National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2005

Thomason/Barker Ranch
Death Valley National Park

Thomason-Baker Ranch
Death Valley National Park

Death Valley National Park concurs with the findings of the CLI, including the management category and condition assessment as identified below:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: **B: Should be Preserved and Maintained**

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: **Poor**

Terry Baldwin 8-25-09

for Superintendent, Death Valley National Park Date

Please return to:

Vida Germano
Cultural Landscape Inventory Coordinator
National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Office
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607-4807

Cultural Landscape Inventory:
Barker Ranch

Death Valley National Park concurs with the general findings of this Cultural Landscape Inventory, including the Management Category and Condition Assessment as listed below:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY B: **Should be preserved and maintained**

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: **Poor**

for Superintendent, Death Valley National Park — Date 9/12/05

Please return this form to:
John Hammond
CLI Coordinator, Oakland Office
National Park Service
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700
Oakland, CA 94607

BARKER RANCH
DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

California SHPO Eligibility Determination

Section 110 Actions Requested:

1) SHPO concurrence with determination of eligibility of Barker Ranch for listing on the National Register.
2) SHPO concurrence that the Setting as identified in the CLI, contributes to the significance of the site.
3) SHPO concurrence with the list of contributing structures to the Barker Ranch Historic Site. (See chart below)

1) ___X___ I concur, _____ I do not concur with Barker Ranch's eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

2) __X____ I concur, _____ I do not concur that the **Setting** as described in the CLI contributes to Barker Ranch (see the following landscape characteristics: natural systems and features, spatial organization and vegetation).

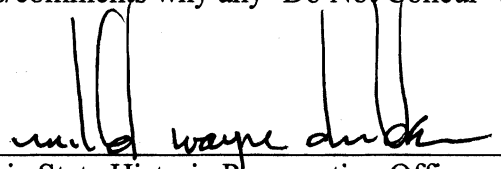
3) Based on the information provided in the CLI, the following structures have been identified as **contributing** to Barker Ranch:

LCS number	Structure Name	Date Built	Concur	Do not Concur
057723	Barker Ranch Bunkhouse	ca. 1957	X	
057725	Barker Ranch Chicken Coop	ca. 1940	X	
057721	Barker Ranch Main House	ca. 1940	X	
057724	Barker Ranch Shed	ca. 1940	X	
057726	Barker Ranch Swimming Pool	ca. 1957	X	
057722	Barker Ranch Workshop	ca. 1940	X	
057728	Barker Ranch Feed Trough	ca. 1940	X	
057727	Barker Ranch Gate and Fences	ca. 1940	X	
451426	Barker Ranch Stone Berms	ca. 1940	X	
451516	Barker Ranch Stone Retaining Walls	ca. 1940	X	
451555	Barker Ranch Entry Road	ca. 1940	X	
451559	Barker Ranch Stone Patio	ca. 1940	X	
451562	Barker Ranch Stone Stairway	ca. 1940	X	
NA	Barker Ranch Spring	ca. 1940	X	

Based on the information provided in the CLI, the following structures were constructed after the period of significance and are **not contributing** to Barker Ranch:

LCS number	Structure Name	Concur	Do not Concur
NA	Barker Ranch Foot Paths	X	
NA	Barker Ranch West Parking Area	X	

Reasons/comments why any 'Do Not Concur' blocks were checked:



9-28-2006

California State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Please return forms to the attention of:

Kimball Koch
Cultural Landscape Program Lead-Oakland
National Park Service
Pacific West Regional Office-Oakland
1111 Jackson St. Suite 700
Oakland, CA, 94607
(510) 817-1398
kimball_koch@nps.gov

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Inventory Summary

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information:

Cultural Landscapes Inventory – General Information

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) is a database containing information on the historically significant landscapes within the National Park System. This evaluated inventory identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved inventory records when all required data fields are entered, the park superintendent concurs with the information, and the landscape is determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places through a consultation process or is otherwise managed as a cultural resource through a public planning process.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures (LCS), assists the National Park Service (NPS) in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2001), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that respond to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two goals are associated with the CLI: 1) increasing the number of certified cultural landscapes (1b2B); and 2) bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (1a7). The CLI maintained by Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, WASO, is the official source of cultural landscape information.

