NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

**United States Department of the Interior**
National Park Service

410

# 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.

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District
Other names/site number: 24BL1546/24BL1547
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

**2. Location**

Street & number: River Mile 122.3 Left
City or town: _____ State: Montana County: Blaine
Not For Publication: [ ] Vicinity: [x]

**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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___B ___C ___D

Rachel Stephenson Cagnon 3 May 2016

**Signature of certifying official/Title:** **Date**

Federal Preservation Officer, Bureau of Land Management

**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**

M. F. Baumler 1/7/2016

**Title:** MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X 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 of the Keeper — Date of Action: 6/28/14

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Private: | ☐ |
| Public – Local | ☐ |
| Public – State | ☐ |
| Public – Federal | X |

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

| | |
|---|---|
| Building(s) | ☐ |
| District | X |
| Site | ☐ |
| Structure | ☐ |
| Object | ☐ |

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

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | | buildings |
| 8 | | sites |
| 2 | 1 | structures |
| | | objects |
| 19 | 1 | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**
**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structures
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural field

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER/Western stick
OTHER/Log building

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: _____
Walls: WOOD/log
Roof: Wood/tarpaper/Bentonite clay

**Narrative Description**
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District is located at the confluence of Bullwhacker Creek on the north side of the Missouri River in southern Blaine County at river mile 121.2 to 123. It lies within the vast and isolated but breathtakingly beautiful Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (Proclamation 7398, 2001 by President Clinton). The district consists of the abandoned buildings and sites associated with two ranches, the John Ervin Ranch and the Gist Family Ranch, which span much of the south half of Section 34 of Township 24 North, Range 21 East. John Ervin developed the land and buildings here beginning in 1911 and received his homestead patent in 1926. The Sanfords and Kinkaids owned the land through the 1930s and early 1940s, respectively. The Gist family bought the land in 1947 and began developing the area east of Bullwhacker Creek in what is now known as Gist Bottom. The Gist family sold the land to the BLM in 1980.

The simple and small log and wood frame buildings and sites in this district are typical examples of vernacular buildings associated with a continuum of farming and ranching along the Missouri

from the homesteading era in the early 1900s, through the Depression era, and through World War II and the postwar era. They are also among the few remaining within the Monument that possess integrity enough to reflect the legacy of homesteading and ranching in the area. The standing residences are the most significant reminders of life in this most lonely and unforgiving landscape, and taken together with the remains of outbuildings, structures, fields, and roads, this district strongly represents the hope, hard work, and history of the people who settled and eked out an existence in the Upper Missouri River Breaks area after 1910.

## Narrative Description

### Location/Access

The Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District is located in north-central Montana in the southern portion of Blaine County on the north side of the Missouri River. It also occurs within the BLM-administered Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. The Bears Paw Mountains rise some 30 miles to the north-northwest and the lower southwesterly flanks of the Little Rocky Mountains rise about 20 miles to the east. The district is located at the confluence of Bullwhacker Creek and the Missouri River within what is named "Gist Bottom." Bullwhacker Creek originates in the Bears Paw Mountains but also drains a substantial portion of southern benches and breaks. Little Bullwhacker Creek, just to the north, has its source in the benches on the southeast edge of the Bears Paw Mountains.

Access to the district is quite difficult given that no major roads or communities exist nearby. The community of Zortman in the Little Rocky Mountains is about 35 miles to the east-southeast while Chinook lies about 70 miles to the north. The tiny, mostly abandoned communities of Cleveland and Leroy are located about 40 miles north of the district. Automobile access into the site is difficult at best. The Ervin Ridge Road and Bullwhacker Creek Road/Gist Road, which converge at the Bullwhacker Creek drainage, allow access into the property. Both are treacherous and frequently wash out. More direct access is by boat, departing from Judith Landing at river mile 88.5 and continuing down river 34 miles to the Gist Bottom Primitive Boat Camp and Campground.

Segments of the above described road occur within the property boundary. The Ervin Ridge portion of the road enters the Ervin Homestead area from the southwest and continues directly to the original Ervin Cabin and then turns north toward the ridge (outside the district) where it meanders in a northeasterly fashion toward Bullwhacker Creek. At the creek, the road descends steeply to the creek and washes out. On the east side of the creek, the road reappears and continues east-northeast along the ridge for about one-half mile before turning south (this portion of the road is also noted as Bullwhacker Creek Road on some maps). The road then splits with one section continuing south to the Gist buildings and the other continuing east and then directly north where it continues on into the hills for approximately four miles.

### Setting

Erosion is the dominant geomorphic force here, which has created a "badlands" type of topography dominated by deeply dissected terrain formed in clay shale, sandstone, and siltstone

with numerous breaks, coulees and erosional remnants. Steep sandstone breaks to the north and south of the district characterize the dominant view shed with large open terraces formed by a combination of colluviation, erosion of adjacent slopes, and overbank flooding by the creeks and the Missouri River directly adjacent to the district. Area vegetation consists of intermittent stands of Eastern Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and Rocky Mountain juniper forest, big sage brush, prickly pear cactus, greasewood, cottonwood, juniper, yucca, crested wheatgrass, and various other native grasses, which provide stable ground cover. On the bench just north of Gist Bottom, rocky outcroppings and distinctive hoodoos with stone caps tower over the bottomlands below.

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Proclamation specifies the Bullwhacker area as "some of the wildest country on all the Great Plains." Simply stated, the area is almost completely uninhabited, untouched by modern development and little changed by historical development. The harsh weather, remote location far from any large towns or cities, and arid soils discouraged settlement and contributed to the overpowering sense of remoteness and isolation in the area. Still, a number of single men and families homesteaded this area in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and today only a handful of the remnants of these farms and ranches remain. These buildings and structures are among the last tangible reminders that clearly reflect the presence of white settlers who made this area home after 1910.

There are two building clusters within the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District. The original John Ervin homestead buildings and corral are located immediately west of the confluence of Bullwhacker Creek and the Missouri River. The second building cluster, developed by the Gist family after 1947, is located about 0.2 miles north of the Missouri River and 0.5 miles east of Bullwhacker Creek. Historic fields and pasture link the two building clusters. The historic fields and pasture, common to and associated with both the earlier Ervin homestead and the later Gist development are discussed under the "Gist Resources" feature descriptions in Section 7.

**Ervin Resources**

**Ervin Cabin (one contributing building):** This one-story dugout cabin served as John Ervin's primary residence. It overlooks Bullwhacker Creek, 10 feet to the east. The dugout wing on the west is constructed of logs, and the east wing is post and beam construction with a front-facing gable roof. The west wing of the cabin was likely built between spring 1910 and 1911 when John Ervin claimed he first settled on the land. The east addition was likely built shortly after given that Ervin includes the description "2 room house" on his Homestead Entry Final application dated April 1922 (Ervin Case File).

The foundation consists of 6-inch square ground contact wood beams and the far west end of the cabin is partially buried or dugout into the hillside. Unpainted square-notched log walls comprise the western two-thirds of the cabin. Split logs serve as chinking. The post and beam addition on the east is clad with unpainted vertical 1-inch by 12-inch replacement wood plank siding. The front-gable roof covers both the frame and log portions of the building. A 3-inch by 12-inch timber ridge beam and two 8-inch square timber joists support the eastern portion of the building. The ridge and joists are exposed on the east under an 18-inch overhang. A 10-inch-wide log

ridge pole and 9-inch wide purlins support the western portion of the roof. The 4:12 pitch roof is dirt over 2-inch by 12-inch planking.

**Fenestration**

The east or front façade wall consists of a central entrance door flanked by identical 24-inch-square, fixed wood and glass windows with 1-inch by 4-inch trim. The door measures 31 inches by 6 feet and consists of three Z-braced vertical planks. Above the door, a 1-inch by 4-inch wood plank header displays the wood-burned inscription, "Thru this door pass the best dam'd cowboys in the world."

The south elevation contains two windows. A 30-inch by 24-inch, six-light, fixed window is located in the frame portion of the wall and the log portion of the elevation contains a 24-inch by 18-inch, four-light, fixed window. The west wall of the building, which is built into the bank of the hillside, contains two 24-inch by 12-inch, evenly spaced, two-light wood and glass fixed windows with 1-inch by 4-inch wood trim. There are no openings on the north elevation.

**Interior**

The interior of the Ervin Cabin is divided into two rectangular rooms – a smaller front room on the east and larger room on the west. The floors in both the east and west rooms are 1-inch by 12-inch wood planks on a free-floating 2-inch by 4-inch wood frame. The east room walls and ceiling are exposed plank siding on the east, north, and south, and log with mortar chinking on the west. The entire interior of both rooms show evidence of whitewashing, the effects of which are still visible along the ridgepole, purlins and original wall.

The front door is hung with large steel strap hinges and the interior side is decorated with hand-drawn cattle brands and growth charts associated with the Kinkaid family. The door latch is constructed of a crudely cut wood handle and hasp with an iron lift lever. Across the room to the west, a 33-inch by 6-foot-tall Z-braced vertical wood plank door with 1-inch by 3-inch wood trim separates the two rooms. Five feet to the north of the door, a 33-inch x 5-foot-tall shelf with 1-inch by 3-inch wood trim is cut into the log wall. Each of the 5 wood shelves is 12 inches deep. This shelf appears to have been rebuilt where the original entrance door to the cabin was located before the east room was added.

The west room walls are exposed log with split log chinking. The ceiling displays the log ridge and purlins as well as the wood plank sheathing. The windows on the west wall have 1-inch by 4-inch wood trim. Between the two windows, the BLM has installed a rectangular interpretive panel explaining the history of the Ervin Cabin and details of Jack Ervin's life.

**Rehabilitation**

The harsh environment, deferred maintenance, and an ice jam on the Missouri River and Bullwacker Creek threatened to destroy the Ervin Cabin in the mid-2000s. The south wall of the east addition collapsed and the entire building started to shift. Also, the sod roof was failing due to nonhistoric corrugated metal sheathing and the west log wall was badly deteriorated from its location buried in the hillside.

In 2008 and 2009, the BLM and Forest Service Historic Preservation Team stepped in to stabilize deterioration and prevent collapse. Structurally sound logs were retained and new logs were harvested from ponderosa pine groves and hand peeled. The subsurface logs on the three sides of the dugout wing were replaced, leaving the interior log wall and the upper courses intact.

There was originally a door on the dugout wall that led out the back of the west wall. Since it was buried, the door may have led to a small root cellar or cold storage room. The decision was made not to replace the cellar and the door was converted to a window. Window openings were measured, and all windows were rebuilt to replicate the originals.

Later work included reburying the west wall, reroofing, and rehabilitating the east addition. During reroofing, two original log purlins were retained on the west and new replica logs added where needed then covered with 2-inch x 12-inch wood planks and local dirt to a depth of 5 inches. A square, tin-lined stovepipe hole was in the NW corner of the roof. To prevent roof leaks, the stovepipe opening was not reintroduced.

Rehabilitation of the east addition included sill log replacement, installation of new floor boards and replica window sash and trim. The interior cabinet, rafters, original interior door on the west wall, and the front door remain intact.

