

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch
other names/site number Wilber Homestead/5CF.2878

2. Location

street & number 17975 County Road 338 N/A not for publication
city or town Buena Vista X vicinity
state Colorado Code CO county Chaffee code 015 zip code 81211

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

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History
Colorado
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting official Date
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
other (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch
Name of Property

Chaffee, Colorado
County and State

5. Classification

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

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

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

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 6 | 5 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | district |
| 2 | 0 | site |
| 8 | 1 | structure |
| 0 | 0 | object |
| 16 | 6 | Total |

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Field

AGRICULTURE/Storage

AGRICULTURE/Irrigation Facility

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Field

AGRICULTURE/Storage

AGRICULTURE/Irrigation Facility

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Pioneer Log

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: WOOD/Log

OTHER/Vertical Board

OTHER/Cinderblock

roof: METAL

other:

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Narrative Statement of Significance

(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

Located 3.9 miles west-southwest of the small mountain town of Buena Vista in Chaffee County, Colorado, the nominated area of the 1887 Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch covers 117.8 acres in the shadow of 14,197' Mount Princeton towering to the southwest and the foothills of Mount Yale to the west. The 3.3-acre ranch headquarters in the northwest corner of the tract includes log and frame buildings and structures of a variety of functions necessary for successful agricultural operations during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the buildings are constructed of materials native to the area, a few consist of recycled materials, and a few were moved from Leadville or within the site; all contributing resources represent historic methods of construction traditional for ranch buildings and structures. Nonhistoric resources represent construction materials and techniques common in agricultural areas during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. With its retention of large amounts of historic grazing and irrigated lands; preservation of a large variety of agricultural buildings, structures, machinery, and implements; and continued operation by the same family for more than a century, the ranch retains a high degree of integrity conveying its historic character during the period of significance, 1887-1965.

Elaboration

The district contains twenty-two resources (see Table 1), including sixteen contributing and six noncontributing; most of the noncontributing evaluations result from addition of new or alteration of old buildings as part of the continued operation of the ranch. Construction dates for resources were established through interviews with the owners, homestead records, county assessor records, and published histories. In some cases, construction dates are presented as a range of years. If a date of construction could not be definitively determined to be within the period of significance, the resource was evaluated as noncontributing.

Contributing

Ranch Site, Map Reference 1, 1887, Site, Photographs 1 through 13

Since 1887 this land has been the site of farming and ranching operations initiated by Ernest Wilber and continued by three generations of the Franzel family. The property is surrounded by agricultural lands, with Mount Princeton and its foothills to the southwest, the foothills and Mount Yale rising to the west, and more distant mountain ranges to the south and east creating magnificent scenic vistas (Photographs 1 through 4 and Figure 1).

Headquarters Area. The ranch headquarters stands at the northwest corner of the property, displaying buildings grouped by function.¹ It is roughly divided into three areas by the north-south driveway extending from County Road 338 and the east-west Michigan Ditch. The northeast quadrant of the headquarters is the focus of domestic life. Enclosed by a protective woven wire fence, the area includes the one-story main house, a small shed, a gazebo, vegetable gardens (growing plants such as carrots, beans, lettuce, zucchini, and beets), flower gardens (including old lilacs, roses, and peonies), a historic apple orchard, rows of historic currant shrubs (used for wine), a grass lawn, a fenced dog run, and numerous shade trees along the perimeter (Photographs 5 and 11). The northwest section across the driveway contains a modern garage, brooder house, feed shed, bunkhouse ruin, chicken house, wood shed, and two wells. Large cottonwood trees and blue spruces are present, as well as open land in the northwest corner.

¹ In terms of layout, the headquarters displays an informal central courtyard of open space shaded by some trees and surrounded by building groups.

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Narrow, unlined Michigan Ditch runs west to east and roughly divides the headquarters in half.² A corrugated metal culvert carries the ditch under the driveway leading to the southern part of the headquarters. The southwest part of the area includes an ice house, machine shed, and a garage. An immense cottonwood tree is adjacent to the ice house, with open grazing land to the west. The southeast section of the headquarters is the focus of animal care and housing and vehicle and machinery storage and repair, containing log and metal barns, a blacksmith shop/tool shop/hog butchering building, a divided corral (with a squeeze chute and loading chute), old farm equipment, and a cistern (Photographs 7, 9, 12, and 13). Numerous pieces of historic farm equipment and construction materials are found around the headquarters.

Open Lands. The remaining 114.5 acres of the parcel hold open areas consisting of grazing lands and irrigated fields (see Overview Sketch Map). The northern third of the parcel, lying east of the headquarters and adjacent to County Road 338, is irrigated by the Michigan Ditch and was historically used for crops and hay raising. The roughly 21.4-acre area is traversed by feeder ditches extending north and south from the main ditch (Photographs 3 and 4). Open grazing lands occupy the remaining 93.1 acres of the parcel, lying south of the irrigated area and the headquarters area. Current owner Kenneth Franzel notes many rocks present in the south field were picked up, stacked, and used in the foundations of most of the buildings (Photograph 8). Immediately southwest of the headquarters along the west edge of the parcel adjacent to an unpaved road is a one-third-acre area containing rows of trees and shrubs (including juniper and ponderosa pines) that were planted in the 1990s as an unsuccessful windbreak (Photograph 6).

Alterations. Some buildings historically present in the headquarters area are no longer extant, having been removed as they became obsolescent and/or damaged by wind (Photograph 8). An outhouse stood about twenty feet southeast of the current shed, south of the main house and near the fence. A smokehouse was located where the current shed is. In the northwest quadrant, southeast of the brooder house, the location of a rock-walled root cellar (about 25' x 20') is now marked by a slight depression in the ground.³ The southeast quadrant contained a log barn for hogs and a fenced pig pasture in the area south of the large metal barn. An open cattle shed was west of the hog barn; its north wall and foundation are now the south fence of the corral. An enclosed cattle barn stood between the current cattle shed and the garage. Between the garage and the log barn was a hay barn. All of these buildings were removed in the late 1960s.

Barn, Map Reference 2, ca. 1888-1891,⁴ Building, Photographs 14 through 17

Erected during the homestead era of the ranch by Ernest Wilber, this large log barn is constructed of materials native to the area. Its southwest corner projects into the corral area. The barn first held dairy cows; Kenneth Franzel found evidence of the dairy when working on the barn and discovered a brass token indicating it was good for a quart of milk from E. Wilber. After the dairy ended about 1908, horses used for farm work were housed in the barn. The interior stalls were reconfigured during the horse period; one partition remains today. No storage loft was included; a separate hay barn was erected on the property. A shed roof frame bay of the barn provided space for a granary as well as buggy and car storage.⁵

The rectangular (32' x 31') barn stands at the north end of the headquarters corral facing east. The gabled-roof building is oriented east-west, with the shed bay on the north wall. The foundation consists of stones gathered from the site and some added concrete. The walls of the barn are composed of round logs with daubing that

² Only real property, not water rights (per 36 CFR 60.6), is the subject of this nomination.

³ The Franzel Ranch is very likely also eligible under Criterion D, but additional investigation beyond the scope of this nomination preparation is needed. No surveys focused on historic archaeology have been conducted, but archaeological potential may reside in identification of discrete features, such as former privy pits or trash middens, and artifacts related to ethnicity and assimilation, in particular frugality and recycling. Such potential should be considered when planning future ground-disturbing activities within the area.

⁴ U.S., General Land Office, Leadville, Colorado, Case File for Homestead No. 717, Sec. 22-23, Township 14 South, Range 79 West, Colorado, Patent 27 December 1898, National Archives, Washington, D.C. The exact date of the barn is uncertain. In his 1890 Homestead Affidavit, Ernest Wilber indicated he had a barn. Dairying, which this barn shows evidence of being used for, began in 1891. In his 1898 Homestead Proof, Wilber testified his improvements then included "barns."

⁵ Kenneth Franzel, Rock Ledge/Franzel Ranch, Buena Vista, Colorado, Interviews by Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons, 22 August 2012 and 16 September 2014.

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are joined with full dovetail notching; vertical planks cover the corners, except at the southeast. The walls above the logs are clad with vertical boards. The walls of the shed roof bay also display vertical boards. Cut and round wire nails are found on the building. The barn roof has overhanging eaves, corrugated metal roofing on the east slope, and standing seam metal roofing on the west; the shed bay is roofed with standing seam metal.

The front (east) wall of the barn at the south end contains a two-part vertical board door with a plain board surround. Adjacent to the entrance is an upright board holding old horseshoes. The vertical board-clad gable face is blank. Further north, the east wall of the shed roof bay includes double vertical board doors with metal strap hinges facing a small concrete apron. Above the doors is an awning door that can be opened to accommodate taller vehicles. A four-light wood window is at the north end of the east wall.

