United States Department of the Interior — National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Inventory – Nomination Form

Canyon Creek Laboratory of the U.S. Public Health Service

The Ricketts Memorial Museum

Hamilton, Montana (Ravalli County)

Received March 20, 1970

Entry Number: 70.10.30.0013 | Dated October 15, 1970 | NPS Form 10-300 (July 1969)

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Form 10-300 (July 1969) | United States Department of the Interior — National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places | Inventory – Nomination Form

Entry Number: 70.10.30.0013 | Date: 10/15/70 | State: Montana | County: Ravalli | County Code: 081

Section 1. Name

Common Name: Canyon Creek Laboratory of the U.S. Public Health Service
And/or Historic Name: The Ricketts Memorial Museum

Section 2. Location

Street and Number: T6N R21W, Sect. 26 (NE¼)
City or Town: 3/4 of a mile west of the western city limits of Hamilton
State: Montana | Code: 25 | County: Ravalli | Code: 081

Section 3. Classification

Category

☐ District ☒ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object

Ownership

☐ Public ☒ Private ☐ Both

Public Acquisition

☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered

Status

☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress

Accessible to the Public

☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No

Present Use (check one or more)

☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☐ Park ☐ Transportation
☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Private Residence ☐ Other
☒ Educational ☐ Military ☐ Religious
☐ Entertainment ☒ Museum ☒ Scientific

Comments: See Attachment.

Section 4. Owner of Property

Owner's Name: Dr. William L. Jellison
Street and Number: 504 South Third Street
City or Town: Hamilton
State: Montana | Code: 25

Section 5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.: Ravalli County Courthouse
City or Town: Hamilton
State: Montana | Code: 25

Section 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title of Survey: State Inventory
[Remediation note: OCR read 'State 3/ventory'; corrected to 'State Inventory'.]
Date of Survey: September, 1968
☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local
Depository for Survey Records: Montana Fish and Game Department, Sam Mitchell Building, Helena, Montana | Code: 25

Section 7. Description

Condition

☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed

☒ Altered ☐ Unaltered

☐ Moved ☒ Original Site

Describe the Present and Original (if known) Physical Appearance

Brick structure (see attached) school, converted to laboratory. Condition, excellent.

The local Neighborhood Youth Corps has supplied attendants each summer.

The grounds, building, and exhibits are being gradually improved. There are flower beds, three fish ponds, and sprinkler system.

The exhibits feature not only the laboratory work, but include Indian artifacts and costumes, natural science, work of local artists, and Lewis and Clark history.

There is no comparable museum facility in the country.

Some effort is being made through Public Health Service channels to secure financial help for this project. Our representatives in Congress have been kept informed of developments but have not been requested to take any action.

The museum project is listed as Project #100 under the local Resources Conservation and Development Program and has the active support of this agency.

Section 8. Significance

Period (check one or more)

☐ Pre-Columbian ☐ 15th Century ☐ 16th Century ☐ 17th Century ☐ 18th Century ☐ 19th Century ☒ 20th Century
Specific Date(s) (if applicable and known): 1921

Areas of Significance (check one or more)

☐ Aboriginal ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Historic
☐ Agriculture ☐ Architecture ☐ Art ☐ Commerce ☐ Communications ☐ Conservation
☒ Education ☐ Engineering ☐ Industry ☐ Invention ☐ Landscape Architecture ☐ Literature ☐ Military ☐ Music
☐ Political ☐ Religion/Philosophy ☒ Science ☐ Sculpture ☐ Social/Humanitarian ☐ Theater ☐ Transportation
☐ Urban Planning ☐ Other (Specify)

Statement of Significance

Background information regarding this building is of historical importance. It was originally constructed in 1894 and used as a schoolhouse. Twenty-seven years later, from 1921 to 1928 Dr. R.R. Parker and his staff from the Montana State Board of Entomology and the U.S. Public Health Service occupied this old building about one mile west of Hamilton, Montana. This group engaged in the study and control of spotted fever, a serious and often fatal disease prevalent in Montana and about 10 other Western States. While at this laboratory, the Spencer-Parker vaccine for spotted fever was developed and other important studies on ticks and tick-borne diseases were started (tick-borne tularemia, tick paralysis).