**Ervin Cellar (one contributing building):** Directly to the south of the Ervin Cabin lies a 6-foot by 8-foot partially collapsed cellar constructed of log and milled timbers. The cellar is badly deteriorated, however, there is evidence of a vertical plank door, log ridge beam and split log roof sheathing covered with dirt. It is not known when Ervin built the cellar, although it was likely constructed shortly after spring 1911. Ervin does not list a cellar on the property in his Homestead Entry Final Proof; however, he does list “sheds” (Ervin Case File).

**Ervin Dugout Shed (one contributing site):** Approximately 25 feet southwest of the Ervin Cellar is a 12-foot by 12-foot collapsed dugout shed that was constructed of v-notched logs. Ridge poles and vertical logs along what was a back wall are evident, but all have collapsed. It is not known when Ervin built this shed, although it is likely it was constructed shortly after spring 1911 given that he does list “sheds” on the property in his Homestead Entry Final Proof (Ervin Case File).

**Ervin Outhouse (one contributing site):** Approximately 100 feet southwest of the Ervin Cabin is a collapsed outhouse oriented along an east/west axis. The wood frame building measured approximately 5 feet by 8 feet and had two holes. Only a few boards of milled lumber are left as well as a slight depression. It is not known when Ervin built the outhouse, although it is likely it was constructed simultaneously or shortly after spring 1911 while he was constructing his house (Ervin Case File).

**Ervin Corral (one contributing structure)**: A deteriorated circular log and pole corral is located about 350 feet west of the buildings. Eighteen posts spaced approximately 10 feet apart

formed panels that may have been 5 or 6 rails high. Most of the horizontal rails have collapsed, but a few panels retain 3 or 4 rails. The corral is roughly 60 feet in diameter and a gate opens on the northwest side of the corral. Erosion and deposition is affecting the corral, removing soil from the base of some of the posts, and burying others. It remains unknown when Ervin built the corral, although it was likely constructed between spring 1911 and 1926 given that he lists "corrals" on the property in his Homestead Entry Final Proof (Ervin Case File).

**Gist Resources**

The Gist cluster of buildings is located about ½-mile east of the Ervin cabin and consists of two log cabins, a log/frame two-room residence, a wood frame shed, a log shop, a chicken coop, an outhouse, three dugout sheds, a corral, and the site of a log barn. In addition, the resources are surrounded by historic fields and remnants of the Gist/Ervin Ridge Road.

A large corral sits isolated south outside of the main building cluster immediately north of the Missouari River. Due to its distance from the main Gist cluster, it does not appear on the detailed Gist sketch map, but only on the overview sketch map showing the entire property (page 38 of nomination).

**Gist Cabin #1 (one contributing building):** This one-story rectangular building is the southern-most building in the Gist cluster of buildings. The building is abandoned and in fair condition. The date of construction is likely spring 1948 when the Gist family began moving other buildings to the property and expanding their cattle operation near the river (Gist 1995).

The western gable-roof wing of the cabin measures 7 feet by 11 feet with cornerstone bracing and five east-west log floor stringers. The log walls are stacked with a full dovetail notch, and chinked with saplings and mud. Fenestration includes a 28-inch by 66-inch door opening. No other fenestration is present on the west wing.

The eastern shed-roof wing measures 6 feet by 11 feet and has no visible foundation. The log walls are lapped at the corners and chinked with saplings and mud daubing. Fenestration includes a 31-inch by 64.5-inch door opening. No other fenestration is present on the east wing.

The roof covers both the east and west wings, and is supported by a total of five log purlins clad with rough sawn wood planks and the remains of local bentonite clay.

**Gist Residence (one contributing building):** The Gist Residence is a one-story log and wood frame structure, made up of a rectangular log wing on the south and a rectangular wood frame wing on the north. The log wing was previously the Gist Schoolhouse and the frame wing was the teacherage. Both buildings were moved from the Gist Ranch on Cow Creek in spring 1948 (Gist 1995) and connected together by a small hallway. Both wings have shed roof entrance vestibules on the east elevation. The south wing was used for a living area/bedroom and the north wing was used for a kitchen. It is located about 20 feet north of Gist Cabin #1. The building is abandoned and in fair condition.

*South Wing Exterior*
The south wing measures 18 feet by 21 feet and rests on a stone and concrete foundation. The log walls are lapped at the corners and chinked with a mixture of concrete and grass. The chinking is in fair condition.

On the primary east elevation, a wood-frame vestibule protects the main entrance. The vestibule consists of 2-inch by 4-inch framing clad with 1-inch-thick horizontal boards. The shed roof covering the vestibule is also clad with 1-inch-thick horizontal boards and the remnants of green asphalt roll roofing. Although hidden by the vestibule in historic photographs, there is a 28-inch by 66-inch door opening and a five-panel wood door on the north side of the east wall. Other fenestration includes a paired 3-over-1 double-hung wood sash on the south side of the east wall. There is also an identical paired 3-over-1 wood sash located on the south elevation just east of center. Some glass remains intact. To the west of this window, the log wall has been patched with short lengths of logs where another window once existed. The west elevation has two window openings with no glass remaining: a 28-inch by 30-inch opening on the south half and a 28-inch by 28-inch opening on the north half.

The gable roof structure consists of six east-west purlins that overhang about 18 inches to form the eves. The roof is clad with butt-jointed wood plank sheathing and corrugated sheet metal. A tin stove pipe exits the roof near the north wall.

*South Wing Interior*
The interior of the south wing is divided into three rooms. There are two bedrooms on the west wall (both measure 8 feet by 8 feet 3 inches) and an open living room on the east. The floor consists of 2-inch by 4-inch floor joists clad with 1-inch by 12-inch boards covered with sheet linoleum. The east room has a 24-inch square opening in the floor providing access to a cellar. A small hallway (3 feet 1 inch long by 28 inches wide) in the northeast corner of the north wall connects to the north (kitchen) wing. The log walls are whitewashed and the floor and door trim is painted mint green.

*North Wing Exterior*
The north wing measures 13 feet by 17 feet and no foundation is visible. The east and north walls are clad with unpainted wood shiplap siding with 6-inch-wide wood corner boards. The west and south walls are clad with 1-inch-thick horizontal wood planks covered with the remnants of green asphalt roll roofing. A wood frame vestibule is centered on the east elevation around the entrance opening (no door remains). The vestibule is constructed of 2-inch by 4-inch wood framing with a shed roof. The exterior sidewalls and roof of the vestibule are covered with 1-inch-thick wood boards and clad weathered green asphalt roll roofing. Inside the vestibule on the south wall is a wood shelf, and a square window opening on the north.

Fenestration on the north wing includes two 1-over-1 double-hung sash on each side of the entrance on the east elevation. The west elevation has a central paired 1-over-1 double-hung sash. Most of the glass is missing from all the sashes.

The shed roof slopes down toward the west and is constructed of 2-inch by 4-inch wood rafters with wood plank sheathing and corrugated tin roofing. A 12-inch-wide by 1-inch-thick wood board forms a soffit on the east elevation, and there is a 12 to 18-inch overhang on the north.

*North Wing Interior*
The interior of the north wing retains remnants of a kitchen room. The floor is 1-inch by 4-inch wood tongue-and-groove flooring covered with linoleum. The walls on the north, east, and south are clad with sheetrock (pink) and 8-inch mopboard trim (white). The west wall is dark green behind the cupboards and the rest is white. Two kitchen cabinets constructed of 2-inch-wide tongue-and-groove (beadboard) paneling remain on the west wall on each side of the window. There is a two-gang outlet on the north wall and wiring for a central light fixture. The stove appears to have been on the south wall where a chimney pipe opening exits the wall.

Behind the north wing on the west wall, there was a 10-foot by 9-foot concrete lined well. Only the remains of wood roof framing and metal roof cladding are evident.

**Gist Cabin #2 (one contributing building):** Another one-story log cabin is located approximately 25 feet north of the Gist Residence. The building was used for a bunkhouse. It is now abandoned and in fair condition. The Gist brothers and father, Leo Gist, likely built the building in the late 1940s or early 1950s using local timbers.

The building measures 14 feet by 16 feet and rests directly on the ground. The log walls are lapped at the corners (similar to notching on Gist Cabin #1 and the Gist Residence South Wing) and chinked with concrete. One log on the east side of the south elevation near the roof has blown out and away from the main wall.

The main entrance door is centered on the south elevation. The door is a solid piece of plywood with a crude wire handle. The door opening is trimmed with 4-inch wide milled wood. Identical paired 2-over-2 double-hung sash with horizontal muntins are located on the south side of the east elevation and centered on the west elevation. The sashes are trimmed with 4-inch-wide milled wood boards. There are no openings on the north elevation.

The roof structure consists of six log purlins that overhang 12 inches on the north and south. The logs are covered with 1-inch by 12-inch wood plank sheathing and the soffit and rake board are finished with 6-inch milled wood boards that form a tray for what was a dirt or sod roof. The sod roof is now covered with corrugated sheet metal; however, one or two panels are missing on the east side and show evidence of the historic sod roof below.

**Gist Frame Shed (one contributing building):** A one-story wood frame shed is located approximately 12 feet southwest of Gist Cabin #2. The shed is leaning to the west and is in poor condition. The build date and builder remian unknown, though the building dfintely appears historic.

It measures approximately 5 feet by 7 feet and appears to lack a foundation. The walls are sided with 1-inch by 12-inch vertical wood planks. There is a vertical plank entrance door on the east elevation that rests up against the door opening. Boards on the east side of the south elevation are cut away to form a window opening. The shed roof slopes down to the west and is clad with 1-inch by 12-inch wood boards that overhang about 12 inches on the north and south elevations and about 6 inches on the east and west elevations. The boards are clad with corrugated sheet metal.

**Gist Log Shop (one contributing building):** This shop building is located on a lower terrace about 25 feet to the northwest of the Gist Frame Shed. What is left of the north and south walls lean to the west; the other walls have mostly collapsed. The Gist brothers and father, Leo Gist, likely built the building in the late 1940s or early 1950s using local timbers.

The one-story building measures 13 feet by 17 feet with log walls attached to vertical log corner posts. With the absence of tight corner notching, the log corner posts have generally failed to hold the walls together. The south wall has a large window opening on the west side and an entrance door opening on the east side. The east wall also had a large window opening on the south side. The roof was supported by 5 large log purlins and is clad with wide planks of rough milled wood. The eastern most purlin has since collapsed and rests on the ground.

**Gist Dugout Shed #1 (one contributing building):** The dugout shed is located about 200 feet east of the main Gist building cluster The builder and build date are unknown, though it is likely the Gist family constructed it in the late 1940s or early 1950s while developing the property as their summer place.

The rectangular building is dug into the hillside and measures approximately 10 feet by 14 feet by 6 feet high with about 4 feet of log wall exposed on the south elevation. The walls are constructed of a variety of log sizes and shapes, displaying a variety of random end notches suggesting that the logs were salvaged from other buildings. The building is in poor condition.

Sheet metal covers portions of the south elevation. The only opening is the entrance doorway centered on the south elevation. The door is no longer present. Ten log purlins laid flat on top of the walls make up the roof structure. The exposed portion of the roof retains remnants of green sheet metal cladding. One area on the east side of the roof has collapsed and the remainder is underground.