The north and west walls of the shed roof bay are clad with vertical boards. The north wall has no openings. The west wall of the shed bay near the center has a small opening with a vertical board door with strap hinges. The opening was used to insert grain. The west wall of the barn at the south end contains a vertical board pedestrian door illuminated by a metal goose neck light. The south wall of the barn, adjacent to the corral, contains a four-light window to the west and a two-light square window to the east, both with plain board surrounds. Between the two windows, a vertical plank extends from the foundation to the top of the wall in the location where two sections of logs meet.

Interior. The first story of the barn has an open aisle along the south wall and four open stalls along the north wall defined by vertical posts; the west end of the stalls has a vertical board divider (Photograph 16). The upper level is accessed by a ladder near the southwest corner. The roof framing consists of thick diameter vertical posts, a ridge beam, and mid-span purlins. Additional support is provided by smaller diameter posts mortised into the purlins and joists (Photograph 17). The building was constructed with a gable roof to help it shed rain and snow; the "loft" was never used for hay storage.

Corral, Map Reference 22, pre-1927, Structure, Photographs 7, 14, 15, 33, and 34

The 89' x 89' L-shaped corral lies between the barn (at its northeast corner, Map Reference 2) and the hay shed (at the southwest corner, Map Reference 19). The hay shed is completely within the corral and the southwest corner of the barn projects into the corral. The vertical board south fence of the corral consists of the north wall and foundation of an open cattle shed once present to the south. The west wall is also composed of vertical boards. The remaining corral fence consists of wood posts with horizontal metal rails. A vertical board pedestrian gate and a dimensional wood cattle gate south of the barn provide access to the corral. The smaller leg of corral to the southeast contains a timber and wood pole loading chute and a metal squeeze chute that project to the north.

Blacksmith Shop/Tool Shop/Hog Butchering Building, Map Reference 3, ca. 1890s, Building, Photographs 18 and 19

This multipurpose building erected during the homestead era contained a space for blacksmithing and tool storage as well as for hog butchering and scalding. The one-story side-gabled roof rectangular (25' x 13') building, which appears to result from the joining of two separate log components, sits northeast of the barn and faces south. The gable faces are clad with vertical boards, and walls are composed of round and square unnotched logs with daubing and vertical corner posts atop a stone foundation. Some cut nails were observed in the logs. The roof has overhanging eaves, a red brick chimney at the center on the north roof slope, and corrugated metal roofing. The front (south) wall contains a central four-panel wood door with a plain board surround, paired four-light wood windows to the west, and a boarded up rectangular wood window opening to the east. Antlers and metalwork are attached the wall. The east wall is composed of round and square log sections divided by a vertical post and has a central screened window opening boarded up on the inside. The north is also divided into two sections by a vertical board; the west section has a square window with a screen and a plain wood surround. The west wall is blank. Brick and metal are stored in areas adjacent to and near the building.

Ice House, Map Reference 4, ca. 1890s, Structure, Photograph 20

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Ice cut on a pond on nearby Cottonwood Creek was stored in this ice house by the Wilbers and Franzels. The walls of the rectangular (12' x 10') log building have sawdust insulation and the foundation is stone. The walls are composed of round logs with daubing and chinking joined at the corner with half-dovetail notching. The gable faces are clad with vertical boards. Some cut nails are present. The deteriorated side-gabled roof displays projecting purlins on the north and south and a few roofing boards. The east wall contains a center, double-thickness vertical board door with strap hinges and wood latch. The remaining walls are blank. A massive cottonwood tree is located near the northwest corner of the building, which abuts the machine shed on the south.

Machine Shed, Map Reference 5, ca. 1900s, Building, Photograph 21

The long rectangular machine shed (38' x 18') displays north, south, and west walls composed of round logs that are V-notched at the southwest and southeast corners and cut off at the northwest corner. The shallow side-gabled roof is clad with corrugated metal. The front (east wall) contains an off-center entrance projection with a shed roof and walls composed of vertical boards (upper) and square logs with adze marks (lower). The east wall of the entrance projection is open, but it once had doors whose strap hinges are still present. North of the projection the east wall has a vertical board vehicle door and vertical board wall cladding. South of the projection the wall is composed of massive round logs, with vertical boards above.

Brooder House, Map Reference 6, ca. 1890s, moved to site in 1920s, Building, Photograph 22

The one-story side-gabled roof rectangular frame brooder house (12' x 9') was moved from Leadville to the ranch by Gustav Franzel. Despite the adornment of a stained glass window, the building served an important practical function in animal care as a brooder or heated place where baby chicks were raised. The building rests on a log sill foundation. All walls except the north are clad with horizontal lap siding with corner boards; the north (rear) is clad with vertical boards. The roofing consists of rolled asphalt. The building faces south and the front wall features an entrance with an off-center four-paneled wood door and a short wood ramp to the west and a large Queen Anne-style window to the east with small colored lights flanking a large center clear light. The interior, now used for storage, has a wood plank floor, walls, and ceiling.

Feed Shed, Map Reference 7, ca. 1890s, Structure, Photographs 23 and 24

The rectangular (11' x 9') feed shed from the homestead era displays vertical board walls and a steep shed roof clad with vertical boards. A vertical board door with metal strap hinges and two metal latches is present on the east wall. The south wall contains an off-center square opening covered with chicken wire under the eaves. The north wall is blank, and the west wall abuts the ruins of the bunkhouse.

Bunkhouse, Map Reference 8, ca. late 1880s-1890s, Site, Photographs 23 and 24

The rectangular (40' x 11') bunkhouse ruin from the homestead era has a log foundation and abuts the west wall of the feed shed. The partially standing walls are composed of large square hewn logs joined at the northwest and southeast corners with V-notching. Some logs used in the rear wall are about 15" in diameter. The front (south) displays a massive sill log and a log beam above supported by wood posts and the end walls. The façade retains a door frame and a vertical board door at the east end.

Well House, Map Reference 9, 1959, Structure, Photograph 25

About twenty feet north of the bunkhouse is a water well with a low shed roof well cover (6' x 6') covered with asphalt rolled roofing edged in metal. A hatch with wood handles is at the southeast corner and a pipe projects near the northeast corner. The walls are composed of plywood and horizontal boards. This well is structure identification number 5221 in Water Division 2, Water District 11.

Well House, Map Reference 17, 1964, Structure, Photograph 32

Near the southeast corner of the garage is a well with a shallow gabled roof cover clad with rolled asphalt roofing. The walls are composed of wood panels with vertical scoring. This well is structure identification number 5078 in Water Division 2, Water District 11.

Chicken House, Map Reference 10, ca. 1940s, Building, Photographs 25 and 26

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North of the wood shed and west of the bunkhouse ruin, this one-story shed roof (17' x 13') chicken house faces east. The walls are composed of tan cinderblocks composed of cinders from the Buena Vista Smelter. The building has rolled asphalt roofing and overhanging eaves. The front wall contains an off-center four-panel wood door with large paired single-light windows to the north. The remaining walls are blank.

Wood Shed, Map Reference 11, pre-1920, Structure, Photograph 27

The one-story wood shed (24' x 10') faces east and has a shed roof with overhanging eaves and corrugated metal roofing. The front is divided into three bays by vertical log supports, with the two north bays filled with firewood. The south bay has a vertical board door with metal strap hinges south of an open area enclosed with woven wire. The west (rear) and south walls are clad with vertical slab log siding; wood pole beams project slightly on the south wall. The building is attached to the chicken house on the north.

Cistern, Map Reference 12, 1910s-1920s, Structure, Photograph 18

The cistern in the southeast section of the headquarters is concrete lined and was utilized primarily for watering the ranch animals. The structure could contain enough water to last the winter. The circular 12' diameter cistern is 16' deep and encircled by a retaining wall consisting of three courses of rounded native stones topped by a concrete rim. The center is filled with earth and contains a central concrete pad with a green metal pump. Originally, the cistern had a concrete and wood cover.

Michigan Ditch, Map Reference 13, 1887, Structure, Photograph 28

The Michigan Ditch, which ends near the northeast corner of the ranch, provided water to irrigate the fields growing peas, grains, potatoes, lettuce, and hay from the homestead era forward. The ditch (structure identification number 661) is located in Water Division 2, Water District 11. Kenneth Franzel reports that water ran in the ditch throughout the summer historically, but the sale of water rights to cities since the 1950s has reduced it to flowing only one month a year now, thus ending the growing of hay. This shallow, approximately one-foot-wide earthen ditch flows west to east through the property with water diverted from Cottonwood Creek, a mile to the southwest. Small, unlined feeder ditches extend from this structure into the fields.

