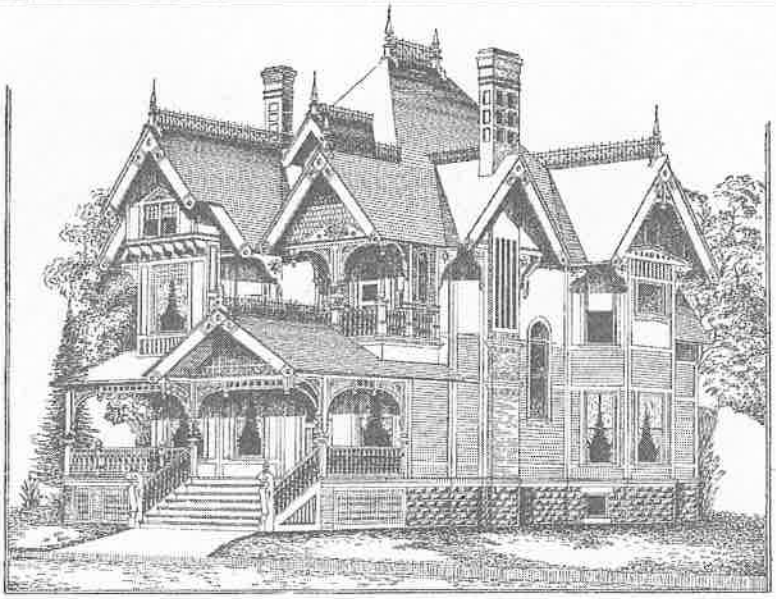
name Removed at request of National Park Service
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Figure 1: Historical photograph of the Bald Eagle Ranch House taken sometime after construction in 1893.

Figure 2: Panoramic Photo of the Bald Eagle Ranch taken sometime after 1893. This panoramic photo was almost certainly taken from the top of the huge drying and storage barn that was located just to the east of the house. From that high vantage point, the barracks-like employee housing can be seen as well as the horse and cattle barns; individual, one story, foursquare houses; and endless rows of fruit trees going off into the distance. The Bald Eagle Ranch House can be seen to the right, surrounded by white fencing and orchards.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW.

DESIGN No. 36.

Cost to build, as per description, $3,180.

NOTES.

This design has been arranged with a view of filling a universal demand for a house of this character. The exterior is all that any one could desire, the veranda especially forming a very important part in bringing out the true proportions of the structure.

Through the vestibule, from the front, we enter the hall, which is large and handsomely arranged. The staircase is intended to be beautiful in plan and design. A front view from the hall is obtained from the nook which is cut off from hall by a neat arch. The fireplace, with a nice mantel, adds very much to the trimmings and embellishments of the hall.

The parlor and dining room are connected by sliding doors. The bed room has been made narrow in order to get a good closet and a large bath room. A good change, however, would be to make this room into a dining room and the dining room into a sitting room, omitting the closet in the bed room and shortening the bath room into a serving room and connecting with the kitchen. The back hall, while serving as a rear entrance, cuts the kitchen off from main part of house, thus preventing the odors of cooking from entering the living apartments.

In the second story there are four good rooms. The hall occupies very little space, only serving as an entrance way to all the rooms. It connects with the back hall, where the back and attic stairs are reached. Chimneys are arranged so that stoves may be used for heating, but furnace or steam heat is preferable.

This plan can be enlarged, reduced or changed to front in any direction.

(*See page 10.*)

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Figure 3: "Design No. 36" from George F. Barber's *Cottage Souvenir No. 2, A Repository of Artistic Cottage Architecture and Miscellaneous Designs 1891*. (New York: American Life, 1982). The Bald Eagle Ranch House is based on this design. Major features, their arrangement, and most of the details of the house are identical to this perspective view.

FRONT VIEW.

DESIGN No. 36.

SIZE.

Over all except steps, 31 feet 6 inches x 57 feet.

Height of first story, 10 feet; second story, 9 feet 4 inches.