Implementation of the CLI is coordinated and approved at the regional level. Each region annually updates a strategic plan that prioritizes work based on a variety of park and regional needs that include planning and construction projects or associated compliance requirements that lack cultural landscape documentation. When the inventory unit record is complete and concurrence with the findings is obtained from the superintendent and the State Historic Preservation Office, the regional CLI coordinator certifies the record and transmits it to the national CLI Coordinator for approval. Only records approved by the national CLI coordinator are included on the CLI for official reporting purposes.

Relationship between the CLI and a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR)

The CLI and the CLR are related efforts in the sense that both document the history,

significance, and integrity of park cultural landscapes. However, the scope of the CLI is limited by the need to achieve concurrence with the park superintendent resolve eligibility questions when a National Register nomination does not exist or the nomination inadequately addresses the eligibility of the landscape characteristics. Ideally, a park's CLI work (which many include multiple inventory units) precedes a CLR because the baseline information in the CLI not only assists with priority setting when more than one CLR is needed it also assists with determining more accurate scopes of work.

In contrast, the CLR is the primary treatment document for significant park landscapes. It, therefore, requires an additional level of research and documentation both to evaluate the historic and the existing condition of the landscape in order to recommend preservation treatment that meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the treatment of historic properties.

The scope of work for a CLR, when the CLI has not been done, should include production of the CLI record. Depending on its age and scope, existing CLR's are considered the primary source for the history, statement of significance, and descriptions of contributing resources that are necessary to complete a CLI record.

Inventory Unit Description:

Thomason/Barker Ranch is a five-acre property within Death Valley National Park. This historic site is located in the southern Panamint Range in the southwestern portion of the park, at an elevation of 3280 feet. Although the property is historically and currently referred to as a "ranch", it should more accurately be described as a single-family primitive retirement retreat. As a compromise, the expression "primitive recreational ranch" will be used to describe this property, understanding that the term "ranch" remains problematic, since the occupants of this property never conducted any of the activities commonly associated with ranching.

Initial development of the site occurred during the late 1930s by Bluch and Helen Thomason, a retired couple from Los Angeles. Further development occurred after another retired couple, James and Arlene Barker, acquired the ranch in the mid-1950s. Although both the Thomason and Barker families mined various claims near the ranch, their primary interest in Goler Wash was their desire for recreational habitation in the desert.

The ranch is locally significant under National Register Criterion A due to its association with the internal migration of people from urban civilization to the desert in order to withdraw from mainstream society. The period of significance extends from the beginning of development in 1937 to the date of the last physical improvement in 1957.

The Thomason/Barker Ranch retains integrity as demonstrated through the aspects of location, design, workmanship, setting, materials, feeling, and association. Contributing landscape characteristics include: Buildings and Structures, Circulation, Vegetation, Response to Natural Systems and Features, and Spatial Organization.

The Thomason/Barker Ranch has been placed in management category B (should be preserved and

maintained) and a condition assessment of “poor” has been assigned to the landscape. Deterioration and vandalism has occurred the past several decades since the site was last formally inhabited. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural resources.

Site Plan

Thomason/Barker Ranch existing conditions map. See supplemental Information for a larger scale version.

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Thomason/Barker Ranch
Property Level:	Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	400250
Parent Landscape:	400250

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	Death Valley National Park -DEVA
Park Organization Code:	8130
Park Administrative Unit:	Death Valley National Park

CLI Hierarchy Description

Thomason/Barker Ranch is a single cultural landscape with no component landscapes.

Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

Michael Hankinson and Gretchen Stromberg completed fieldwork in May of 2005. Stromberg and Hankinson wrote the CLI and entered the CLI into CLI Web during the Summer and Fall of 2005 and the Summer of 2006.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: Yes

Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: 09/12/2005

National Register Concurrence: Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

Date of Concurrence Determination: 09/29/2006

Data Collection Date: 06/01/2005 **Recorder:**

Data Entry Date: 08/24/2005 **Recorder:** Michael Hankinson and Gretchen Stromberg

Geographic Information & Location Map

Inventory Unit Boundary Description:

The boundary of Thomason/Barker Ranch includes the original five-acre mining mill-site first registered in the 1930s. The property is located in Goler Wash on the western slope of the Panamint Mountains. It is situated in the southwestern part of Death Valley National Park, less than one mile east of the park's western boundary (see location map).