Cow Shed/Hay Storage, Map Reference 19, late 1950s-early 1960s, Building, Photograph 34

This rectangular cow shed/hay storage building (38' x 16') is located at the southwest corner of the corral and faces east. The one-story shed roof building has corrugated metal roofing. The rear and south walls are composed of vertical boards; the east and north sides are open. The front features pole supports with diagonal braces and pole beams.

Noncontributing

House, Map Reference 14, ca. 1888, 1927 remodeled and expanded 1987, Building, Photographs 29 and 32

In his Homestead Proof testimony, Ernest Wilber reported building his log house about 1888. The one-story gabled roof L-shaped main house includes the original log homestead house and a 1927 rear addition that was moved in from Leadville. In 1987, the Franzels remodeled the dwelling, expanding the north wing eastward, re-siding and re-roofing it, and adding new doors and windows. The walls are clad with wood panels with vertical scoring. The north wall includes two six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows toward the east and two toward the west; the original log house is at the west end, with the windows in their original position. A small projecting side-gabled-roof enclosed porch with a paneled door facing a concrete stoop is on the west. Farther south is the 1927 wing that terminates with a slightly lower, gable-roofed, projecting enclosed porch. This building is evaluated as noncontributing due to expansion and remodeling resulting in loss of historic physical integrity.

Shed, Map Reference 15, post-1980s, Building, Photograph 30

South of the house is a small one-story rectangular gambrel roof shed with wood panel walls with vertical scoring and a door of the same material. There are no openings on the other walls. The building rests on concrete block piers and features lattice skirting. This building is evaluated as noncontributing due to its construction after the period of significance.

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Garage, Map Reference 16, 1987, Building, Photographs 31 and 32

This one-story rectangular (30' x 22') side-gabled roof garage lies west of the house across the driveway and faces north toward County Road 338. The walls are clad with the same wood panel siding with vertical scoring as the house. The front contains an off-center overhead four-part wood sectional garage door with one section glazed. A gravel driveway extends to the road. This building is evaluated as noncontributing due to its construction after the period of significance.

Garage, Map Reference 18, 1920s, Building, Photograph 33

The one-story front-gabled-roof rectangular (16' x 14') garage stands east of the machine shed. The walls are clad with flush horizontal boards. The façade contains double vertical board doors, while the east and west walls are blank. The building has a concrete foundation. Moved to the ranch during the historic period, the garage was relocated to its current location in 1987 when a new garage was constructed on its former site. This building is evaluated as noncontributing because it was moved from one location on the headquarters to another after the period of significance.

Barn, manufactured and erected by Cleary, Map Reference 20, 2002, Building, Photograph 35

This large one-story, rectangular (60' x 40') front-gabled roof prefabricated barn (assembled in just twelve hours) faces north and provides storage for farm vehicles. The walls consist of standing seam metal panels that include bands of translucent plastic along the top of the east and west walls. The north and south walls contain large top-hung sliding standing seam metal doors. This building is evaluated as noncontributing due to its construction after the period of significance.

Gazebo, Map Reference 21, ca. 2004, Structure, Photograph 36

Built in conjunction with a residential development to the east, the small gazebo was acquired by the Franzels in 2014 and moved to its present location near the old apple orchard. The pyramidal roof gazebo has a wood deck, log supports and balustrade, and a wood shingle roof. The gazebo is evaluated as noncontributing because it was moved to the district after the period of significance.

Integrity

Location

The location of the ranch headquarters has not changed, and within it only one building, a 1920s garage that is physically unaltered, was moved from its original location to another nearby site after the period of significance.

Setting

The broad setting of the ranch within the larger landscape, dominated by Mount Princeton and its foothills, the foothills of Mount Yale, other distant mountain ranges, and agricultural fields and buildings, is virtually unchanged since the period of significance. The historic layout of the headquarters area, with buildings grouped by function around the ranch yard, remains intact. Vegetation established during the historic period is present, including cottonwood and blue spruce trees, buffalo grass, old roses and lilacs, an apple orchard, and currant shrubs. The Michigan Ditch and feeder ditches wind through the site, and barbed and woven wire fences continue to divide and enclose the land. Within the headquarters, some buildings were removed after they no longer served a continuing function or were damaged beyond repair (as detailed above under the Site description). Buildings serving the modern workings of the ranch added to the site include a garage, barn, sheds, and a gazebo; all are of vernacular and pragmatic designs that do not detract from the historic resources. Historic equipment utilized historically or currently on the ranch stands next to the barns, and historic construction materials and other artifacts of more than a century of occupation of the land are found throughout the site.

Design

The ranch headquarters displays integrity of design, maintaining its historic layout, with resources grouped by function around a central open area. The northeast area contains the main house, which incorporates the smaller ca. 1888 homestead house. The south half of the headquarters contains animal care, maintenance and storage buildings, and food production facilities. A fenced corral in the southeast area is associated with the

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historic log barn and a cow shed. The northwest section includes chicken and bunk houses, as well as feed, ice, and wood storage buildings. A newer garage/workshop, in the location of a historic garage, lies north of these buildings, across from the main house. The historic pattern of irrigated fields and grazing lands remains as established by the Franzel family.

The contributing buildings of the district display a high level of historic design integrity, exhibiting few changes since the historic period. The principal design theme is the employment of simple, functional construction utilizing native materials and skills and techniques available in frontier areas of the West during the nineteenth century. The only ornamental element present is the stained glass window of the brooder house, a recycled building from the mining town of Leadville. Primary examples of early design skills are the 1880s massive log barn with square-notched corners, the log blacksmith, tool shop, hog butchering building with its chimney associated with pork production, and the bunkhouse ruin displaying massive log walls with V-notches. The design of the bunkhouse is impacted by deterioration, as its roof and parts of its walls are gone. The original log house dating to 1888 is contained within the main house, which has been substantially expanded and is evaluated as noncontributing. The missing barns, as noted above, somewhat alter the spatial relationship of historic resources in the southeast quadrant of the headquarters.

Materials

The district displays a high level of retention of historic materials, as significantly seen in the native log buildings displaying a variety of notching. The vertical and horizontal board siding found on some buildings is also representative of popular materials of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The foundations of many buildings are composed of stones removed from the grazing and irrigated fields of the ranch. The brooder house maintains its unusual stained glass window and weatherboard siding. The chicken house, erected with cinderblocks incorporating cinders from the Buena Vista smelter, is a notable use of locally produced materials. The main house in its expanded form incorporates an original log dwelling, with the old and newer construction clad in panel siding. Other newer materials are present in the 2002 metal panel barn.

Workmanship

The district retains a high level of integrity in terms of workmanship, with buildings displaying the skills required to construct log and frame buildings meeting the requirements of an active and self-sufficient ranching operation during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The architecture's vernacular emphasis represents the rancher's concern for cost, utilizing available materials, and creating sturdy buildings requiring little maintenance. Workmanship is seen in the technique of hewing, notching, and joining the logs; the reuse of materials; and the placement and erection of buildings serving specific functions for the ranch. The historic ditch running through the property displays techniques of construction during the era before mechanization of irrigation projects.

Feeling

The ranch strongly retains integrity of feeling that conveys its history as a homestead founded in the late 1880s and which evolved and expanded to meet changes in animal husbandry, agricultural technology, crop preference, environmental conditions, economic conditions, construction materials, and the host of considerations faced by ranchers during the course of more than 125 years of operation. The integrity of feeling is enhanced by the retention of the original location and setting, intact historic resources, and continued agricultural associations of the property.

Association

The Rock Ledge Ranch represents a direct link to the long history of agriculture in Chaffee County, from its nineteenth century homesteading era to the post-World War II period. With its numerous intact historic buildings and structures that have served wide-ranging functions, its high integrity of location and setting, and its continued operation and occupation by the second family to own it, the property retains excellent integrity of association.