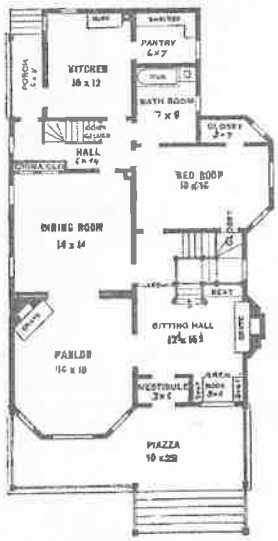
Depth of cellar, 7 feet, under all.

OUTSIDE MATERIALS.

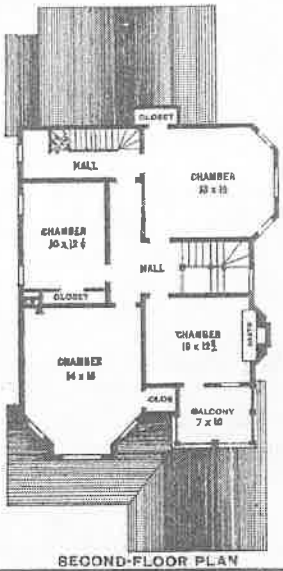
The entire building, up to cornice, is weatherboarded; gables and roof shingled. Foundation of stone. Outside blinds. Painting, three-coat work.

INTERIOR.

The hall, parlor, dining and bed rooms are finished in oak or other desirable hardwood; all the rest is finished in pine or poplar, for painting. Plastering, three-coat work, hard finish. Plumbing consists of sink and pump in kitchen, bath tub and bowl, with supply and waste pipe connections, and gas throughout.



FIRST-FLOOR PLAN.



SECOND-FLOOR PLAN

79

Figure 4: "Design No. 36" from Barber's *Cottage Souvenir No. 2*. The house is almost identical to this front view and follows the floor plan closely.

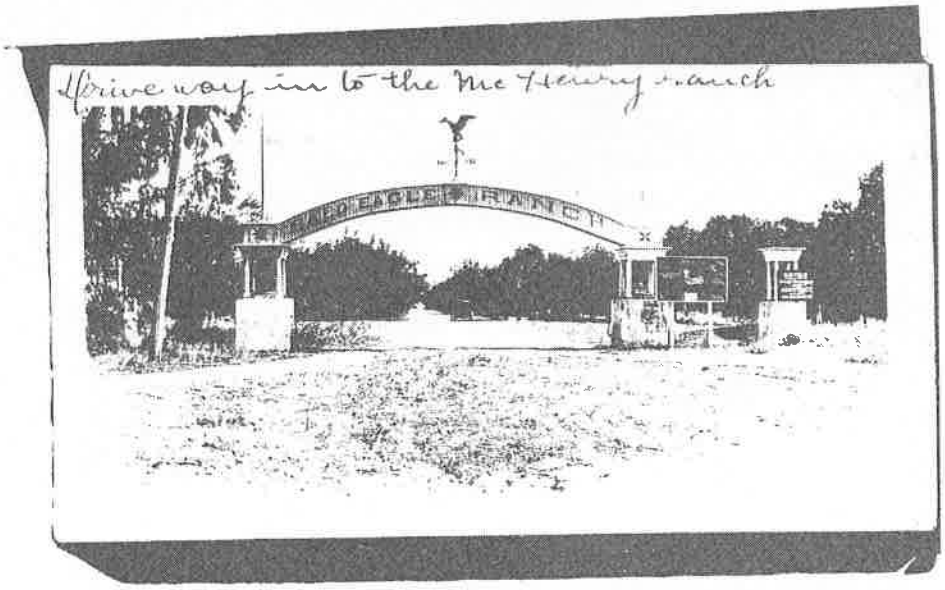


Figure 5: Historical photograph of the gated entry to the Bald Eagle Ranch. The concrete base structure on the right is still standing on the corner of Crawford Road and McHenry Avenue in Modesto, California.

