

# National Elk Refuge Miller Ranch Interpretive Plan

August, 2005



Miller Ranch 2005

Photograph by Mary Humstone

*“The Elk Herd is the greatest single thing about the valley. Its history is that of the valley, and to a very real extent so is its fate.”*

Donald Hough



# Miller Ranch Interpretive Plan

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Prepared for the National Elk Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Jackson, Wyoming

Prepared by the University of Wyoming American Studies Program

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Photograph by Roy. M. Porter



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## I. Introduction

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In 2005, the National Elk Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Jackson Wyoming, contracted with the University of Wyoming American Studies program to develop an interpretive plan for the Miller House and related buildings on the Refuge property.

The American Studies program conducted a week-long field class at the site, to interview interested parties, study the site and its history, develop interpretive themes, and assess the condition of the buildings and the feasibility of reusing them for interpretive and community uses. In addition to the field class, American Studies placed a graduate student intern on site for two months, to conduct research, gather input from the community, and help to write the interpretive plan. The final plan was compiled and edited by project director Mary Humstone, with help from design consultant Roy M. Porter and intern Dwayne Meadows.

Because of the significance of the Miller Ranch in the history of Jackson Hole and the National Elk Refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) seeks to increase interpretation of and visitation to the Miller Ranch site. As Refuge Manager Barry Reiswig recognized, “The Miller House has value beyond employee housing.” Increasing public use of the Miller House also helps to fulfill the agency’s responsibilities under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to manage National Register-listed (or eligible) properties “in a way that considers the preservation of their historic, archaeological, architectural, and cultural values” [NHPA, Sec 110 (2) (B)].

Preserving and interpreting the Miller Ranch also helps to fulfill the goals of the National Elk Refuge. Goal II of the *National Elk Refuge Mission and Objectives* (2004) is to “Preserve and protect archeological and historical sites” with an objective to “Preserve and maintain the Miller House, cabin and Miller Barn and integrity of the site which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are protected by the National Historic Preservation Act. Maintain the structures through adaptive use, thus stabilizing and preserving the buildings” (page 7). Goal VII states, “Provide an understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife, ecology, and man’s role in the environment...” with objectives (1.) “Provide wayside information signs, kiosks and exhibits...; (12.) Plan for a Miller house/Barn public living history interpretive program also integrating exhibits, period furniture and farm implements, interpretation and a cooperating association sales outlet” (page 9).

This plan presents an overview of the history of the site and its setting; analyzes current access and visitation; assesses the condition of and makes recommendations concerning the three historic buildings and the site itself; provides goals and objectives for interpretation of the Miller Ranch; presents a central interpretive theme and eight sub-themes to guide the interpretation; makes recommendations for off-site and on-site interpretative media; provides a phased implementation plan; and recommends a system to evaluate the interpretation. Interpretive inventory forms included in the appendix present more detailed recommendations for each of the interpretive sub-themes. The historical research that was conducted as part of this project has been organized under each of the sub-themes, to facilitate creation of the interpretive panels.

Recommendations for photographs, maps, quotes and other materials to enhance the text are also included. The appendix also includes general guidelines for sign and panel design, as well as a bibliography.



## **II. History and Description of the Miller Ranch Site**

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Robert Miller filed the third homestead claim in Jackson Hole, on what was later to become the Miller Ranch. In 1898, he and his wife Grace moved into the log home that today is known as the Miller House. As the largest house in the valley at the time, the Miller House became the center of social activity for the homesteaders and ranchers who began pouring into the valley around the turn of the century. Also on the property are a large, 2-story barn and a one-room log building that was once used as the office for what became the Teton National Forest. In 1914 Robert Miller sold most of his ranch to the federal government, and it formed the nucleus of the National Elk Refuge. The Refuge office was in the Miller House, and the site manager lived in the house, from 1914 to 1942. The Miller property represents many facets in the development of Jackson Hole, including homesteading, ranching, conservation and preservation.

### History of the Miller Ranch

Beyond the basic story of a settler coming to a remote area of the West and going through the stages of homesteading and ranching, the Robert Miller Ranch and its surrounding landscape is a metaphor for the greater history of the Jackson Hole area—a history alive with outlaws, cowboys, naturalists, real estate deals and conservation issues.

Previous to Euro-American settlement, Jackson Hole was home to summer hunting parties of the Shoshone, Gros Ventre, Crow, Blackfoot, and Sheepeater tribes. Little evidence exists of permanent Native American settlement, but archaeological sites dating from as early as 11,000 B.P. indicate use of the area for summer hunting, and for point and tool making using the black obsidian found in the Upper Snake River and Yellowstone area.

The first Euro-Americans began exploring the area in the early 1800s, and by the 1830s many trappers were working in western Wyoming and eastern Idaho, and trading their furs at the great rendezvous that took place on the Upper Green River, Pierre's Hole, and along the Popo Agie River. The bottom fell out of the fur market in the early 1840s and many of the trappers left the region. In the 1870s government survey parties passed through Jackson Hole, including the Hayden Party with photographer William Henry Jackson. As a result of these surveys, Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872, followed by the 1,239,040-acre Yellowstone Forest Reserve in 1891.

Beyond the trappers and explorers, another infamous type of Westerner was moving into the valley. Beginning in the early 1880s there were rumors of a notorious group of horse thieves, headed by William Arthur Bradford a.k.a. "Teton Jackson." The group would move stolen horses into an area in the southeast end of the valley in the fall, re-brand them, and let them winter there until the new brands healed. The valley was nearly impossible to reach because of snow blocking passes for up to six months.

For their winter headquarters, the gang selected an area known as "the Swamp," which features ample water, relatively light snow pack and early spring grass. Teton Jackson built a cabin nearby, which was purchased by Robert Miller in 1885, the same year Teton Jackson was arrested in the Ten Sleep, Wyoming, region and sent to prison in Boise, Idaho.

Robert Miller was born in Argyle, Wisconsin, in 1863. At the age of 17 he moved to Joliet, Illinois, where he worked as a bank clerk. He left Joliet two years later (1882), and went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad in Nebraska. By 1883 he was in Denver, working again as a bank clerk. Accounts have him passing through Jackson Hole in 1883 and returning to settle in 1885.

Miller was the third permanent settler in the Valley. A year before he arrived, John Holland and John Carnes had applied for the first homesteads north of what later became Miller Butte. Miller's "proved up" homestead application, placed on March 21, 1894, states that he had lived on his property continuously since May 15, 1885. Before submitting the application, he traveled to Illinois to marry Grace Green, returning with his new bride the following spring.

Miller's 1894 application lists a home built in 1885--a three-room structure west of the current Miller House which has since been destroyed. Other structures listed were a two-room tool shed, a 40' x 100' shed, a 16'x 50' log stable, and 150 acres of cultivated land. Soon after she arrived in Jackson Hole, Grace Miller applied for a Desert Lands claim south of Robert's property. Both lands were patented in 1898. Hattie Green, Grace's sister, also applied for a homestead east of Robert's and later sold the property to Grace and Robert for \$1.

Construction of the current Miller House began in 1895. The home was massive for its time, and is sometimes called Jackson's first "trophy home." The Miller House was one of the important meeting places in the community-- the first elections in Jackson Hole were held in the house in 1898, and groups such as the American Legion were reported to have met there. The Millers themselves soon emerged as leaders in the community. Robert Miller began a second career as a loan agent when he loaned hay to new settlers at 12% interest, earning him the nickname "Old 12%" that stuck throughout his life. In 1901 Grace bought some land near the confluence of Cache and Flat Creeks, platted the town of Jackson, and began selling lots.

An influx of settlers followed Robert Miller to the valley, and by 1900 the historic elk winter range of Flat Creek, the Gros Ventre River and South Park was settled and being used for range cattle and hay cultivation, causing concern among scientists and settlers alike. Ranchers in the valley were constantly in conflict with elk raiding their winter hay supplies. The fate of the Yellowstone/Jackson Hole Elk Herd became a broader public concern in 1897 when 10,000 elk died of starvation in Jackson Hole. Lobbying by ranchers convinced the state of Wyoming to set aside the Teton Game Reserve in 1905, the first step in the establishment of a permanent elk refuge. Money was appropriated to buy hay from ranchers to feed the elk, while scientists studied the situation. In 1912, Congress appropriated \$45,000 for the purchase of lands and the maintenance of elk winter range. Former state game warden D.C. Nowlin became the first refuge manager, and in 1914 Robert Miller's home, barn and 1,240 acres were purchased as the nucleus of the National Elk Refuge (NER). Nowlin moved into the Miller House, which became refuge headquarters, and the Millers moved to town, where Robert started the Jackson State Bank.

The locals nicknamed the Refuge the "Government Ranch," and for good reason, since it was modeled on the traditional agricultural land use of the Rocky Mountain West. The refuge was

managed much like a cattle ranch. Miller's traditional hay fields were used to provide hay for elk, instead of cattle, in the winter. Elk migrated to the high meadows in the valley's surrounding mountains for summer pasture, the same places that cowboys moved cattle each summer. This movement of livestock and wildlife began a long tradition of competition for forage.



S.N. Leek photograph, from the Collections of the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming

It soon became obvious that the refuge was not large enough. In the winter of 1917 more than 2,500 elk perished due to starvation. In response to these deaths, the Teton Forest Reserve east of the Miller house was designated “big game winter range.” The NER continued to enlarge its land holdings, both by government purchase and by donations from organizations such as the Izaak Walton League. In 1933, the Elk Refuge was granted \$6 million to buy up the remaining ranches, and the work of the refuge expanded to include management of other ungulates, water fowl, and fish. In 1942, the refuge moved to a new headquarters in east Jackson, and the Miller House was converted for housing for seasonal and permanent employees.

By 1965, the house was in poor condition, and the NER decided to either move it or donate it to the Jackson Volunteer Fire Department for practice. When word got out about the planned fate of the house, the Teton County Historical Society (TCHS) began a campaign to save it. Due to public pressure, the NER changed its plans. The house was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1969, and was rehabilitated for continued use as employee housing. From 1985-2005, Refuge employee Al Ridgway and his family lived in the house.

Today the National Elk Refuge is one of 23 feed grounds in Wyoming, the majority of which are located in the foothills of the Upper Green River Basin and the along the traditional migration

corridors out of Jackson Hole. Conflict still exists between elk and livestock, not only competition for food, but also concerns about disease. Elk still raid ranchers' hay supplies, and feed grounds which concentrate elk in large numbers in an enclosed area cause disease to spread rapidly among the elk. In recent years disease has been proven to pass from elk to livestock.

Each year elk migrate down their ancient paths towards their traditional winter range, which becomes more fragmented each year. They often find ranches, oil and gas development, communities, roads, and railways. Their migration stops where they find food, whether it be a rancher's field, the high desert, or a feed ground. Feed grounds have played a pivotal role in the survival of thousands of elk in western Wyoming, and the elk themselves have attracted hunters and wildlife viewers who bring millions of dollars to Wyoming each year. Robert Miller's home and the cultural landscape surrounding it is the perfect place to tell the story of the settlement of Jackson Hole.



Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge

Photograph by Mary Humstone 2005

## Timeline of Miller Ranch History

- Prehistoric: The region around the Miller House was known to be used as summer grounds of the Gros Ventre, Shoshone Bannock, Crow, and Shoshone tribes. Native American sites have been dated as early as 12,000 years B.P. (Love et. al. 2003). Corridors like Union Pass, Gros Ventre-Green River, and Teton Pass are believed to have been major travel routes of Native Americans and the wildlife they hunted.
- 1807 John Colter makes the first recorded Euro-American visit to the valley.
- 1824-1840 Trapping period. The downturn in the fur trade removes Euro-American presence in the valley by 1840.
- 1860s Beaver Dick Leigh and his wife Jenny move to the valley as trappers.
- 1866 The territorial government of Wyoming passes a law banning the sale of elk meat between Feb. 1 and Aug. 15.
- 1871 Wyoming Territory enacts closed game seasons.
- 1870s Several government survey parties pass through the valley, including the Hayden Party and the Lt. Gustavus Doane Party.
- 1872 Yellowstone National Park is created.
- ca.1882 William Arthur Bradford a.k.a. "Teton Jackson," notorious outlaw, moves to the valley (Jackson Hole Guide 10/21/76).
- 1884 John Holland and John Carnes become the first homesteaders on what is now the NER.
- 1885 Teton Jackson is incarcerated in Boise Penitentiary for horse thieving. Robert Miller buys (or begins squatting on) Teton Jackson's cabin.
- 1886 Frank Wood and William Crawford homestead on what is now NER.
- 1887 Teton Jackson is arrested for horse theft near present day Ten Sleep
- 1888 S.N. Leek settles on what is now the Porter ranch.
- 1889 Census counts 65 people in the valley. Miller loans hay to new settlers, and earns nickname "Old 12%."
- 1890 Wyoming territory becomes a state.

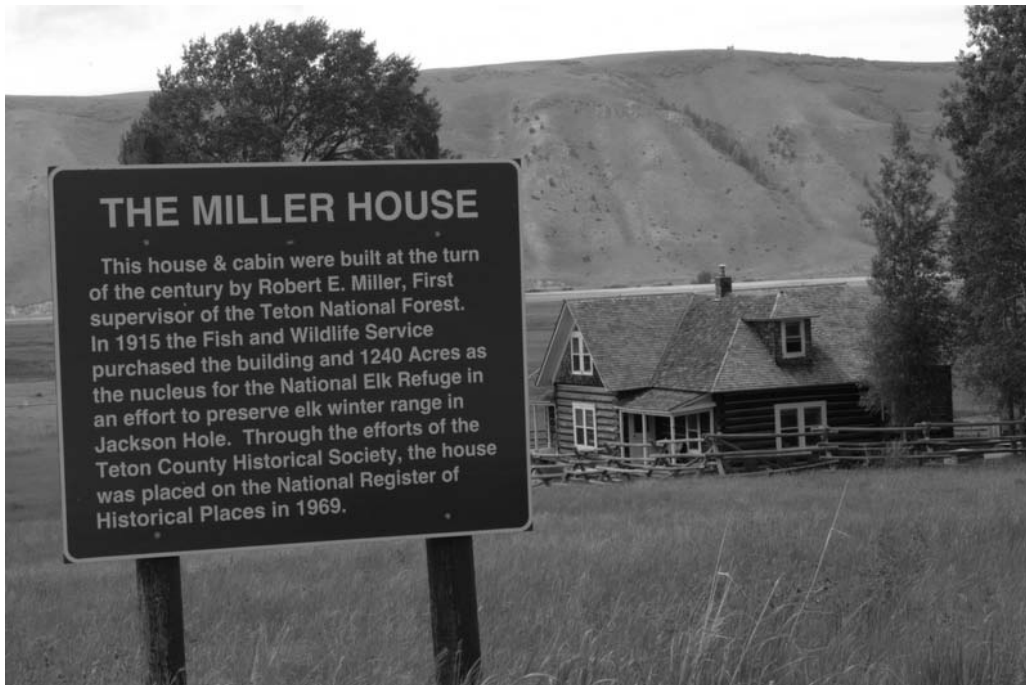
- 1890 – 1900 Conversion of elk range to livestock use.
- 1891 Yellowstone Forest Reserve is created.
- 1892 First post office in Jackson Hole established at “Marysvale” on Flat Creek, now part of NER.
- 1893 Robert Miller marries Grace Green in Illinois. Grace Green Miller files Desert Lands Claim.
- 1894 Robert Miller files “proved up” Homestead application.
- 1895 Sale of game meat is prohibited; first non-resident hunting licenses are issued.
- 1897 10,000 elk die of starvation in Jackson Hole.
- 1898 Miller house built and elections held in house. Miller Barn built.
- 1900 Hattie Green files homestead claim. Most of the valley is settled.
- 1901 Grace Miller plats Town of Jackson.
- 1902 D.C. Nowlin is appointed Wyoming’s second game warden. Robert Miller becomes supervisor of the Teton Forest Reserve.
- 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt and contemporaries establish Pelican Island Refuge, the first National Wildlife Refuge.
- 1905 Teton Game Reserve established by the State of Wyoming.
- 1907 Robert Miller, as supervisor of the Teton Forest Reserve, funds the first supplemental feeding of 200 snowbound elk on Willow Creek near Pinedale.
- 1909 S.N. Leek as state representative introduces a bill making killing elk for teeth a felony.
- 1910 Wyoming Legislature appropriates \$5,000 to purchase all available hay from ranchers. S.N. Leek attracts national attention by writings, photographs and lectures about starving elk.
- 1911 Wyoming Legislature asks U.S. Congress to cooperate with state in feeding, protecting and preserving big game. Congress responds by appropriating \$20,000 to feed, restock, and investigate elk situation. Under supervision of D.C. Nowlin, E.A. Preble of U.S. Biological Survey conducts study of elk situation. 2,500 elk die during sever winter.