**Gist Outhouse (one contributing building):** A one-story wood-frame outhouse is located approximately 180 feet east of Digout Shed #1. The builder and build date are unknown.

The two-hole outhouse measures 5 feet 4 inches by 4 feet 5 inches and has no visible foundation. The walls are sided with unpainted shiplap siding with 4-inch corner boards. The south elevation entrance door opening measures 23 inches by 4 feet 9 inches and has a 2-panel wood plank door. There are no other openings. The roof is framed with 1-inch by 6-inch rafters that are exposed under the overhanging eaves. One-inch by 6-inch horizontal wood planks cover the roof.

When the building was first evaluated in 1997, the report indicated that the outhouse was moved to this location from elsewhere and lay on its side (Fulbright 1997). It is not known where the outhouse originally stood. A subsequent inventory by Aaberg in 2011 noted the righting of the outhouse.

**Gist Corral Complex (one contributing structure):** The remains of a large fenced corral system is scattered in the area south of the barn. The corral appears to have been extensive at one time and consisted of wood posts and barbed wire. The corrals were likely built when the barn was complete, sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s by the Gist family. Aerial images of the area in 1938 do not show a barn or corrals, but by 1953, aerial imagery shows a large barn with a fenced yard on the south side. Since the 1953 aerial images show only a fenced barnyard south of the barn, the corrals were likely further developed between 1953 and 1979 by the Gists.

Today, only a few leaning wood poles and random pieces of barbed wire exist. The corrals consisted of an approximate 20-foot by 60-foot fenced barn yard directly south of the barn that connected to another large corral that extended approximately 140 feet west and then 70 feet south of the barnyard to form a large rectangle south of the barn yard. Another corral extended 100 feet east from the east side of the barn and 120 feet south forming a north/south rectangle that connected to the corral on its west side. This corral was then divided equally into three separate pens. Satellite imagery found on Google Maps provides a good illustration of the corral configuration (Google Satellite image 2015).

**Corral 2 (one noncontributing structure):** A large corral constructed in 2014 by the BLM sits immediately north of the Missouri River and approximately 900 ft. south of the Gist resource cluster. The corral, roughly rectangular in shape, measures 150 feet north-south by 600 feet east-west. The BLM installed the corral to preclude cattle from entering the area which is used for camping by boaters.

**Gist Chicken Coop (one contributing site):** The site consists of the remains of a collapsed chicken coop. The building measures approximately 5 feet by 7 feet and was constructed of milled lumber and chicken wire. The builder and build date are unknown.

**Gist Dugout Shed #2 (one contributing site):** The site consists of the remains of a collapsed shed dug into the north bank of an old channel of either the Missouri River or Bullwhacker Creek. The dugout is located approximately 700 feet west-northwest of the main building cluster. There appears to be 10 feet to 14 feet long timbers placed horizontally on an earthen berm to span the gap. The south side had planed, 1-inch by 8-inch, vertical and horizontal siding and a small man-door. Wire nails secure the siding. The roof was likely sod but has totally collapsed. A floor was not evident but the floor space is in-filled with sediment. Three posts are present in the ground just south of the gap in the earthen berm. Heavy vegetation and sedimentation prevented accurate measurement of the feature.

**Dugout Shed #3 (one contributing site):** The feature, like Dugout Shed #2, consists of the remains of a shed dug into the north bank of an old channel. It lies northwest of the main building cluster. The south end of the feature is much narrower than the north end. One very large timber (broken in two pieces) lies at the north end. The north end has eroded and is collapsed, likely due to livestock and/or wildlife actions. No vertical timbers are in place and only three smaller timbers are present inside the dugout. These small timbers are likely collapsed supports. The timbers lie directly on the earthen berm. A small piece of barbed wire is present within the dugout. A piece of farm machinery is present to the southeast, across the old channel. Heavy vegetation and sedimentation prevented accurate measurement of the feature.

**Gist Barn (one contributing site):** The site consists of the remains of a mostly collapsed barn built in the late 1940s or early 1950s by the Gist family. Aerial images of the area in 1938 do not show a barn, but by 1953, aerial imagery shows a large barn with a fenced yard on the south side. The barn measured approximately 60 feet by 20 feet and was constructed with log poles, rough wood plank siding, and had a corrugated metal roof. The south elevation held the main entrance and there was a loading chute on the west elevation. There was also a wood plank holding pen to the west connected by another chute that led to the large corral located south of the barn. The chute and pen are completely collapsed.

**Gist/Ervin Ridge Road (one contributing site):** The Gist/Ervin Ridge Road provides access to the Gist and Ervin ranches and the Bullwhacker Creek valley. The Gist family hired a contractor to cut the road in 1948 (Gist 1995).

The road is an unimproved two-track that extends for several miles to the west from the Ervin Cabin and continues straight north for 2.5 miles from the Gist buildings. It provides a means of road access into the Missouri River and Little Bullwhacker Creek valley bottoms. The road averages about 8 feet in width. A few sections of the road are cut through sandstone and shale but most of the route follows the surface of landforms that required no cutting. Bridges are not present anywhere along the recorded segment. The road crosses a number of small drainages and in some crossings steel culverts are present. Some culverts appear to be modern while others could be of historic age. Some sections of the road that pass over drainages are washed out and treacherous for motor-vehicle use.

The road continues southwesterly and eventually turns northwest crossing Bullwhacker Creek and passing up Ervin Ridge where it becomes the Ervin Ridge Road. The Ervin Ridge Road dips south heading past the Ervin Homestead and continues west for several miles before it becomes the Lonetree Road.

**Agricultural Fields (one contributing site):** Contributing to the historic setting, feeling, and association of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District is approximately 160 acres of agricultural fields or pasture that occur around and between the Ervin and Gist building clusters. These lands comprise the agricultural and pastoral element of the property and are counted as one contributing site. The area originally associated with Ervin was used to grow corn, millet, sweet clover, hay, and alfalfa. During the Sanford's ownership, much the area was plowed to create hayfields; the area also began heavy use as a cattle pasture. The Kinkaid ownership went

one step further by pasturing horses, a tradition carried on by the Gists, in addition to running cattle.

**Integrity**

The Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District retains good integrity that reflects a continuum of farming and ranching that spanned from the early 1900s through the Great Depression and World War II and on through the postwar days of the 1950s and 1960s.

The contributing buildings and structures retain their original locations and association to each other on the landscape, and the design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as an agricultural landscape of the early to mid-1900s is highly evocative, despite the fact that these buildings are heavily weathered.

The design embodied in the arrangement and construction of the log cabins, sheds, and simple wood frame outbuildings is still easily identifiable as homestead era and postwar utilitarian agricultural buildings. Although the Ervin and Gist farmsteads were not designed in the professional sense, and all but one are quite deteriorated, both building clusters reflect a typical agricultural property site plan.

At both the Ervin and Gist clusters, the houses display solid walls on the north (to keep out cold winter drafts); the windows and doors are on the south or east (to take advantage of solar gain); a dugout or cellar is nearby for refrigeration; an outhouse is nearby; and barns and/or fenced corrals are about 100 to 200 feet from the house.

The materials and workmanship, though undoubtedly compromised by neglect and their continual assault by the elements, also reflect typical vernacular log and wood frame construction methods and display the often rough, utilitarian character of a Montana homestead. From the simple lapped corner notches on the log buildings, to the roofs covered with local clay, the hand carved door latches and hasp locks, salvaged log dugouts, and hundreds of remnants of wood fence posts, the materials and workmanship here create a clear picture of people making due with local materials and lots of hand and back labor to put up serviceable buildings in which to sleep, eat, and raise crops and livestock.

Augmenting the previous elements of integrity within Gist Bottom is the amazing natural setting with its gorgeous geological formations (the breaks), the sweeping grassy open bottomland, and the sparkling Missouri River and its tributaries. This is literally a pristine historic setting (and a designated National Monument), kept rural, isolated and almost completely untouched by modern development because of its dry, inaccessible location.

The Ervin Gist Bottom Historic District retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, materials, workmanship, and association. Taken together, these seven elements of integrity help create a strong sense of the past at Gist Bottom that is highly evocative of the historic agricultural use of this landscape -- one that clearly represents homestead era development and continued use through, and on past World War II. With stewardship by the BLM, these buildings will continue to reflect the harsh, unvarnished reality of the life of the people who came to this area to eke out a living in these lonesome cabins and outbuildings.

## 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.
- [ ] 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.)

- [ ] 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

**Areas of Significance**
(Enter categories from instructions.)
AGRICULTURE; EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

**Period of Significance**
1910-1980

**Significant Dates**
N/A

**Significant Person**
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A at a local level of significance for its historic association with land settlement

and agriculture spanning from the early 1900s through to the mid-1900s along the Missouri River. The remaining buildings, sites, and structures associated with the Ervin Gist Bottom Historic District number among the very few in the Missouri Breaks that retain sufficient integrity to reflect a continuum of occupation and development on this property from the days of homesteading through World War II. The wide variety of vernacular buildings are some of the last tangible reminders of the intrepid people who settled along the Missouri during the homesteading era and in later years to make a living off the land. The period of significance begins in 1910 with the occupation and construction of the homestead by John Ervin, continues through when the Gist family began developing the land and construction of the buildings east of the original Ervin homestead beginning in 1947, to 1980 when the land transferred out of private ownership.[1]

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

Prior to the settlement of the Missouri River Breaks of Montana by emigrants such as John "Jack" Ervin into the Missouri River Breaks area, 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 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.

However, beginning in the 1800s, the Native American way of life began to change as Euro-American exploration of the area began. Early on, John Ervin was one of many individuals who immigrated to Montana from all over the world seeking to better himself.

Exploration and the Fur Trade 1803 – 1859

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. Soon after, 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

[1] The Gist family used the property until 1980 when it was sold to the Bureau of Land Management.

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 Missouri River was particularly important in western expansion, because it provided the easiest access to the resources of the west. By 1829, Kenneth MacKenzie established Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone River for the American Fur Company, introducing the steamboat to the fur trade (Lepley 2001). Fort Benton became the premier trading post on the Missouri River. The steamboats transported thousands of people up the river raising an 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 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 culminating with the Federal Homestead Act of 1862. The law offered 160 acres of publicly owned land to anyone who claimed and occupied an area for five years while making improvements on it (Kunhardt Jr. et.al. 1992:180). While the Homestead Act provided one incentive to move west, depending on the emigrants, other factors also existed.

Events of the 1850s and early 1860s also proved pivotal 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 representatives from the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Nez Perce, and Broken Arm and his band of Cree (Hungry Wolf 2006). The overall tripling of the population in the United States from 1850 to 1900 contributed to the desire for many to head west (Toole 1959).

Settlement in the Missouri River breaks commenced as woodhawkers like Mose La Tray began to settle along the river cutting wood and selling it to steam ships in the 1850s and 1860s (Deal and McDonald 1976). Cow Island, approximately five river miles east of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District, was important along the river. Many steamboats had problems reaching Fort Benton due to the unpredictable and difficult nature of the Missouri River. The southern end of Cow Island was often the farthest point that riverboat captains could navigate; terminating navigation at Cow Island required offloading supplies to freighters, called bullwhackers, who took shipments 120 miles overland on the Cow Island Trail. The trail ran north up Cow Creek, then west across Bullwhacker Coulee near the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District then toward the present town of Warrick eventually leading to Fort Benton (Arthur 1988).