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Table 1
Resources within the Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch Historic District

| Map Reference No. | Historic Resource Name | Resource Type | Contributing Status |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Rock Ledge/Franzel Ranch site (1887) | Site | Contributing |
| 2 | Barn (1888-91) | Building | Contributing |
| 3 | Blacksmith Shop/Tool Shop/Hog Butchering Building (1890s) | Building | Contributing |
| 4 | Ice House (1890s) | Structure | Contributing |
| 5 | Machine Shed (1900s) | Building | Contributing |
| 6 | Brooder House (1890s) | Building | Contributing |
| 7 | Feed Shed (1890s) | Structure | Contributing |
| 8 | Bunkhouse (late 1880s-1890s) | Site | Contributing |
| 9 | Well House (pre-1964) | Structure | Contributing |
| 10 | Chicken House (1940s) | Building | Contributing |
| 11 | Wood Shed (pre-1920) | Structure | Contributing |
| 12 | Cistern (1910s-1920s) | Structure | Contributing |
| 13 | Michigan Ditch (1887) | Structure | Contributing |
| 14 | House (ca. 1888, 1987) | Building | Noncontributing |
| 15 | Shed (post-1980s) | Building | Noncontributing |
| 16 | Garage (1987) | Building | Noncontributing |
| 17 | Well Cover (post-1965) | Structure | Noncontributing |
| 18 | Garage (1920s) | Building | Noncontributing |
| 19 | Cow Shed/Hay Storage (late 1950s-early 1960s) | Building | Contributing |
| 20 | Barn (2002) | Building | Noncontributing |
| 21 | Gazebo (ca. 2004) | Structure | Noncontributing |
| 22 | Corral (pre-1927) | Structure | Contributing |

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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.)

- 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.)
Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/European

Period of Significance

1887-1965

Significant Dates

1908

Significant Person

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

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from 1887, the reported beginning of homestead activity, to 1965, a date fifty years before the present in accord with National Register practice when there is no more appropriate date.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

None.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Summary

The Rock Ledge/Franzel Ranch possesses a local level of significance for its importance under Criterion A in the areas of Agriculture and Ethnic Heritage/European for its association with the farming and ranching history of Chaffee County and for its continued development and long operation by German immigrants and their descendants. The property is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its representation of a variety of buildings essential to ranch life in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The period of significance for the property is 1887-1965, representing the period from the reported beginning of the homestead activity on the site through its continuous agricultural operation to a date fifty years from the present, in accordance with National Register guidelines when there is no more appropriate date.

Elaboration

Criterion A

The Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch west of Buena Vista is significant under Criterion A for its important association with the history of agriculture in Chaffee County. Ernest and Belle Wilber homesteaded the property beginning in the late 1880s, constructing the first buildings and other improvements, raising field crops, vegetables, cattle, and eventually establishing a flourishing dairy. Gustav and Marie Franzel acquired the ranch in 1908, completing other buildings, raising a family, and growing grains, vegetables, hay, and cattle on the land. Descendants of the Franzels continue to own and operate the ranch more than a century later, and each generation has left its mark on the built environment by responding to changing factors such as new technologies, shifting weather conditions and water supplies, changing tastes relating to breeds of animals, and available construction materials. The property is also significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage/European for its association with Gustav and Marie Franzel, German immigrants who founded a successful ranching enterprise in America and whose descendants are still present on the land. The Franzels raised hogs and continued a sausage making tradition, producing such German favorites as liverwurst, blood sausage, and summer sausage.

Criterion C

The property is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its preservation of a variety of buildings representing late nineteenth and twentieth century ranch architecture, including a large log barn, machine shed, chicken house, brooder house, bunkhouse, blacksmith shop, ice house, and wood shed, as well as a historic cistern and a ditch. All designed in an unadorned, traditional, and functional vernacular manner, the buildings exhibit a variety of historic ranch construction materials, including logs, milled boards, wood shingles, corrugated metal, concrete, stone, and cinderblocks. The layout of the ranch, its landscape features, the areas chosen for grazing and irrigated fields, and the relationship among buildings, fences, vegetation, roads, and open space are all important indicators of ranch life during the period of significance.

Founding of the Wilber Homestead and Rock Ledge Ranch

Ernest Wilber testified he first settled on the land encompassing the headquarters and associated fields of this ranch on 15 September 1887; in 1898 he received a patent to the acreage. Born in 1854 in Adrian, Michigan, to a farming family, Wilber traveled west to California as a young man and returned part way, stopping in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and obtaining work with the Union Pacific Railroad Company. In about 1880 he moved to Denver, where he entered a promising career as a conductor with the Denver, South Park & Pacific Railroad (DSP&P), which had a new headquarters in the booming town of Buena Vista. His long association with the community was cemented when he led a group of local men in successfully securing the county seat by "borrowing" a locomotive and a flat car, traveling north to the courthouse in Granite, and removing Chaffee

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County's records at gunpoint.⁶ In March 1882 in Buena Vista he married Belle Orr, a native of Nebraska whom he met in Cheyenne. The couple's first child, Lucretia, named after Ernest's mother, arrived in the same year.

The couple soon became active in Buena Vista's social and civic life, with Ernest plunging into local politics in 1883. In that year he left the DSP&P and ran for election as Chaffee County Clerk and Recorder on the Republican ticket. The *Buena Vista Democrat* wryly observed Wilber, the relative newcomer, "has devoted all his energy to secure his position on the ticket. Why the people owe the best paying office in the county to this stranger we cannot understand."⁷ Ernest's previous affiliation with the railroad gave him an advantage with a big block of voters and he won the position. After a few months in office, the newspaper found the county clerk was discharging his duties satisfactorily, despite his party affiliation.⁸ He also assumed other leadership positions, including as 2nd Lieutenant of the Buena Vista Guards (Company H, Battalion C).⁹ During 1884 the Wilbers became parents of a son, Ernest Orr Wilber, known locally as "Doc." The Wilbers acquired a ranch in the area, and when Ernest ran for reelection in 1885 the *Democrat* reported some observers felt he paid more attention to his ranch than his county office, allowing his deputies to conduct day-to-day business.¹⁰ The newspaper commented, "...Wilber has wrapped the mantle of obscurity about him and lies down in the seclusion of his foothill ranch to dream of the times that are coming."¹¹

After losing the election, Wilber continued to participate in efforts supporting all aspects of Buena Vista's development. In 1886 he was an organizer of a Business and Improvement Association to aid in developing the town's resources.¹² In May of that year a Buena Vista Market Day celebration included decoration of the town, a brass band, Hose Company demonstrations, and a ball in the evening. One of the featured events was a stock display of "high order," including the blooded cattle of Ernest Wilber and J.M. McMichael, described as "being without equal in the state."¹³ Despite early successes, ranch life in the late 1880s was not without challenges and dangers. In 1886 a local newspaper reported, "The family of Ernest Wilbur [sic] narrowly escaped serious results from poisoning" after their two-year-old son unknowingly put some rat poison that had been mixed with meal into a coffee pot from which the family then drank. Luckily, a doctor arrived quickly to save the family.¹⁴

In the late 1880s, Wilber acquired the nominated property through the homestead process. In his 1890 homestead affidavit for what is known as the Rock Ledge Ranch, Wilber indicated his residence on the land began on 15 September 1887 and his family's permanent settlement initiated on 7 January 1888. In his Homestead Proof testimony Wilber stated he built the first house in about 1888 out of logs. In that year, though he was in his early forties, the *Democrat* called him one of the "old experienced cattle kings" of the Buena Vista area, and he was a leader in efforts of local cattlemen to create an organization for their mutual benefit.¹⁵ In 1889 the newspaper observed, "Ernest Wilbur [sic], one of Chaffee County's most successful ranchmen showed us some of the largest and finest pumpkins, squash, rutabagos [sic], carrots and parsnips ever raised in Colorado, and grown on his ranch west of Buena Vista."¹⁶ By 1890 his improvements included a "dwelling house, barn, out cellar, fencing, breaking, and irrigating ditch."¹⁷ Ernest's name appeared on a list of farmers and ranchers in the Buena Vista area in 1891 that details the products of his operation. On his 160 acres he

⁶ *Chaffee County Republican*, 20 March 1953.

⁷ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 11 October 1883, 4.

⁸ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 14 February 1884, 1.

⁹ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 4 December 1884, 4.

¹⁰ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 21 and 31 October 1885.

¹¹ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 22 July 1885, 3.

¹² *Buena Vista Democrat*, 3 and 17 March 1886, 2.

¹³ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 5 May 1886, 3.

¹⁴ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 4 August 1886, 3.

¹⁵ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 19 April 1888, 3.

¹⁶ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 19 September 1889, 2.