- 1912 (Aug 10). Act of Congress appropriates \$45,000 for purchase of lands to create the National Elk Refuge and maintain elk winter range. D.C. Nowlin becomes first refuge manager.
- 1914 Miller House and 1,240 acres are purchased as nucleus of the NER. Miller moves to town, and house becomes the first Refuge office. Refuge called “government ranch” by locals. Robert Miller and partners start the Jackson State Bank.
- 1916 Refuge grows to 2,760 acres from private and public lands.
- 1917 2,500 elk die during harsh winter.
- 1918 Forest lands to the east of the Miller property are designated big game range.
- 1920 Grace Miller becomes first woman mayor of Jackson, with all-woman town council.
- 1923 Almer Nelson takes over as NER manager (until 1956).
- 1925 Izaak Walton League purchases and donates 1,760 acres of private lands, expanding refuge to 4,500 acres.
- 1927 The Committee on the Conservation of Elk of Jackson Hole is formed with Jackson Hole herd population goal of 20,000.
- 1928 Biologist Olaus Murie is hired to study elk on the refuge and their migration habitat.
- 1935 Due to overpopulation and need for meat during the Depression, 541 elk are killed on refuge and shipped to a packing company in Cheyenne.
- 1936 3,783 acres of public domain lands added.
- 1938 Four trumpeter swan cygnets from Red Rocks Lakes are released on NER – first successful transplant in U.S.
- ca.1938 NER begins program of sleigh rides for tourists.
- 1939 NER switches from feeding loose hay to baled hay.
- 1942 New headquarters buildings and office are completed.
- 1943 Hunting starts on the NER.

- 1944 Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Forest Service and NER agree to limit the size of the Jackson Hole herd to 15,000 elk. A portion of the Teton Game Preserve opens for hunting.
- 1950 Creation of Grand Teton National Park, and acreage added to NER.
- 1953 First antler arch built in Jackson Town Square from refuge antlers; other arches built 1966-69.
- 1955 Elk exhibition pasture constructed for tourists.
- 1957 Boy Scouts begin collecting antlers on refuge.
- 1958 NER lands traded to St. John's Hospital for Vandevveer tract. Tractors replace horse-drawn sleds for feeding.
- 1965 Jaycees sponsor first concession sleigh rides.
- 1966 National Historic Preservation Act is signed into law. Last year that hay is harvested on NER.
- 1968 First antler auction by Boy Scouts.
- 1969 Robert Miller House and cabin placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1974 Cooperative Agreement with Wyoming Game and Fish Department sets a maximum of 7,500 elk on NER lands, a policy that remains in place in 2005.
- 1975 NER switches to feeding pelletized alfalfa hay.
- 1984 Miller House rehabilitated for use as employee housing.
- 1989 Refuge acquires additional lands over several years; some Twin Creek and Teton Valley Ranch lands added.
- 1990s Ecological studies of elk herd and population dynamics, radio telemetry, and disease.
- 1994 Sleigh rides move to west side highway location and partnership with National Museum of Wildlife Art.
- 1998 Wyoming Information Center purchased by Grand Teton Natural History Association and operated by multi-agency partners as Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.



- 2001 Miller House and Cabin National Register nomination amended to include Miller Barn.
- 2005 Miller House vacated, and opened to the public as a historic site.



## Description of Location and Setting

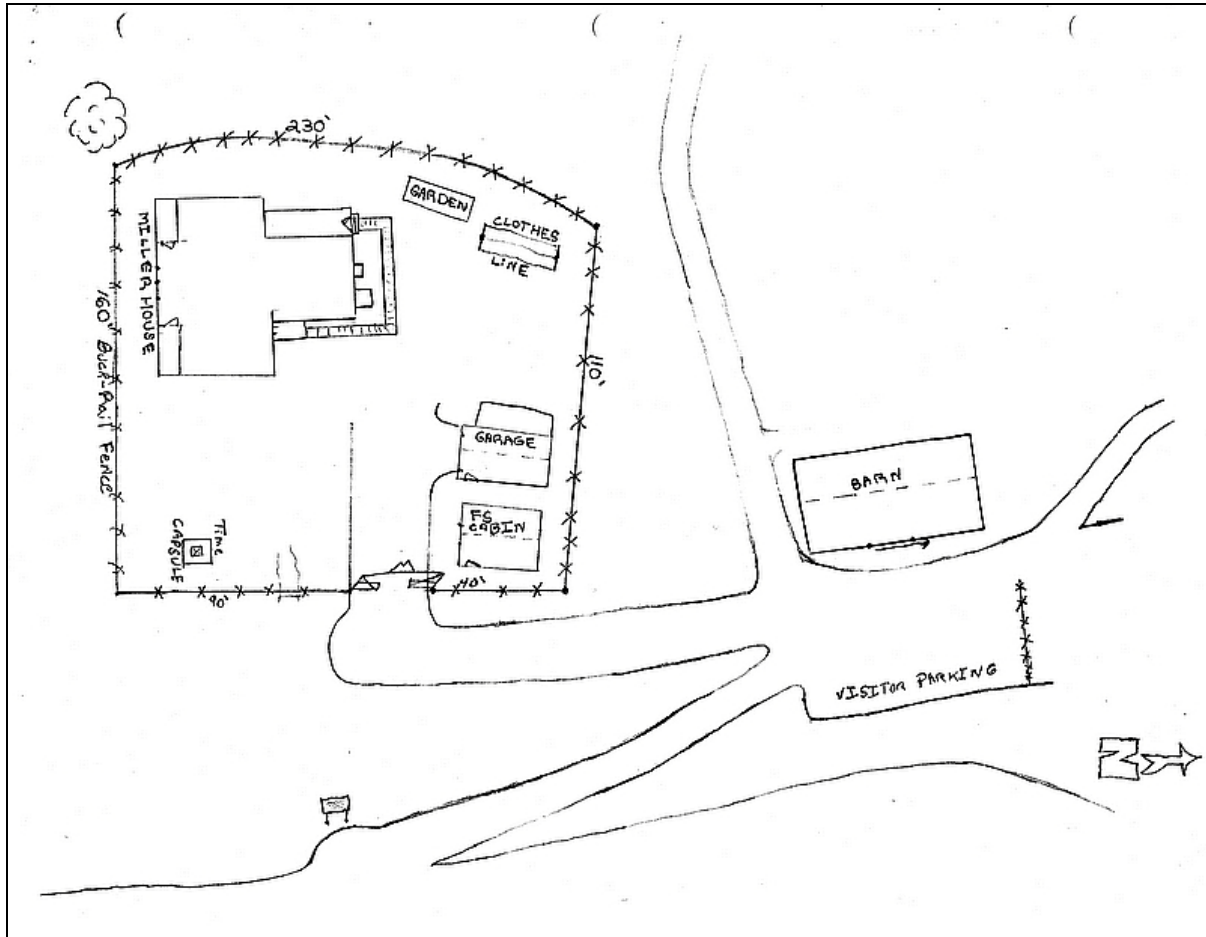
The Miller Ranch is located ¾ mile north of Jackson, Wyoming, on the Elk Refuge Road. The ranch and the surrounding cultural landscape are located in a small valley delineated by the Gros Ventre Mountains to the east, Miller Butte to the north, East Gros Ventre Butte to the west and Snow King Mountain to the south. The Gros Ventre Mountains rise 4,441 feet from the Miller Ranch to the 10,741-foot summit of Jackson Peak. Views of the Grand Teton, Rendezvous Mountain in the Teton Range, and Smoky Hollow Peak in the Snake River Range can be seen from the site. To the west side of the ranch buildings is a large meadow, through which flows Flat Creek. Miller Springs, a tributary of Flat Creek, is located just west of the barn, and feeds a series of ponds built for raising fish and for water fowl habitat.

The Gros Ventre Range is made up of layered rock that was once the bed of a large inland sea that covered much of Wyoming. After the sea dried up, upheavals in the earth's crust formed the Gros Ventre Range, leaving many layers of rock exposed. Volcanoes began breaking through the valley floor creating a large fault along the base of the present Teton Range. This fault began rising on the western edge exposing the old sea bed. Tilting westward, the sheer eastern face of the fault exposed ancient, crystalline rock once buried deep beneath the earth's surface. Three different ice ages covered the area with massive glaciers. As each ice age ended, glacial valleys were cut and glacial moraines and till extended into the valleys. The ice melt flowed into the ever changing channels of the Snake River. The flat areas where soil was rocky became covered with sage, and the higher slopes were covered with evergreen. The lakes along the base of the Tetons are a result of the glacial moraines.

The cultural landscape of the Miller Ranch reflects the past 115 years of ranching and feeding of cattle and elk. The focal point of the ranch is a cluster of buildings, including the house, barn, Forest Service cabin and a newly constructed garage. The barn is the only outbuilding from the era of traditional haying still standing on the property. The foundation of an outbuilding is barely visible in the meadow northwest of the Miller House, along the old access road, which is now used to access sprinkler irrigation and to manage a tree break on the west edge of the meadow. Irrigation ditches built in the ranching period extend from a main ditch that follows the Elk Refuge road, and contour easterly into the hay meadows between the town of Jackson and the ranch. The concrete head gates are still in place along the north side of Broadway near the refuge fence.

The vegetation in the meadow has been altered with hay forage species, predominantly timothy, Kentucky blue grass, and smooth brome grass. Another feature of the landscape is an abandoned bridge over Flat Creek in the middle of the north end of the hay meadow.

# Site Plan



Miller Ranch Historic Site

Drawn by Dwayne Meadows 2005



### **III. Access and Visitation at the Miller Ranch Site**

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The Miller Ranch was opened to the public for the first time on May 28, 2005. In its first summer of operation, the site was open from 10 am to 4 pm, daily, from May 28 until August 21. From August 21 through September 11, it was open on weekends only. During the 2005 season only the house was open, although visitors were encouraged to look around the grounds and view the other two historic buildings from the outside. Historic photographs and interpretive labels were installed inside the house, and a seasonal employee was available to answer visitors' questions. A small bookstore operated by the Grand Teton Natural History Association occupies one room on the main floor of the house.

#### Common Methods and Points of Access

The Miller Ranch site is accessed by the unpaved Elk Refuge Road at the north end of Broadway in Jackson. It is  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from Broadway to the Miller House. Most visitors arrive by car, although the site is on a route heavily used by local bicyclists, runners and walkers, some of whom stop at the Miller House. The Elk Refuge road is the only point of access to the site, although it is visible from U.S. Highway 26/89 just north of Jackson, and from the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.



Entrance to Miller Ranch Historic Site

Photograph by Mary Humstone 2005

## Who Visits the Site and What Do They Do?

During its first summer of operation, the Miller Ranch received 1,323 visitors, with a daily average of 13.6. The highest visitation was in July (444), and the lowest in May (87) and September (86). Currently visitation is limited to tourists who learn about the Miller House at the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, and locals who have driven or walked by the ranch and always wanted to see it, or who have out-of-town visitors and are looking for things to do. Visitors are about equally divided between tourists and locals.

According to the on-site interpreter, some visitors are disappointed when they enter the house and see the modern interior. Some leave almost immediately, but most spend about 5 – 10 minutes looking at the photographs on the walls and visiting the bookstore. Some look at everything, and engage the interpreter in extended conversation.

Many people come looking for elk, and want to know where they are. Others are interested in seeing “an authentic homestead.” Local people especially are interested in learning about the Miller Ranch project itself.

## Visitor Orientation

**Pre-visit orientation** is any information the visitor receives prior to accessing the site. Currently visitors learn about the site from volunteers and/or fliers at the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center or the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, from newspaper articles and from the Chamber of Commerce website. A sign at the beginning of the Elk Refuge road directs visitors to the “Miller House Historic Site,” and another sign ¾ mile later marks the turnoff. About half of the visitors find the site on their own, after seeing the signs on the road. Pre-visit orientation to the history or themes of the site is limited to a single sign at a roadside turnout near the entrance to the site.

**On-site orientation:** Once visitors enter the Miller House, they are greeted by an interpreter, who guides them through the house, or invites them to tour on their own. The interpreter is available to answer questions about the Millers and the property. A brochure about the property is currently being prepared for on-site interpretation.

## IV. Assessment of Buildings and Site

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### Methodology

This assessment has been based on the inspections of the residence, barn, and cabin on June 22 and June 23, 2005, by students enrolled in AMST 4900: Field Studies in Historic Preservation, a course offered by the American Studies Program at the University of Wyoming.

Recommendations have been presented in three categories, whose priorities reflect the urgency with which treatment should be provided. Recommendations assume use of all three buildings as historic sites. Included under “lowest priority” are certain steps that are not necessary for the continued preservation of the buildings, but would add to the historic character of the buildings.

Because the Miller Ranch is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, all treatments should adopt the approach in *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Especially critical is the repair, rather than the replacement, of historic features. However, if “the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials,” and its selection “shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.” Information about appropriate techniques is available in *Preservation Briefs*, which have been prepared by the Technical Preservation Services Department of the National Park Service. The standards and guidelines, as well as the *Preservation Briefs*, can be viewed on the site of the National Park Service ([www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm) and [www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm), respectively).

Strategies for the preservation of the site should be developed during consultation with an architect and contractor qualified to assist with such projects. As the preservation of this site continues, a plan for its maintenance, which requires frequent inspections, should be developed to ensure the success of these efforts, and accessibility for compliance with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be provided.

It should be noted that this is a preliminary assessment only, and is not a substitute for a full Historic Structure Report.

### Historic Building Treatments – Definitions

**Restoration** is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code required work to make properties functional is appropriate within restoration projects.

**Preservation** is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of a historic property. Work, including preliminary

measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses on the on-going maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code required to make properties functional is appropriate within preservation work.

**Rehabilitation** is defined as the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic architectural and cultural values.

## Condition Assessment and Prioritized Recommendations

### Miller House

The Miller House has undergone rehabilitation on several occasions and appears to be in satisfactory condition overall. The roof, walls, and foundation seem stable and mostly weatherproof, although some conditions will require attention.

#### Miller House - Highest Priority

- Chimney
  - There appears to be some deterioration of the chimney mortar and the flashing between the chimney and roof. Further inspect flashing and mortar to determine the extent of deterioration (Figure 1).
  - Reattach loose flashing unless damaged
  - Replace damaged flashing
  - Remove loose mortar and repoint joints with mortar which matches the original mortar in color and composition
- Dormers
  - Flashing around the dormers appears to be loose and/or deteriorated, and some dormer shingles are loose. Further inspect flashing and shingles on all dormers to determine the extent of deterioration (Figure 1).



- Reattach loose flashing, unless damaged
- Replace damaged flashing
- Reattach loose shingles
- Replace damaged shingles with shingles which match the color, dimensions, and material of the existing shingles

Figure 1. Miller Residence, view of dormer and chimney, east elevation.



- Drainage
  - In some places, especially the south elevation, the grade of the yard slopes in toward the house, allowing water to collect against the foundation.
  - Adjust the grade to ensure adequate drainage away from the house
  - Monitor condition and if necessary, install a drainage system such as a French drain
  - Remove mulch from contact with the foundation and sill logs to prevent the retention of moisture (Figure 2)
- Vegetation
  - Remove vegetation from the walls of the foundation, particularly on the south elevation
- Wildlife/varmints
  - Ground squirrels have burrowed beneath and along the foundation walls.
  - Conceal burrows to remove a route for moisture (and rodents) into the house
  - Securely close the small basement window under the enclosed back porch
  - Implement measures to prevent future intrusions in accordance with the policies of the National Elk Refuge



Figure 2. Miller House, view of entrance, east elevation.

### Miller House - Intermediate Priority

- Roof
  - Some of the wood shingles on the roof appear to be loose, broken and/or curled at the edges. Inspect shingles to determine the extent of deterioration.
  - Replace damaged and excessively worn shingles. Individual shingles, or a section of roofing, can be replaced without replacing the entire roof
- Trim
  - Fascia and soffit are generally in good condition, but there are areas of deterioration, especially at the corner joints. Trim elements are in need of repainting. Inspect to determine extent of deterioration.
  - Replace damaged sections and paint
- Windows, Doors, and Columns
  - These elements are also in need of repainting to improve appearance and weather durability. Inspect windows, doors and columns to identify damaged areas.
  - Repair or replace damaged sections before painting (Figure 2)
- Log walls
  - Walls are generally in good condition. Inspect chinks annually to ensure that chinking material (Perma-chink) continues to adhere to logs, creating a weatherproof enclosure. Avoid allowing organic material to collect in cracks and chinks, since it can cause rotting of the logs.
  - Remove debris from cracks in logs and chinks between logs. These can be blown out with a power blower.
  - Replace chinking material if necessary
- Interior – basement
  - Small cracks are noticeable in the southern and eastern walls of the basement. These should be monitored.