State and County:

State: CA

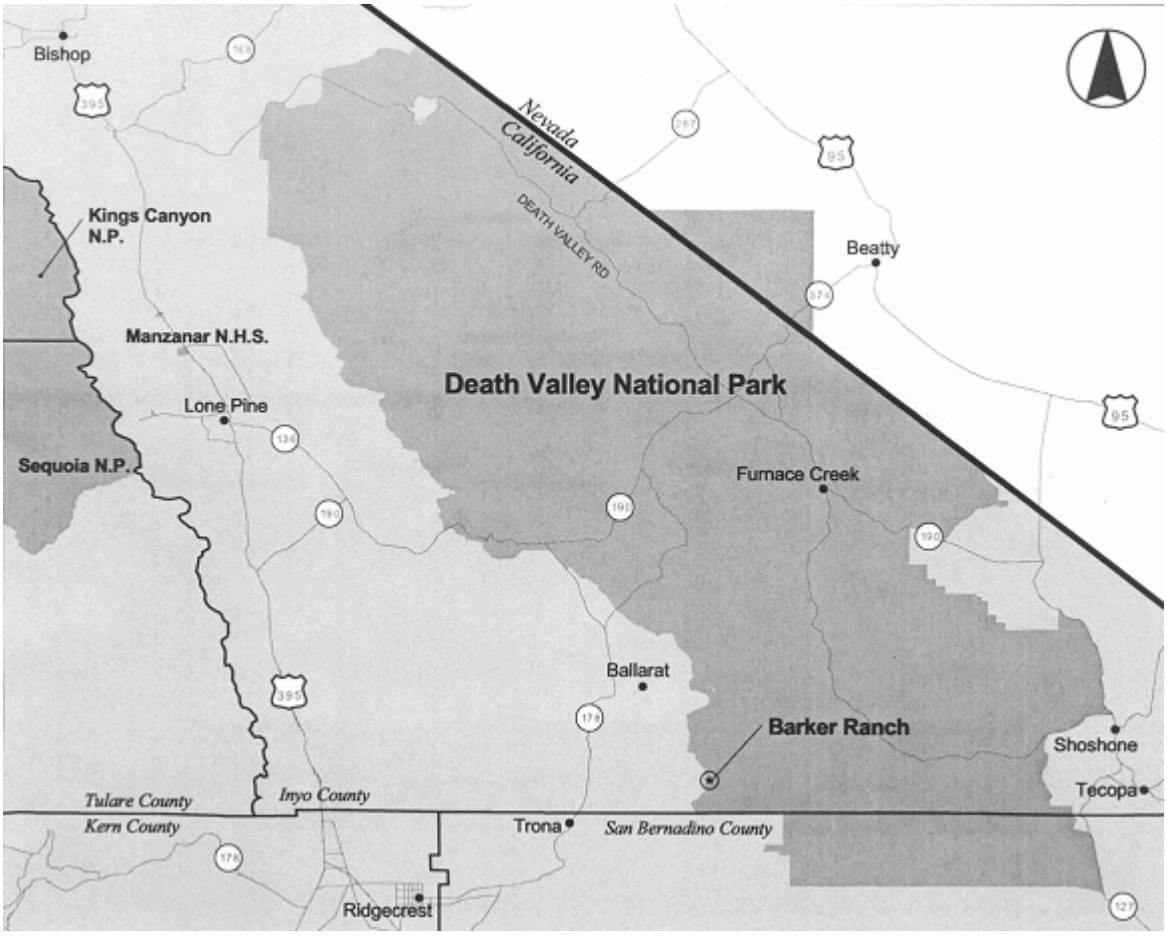
County: Inyo County

Size (Acres): 5.00

Boundary UTMS:

Source	Type of Point	Datum	UTM Zone	UTM Easting	UTM Northing
GPS-Differentially Corrected	Area	NAD 83	11	492,055	3,968,412
GPS-Differentially Corrected	Area	NAD 83	11	492,045	3,968,344
GPS-Differentially Corrected	Area	NAD 83	11	491,965	3,968,372
GPS-Differentially Corrected	Area	NAD 83	11	491,975	3,968,419

Location Map:



Location of Thomason/Barker Ranch within Death Valley National Park

Regional Context:

Type of Context: Cultural

Description:

Today, Goler Wash is periodically inhabited by prospectors, recreationists, and members of the Myers family who own a 40-acre inholding 0.4 mile east of Thomason/Barker Ranch. The closest permanent, year-round community to Goler Wash and Thomason/Barker Ranch is Trona located approximately 30 miles to the southwest. Trona is a small town developed around the extraction and distribution of borax. The sleepy town remains industrial in character, and contains one motel, one gas station, and a handful of restaurants. The China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station is located north of Trona. Responsible for developing and testing airborne weapon systems, this facility generates frequent flights over Panamint Valley and the Panamint Range that can be viewed or heard from Thomason/Barker Ranch.

