

Just, Nels and Emma, House
Firth, Bingham County, Idaho

Summary:

The Just, Nels and Emma, House, is located at 995 Reid Road approximately eight miles south and east of the rural town of Firth, in the eastern Idaho county of Bingham. Situated in a rural setting on the north side of the Blackfoot River, the Just House is encompassed by a much larger contemporary farmstead, reflecting the growth and maturation of the Just family property over time. Built in 1887, the Just House is an excellent example of an eastern Idaho pioneer farmhouse established during the Territorial Period. Character defining features include the simple, utilitarian design, full length front porch, brick exterior, and wood windows. Associated features include an adjacent windmill, as well as an orchard enclosed by an iron fence; all dating to the historic period. Though some alteration has occurred over time, the Just House is in fair condition, with restoration work currently underway, and retains historic integrity across all seven aspects. Integrity of setting is diminished due to contemporary additions to the larger farmstead, yet the agricultural character and rural feeling remain. The Just House is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the area of exploration and settlement.

SHPO Comments:

None

Recommendation:

SHPO recommends the Idaho State Historic Sites Review Board forward the nomination to the National Park Service with a recommendation to list the Just, Nels and Emma, House, in the National Register of Historic Places.



IDAHO STATE
**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Preserving the past, enriching the future.

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 Just, Nels and Emma, House

other names/site number Reid, Agnes Just, House

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

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

2. Location

street & number 995 Reid Road N/A not for publication

city or town Firth N/A vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Bingham code 011 zip code 83236

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this 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 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 local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Tricia Canaday, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date _____

Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
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 _____

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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.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		site
1		structure
		object
3	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

GOVERNMENT / post office

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: WOOD / shingle; METAL / aluminum

other: _____

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Just, Nels and Emma, House, is located at 995 Reid Road approximately eight miles south and east of the rural town of Firth, in the eastern Idaho county of Bingham. Situated in a rural setting on the north side of the Blackfoot River, the Just House is encompassed by a much larger contemporary farmstead, reflecting the growth and maturation of the Just family property over time. Built in 1887, the Just House is an excellent example of an eastern Idaho pioneer farmhouse established during the Territorial Period. Character defining features include the simple, utilitarian design, full length front porch, brick exterior, and historic wood windows. Associated features include an adjacent windmill, as well as an orchard enclosed by an iron fence; all dating to the historic period. Though some alteration has occurred over time, the Just House is in fair condition, with restoration work currently underway, and retains historic integrity across all seven aspects. Integrity of setting is diminished due to contemporary additions to the larger farmstead, yet the agricultural character and rural feeling remain. The Just House is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the area of exploration and settlement.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Nels and Emma Just House is located just south and east of the small town of Firth, Idaho, in Bingham County in southeastern Idaho. Situated in a small valley just north of the Blackfoot River, the property is surrounded by rolling hills just west of where the Blackfoot River leaves its canyon and before it enters the much larger Snake River Valley. Sparsely placed farmsteads with irrigated cropland dot the landscape. The Fort Hall Indian Reservation is located across the river to the south.

The Just property is situated south of Reid Road and north of the Blackfoot River. The sprawling property consists of fields, residential buildings, and agricultural structures supporting the modern farming operation. Towards the center of this farmstead is a collection of historic buildings and structures comprising the current nomination: the historic Just House, an adjacent windmill, and the nearby remnants of an orchard, surrounded by a wrought iron fence. A separate shop, also of historic age, has been moved elsewhere on the property (see site plan). Though current plans are to move the shop back to its original location adjacent to the house, the date of the move is uncertain and thus the shop is excluded from this nomination.

The house itself faces east on an informal corner formed as an interior lane running north/south wraps to the west. A white picket fence flanks the east and a portion of the south boundary along this lane. The historic windmill is located adjacent to the house just to the north. The remnants of the historic orchard, surrounded by iron fencing, is located to the east, across the lane, and runs to the north (see site plan). The property drops to the west at the rear of the home, creating a walk-out cellar cut into the hillside. Mature evergreen trees surround the historic home.

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Exterior

The Just House is a 1½ story, side-gabled, brick home which faces east on a basalt rubble foundation, with an asymmetrical rectilinear plan and a full width front porch. The rear of the house is offset to the north from the main footprint by approximately 8-feet. This rear portion of the home features a shed roof which is shallower than the primary roof and terminates in an asymmetrical gable on the north end. The principal gabled roof is finished with wood shingles on the front-facing (east) elevation, while the west sloping roof and that of the shallower rear massing are sheathed in contemporary standing seam metal. The shallow, open eaves have enclosed rafters which feature wood soffits, but the fascia is finished with aluminum flashing. Brick chimneys with temporary metal caps pierce the ridgeline at both gable ends. The brick walls of the house are laid in a common bond with a row of headers roughly every five courses. A wide band of stucco parging, added after the 1930s, has been applied to most elevations below the windowsills and above the foundation while a plain, frieze board accents the top of the wall below the eaves. A full width, shallow front porch with no rail rests on four chamfered posts which support a shed roof with a slightly shallower slope than that of the principal structure. Reconstructed in 2019, the plank floor of the porch approximates the original flooring replaced by concrete in the mid-20th century.

A wooden front door with four raised panels is located on the east elevation under the front porch and slightly right of center. An operable wood transom, with glass still intact, is located atop this door. Two-over-two double hung windows are positioned on either side of the front door. These windows feature a single vertical muntin on both the top and bottom sash. Throughout the house, all windows are wood unless otherwise noted, and their masonry openings feature unornamented wood frames with board lintels and sills. A single, gabled dormer, also located right of center, pierces the roof just below the ridgeline. This element is framed rather than masonry and features clapboard siding, shallow, open eaves with enclosed rafters and wood fascia and soffits, and a recessed triangular panel in the gable. This dormer features a four-over-four double-hung window, with two overlapping sashes so that the window appears to have six panes when closed. This dormer is not original but was added when fire damaged the roof in 1930. The gabled projection of the rear section of the house is recessed but visible at the north end of the east elevation.

The south elevation of the home consists of the primary gabled massing to the right, with the shed roofed kitchen recessed and to the left at the rear of the home. One two-over-two double hung window, with a muntin pattern as described above, is located right of center towards the front of the home on the first story. Slightly right of center, the attic features a window, with two horizontal muntins dividing the sash into three equal panes. This window replaced an original door in the 1960s that once provided independent access to the attic via an external stair. The stairs are no longer extant. A large, 1 by 1 aluminum slider window is centered on the shed roofed portion of this elevation. This window replaced an original wood window during a kitchen remodel in the early 1960s.