### Miller House - Lowest Priority

- Gutters
  - Determine whether gutters are a historical element or recent addition. If recent addition, remove gutters. If historical element, replace with gutters appropriate to the period of significance (Figure 2).
- Attachments
  - Remove hooks and nails from fascia and logs.
- Windows
  - Existing windows are a recent addition, and not appropriate for the period of significance of the house (1898 – 1942). If sufficient documentation is available, consider replacing windows with appropriate style historic sash.
- Interior
  - While a complete restoration is not recommended for the interior, certain steps could be taken to make it appear more in keeping with the historical period. Consider removing carpeting and refinishing wood floors; removing dropped ceiling; and removing the ceiling fan in the main room.
- Landscape
  - Consider restoration of the former entrance (the antler arch and concrete path), if sufficient documentation to guide this process is available.

## Forest Service Cabin

This cabin on the Miller Ranch is a small, rectangular building constructed of logs with a stone foundation. The overall condition of the cabin is satisfactory, although some of its elements will require attention.

### Forest Service Cabin - Highest Priority

- Roof  
The wood shingle roof is deteriorated. Thoroughly inspect roof to determine extent of damage, and how much of the roofing material needs to be replaced. Install replacement shingles which match the color, dimensions, and material of the existing shingles
- Drainage  
Adjust slope of grade so that water drains away from the foundation. Monitor condition, and if necessary install a drainage system such as a French drain. Remove vegetation from around building.

### Forest Service Cabin - Intermediate Priority

- Foundation  
The foundation is cracked in places, and stones and mortar are missing. Previous repairs using Portland cement have resulted in additional damage to stone. Further inspect foundation to determine the source of cracks, such as settlement. If settlement has occurred, *Preservation Brief 26: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings* recommends reconstruction of the foundation with "modern construction methods but to match the historic appearance."



- Remove loose stones and mortar, including previous applications of Portland cement (Figure 3)
- Replace missing stones (Figure 3)
- Repoint joints with mortar which matches the original mortar in its color and composition, to prevent damage to the stone from a mortar with excessive strength and lack of permeability

Figure 3. Forest Service cabin, view of southwestern corner.

- Wildlife/varmints
  - Ground squirrels have burrowed beneath and along the foundation walls.
  - Conceal burrows
  - Implement measures to prevent future intrusions in accordance with the policies of the National Elk Refuge
- Walls
  - The lower portion of the wall at the southwestern corner is pushed out. Chinking material is damaged, loose or missing in several areas. Inspect to identify extent of damage. In several places, small pieces of galvanized tin have been placed over the logs, probably to prevent moisture from entering cracks. These can be left in place.
  - Realign logs. This can often be accomplished using jacks.
  - Replace damaged chinking with material which matches the original material in color and composition, or with an appropriate substitute (Figure 3)
- Windows
  - Because the windows are original, they should be repaired, rather than replaced
  - Repair and re-glaze windows on north and south side, and repaint.
- Chimney
  - The chimney extends only about eight inches from the ridgeline. Rebuild to at least two feet if the chimney is to be used.
- Door
  - The door has been damaged by moisture and wood in the panels is lifting up. Repair or replace the door.
- Interior Features and Finishes
  - The plaster has been stripped from the ceiling and walls of the cabin, but lath remains. In order to use the Forest Service Cabin as recommended in this plan, the following steps will need to be taken (Figure 4)



- Thoroughly clean interior of building and remove furniture and junk
- Repair broken lath, re-plaster walls and ceiling, and repaint
- Replace damaged section of floor near the entrance
- Repair baseboards as necessary and paint

Figure 4. Interior of Forest Service Cabin

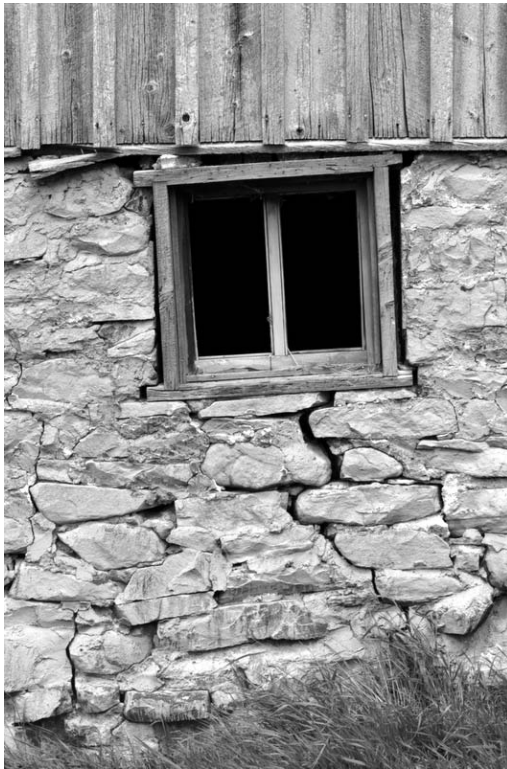
## Miller Barn

The 30-by-40-foot barn was built in 1898, the same year as the Miller House. It has shared the rich history of the Miller Ranch and has thus become a valuable piece of the cultural landscape, which deserves inclusion in the interpretation of the site. The barn is in fair condition overall, but several aspects require attention to ensure its preservation.

### Miller Barn - Highest Priority

- Foundation

The barn sits on a raised foundation that goes from about 6 inches at the east elevation to 6 feet at the west elevation. The south wall has experienced significant settling, resulting in cracks in the mortar and the stone, missing stones and missing mortar. Similar although not as serious problems exist on the north wall. Further inspection is necessary to positively determine the cause of the cracks in the stone (Figure 5). Reconstruction of damaged portions of the foundation to match the historic appearance is recommended.



- Determine cause of foundation failure, and repair
- Replace missing stones and mortar (Figure 5)
- Repoint joints with mortar which matches the original mortar in its color and composition, to prevent damage to the stone from a mortar with excessive strength and lack of permeability

Figure 5. Barn, view of south elevation.

- Drainage

In some places the grade of the yard slopes in toward the barn, allowing water to collect against the foundation.

- Adjust the slope of the grade to ensure adequate drainage away from the house
- Monitor condition and if necessary, install a system such as a French drain

- Windows and Doors

The stable doors and several of the windows are out of alignment, basement window frames are in need of repair, and window glass is missing (Figure 5). The basement doors have been patched together with various materials including 1-inch dimension lumber and plywood. Doors to the upper floor are in good condition. Original sliding door track above existing operable track should be retained to show the changes in the openings over time.



- Once basement walls are repaired, re-align and repair door and window frames
- Replace missing glass
- Replace and/or repair stable doors, based on documentation of original, if available. (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Barn stable doors

- Interior (stable)

Remove debris and thoroughly clean to prevent accumulation of moisture, especially along foundation walls

### Miller Barn - Intermediate Priority

- Roof

While the roof appears to be sound, the interior should be inspected periodically to detect any signs of leakage

- Replace damaged shingles and secure loose shingles

- Walls

Some of the battens are split and/or loose. Corner boards, especially in the southeast corner, are damaged, as is the drip board on the south elevation.

- Cut out damaged portions of sheathing boards, battens and trim, and replace in kind
- Secure loose boards and battens
- Repair or replace drip board on the south elevation (Figure 5)

- Interior (upper floor)

The upper floor of the barn appears to be in good condition. The barn is currently being used for miscellaneous storage. Once these items are removed, a more thorough examination of the floor can be conducted.

- Secure loose floor boards and replace damaged boards
- If occupancy for exhibitions, receptions, and other events is anticipated, safety and code concerns, including floor load capacity, fire safety and egress, will need to be addressed in consultation with local officials.

- Entry: Replace deteriorated concrete pad at entrance

## Suitability of Buildings for Interpretive Purposes

**Miller House:** The exterior of the Miller House appears much as it did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and as such can easily be interpreted as a large ranch home of the period. The interior has undergone remodeling to conform to late 20<sup>th</sup> century norms, with dropped ceiling panels, fluorescent lighting, carpeting, and new kitchen and bath facilities. To date, documentation has not been found that would allow an accurate restoration of the interior. Furthermore, original furniture belonging to either the Millers or to later residents has not been located. Therefore, it is not recommended that the Miller House be interpreted as a historic house museum, but rather that the interior be used as a place to present the historic themes represented on this property. In the future, certain steps could be taken to make the interior of the house closer in feel to the historic period, for example removal of ceiling panels and fluorescent lights, and removal of carpeting and refinishing of the wood floor.

It is recommended that the house be sparsely furnished with early 20<sup>th</sup> century period furniture (if available) including the large dining room table that is in the house at present. This will keep the interior from looking too bare, and will allow the house to be used for small community meetings, following the historic example of the use of the house during the Miller period. The kitchen and bathrooms should also be retained, to facilitate use of the house or meetings. Because the upstairs is not easily accessible, it could continue to be used as housing for one or more employees, preferably year-round.

**Miller Barn:** The barn appears to be in original condition, and could be used for both interpretation and community activities. Once the stable area is cleaned out and the foundation wall repaired, the lower portion of the barn could house interpretive panels about traditional ranching techniques, used by both ranchers and the elk refuge, such as irrigating, putting up hay, and feeding cows and elk.

The upper floor of the barn provides a large space for community events such as dances, workshops, and interpretive talks. Portable exhibits, which could be moved out of the way to accommodate events, could be installed in this section of the barn, as long as adequate lighting could be provided.

Farm machinery could also be exhibited in the barn. However, we caution that only equipment that would have been used on the Miller Ranch or the Elk Refuge should be displayed, and that it should be in good enough condition, and well enough labeled, that visitors can easily comprehend how it was used.



Miller Barn

Photograph by Mary Humstone 2005

**Forest Service Cabin:** A simple, one-room structure, the Forest Service cabin could appropriately be used for an exhibit explaining the Forest Service as part of the larger conservation picture in the Greater Yellowstone region. Requirements would be cleaning of the interior, replacement of plaster, repair of windows and doors, and installation of lights.



Forest Service Cabin (with modern log garage) Photograph by Mary Humstone 2005

**Garage, Pump House/Laboratory, Blacksmith Shop:** These buildings were not formally evaluated as part of this plan. However, it should be noted that all three of them are more than 50 years old, and potentially historic. Potential uses of these buildings to expand the interpretive and community use possibilities of the Miller property should be considered if and when they are no longer needed by the National Elk Refuge.



## Overall site assessment

One of the great strengths of the Miller Ranch as an interpretive site is that the hay meadows and buttes surrounding the site look much the same today as they did in Robert Miller's time. The landscape and view around the house and barn should be preserved as much as possible. A few visitor parking spaces could be provided just outside the gate where the residents now park. A handicapped space should be provided close to the walk leading to the front door. The existing parking area should be used for overflow parking, or for events at the barn. Signs directing visitors to parking areas should have directional arrows for clarification.



## V. Interpretive Overview

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*Interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information (Freeman J. Tilden, 1967).*

### Mission Statement for the Miller Ranch Interpretive Plan

The Miller Ranch Interpretive Plan will present a phased approach to interpreting the history of the Miller Ranch and surrounding lands in the context of the broader history of settlement, development, conservation and historic preservation in Jackson Hole, in order to assist visitors in gaining a keener awareness, appreciation and understanding of what they are viewing or experiencing, and to encourage thoughtful use of historic and natural resources.

### Targeted visitor profile

The Miller House Interpretive Plan is designed for the following audiences:

- Local Jackson residents, both long-time residents who are aware of its history, and newcomers
- Visitors/tourists
- School children from Jackson, and other Wyoming communities
- Researchers

### Interpretive Goals and Objectives

Interpretive goals state the ultimate desired result of interpretation of the Miller Ranch site. Objectives are specific steps taken to achieve these goals. These goals and objectives should be taken into consideration when interpretive panels and other media are created.

**Goal # 1:** Present visitors with a true picture of homesteading and ranching life in the Jackson area, in the larger context of the American West.

#### Objectives:

- Base interpretation on documented history.
- Present the Miller Ranch as a successful ranch, in contrast to other, less prosperous, homesteads.
- Draw parallels between settlement in Jackson Hole and other parts of the West.
- Focus on the Millers and their experiences, telling personal stories of what happened within the walls of the Miller House, and using these stories as a way of telling the broader history.

**Goal #2:** Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.

#### Objectives:

- Explain why people came here, how the land was used, and how it changed over time.

- Explain why this land still looks the way it does, and contrast it with other parts of the valley.
- Use maps and historic photographs to give a picture of the development of the valley.

**Goal #3:** Explore the relationship between agriculture and conservation, and help residents and visitors understand the role of conservation in shaping this landscape.

Objectives:

- Illustrate the role of wildlife as part of the larger homesteading picture.
- Illustrate ranchers' "homegrown" solution to elk problem in the 1890s, and explore the relationship between ranching and conservation today
- Show the unique relationship that exists between the people of Jackson Hole and the Jackson Hole Elk Herd.

**Goal # 4:** Use existing historic resources, especially the Miller House and barn and the Forest Service cabin, to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.

Objectives:

- Limit interpretation to the history and issues that are directly related to the site.
- Use interpretation to draw the visitor's attention to the site itself – the buildings and the landscape – and show the connections that can be made by studying the built and natural environment.

**Goal # 5:** Help visitors and residents understand the importance of historic preservation, and how it is accomplished.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate the value of place in understanding history.
- Inform visitors of the preservation techniques, including adaptive use and community activism, that resulted in the Miller House being here today.
- Follow the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* in all work on the historic buildings and site.

**Goal # 6:** Make the Miller Ranch a real asset for the community.

Objectives:

- Make the interpretation interesting for local residents as well as visitors, and for all age groups.
- Use a variety of interpretive media such as interior exhibits, photographs, an interpretive trail and living history events.
- Involve the public in the preservation of the site through workshops, lectures and interpretation of on-going preservation work.
- Use the site for community activities and events.
- Adhere to museum standards for research, interpretation, collections, archives, security, life safety, training of interpreters and other issues.

## Themes for Interpreting the Miller Ranch

Interpretive themes capture the essence and importance of the ideas, concepts, information and features relating to natural and cultural resources that were considered in the development of this plan. The themes represent the principal messages that we want to get across to our audiences. Using themes in interpretive planning provides focus and continuity to the interpretation.

### **Central Interpretive Theme**

The central interpretive theme is a statement that ties together all the information and ideas to be presented to the public.

This log home, outbuildings and surrounding property represent homesteading, settlement, community, ranching, business, conservation and preservation in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. From a simple homestead, to a successful ranch, to the center of the region's first wildlife refuge, the Miller property tells the stories of the struggles and successes of the men and women who settled and developed Jackson Hole.

### **Sub-themes**

Sub-themes relate to and support the central theme, and address one or more of the "Interpretive Goals" listed above. Each sub-theme will be the topic of one or more interpretive signs or panels. Sub-themes are linked to specific resources and can be the focus for interpretation at certain places on the site. Each sub-theme is further developed in an individual "Interpretive Inventory Form" included in the Appendix.

#### **1. Settlement and Homesteading (c. 1883 – 1893)**

Interpretive statement: Robert E. Miller was one of the first of hundreds of settlers drawn to Jackson Hole in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to stake a claim to lands being offered by the federal government. Like his fellow homesteaders, he relied on other means of support, such as trapping, to make a living while he proved up his land.

Where to tell the story: Miller House front room

Topics to include: Motivation for coming to Jackson Hole, acquisition of land, Homestead Act, Desert Lands Act, life of the homesteader, Teton Jackson story.

#### **2. The Miller Ranch (c. 1894 – 1901)**

Interpretive statement: Whether it was due to his strategic business decisions, or the money his wife Grace brought to the partnership, Robert Miller soon surpassed most of his fellow homesteaders to rise to a position of wealth and prominence in the emerging community. His spacious log house and his up-to-date ranching practices won him the admiration, and possibly the envy, of his neighbors.

Where to tell the story: Miller House front room, with a more complete story of traditional ranching in Jackson Hole to be told in the barn.

Topics to include: Miller's rise from homesteader to rancher, reasons for success, development of the Miller House and additional land and buildings, ranching in the valley c. 1900, daily life at the Miller House.

### **3. Ranch and Community/Grace Miller (1901 – 1914)**

Interpretive statement: Soon after its completion, Robert and Grace Miller's large, log home became a business and social center of Jackson Hole, hosting the area's first elections and meetings of groups such as the American Legion, as well as more informal gatherings. Like other pioneer women of Wyoming, Grace Miller became a local leader in her own right, platting the town of Jackson, serving as the mayor with an all-female town council, and purchasing available ranch lands.

Where to tell the story: Miller House dining room

Topics to include: Miller House as a community center, roles and status of women in Wyoming's early history, and why they rose to prominence, Grace Miller's acquisition of land and platting of Jackson, motivation of Grace Miller for developing town, all-female town council.