One sizable problem confronting early small farming and ranching operations in the west was the small size of the average farm or ranch. While sufficient in the east, 160 acres was far too little to make a living in many parts of the west. In the area soon to become Western Montana, resource extraction provided income to many people including merchants, ranchers and farmers.

However, the eastern and central portion of the territory "depended on grass, weather, and luck" (Toole 1959:141). The harsh climate resulted in many small homesteaders finding it difficult to gain a foothold in the eastern portion of the territory; 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 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).

Despite the environment, cattle proved lucrative. The Montana Territory was the last of the open range, and by the 1870s and 1880s, cattlemen sought to take advantage of the opportunity (Presser 1997). Men, such as Johnnie Grant, in the Deer Lodge Valley in Southwest Montana, and later Conrad Kohrs, who eventually owned Grant's land and ran cattle all over Montana (Cascade County Historical Society 1981), and Robert and Clifford Tingley, who settled in the Big Sandy area about 65 miles northwest of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District (Lawrence 1963). The vicinity along the river provided plenty of water and good grass for feed. On the Missouri River, some of the large ranches ran a thousand cattle at a time in the breaks (Abbot 1976).

During this time, 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 began to move into the area for free grass.

While large cattle operations found the area appealing, not all newcomers were cattle barons. David Archer settled near the confluence of the Marias and Missouri in 1868. He said that "all the neighbors came to help build the homestead." Archer and his class were the beginnings of the "blue-collar" settlers along the Missouri; the first of a group that found living in the Missouri River Breaks country quite difficult. Archer's reminiscences provide insight regarding the difficulty of eking out a living in the badlands (Archer n/d:170-175).

Homestead Boom 1910 through 1919

The early 1900s witnessed the decline of the cattle business in Montana, and the emergence of agriculture as the main industry in the eastern part of the state. To compensate for the decline in cattle transport, the railroad, who had built north and west of the area in the late 1800s, required additional passengers to pay off their substantial investment. Beginning in 1909, promotion of the area began in earnest. James 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; in 1912, the act was massaged reducing the time it took to "prove up" from five to three years (Toole 1959). In 1910, after the initial passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act, the government passed an act allowing for homesteading on known coal lands benefitting several farming and ranching operations in the Missouri River Breaks allowing coal operations to supplement their livelihood. The homestead boom was on, with over 42 percent of Montana's land settled, and most 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 poured in. Many people arrived on emigrant trains or cars where all their possessions were also loaded. Upon arrival, a "locator" met the homesteader at the train. The locator whisked the homesteaders to the countryside to look at land. That the land was often flat and barren didn't always dissuade those seeking a better life (Toole 1959). However, the harsh reality of the area often proved too difficult for many.

Fueling the surge of homesteading was rampant deception about the fertility of the land and the promise of new dryland farming techniques during the second decade of the twentieth century. From 1910 to 1917, the weather cooperated and farms returned productive yields and decent grain prices. In 1916, 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). While agriculture played a role in many early homesteads, "stock remained the big economic factor in the mountains and along the Missouri River" (Lawrence 1963:33).

Additional homesteading assistance occurred in 1916, when the Government passed the Stock Raising Homestead Act, which gave a homesteader up to 640 acres. The government designed the Stock Raising Homestead Act specifically for lands chiefly valued for grazing and required residency and $1.25 worth of improvements per acre. The railroads began to expand into areas such as Lewistown, 60 miles south of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District, to provide services for the budding communities and to ship goods out of the state.

The Depression and the years 1919 through 1945

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

As World War I elevated the price of wheat, consumer spending rose and many homesteaders began to invest in new equipment, land, and cars. However, as the war ended, prices for grain

began to fall, and land that once produced 25 bushels an acre only produced 2 ½ bushels an acre (Toole 1959). The end of the War corresponded with environmental disaster in Montana in the form of drought. Many homesteaders had over-extended financially on the premise of high yields and high prices, taking out loans against their land. Some found they lacked the required amount of land to succeed and a large number just starved out, simply turning loose their livestock and walking away (Deal and McDonald 1976). The largest exodus from the Missouri River country occurred in 1919 (Lawrence 1963).

Adding to the poor productivity of the badlands, many homesteaders lacked farming and ranching experience. Emigrants to the area arrived with the promise of good fertile free land, but many hailed from European cities, spoke little English, and had no idea how to farm. Lacking necessary farming skills and being stuck in the isolation of the river proved to be too much for many.

Attempting to minimize the effects of the drought, several local agencies downplayed its enormity. The Billings Chamber of Commerce stated "industries are being discouraged by grossly exaggerated reports of failure and ruin in this state" (Dalich 1968:6). Accurate counts of the influx of people into Montana during the second decade of the nineteenth century are lacking as many of the homesteaders came after the 1910 census and fled before the 1920 census.

The agricultural economy began a slight recovery in the 1920s, but the drought that began in 1917 largely continued into the 1930s. The incessant winds of the 1920s blew much of the topsoil east into North Dakota (Toole 1959). Further complicating the issue, grain prices continued to drop; wheat that sold for $2.34 a bushel in 1919, fell to 92 cents in 1922. Likewise, from 1919 to 1921, the cattle price 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). Those that survived the drought of a few years earlier borrowed money against the land for seed and hoped the next crop would prove their salvation. However, conditions didn't improve. In 1921, wheat stem maggots, grasshoppers, Mormon crickets, and continuing drought combined to drive more homesteaders away (Lawrence 1963). Often, homesteaders proved up on their land, acquired the deed, borrowed money against it from a loan company, usually about $3000, and walked away (Arthur 1988). In 1929, during these tough times, the stock market crashed signaling the official beginning of the Great Depression.

By the time the Depression hit the rest of the county, the people occupying the Missouri River Breaks had already experienced years of anguish and hardship. The agricultural community, which was Montana's leading industry, lost nearly 53 percent of its annual revenue between 1930 and 1932. 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 including Roosevelt's New Deal and its associated programs such as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (Loken 1993), Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

The year 1937 proved especially difficult for farmers and ranchers resulting in passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act, which allowed the government to buy back many of the private lands deemed agriculturally unfit.

WWII and Post WWII

World War II proved significant to those living in the Missouri River Breaks in several ways. Most New Deal projects lasted through the 1930s and up to 1941, with America's entrance into the War. In the early 1940s Montana's unemployment rate 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.

The agricultural economy in Montana boomed once again as the war progressed, abundant rainfall returned, and high food prices prevailed. In 1941, the state enjoyed its best crop year since 1927 and yields in 1942 and 1943 were the best farmers had ever seen. Crop values and livestock income hit a high in 1943 and continued to be robust through 1945. Between 1940 and 1948, the net cash income of Montana ranchers increased by 188 percent. Although Montana now had fewer farmers, those like Leo Gist that had hung on during the lean years were able to grow and mechanize (Malone et al. 1991:308-309).

After World War II, mechanization allowed farmers and ranchers to cut labor costs and expand in size and productivity. In 1945, the average size farm grew to over 1,500 acres and a full 64 percent used tractors, compared with 36 percent in 1930 (Loken 1993). At the same time, family farms and ranches were divided, and many farm children left to find work elsewhere or go to school. As a consequence, many farms and ranches were sold to neighbors, or in the case of some Missouri River area ranches, reverted back to the federal government. For years after the War, farms and ranches continued to be consolidated and grow in size as the small "mom and pop" farm or ranch became, more often, a ranch corporation.

Missouri River Breaks Homesteaders

In most respects, 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 failed to provide the cohesion many homesteaders elsewhere created at supply towns and railroad landings. Settlers were identified as Missouri River Breaks homesteaders; however, they lacked unification as a "Breaks" community.

The river united them in their geographic identity, but not as a community with a central gathering point. Early in the river's settlement, steamboats and barges dropped off supplies and mail, as well as the news of "happenings" along the river and the rest of the world. People on the river lived 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. The isolation, hardships and lack of community that the river bottoms offered failed to attract single women. Consequently, many homesteaders consisted of middle-aged single men who never married after homesteading on the river.

Arrival of many homesteaders to the breaks coincided with the boom. Once they arrived they discovered the Missouri Breaks area presented unique problems, the most crucial being the isolation. While gatherings of homesteaders occurred for activities such as dances and card games, the rugged topography of the breaks greatly restricted casual travel. The deep valleys and coulees of the breaks served as physical barriers that isolated neighbors. While some families did homestead along the river in the breaks area, like the Sanfords (approximately 28 miles to the east), Kipps (4 miles to the west), and Hagadones (approximately 25 miles to the east), many were single middle-aged men.

Many of these men like Jack Ervin, George Middleton, and August “Gus” Nelson never married, and some were complete hermits. Several homesteaders, likely all men, landed 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 isolated, yielded reduced productivity of land. The scarcity of productive land often prohibited a productive grain farm, even on the fertile lands along the river. Many people migrated 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 developed and modified the landscapes of their claims to fit their unique environment. 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 more readily available resources. Although supplies for a frame house could be transported by barge on the river, or even hauled down the breaks from neighboring towns, 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 lacked both the resources and time to construct a permanent residence. Breaking the land and planting crops was a higher priority.

The experiences of George Middleton, who lived five miles southeast of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District, exemplify the transitional living common for some of the homesteaders. Middleton 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 dugouts were excavated into the level ground, but many 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 accessibility of water tended to be a deciding factor in the location of homesteads. Most homesteaders settled along springs, streams and rivers. Many others dug wells to supply their domestic needs. The proximity to the Missouri River allowed for plentiful water for livestock and crops, but the muddy Missouri was not the most palatable water. Perhaps conditions were such that settlers did not feel the need to irrigate their crops; the early years were relatively lush years. The capital required to purchase a pump might have also been a factor in limiting the number of people who filed desert land claims along the river. Of all the claims patented along this portion of the Missouri River, only five were desert land claims.

As few springs have been identified along this stretch of the Missouri, other means of obtaining water were necessary. Coulees and drainages often bisected homesteads along the bottomlands. These drainages channeled seasonal alkali streams through their land. Many homesteaders were forced to get drinking water from the river or collect it during snow and rain storms. Rain barrels were probably common sights along the river.

The isolation faced by Missouri River homesteaders rivaled and often exceeded that 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 existed. In addition, the elements were as unrelenting on the river as on the Plains. Winters were harsh and cold, and summers unbearably hot. Settlers all along the Missouri lost homes, fences, and fields to the seasonal fluctuations of 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 depended on the river for communication and supplies, and always for water. Little remains of homesteaders' efforts along the Missouri; a dilapidated cabin at one site, a collapsed dugout down the river. Agricultural history spans a brief period of Missouri River history often overlooked by river promoters and tour guides. Fortunately, physical evidence from the homesteading period and beyond 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 homesteads within the breaks area still exist, the Ervin and Gist ranches still provide a fine example of the homesteading experience in one of the more foreboding areas of Montana.