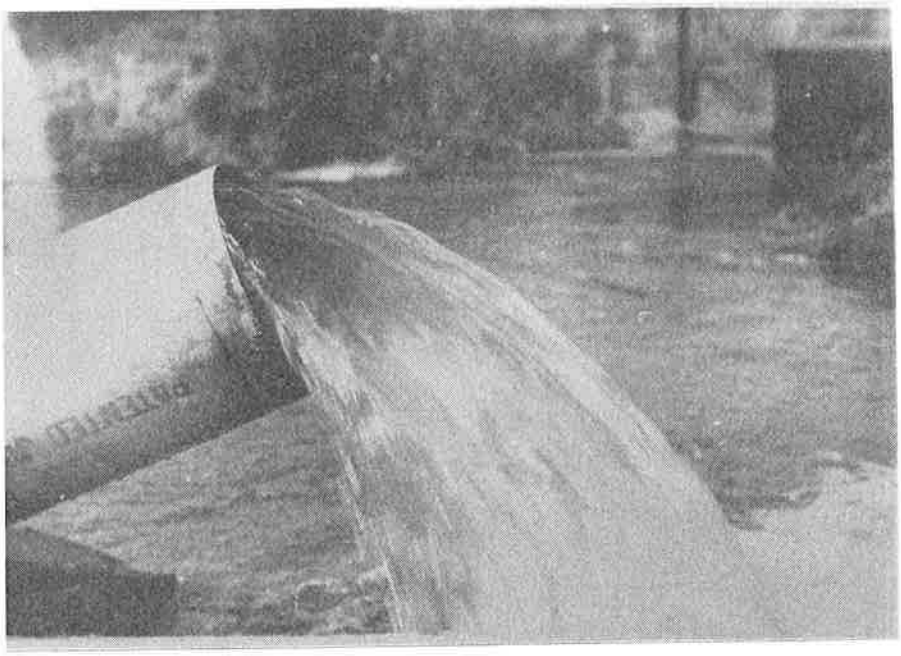


Figure 6: Historical photograph of irrigation water coming to the Bald Eagle Ranch.

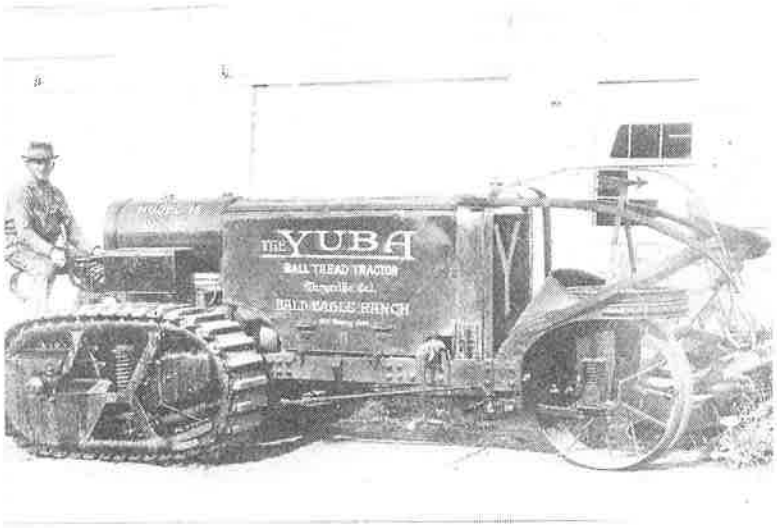
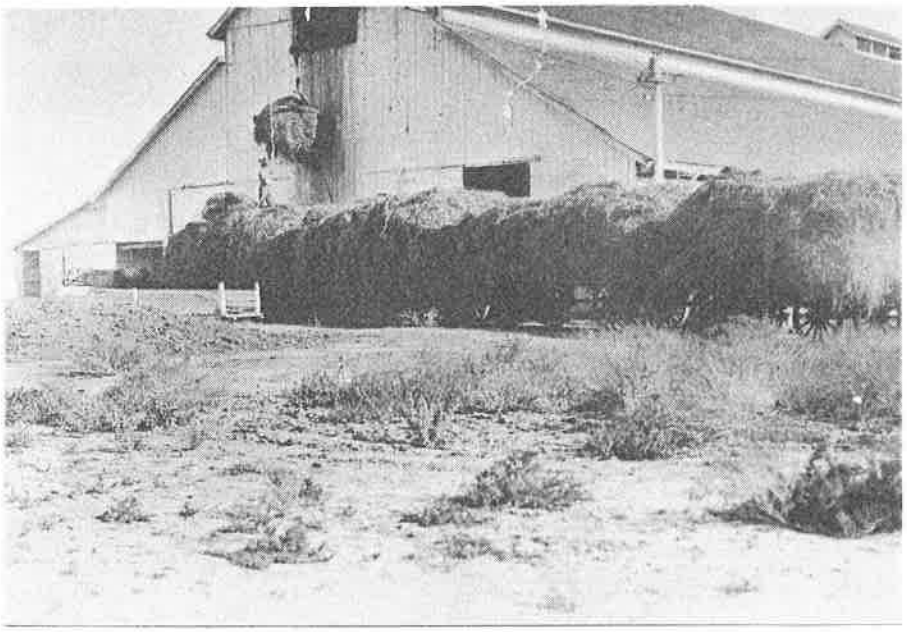