### **4. Conservation in Jackson Hole (1908 – present)**

Interpretive statement: At about the same time that Robert Miller was building his small empire in Jackson Hole, new ideas about conservation were emerging throughout the United States. The wanton exploitation of resources that marked the Gilded Age was being tempered by a new, science-based conservation movement. From the creation of Teton National Forest from the Yellowstone Forest Preserve in 1908, to the creation of the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park, to the preservation of the Miller House in 1967, this property is connected to many important landmarks and persons in the American conservation movement.

Where to tell the story: Overview in Miller House master bedroom, with a more complete story of the Forest Service in the Forest Service cabin, the Elk Refuge in additional panels in the Miller House master bedroom, and historic preservation outside the house.

Topics to include: National context for beginnings of conservation movement, Robert Miller's appointment as first Teton National Forest supervisor in 1908, creation of Elk Refuge, ties to important names in conservation history, preservation struggle of 1967.

### **5. The Jackson Elk Herd and the "Government Ranch"**

Interpretive statement: As the large Jackson Elk Herd lost its winter range to development, elk began to compete with cattle for winter hay. Because of the importance of elk to their livelihood, ranchers such as Robert Miller sought a solution to the "elk problem." The ranchers'

solution became federal policy, which is still in effect today, and the Miller Ranch became the “Government Ranch.”

Where to tell the story: Miller House master bedroom (former NER headquarters office). A more detailed story is proposed for an interpretive trail along Elk Refuge Road from Broadway to the Miller House.

Topics to include: Economic and cultural importance of elk in Jackson Hole, origins of elk problem, ranchers’ solution (feeding hay), state and federal involvement, establishment of the “Government Ranch” and purchase of the Miller property, conversion of Miller Ranch to NER headquarters.

## **6. Historic Preservation**

Interpretive statement: Historic buildings and landscapes provide a place to tell important stories about our past, and sharpen our image of life in earlier times. The preservation of the Miller Ranch is itself an important story to tell.

Where to tell the story: Miller House yard, and Master Bedroom. Additional interpretation of on-going preservation work to be presented in temporary panels and displays, and through workshops.

Topics to include: NER adaptive use of Miller Ranch as headquarters from 1914 to 1942, and continued use as employee housing, planned disposition of building, community activism responsible for saving house, rehabilitation work, current plans.

## **7. Ranching in Jackson Hole (1884-Present)**

Interpretive statement: Homesteaders came to Jackson Hole to raise cattle, but only a fraction of them became successful ranchers. Traditional ranching practices common to the Intermountain West, such as irrigating, putting up hay and use of summer and winter pastures, were used here until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and created the landscape of the Miller Ranch and the National Elk Refuge.

Where to tell the story: barn (upper and lower levels)

Topics to include: Homestead application process, flood irrigation, hay production, federal grazing leases, branding, roundups and cattle drives, transient cowboys and herders, the ranchers’ relationship to the land and wildlife, loss of traditional ranch lands in recent years.

## **8. Forest Headquarters (1902-1918)**

Interpretive statement: Through grazing leases, timber sales, recreation, and mineral development, the U.S. Forest Service has played an important role as land steward and manager of natural resources throughout the West. The influence of the Forest Service can be seen in the cultural landscapes of the Jackson Hole area.

Where to tell the story: Forest Service cabin

Topics to include: History of Teton National Forest, Miller's status and power as supervisor, relationship between Forest Service and ranchers, relationship between Forest Service and the community, Forest Service as economic boon to Jackson.



## **VI. Recommended Interpretation**

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### Off-site Interpretive Opportunities

#### **Orientation/Information Sites**

Currently the off-site interpretation of the National Elk Refuge, ranching in the valley, and Grace and Robert Miller is very limited. The Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor center is limited to one panel on refuge history (located on the viewing deck) that does not mention the Miller Ranch. The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum offers the best general introduction to ranching and homesteading, and mentions Grace Miller and the all women's town council. The tourist map provided by the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce does not show the Miller House. A brochure encouraging visitation of the Miller House is in the process of being created.

The following sites offer opportunities to provide information about the Miller Ranch, and encourage visitation. Brochures and/or fliers should be made available at these sites.

- Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center
- Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum
- National Museum of Wildlife Art

#### **Wayside Exhibits**

The 3-panel sign at the kiosk at the entrance to the NER (on Elk Refuge Rd.) has no information about the Miller House. The kiosk is the first interpretative opportunity for those traveling to the Miller Ranch, and may be the only place that some visitors stop. Because this sign is outdated, faded and in need of replacement, a new sign should be developed which includes mention of the Miller Ranch, along with information about elk, elk migration and the Refuge as a whole. The sign should give an overview of the site and what to look for, and direct visitors to other locations such as the Miller Ranch and the Jackson Hole Visitor Center where more interpretation is available. The Miller Ranch buildings should also appear on the map included in this sign.

#### **Interpretive Trail**

It is recommended that an interpretive trail be developed along the west side of the Elk Refuge Road, with a series of signs telling the story of the impact of human settlement on the traditional use of this land by the elk, and the cultural landscape that resulted. The trail will end at the pull-out in front of the Miller House, where the "central interpretive statement" will serve as an introduction to the historic site.

#### **Electronic Media**

The Miller Ranch is not currently featured on the internet, except a brief historical account of the house on the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office website. The internet could be used to reach both the visiting and the non-visiting public. For prospective visitors, basic information such as how to get there, hours of operation, and what to expect would be very helpful. Those who are not able to visit would still be able to learn about the Miller Ranch and the National Elk Refuge story through the website.

The following steps are recommended:

- Develop a Miller Ranch page as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Elk Refuge website.
- Provide links to this site from any pertinent reputable websites (see List of Websites, Appendix)
- Website to include: information for orientation and trip planning (directions from Jackson, hours of operation, what to expect, etc); schedule of special events; update on activities; and a comprehensive history of the site.

## On-site Interpretive Media

### **Interpretation of historic buildings**

This plan recommends that the three historic buildings on the site be used both as artifacts themselves, and as vehicles for interpretation of the larger stories. Although the interior of the Miller House has been extensively remodeled, the exterior is in excellent condition and gives an accurate picture of a large ranch house of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Forest Service cabin and the barn are still in close to original condition. Interpretative signs and brochures should include mention of the architecture, construction and significance of all three buildings.

Interior restoration of the house is not deemed possible unless accurate documentation to a particular period in its history can be found. However, certain steps can be taken to make the house appear more in character with its period of significance (1898 – 1942). We recommend that in at least one room (such as the southeast bedroom), the dropped ceiling and carpeting be removed, and the wood floor be refinished. This operation should not interrupt visitation to the house; in fact, the on-going preservation work should be considered as part of the interpretation.

### **Interior interpretive media**

Inside the buildings, interpretive panels consisting of photographs and/or maps and text will be installed on the walls. Additional labeled photographs and documents could supplement the panels, in spaces that are too small for a standard panel. In addition, free-standing exhibits are recommended in some places where wall space is limited, or where it might be necessary to remove them for an event. These include the front room and dining room of the Miller House and the upper floor of the barn.

Any artifacts to be used in the exhibits must be documented to be either from the Miller Ranch, or from a similar, contemporary site. Artifacts such as tools, furniture and equipment must be properly labeled.

For those who want more information, scrapbooks on a variety of topics could be prepared, including Robert and Grace Miller, the all-female town council, the Miller House preservation story, the National Elk Refuge story, etc. Scrapbooks would consist of copies of newspaper articles, historic photographs, maps and other documents.

**Outdoor interpretation**

All-weather outdoor signs are recommended in the Miller House yard and along Elk Refuge Road to interpret features of the cultural landscape, such as irrigation, corrals, and foundations, as well as the house and its preservation. Signs should be kept low, to avoid interfering with the view (see Suggestions for Sign and Panel Format, Appendix). Temporary and/or moveable outdoor signs can also be used to explain the preservation process, current archaeological research and current Refuge/Miller Ranch activities.



## VII. Implementation

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### Summary

The implementation plan includes recommendations for site improvements, building improvements, and the creation, manufacture and placement of interpretive signs and exhibits. This plan recommends a phased approach to interpretation of the Miller Ranch.

Phase 1 of the project consists of improving informational and directional signs outside the Miller House, enhancing current interpretation within the house and developing a website. The first six themes of the Miller Ranch are presented in phase one.

Phase 2 calls for preservation of the barn and Forest Service cabin, to allow more space for elaborating on the first six themes, and adding themes 7 and 8 (ranching and the Forest Service). Development of an interpretive trail along the Elk Refuge Road is also recommended.

Phase 3 focuses on activities to enhance interpretation and further involve the community in the Miller Ranch historic site, and to ensure long-term sustainability of the project.

Specific recommendations for interpreting each of the eight themes are included in the “Interpretive Inventory Forms” (Appendix).

### Funding and community support

Funding and community support are critical to the success of the Miller Ranch interpretation project. Many opportunities exist for developing partnerships with a wide variety of individuals, organizations, and businesses. It is recommended that for each phase of the project, the NER and its partners identify costs for specific elements (rehabilitation, design and manufacture of interpretive signs, etc) and create a “gift catalog” with a description of each task, and its cost. The catalog could then be provided to visitors, local citizens and businesses to encourage in-kind and cash gifts to complete the project. Potential partners and funding sources are listed at the end of this chapter.

### Phase One

#### Site improvements

- improve signs to the Miller House and parking areas by adding directional arrows

#### Building Improvements

- Miller House: repair chimney and dormers; improve grading around the foundation, remove vegetation, and address varmint problem; consider removing false ceiling and carpeting in one room (see Condition Assessment, pp. 20 - 21)
- Barn: Repair foundation and walls; repair windows and doors; improve grading around the foundation; clean stable interior (see Condition Assessment, pp. 25 - 26)
- Forest Service Cabin: repair or replace roofing material; improve grading around the foundation (see Condition Assessment, p. 23)

## **Interpretive Media**

This plan includes recommendations for interpretive panels and signs, which develop eight themes relating to the history of the Miller Ranch site. Goals and objectives and recommended topics for each theme are developed in the “Interpretive Inventory Forms” included in the Appendix. These forms include most of the historical information needed for the interpretive text, as well as recommendations for graphics. Signs and panels should be professionally written and designed following the guidelines in “Suggestions for sign and panel format” in the Appendix.

### Miller House

- Design, manufacture and place 10-12 interpretive panels in the Miller House front room, dining room and master bedroom. The Grand Teton Natural History Association bookstore will be moved to the back bedroom. (See “Interpretive Inventory Forms” for details on number and placement of signs, and themes to be interpreted.)
- Create labels for existing historic photographs, and place where appropriate to supplement the interpretive panels.
- Develop an interior plan and policy for furniture, wall decorations and other artifacts inside the Miller House. We recommend that the house be sparsely furnished with locally acquired furniture from the period of significance (1898 – 1942), if available.

### Roadside Kiosk

- Develop a new 3-panel sign for the kiosk at the start of the Elk Refuge Rd. The sign should be more graphically interesting than the current sign, with reduced text and an improved map, which includes the Miller property. In addition to information about elk, elk migration, and the Refuge, the sign should introduce visitors to the human dynamic on the landscape, including the fact that most of this land was cattle ranches before becoming a refuge. Introductory information about the Miller House historic site should invite visitors to explore the cultural as well as the natural aspects of the Refuge.
- Make the kiosk more inviting to visitors by encouraging parking in front of it.

### Website

- Develop a Miller House website to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the site as well as up-to-date information about operations and current activities.
- Use the 8 themes introduced in this plan as the basis for the interpretive section of the website, supplementing the text with historic and contemporary photographs.
- Provide links to other websites that contain pertinent information about the historic settlement of Wyoming and the region, to provide a broader context for understanding the development of the Miller Ranch (see List of Websites, Appendix).

## Phase Two

### **Site improvements**

- create a path from the roadside turnout directly to the Miller House, so pedestrians don't have to take a circuitous route through the parking area
- create a handicapped parking space near entrance to the Miller House

### **Building Improvements**

- Miller House: repair roof; repair and repaint trim; clean debris from log walls (see Condition Assessment, p. 22)
- Barn: repair walls and trim; pour a new concrete pad at entry; clean interior of upper story; add lighting for exhibits; address safety and code concerns, including floor load capacity, fire safety, egress, etc. (see Condition Assessment, p. 26)
- Forest Service Cabin: repair foundation; realign walls; repair window frames and replace glass; address varmint problem; clean interior, re-plaster and paint (see Condition Assessment, p.p. 23 - 24)

### **Interpretive Media**

#### Barn

- Design, manufacture and place interpretive panels in the lower level of the barn (see Interpretive Inventory Form #7).
- Develop a plan for accessing artifacts to supplement the interpretive panels.
- Promote use of the barn for special community and fund raising events such as dances, barbeques, art classes, auctions, etc.

#### Forest Service Cabin

- Design, manufacture and place interpretive panels in the Forest Service cabin to tell the story of the Forest Service role in the development of the valley (see Interpretive Inventory Form #8).
- Develop a plan for accessing artifacts, especially office furniture, to supplement the interpretive panels.



#### Miller House yard

Design, manufacture and place three interpretive signs in the yard of the Miller house: 1) Miller house style and construction; 2) historic preservation story (south yard); 3) time capsule

#### Interpretive Trail

To provide an outdoor activity and introduce visitors to the cultural landscape, develop an interpretive trail from the east end of Broadway to the Miller House. The trail will tell the story of man's interaction with the elk, from the early homesteaders to the present, and will include an introduction to the Miller Ranch Historic Site. The trail should be designed by a professional landscape architect.

UW American Studies students walk the proposed Elk Refuge Road Interpretive Trail. Photograph by Mary Humstone, 2005

Recommended sign topics are provided in Interpretive Inventory Form #5A.

### Website

- Continue development of the Miller House website, adding more interpretive information as well as updates on events at the Miller Ranch.

### Phase Three

#### **Building Improvements**

- Miller House: consider improvements to exterior such as removal or replacement of gutters and replacement of windows with historically accurate sash; consider removing carpeting and refinishing wood floors, removing dropped ceiling and removing the ceiling fan in the main room. (see Condition Assessment, p. 22)
- develop a maintenance plan for all three historic buildings, with a yearly schedule

#### **Interpretive Media/Activities/Events**

During Phase 3, programming will be introduced to more actively use the Miller Ranch Historic Site as a community asset. Suggestions listed below are a sampling of ideas generated during the field class. Additional community uses and possible sources of funding should be explored using a community brain-storming process with representatives of the partner agencies and organizations listed below. Potential research and restoration projects are also suggested.

Local events: Potential uses of the property, especially the barn, include Center for the Arts classes and workshops, preservation workshops, arts shows, meetings, lectures, and a day camp for kids. Planning for events must take into consideration the needs of tenants living in the Miller House.

Preservation workshops: Whenever possible, the community should be invited to participate in activities on the site, including clean up and rehabilitation work. For example, rehabilitation of the barn foundation could be completed by a skilled stone mason using volunteers in a workshop setting.

Public Programming: Use the Miller House for small meetings and group discussions concerning the themes of the Miller Ranch and the NER. These educational events could be coordinated with the Jackson Hole Historical Society, the Teton Science School, the University of Wyoming AMK Ranch research center and the Murie Center, to bring visiting professionals and academics to the Elk Refuge.

Archeology: Archeological investigation of both Native American sites on Miller Butte and other locations, and the original Miller homestead buildings, would yield important historical information, and could also involve community volunteers.

Research: Develop partnerships with the University of Wyoming and other institutions, and solicit help with researching additional aspects of the Miller legacy.



Archive, Photo Archive, Scrapbooks: In cooperation with the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum, begin developing an archive of information and historic photographs about Robert and Grace Miller and the Miller Ranch. Using these materials, develop scrapbooks to supplement the permanent displays in the Miller House, and update the Miller House website.

Living history: Although a permanent living history component is too intensive for this site, living history demonstrations could be staged at the site, starting with one weekend a month and increasing if the response is positive. Activities to be illustrated include household chores such as churning butter, candle making, soap making and sewing clothes; ranch chores such as putting up hay and shoeing horses; and crafts such as furniture making, wood carving and antler crafts.

Stagecoach rides to Miller House: Consider working with the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce to expand the existing Jackson stagecoach rides to bring visitors to the Miller Ranch.

### **Restoration projects**

Restoration of interior of house: This activity is dependent on finding adequate documentation for an accurate restoration (see definition of restoration, p. 16), as well as funding. If restoration is feasible, the project could be phased, with sponsors for each individual room.

Restoration of elk arch pathway: This activity is also dependent on accurate documentation. If feasible, Boy Scouts could be involved in this project.

Consider potential future uses of NER maintenance buildings to the north of the historic site, for interpretation, classroom space, summer field classes, etc.

### **Potential Partners, Volunteers, Sources of Funding**

#### **Revenue-generating ideas:**

- Bottle and sell Miller Springs water.
- Develop Elk products, such as stuffed animals, bookmarks, mugs, etc. (Stores in Jackson Hole are full of moose and bears – where are the elk?) Create a contest aimed at local artisans to develop additional elk-emblazoned items for sale in the gift store.
- Print and sell postcards of historic photographs, such as the photo of Boy Scouts picking up antlers.
- Rent the Miller house and grounds for weddings and other events, provided this does not interfere with tenants living in the Miller House.