Although the Timbisha Shoshone and the Kawaiisu have been culturally affiliated with this part of the Eastern Sierra and Northern Mojave Desert for thousands of years, no known American Indian traditional cultural properties are located at Thomason/Barker Ranch. The Death Valley park archeologist conducted a surface survey at and around Thomason/Barker Ranch spring 2005—no American Indian archeological remains were discovered at this time.

Type of Context: Physiographic

Description:

Thomason/Barker Ranch is located in Goler Wash on the western slope of the Southern Panamint Range of eastern California within the Great Basin. Death Valley National Park is comprised of several north/south-trending ranges separated by long, narrow basins. The Panamint Range is the western-most range within the park and is characterized by steep mountains and gently to moderately sloping alluvial fans. The mean annual precipitation is about four to 20 inches, and the mean annual temperature is about 35° to 72° F. The predominant natural plant communities, from lower to higher elevations are creosote bush series, mixed saltbush series, shadscale series, big sagebrush series, singleleaf pinyon series, limber pine series, and bristlecone pine series. The elevation of the Panamint Mountains ranges from 1000-11,000 feet, Thomason/Barker Ranch is at an elevation of approximately 3280 feet.

Type of Context: Political

Description:

Thomason/Barker Ranch is located in Township 24 South, Range 45 East, Section 11 (Mount Diablo Meridian), within Death Valley National Park. The majority of park lands are located in Inyo and San Bernardino counties in California, but a small segment of the park is located in Nye and Esmeralda counties in Nevada. Thomason/Barker Ranch lies within Inyo County, California, in a portion of the park that was transferred from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the National Park Service (NPS) following the passage of the California Desert Protection Act in 1994. Thomason/Barker Ranch lies within Congressional District 25.

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Should be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 07/29/2005

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

Thomason/Barker Ranch meets National Register Criteria A and C. Additionally, Thomason/Barker Ranch is compatible with the park's legislated significance which calls for the preservation of cultural resources associated with patterns of western exploration and settlement and requires the park to provide opportunities for compatible public outdoor recreation. Because the ranch is still used by people recreating in the area, it has a continuing purpose that is appropriate to its traditional use or function.

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Public Access:

Type of Access: Unrestricted

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? No

National Register Information

Existing National Register Status

National Register Landscape Documentation:

Undocumented

National Register Explanatory Narrative:

A draft nomination for Barker Ranch was compiled in 1997, but was never finalized or submitted. The draft (which attributes significance due to the property's association with Charles Manson) was authored by Steve Whissen (Historian from the NPS-Denver Service Center) and is on file at the Death Valley National Park Library and Archives.

National Register Eligibility

National Register Concurrence:	Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination
Contributing/Individual:	Individual
National Register Classification:	Site
Significance Level:	Local
Significance Criteria:	A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history

Period of Significance:

Time Period:	AD 1937 - 1957
Historic Context Theme:	Creating Social Institutions and Movements
Subtheme:	Ways of Life
Facet:	Domesticity And Family Life
Time Period:	AD 1937 - 1957
Historic Context Theme:	Developing the American Economy
Subtheme:	The Mining Frontier
Facet:	Great Basin: Nevada, Utah And Eastern California

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category	Area of Significance Subcategory
Exploration - Settlement	None

Statement of Significance:

Summary
This Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) seeks concurrence on a Determination of Eligibility under