The offset rectilinear footprint is most visible on the west (rear) elevation. The shed roofed portion of the home extends out (west) from the primary mass, with yet a smaller shed roofed extension offset to the north. This was once an interior stair to the cellar but in the 1950s was converted to a bathroom. All of this rests atop a walk-out cellar built of local basalt. The main portion of the house on this elevation features a two-over-two double hung window providing light and air to the living room from the west. This window matches those previously described on the east and south elevations. Two, one-over-one double hung windows are located on the shed roof portion of the home, providing light and air to the kitchen from the west. A small, metal chimney pierces the roof above the kitchen where the shed and gable roofed masses meet. This chimney vents the original wood burning kitchen stove. The walk-out cellar below is built of basalt with an earthen roof. A small overhang runs the length of the structure and is supported by four unfinished log posts. Two wood doors, one raised panel and one plank, provide access to the cellar. To the right of the doors, a wood double hung window with broken muntin pattern provides natural light to the cellar. The window appears to have once had a six-over-six configuration.

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The north elevation features two gables, with the rear kitchen gable sitting proud of the main portion of the home. This asymmetrical rear gable shelters a screened porch and secondary access to the kitchen on its east elevation. A non-original 1 by 1 aluminum slider window, installed in a 1963 kitchen remodel, is located to the right of this door. The smaller shed mass at the rear of the home features a single pane awning window that tilts in toward the bathroom. The main portion of the home features two historic two-over-two windows, matching those on the other first floor elevations, providing light and air to the two first floor bedrooms. Above, a fixed, undivided attic window accommodates the north attic bedroom.

Interior

The interior of the home is lath and plaster with little wood, save for doors, floors, simple cabinetry, the staircase and wainscot in the main hall, and baseboard and door trim. Wood for the home likely came from a sawmill Nels Just installed in the nearby mountains the year the home was built. Original raised panel wood doors are still present, with transoms above. Exposed electrical wiring was added when electricity became available (date unknown).

Upon entering the home from the east (main) entry, a long hallway extends to the large kitchen at the rear. The hallway features wood wainscot and linoleum flooring. Rustic coat hooks line the south wall. Two bedrooms are located off the hallway to the right (north), while a doorway in the middle of the hallway on the south leads to the living room. Near the kitchen doorway, and facing back toward the front door, is a steep wooden stairway that leads to the attic/sleeping loft. A utilitarian cabinet with drawers is built beneath the stairway. Notably, there is a large U.S. map mounted on the wall in the hallway between the bedroom doors on the north. Printed in 1887, it was mounted there by Nels Just upon completion of the house. The map was restored in 2014 with the help of the Idaho Heritage Trust and mounted in a protective display case.

The first-floor bedrooms on the north are rather spartan, but still contain furniture used up until 1976. The living room to the south has a wood plank floor and three wooden windows, one each to the east, south, and west. A plaster-finished chimney is located on the south wall and projects into the room. A Stokermatic coal furnace was installed in front of the fireplace sometime in the 1940s. The living room is furnished much as it was during the time of Agnes Just Reid, notably with an organ given to her as a birthday present when she was 11 in 1897, a writing desk, and a post office bureau. The latter is an artifact from when the house served as a post office with Emma Just as the Presto postmaster, from 1890 to 1907.

A doorway was opened between the kitchen and the living room in the 1950s. The kitchen served as the heart of the home with plenty of room for meal preparation for the large family and many ranch hands, who were needed for a working cattle ranch. The kitchen, when viewed today, resembles the configuration used during Nels and Emma's residency with the cast iron stove still in place, dish cupboards, long table, bench, and lounge. In the early 1950s, the landing to a stairway that led down into the cellar from the kitchen on the west was converted into a small bathroom, giving the house indoor plumbing for the first time. In 1963 the north end of the kitchen was remodeled with knotty pine cabinetry and a new sink. At that time an original wood window was replaced with a sliding aluminum window. At about the same time a larger aluminum picture window replaced a wooden window in the kitchen on the south side of the house. Two original windows in the kitchen face west. In the 1960s brightly flowered linoleum typical of that era was placed on the kitchen floor. Agnes Just Reid, who had lived in the house almost since birth, purchased a bright red electric push-button range to sit next to the original wood stove. Both stoves are still in the house, along with the furnishings that were there when Agnes passed away in 1976.

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The upstairs sleeping loft features two bedrooms on either end with a common area in-between. A non-original dormer pierces the roof on the east side of this common area. All three rooms are currently unfurnished. For many years there was an exterior wooden stairway leading to the loft room on the south. It was removed for safety reasons in the 1960s. The doorway was replaced by a window at that time.

Integrity

Overall, the Nels and Emma Just House retains a high degree of integrity across all seven aspects. Specifically:

Location: The house is in its original location and has not been moved. The property retains integrity of location.

Design: Despite alterations, some of which are historic but fall after the period of significance, the design of the home has not been significantly altered. Character defining features such as the overall form, fenestration, and historic materials largely remain. Though diminished, integrity of design is retained.

Setting: Though the integrity of setting is diminished by the growth of the active contemporary farmstead encompassing the Just House, the placement of the home and associated features relative to the more recent additions retains the agricultural feel of the property. Integrity of setting is retained.

Materials: For the most part, the Just House retains the original materials used in its construction. The original brick walls and most of the wood windows remain. Though some windows have been replaced, and a metal roof has been added to the rear of the home, the building continues to possess many of the materials dating from the period of significance. Though diminished, integrity of materials is retained.

Workmanship: The Just House continues to reflect the workmanship invested in its construction. The common bond brick pattern with a header course roughly every five courses is still apparent. Similarly, the basalt cellar incorporated into the hillside at the rear of the home continues to reflect the pioneer ingenuity of the time. Integrity of workmanship is retained.

Feeling: Though surrounded by the larger, contemporary farmstead, the Just House continues to reflect a late 19th century rural farmstead in eastern Idaho. Associated features in support of the household are also extant and adjacent to the historic home, creating a small enclave set apart from the active farming operation nearby. Integrity of feeling is retained.

Association: Integrity of association is retained. Both from the interior and exterior, the sense of a rural farmhouse is presented with aids such as the wood picket fence, windmill, orchard surrounded by an original iron fence, as well as mature landscaping. The home has not witnessed alteration or reuse that would diminish its original character. By retaining all other aspects of integrity, the Nels and Emma Just House continues to convey the feelings and associations of exploration and settlement in early eastern Idaho.

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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

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EXPLORATION / SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

1887-1923

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

Though the Just family is associated with the subject property and the construction of nonextant dugouts and cabins as early as 1870, the period of significance begins in 1887. This was the year the current home was completed and placed in service. The period of significance ends in 1923, the year of Emma Just's death. Nels Just preceded her in death in 1912. Though the Just family continues to own the property, the association with exploration and settlement ends with the transfer of the property to their daughter, Agnes Just Reid.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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

The Nels and Emma Just House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, and is significant at the local level in the area of exploration and settlement. The Just family were very early settlers to the area along the Blackfoot River in southeastern Idaho, and contributed to the growth and commerce of the area. The period of significance for the property begins in 1887, the year the home was completed and placed in service, and ends in 1923 with the death of Emma Just, who lived in the home until that time. The property remains in the Just Family to this day.