#### **Volunteers**

- Build on existing relationship with the Boy Scouts to recruit Scouts for projects at the Miller site, such as clean up, repairs, etc. Develop badge projects.
- Contact local school officials to find out if there is a required public service component for students. If so, have the Miller Ranch identified as a qualifying project.
- Recruit volunteers from the community-at-large and partnering organizations for projects such as cleaning up the interior of the barn and the grounds.

## **Partners**

- The Miller Ranch property is tied to the history of the Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Teton County and the Town of Jackson. These other governmental agencies may be persuaded to assist with various aspects of the project through professional and other staff support, even if direct funding is unavailable. An early brainstorming session with decision makers from the above-identified governmental agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum could help to identify sources of support early in the project.
- The U.S. Forest Service is a natural partner for the restoration and interpretation of the Forest Service cabin.
- The University of Wyoming American Studies program is interested in further partnerships with NER for projects such as research, writing interpretive text, website development, etc. Other UW departments, such as E-Business and Art, could be contacted for possible student projects at the Miller Ranch.
- Grand Teton Natural History Association
- UW/NPS Research Center at the AMK Ranch, Grand Teton National Park
- Murie Center
- Teton County Historic Preservation Board
- Teton Science School-Journey School- PREE program
- Teton County School District
- First Interstate Bank (Mark Mickelson)
- Jackson State Bank (founded by Robert Miller)
- Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce
- Wyoming Division of Tourism
- National Trust Barn Again! Program (for barn rehabilitation information – no grants)
- Boy Scouts
- Friends of Pathways
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Outdoor Life Magazine
- Izaak Walton League

## **Potential funding sources**

- Gift Catalog
- Wyoming Community Development grant
- Community Foundation of Jackson Hole
- Wyoming Community Foundation
- Teton County Historic Preservation Board (CLG grant)
- McMurray Foundation (Casper)
- Kresge Foundation

## **Potential sources of in-kind donations:**

- Local sign companies
- Building supply companies
- Contractors and/or federal agency maintenance/construction staff to help with cost estimating and project supervision
- Website and graphic designers

## VIII. Evaluation of the Miller Ranch Interpretation

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We recommend that visitor frequency and satisfaction be monitored, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Miller Ranch interpretation. Visitors to the house should be asked to sign a guest book, so that accurate data can be collected about how many people visit, where they are from, and the reasons for their visits. This information will help in future promotion of the site, as well as adjusting interpretation and events to fit the target audience.

Once the first phase of interpretation is in place, visitor satisfaction should be evaluated every other year, using a short survey form, which visitors complete before leaving the site. In addition, comments should be solicited through the Miller Ranch website.



Miller House

Photograph by Mary Humstone 2005



## **Miller Ranch Interpretive Plan – Appendix**

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## **Appendix: Interpretive Inventory Forms**

The following pages contain “Interpretive Inventory Forms” for each of the eight sub-themes of the Miller Ranch interpretation. These forms provide detailed recommendations for each sub-theme, including interpretive goals and objectives, topics to cover, background information, and recommendations for photographs, maps, quotes and other materials to enhance the text. These forms are intended to be used as the basis for writing and designing the interpretive panels recommended in this plan.

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**# 1: Settlement and Homesteading (c.1883-1893)**

**Interpretive theme:**

Robert E. Miller was one of the first of hundreds of settlers drawn to Jackson Hole in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to stake a claim to lands being offered by the federal government. Like his fellow homesteaders, he relied on other means of support, such as trapping, to make a living while he proved up his land.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Present a true picture of homesteading life in the Jackson Hole area.
  - Describe reasons for and methods of settling/homesteading the Jackson Hole area
  - Describe Miller's specific experience within this context, and compare it with that of his fellow homesteaders

**Topics to include:**

- Robert Miller's journey to Jackson Hole: his origins and motivation for coming here; how does it compare to others?
- Miller's relationship with Teton Jackson, and acquisition of TJ's land and cabin
- Building a homestead: describe why Miller chose this land, and describe his first buildings; compare them with those of his neighbors
- Responses to the natural environment: how did homesteaders adapt the land (irrigating, etc)? How did they benefit from other aspects of the natural environment, such as scenic beauty and abundant wildlife?
- How did homesteaders survive/make a living? Trapping and other means of supplementing income
- Profile of a typical Jackson Hole homesteader (age, gender, ethnic background, etc). Explore the image of a homesteader: was he a rugged individual or someone who sought community? What was he/she looking for in Jackson Hole?
- The homesteading experience: daily activities (what they did and why)
- Issue of class distinction among homesteaders – did it exist, and if so, how did it shape the homestead experience?
- Government policies affecting the homesteading experience (Homestead Act, Desert Land, etc.)
- Robert Miller's marriage to Grace, and return to Jackson Hole

**Location and orientation:** Miller House front room. This should be the first exhibit that visitors see when they enter the room. Consider mounting the panels on a free-standing, three-sided display in the center of the room, so that walls will not be too crowded with display panels. A second, 3-part, free-standing display could be placed in front of the wide window in the west

wall. In addition, wall space is available on the stair wall (maximum 2 panels) and south wall between the dining room and the bathroom hall (maximum 1 panel).

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct as two or three interpretive panels containing text and photographs. Include a small sidebar with the Teton Jackson story. Additional photographs, with labels, could be hung on walls. Additional information (photographs, copies of homestead patents) could be put in a scrapbook.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Photo of Robert Miller as young man around time of arrival
- Teton Jackson photo
- Trapping/hunting photo and/or advertisement in Eastern newspaper/magazine luring hunters to Jackson Hole
- Robert Miller's homestead cabin and other buildings; other homesteads in the valley
- Map showing lands that were homesteaded around the Miller Ranch
- Copy of homestead patent
- Photos of other Jackson Hole homesteaders (for contrast), 1883-93
- Quote about homesteading life

**Background information for interpretive text:**

Robert Miller's arrival in Jackson Hole: Robert Miller filed the third homestead claim in Jackson Hole. He had apparently spent a year as a transient trapper before acquiring (whether by purchase for \$25, or merely squatting) the cabin belonging to the infamous outlaw Teton Jackson in 1885. Many rumors exist about how this young settler came to the valley with a connection to Teton Jackson. Although his work history is documented, documentation about his motivations for homesteading here has not been found. Miller chose an ideal place for his homestead claim, an area known as the "Swamp," where snow pack is relatively light, and grass sprouts up early in the spring. By 1893, Miller had settled his land and created a comfortable place to raise a family. He headed east to Illinois and returned in six months with his new bride, Grace Green Miller. Before Miller left he had put a wood floor in his cabin, but when he returned the floor had been stolen for a mining flume, and Grace had to begin her new life in the valley on a dirt floor. The couple's only child, a baby boy, was born in 1894, but died in infancy.

Teton Jackson, a.k.a. William Arthur Bradford, was the head of a notorious group of horse thieves, who wintered their horses in the southeast end of the valley. Teton was arrested and sent to prison in Boise, Idaho, the same year Robert Miller filed his homestead claim. Their relationship (if any) is still a mystery.

Early homesteaders: The railroad, and the Homestead Act of 1862, helped attract permanent settlers to Jackson Hole. The first homesteaders, John Holland and Millie and John Carnes, filed on lands in Jackson Hole in 1883, and introduced cattle to the valley. Gradually they were joined by others, primarily bachelors, such as Robert Miller, Steven Leek, and Dick Turpin, who began fencing their claims, building corrals and buying more cattle. At this time, nothing but trails entered the valley, and many homesteaders did not even have a wagon to bring in supplies.



Even for those who did, the closest store was in St. Anthony, Idaho, 100 miles away by pack trail. Most of the buildings and equipment were constructed with what was available locally. Although dimension lumber was widely available at the time Jackson Hole was settled, the remoteness of the valley limited the settlers to what they could build themselves with local materials and basic hand tools: hand saws, falling (or two-sided) axes, and froes (splitting tools). The common homesteader cabin was a simple log structure with a sod roof and a dirt floor. Holland and Carnes, for example, built two cabins on the border of their adjacent homesteads, connected by a dog-trot.

In Robert Miller's 1894 "proved up" homestead application he listed a home built in 1885. The home was a three-room structure west of the current Miller House, and has since been demolished. Other structures listed were a two room tool shed, a 40' x 100' shed, a 16'x 50' log stable, and 150 acres of cultivated land (all of these structures are visible in an early refuge picture by SN Leek, now hanging in the Miller House).

The census of 1890 records Jackson Hole's population as 60 to 70 individuals. The 1892-1893 township survey of the present town of Jackson and a portion of the Flat Creek Area (now the National Elk Refuge) showed 11 homesteads and cabins on the map.

By 1900 the valley's population had reached a total of 683 people. Men constituted a majority of the population, outnumbering women two to one. Homesteaders survived economically by diversifying their sources of income, and raising or hunting their own food. Homesteaders gardened, hunted game, trapped, and raised livestock. Livestock was recognized as a commodity and the elk were viewed as food. Trapping was a way to supplement their meager incomes, as was guiding hunters in the fall, which often proved more profitable than raising cattle.

Responses to the natural environment: To make the land suitable for raising cattle and hay, homesteaders cleared the land by grubbing and burning the sagebrush, and dug irrigation ditches by hand. These early settlers also had a concern for the wildlife that supplied their tables in the long winter. They objected to the wanton taking of elk by Shoshone tribes for hides and tusks, and contacted H. Donzelman, Wyoming Territory Attorney General, requesting a copy of the Wyoming Game Laws.

Government policies: Signed into law in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln after the secession of southern states, the Homestead Act turned over vast amounts of the public domain to private citizens. Two-hundred-seventy million acres or 10% of the area of the United States was claimed and settled under this act. A homesteader had only to be the head of a household and at least 21 years of age to claim a 160-acre parcel of land. Settlers from all walks of life including newly arrived immigrants, farmers without land of their own from the East, single women and former slaves came to meet the challenge of "proving up" and keeping this "free land." Each homesteader had to live on the land, build a home, make improvements and farm for 5 years before he was eligible to "prove up." A total filing fee of \$15 was the only money required.

In 1877, Congress passed the Desert Land Act. This act gave 640 acres (four times what the Free Homestead Act allowed) to any claimant who irrigated the land within three years. The

claimant had to pay 25 cents per acre up front and an additional \$1.00 per acre after they had completed the irrigation work. After three years the claimant could file for ownership of the land.

**Research needs:**

- Information on Robert Miller's background, in Illinois, Nebraska, Denver - why did he come here? Where did his money come from?
- Quote from Miller or other Jackson Hole homesteader illustrating one or more of the above topics
- More information on the personal side of the homesteading experience



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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#2: Miller Ranch (c.1894-1901)**

**Interpretive theme:**

Whether it was due to his strategic business decisions, or the money his wife Grace brought to the partnership, Robert Miller soon surpassed most of his fellow homesteaders to rise to a position of wealth and prominence in the emerging community. His spacious log house and his up-to-date ranching practices won him the admiration, and possibly the envy, of his neighbors.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Present a true picture of homesteading and ranching life in the Jackson Hole area.
  - Compare/contrast Millers with contemporaries through descriptions of daily lives
  - Explore issues of success in homesteading/ranching
- Use the Miller House and barn to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.
  - Describe the origins of the Miller House and other buildings on the ranch, and explain their role in the evolution of the ranch
- Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.
  - Describe the Miller Ranch as it looked c. 1900, how it functioned and why it looked the way it did

**Topics to include:**

- Miller's rise from homesteader to rancher, and why: how did he manage to own 125 cattle (more than anyone else) by 1895? Why did some homesteaders succeed, while others failed? (It's not just "hard work.")
- Miller as a long-range, strategic thinker: side enterprises (land speculation; 'old 12%;' hay loan to Mormons at 50% interest; Grace's Desert Land claim and other property ventures; Grace's sister's adjacent Homestead claim)
- The Miller House: development from dirt-floored cabin to "trophy home;" physical description; size, luxury as representative of wealth and influence of Millers
- Physical development of the ranch: additional land and buildings, and how they were used
- Miller's ranch in context of ranching in the valley at that time: traditional practices such as irrigating and putting up hay; Miller's introduction of the first mowing machine in the valley
- Life at the Miller House: domestic daily activities (servants and ranch help)

**Location and orientation:** Miller House front room (see explanation of locations under form #1). Ranching theme to be expanded in the lower floor of the barn (#7).

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Design as two interpretive panels containing text and photographs. Panel should focus on the Millers. Additional photographs, with labels, could be added, to hang on walls. Additional information (photographs, copies of correspondence) could be put in a scrapbook. Direct visitors to additional interpretation of ranching (#7) in the barn.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Map(s) of area showing growth of Miller property
- Photograph of Miller Ranch c. 1901 (see S.N. Leek panorama: enlarge section showing Miller Ranch)
- Photo of Robert and Grace Miller on horses in front of finished house
- Photographs of Miller House over time
- Quotes about and/or by Robert Miller
- Photo(s) illustrating traditional agriculture (beaver slide, early mowing machine, etc)

**Background information for interpretive text:**

Miller's rise from homesteader to rancher: Whether by luck or knowledge, Robert Miller filed on an exceptionally good piece of land. Miller's land was clear of sage and naturally grew good grasses. It had natural springs for irrigation, which he supplemented by digging a ditch from Cache Creek. Although it is unknown what Robert Miller's financial situation was when he came to the valley, it can be assumed that he came with more capital than others. A few years after his arrival, Miller made a move that distinguished him from the average homesteader. Crossing Teton Pass with pack horses, he purchased a mowing machine in Idaho, took it apart and packed it back to the valley, a 200-mile round trip. With an efficient way to cut hay, he had a commodity that many new settlers needed. His previous work in banks, and his experience growing up in the farming regions of Illinois and Wisconsin, gave him a knowledge of selling, investing, and taking advantage of farm markets. Miller began loaning hay to new settlers who came late in the year, or had less productive lands. His normal interest rate was 12%, earning him the nickname "Old 12%," but his rates went as high as the 50% he charged to the Nick Wilson party, a group of Mormon settlers who founded the town of Wilson. Miller was adept at watching the market and investing wisely. As less fortunate homesteaders came and went, he purchased lands from them, taking advantage of their misfortune.

It is very likely that Robert Miller's financial position improved when he married Grace Green in 1893. By 1895 he had over 125 head of cattle. The Millers took advantage of opportunities offered by the federal government to increase their holdings. Soon after her marriage in 1893, Grace Miller applied for a Desert Land claim south of her husband's property. Both lands were patented in 1898. Hattie Green, Grace's sister, also applied for a homestead east of Robert's in 1900 and sold the property to Grace and Robert for \$1 in 1913. All of these claims equaled 480 acres of land, stretching from the edge of the present-day town of Jackson, north of the Miller Ranch and out into the western hay meadows. The couple owned additional land north of Miller's Butte along Nowlin Creek, including the 120-acre Detweiler homestead, purchased by Robert Miller in 1902, and a 160-acre piece homesteaded by Grace (Doris Platts).

Using family to claim more lands was common among homesteaders. A story of the Nethercott family and the Linn brothers best tells this story. The Nethercotts had settled on the west bank of the Snake River with many other Mormon families. When the Linn brothers began settlement, the elder Nethercott threatened them, because he was waiting for his son to reach 21 to claim the land. The Linn brothers responded with their own threats. Today the Nethercott and Linn families are still on their ancestors' land as 100 year old neighbors (JHG).

The Miller House: In 1895 the construction of the Miller House began. The home was finished in the spring of 1898 and quickly became a meeting place for the families settling in the region of the present Elk Refuge and the town of Jackson. The house was large for its time, with four bedrooms, a large living room, dining room and kitchen. Its log construction with square-notched corners and logs well matched in size, shows a degree of refinement not seen in the ordinary homesteader's cabin.

Miller's ranch: physical development and contrast with other ranches in the valley:

Most of the ranchers in the valley used the same techniques, pasturing cattle on their land in the spring and fall, driving them up to the mountains in the summer, and feeding them hay in the winter. Hay production was an important part of the system, and in this respect Robert Miller had an advantage over his neighbors, with his excellent grasslands and his mowing machine. The layout of Miller's agricultural operations were typical of a large cattle ranch at this time. The large barn lay to the north of the house, with a corral system and fenced pastures nearby, for ease in winter feeding. After construction of the large house, the old house was kept in use, most likely as a bunk house. Other outbuildings included a two room tool shed and 16'x 50' log stable.