¹⁷ References in this paragraph to Wilber's homestead documents refer to U.S., General Land Office, Leadville, Colorado, Case File for Homestead No. 717, Sec. 22-23, Township 14 South, Range 79 West, Colorado, Patent 27 December 1898, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

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grew peas, potatoes, other vegetables, and ten acres of hay. His improvements included two miles of ditch. Animals on the ranch included twelve horses (a large number for the area), fifty cattle, and twenty hogs.¹⁸

Wilber's older brother, Walter, acquired homestead acreage with a cash entry adjacent to Ernest's claim in 1891. Such coordinated land acquisition by family members was common during the era, as it enabled relatives to work together when necessary, sharing manpower and resources. Walter, a Civil War veteran, grew no vegetables or hay, but reported twelve horses and twenty head of cattle in 1891. He received a patent to his land, married, and resided on his ranch for several years. Eventually, he sold his land, left his wife behind, and headed for the Klondike region of Alaska to seek his fortune.¹⁹

About 1891, likely influenced by low cattle prices beginning in the last decade, the Rock Ledge Ranch switched its focus from cattle and vegetables to dairy cows. In January the *Democrat* carried an advertisement indicating, "Wilber will deliver to you standard milk in sealed glass cans, 12 qts., 8 ½ gals., or 22 pints for a dollar, evening delivery."²⁰ The *Buena Vista Herald* published an article entitled "A Trip to Rockledge [sic]: A Dairy Which Would be a Credit to any City in the Country." The reporter found the Wilber stables "filled with pure blooded cows—such as Holstein, Durham, and Galloways, none of which are worth less than \$100." The cows had "a warm stable," appeared "sleek as a lot of race horses," and were raised on a mixture of peas and bran, then considered the best milk-producing feed. The milk went directly into clean, airtight jars for delivery.²¹

By summer of the following year, Ernest claimed selling more milk than all others in the area, with the best quality and lowest prices.²² In June he received notice for making improvements to the road near his ranch house by plowing and rolling it. The *Herald* indicated, "When finished, it will be suitable for a race track."²³ Ranch life, even for a dairy business, still came with challenges. In July 1891 Ernest was reportedly "laid up a few days . . . with a bruised knee, the result of a personal encounter with an infuriated bull."²⁴ A few years later, the Wilbers' son received a fractured jaw when being kicked while "experimenting with a colt," according to the *Buena Vista Herald*.²⁵

Wilber again ran for County Clerk and Recorder in 1891, this time on the ticket of the People's Party (better known as the Populists), a political organization that arose before the Civil War in agricultural parts of the South and West.²⁶ As farmers and ranchers experienced drought and economic depression beginning in the late 1880s in Colorado, the movement in the state grew, also invigorated by its position supporting free and unlimited coinage of silver. In 1891 the party ran numerous candidates for county and state office. Wilber gained the most votes for the office in Buena Vista, receiving more than the Democratic and Republican candidates combined, but did not fare as well in other parts of the county.²⁷ He continued to be active in the Populist Party, serving as a member of Buena Vista's delegation to the county convention in 1893.²⁸

Wilber's focus returned to the dairy, personally delivering its product in a canvas-covered milk wagon and boasting of being "the only dairyman who uses an aerator west of the Missouri river."²⁹ In 1894 the operation began to switch to all Jersey cows, at that time considered the best for producing high quality milk.³⁰ Broadening his offerings, Wilber "embarked in the ice business, having, during the winter, stored away a vast

¹⁸ June Shaputis and Suzanne Kelly, comps. and eds., *A History of Chaffee County* (Buena Vista, Colorado: Buena Vista Heritage, 1982), 127.

¹⁹ *Chaffee County Republican*, 29 April 1896, 3.

²⁰ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 22 January 1891.

²¹ *Buena Vista Herald*, 26 December 1891, 3.

²² *Buena Vista Democrat*, 30 July 1892, 3.

²³ *Buena Vista Herald*, 13 June 1891, 3.

²⁴ *Buena Vista Herald*, 4 July 1891, 3.

²⁵ *Buena Vista Herald*, 14 July 1894, 3.

²⁶ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 30 September 1891, 2.

²⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 November 1891, 2.

²⁸ *Buena Vista Democrat*, 6 September 1893.

²⁹ *Colorado Democrat*, 28 June 1893, 3 and 25 April 1894, 3; *Buena Vista Herald*, 27 January 1894, 3.

³⁰ *Buena Vista Herald*, 30 June 1894, 2.

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quantity of the frozen liquid.”³¹ The ice house still stands on the ranch. Ads for the dairy and ice business appeared frequently in the local newspapers and often employed a humorous approach to their subject, such as this one in 1894:

Wilber’s Milk, On Ice

In springtime when the senses are obscured by ennui,
And you have that tired feeling and are blue as blue can be,
And your head perchance is throbbing—you’ll find it very nice
To imbibe a cool, refreshing glass of Wilber’s milk, on ice.³²

By 1898 the Rock Ledge Ranch included a house and “barns, outhouses, fencing and irrigation ditches worth about \$400,” according to Ernest’s testimony for his homestead patent. Wilber received title to his land at the end of that year.³³

Belle Wilber’s role in the dairy business was not documented (see Figure 2). By 1891 she lived in Buena Vista during the winter and spent summers on the ranch.³⁴ She participated in women’s organizations such as the Fortnightly Club and the Ladies’ Missionary Society. In 1893 she served as treasurer of the Women’s Suffrage League.³⁵ In his 1898 history of the suffrage movement in Colorado, Joseph G. Brown listed Mrs. Ernest Wilber as one of the women who “took an active part in the campaign of 1893 and won the victory for equal rights.”³⁶ By the end of the decade, she and son Ernest lived in Denver, perhaps for his schooling, and returned to the ranch periodically.³⁷

The Wilbers sold the farm in 1908 and spent three years in Seattle near their daughter. Returning to Buena Vista, they went into the hotel business for several years. Ernest, Belle, and their son operated the Princeton Hotel, one of the area’s finest, with steam heat, hot water, and electric lights.³⁸ The 1910 U.S. Census found them living at the hotel with three servants (a cook, dishwasher, and waitress) and hosting eleven boarders, mostly professionals associated with the mining industry. In 1911 Ernest also served as the first president of Buena Vista’s Board of Trade.³⁹ In 1922 the Wilbers acquired the Boston Hotel to operate.⁴⁰ The couple later ran the Yale Hotel and then the Wilber Hotel and Café.⁴¹ By 1930 they left Chaffee County to live with their daughter and her husband in Platteville, Colorado. Ernest Wilber, described as “a pioneer and prominent hotel man of Buena Vista,” died in Platteville in 1932, following several years of poor health.⁴² Belle Wilber passed away at the Rio Grande Railroad Hospital in Salida following an operation in 1937.⁴³ Both Wilbers were buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

³¹ *Buena Vista Herald*, 12 May 1894, 3.

³² *Buena Vista Herald*, 7 July 1894, 2.

³³ U.S., General Land Office, Leadville, Colorado, Case File for Homestead No. 717, Sec. 22-23, Township 14 South, Range 79 West, Colorado, Patent 27 December 1898, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁴ *Buena Vista Herald*, 9 May 1891, 3.

³⁵ *Colorado Democrat*, 27 September 1893, 3; *Buena Vista Herald*, 18 August 1894, 3; *Colorado Republican*, 31 May 1906, 1.

³⁶ Joseph G. Brown, *The History of Equal Suffrage in Colorado, 1868-1898* (Denver: News Job Printing Co., 1898), 55.

³⁷ *Chaffee County Republican*, 14 April 1897, 3.

³⁸ *Colorado State Business Directory*, 1910.

³⁹ *Chaffee County Republican*, 11 May 1911, 1.

⁴⁰ *Chaffee County Republican*, 13 April 1922, 1.

⁴¹ *Chaffee County Republican*, 20 March 1953.

⁴² *Greeley Tribune*, 21 April 1932.

⁴³ *Greeley Daily Tribune*, 9 October 1937.

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The Franzel Era at Rock Ledge Ranch⁴⁴

Gustav Adolph "Gus" Franzel purchased the Rock Ledge Ranch from the Wilbers in 1908, and the property is owned and operated by the third generation of the Franzel family today, more than a century later. Gustav was born in Germany in 1864 and came to the United States in 1890. Four years later, he and twenty-six-year-old Marie E. Baier, also from Germany, were wed in Leadville.⁴⁵ According to the Franzels' granddaughter, Jan Sheesley, Gustav helped build the railroad to the town of Granite and then took up hydraulic gold mining there. The Franzels' first son, Carl, was born in Granite in 1895, followed by Herman in 1896, and Erna in 1899.

At the time of the 1900 Census Gustav worked as a placer miner in Granite. Both Franzels reported becoming naturalized citizens in 1903.⁴⁶ Eventually, Gustav decided "he could make more selling food to miners," according to grandson Kenneth Franzel. In 1908 the Rock Ledge Ranch was acquired from Ernest and Belle Wilber. Marie and the children moved via train from Granite to Buena Vista on the first day in January 1909, and Gustav picked up the family and their belongings from the railroad station with a team of horses and a sleigh. Descendant Jan Sheesley summarizes some of the family's early twentieth century agricultural efforts at the Rock Ledge Ranch:

Farming began with many long hours of clearing the land of rocks. A little of everything was raised, but the main source of income was garden peas which were shipped out. Eggs were sold for 20 cents a dozen. Around 1924 fields of head lettuce were raised, packed at the lettuce shed, and shipped out. In the 30's big potato crops were hauled to Leadville in a 1924 Ford truck and sold.⁴⁷

The property today retains the irrigated and grazing lands, brooder and chicken houses, and piles of rocks removed from the fields that were components of the landscape in Gustav's time. In the early days, Leadville provided a big market for the family's farm products. The Franzels were thrifty and recycled building materials and whole buildings, including some moved from Leadville.