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

General History of the Area

Fur trapper Donald McKenzie gave the Blackfoot River its name in 1819. The indigenous people in the area were mostly Shoshone and Bannock, but McKenzie encountered some Siksika, or Blackfeet, in the area in 1819 and gave the anglicized version of their name to the river. The name Siksika refers to the dark moccasins members of that tribe wore.¹

The valley where the Nels and Emma Just house stands is at the point where the Blackfoot River exits the approximately 26-mile canyon it has carved from the Blackfoot Reservoir Dam to the south and east. The 1,500-acre valley, called the Just-Reid Valley locally today, sits between the foothills of the Blackfoot Mountains to the south, and the low-lying Presto Bench on the north. The valley on the south side of the river is on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

Graphic evidence of occupation by the Bannock and Shoshone tribes comes in the form of petroglyphs attributed to both tribes along a lava rock outcropping of the Presto Bench.²

Some of the first settlers in the area were Charles and Jane Higham, who built a cabin along Lincoln Creek in 1866, just west of the valley described above. Emma Thompson (Just), the niece of Jane Higham, stayed briefly there with her new husband, George Bennett. They would soon move to Taylor Bridge, near present-day Idaho Falls, to operate the stage station and toll bridge.³

Settlement of the valley where the Just home stands came in 1870 when the U.S. Army began construction of the new Fort Hall some nine miles southwest of the Just home where Lincoln Creek flows into the Blackfoot River.⁴ The first settler in the valley was Presto Burrell, a former sergeant with General Patrick Edward Conner's California Volunteers. Burrell was given 160 acres at the upper end of the valley by the government at the time of his discharge.⁵ Burrell settled there in the spring of 1870. Nels and Emma Just set up housekeeping in a dugout along the Blackfoot River about three miles east of Fort Hall shortly after their marriage on November 9, 1870 in Malad City, Idaho Territory.⁶

¹ Boone, Lalia Phipps. Idaho Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary. University of Idaho Press, 1988, 37.

² Rees, John, Bannock Petroglyphs along the Blackfoot River. Ms, Blackfoot Public Library. Blackfoot, Idaho, undated, as quoted in the Twenty-third biennial report of the Board of Trustees of the Idaho State Historical Department (1951-1952).

³ Reid, Agnes Just, The Lost Letters, Cedar Creek Press, 2006, 32.

⁴ Jones, Larry, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Fort Hall (United States Army, 1870-1883).

⁵ Burrell, Brent, Ring the Bell for Presto—The Grandfather I Never Knew, Summer 2017 edition of the Just-Reid family magazine, Presto Press, 2.

⁶ Agnes Just Reid, The Settling of Presto, Idaho, oral history interview conducted by Harold Forbush, Brigham Young University-Idaho, July 5, 1970.

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Early Family History

Nels Anderson Just was born in Dallerup, Skanderborg, Denmark to Peder Anderson Just and Karen Marie Christensen Just in 1847, the second of nine children.⁷

In April 1857, the Just family, new converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), left Liverpool, England, aboard the Westmoreland, a ship of US registry that took them to Philadelphia.⁸ That July the family set out from Florence, Nebraska, with the Christian Christiansen Hand Cart Company. It was the seventh such company of Mormon Saints to cross the plains and the second organized for travel to Utah Territory that year. The Just family arrived in Salt Lake City on September 3, 1857.⁹

Soon after their arrival in Utah the Just family began to follow Joseph Morris.

Emma Thompson was born in East Winch, Norfolk, England, in 1850 to George Thompson and Frances Hunter Thompson.¹⁰ The Thompson family became followers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gathered up their family and sailed to the United States. They arrived in New Orleans on the Onward on January 17, 1854, then traveled by wagon train to Salt Lake City.¹¹

In 1859, the Thompsons became followers of Joseph Morris, who considered himself the new prophet of the church.

The Morrisites

In 1857, Latter-day Saint Joseph Morris announced he started receiving visions from God, declared himself a prophet, and began sending a series of letters/visions to Brigham Young, asking the church leader to step down and recognize Morris as the new leader of the church. Young largely ignored those letters.¹²

Growing ever more frustrated with Young's refusal to recognize a new prophet, Morris began gathering a following of his own. Circa 1859, the families of Emma Thompson and Nels Just were persuaded that Morris was a true prophet and began following his teachings.¹³

In 1861, around 300 followers of Morris gathered together with him at an abandoned fort—Kington Fort—in South Weber, Utah Territory, where they lived communally. Morris assured his followers that the Second Coming of Jesus was imminent. Some were reportedly so certain that Jesus was on his way that they quit caring for their crops, perhaps even tramping them into the ground. Communal supplies began to dwindle as winter approached.¹⁴

There was some confusion about the timing of the Second Coming, leading to disillusion among the faithful. A few, who decided to break away from Morris, were not convinced they had received property upon their departure that was equivalent to what they brought to the commune. As a result, three former Morrisites plotted to hijack a grain wagon belonging to the new church. The Morrisites captured them (though one later escaped) and held the men inside the fort.¹⁵

⁷ Birth registration, Danish parish records, US Federal Census records.

⁸ Passenger list from the Westmoreland.

⁹ Reid, Alma J, *Along the Rivers*, Sage Brush Studio, 1994, 52.

¹⁰ 1851 English census, Middleton Parrish, Norfolk County.

¹¹ Passenger list from the Onward.

¹² Anderson, C. Leroy, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites*, (revisited), Utah State University Press, 2010, 43-53.

¹³ Anderson, C. Leroy, *Morrisite Collection*, University of Utah, Morrisite membership roles.

¹⁴ Anderson, C. Leroy, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites*, (revisited), Utah State University Press, 2010, 43-53.

¹⁵ Ibid.