**The Ervin Homestead**

John “Jack” Ervin was born in 1858 in Austin County, Texas (1860 U.S. Census; Kipp 1922). Despite the various spellings of John's name, including Irvin, Erwin, and Irwin, the correct spelling was Ervin according to Ervin Smith, who knew Ervin well (Smith 1986); this spelling is also consistent with his signature as witness on James Kipp’s Homestead Entry Final Proof, and as typed on his own homestead entry final proof for his property.

Ervin's pursuit of excitement began at the early age of 11 when he left home and stayed with a sheepherder for a month (Smith 1986). In the 1890s, Ervin trailed a cattle drive north from Texas marking his arrival in Montana. It appears he was a "wanted" man at this time (Arthur 2003). By May 1910, Ervin was working on a stock farm in the Milk River area near Harlem in what is now southern Hill County (1910 US Census). There is some discrepancy as to when Ervin actually settled immediately west of Bullwhacker Creek just north of the Missouri River. His Homestead Entry application filed in April 1922 lists May 1910, but on his later Final Proof application from 1926, he lists Spring 1911.

Whether it was 1910 or 1911, Ervin set about and continued the hard work of putting up buildings and fences, digging a well, clearing land, raising crops, and rounding up and breaking wild horses. One story suggests Ervin did not construct the original log cabin on the property, that it was a cabin left by an old woodhawk (Gist 2003). "Woodhawks” were men who cut wood to fuel the steamboats that traveled up the Missouri River as early as the 1850s and 1860s. However, no other evidence has been found to support this claim.

According to Ervin’s homestead entry final proof application of April 1922, he wrote that his house was built at the same time he settled on the property in spring 1910. He specifically lists his two-room house valued at $500, 2 miles of fence valued at $400, and a barn, sheds, and corrals valued at $400. He planted and harvested 40 acres of corn and millet, cut for hay, during the years 1921 to 1925. For the year 1926, he planted 40 acres of sweet clover and alfalfa and was in the process of breaking another 40 acres (Ervin Case File). According to a later account, Ervin’s hay field was just east across Bullwhacker Creek from the cabin (Eigell 1987: 263).

During Ervin’s tenure on the land, he only broke 80 acres of land, most likely because he was busy rounding up and breaking wild horses. Ervin did not list crop information for the years 1911 to 1920 on his homestead entry final application; however he was likely raising some feed crops to sustain his horses. By 1915, Jack had a herd of 150 horses, mainly Percheron and was a reliable source of work horses for other homesteaders along the river (Arthur 1988). Aside from horses, he also made moonshine. Despite the presence of cattle in the breaks, Ervin never ran cattle himself (Smith 1986).

Several stories regarding Ervin's demeanor, temperament and reputation as a man not to be crossed exist. One friend, Robert Eigell described Ervin as a "thin wiry man of medium height" who in 1930 possessed “a full head of white hair and a pair of piercing blue eyes,” and “a large, walrus type mustache” (Eigell 1987:263). Ervin possessed an "odd caliber" single-action frontier model six-shooter, with which he was quite proficient (Eigell 1987: 265). The gun was always within his reach and contributed to his reputation (Arthur 2003). He was known to have killed at

least two men including a sheepherder caught grazing on his property (Smith 1986) and a man he caught stealing horses (Arthur 1988).

Smith (1986) provides a more detailed account of Ervin's confrontation with the sheepherder:

> "One incident involved Jack Ervin, who lived at the bottom of Bullwhacker Creek, and a sheepherder. When he found a sheepherder grazing sheep on his land Ervin told the sheepherder not to come around to his place. Soon afterwards Ervin was awoken by the tingle of a sheep bell. Ervin went and got his 30-30 and went and killed the sheepherder. Even though Ervin killed the sheepherder, he was acquitted when other cattlemen came to his defense and he was let off as the incident was determined as "self-defense (Smith 1986)."

Smith also reported that Ervin stated he robbed a bank earlier in his life (Smith 1986). Smith apparently felt Ervin fit the mold of many people who migrated to the Missouri River Breaks county –"that's the reason all them outlaws went down to the river more than anything. They went down there to get away from the law" (Smith 1986).

When Ervin first filed for his homestead patent on October 29, 1921, it was rejected because the claim contained more than the 1862 Homestead Act permitted, a paperwork error, given that the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act was in effect. His second filing attempt under the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act also failed due to a dispute relating to his oil and gas rights to the property. He later waived his oil and gas rights and received final patent #1001225 on May 4, 1927 for his 319.57 acres (Ervin Case File).

By 1930, Ervin was in his late 60s and perhaps ready for a less labor-intensive life. On November 15, 1930, Johnny and younger brother, William George (Willie) Sanford purchased Ervin's property. Johnny and Willie were the sons of Oliver "Boss" Sanford, a well-established and successful Missouri River Breaks rancher. The boys had grown up in the Breaks, about 25 miles upriver and were well acquainted with Jack Ervin. As men in their mid-20s they had been homesteading for over a decade with their father and were actively engaged in acquiring land to expand their ranching operations.

After purchasing Ervin's homestead, they offered to let Jack stay the winter in his cabin and set about building a bunkhouse next to the corral (now gone) with the help of a friend, Robert Eigell. It was Eigell who wrote much of what we know about Ervin and the Ervin Homestead in his book, *Cows, Cowboys, Canners, and Corned Beef and Cabbage* (Eigell 1987:261-266). In the spring of 1931, Ervin relocated to the town of Hays. He died on January 5, 1941 (Montana Death Index).

**Development of Gist Bottom**

Through the Depression and up to World War II, the Sanfords used all means of hard work to develop their ranch. The winter of 1930 and spring of 1931 began a decade of work for the Sanfords, and significant use of the land at what later would be called Gist Bottom. After the bunkhouse was completed, the Sanfords used cinders from the power plant, which was already closed, to build a crude ice house. Ice cut from the river was packed and used by them or sold during the year (Fulbright et al. 1997).

Soon thereafter, Johnny Sanford brought a tractor down to the area and plowed the bottom to create a large hay field east of the creek. Sanford must have brought in the tractor with a team of horses and a flatbed or on a barge from the river, as the Bullwhacker and Gist Roads were not yet constructed (Gist 1995: 8). In 1933, the Sanfords brought black angus cattle to the bottom and began the era of cattle ranching in earnest. The Sanfords reportedly cut logs on the west ridge and began construction of a barn during the 1930s. It is not known if this barn was ever complete as a barn does not appear on 1938 aerial images.

The Sanfords continued ranching throughout the feast or famine years of the1930s while living in the Ervin cabin and the bunkhouse building near the corral. Just after the entry of the United States into World War II they sold the property to Jimmy and Lillian Kinkaid in May of 1942 (Fulbright et al. 1997).

Kinkaid was an old-time cowboy who “loved to ride broncs” (Gist 2003). Kinkaid and his stepson Doug did not make significant improvements or construct new buildings on the property, however Mrs. Kinkaid was responsible for burning the cattle and horse brands on the inside of the Ervin cabin door as well as the inscription on the header above the cabin door, “Thru this door go the best dam’d cowboys in the world” (Gist 2003). According to Leo (Sonny) Gist, Jr., they were mainly engaged in breaking horses for other ranchers, rounding up wild horses, breaking them, and selling them. The Kinkaid’s nearest neighbors were the Leo Gist family who lived about 6 miles north on Cow Creek. Jimmy and Doug Kinkaid were good friends with the Gists, and often allowed young Sonny Gist to help with breaking horses. The Kinkaids also let cattle graze on their land, and worked alongside the Gists at a large ranch to the north (Gist 1995:17).

The winter of 1947 was terrible with heavy snow and day after day of freezing temperatures. Ranchers lost many cattle and ice jams on the river caused much trouble for ranchers in the breaks. Sonny Gist remembers saving the Kinkaid’s (Ervin’s) house and cellar from ruin and paints a vivid picture of the often harsh life of Missouri River ranchers.

> Talk about a muddy trip. That was it. That 20 inches of snow we had was just going off all at once. Every coulee was a good sized creek. We were lucky we could stay on the county road where there was bridges for the first four days and by the time we crossed the first coulee it wasn't quite swimming deep. We only lost one cow. She was pretty weak and bogged down and when we pulled her out she couldn't get up. We made it to the old place, as we called the ranch

> in the breaks, that nite. There was damned little grub there but it was home, so we didn't care.
>
> After a skimpy breakfast we thought we would go down to Jimmy's because we were sure to get all we could eat there. We were quite a bit surprised when we reached the river. The worst ice jam that anybody had seen had just broke the nite before at eleven o'clock but before it broke it had put one ice cake about five foot thick on top the cellar door. And another one had smashed the side of the kitchen in. We wound up chopping ice all afternoon so we could get into the cellar to get something to eat. We rode back to the mountains in a day and a half. (Gist 1995:18).

In the mid-2000s, another harsh winter caused a very similar ice jam, which again, nearly destroyed the original Ervin cabin and likely contributed to the collapse of the cellar.

After that hard winter, Jimmy Kinkaid sold the ranch to Sonny's father, Leo Gist, in April 1947. Gist also bought the Gilmore ranch to the north, which completed a V-shaped continuum of land spanning from their original ranch on Cow Creek, down toward the river and then northwest again to the Gilmore ranch. With this configuration, the Gists had prime access to water from Cow Creek and Bullwhacker Creek, as well as the water and the grassy bottomland on the banks of the Missouri River.

Sonny Gist graduated from Big Sandy High School that summer, and began ranching with his Dad in earnest. After graduation, Sonny helped move the family operation to the Gilmore place for the summer where they would manage cows and round up horses in the breaks area until winter when they would move back north to the Cow Creek ranch. In spring 1948, they hired a contractor to put in a road from the Gilmore place to the river (now the Bullwhacker and Gist roads).

> That winter we had a cat and bulldozer build a road to the river from the Gilmore place and we moved to the river in April. It was pretty much of a wild horse place that summer. I got in all the young horses we had and kept them around kind of close to civilize em. I had fifteen head of 2's and 3's. They were all bays, pretty near all bucking, fighting, striking horses but man-o-man they were tough. I can remember only one that didn't buck. He was a natural born wring-tail and head shaker. I'd just as soon have em buck, myself, as to wring their tail. Another one of these bays, I remember, was about the worst one with his front feet. He could buck pretty well too (Gist 1995:23).

That same summer, the Gists moved a bunkhouse (Gist Cabin #2) and a school and teacherage (Gist Residence) down to the river and settled the place now known as the Gist Place. They continued to run cattle and horses along the Missouri, using the newly moored buildings for their summer place, and retreating to the Cow Creek ranch further north for the winters.

All through high school Sonny Gist was an avid rodeo man, and competed in bucking horse competitions at local and regional rodeos with some success. Unfortunately, he was badly hurt in a rodeo in 1951, ending his rodeo days (Gist 1995:43). That same year, Leo Gist died after a long illness (Montana Death Index). In 1952, Sonny's brother, Jack Gist married Ora Chapman, and they moved down into the old dugout cabin of John Ervin, while Sonny and his mother lived in the old Gist School and teacherage (Gist 2003). Jack and Ora later moved to Louisiana (Jack Gist Obituary), but Sonny continued to summer at the ranch, raising cattle and horses until the late 1970s. In 1980, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acquired the property.