Figure 7: Historical photograph of Bald Eagle Ranch farm machinery.



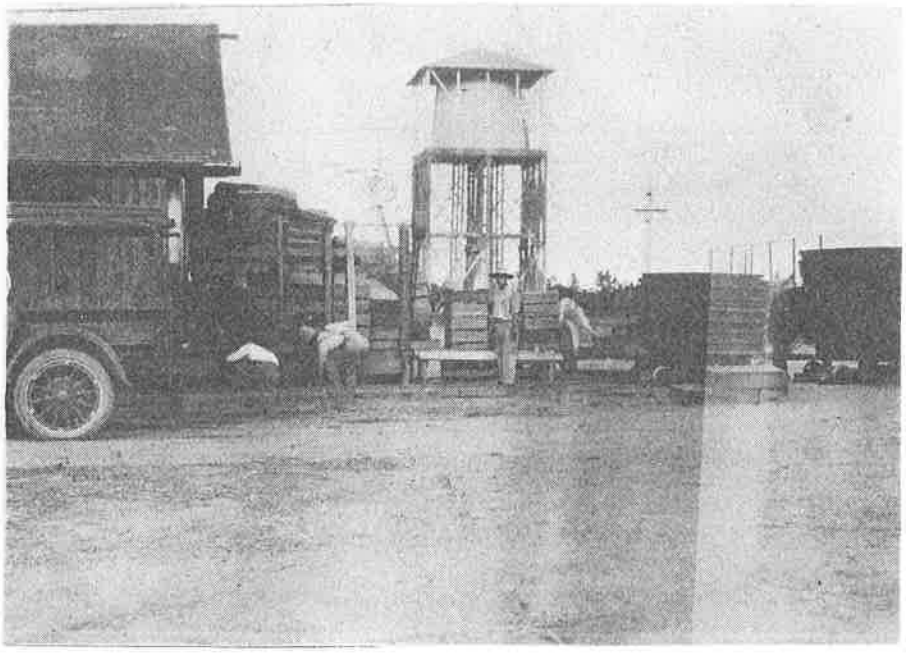


Figure 8: Two historical photographs of agricultural buildings on the Bald Eagle Ranch.

Figure 9: "Residence and Packing House, Bald Eagle Ranch." Photograph printed in article "Bald Eagle Ranch, Modesto, Cal." *Pacific Rural Press.* October 21, 1899, California Digital Newspaper Collection (PRP18991021.2.13.1).

