

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

ROCK CREEK STATION AND STRICKER RANCH

By Patricia Wright

Number 972

July 1972

SIGNIFICANCE

The Stricker store and homesite buildings are architecturally significant for the examples they provide of locally-rare types of nineteenth and early twentieth century rural architecture, intact in their original setting and in their original relationship to one another. They are historically significant for their association with the earliest phases of white movement through and settlement of what is now agrarian south central Idaho.

The log store and outbuilding, particularly, are rare types in Twin Falls County, where broad-based settlement came late, after the advent of irrigation in 1905. The ell-type frame farmhouse is similarly notable for its stockade construction; and constructed as it was in 1900 to replace a log home destroyed by fire, it is half a decade earlier in date than most other substantial early dwellings in the county. The house and the frame barn, though visually less striking and unusual building types than the log store, comprise with it an integrated and attractive display of early rural architecture. Although the buildings are somewhat deteriorated, they are certainly restorable. There is substantial local and owner interest in such a restoration.

The complex is also significant as visual evidence of the earliest chapter in the movement of white settlers into Twin Falls County. The site had been passed by the Oregon Trail since the 1840's. Travelers along the Trail regularly used the area as a place to camp and water their stock, which gives it unusual potential for historic archaeology. After a stone "home station" was built in 1864 (demolished in 1905) to service Ben Holladay's tri-weekly mail and passenger service between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Boise, Rock Creek Station became a focus for limited settlement. In 1865 James Bascomb built the log store, which was bought in 1875 by Herman Stricker and which remains standing today. It served as store, post office, lunchroom, saloon, and club for several generations of travelers and residents.

The entire quarter section is still under the ownership of Herman Stricker's descendants. The boundaries have been drawn to include the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter. This includes the buildings, grounds, and those adjacent areas most

likely to yield historic archaeological information.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The group of buildings associated with the Stricker store near Rock Creek is located about three miles northwest of that small community; the property on which they stand lies on the north side of the creek itself. There are five significant structures in the group, ranging in date from the 1865 log store to the early twentieth century frame barn.

The most important building, historically and architecturally, is the store itself. It is a small rectangular building of hewn log construction with loglap corners. There are doors front and rear center, and horizontal casement windows in the sidewalls (two on the west and one on the east). Twentieth century frame additions which extended from the original south facade of the structure have been removed in recent years, and a shed-roofed porch added; the original pole-supported sod roof is intact and visible under a modern protective canopy.

Directly north of the store is a double-chambered storage cellar of rubble, pole, and sod construction; it has entrances in both end and side. South of the store, a sod-roofed log animal shelter is preserved. And to the east is a substantial frame barn which according to local sources was used as a dance hall in the early part of the century. It is a gable-roofed structure of simple rectangular plan, with a broad sliding door in the south wall and casement window in the gable.

The Stricker farmhouse is the final major structure in the group. It is a one-and-a-half story house set among mature native and introduced evergreen and deciduous trees, with orchard to the south. The core of the house is a log stockade, now invisible under wood siding. The basic plan is an ell, with large gables in the cross wing as well as lateral running gables in the main block. There is a screened porch with shed roof across the facade from the intersection of the ell. Gabled dormers, facing front and back, occur halfway along the main block. The rear elevation presents an interesting example of rural continuous architecture, as early frame and poured concrete additions for space and storage purposes can be seen. The house, like the other structures in the group, is vacant and in disrepair. The only alteration, however, is the boarding up of windows and the removal of the gingerbread trim visible in early photographs.

(This information has not been edited.)

Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428