Before vaccine was available, about 400 cases of spotted fever had occurred in the Bitterroot Valley and over 250 of these were fatal. After vaccine came into use only one death was recorded in the Valley in persons who had taken the vaccine, and this was a professional laboratory worker. Similar results from the vaccine were experienced elsewhere in the Rocky Mountain region. Before a vaccine was developed there were six cases of spotted fever in research workers in Montana laboratories and others; all were fatal. Since vaccine became available there have been over 30 cases in laboratory workers with only one death recorded. The work done at this laboratory was a significant part of the medical history of the West.

Section 9. Major Bibliographical References

Rocky Mountain Laboratory, A Brief History of its Growth and Research Activities, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases,

and United States Public Health Service publications

Section 10. Geographical Data

Latitude and Longitude Coordinates — Center Point of Property (Less Than Ten Acres)

	Latitude	Longitude
Degrees / Minutes / Seconds	46° 15′ 15″ N	114° 10′ 49″ W

Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property: 1 acre

[Remediation note: OCR read ']_ aC^Q'; corrected to '1 acre' per original image.]

Section 11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title: Robert A. Murray, Historic Consultant
Organization: Montana Fish and Game Department
Street and Number: Sam Mitchell Building
City or Town: Helena
State: Montana | Code: 25
Date: September, 1968

Section 12. State Liaison Officer Certification

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is: National.

Name: Wesley R. Woodgerd
Title: State Liaison Officer
Date: March 17, 1970

National Register Verification

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Signed: Ernest Allen Connally (signature on file)
Title: Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Date: October 15, 1970

Attest:

Signed: William J. Murtagh (signature on file)
Title: Keeper of The National Register
Date: October 12, 1970

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Supplement to Statement of Significance

The work at Hamilton, Montana, has been the basis of a book “Fighting Spotted Fever in the Rockies” by Eleanor Gaskins Price (1947), for a movie, “Green Light”, and for numerous articles in magazines and newspapers.

In 1928, the laboratory work was moved from the Canyon Creek site to a new building on the edge of Hamilton. The laboratory has grown from one building to a complex of many units with a physical plant value of approximately $3,000,000. It has a staff of over 160 workers. It enjoys a world wide reputation for work on arthropod borne diseases, virus studies and other medical research.

For many years tourists were taken through the laboratory even to rooms where work was in progress. Now tourists are limited to the library and a small museum room and are not encouraged. Professional visitors are received for brief or extended visits.

The restriction on visitors was not a lack of hospitality, but was made because of the danger of infection from some of the diseases being studied including typhus, Q fever and tularemia.

For this reason it appeared desirable to have a public museum where history and work of the laboratory could be exhibited. The Canyon Creek Laboratory seemed most appropriate for this purpose.

The building was acquired in 1966, and the first year was spent in cleaning up the building and grounds. Displays and pictures were borrowed from the Laboratory and from other sources and installed.

The museum has been open to the public for three summers, 1967, 1968, and 1969. No admission has been charged. No “tourist material” has been on sale.

Submitted by Dr. William Jellison

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Figure 1: General Highway Map — Ravalli County, Montana

This page reproduces the General Highway Map of Ravalli County, Montana, prepared by the Montana State Highway Department in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads, from the State-Wide Highway Planning Survey. Date: 1947. The Canyon Creek Laboratory property is annotated on the map at N. Lat: 46° 15′ 15″, W. Long: 114° 10′ 49″, approximately 3/4 mile west of the western city limits of Hamilton, Montana.