Draft horses and quarter horses were stabled in the lower level of the barn. The draft horses or mules were used for winter feeding, cutting and stacking hay, clearing sagebrush, plowing ditches, and logging. Quarter horses were used to move cattle to market and to summer pastures, for cutting and roping during branding and separating steers, general range work, and travel. Many ranches also had a dairy cow, and a coop for chickens. It is likely that much of the ranch work was done by hired cowboys who traveled around the region.

Hay fields were irrigated from ditches dug by hand or with a plow. The ditches were filled by opening a head gate that led from the water source. Miller's system of ditches that diverted water from Cache Creek onto his hay fields still exist on the Miller Ranch.

Hay was cut and raked into rows called "windrows." It was then gathered and staked in cribs using a beaver slide (see Ranching, # 7). In historic photos of the Miller Ranch, the open fields between US 89 and the Elk Refuge Road were dotted with large, mushroom-shaped hay stacks. The placement of the hay cribs not only served well for stacking hay, but also for distributing the hay in winter to cattle along feed lines. These same hay cribs and feed lines were constantly being raided by elk during harsh winters. With some of the largest hay meadows and so little winter snow, it is no doubt that the elk were a major problem in the Miller's winter feeding of cattle.

Life at the Miller House: The Millers had no children, and had to hire many men to help with ranch work, which meant many mouths for Grace to feed. At one time she rode 10 miles to Wilson to obtain women for help cooking on the ranch. She lost female workers quickly to the loving arms of the bachelors (Nelson, 35).

The daily lives of the Millers were no doubt busy. They were managing one of the most productive hay lands in the area, as well as over 125 head of cattle. Robert was also working as the U.S. Commissioner for the region. In 1897 Robert worked with the Simpsons, S.N. Leek, Karns, Nowlin, Detwieler, Albert Nelson and others to create the Jackson Hole Gun Club, which held its first Grand Ball on July 5, 1897. The clubhouse, which also operated as a school and meeting house, was built on a 5-acre piece of land on the Simpson Ranch, which later became part of Jackson. After the Millers' large house was completed, it too served as an unofficial community center.

**Research needs:**

- Floor plan/blueprints of Miller House to shed light on original use: was it built all at once, or in stages?
- Information on Miller House daily life
- 1973 Master Plan for restoration of Miller House, by Thomas Muths (NER files? JHHS collection)
- NER archival building information (to understand history of house)
- Quotes from Robert Miller and/or about him
- Origins of barn design, and comparison with others in the area
- Inventory of building when government took it over (National Archives?)

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#3: Ranch and Community/Grace Miller (1901-1914)**

**Interpretive theme:**

Soon after its completion, Robert and Grace Miller's large, log home became a business and social center of Jackson Hole, hosting the area's first elections and meetings of groups such as the American Legion, as well as more informal gatherings. Like other pioneer women of Wyoming, Grace Miller became a local leader in her own right, platting the town of Jackson, serving as the mayor with an all-female town council, and purchasing available ranch lands.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Present a true picture of homesteading and ranching life in the Jackson Hole area.
  - Show ties between the Millers and the Jackson community
  - Describe origins/early life of town of Jackson
  - Describe the role of women in early Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and the West
- Use existing historic resources to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.
  - Present samples of conversations that might have gone on in the Miller House, both public and private

**Topics to include:**

- Miller House as a reflection of the Millers' growing influence/affluence, and as a way to increase the same
- Grace Miller's role in Jackson's establishment and early life: buying land and platting the town of Jackson, selling lots, Mayor with all-female town council, philanthropy (children's park planned into original town); what motivated her?
- Role of women in Wyoming's early history (opportunities, responsibilities)
- Status of women in Wyoming's early history (use Grace's obituary which is all about Robert to raise questions about this).

**Location and orientation:** Miller House dining room (these first three themes should be kept fairly close together, in the Miller House). Additional moveable interpretive panels to be placed on dining room table, and removed for meetings, etc.

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct as two interpretive panels containing text and photographs. Additional photographs, with labels, could be added, to hang on walls. Additional information (photographs, copies of correspondence, meeting minutes) could be put in a scrapbook.



**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Photograph of Grace Miller
- Original plat of Jackson
- Photos of meetings at Miller House with significant figures from area
- Town Council/Mayor photographs
- Grace Miller's obituary
- Quotes from letters, diaries

**Background information for interpretive text:**

Miller House as a reflection of the Millers' growing influence/affluence: The size of the house, and its use as a meeting place, reflect the Millers' growing affluence, as well as influence. By 1905 the Millers were one of two ranchers with over 400 head of cattle, owned more land than most other ranchers and were arguably the most affluent citizens of the valley. In addition to the property around the ranch headquarters, the Millers had purchased hundreds of acres of land north of Miller Butte near Poverty Flats. As U.S. Commissioner of the region, Robert was in charge of approving the homestead applications, thus giving him an intimate knowledge of the real estate situation in the valley.

Grace Miller's role in Jackson's establishment: With men occupied improving the lands and managing the cattle, women often played a major role in the development of pioneer communities. Grace Miller was no doubt one of these enterprising women. She was no stranger to land development, her father having platted her hometown of Ottawa, Illinois. She placed the first Desert Land claim in the valley, purchased additional lands on her own, and held her own grazing leases. Her sister Hattie claimed the adjacent homestead, later selling it to Robert and Grace for \$1.

Grace's closest neighbor was Maggie Simpson, whose successful ranch (now the town site of Jackson) was a short walk or ride from the Millers'. Maggie Simpson was also a rancher in her own right, owning 35 head of cattle that she sold to help obtain the Cache Creek Ranch. Maggie also discovered an isolated tract of 40 acres which she claimed and proved up for \$90 in 1900. The next year Grace purchased ten acres of this land for \$90, platted the town of Jackson, and began selling lots for \$15 each, a price low enough to encourage settlement. Strategically placing the town on the edge of the Miller Ranch gave Grace and Robert easy access to the affairs of the growing community. Within the newly platted town, Grace set aside an area for a school and park (now Miller Park). It was not long before Charles Deloney's store, the Wort Livery Stable and a saloon were built in the emerging town.

Early post offices were often located at a ranch, with women often serving as postmaster. The first post office was located at Fred and Mary White's ranch on Flat Creek, with Mary White as the first postmaster. In 1894 it was moved to the Miller Ranch, where it is probable that Grace Miller worked as postmaster, then to the Simpson Ranch. Maggie Simpson changed the name from Marysvale to Jackson.

Grace Miller's political career: In 1908 Grace Miller was one of the founding members of the Pure Food Club, a social club to encourage good family cooking and to play cards. The club quickly became a political forum and its members began to make complaints to the Town Council about the "safety and sanity" of their community. The Town Council met only when spring weather broke and many of the meeting minutes were lost or just not recorded. Taxes often went uncollected and the streets resembled the open range.

"The town certainly needs cleaning up. Cows and horses running loose through the streets and in peoples' yards. Numerous tramp and unlicensed dogs. Ditches broken through, a menace to horses and the town drunks who wend their wobbly way through the streets at night. Mammoth manure piles, that give off a most unpleasant odor and make it difficult for people to crawl over in traveling alleys. A garbage pile at the entrance to town and numerous garbage piles in alleys and back yards. A pile of boulders in the town square" (JHC May 3, 1923).

Grace Miller had platted the Town of Jackson, but was not in control of its fate. Not getting much response to their complaints, the members of the Pure Food Club decided to create their own town council, and an all-woman council with Grace Miller as mayor took office in 1920. They immediately began making changes, starting with running regular monthly meetings following Robert's Rules of Order, and taking minutes. They began collecting on delinquent taxes, including those of their husbands, increasing their coffers from \$200 to \$2000 in just a few weeks. They set about improving the town's infrastructure, installing culverts along the streets to cut down on the children's exposure to gray water, and began the long, 10-year process of developing city water and sewage disposal. They installed street lights and began running electrical lines into the town. They established the town square and purchased property for a town cemetery (the Aspen Cemetery), and the Pure Foods Club paid for fencing and a road to the site. They also began to clean up the school grounds and hired a man to shovel snow.

They passed laws to control animals and firearms, fining citizens for loose stock, requiring dogs to be licensed, and outlawing fireworks and the discharging of firearms in town. They also paid for the printing of the *Jackson Hole Courier*. The Council was nationally recognized in the *Delineator*, *The Evening Mail*, *New York Evening Post*, *Cheyenne State Leader*, and other newspapers nationwide.

#### Role of women in Wyoming's early history (opportunities, responsibilities)

Women played a critical role in Wyoming's early history. With so few people, women had to take on jobs usually done by men. In many ways, perhaps due more to necessity than enlightenment, Wyoming has led the country in new roles for women, from political office to construction work. Wyoming was the first state to allow women to vote, beginning in 1890. Nellie Taylor Ross was elected the first woman governor in the country in 1924.

"The women didn't run for office for pressing reform but to further the cause of Women's Suffrage in Wyoming" (Grace Miller).

Status of women in Wyoming's early history: (use Grace's obituary, which is all about Robert, to raise questions about this). Although women played an important role, they were rarely recognized for their achievements. Considering the contributions of Grace Miller to the town of Jackson, one might expect her obituary to describe her accomplishments rather than just those of her husband.

**Research needs:**

Minutes of town council meetings (located at Town Hall)  
information on Grace Miller's civic and social activities c.1901-1920

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#4: Conservation in Jackson Hole (1908 – present)**

**Interpretive theme:** At about the same time that Robert Miller was building his small empire in Jackson Hole, new ideas about conservation were emerging throughout the United States. The wanton exploitation of resources that marked the Gilded Age was being tempered by a new, science-based conservation movement. From the creation of Teton National Forest from the Yellowstone Forest Preserve in 1908, to the creation of the National Elk Refuge and Grand Teton National Park, to the preservation of the Miller House in 1967, this property is connected to many important landmarks and persons in the American conservation movement.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.
  - Tell the story of why this land still looks the way it does, and contrast it with other parts of the valley
- Explore the relationship between agriculture and conservation, and help residents and visitors understand the role of conservation in shaping this landscape.
  - Provide historical context for understanding the role of conservation in the Jackson Hole area.
  - Introduce visitors to various persons and events in the history of the conservation movement.
  - Introduce the Elk Refuge, the Forest Service and historic preservation of the Miller House, three themes that will be further developed in other locations.
- Help visitors and residents understand the importance of historic preservation, and how it is accomplished.
  - Show Miller Ranch as an excellent example of historic preservation, 1914 - present

**Topics to include:**

- The national context for the beginnings of the conservation movement
- Applying the scientific method to conservation: rational planning for resource development; Elk Refuge as an example of scientific conservation.
- Involvement of ranchers and the State and Federal governments in the “elk problem” and creation of the Refuge
- Introduction of the Forest Service
- Profiles of famous names in conservation including D.C. Nowlin, Almer Nelson, the Muries, S.N. Leek, J.D. Rockefeller, and others with ties to the Miller Ranch

- Adaptive reuse: conserving ranch buildings for the elk refuge, including continuing the traditional use of hay cribs, irrigation, corral systems, barns and outbuildings as well as the house.
- Preservation struggle of 1967: role of local support and advocacy in conservation and preservation of important resources

**Location and orientation:** Miller House master bedroom. Forest Service theme (#8) to be expanded in the Forest Service cabin. Elk Refuge theme (#5) to be expanded in next panel, and in Interpretive Trail. Historic preservation theme (#6) to be expanded outside of Miller House.

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct as two interpretive panels.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Map showing relationship of Miller Ranch to places and people mentioned in the text; perhaps with a photo and brief bio for each
- Quote from T. Roosevelt about “scientific conservation”

**Background information for interpretive text:**

National context for the beginnings of the conservation movement: The late 19th century was known as the “Gilded Age,” for the excesses in consumption of resources. Natural resources were valued primarily for their utility to people, as opposed to being appreciated for their own intrinsic value. By the middle of the 19th century, industrialization was drastically changing the American landscape. Mechanization of agriculture and manufacturing was rapidly turning natural resources into consumer products, and trains were carrying products and people to and from the far reaches of the continent. New demands were placed on the natural environment to support industry, and the burgeoning population of immigrants who were flocking to the United States. The Great West was being sought not only for its settlement, but also for its resources. Trees were cut, minerals were mined, and prairies were plowed under. The native species on these lands were also being removed to make room for settlement and resource extraction. During this age of excess, only a few visionaries saw the threat to the future of the country.

Applying the scientific method to the conservation movement: rational planning for resource development: The conservation movement was galvanized by the wasteful use of resources and coincided with the rising importance of science and technology. Men like Gifford Pinchot (considered the “grandfather of American forestry”), John Muir, and Teddy Roosevelt saw that some restraint must be placed on this wanton taking of resources if they were going to last. The conservation movement was a utilitarian “scientific movement” led by people educated in hydrology, forestry, and geology. Its essence was rational planning to promote efficient development and use of all natural resources. Conservationists believed that scientific practices applied to resource exploitation would open new opportunities for the long term wealth of the nation. Much of this idea was based in Gifford Pinchot's approach to conservation of resources that states, “Where conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number of people.”

In a 1907 speech to Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt called for a change in the approach to land use. “The reward of foresight is easily told. But there must be the look ahead, there must be the realization of the fact that to waste, to destroy, our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”

As a result of this new ideology, many National Forest Reserves and National Parks, such as the Yellowstone Forest Reserve and Teton Forest Reserve, were set aside to conserve the grazing lands, timber resources, and wildlife of the West. But a conflict arose about how these lands would be used. Preservationists, like John Muir, wanted the land to be preserved in its natural state, without the disturbance of man; conservationists, like Gifford Pinchot, wanted the land conserved for the increased and sustained yield of resources.

The original motive for establishing the National Elk Refuge was based on scientific conservation. The 1911 Preble Report, which was commissioned by the U.S. Biological Survey, supported the ranchers’ solution of feeding the starving elk, as the best way to conserve the economic resource. Much like a forest that was being logged to the point of permanent destruction, the potential loss of the elk herd was seen as a critical threat to the economic base of Jackson Hole. Elk were considered natural capital for the growing segment of the local economy that was supported by wealthy eastern recreationalists. Good science was needed to maintain the health and viability of the herd.

Miller Ranch ties with famous names in conservation including the Muries, SN Leek, Rockefeller, others: The first land purchased for the Refuge was the Robert Miller Ranch. The location of the ranch, its size, and the existing structures on the site made it the ideal place to raise feed for elk and provide a small winter range. D.C. Nowlin became the first refuge manager, taking residence and setting up his office in the Miller House. Nowlin immediately began advocating for more lands to supplement the original 2,760 acres, to lure elk away from ranchers’ hay stacks. Despite conservation efforts, 2,500 elk starved to death in 1917, and in 1922, 886 elk died on the refuge.

Almer Nelson began managing the refuge in 1923 and over the next 30 years helped the refuge grow into what it is today. Under his leadership the Refuge was changed from an elk feed ground to a winter range, and managed as an eco-system that included all wildlife, not just the elk. Nelson was greatly influenced by the lifelong relationship that he created with a young biologist the US Biological Survey hired in 1928 to study the elk situation.

Olaus Murie’s in-depth study of elk and their migration patterns was the first of its kind in the nation. He studied the conditions of elk in Jackson Hole for many years, publishing many books about the state of elk in the region and the nation, most notably *Elk of North America* and *Wapiti Wilderness* (which he co-authored with his wife Martie). Olaus was also a well known naturalist artist, and published over 75 popular and scientific articles. The Muries settled in Jackson, on a property that is now part of Grand Teton National Park. They were major advocates for the Wilderness Act, arguing that entire eco-systems must be protected. In partnership with Bob Marshall, they created the Wilderness Society in 1946.

Other famous names associated with the Millers include photographer and conservationist S.N. Leek, and J.D. Rockefeller, whose Snake River Land Company hired Miller in 1927 to help acquire lands for what would become Grand Teton National Park.

Many crucial discussions about the fate of the elk and the refuge took place within this house. These discussions began with Nowlin, Miller, and Leek at the turn of the century and continued with Olaus Murie and Almer Nelson into the 40s.

Adaptive reuse: When the Miller Ranch was purchased for the National Elk Refuge, both the buildings and the land were easily adapted for their new use. The house was used as refuge headquarters and residence for the refuge manager, the barn housed the draft horses used to cut and stack hay and feed elk in the winter, and the Forest Service cabin continued its original use. Until 1964, much of the low lands of the refuge continued to be used to produce hay for winter feeding. Because of the continued use of the buildings and land, the Miller Ranch today appears much as it did in 1900.

Preservation struggle of 1967: In 1967, just a year after passage of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Miller House was threatened with demolition. The struggle to preserve the house is an excellent lesson in how citizen activists can influence federal agencies. This story is told in more detail in theme # 6.

**Research needs:**

- USFS records
- More detailed information on conservationists associated with Miller and the Miller Ranch.

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#5: The Jackson Elk Herd and the “Government Ranch”**

**Interpretive theme:** As the large Jackson Elk Herd lost its winter range to development, elk began to compete with cattle for winter hay. Because of the importance of elk to their livelihood, ranchers such as Robert Miller sought a solution to the “elk problem.” The ranchers’ solution became federal policy, which is still in effect today, and the Miller Ranch became the “Government Ranch.”