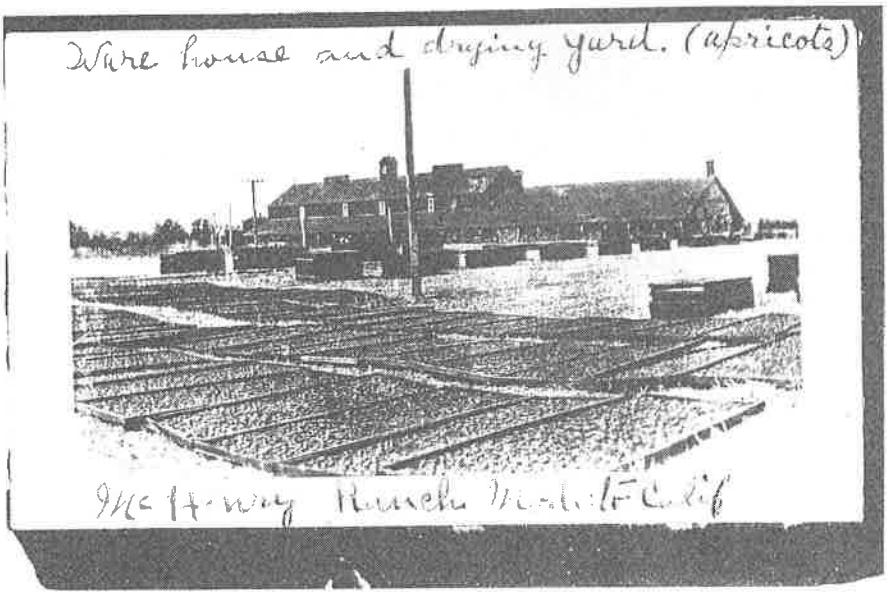


Figure 10: Historical photograph of warehouse and drying shed and drying yard.