**Bureau of Land Management**

Since acquisition of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom land and resources, the BLM has been a stalwart steward of the Ervin and Gist Bottom area. From efforts to remove trash and build fences to keep cattle away from the buildings, to the stabilization of the Ervin cabin and installation of an interpretive panel in the cabin, the BLM has made valiant efforts to maintain the historic character of the buildings, preserve the integrity of this extremely rural agricultural landscape, and educate the public about its importance.

Although many of the resources have fallen into disrepair, some to the extent of a reclassification from "building" to "site," together they illustrate the struggle and perseverance of life in the Missouri Breaks. In many ways, the attempt to tame and make a fruitful life in the Missouri Breaks proved much more difficult than other areas homesteaded in Montana, if only due to the extreme loneliness and isolation. The condition of the resources associated with these attempts, in this case those specifically related to the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District, eloquently epitomize the unrelenting environment of the breaks, which not only procured a human toll, but also left, and continues to leave, its unremitting mark on the vestiges of their occupation.

With continued BLM stewardship, travelers to the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument gain a better understanding of the legacy of those who settled here, broke the land, used its scarce resources, and persevered through many, often unimaginable, hardships in this lonely and unforgiving country.

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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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

**Primary location of additional data:**

__X_State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
__X_Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: Bureau of Land Management, Lewistown, MT Field Office
_____

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** __N/A_____

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ___189_____

Total area: 8,256,805 ft²

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Latitude | 47.798265 | Longitude | -109.02152443237838 |
| 2. Latitude | 47.804205 | Longitude | -109.02212686241229 |
| 3. Latitude | 47.806625 | Longitude | -109.01738688097211 |
| 4. Latitude | 47.807234 | Longitude | -109.00836127576589 |
| 5. Latitude | 47.805998 | Longitude | -109.00816813210176 |
| 6. Latitude | 47.805976 | Longitude | -109.00277297375642 |
| 7. Latitude | 47.803249 | Longitude | -109.00277068018923 |

**Or**

**UTM References**
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[ ] NAD 1927 or [x] NAD 1983

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Zone: 12 | Easting: | 648157 | Northing: 5295774 |
| 2. Zone: 12 | Easting: | 648095 | Northing: 5296433 |
| 3. Zone: 12 | Easting: | 648443 | Northing: 5296711 |
| 4. Zone: 12 | Easting : | 649117 | Northing: 5296796 |
| 5. Zone: 12 | Easting : | 649135 | Northing: 5296659 |
| 6. Zone: 12 | Easting : | 649539 | Northing: 5296667 |
| 7. Zone: 12 | Easting : | 649547 | Northing: 5296364 |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon on the following topographic map whose vertices are marked by the above reference points (1-7) and includes all or portions of the NWSW, NESW, SWSW, SESW and the NWSE, NESE, SWSE, SESE of Section 34 of Township 24 North, Range 21 East, and the NWNW of Section 3, Township 23 North Range 21 East.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary includes the buildings, sites, and structures that were historically part of the John Ervin homestead and the later Gist Family Ranch that absorbed the Ervin property. The boundary includes those lands officially homesteaded and/or historically used by Ervin, and later, the Ervin property purchased by the Gists, and other lands, not officially owned by the Gists but used as part of the Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom area operation.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: _Christine Brown, Montana Preservation Alliance; Zane Fulbright/BLM Archaeologist; Bob O'Boyle; assisted by John Boughton
organization: Montana Preservation Alliance__
street & number: 120 Reeder's Alley
city or town: Helena_____ state: _MT_____ zip code:_59601___
e-mail__christine@preservemontana.org; zfulbrig@blm.gov
telephone:_406-457-2822; 406-538-1900_____date:_July 16, 2015 _

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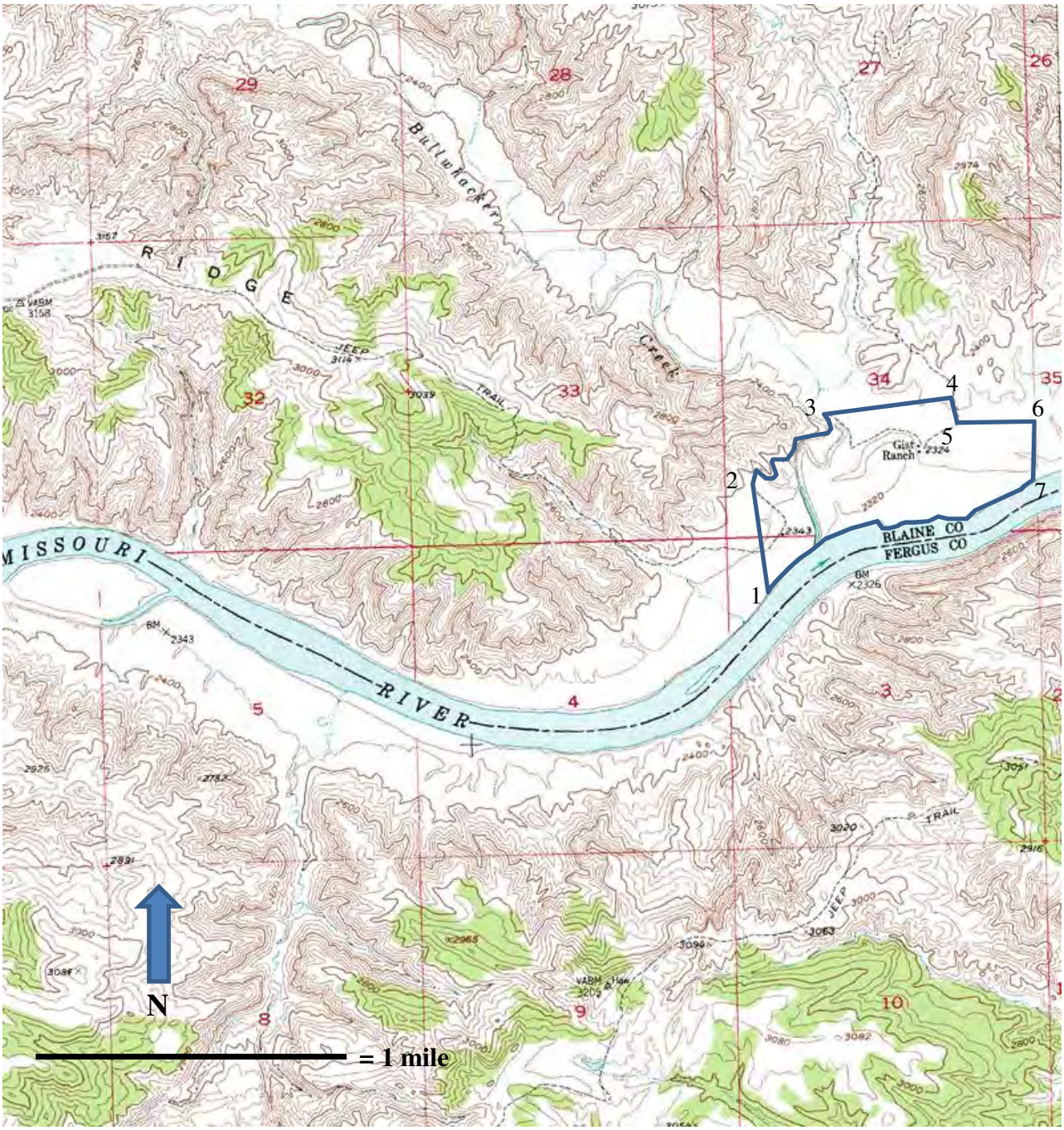
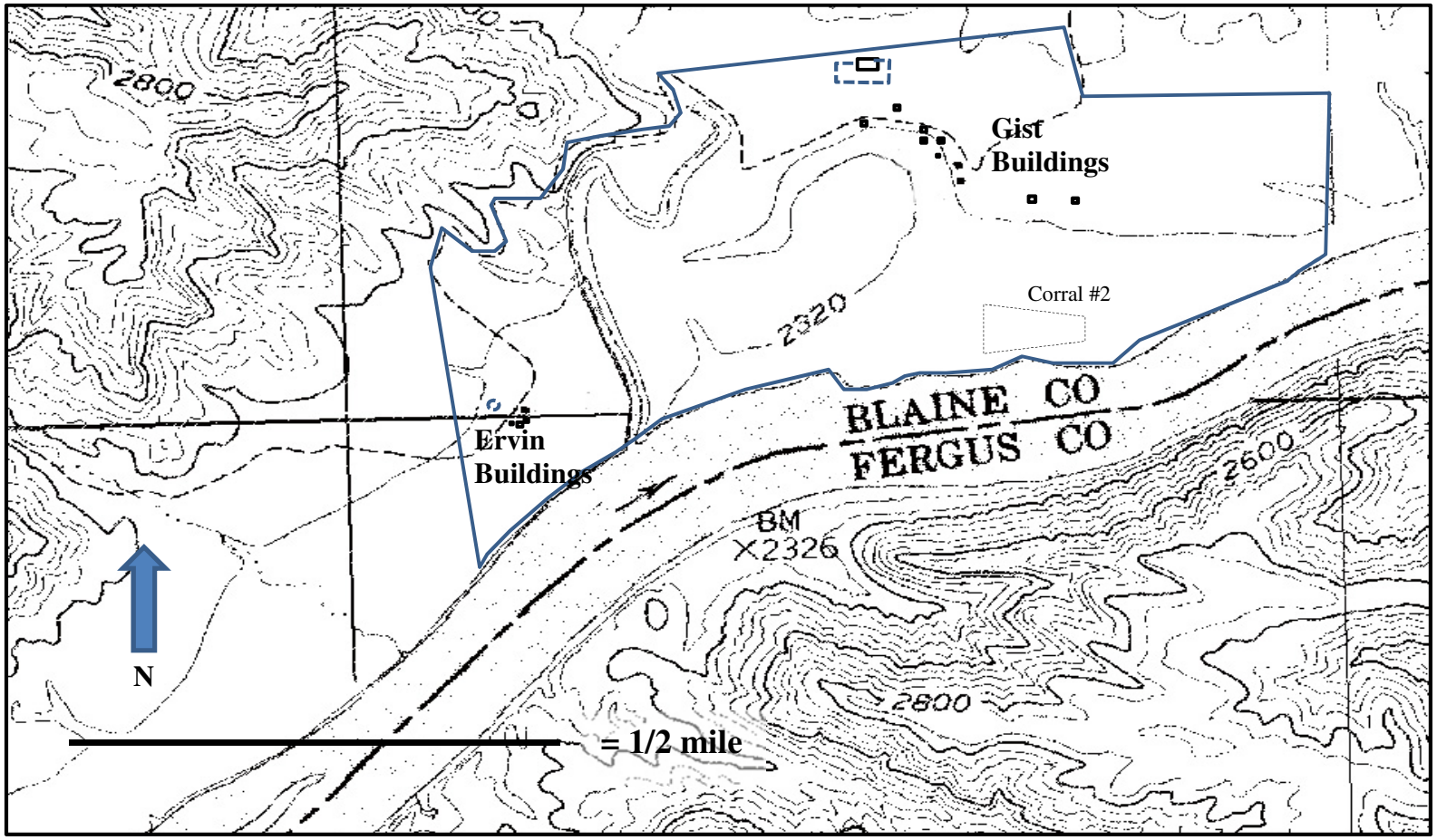
**Additional Documentation**
Submit the following items with the completed form:

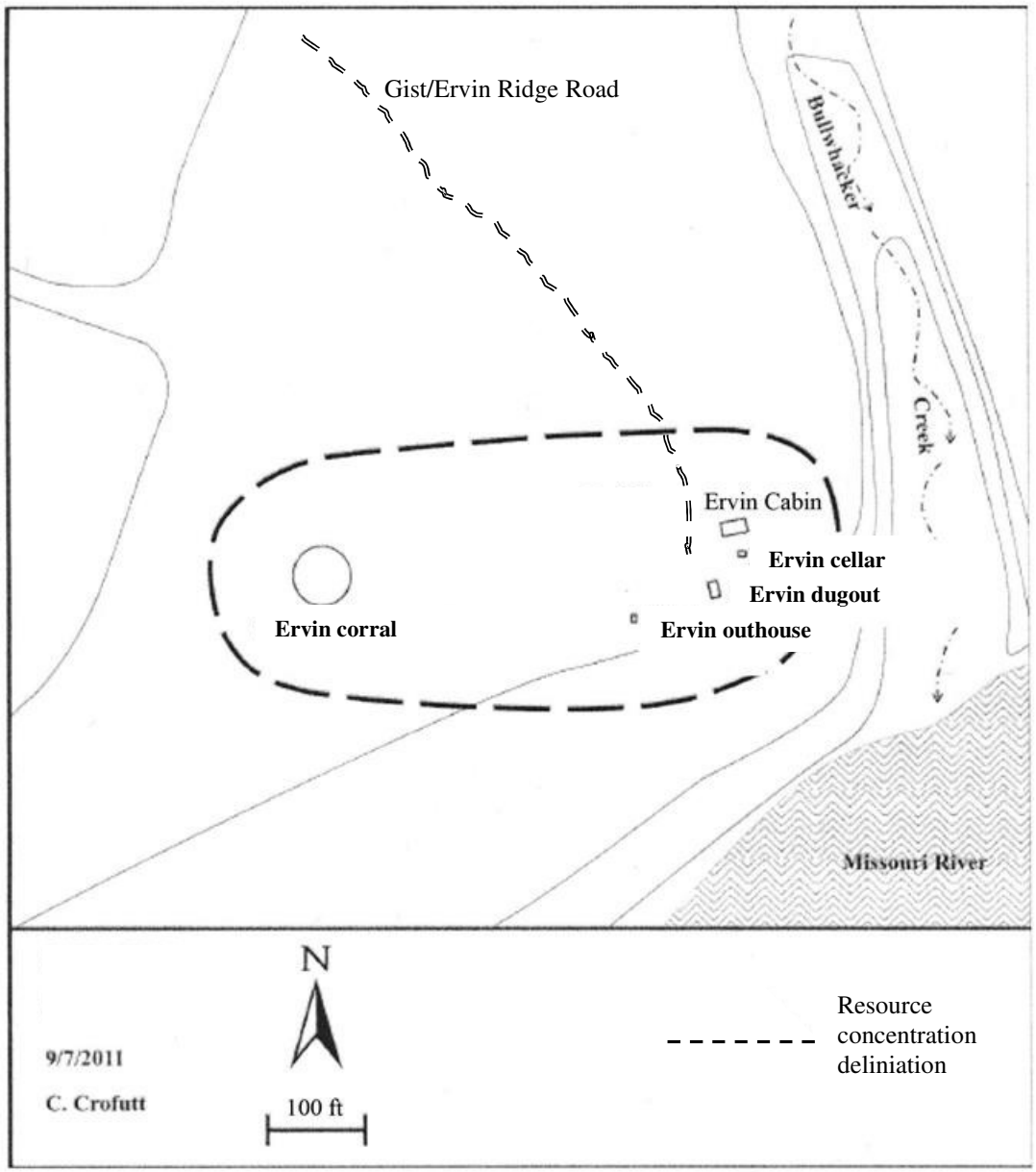
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)




**Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District**
**Found on the USGS 7.5" Sturgeon Island, MT 1954 topographic map**

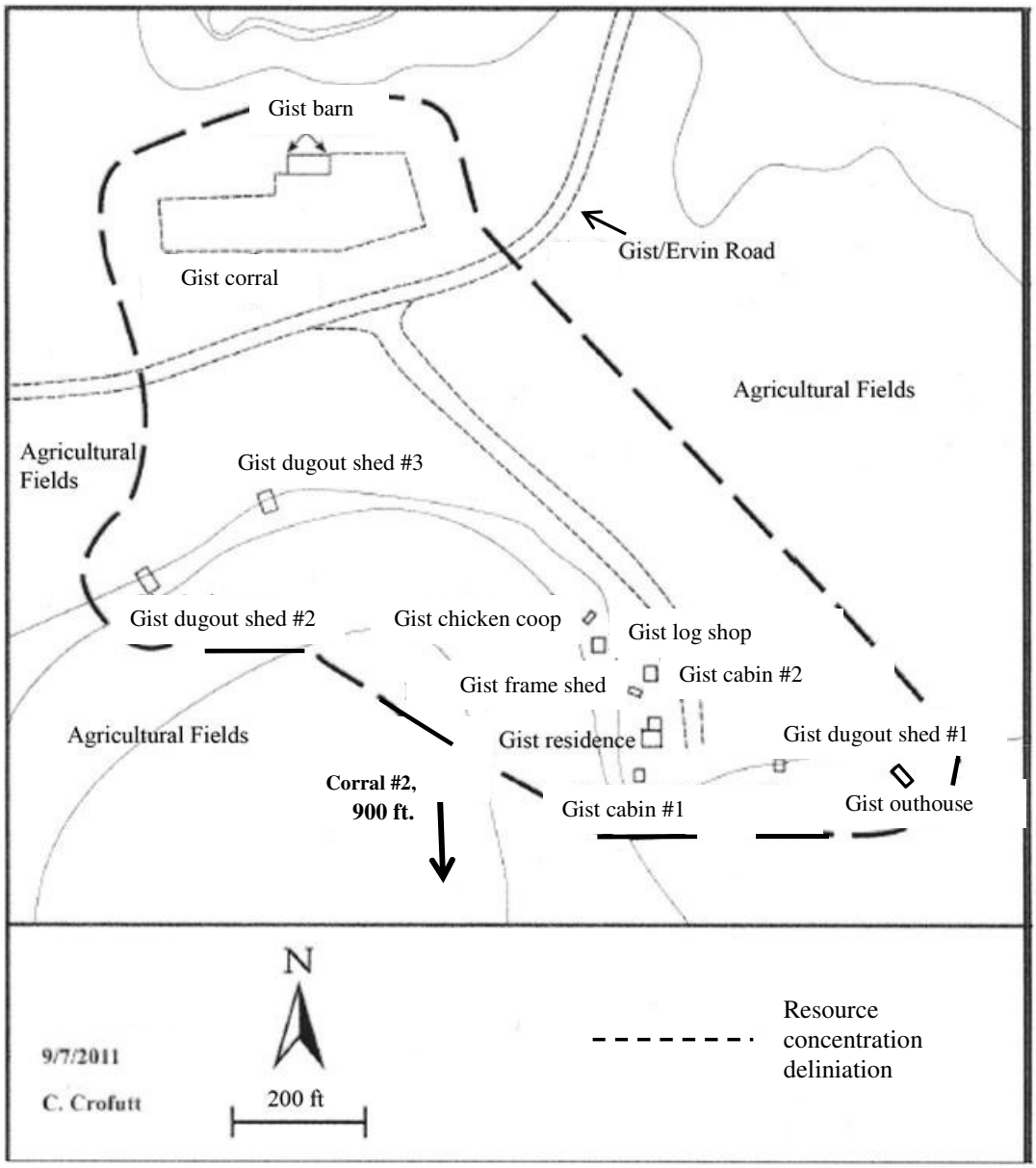



Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District Sketch Map ■ Buildings ▫ Sites ⬚ Structures
See following pages for detailed site sketches of the Ervin Homestead resource cluster and the Gist Bottom resource cluster



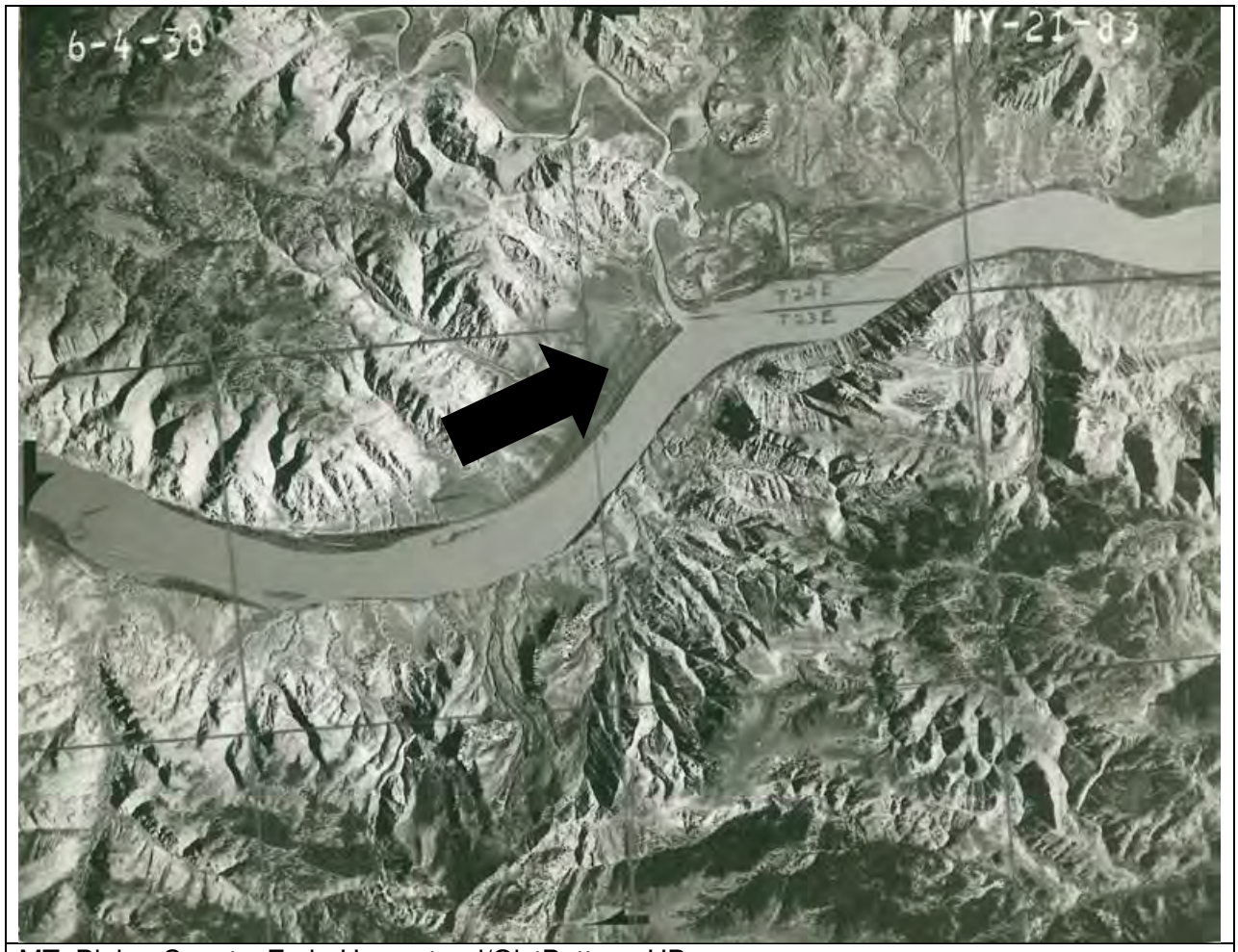

**Detail of Ervin Homestead site plan[2]**

[2] Aaberg Cultural Resource Consulting Service. Bullwhacker Class III Cultural Resources Inventory, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, Blaine County, MT. December 2011. On file at MT SHPO.