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.
  - Explain how the land (Miller Ranch, other NER land) was used, and how it changed over time
- Explore the relationship between agriculture and conservation, and help residents and visitors understand the role of conservation in shaping this landscape.
  - Give an accurate and personal picture of ranchers’ struggles with the elk
  - Explain the role of ranchers in forging a solution to the “elk problem”
  - Answer the question “Why do they feed the elk?”
- Use existing historic resources, especially the Miller House and barn, to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.
  - Stress importance of this site as birthplace of the NER, and show how it was adapted from cattle to elk.

**Topics to include:**

- Economic and cultural importance of elk in Jackson Hole: economic importance to early homesteaders and ranchers (outfitting, guiding, hunting), source of meat, Jackson’s identity with the elk, the Jackson Elk Herd
- Origins of the elk problem; elk versus cattle on public lands, threats to the elk (hunting, tusk hunters, lack of vegetation, etc)
- Ranchers’ stories of dealing with the elk problem: sleeping on haystacks to protect hay from elk, herding elk away from hay fed to cows, etc.
- Ranchers’ solution (feeding hay)
- State and federal involvement
- Connection with larger conservation movement (previous panel) and concern that elk would go the way of the bison
- Purchase of the Miller property and conversion of Miller Ranch to NER headquarters (why the Miller Ranch?) and establishment of the “Government Ranch”
- Comparison of the Miller property as a cattle ranch, and as the “Government Ranch”



**Location and orientation:** Miller House master bedroom (former NER headquarters office). A more detailed story is proposed for an interpretive trail along Elk Refuge Road from Broadway to the Miller House (see Form #5A).

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct as two interpretive panels containing text and photographs. Direct visitor to interpretive trail.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Photo of elk-cattle conflict
- Quotes from ranchers (Cliff Hansen?)
- Starving elk photo (S.N. Leek)
- Early photo of Miller Ranch as the Government Ranch

**Background information for interpretive text:**

Economic and cultural importance of elk in Jackson Hole: The elk herd was important to the economic well being of Jackson Hole residents. According to former senator and local rancher Cliff Hansen, “Ranchers always said, ‘cattle are to pay the bills, elk are to eat.’” But elk also contributed significantly to helping pay the bills, since many ranchers were also outfitters who benefited from guiding wealthy out-of-state hunters. The 1911 Preble Report clearly states the economic importance of elk to Jackson Hole. “Hunters are obliged to hire guides, packers, cooks, and pack animals, and to provision the party. A conservative estimate places the average daily expense of a person hunting in this region at \$14. Thus, a trip of 30 days would cost each non-resident \$420. Practically all this is spent in the vicinity of the hunting grounds. The food value of the animals killed by residents is also very large. During the season of 1910, 413 resident licenses, each good for the capture of two elk, were granted in Jackson Hole. It is fair to assume that 800 elk with an average value of \$20, not counting the value of hides, horns, and scalps, were taken under these licenses” (PR, 12).

Elk and the NER have become part of Jackson Hole’s identity. Tourist activities on the refuge began in the early days of the refuge, and continue to the present, with elk viewing from the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center and from Highway 89, and winter sleigh rides into the refuge.

Origins of the elk problem

With their winter range converted to hayfields of ranchers, the great Jackson Hole Elk Herd was threatened by starvation. Local ranchers began to have major problems with elk robbing their haystacks. The fate of the Yellowstone/Jackson Hole Elk Herd became a broader public concern in 1897 when 10,000 elk died of starvation in Jackson Hole. Lobbying by ranchers convinced the state of Wyoming to set aside the Teton Game Reserve in 1905, the first step in the establishment of a permanent elk refuge. Money was appropriated to buy hay from ranchers to feed the elk, while scientists studied the situation. In 1912, Congress appropriated \$45,000 for the purchase of lands and the maintenance of elk winter range. Former state game warden D.C. Nowlin became the first refuge manager, and in 1914 Robert Miller's home and 1,240 acres were purchased as the nucleus of the National Elk Refuge (NER).

Ranchers' stories of dealing with the elk problem: Local ranchers have many stories to share about dealing with the elk problem, some of them quite humorous. Former U.S. Senator Cliff Hansen, for example, recounts how, in the winter, the ranch hands would feed hay to the cattle, then get on their horses and herd the elk away until the cattle had finished eating. When the snow became so deep that elk could walk over the fences put up to protect the haystacks, ranch hands would carry their sleeping bags outside and sleep on top of the haystacks to protect the hay from the elk. "For every elk we ate, we probably fed 100," he said.

Ranchers' solution (feeding hay): Feeding elk was a reaction to a condition that was threatening not only the elk, but also the livelihoods of early settlers. Ranchers began feeding elk to keep them from starvation (so that they could be hunted), but also to keep them from competing with livestock. The ranchers' early decision to feed the elk was a cultural reaction based on their own experience managing livestock to survive the winter months in the valley. This homegrown solution became the recommended management policy in the Preble Report of 1911, and continues today. The ranchers of Jackson Hole developed the solution to the elk problem, appealed to state and federal government for help, and eventually were the men hired to manage the refuge.

State and federal involvement: By the early 1900s, ranchers were calling on the State of Wyoming to help pay for the cost of feeding the elk. At the same time, local rancher and businessman S.N. Leek began photographing starving elk and displaying the photographs at the New York Natural History Museum and other venues, attracting the attention of wealthy easterners who had been coming to the region to hunt since the 1870s. As supervisor of the Teton Forest Reserve and a local rancher, Robert Miller used the first federal funds to feed 200 head of snowbound elk through the winter of 1907, beginning a practice that continues to the present. After years of lobbying by both S.N. Leek and D.C. Nowlin, the state in 1910 set aside \$5,000 for purchase of 250 tons of hay to feed the elk.

Recognizing that the economic burden of feeding elk would be difficult for Wyoming to bear, the state wrote to the U.S. Congress asking for help with feeding elk and setting aside a preserve for the winter herds. With the support of easterners swayed by Leek's photos, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for feeding the elk and appointed E.A. Preble to study the elk problem. Upon Preble's suggestion, Congress appropriated \$45,000 to purchase the 1,240 acre Robert Miller Ranch as a Game Preserve, and added 1,000 acres of public lands.

Connection with larger conservation movement (previous panel): The growing conservation movement contributed to the willingness of the state and federal governments to get involved. Conservationists believed that the elk herd and other wildlife must be preserved for economic reasons. The experience of the near eradication of the bison was used as a motivation for intervention in conserving the Jackson Hole Elk Herd.

Purchase of the Miller property and conversion of Miller Ranch to NER headquarters (and establishment of the "Government Ranch:": Being one of the largest hay producers and land holders, and having one of the largest livestock herds, Miller no doubt had a say in hay purchases, land use, and the conflict of elk and cattle. As supervisor of the Teton Forest Reserve, Miller funded the first supplemental feeding of 200 snowbound elk on Willow Creek

near Pinedale in 1907. The money appropriated by the State of Wyoming in 1910 was really a payment to ranchers for feeding their hay to the elk. As a major hay producer, Miller was most likely one of those ranchers.

It is unknown exactly why the Miller Ranch was chosen as the site of the National Elk Refuge, but the suitability of Miller's lands for raising hay and grazing made the ranch a logical choice, and Miller's connections with state and federal officials and local ranchers active in the conservation movement put him in a position to take advantage of the opportunity to sell out.

#### Comparison of the Miller property as a cattle ranch, and as the "Government Ranch:"

The locals nicknamed the Refuge the "Government Ranch," and for good reason, since it was modeled on the traditional agricultural land use of the Rocky Mountain West. The refuge was managed much like a cattle ranch. Miller's traditional hay fields were used to provide hay for the elk, instead of cattle, in the winter. Elk migrated to the high meadows in the valley's surrounding mountains for summer pasture, the same places that cowboys moved cattle each summer.

#### **Research needs:**

- Earliest possible photos and quotes of interest of ranchers in helping/saving elk (1898?)
- Correspondence and/or documents indicating why Miller's ranch was purchased as the Elk Refuge headquarters
- Reports/quotes from conversations that took place in the Forest Supervisor's office and around the table in the Miller House.
- Ranchers' stories about dealing with the elk: oral histories, quotes from books, articles in local paper, etc

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#5A: Elk Refuge Road Interpretive Trail**

**Interpretive theme:** As the large Jackson Elk Herd lost its winter range to development, elk began to compete with cattle for winter hay. Because of the importance of elk to their livelihood, ranchers such as Robert Miller sought a solution to the “elk problem.” The ranchers’ solution became federal policy, which is still in effect today, and the Miller Ranch became the “Government Ranch.”

**Goals & Objectives:** same as #5

**List of Interpretive Signs:**

**1. Introduction:** introduction to the refuge, and to the interpretive trail.

Location: Corner of Broadway and the Elk Refuge Rd., at the east end of the side walk

**2. Homesteading with the Elk:** explanation of why the lands the visitor is looking at were an ideal place both for wintering elk, and for the early homesteader. The low water table kept the lands clear of snow and produced excellent feed for elk and cattle.

Objective: Create an understanding of how early homesteaders quickly came into with conflict with the elk, by explaining why this eco-system was attractive to both homesteader and elk.

Location: An appropriate distance to get the visitor into the landscape and in view of the ranch buildings.

**3. Making Hay:** explanation of how the settlers moved in with the elk and began changing the land.

Objective: Interpret the irrigation ditches along the trail, how they were used, and how this use began changing the landscape. This change in landscape brought elk to feed lines and haystacks instead of their winter grazing lands.

Location: Near the beginning of the irrigation ditches along Elk Refuge Rd.

**4. Seasons of Conflict:** the story of tusk hunters, hide hunters, and winters of mass starvation of elk.

Objective: Introduce impact of settlers on the elk herd, and early activists such as S.N. Leek.

Location: further up trail towards Miller House (to be determined by designer).

**5. Ranchers to the Rescue:** the story of ranchers’ activism and the results of their efforts.

Objective: Help the visitor to picture the plight of ranchers in the valley, and their efforts to come up with a solution to save the elk and their livelihoods. Explain how the ranchers’ solution became national policy.

Location: further up trail towards Miller House (to be determined by designer)

**6. Conservation to the Rescue:** the story of how the Miller Ranch was purchased for conservation; the significance of this move by the federal government to set aside land for wildlife and why the Miller Ranch was the perfect place for the NER.

Objective: Create an understanding of how the Miller Ranch became the Government Ranch and how the use of the ranch stayed similar, but was geared towards elk instead of cattle. Help visitor picture the transition of use of these lands from elk, to cattle, and back to elk.

Location: Near the 25 MPH sign

**7. Welcome to the Miller House Historic Site:** Miller Ranch central interpretive theme.

Objective: Encourage visitors to continue their education by going into the buildings, visiting with the onsite interpreter, and learning more about the people that make the history of the site so rich. Explain the buildings that are open to the public and the themes present within.

Location: At the pullout in front of the Miller House.

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Signs should be high enough to be easily read, but low enough to not obstruct the view. A mounting height of 24 to 30 inches with a 30 to 45-degree angle toward the view being interpreted will be accessible to most visitors.

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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#6: Historic Preservation**

**Interpretive theme:** Historic buildings and landscapes provide a place to tell important stories about our past, and sharpen our image of life in earlier times. The preservation of the Miller Ranch is itself an important story to tell.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Help visitors and residents understand the importance of historic preservation, and how it is accomplished.
  - Draw the visitor's attention to the site itself – the buildings and the landscape – and show the connections that can be made to the past by studying the built and natural environment.
  - Inform visitors of the preservation practices, including adaptive use and community activism that resulted in the Miller House being here today.
- Make the Miller Ranch a real asset for the community.
  - Make the interpretation interesting for local residents as well as visitors
  - Provide opportunities for locals to participate in the project, through preservation workshops

**Topics to include:**

- NER use of Miller Ranch as headquarters from 1914 to 1942, and continued use as employee housing until 2004 (adaptive use); continued use of barn
- Community activism responsible for saving house when haying operation ended in 1966.
- National Register listing
- Examination of the rehabilitation work (can you find the places where the house was changed?)
- On-going work at the Miller Ranch (all three buildings)

**Location and orientation:** Topic is introduced as part of the conservation theme (#5), in the master bedroom of the Miller House. Install two outdoor signs, one in the front yard, and one near the replaced log wall. Additional interpretation of on-going preservation work to be presented in temporary panels and displays, and possibly workshops.

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct two outdoor signs (to match those on interpretive trail), with text and graphics.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Photos of Miller House before and during rehabilitation
- Newspaper headlines of threatened demolition by fire
- Quotes from community activists about importance of preserving the Miller property

**Background information for interpretive text:**

Adaptive use: The Miller Ranch buildings were preserved for many years because they were adaptively used, the house as the residence of the Elk Refuge managers, and the outbuildings for refuge operations. In this way, the USFWS saved money by using existing buildings instead tearing them down and building new. The barn remains in good condition today because it was actively used by USFWS until the 1960s, and is still used for storage. The original homestead cabin of Robert Miller, which was not being used, was torn down by the USFWS in the 1940s.

The 1898 Miller House was used for employee housing until 1964, when the USFWS found that the building's maintenance needs were excessive and it was declared that the building was a surplus property. "In due time informal bids were solicited for the building's removal. The bid solicitations drew no interest. It was decided at this time to salvage what was possible and raze the structure" (Cain, 1967).

Community activism: Destruction by fire is a common fate of historic buildings, and the Miller Ranch buildings were headed for a fiery end. In February, 1967, Dr. Donald McCleod went for a horseback ride and discovered holes had been kicked into the walls of the Miller House, and stuffed with rags. He inquired about this and discovered that the US Fish and Wildlife Service had plans to allow the Teton County Volunteer Fire Department to use the house for a fire-fighting exercise. On March 13, 1967, the fire department burned a small outbuilding. Dr. McCleod contacted the Teton County Historical Society and a fight began to protect the house. Appealing to local rancher and U.S. Senator Cliff Hansen and U.S. Senator Gale McGee, Dr. McCleod and the Teton County Historical Society (TCHS) succeeded in saving the Miller House. The community outcry convinced the USFWS to consider preserving the house as a historic site. Soon after, a chain-link fence was erected to keep out vandals, and an agreement was made that the TCHS would take on the preservation and maintenance of the house. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1967, and a special use permit was issued to the Teton County Museum Board giving jurisdiction over its preservation and maintenance.

The struggle to preserve the Miller House came just one year after passage of the National Historic Preservation Act, and before historic preservation was routinely considered as an option for older buildings.

National Register of Historic Places: Listing on the National Register of Historic Places is an honorary designation that recognized the Miller House and the Forest Service Cabin as significant in American history and culture. In 2001, the nomination was amended to include the Miller Barn. Because it is a federal agency, the USFWS has certain obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act to preserve historic properties and use them to educate the public.

Preservation work: In 1968 the TCHS replaced the cedar shingles on the roof of the house and the Forest Service Cabin. In May, 1973, the TCHS hired Tom Muths, an architect-planner, to write a comprehensive restoration plan and detailed plans for a visitors' center. In 1987 the south wall and foundation were repaired and many logs replaced. The interior of the home was rehabilitated to a more modern style at this time. This included lowering the ceilings, adding florescent lighting, modern kitchen cabinets and appliances, applying sheet rock to walls with heavy plaster texturing, floating a concrete floor in the basement, adding electric baseboard heaters, and changing the wood stove to a gas stove in the living room. The log auto garage was also built at this time. The home became a Refuge living quarters again for Al Ridgeway and his family. The Ridgeways lived in the house until 2004 when Al retired.

**Research needs:**

- Muths report, 1973
- Photographs of house before/during rehabilitation
- Quotes from letters and newspaper articles about preservation of house





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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#7: Ranching in Jackson Hole (1884-present)**

**Interpretive theme:** Homesteaders came to Jackson Hole to raise cattle, but only a fraction of them became successful ranchers. Traditional ranching practices common to the Intermountain West, such as irrigating, putting up hay and use of summer and winter pastures, were used here until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and created the distinctive landscape of the Miller Ranch and the National Elk Refuge.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Present visitors with a true picture of homesteading and ranching life in the Jackson area, in the larger context of the American West.
  - Present the Miller Ranch as a successful ranch, in contrast to other, less prosperous, homesteads.
  - Use the Miller family and their experiences to describe traditional ranching practices and ranch life.
- Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.
  - Explain how the land was used, how it changed over time, and why it looks the way it does.
  - Use maps and historic photographs to give a picture of ranching in the valley.
- Use existing historic resources, especially the Miller House and barn and the Forest Service cabin, to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.
  - Limit interpretation to the history and issues that are directly related to the site.
  - Use interpretation to draw the visitor's attention to the site itself – the buildings and the landscape – and show the connections that can be made by studying the built and natural environment.