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The wives of the captured men petitioned the LDS leadership in Salt Lake City for their release. Several official demands for the release of the men were delivered, all ignored by Morris. As a result of this impasse, the Mormon Militia was formed to resolve the situation by force, if necessary. The militia marched north from Salt Lake City in the spring of 1862, picking up recruits along the way until between 500 and 1,000 men arrived at Kington Fort.¹⁶

After Morris failed to respond to a demand of surrender, a cannonball was fired into the fort. Historical accounts differ. This may have been a warning shot. Nevertheless, the result was the death of two women and the severe injury of a teenage girl. A three-day siege ensued, resulting in the death of two militia members.¹⁷

On June 15, 1862, Joseph Morris, his right-hand man John Banks, and two women were killed. Again, accounts are at odds, but this took place during an attempted surrender by Morris.¹⁸

Of particular interest to the Just/Reid family, was the account of 12-year-old Emma Thompson, who witnessed the killings. She later testified that, "When Morris was killed, my father sat upon his body and said, 'Now kill me, for I have nothing more to live for.'" A member of the militia aimed his weapon at George Thompson to honor the request, but the gun misfired.¹⁹

The bodies of Joseph Morris and John Banks were paraded back to Salt Lake City and put on display for some time before burial.

Several Morrisites were immediately put on trial and convicted of various crimes, including murder. Days after their conviction, the newly arrived governor of Utah pardoned them all.²⁰

In the spring of 1863, soldiers under the command of Colonel Patrick Conner escorted many of the Morrisites—including the Just and Thompson families—out of Utah Territory and into the newly formed Idaho Territory. The group passed near the site where Conner, a few weeks earlier, had led his troops in the Bear River Massacre, an event that resulted in the deaths of about 300 Shoshone men, women and children.²¹

The soldiers established a post called Camp Conner, and the followers established the community of Morristown, nearby. The Morrisites would soon be overshadowed by Mormon settlers who subsequently started the community of Soda Springs on the other side of Camp Conner. Morristown itself would eventually be swallowed up by the Anderson Reservoir, though by that time most of the Morrisites had scattered, many of them to settle in Deer Lodge, Montana.²²

Emma Thompson married one of Conner's soldiers at Morristown. He was a supply sergeant by the name of George Waldron Bennett. Their wedding date was February 22, 1865. She was 15.²³

The Bennetts moved to Fort Douglas, Utah Territory, later that year. The fort commissary burned down and George Bennett and another soldier were put in the guardhouse under suspicion of having set the fire. Alone and frightened, Emma worked up the courage after a few days to go see the post commander, General Conner. When she begged for her husband's freedom, Conner said, "Why my child, are you married?" Considering her plea for a moment he said, "We'll see what we can do about it." The next day George was released and he was soon mustered out of the army.²⁴

¹⁶ Anderson, C. Leroy, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites*, (revisited), Utah State University Press, 2010, 43-53.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, endnotes by Brigham D. Madsen, 85.

²⁰ Anderson, C. Leroy, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites*, (revisited), Utah State University Press, 2010, 43-53.

²¹ Ibid, 160.

²² George Thompson and Peder Anderson Just remained Morrisites until their deaths. Nels and Emma said little about their beliefs but did not follow either the Morrisite or LDS church.

²³ Reid, Agnes Just, *The Lost Letters*, Cedar Creek Press, 2006, 21.

²⁴ Ibid, 30.

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In 1866 the Bennetts moved to Lincoln Creek, east of the current town of Blackfoot, Idaho, for a short time to live with Emma's Aunt, Jane Higham, and Jane's husband, Charles.²⁵ They spent the winter of 1866-1867 running the stage station and toll bridge at Taylor Bridge.²⁶

Disheartened with the Promised Land, Emma's parents decided to return to England. George and Emma were to meet them in Helena, Montana, and go back with them. The Bennetts arrived first in Helena. George went into town every day from the miner's cabin where they were staying to see if Emma's parents had arrived. Each evening he would return to report they had not. When the last steamer of the season headed down river without any word from her parents, Emma was confused and despondent. Later, she learned George had been lying. Her parents had arrived. They had camped in the middle of the street so they could not be missed, but Bennett had hidden from them to avoid going back to England. Emma would never see her mother again. Frances Thompson and an infant daughter both died on their journey home.²⁷

George Bennett's drinking soon got the better of him. While working at a livery, George robbed his employer and stole a horse, leaving town and deserting his pregnant wife.²⁸

In 1869, Emma divorced George Bennett and returned to Idaho Territory to live with her aunt and uncle, Charles and Jane Higham. She made a living by baking bread for the soldiers at Fort Hall during its construction. There, she met another former Morrisite, Nels Anderson Just.²⁹

Nels Anderson Just moved to Montana Territory 1865, where he was employed in mining for one season. In 1866, he returned to Utah Territory where he served for a time as a messenger for Wells-Fargo.³⁰

From 1866 to 1869, Nels worked as a night watchman for Union Pacific during the construction of the first continental railroad. It is likely that he was there for the ceremony when they drove the famous golden spike at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory, in 1869, but there is no firm record of it.³¹

After completion of the railroad, Nels Just took up freighting, running his team and wagon between Corrine, Utah, and the Salmon River Country in Idaho. On one of those trips his oxen wandered off. He followed their tracks to find a little hidden valley along the Blackfoot River in Idaho Territory. He thought it would be a good place to homestead. Soon after, he met a divorced woman, Emma Thompson, at nearby Fort Hall. She had a baby boy with her. Nels proposed marriage. Emma readily accepted but told him not to expect her to love him.³²

Establishment of the Homestead

Nels and Emma Just, along with Emma's son Fred Bennett, spent the winter of 1870 and 1871 in a dugout with a bison robe for a door along the Blackfoot River in the valley.³³

In the summer of 1871, with the help of neighbor Presto Burrell, the Justs built a cabin. Notable visitors that year included John and Thomas Moran, along with other members of the Hayden Expedition. They had been camped at nearby Fort Hall. Some who visited the Justs purchased leather britches Emma had made.³⁴

²⁵ Reid, Agnes Just, *The Lost Letters*, Cedar Creek Press, 2006, 32.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 37.

²⁷ *Ibid* 39-45.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 45-54.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 59-67.

³⁰ Just, Rick, editor, *Waterman—The Life and Letters of Nels Just*, Cedar Creek Press, 2005, 13.

³¹ *Ibid*, 13-16.

³² Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, 3-5.

³³ Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, 3-5.

³⁴ Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, 11-13.

Just, Nels and Emma, House

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That first summer the Justs planted a garden and lived off the bounty from the land and nearby river.³⁵ Later that summer Nels completed a little irrigation project in the Eagle Rock area, digging an irrigation ditch from Willow Creek.³⁶ Also in 1871, Nels acquired a branding iron from a blacksmith at Fort Hall. The T brand would be seen on several thousand cattle and about 250 head of horses during Nels' life.³⁷

The Justs would raise four boys and bury four girls. Then, in 1886 Agnes Just was born. She would become the historian of their lives.