In 1916 Gustav joined a group of local men in forming the Chaffee County Cattle and Horse Growers Association.⁴⁸ Children Carl, Herman, and Erna helped their parents with labor on the ranch in their youth. Herman attended Buena Vista High School, later moving to California. Carl enlisted in the Army during World War I and then returned to the ranch.⁴⁹ Daughter Erna also graduated from Buena Vista High School and worked as a public school teacher in Nathrop, the Grand Valley, and later in Wyoming.⁵⁰

For entertainment on Saturday nights during the early years, the family hooked up the horse team and drove to town for a silent movie at the Orpheum Theater. Barn dances, another Saturday night activity, drew neighbors in the area. Carl Franzel met his future wife, Lois Wheatley, at one such event in the 1930s. By that time, he was the only child still living with his parents, who were in their sixties. After marrying in Grand Valley, Carl and his wife returned to live at the ranch. He recalled that during the Great Depression the Franzels fared better than many because they had everything they needed right on the ranch. And even though many cattle fared poorly during the severe weather conditions of the era, Carl was able to sell his for a reasonable price on autumn trips to the Denver stockyards. Marie Franzel died in 1938, and Gustav continued to live at the Rock Ledge until his death in 1950 at the age of eighty-four.

⁴⁴ Information in this section is derived principally from interviews with Kenneth and Grace Franzel during 2012 and 2014 and a reminiscence written by Janice Franzel Sheesley, "Franzel Family," published in June Shaputis and Suzanne Kelly, *A History of Chaffee County* (Buena Vista, Colorado: Buena Vista Heritage, 1982). Other sources are specified in footnotes.

⁴⁵ Although the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Censuses indicated the Franzels were from Germany, the 1920 Census taker indicated they were born in Prussia, and the 1930 document noted Marie was born in Poland, formerly a part of Prussia.

⁴⁶ U.S. Census, Buena Vista, Colorado, 1920.

⁴⁷ Shaputis and Kelly, *A History of Chaffee County*, 198. The lettuce shed, used by all raisers in the area, was not located on this ranch.

⁴⁸ Shaputis and Kelly, *A History of Chaffee County*, 111.

⁴⁹ U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, Carl Franzel, www.ancestry.com, accessed 13 December 2014.

⁵⁰ *Chaffee County Democrat*, 21 May 1921, 4.

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Carl Franzel assumed increasing responsibility for the ranch and began a family with his wife, Lois (see Figures 3 through 5). His daughter recalled him working hard in the winter cutting ice on a pond to store under sawdust in the ice house before electricity came to the property. The winter months provided time for maintenance of machinery, buildings, and tools and planning for the next growing season. In the spring cattle were herded to their pasture in the Silver Creek Basin. Hogs were also raised and butchered on the property. At the end of summer the hay was harvested for winter feeding. The fall required rounding the cattle up and returning them to the ranch for sale or wintering. Another big task in the autumn was emptying the cistern, scrubbing the walls, and filling it for the winter. When the water ran out, buckets were filled with creek water for the animals. Prisoners from the reformatory in Buena Vista could be hired for tasks like fence work and maintaining ditches.

In about 1940 Carl Franzel bought the family's first tractor from the Ford Company for \$750. With introduction of motorized vehicles to do farm work, the traditional use of horses declined. Jan Sheesley notes the Ford tractor was still being used on the property in 1982. Carl also acquired a thresher that is still on the ranch from some cousins in the 1940s and did custom threshing into the 1960s. New appliances for the ranch's domestic life included a gas stove, which replaced the traditional wood cooking stove, and an oil heater that replaced a coal heating stove. Another improvement came from the county's construction of roads in the late 1950s and 1960s. Kenneth Franzel reports that before that the road ended at their place. Earlier there had been wagon roads, but they were abandoned.

Born in 1899 in Trinidad, Colorado, to a newspaper editor and a teacher, Lois Wheatley Franzel, had taught school in Grand Valley before marriage. Carl and Lois became parents of three children: Lucia Marie (born 1934), Kenneth Carl (1937), and Erna Janice "Jan" (1940). The children helped with many chores, including bringing wood and coal to the house, milking and feeding cows, gardening, feeding the chickens and gathering eggs, plowing, mowing, and planting, as well as household duties. Kenneth reports his father drove the children to school in Buena Vista every day and in winter had to clear the snow from the roads to accomplish the task. When the children were all in school, Lois returned to teaching until her retirement in 1967. All the Franzel children graduated from Buena Vista High School, received additional education and training, and pursued careers outside the farm.

Lettuce Day was the biggest community celebration in Buena Vista each year when they were growing up, marking the importance of that product to the local economy for a time. Jan Sheesley remembers it as "the one time Dad would forget about work.... The day was spent visiting with old friends. You could be sure they would all be there."⁵¹ The event included activities such as a parade, a barbeque using meat donated by local ranchers, a rodeo, and a big dance in the evening. Most of the time, simple family pleasures marked daily life. Jan reports, "Summer evenings were spent sitting on the back steps just enjoying life, and long winter nights were spent by the fire listening to the radio and reading stories."⁵² Kenneth recalls a hand-dug swimming hole and ice skating in the winter.

Kenneth noted that his grandfather did not speak German in the home, believing that "in America you should speak English," although he sometimes talked with other German speakers. Sausage making was one area in which German traditions were important. The family raised hogs and made liverwurst, blood sausage, and summer sausage. The celebration of Christmas was always a big event as in Germany, with presents opened on Christmas Eve.⁵³

Carl and Lois Franzel eventually retired, but remained busy caring for their house, gardening, and raising chickens. In the fall apples in the orchard and currants from the old shrubs were picked. Eventually, Jan Sheesley returned to the ranch with her husband, Blaine, and two sons. Carl passed away in October 1980, at the age of eighty-four. Lois died four years later. They are both buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Buena Vista.

The Franzels' son Kenneth and his wife Grace moved back to the ranch in 1981 to assist his mother before her death; they inherited the property and still live there (see Figures 6 and 7). After graduating from high school,

⁵¹ Sheesley, "Franzel Family," 198.

⁵² Sheesley, "Franzel Family," 198.

⁵³ Kenneth Franzel, Buena Vista, Colorado, telephone interview by Thomas H. Simmons, 13 January 2015.

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Kenneth attended Colorado State University and then joined the Air Force and received training as a pilot. He met his wife, Grace, in Florida during his flight training. Born in Italy before moving to America as a child, she performed as a water skier at Cypress Gardens. After Kenneth's graduation from flight school they married in Fort Lauderdale in 1961. Kenneth's career as an Air Force pilot took them across the United States and to Korea, Thailand, and Germany. He served as a rescue pilot during the Vietnam War. They were living in Hawaii when Kenneth retired to move to his parents' ranch in Colorado. The couple still raises a few cattle and plants vegetable gardens, as well as maintaining the buildings, ditch, fences, and fields. The Franzels have two sons who live elsewhere: Tony, a retired Air Force pilot, and Ken, an electrical engineer. Kenneth's two sisters own property nearby, and they continue to possess shares of the Michigan Ditch.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Buena Vista Heritage

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):
5CF.2878

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 117.84
Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | <u>38.825174</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.202518</u> Longitude: | 6 | <u>38.818240</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.198311</u> Longitude: |
| 2 | <u>38.825134</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.193431</u> Longitude: | 7 | <u>38.818026</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.199071</u> Longitude: |
| 3 | <u>38.821768</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.193444</u> Longitude: | 8 | <u>38.817925</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.199026</u> Longitude: |
| 4 | <u>38.821696</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.198122</u> Longitude: | 9 | <u>38.817970</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.202574</u> Longitude: |
| 5 | <u>38.818237</u> Latitude: | <u>-106.198121</u> Longitude: | | | |

OR

UTM References

 NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | <u>13</u> Zone | <u>395614</u> Easting | <u>4298063</u> Northing | 6 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395970</u> Easting | <u>4297289</u> Northing |
| 2 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>396403</u> Easting | <u>4298048</u> Northing | 7 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395903</u> Easting | <u>4297266</u> Northing |
| 3 | <u>13</u> Zone | <u>396397</u> Easting | <u>4297675</u> Northing | 8 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395907</u> Easting | <u>4297255</u> Northing |
| 4 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395991</u> Easting | <u>4297672</u> Northing | 9 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395599</u> Easting | <u>4297264</u> Northing |
| 5 | <u> </u> Zone | <u>395986</u> Easting | <u>4297288</u> Northing | | | | |