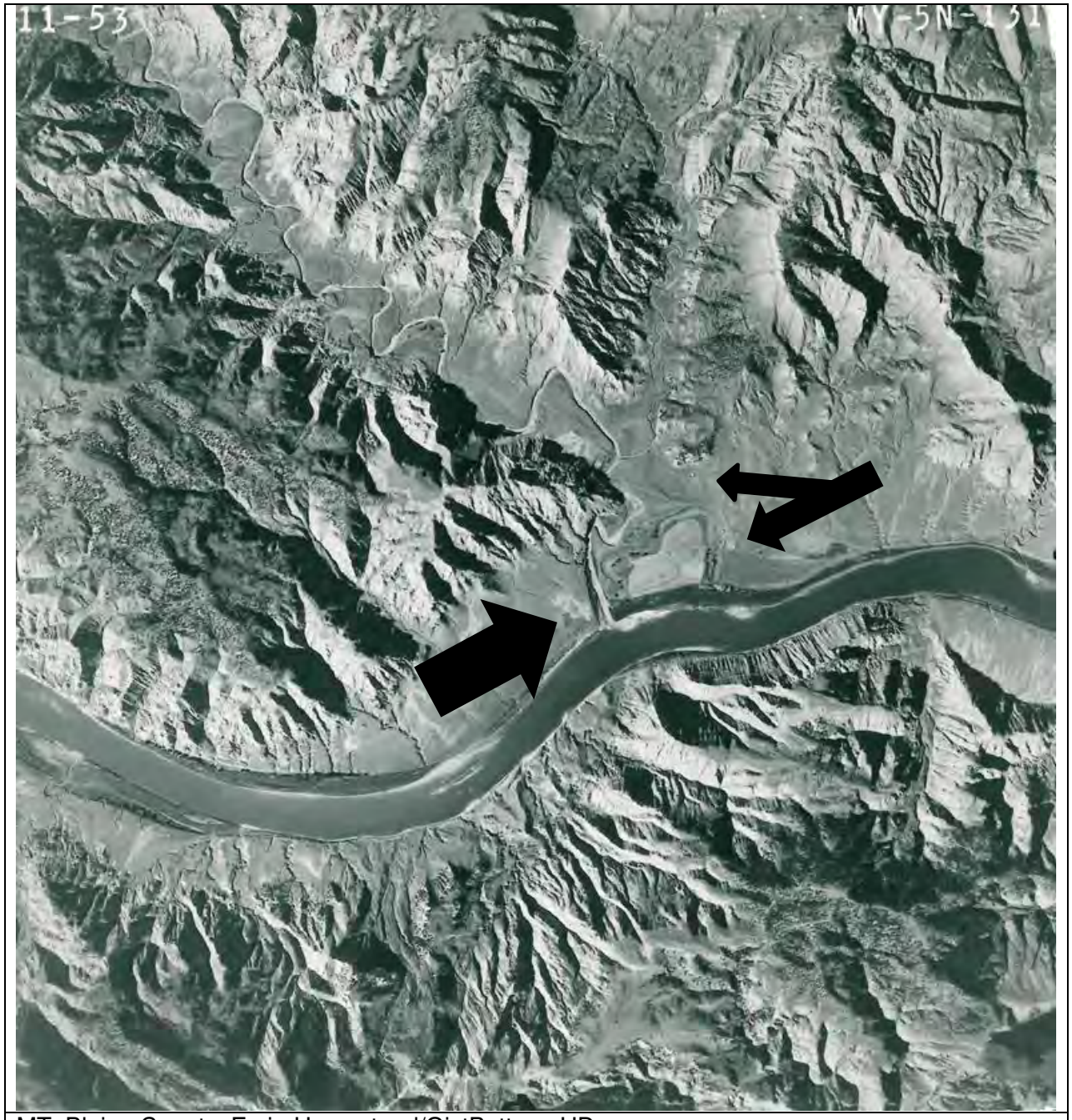



**Detail of Gist Bottom Ranch site plan**[3]

[3] Aaberg Cultural Resource Consulting Service. Bullwhacker Class III Cultural Resources Inventory, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, Blaine County, MT. December 2011. On file at MT SHPO.




MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD
June 4, 1938 Aerial photograph showing area of development at original Ervin Homestead.




MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD
November 1953 aerial photograph showing original Ervin Homestead on left and developed Gist Ranch on right.

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

**Photographs #1-14, 16-47, 51-61**

Name of Property: Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District
City or Vicinity: Missouri River Mile 122.3 Left
County: Blaine State: Montana
Photographer: Zane Fulbright, Christine Brown
Date Photographed: October 9, 2014
Description of Photograph(s) and number: See images below

**Photograph #15**

Name of Property: Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District
City or Vicinity: Missouri River Mile 122.3 Left
County: Blaine State: Montana
Photographer: Zane Fulbright
Date Photographed: May 2012
Description of Photograph(s) and number: See images below

**Photographs #48-50**

Name of Property: Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District
City or Vicinity: Missouri River Mile 122.3 Left
County: Blaine State: Montana
Photographer: Cris Crofutt, Aaberg Cultural Resource Consulting Services
Date Photographed: 2011
Description of Photograph(s) and number: See images below

**Photographs #62-64**

Name of Property: Ervin Homestead/Gist Bottom Historic District
City or Vicinity: Missouri River Mile 122.3 Left
County: Blaine State: Montana
Photographer: Historic photos curtosy of Jack Gist
Date Photographed: circa 1940-1950
Description of Photograph(s) and number: See images below

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0001
East and north elevations of rehabilitated Ervin Cabin. View to the southwest.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0002
North and west elevations of Ervin Cabin, view to the southeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0003
West and south elevations of Ervin Cabin, view to the northeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0004
South elevation of Ervin Cabin from hillside above, view to the northeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0005
East elevation entrance door of Ervin Cabin with inscribed sign above. "Thru this Door Pass The Best Dam'd Cowboys in the World." View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0006
Ervin Cabin interior door with Kinkaid brand marks. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0007
Ervin Cabin interior, view northwest from front door to kitchen shelf.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0008
Ervin Cabin interior, view looking west into log dugout wing.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0009
Ervin Cellar, east elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0010
Ervin Cellar, view looking south at roof.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0011
Ervin Dugout Shed. View looking north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0012
Ervin Outhouse. View looking south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0013
Ervin Corral. View looking west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0014
Ervin Corral, detail. View looking north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0015
Ervin Corral and gate. View looking southeast. Photo by Zane Fulbright, May 2012.

**Gist Ranch Buildings**

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0016
Gist Cabin #1. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0017
Gist Cabin #1. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0018
Gist Cabin #1. North elevation. View to the south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0019
Gist Cabin #1. West elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0020
Gist Residence. Overview looking north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0021
Gist Residence. Overview looking east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0022
Gist Residence. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0023
Gist Residence. East elevation. View to the southwest.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0024
Gist Residence. Detail of south wing. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0025
Gist Residence. Detail of north wing. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0026
Gist Residence. North elevation. View to the south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0027
Gist Residence. West elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0028
Gist Residence. Detail of collapsed well, west elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0029
Gist Cabin #2. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0030
Gist Cabin #2. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0031
Gist Cabin #2. North elevation. View to the south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0032
Gist Cabin #2. West and south elevations. View to the northeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0033
Gist Frame Shed. South and east elevation. View to the northwest.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0034
Gist Frame Shed. East and north elevation. View to the southwest.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0035
Gist Log shop. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0036
Gist Log shop. West elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0037
Gist Log Shop. North elevation. View to the south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0038
Gist Log shop. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0039
Gist Dugout Shed #1. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0040
Gist Dugout Shed #1, Dugout shed. East elevation. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0041
Gist Dugout Shed #1. West elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0042
Gist Dugout Shed #1. Interior west wall. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0043
Gist Outhouse. South elevation. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0044
Gist Outhouse. South and east elevations. View to the northwest.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0045
Gist Outhouse. North elevation. View to the south.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0046
Gist Outhouse. West elevation. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0047
Gist Outhouse. Interior view of west wall. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0048
Gist Chicken Coop. View to the northwest. Photo by Cris Crofutt, Aaberg Cultural Resources, 2011.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0049
Gist Dugout Shed #2. View to the east. Photo by Cris Crofutt, Aaberg Cultural 2011.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0050
Gist Dugout Shed #3. View to the west. Photo by Cris Crofutt, Aaberg Cultural 2011.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0051
Gist Barn. View to the north.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0052
Gist Barn. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0053
Gist Barn. View to the west.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0054
Gist Corral Complex. View to the east.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0055
Gist Corral Complex. View to the northeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0056
Gist Corral Complex and fields and pasture. View southwest toward main ranch buildings.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0057
Gist/Ervin Ridge Road from north ridge showing fork to head south toward Gist Ranch buildings and east toward Ervin Homestead.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0058
Overview Showing Bullwhacker Creek in foreground. View looking southeast.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0059
Overview of Gist/Ervin Bottom showing historic fields and pasture. View looking south-southeast toward Ervin Homestead (in yellow trees at top right). Collapsed Gist Barn in foreground.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0060
Overview of Gist Bottom showing historic fields and pasture. View looking southwest. Gist Ranch buildings clustered at right.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0061
Overview of Gist Ranch buildings showing historic fields and pasture. View looking southwest with breaks on south side of Missouri River.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0062
Gist family on horses, ca. 1950 with Building #2 (left behind horses) and #3 in background. View to the west. Photo courtesy Jack Gist.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0063
Gist children, ca. 1940. Standing on south side of Building #2, when it was still the Gist School. View to the northwest. Photo courtesy Jack Gist.

MT_Blaine County_Ervin Homestead/GistBottom_HD_0064
Gist horse near corrals, ca. 1950. View looking south. Photo courtesy Jack Gist.

THRU THIS DOOR PASS THE BEST
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John "Jack" Ervin Homestead