Life in the valley was always a partnership between Nels and Emma. They bought buckskin from Anderson's store at Eagle Rock. Nels would cut the gloves and britches from patterns; Emma sewed them together, at first by hand, then with a sewing machine obtained in 1874 for \$75. They got from \$1.50 to \$2.50 a pair for the gloves, while the materials cost about 75 cents.³⁸

They raised and butchered cattle, selling the meat to the army at Fort Hall. Over a period of about a year they had rendered 400 pounds of fat. Hoping to sell it, Nels hauled it to Corinne, Utah, where he was offered only four cents a pound. Thinking that was not enough, he hauled it back to the valley where he and Emma turned it into soap and candles to sell to area settlers and the army.³⁹

Nels spent several summers putting up hay at Fort Hall. During much of their early marriage Emma did laundry for the ladies in Eagle Rock. Nels continued to haul freight from time to time and raise cattle and sheep.

The Justs replaced their dugout with a 12' by 14' cabin within a year of coming to the valley, then replaced the cabin with a frame home built on a lava rock foundation (date uncertain). In 1887 they constructed the existing brick home on the foundation of the frame home, first tearing down the kitchen side of the frame house and replacing the walls with brick while living in the remaining part of the home. Once the kitchen was finished, they reversed the process, living in the kitchen side and rebuilding the bedroom and living room side with brick. The brick was fired on site and the lumber was cut at a sawmill Nels had recently purchased nearby.⁴⁰

The year 1889 was a milestone in many ways for the Justs. That was the year the Presto Post Office, named by Nels after Presto Burrell, began operating from the living room of their home. The bureau that served as the post office is still in a corner of the house. Albert F. McElroy, who was staying in the house to serve as a teacher to the children, was the first postmaster. Emma became the postmistress in November of 1890, and served in that position until April 1904, when her son, Fred Bennett took over. The post office was discontinued in February of 1907 when the service was moved to Shelley.⁴¹

In 1889, Nels began working with other investors to form a canal company.⁴² He and Joseph A. Clark, C.C. Tautphaus, DeForest Chamberlain, Casper Sauer and other promoters formed the Idaho Canal Company with Chicago backers in 1891. One hundred thousand inches of water from the Snake River for irrigation and useful purposes was appropriated to the company on December 14, 1891. Nels originally owned 200 shares in the company, purchased for \$2,000. He became the contractor for the construction of the canal, naming his son, James, as the principle foreman.⁴³ The company finished the canal which runs south from the Snake River in Idaho Falls into the Blackfoot River about three miles west of the Just home.

³⁵ Agnes Just Reid, *The Settling of Presto, Idaho*, oral history interview conducted by Harold Forbush, Brigham Young University-Idaho, July 5, 1970.

³⁶ Just, Rick, editor, *Waterman—The Life and Letters of Nels Just*, Cedar Creek Press, 2005, 18.

³⁷ Just, James, letter to State Brand Inspector Mary Louise Johnesse. Jan. 1, 1936.

³⁸ Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ U.S. Postal Service records.

⁴² Reid, Agnes Just, *Letters of Long Ago*, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973, 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 66-68.

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Nels Just expanded his holdings in the valley by 160 acres in 1889 with an application through the Timber Culture Act of 1873. In accordance with the Act he planted hundreds of trees in the valley, many of which still stand. The Act was widely abused and was repealed in 1891.⁴⁴

In 1890, Nels was a principle investor in a weekly newspaper in Eagle Rock, *The Times*, which was short lived. Peder Anderson Just, Nels' father, lived with them for a few years until his death in 1891. Shortly after that Karen Just, who was estranged from Peder, came to live with Nels and Emma. Emma's father, George Thompson, came to live with them about the same time. The Justs built a two-room cottage (no longer extant) for them to live in. The two parents, each of whom had lost their spouse planned to be married, but a dispute put an end to that. Karen moved away. George and his sister, Jane Higham, were killed in a wagon accident in 1894.⁴⁵

Nels purchased another farm in the Island Park area for \$300 in 1898. He added \$1,000 in improvements, cleared \$500 a year from the place, and sold it for \$5,000 in 1905.⁴⁶

In 1900, Nels was elected county commissioner for Bingham County. In 1902, Nels sold his shares (by that time increased to 1,000) in the Idaho Canal Company for 24 cents on the dollar. The company had gone into receivership after a contract to continue the canal across the Fort Hall Indian Reservation had run into problems.⁴⁷ The man who came to Idaho to take over the company was James H. Brady. Nels Just would loathe Brady for life and would have been galled to learn that he would eventually go on to become Idaho's eighth governor and a U.S. Senator.

In 1904 Nels and Emma's son James donated land for the Lower Presto School where a two-room schoolhouse was built. In 1905, Nels bought into a Mackay copper mine. That same year he invested in a start-up bank in Shelley, becoming its first president. In 1906, Agnes Katherine Just married Robert Ezekiel Reid. The couple came to live in the Just house. It would be their residence for the rest of their lives.⁴⁸

In 1910, the *Shelley Pioneer* reported that N.A. Just "returned last Friday from a business Jaunt in Nevada, where he says he has purchased 25,000 acres of land in Humboldt County. The land is favorably situated in the beautiful Quinn River Valley, and is now in a high state of cultivation, with a generous water right, and all under fence. It is adapted to diversified farming and horticulture, and it is Mr. Just's intention to cut it up into small tracts and put it on the market."⁴⁹ Whether this purchase actually took place is still a matter of conjecture. Nels died in 1912. There is no mention of it in the probate papers.

Emma continued to live in the house until she passed away in 1923. That was the year *Agnes Just Reid's Letters of Long Ago* was published by Caxton Press in Caldwell. Emma had read and approved every page of the book, which was based on her life. The second edition of the book, also published by Caxton, came out in 1936. The third edition, published by the University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, arrived in 1973. With copies of the book becoming difficult to find the family published the fourth edition of the book in 1997. It is still in print and available as an ebook. The family found an unpublished manuscript after Agnes' death in 1976. The book, which tells Emma's story before her marriage to Nels was published in 2006 by the family under the title *The Lost Letters*.

Agnes Just Reid published several books of poetry over the years. She was a newspaper columnist for at least three papers and the part owner of one Blackfoot paper. She wrote her weekly column, "Here's a Thought," for *The Blackfoot News* for more than 40 years. She wrote for many periodicals and was active in the Idaho Writers League. She corresponded with many writers of her day and had a special friendship with B.M. Bower.

⁴⁴ Just, Rick, editor, *Waterman—The Life and Letters of Nels Just*, Cedar Creek Press, 2005, 23.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 22.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 26-27.

⁴⁹ *Shelley Pioneer*, March 7, 1910, 1.

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Bertha Muzzy Sinclair wrote dozens of popular Westerns under the pen name B.M. Bower, one of which, *The Ranch at the Wolverine*, published in 1914, was written while she was staying at the Just-Reid home.