National Register of Historic Places Criterion A (association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history) for the Thomason/Barker Ranch in Death Valley National Park. The Thomason/Barker Ranch is locally significant under this criterion, because it embodies a distinctive pattern of settlement and social activity that were closely identified with this remote region of the California deserts during the period evaluated. The Thomasons and Barkers were both part of small number of primitive recreational ranchers who moved to the area—and to similarly remote areas of the desert—in order to enjoy the solitude and simplicity of living far from established civilization. These individuals were distinct from the pioneering homesteaders and miners who preceded them, because they did not depend on the immediate environment and its resources to sustain them. They were also distinct from other recreational ranchers and desert retirees, because they chose to live under conditions as primitive or nearly as primitive as those which characterized the life of earlier pioneers. This places them in a unique category which has few examples except in the desert. The activities and values of these primitivists constitute a distinct and important theme which has helped define the cultural character of the California deserts. The Thomason/Barker Ranch is the best surviving example of this theme within the boundaries of Death Valley National Park. The proposed period of significance for this determination of eligibility extends from 1937 to 1957, beginning with the earliest development of the site by Bluch Thomason and ending with the construction of the last major structure. Based on this evaluation of its significance, the Thomas/Barker Ranch is categorized under the contextual theme "Creating Social Institutions and Movements" and the sub-theme "Ways of Life."

Future assessments may reveal that the Thomason/Barker Ranch is also important at the state and local level under the “social history” area of significance due to its association with Charles Manson and events related to the countercultural movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although Manson and his "Family" were an extreme expression of this movement, and their violence was atypical of its dominant characteristics, they belong nevertheless to this historically important period and cannot be understood apart from it. One of the key features of the countercultural movement was its rejection of mainstream culture, a position which often encouraged withdrawal to remote locations and adoption of a primitive lifestyle. These activities had much in common with those of the primitive recreationists of the 1930s and 1950s, like the Thomasons and the Barkers and their neighbors. This earlier group did not openly attach any political value to their activities, but their attraction to the desert as a landscape defined by its contrast to mainstream urban civilization was consistent with the values which drew the later counterculturalists to similar remote locations. On these grounds, the Manson period might legitimately be understood as a continuation of the same theme of primitivism and the mitigated or partial rejection of mainstream urban culture by physical withdrawal from society while preserving an underlying economic relationship with it. For the time being, the period of the Manson residency is not proposed for consideration of eligibility, but the countercultural values represented by Manson should be noted as contributing to the theme of primitivist withdrawal first introduced by the Thomasons in 1937. At a later date, the Manson period might be considered for eligibility as part of a larger theme of countercultural primitivism (and perhaps of religious apocalypticism) in the desert.

Context

The 1930s witnessed an unprecedented migration of people desiring to escape urban life in order to

experience a simpler and less restrictive existence in the remote desert. Others moved to the desert at this time in order to escape the consequences of the Depression by trying to eke out a living on the land rather than face urban soup lines. Since the 1930s the California deserts have provided a sanctuary for those seeking escape from mainstream society. People have been attracted to the secluded and wild environment that the desert provided because it created a feeling of isolation and freedom among those who were avoiding the law, those who wished to live away from other people, or for those who simply did not want to conform to conventional society. The desert attracted people who held to the belief that it was one of the last American Frontiers—offering the maximum amount of freedom from social order and legal constraints. People of this mindset have settled in or drifted in and out of the Goler Wash vicinity over the past 70 years.

It was during this initial era of escape to the desert that the Thomason/Barker Ranch was first settled. In 1937, Bluch and Helen Thomason, a retired couple from Los Angeles, moved to Goler Wash after filing a claim with Inyo County for a five acre mill site. This was the land on which they subsequently built their retirement retreat. As required under the General Mining Act of 1872, the development and use of residences on Government Land Office (GLO) managed lands depended on the owners' ability to show proof of their active use of the land for mining purposes. The Thomasons' primary reason for moving to Goler Wash was to retire in the desert, and they used the provisions of the Mining Act of 1872 as a means to this end. For the same reason, the Barkers, who acquired mining rights to the ranch in 1956, moved to the area because of their attraction to the desert and their desire to retire in a secluded environment. They also used their mining claims as a means to legally occupy the government-owned land. This was substantiated by the testimony of Emmett Harder, a local resident and prospector who knew the Barkers during the period they lived in Goler Wash.

The Thomasons and the Barkers were not the only families who used mining claims as the basis for developing recreational ranches in this area. Four other families maintained retreats in the Goler Wash area, and a similar number developed retreats in nearby Butte Valley in the 1930s and 1940s. Like the Thomason/Barker Ranch, these residences were located on GLO-administered lands and were also legally occupied due to the owners' association with small-scale mining.