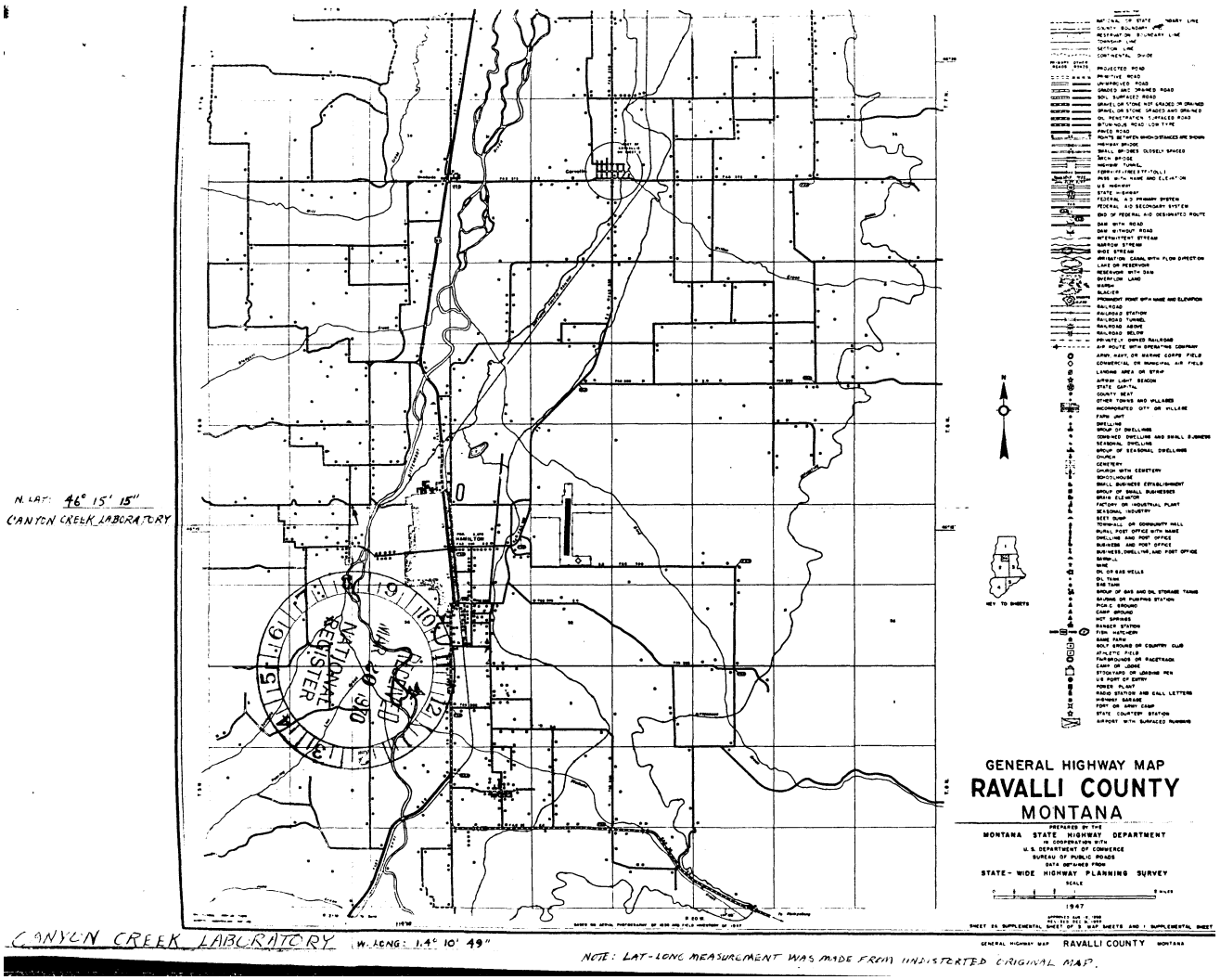


Figure 1: General Highway Map, Ravalli County, Montana (1947).
Canyon Creek Laboratory location marked at N. Lat: 46° 15' 15", W. Long: 114° 10' 49".

1. Name

Common: Canyon Creek Laboratory of the U.S. Public Health Service
And/or Historic: The Ricketts Memorial Museum

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City or Town: 3/4 of a mile west of the western city limit of Hamilton
State: Montana | Code: 25 | County: Ravalli | Code: 081

3. Map Reference

Source: Mont. State Highway Dept. County Maps, Ravalli County, Sheet 2A
Scale: 11/16 inch = 1 mile
Date: 1947, Revised 1959

4. Requirements

To be included on all maps:

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.

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Figure 2: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map — Hamilton, Montana; Idaho

This page reproduces the U.S. Geological Survey topographic map for the Hamilton, Montana; Idaho quadrangle (NL 11-6). The Canyon Creek Laboratory site (1921–28) is annotated on the map near Hamilton, Montana (T6N), in the Bitterroot Valley. Additional historical annotations indicate Cantonment Stevens (1853–54) and St. Mary's Mission (Ft. Owen) to the north and east respectively.