Agnes and Robert Reid raised five sons in the home, most of whom stayed in the valley to farm and ranch. Robert passed away in 1947. Their son, Douglass Reid, cared for his mother in the home until her death. One highlight for the family came in 1955 when a picture of Agnes, with Doug feeding wood to the stove in the background, appeared in *Life* magazine in a feature about women who had written to Anne Morrow Lindbergh in appreciation of her book *Gift from the Sea*.⁵⁰ The photo of the Reids led the feature, along with one of Agnes' poems about writing, called *I've Made a Lemon Pie*.

Each day I write a poem
To satisfy my soul,
About a lovely sunset
Or how the breakers roll.

Today I cannot write one,
No matter how I try,
And still my soul is satisfied,
I've made a lemon pie.

Descendants of Nels and Emma Just continue to live in the valley they homesteaded; farming, ranching, and writing. Though the original farmstead has grown over time, reflecting the maturation of the operation over more than 100 years, the Nels and Emma Just House continues to convey the important history of rural settlement in eastern Idaho dating to the Territorial Period.

⁵⁰ "Dear Mrs. Lindbergh," *Life*, October 2, 1955, 118-119.

Just, Nels and Emma, House
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Anderson, C. Leroy, Joseph Morris and the Saga Of the Morrisites (revisited), Utah State University Press – 2010

Boone, Lalia Phipps. Idaho Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary. University of Idaho Press, 1988

Burrell, Brent, “Ring the Bell for Presto—The Grandfather I Never Knew,” Summer 2017 edition of the Just-Reid family magazine, Presto Press, Boise, Idaho

Jones, Larry, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Fort Hall (United States Army, 1870-1883)

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Rees, John, Bannock Petroglyphs along the Blackfoot River. Ms, Blackfoot Public Library. Blackfoot, Idaho, undated, as quoted in the Twenty-third biennial report of the Board of Trustees of the Idaho State Historical Department (1951-1952).

Reid, Agnes Just, Letters of Long Ago, University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1973

Reid, Agnes Just, The Lost Letters, Cedar Creek Press, Boise, Idaho, 2006

Reid, Agnes Just, The Settling of Presto, Idaho, oral history interview conducted by Harold Forbush, Brigham Young University-Idaho, July 5, 1970

Reid, Alma J, Along the Rivers, Sage Brush Studio, 1994,

Unattributed, “Dear Mrs. Lindbergh,” Life, October 2, 1955, 118-119

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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Just, Nels and Emma, House
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.464

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>43.263306</u>	<u>-112.102853</u>	3	<u>43.262205</u>	<u>-112.103379</u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	<u>43.262374</u>	<u>-112.102535</u>	4	<u>43.263265</u>	<u>-112.103183</u>
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

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

The Just Family Farmstead is a large farming operation identified by Bingham County Assessor parcel number RP0547406, located in T2S R37E Section 10. The proposed National Register boundary is limited to a small 1.464 acre enclave within this larger property consisting of the Nels and Emma Just House, an adjacent windmill, as well as a nearby orchard enclosed by an iron fence.

From coordinates 43.263306, -112.102853, the proposed boundary runs southeast following the historic iron fencing to a point 43.262374, -112.102853. From here, the boundary generally follows an existing vehicular drive southwest to the point 43.262205, -112.103379. The proposed boundary then runs generally north and east, following the meander of an existing drive, to the point 43.263265, -112.103183. The boundary then runs northeast to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The farmstead property associated with the Just family has grown and evolved over time since the original homesteading in 1870. The one (1) building, one (1) site, and one (1) structure historically associated with the farmstead and included in this nomination create an enclave completely surrounded by a more contemporary farming operation still active today. The boundary largely follows an existing lane network that separates the historic assemblage from the modern operation.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rick Just, Executive Director date 12/12/2019
organization Presto Preservation Association, Inc. telephone 208-362-9892
street & number 11544 W Jenilyn Ct email rickjust@rickjust.com
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83713

Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Additional Documentation

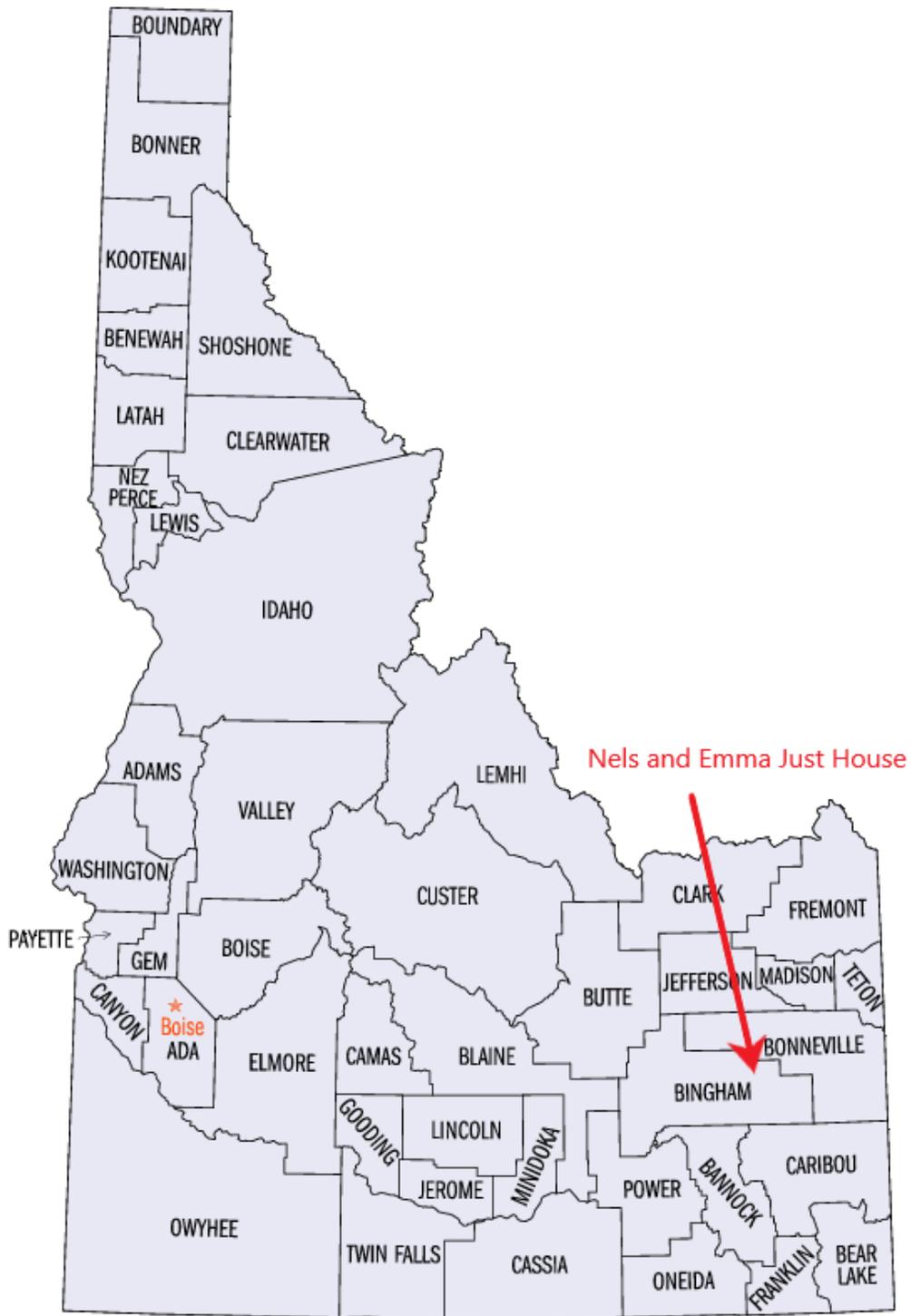
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Regional Location Map**
 - **Local Location Map (USGS)**
 - **Aerial of Farmstead**
 - **Site Plan (Boundary Map)**
 - **Floor Plans (Ground Floor and Attic)**
 - **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).
-