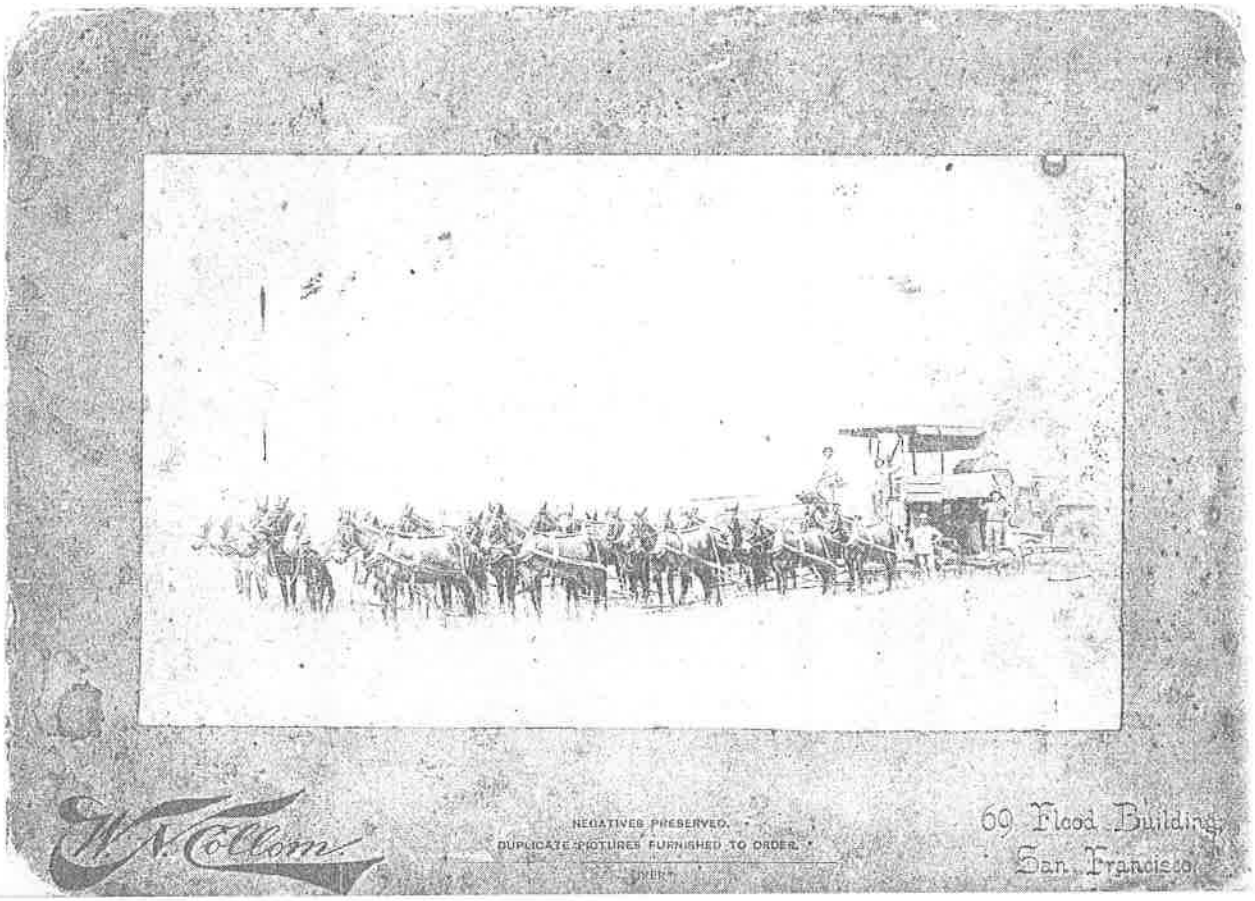


Figure 11: Historical photograph taken at the Bald Eagle Ranch.

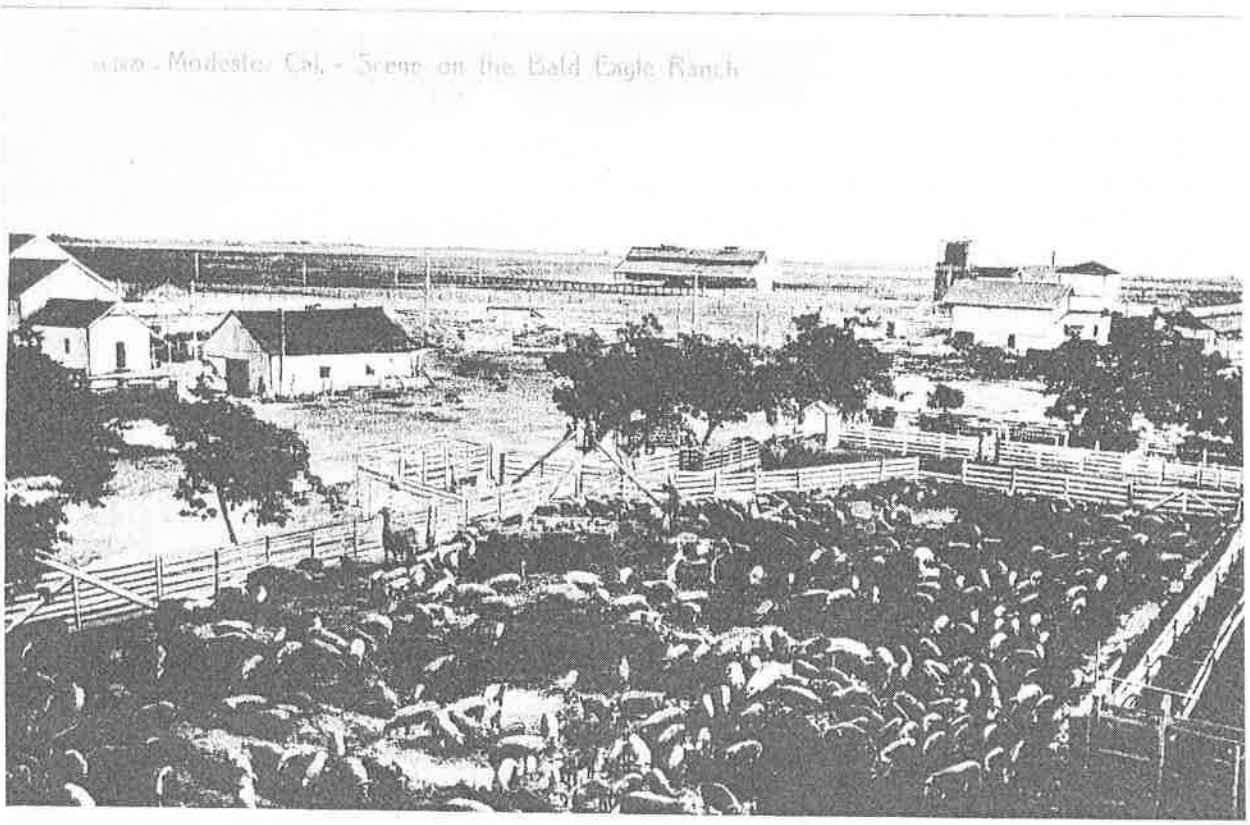


Figure 12: Historical photograph taken at the Bald Eagle Ranch.