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated area, shown on the included to-scale map, comprises all of Chaffee County Assessor parcel number 326923200235, which is part of the Southeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 8, Township 14 South, Range 78 West, Buena Vista vicinity, Chaffee County, Colorado.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

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The boundary includes all of the land historically associated with the house and its outbuildings and all land historically associated with the ranch that is still owned by the Franzels.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, Historians (for property owners)
organization Front Range Research Associates, Inc. date 30 January 2015 (Revised)
street & number 3635 W. 46th Avenue telephone 303-477-7597
city or town Denver state CO zip code 80211
e-mail frraden@msn.com website www.frhistory.com

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

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. 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.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch
City or Vicinity: Buena Vista vicinity
County: Chaffee State: Colorado
Photographer: Thomas H. Simmons
Date Photographed: August 2012 and September 2014

Number, camera direction, description of photographs, and date photographed:

- 1 of 36, view north, open grazing area in the southern part of the ranch with the headquarters in the distance (taken from the southwest corner of the ranch), September 2014.
- 2 of 36, view southwest, the irrigated northern part of the ranch from the northeast corner with Mount Princeton in the distance, September 2014.

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- 3 of 36, view northeast, Michigan Creek (diagonal depression from lower left to upper right) and the irrigated area east of the house and yard, September 2014.
- 4 of 36, view southeast, feeder ditches south of Michigan Ditch, September 2014.
- 5 of 36, view east-southeast, a row of large cottonwood trees along the north edge of the headquarters, September 2014.
- 6 of 36, view southwest, a 1990s windbreak south of the headquarters along the west edge of the property, September 2014.
- 7 of 36, view southwest, loading chute (left) and squeeze chute (right) in the corral, August 2012.
- 8 of 36, view east-northeast, a stone foundation alignment and a log wall remnant mark the former location of a cattle shed, September 2014.
- 9 of 36, view northeast, farm machinery southeast of the blacksmith shop (Map Reference 3), September 2014.
- 10 of 36, view northwest, two cows move along the east edge of the headquarters with the blacksmith shop in the background, September 2014.
- 11 of 36, view west, the grass yard and orchard south of the house (Map Reference 14), September 2014.
- 12 of 36, view southeast, view from the northeast part of the headquarters toward the southern buildings, left to right, shed, barns, garage, and ice house, September 2014.
- 13 of 36, view northeast, the southern buildings cluster, left to right, machine shed, garage, and barn, September 2014.
- 14 of 36, view northwest, barn (Map Reference 2) south and east walls, August 2012.
- 15 of 36, view southeast, barn (Map Reference 2) north and west walls, August 2012.
- 16 of 36, view northeast, barn (Map Reference 2) interior, stalls, September 2014.
- 17 of 36, view east-northeast, barn (Map Reference 2) interior, loft, September 2014.
- 18 of 36, view northeast, blacksmith shop (Map Reference 3) west and south walls with cistern in foreground (Map Reference 12), September 2014.
- 19 of 36, view southwest, blacksmith shop (Map Reference 3) east and north walls, September 2014.
- 20 of 36, view southwest, ice house (Map Reference 4) east and north walls, with massive cottonwood in background and machine shed to left (Map Reference 5), September 2014.
- 21 of 36, view west, machine shed (Map Reference 5) east wall, September 2014.
- 22 of 36, view northeast, brooder house (Map Reference 6) west and south walls, August 2012.
- 23 of 36, view northwest, feed shed (right, Map Reference 7) and bunkhouse (left, Map Reference 8), with the chicken house (Map Reference 10) in the distance, September 2014.
- 24 of 36, view north, bunkhouse (Map Reference 8), with the chicken house (Map Reference 10 to the left) and the feed shed and brooder house to the right (Maps References 7 and 6, respectively), September 2014.
- 25 of 36, view southeast, well house (Map Reference 9) in foreground with the bunkhouse (Map Reference 8) to the left and the chicken house and wood shed to the right (Map References 10 and 11, respectively), August 2012.
- 26 of 36, view northwest, chicken house (Map Reference 10), August 2012.
- 27 of 36, view west, wood shed (Map Reference 11), August 2012.
- 28 of 36, view east, Michigan Ditch (Map Reference 13), with the blacksmith shop (Map Reference 3) in the distance, September 2014.
- 29 of 36, view southeast, house (Map Reference 14), August 2012.
- 30 of 36, view southwest, shed (Map Reference 15, September 2014).
- 31 of 36, view southwest, garage (Map Reference 16), August 2012.

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32 of 36, view northeast, garage (Map Reference 16), with the well house (Map Reference 17) to the right and the house in the background (Map Reference 14), August 2012.

33 of 36, view southwest, garage (Map Reference 18), with the cow shed (Map Reference 19) to the left and the machine shed (Map Reference 5) to the right, September 2014.

34 of 36, view west-southwest, cow shed/hay storage (Map Reference 19), August 2012.

35 of 36, view northeast, barn (Map Reference 20), August 2012.

36 of 36, view north-northeast, gazebo (Map Reference 21), September 2014.

Historic Figure Log

1 of 7, The Franzen Ranch headquarters is shown in this 2013 Google Earth image that generally covers the same area as the detailed Sketch Map. Courtesy of Google Earth, 23 September 2013.

2 of 7, Ernest and Belle Wilber homesteaded the land that became the Franzen Ranch. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 20 March 1953.

3 of 7, Carl Franzen is planting a crop with a horse team in this undated view (perhaps 1930s or 1940s). Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

4 of 7, This undated photo (perhaps 1930s or 1940s) shows Carl Franzen harvesting a grain field with a horse team and grain binder. Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

5 of 7, Grain threshing is underway at the Franzen Ranch in this undated photo, possibly late 1940s. Standing on the right are Gus and Kenneth Franzen. Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

6 of 7, This 1970s-80s Assessor image (view southwest) shows the main house (Map Reference 14) and the entrance to the ranch from County Road 338 before the 1987 remodeling and expansion. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.

7 of 7, This 1970s-80s Assessor appraisal card photograph (view southeast) shows the north and west walls of the log barn (Map Reference 2) and part of the corral. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.

Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch
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Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Location Map



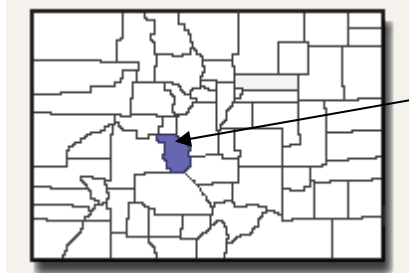
District Boundary Points

| Point | Latitude | Longitude |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | 38.825174 | -106.202518 |
| 2 | 38.825134 | -106.193431 |
| 3 | 38.821768 | -106.193444 |
| 4 | 38.821696 | -106.198122 |
| 5 | 38.818237 | -106.198121 |

| Point | Latitude | Longitude |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 6 | 38.818240 | -106.198311 |
| 7 | 38.818026 | -106.199071 |
| 8 | 38.817925 | -106.199026 |
| 9 | 38.817970 | -106.202574 |