Just, Nels and Emma, House
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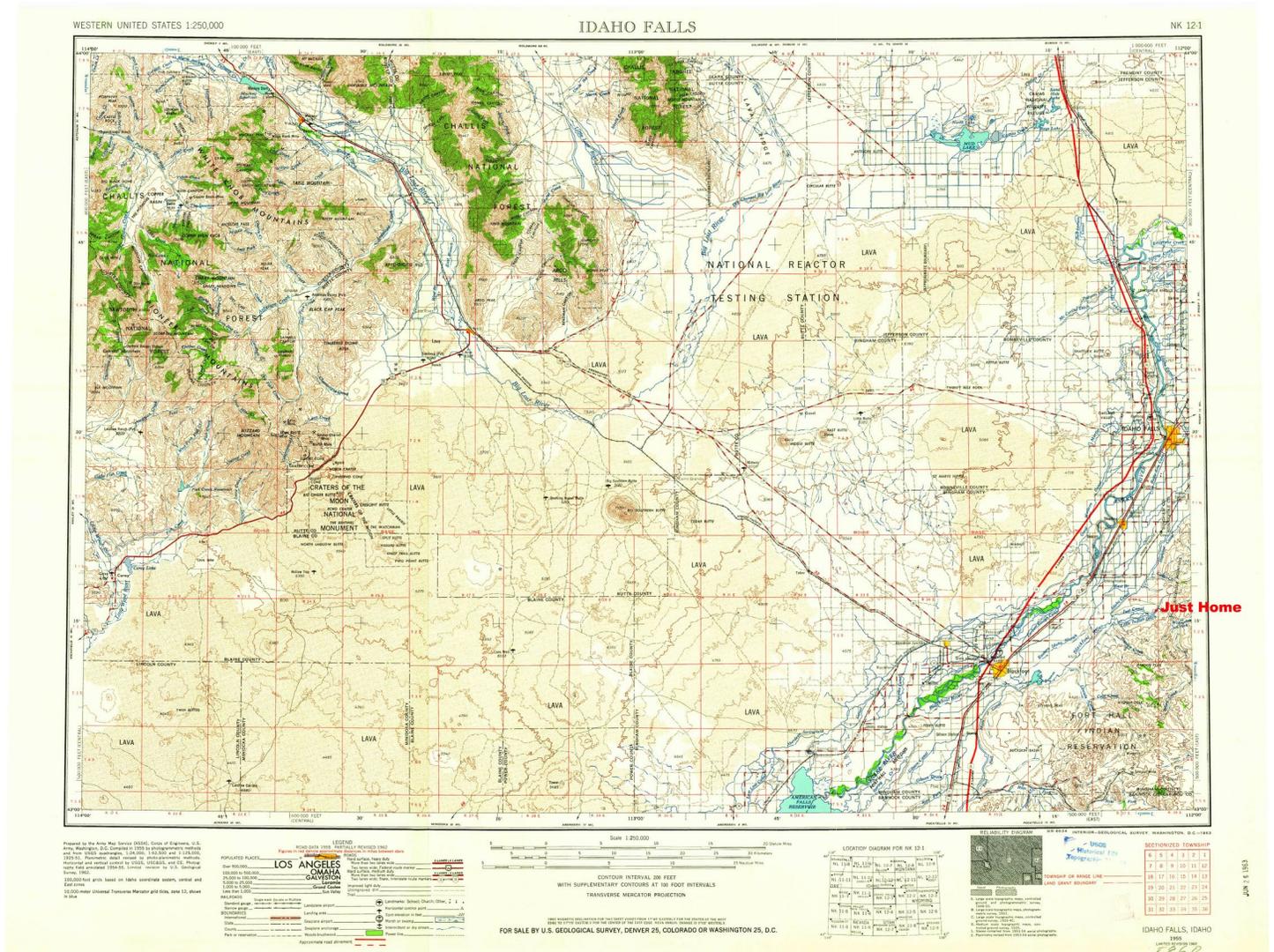
Location Map