**Topics to include:**

- The proving up of lands for a homestead application, and early ranching in Jackson Hole
- Ranching: traditional agricultural practices such as irrigating and putting up hay; annual roundups and cattle drives (the “drift”); the location of cattle and hay markets; use of itinerant cowboys
- Ranch life: crops and livestock for feeding the family, role of the ranch wife, etc.
- Miller's ranch in context of ranching in the valley at that time
- Importance of grazing leases to ranchers, and how Robert Miller was able to use his position to benefit himself as well as fellow ranchers
- Ranchers' relationship to the land and wildlife
- History of brands, and how to read them

- The change from ranch lands to park space, and the loss of traditional ranch lands because of cultural landscape use changes in the valley.

**Location and Orientation:** Lower level of barn

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct several small panels with graphics and text to display in the lower level of the barn. Artifacts such as hand tools, machinery and a beaver slide or hay rack could also be displayed, depending on available space. All artifacts should be documented to be of the area and time period being interpreted, should be complete, and be well labeled.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

- Photo of a “beaver slide” being used
- Photo of roundups, branding, haying.
- Quotes by early ranchers in the valley
- Brands of the valley
- Photo of corrals built by Forest Service for ranchers, or of cattle grazing in the National Forest
- Map of Jackson Hole ranches c. 1905
- Map/site plan of Miller Ranch

**Background information for interpretive text:**

With its dry, rugged landscape, the American West requires different methods of raising cattle from those used in the eastern half of the United States. Rather than a contained pasture, Western ranching is characterized by nomadic use of the range. The horsemanship, style of dress, branding of cattle, and movement of herds on the range stems from the cattle-raising practices that began along the current Mexican border. As early as the 1860s, before the building of the transcontinental railroad, large herds were being driven from Kansas and Texas to the prairies of Wyoming and Montana, although permanent settlement of these areas came later. The earliest cattle ranchers in the Rocky Mountain West relied on mining camps for their markets. With the coming of the railroad, cattlemen had access to larger markets in the east and west, as well as more local demand for their products.

The proving up of lands for a homestead application: Placing thousands of cattle belonging to many different ranchers on the range without fencing created problems with rangeland claims. The government effort to control rangelands began in 1862 with the Homestead Act, which was primarily designed to encourage settlement of the West. Through the Homestead Act, American citizens 21 years of age or older could obtain up to 160 acres of unappropriated public land. To acquire title, the law required that settlers reside on and cultivate the land for five continuous years. Then the individual making the entry had only to file final proof papers and pay a \$15 fee to own 160 acres free and clear. The era of ranching in Jackson Hole began when Holland and Carnes trailed more than 100 head of cattle into the valley in 1884, and settled on a place with good native grasses to feed their cattle in the winter months. Their ranch was located north of Miller Butte on what is now the National Elk Refuge. They began as many ranches began in the west, with a small sod-roofed cabin. To increase their yield of grasses, they dug the first irrigation ditch in the valley from the

confluence of Twin Creek and Sheep Creek. Holland and Carnes also began building the first fences in the valley, to keep their cattle out of irrigated lands and on the range in the summer months. In the early years no hay rakes or mowers existed, and it is likely that hay was cut by hand at the end of the growing season and stacked with beaver slides, or was just left in the field for grazing. When it came time to sell, the nearest cattle markets in the region were found at railheads in St Anthony, Idaho, and later Victor, Idaho.

Ranching: traditional agricultural practices: Hay fields were irrigated from ditches dug by hand or with a plow. The ditches were filled by opening a head gate that led from a water source, in this case Cache Creek. The ditches were then flooded at strategic points by placing V-shaped canvas tarps attached to a log in the ditch. The log lay on the levees of the ditch perpendicular to the water flow and the tarp backed up the water. This water overflowed from the ditches into the adjacent fields.

Like other early settlers, Robert Miller irrigated fenced-in pastures to raise hay for winter feed. Miller brought the first hay rake into the valley, which allowed him to cut and stack hay in mid summer, and continue to irrigate his pastures to increase forage and hay for winter. In mid summer, irrigation was stopped to allow the fields and hay to dry before cutting. The hay rake mowed the native grasses, and placed the hay in “windrows,” long rows of hay left to dry in the field. Once the hay was dry, it was stacked with a large sloped platform built of logs, known as a “beaver slide.” Hay was stacked at the bottom of the platform and hoisted up the slope by horses pulling a lift on pulleys. The beaver slide created large stacks of hay in “hay cribs,” 6-to-7-foot-high fences that held the hay in stacks and protected it from raiding cattle and elk. This traditional style of haying is still used in parts of the North American West.

In addition to raising cattle, most ranchers kept a dairy cow and chickens and raised vegetables for family use. Draft horses or mules were used for clearing sagebrush, plowing ditches, logging, cutting and stacking hay, and winter feeding. Quarter horses were used to move cattle to market and summer pastures, cutting and roping during branding and separating steers, general range work, and travel.

Ranchers employed both cowhands (or ranch hands) and cowboys to help with ranch chores. Cowhands were year-round employees with permanent ties to a brand or ranch, who usually lived on the ranch in a bunk house. Their duties were year round, and included winter feeding and moving of cattle to open pastures; spring calving season, roundups, and branding; summer irrigation and haying; fall round ups, where cattle to be sold were separated from the rest of herd; and working with drovers, purchasing crews that bought cattle from many different ranches and drove them to markets. Cowboys, on the other hand, drifted with the weather patterns from rangeland to rangeland working seasonal roundups. Wages varied, but averaged \$40 a month or \$1.50 a day in the 1880s. A cowboy supplied his own cinch, saddle, bridle, bedroll, and saddle blanket. Often ranchers furnished cowboys with four or five horses that were unbroken. The cowboy was responsible for training and caring for his string of mounts. At the end of the season the horses were often sold, and the cowboy was supplied with new unbroken horses.

Miller's ranch in context of ranching in the valley at that time: Although Miller's Ranch was larger than most, the layout of his agricultural operations was typical of a large cattle ranch at this time. After construction of the large house, the old house remained and was probably used as a bunkhouse. Corrals and smaller fenced-in pastures were located near the barn, for easy access to hay for winter feeding. The placement of the hay cribs in the fields served well for stacking hay, and for distributing the hay in winter to cattle along feed lines.

Importance of grazing leases to ranchers, and how Robert Miller was able to use his position to benefit himself as well as fellow ranchers: The 160 acres of land provided by a homestead claim was much too small to raise cattle in the arid west, and early ranchers took advantage of the nearby federal reserves to graze their cattle freely on public lands in the summer months. In 1891 the Forest Reserve Act began placing controls on grazing, but it was not until 1901 that the first grazing permits were issued on the Teton Forest Reserve. Complaints about how these grazing permits were issued resulted in a government investigation headed by then U.S. Commissioner Robert Miller, who owned one of the largest cattle herds in the valley. As a result of this investigation, Miller was given the job of Forest Supervisor, thus giving him by 1902 control of homestead permits and grazing in Jackson Hole. In an area that was not fully homesteaded and was just beginning to form large cattle ranches, Miller had the most important jobs, insuring his ranching success.

In 1906, a seasonal fee based on the number of animals was placed on public-owned grazing lands. This was changed in 1927 and again in 1933 to a unit-per-month system. A unit per month was the amount of land needed to feed one animal for one month. In 1934 the Taylor Grazing Act banned the settlement of public land prior to classification by the Department of Interior. The act was an effort to stabilize the livestock industry, and make better use of public lands. It established grazing districts, permits and fees. In 1946 the Bureau of Land Management was created, consolidating the Grazing Service and the General Land Office.

In recent years the use of public lands for grazing has been scrutinized by people wanting the land used for wildlife and recreation.

History of brands, and how to read them: A brand is a simple symbol that identifies which ranch the cattle belong to. Often when ranges were shared by many ranches, the rounding up and branding of cattle was a community affair. A representative was appointed from each ranch to see to proper sorting and branding of that outfit's cattle. During the spring roundup, cows and calves were separated from the herd and held in a branding pen. Calves were roped by experienced cowboys and pulled from the herd to other cowboys who would hold the calf down and brand it. It took an experienced cowboy to properly place a brand without smudging it or overly burning the calf.

The change from ranch lands to a landscape valued for its scenic beauty: By the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the scenic value of the land in Jackson Hole had surpassed its production value, and ranchers discovered that dude ranching and outfitting hunters was more profitable than raising cattle. When J.D. Rockefeller's Snake River Land Company (with Robert Miller as agent) began purchasing thousands of acres of private lands, Jackson Hole's ranching lifestyle

began to decline. Today, although the cowboy is a potent symbol in Jackson Hole, only a handful of cattle ranches survive, and most of the original homestead families are gone.

**Research needs:**

- Statistics on livestock numbers, grazing leases in the valley, and size of individual ranches.
- Statistics on irrigated ranch land in the valley and how this has changed.
- A map of historic homesteads and ranches, to compare with land use today
- List and pictures of historic brands in the valley
- Correspondence concerning appointment of R. Miller as Forest Supervisor in 1902
- Accounts of daily life on a ranch, and events such as branding
- Cowboy lore



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**INTERPRETIVE INVENTORY FORM**  
**Proposed Interpretation**  
**Miller Ranch, National Elk Refuge**

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**#8: Forest Headquarters**

**Interpretive theme:** Through grazing leases, timber sales, recreation, and mineral development, the US Forest Service has played an important role as land steward and manager of natural resources throughout the West. The influence of the Forest Service can be seen in the cultural landscapes of the Jackson Hole area.

**Goals & Objectives:**

- Present visitors with a true picture of homesteading and ranching life in the Jackson area, in the larger context of the American West.
  - Show the importance of the US Forest Service in development of ranching in the Jackson area.
  - Use the Miller Ranch as a way of telling the broader history of the impact of the Forest Service.
- Help residents and visitors understand the cultural landscape in which they live and through which they travel.
- Explore the relationship between agriculture and conservation, and help residents and visitors understand the role of conservation in shaping this landscape.
  - Explain the role of the Forest Service is conserving forest lands and regulating their use.
  - Use maps showing ranches and grazing leases to illustrate the importance of Forest lands to ranchers in the valley
  - Invite the visitor to imagine what the valley might look like if the forest preserve had not been created.
- Use the Forest Service cabin to tell the story of the Millers and the development of Jackson Hole.
  - Draw the visitor's attention to the cabin itself and the surrounding landscape, and show the connections that can be made by studying the built and natural environment.
  - Show how the Forest Service has traditionally contributed to the local economy.

**Topics to include:**

- History of Forest Service and especially Teton National Forest
- Relationship between the Forest Service and ranchers
- Miller's status and power as forest supervisor
- Relationship between the Forest Service and the community: the popularity of the work done by the forest employees (building bridges, fighting fires, bringing electricity to areas that did not previously have it, cutting trails and building roads).
- Forest Service as economic boon to Jackson



**Location and Orientation:** Forest Cabin restored to period. Panels and photographs on walls inside.

**Notes/Design Instructions:** Construct several interpretive panels with graphics and text to display in the Forest Service cabin. Additional photographs with labels can complete the story.

**Suggested graphics/text:**

Photo of Miller working in Cabin, or Cabin when it was used as Forest Service office  
Map showing ranches and grazing permits

**Background information for interpretive text:**

History of Forest Service and especially Teton National Forest: The first federal action specifically to conserve forest lands was the 1891 Forest Reserve Act, which gave the president authority to withdraw forest lands from public domain. In 1897, President Grover Cleveland issued an executive order that doubled the size of forest reserves in the U.S. including the 8,329,000-acre Teton Forest Reserve. This was followed by the 1897 Forest Management Act, to administer forest reserves and regulate the occupancy and use of the forests. In 1898, Charles Deloney of Evanston was named supervisor of the Teton Forest Reserve, and the first Forest Supervisor cabin was built on Jenny Lake. In 1901, the first forest grazing permits were issued; Grace and Robert Miller had forest permits for a total of 400 cattle.

The Forest Service was involved in managing more than grazing leases. In 1904 the first logging permit was given to Edward F. Blair for 100,000 bm of saw timber and Ben Sheffield for 1920 poles, 30 cords, and 32,000 bm of saw timber. Sheffield paid \$9.50 for his lease.

Gifford Pinchot summed up the U.S. Forest Service's management philosophy in this 1905 statement: "Where conflicting interests must be reconciled the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number of people."

Relationship between the Forest Service and ranchers: Local ranchers had mixed feelings about the forest reserve program. On the one hand, they objected to restrictions on their use of the public lands. On the other hand, they believed that regulation of these lands would keep large cattle operations out of the valley. They also realized that strict grazing rules would be more detrimental to sheep ranchers, because sheep were much harder on the forage.

In 1902 Frank Mondell of the U.S. Department of Agriculture wrote a letter to the local U.S. Commissioner, Robert Miller, concerning complaints about current Forest Supervisor U.A. Thompson, and his administration of grazing permits. Miller was commissioned to survey the problem. As a result of this investigation, Miller was given the job of Forest Division Supervisor, with the control of grazing leases and pay of \$1500 a year. That same year, Miller built a small supervisor's cabin near his home.

In 1906, grazing permits were issued for 4,072 cattle and 179 horses. In 1908, the U.S. Forest Service was created as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Teton National Forest was established with nearly 2,000,000 acres; Robert Miller remained as Forest Superintendent until 1918.

Miller's status and power as supervisor and the conversations which took place within the Miller home: As a result of his position, Miller wielded much power in the area, and was well aware of local issues, concerns and needs. Although he sold most of his land and cattle in 1914 and concentrated on his new banking business, his knowledge of real estate, ranching, and the local economy put him in an excellent position to buy and sell lands, loan money and otherwise enrich his business, and made him a prime candidate for the job of land agent for J.D. Rockefeller's Snake River Land Company in 1927.

Relationship between the Forest Service and the community: The Forest Service was an economic boon to Jackson, providing jobs for locals and bringing in new services. It was the policy of the Forest Service that their first supervisors were local hires and people of "high moral character." In 1910 the Forest Service installed a telephone line from Yellowstone to Moran. In addition to bringing electricity to areas that did not previously have it, employees were also involved in building bridges, fighting fires, cutting trails and building roads.

**Research needs:**

- Early Forest Service evidence (correspondence) indicating why Robert Miller was selected for Division Supervisor and First Superintendent, and why he retired
- USFS records



## **Appendix: Suggestions for sign and panel format**

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**Captions:** Captions for graphics can be used to meet learning objectives and capture the theme.

**Color and Contrast:** To aid reading, use contrasting colors for text and background.

**Corporate Image:** Incorporate the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service graphic design standards into designs for signs and panels.

**Date:** Include the date of installation.

**Graphics:** should enhance, not repeat, what the visitor can see. Historic photographs and maps that can be used to show changes in the buildings and landscapes are useful graphics, as are photographs of activities (haying, branding, etc.) that can no longer be seen.

**Layout/Design:** In general, signs and panels should contain 1/3 graphics, 1/3 text, and 1/3 blank space.

**Margins:** should be flush on the left and ragged on the right.

**Mounting Height:** For outdoor signs, a mounting height of 24 to 30 inches with a 30 to 45 degree angle toward the views will be accessible to most visitors.

**Site Compatibility:** Make sure the sign is compatible with the site. It should enhance site not detract from it in terms of color, size, and frame.

**Simplicity:** The main body of the text should be no more than two to three paragraphs of short sentences. Keep text to 150 words, up to 300 words maximum.

**Text:** Text should be written with the 3-3-3 rule in mind: three seconds to hook the visitor, 30 seconds if they are hooked, three minutes if they are interested. A sign should be designed and written containing three levels of text each conveying the theme at some level, providing all visitors with an interpretive opportunity. A short title at the top of a sign might be the only text some visitors read. Learning objectives for the site should be met in some way in the three second timeframe.

**Titles:** Sign titles should be a statement of a theme.

**Typeface:** A simple serif or sans serif, upper and lower case typeface should be utilized. A minimum of 18 point type should be used. As a guide titles should be 60-72 point, subtitles 40-49, body of text should be 24 point, and captions should be 18 points.



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The following people were interviewed for and/or otherwise contributed to this plan, June – July, 2005.

Fay Bisbee, Curator of Collections, Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum

Cliff Hansen, Rancher and former U.S. Senator, Jackson

Lokey Lytjen, Executive Director, Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum

Linda Franklin, Associate Director, Murie Center

Mark Mickelson, Banker and Rancher, Jackson and Pinedale

Lorna Miller, Special Project Coordinator, National Elk Refuge

Doris Platts, Historian, Jackson

Barry Reiswig, Manager, National Elk Refuge

Bob Righter, Historian, Jackson

Sherri Smith, Historian, Jackson

Tiffany Smith, Associate Naturalist, National Elk Refuge



## **Appendix: List of Websites**

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