In 1968, the Barkers ceased living on their ranch, and by 1971 they had completely abandoned the site. Many of the other family retreats in the area had been abandoned by this time as well. The exception was the Myers Ranch, which had been successfully patented under the General Mining Act of 1872 a decade earlier. Today, the Myers property has been completely reconstructed following a devastating fire, and its physical structures retain no historic integrity. It is, however, the only residential complex in the area that remains a family-controlled retreat.

The Thomason/Barker Ranch reverted to BLM management in 1971. Since that time, tourists and outdoor enthusiasts have used the site as an overnight destination. Despite decades of benign neglect, most of the buildings and structures remain intact but are in poor condition. As such, the Thomason/Barker Ranch serves as the only remaining example of a primitive recreational ranch and retirement retreat in Death Valley National Park.

Conclusion
The Thomason/Barker Ranch should be considered for determination of eligibility under National Register Criterion A as locally significant for its relationship to the internal migration of a small but locally significant group of people who desired to escape mainstream urban life by withdrawing to the desert. This migrational pattern first appeared during the 1930s in the Southern Panamints. It was later replicated in other remote desert locations. The Thomason/Barker Ranch, as it exists today, still conveys this aspect of its history. The layout and the physical structures such as the main house, swimming pool, workshop, bunkhouse, chicken coop, and storage shed contribute to its significance under criterion A. Additionally, features such as the circulation system, the fences and gates, and the vegetation help define specific spatial and functional zones that further express the values of retired urban escapees during the period of significance.

The Thomason/Barker Ranch retains all seven aspects of integrity. It retains integrity of location, because the ranch is still intact in its original place dating to the period of significance; design, because most of the original buildings, structures, circulation patterns, and detailing from the original design still exist; materials, because most of the original materials such as the extensive mortared rockwork, corrugated metal roofing, and wooden framing and various accents are still present and functional; workmanship, because the rockwork and distinct ornamentation—such as bottle-glass tiling—are still intact and visible; setting, because the natural vegetation, natural systems and features, and spatial organization are similar to those which were evident during the period of significance; feeling, because the retention of most of the site's original forms and features within the broader expanse of Goler Wash conveys the feeling of a small-scale mining and retirement retreat typical of this period. And finally, the association with a primitive lifestyle which the original occupants desired remains evident in the site's remote and inaccessible location. No modern developments or improvements have been introduced to compromise these fundamental associations.

For an expanded discussion of integrity, refer to the Analysis and Evaluation section of this report.

National Historic Landmark Information

National Historic Landmark Status: No

World Heritage Site Information

World Heritage Site Status: No

Chronology & Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape Type: Historic Site

Current and Historic Use/Function:

Primary Historic Function: Small Residential Landscape

Primary Current Use: Outdoor Recreation-Other

Other Use/Function	Other Type of Use or Function
Mine	Historic
Outdoor Recreation-Other	Both Current And Historic

Current and Historic Names:

Name	Type of Name
Thomason/Barker Ranch	Both Current And Historic
Barker Ranch	Both Current And Historic
Chespa Mill Site	Historic

Ethnographic Study Conducted: Yes-Unrestricted Information

Associated Group:

Name of Group: Timbisha Shoshone

Type of Association: Both Current And Historic

Ethnographic Significance Description:

The 1998 “Death Valley National Park Cultural Affiliation Study” (Theodoratus et al.) designates the Western Shoshone and Kawaiisu as being culturally affiliated with the Thomason/Barker Ranch area.

Chronology:

Year	Event	Annotation
AD 1940 - 1941	Built	Thomason built one small rock building for "shop and storage" at the ranch. Later, Thomason added a guestroom and a garage to the structure. The garage is no longer extant, and the guestroom is severely deteriorated.
AD 1940 - 1951	Inhabited	Bluch and Helen Thomason stopped mining—due to a lack of yield—but continued living full-time at their ranch.
AD 1950	Established	Bluch Thomason passed away while he and Helen were visiting relatives in the Trinity Alps.
AD 1950 - 1956	Moved	Helen Thomason moved away from the ranch after Bluch passed away, however the Thomason family continued to use the ranch as a vacation retreat. They visited and maintained the property regularly, but it was no longer inhabited year-round.
AD 1956	Purchased/Sold	James and Arlene Barker purchased the Thomason's improvements from Helen Thomason.
AD 1937	Established	Blouch Thomason, a retired Los Angeles County detective, recorded three quartz lode mining claims named "Tommy Group," "Tommy Group No. 2," and "Tommy Group No. 3" and a mill site located at the present-day Barker Ranch.
AD 1939	Built	Thomason built three tent shelters; unknown whether they were built at the mines or at the mill site (ranch).
AD 1939 - 1941	Mined	Thomason mined at all three mines.
AD 1940 - 1941	Built	Thomason improved his mining claims by adding three metal cyanide tanks to the mill site (ranch).
AD 1940 - 1941	Built	Thomason built the mainhouse, windmill, workshop, chicken coop, corral, fences, entry road, fences, water conveyance system, and planted ornamental and fruit-bearing vegetation.
AD 1940 - 1941	Maintained	Thomason periodically maintained and repaired water conveyance system and structures.