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USGS Map



Just Home

JUN 7 1983

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Aerial Map



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Boundary Map

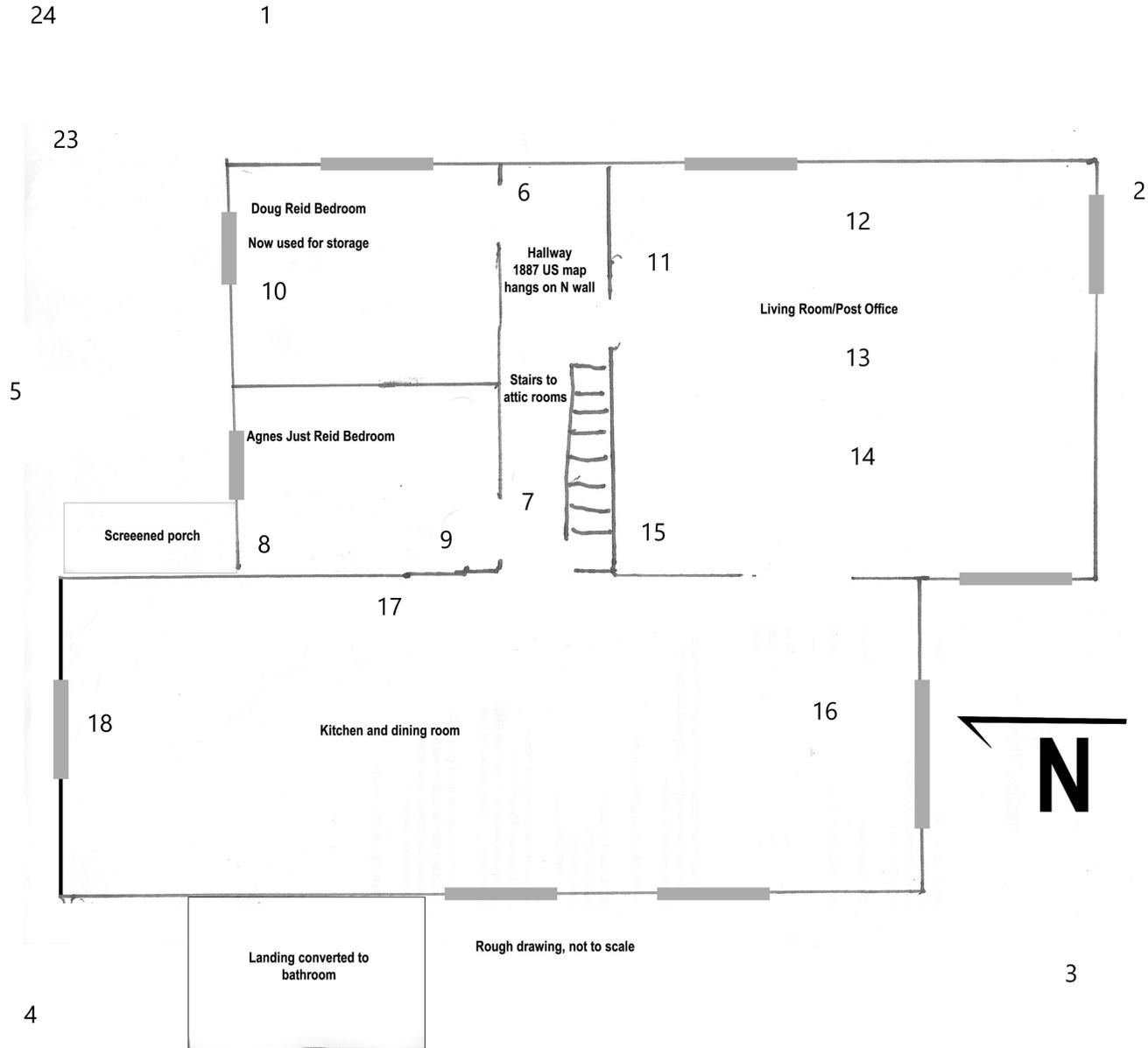
Nels and Emma Just property, 995 Reid Road, Firth, ID 83226



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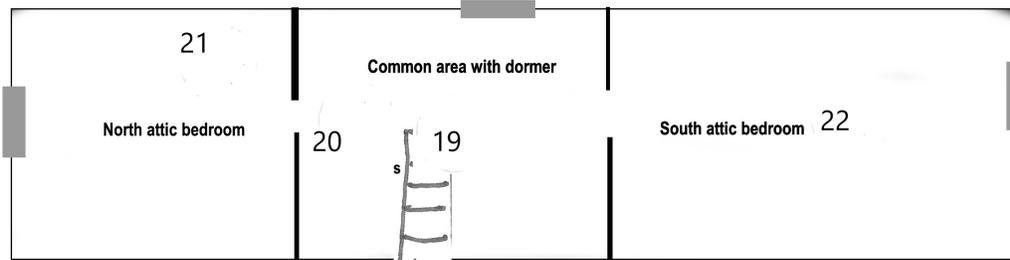
Ground Floor Plan



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Attic Floor Plan



Not to scale



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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch 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.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Just, Nels and Emma, House
City or Vicinity: Firth
County: Bingham **State:** Idaho
Photographer: Rick Just
Date Photographed: June 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1	Front elevation (east), facing west
Photo #2	South elevation, facing north
Photo #3	Southwest corner of home, facing northeast
Photo #4	Rear (west) elevation, facing east
Photo #5	North elevation, facing south
Photo #6	Interior hallway and main entry, facing east
Photo #7	Interior hallway, facing west towards kitchen
Photo #8	First floor bedroom, facing north
Photo #9	First floor bedroom, facing south into hallway
Photo #10	First floor bedroom, facing northeast
Photo #11	Living room, facing north
Photo #12	Living room, facing east
Photo #13	Living room, facing south
Photo #14	Living room, facing west
Photo #15	Living room, facing northwest
Photo #16	Kitchen, facing south
Photo #17	Kitchen, facing east
Photo #18	Kitchen, facing north
Photo #19	Attic, facing downstairs to main hallway

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Photo #20	Attic, facing south
Photo #21	North attic bedroom, facing south
Photo #22	South attic bedroom, facing south
Photo #23	Windmill, facing west
Photo #24	Orchard and iron fence, facing north

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, D

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Photo 1: Front elevation (east), facing west



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Photo 2: South elevation, facing north



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Photo 3: Southwest corner of home, facing northeast



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Photo 4: Rear (west) elevation, facing east



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Photo 5: North elevation, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 6: Interior hallway and main entry, facing east



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 7: Interior hallway, facing west towards kitchen



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 8: First floor bedroom, facing north



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
County and State

Photo 9: First floor bedroom, facing south into hallway



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 10: First floor bedroom, facing northeast



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 11: Living room, facing north



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 12: Living room, facing east



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 13: Living room, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 14: Living room, facing west



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 15: Living room, facing northwest



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 16: Kitchen, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
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Photo 17: Kitchen, facing east



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 18: Kitchen, facing north



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
County and State

Photo 19: Attic, facing downstairs to main hallway



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
County and State

Photo 20: Attic, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

Bingham County, Idaho
County and State

Photo 21: North attic bedroom, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
Name of Property

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Photo 22: South attic bedroom, facing south



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Photo 23: Windmill, facing west



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Photo 24: Orchard and iron fence, facing north



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Figure 1: Family members in front of the house in 1923. Emma Just is on the far left.



L TO R. BACK ROW - EMMA JUST, ROBERT REID, (UNKNOWWN LADY) AGNES REID, CLARILE PHILLIPS; 2ND ROW - BUCK BOWER, FRED REID, VIN REID, INA CLAIRE PHILLIPS, MARK PHILLIPS, STEVE PHILLIPS

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Figure 2: 1930s winter photo of the south side of the house showing enclosed staircase (non-extant).



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Figure 5: Rear of house looking northeast circa 1950. Agnes Just Reid is looking at the camera with two unidentified men.



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Figure 8: Photo taken in 1963 of newly remodeled north end of the kitchen.



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Figure 9: Portrait of Emma Just, age 18



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Figure 10: Portrait of Nels Just, age 20



Just, Nels and Emma, House
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Figure 11: Photograph of Just Cabin, c. 1890



Just family ranch house in 1890