Date of Image: 27 September 2013

Datum: WGS84



State perspective:
 Rock Ledge Ranch/
 Franzel Ranch

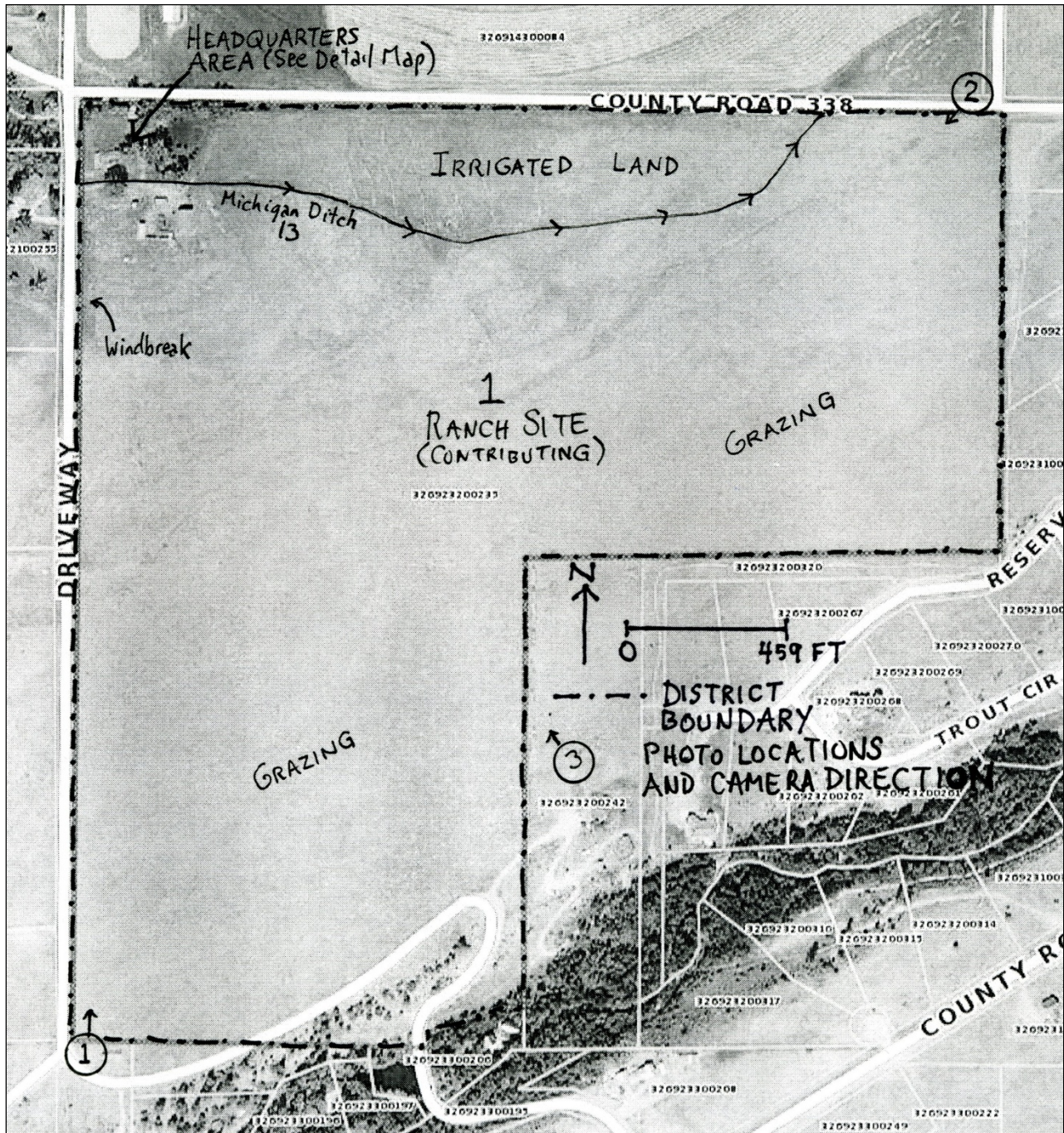
Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch

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Sketch Map-Overview of Ranch Site



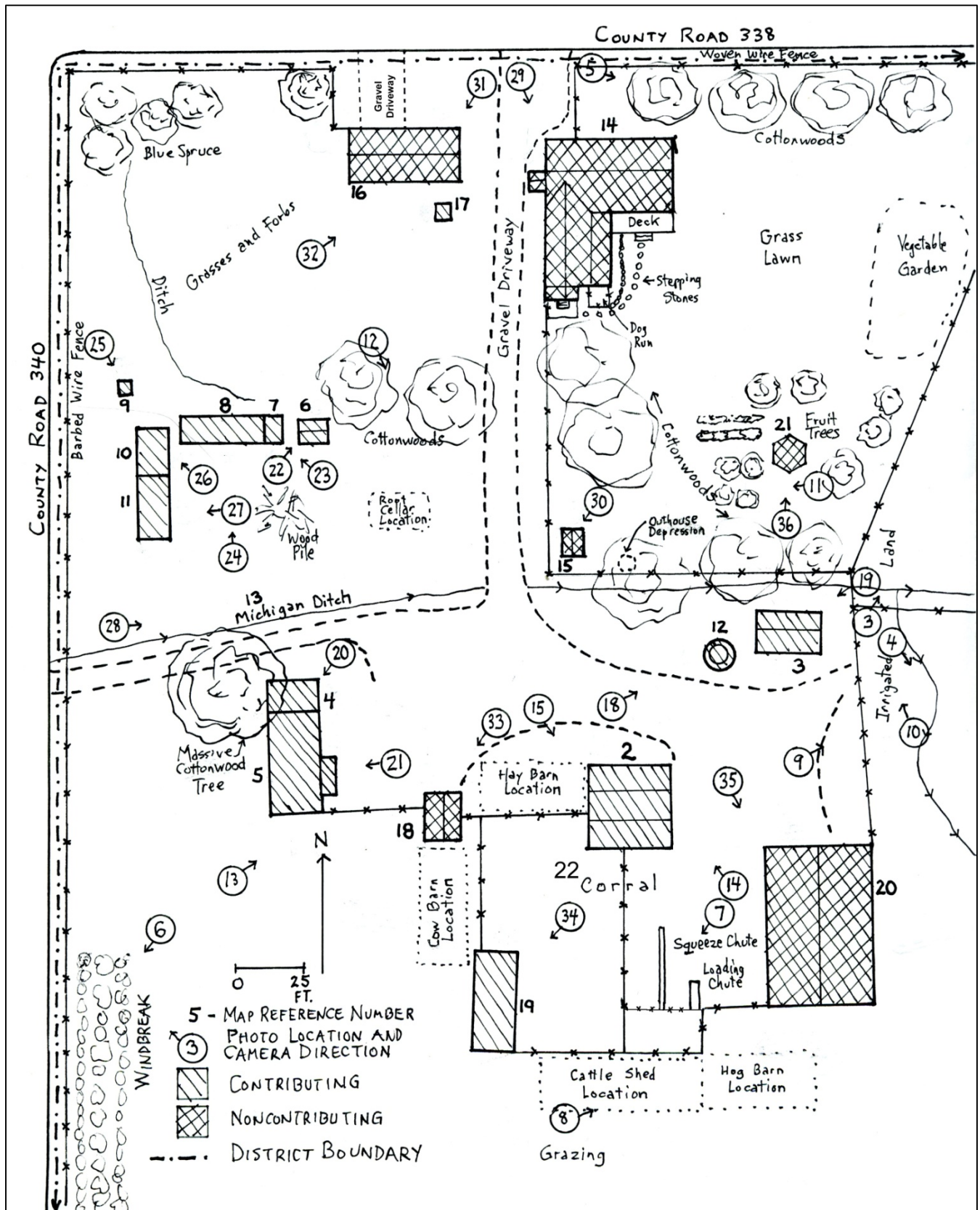
Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch

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Sketch Map-Ranch Headquarters



Rock Ledge Ranch/Franzel Ranch

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Figure 1. The Franzel Ranch headquarters is shown in this 2013 Google Earth image that generally covers the same area as the detailed Sketch Map. Courtesy of Google Earth, 23 September 2013.

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Figure 2. Ernest and Belle Wilber homesteaded the land that became the Franzel Ranch. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 20 March 1953.



Figure 3. Carl Franzel is planting a crop with a horse team in this undated photo (perhaps 1930s or 1940s). Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

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Figure 4. This undated photo (perhaps 1930s or 1940s) shows Carl Franzel harvesting a grain field with a horse team and grain binder. Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

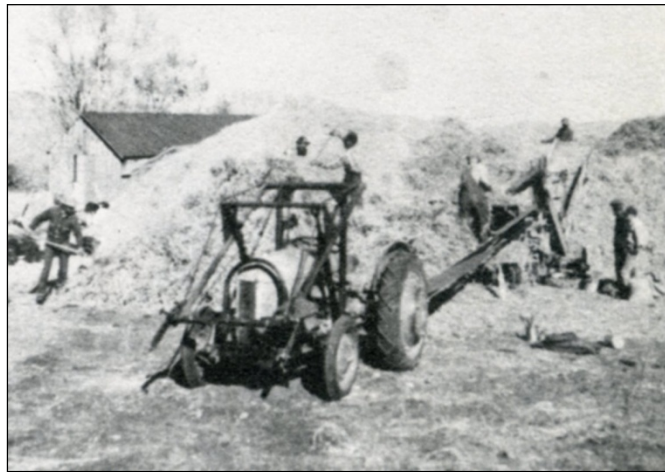


Figure 5. Grain threshing is underway at the Franzel Ranch in this undated photo, possibly late 1940s. Standing on the right are Gus and Kenneth Franzel. Courtesy of Buena Vista Heritage, Buena Vista, Colorado.

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Figure 6. This 1970s-80s Assessor image (view southwest) shows the main house (Map Reference 14) and the entrance to the ranch from County Road 338 before the 1987 remodeling and expansion. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.

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Figure 7. This 1970s-80s Assessor appraisal card photograph (view southeast) shows the north and west walls of the log barn (Map Reference 2) and part of the corral. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.