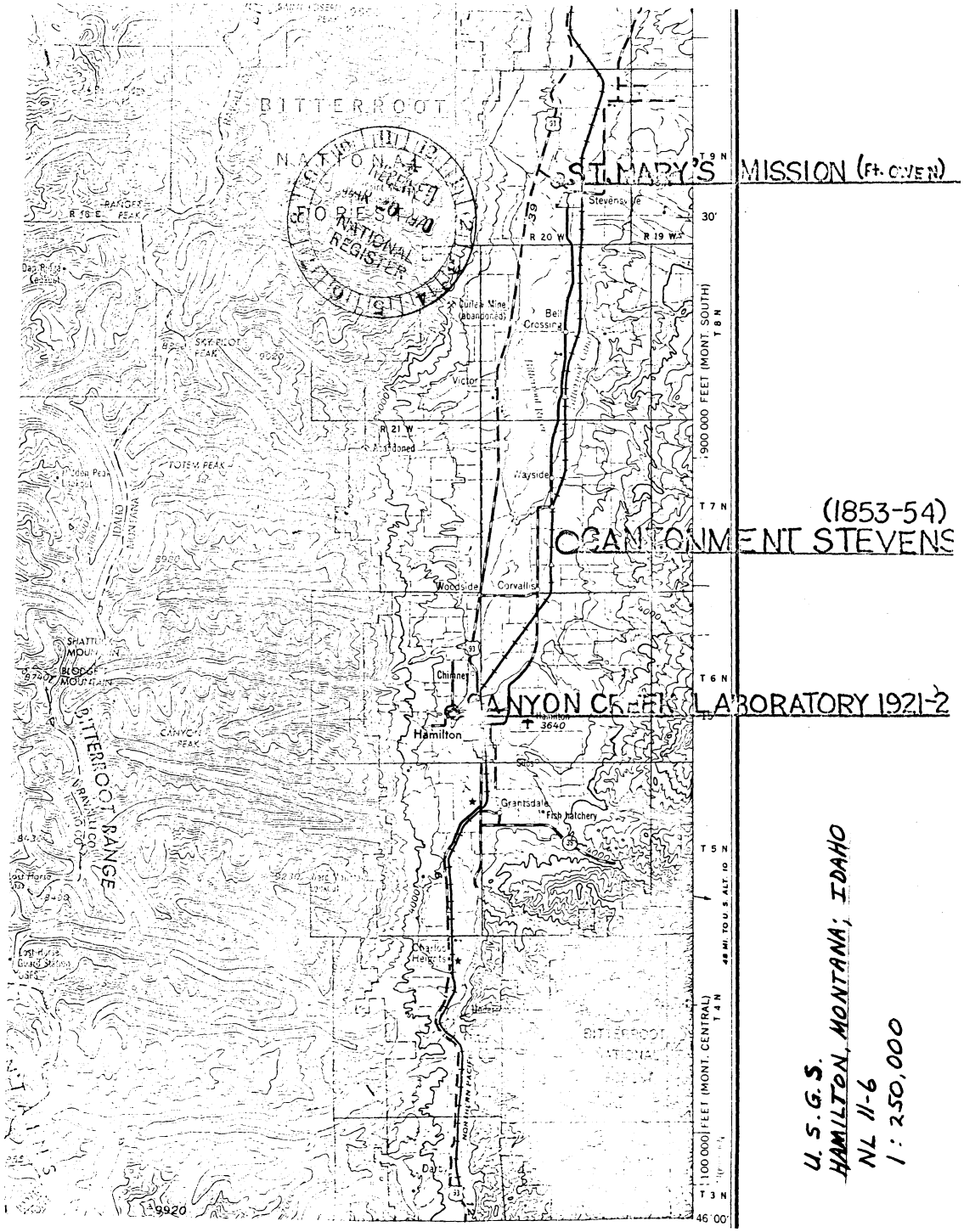


Figure 2: U.S.G.S. Topographic Map, Hamilton, Montana; Idaho, NL 11-6, Scale 1:250,000. Canyon Creek Laboratory (1921–28) and Cantonment Stevens (1853–54) annotated.

1. Name

Common: Canyon Creek Laboratory of the U.S. Public Health Service
And/or Historic: The Ricketts Memorial Museum

2. Location

Street and Number: T6N R21W, Sect. 26 (NE¼)
City or Town: 3/4 of a mile west of the western city limit of Hamilton
State: Montana | Code: 25 | County: Ravalli | Code: 081

3. Map Reference

Source: USGS, Hamilton, Montana; Idaho
Scale: 1:250,000

4. Requirements

To be included on all maps:

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.