AD 1946	Established	Bureau of Land Management was formed, and began administering the land on which Barker Ranch is located. Prior to 1946, this land was still federally owned, but administered by the General Land Office.
AD 1956	Established	James and Arlene Barker recorded the “Chespa Mill Site” with the Inyo County Recorder's Office. This is the site previously inhabited and improved upon by the Thomasons, now known as Barker Ranch.
AD 1956	Mined	The Barkers began mining the “Toleta” lode mining claim in Goler Wash, west of the ranch.
AD 1957	Built	The Barkers built a 5000 gallon reservoir (swimming pool) at the ranch.
AD 1957	Built	The Barkers built the 14' x 20' bunkhouse at the ranch.
AD 1958 - 1971	Maintained	The Barkers periodically repaired and maintained water conveyance system and structures on ranch.
AD 1961	Mined	The Barkers acquired Willow Springs Placer Mining Claim located near Anvil Springs. The claim included an extant stone cabin possibly built by Wallace Todd (the previous owner of the claim).
AD 1966	Mined	James and Arlene Barker acquired the “Pan Goler 1” and “Pan Goler 2” claims three miles west of Sourdough Springs and began chelate uranium mining.
AD 1968 - 1969	Inhabited	The Manson Family inhabited Barker Ranch while the Barkers retained their rights to the site.
AD 1969	Altered	The Manson Family drove a school bus over Mengel Pass to Barker Ranch where it remained as a stationary structure during and after their occupation of the site.
AD 1970 - 1971	Reconstructed	Arlene Barker reconstructed fences and disposed of debris left by vandals—presumably the Manson Family.

AD 1970 - 1980	Destroyed	Manson's infamous school bus was destroyed and removed from Barker Ranch by a caretaker that lived at the Myers Ranch. He threw the scraps of the bus into an abandoned mine shaft that has since been buried—located in the mouth of Goler Wash.
AD 1971	Land Transfer	After 1971, Arlene Barker stopped submitting "Annual Proof of Labor" for the Chespa Mill Site (Barker Ranch) as well as for her other mining claims—forfeiting the ranch. The land and its improvements fell back under Bureau of Land Management control.
AD 1976	Conserved	In 1976, Congress established the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA). The entire Goler Wash including Barker Ranch was included in the CDCA. This expanse was entrusted to Bureau of Land Management to be protected.
AD 1994	Land Transfer	The California Desert Protection Act redesignated Death Valley from national monument to national park. Death Valley acquired an additional 1.3 million acres of land previously privately owned or BLM-owned. Barker Ranch was included in this land transfer.
AD 1994	Established	After the passage of the California Desert Protection Act, the Myers Ranch, which was patented in the 1950s, became a private inholding within Death Valley National Park.
AD 1994 - 2005	Maintained	The National Park Service periodically irrigated landscaping and repaired damage caused by deterioration and vandals.
AD 2004	Damaged	The small stone workshop attached to the main house partially burned, due to unknown causes.
AD 2005	Altered	An unknown individual attempted a partial reconstruction of the burned workshop.

Physical History:

Background

The Thomason/Barker Ranch lies in Goler Wash, a dry, rugged canyon that cuts across the western slope of the southern Panamint Mountains. At its mouth, Goler Wash opens toward the southwest onto the broad playa of Panamint Valley. Toward the northeast, the wash rises steeply to Mengel Pass, beyond which lies a small depression in the middle of the mountains called Butte Valley. The vegetation of Goler Wash is typical Mojavean, with creosote scrub and desert dry wash types dominant. The area lies in the southeast corner of Death Valley National Park within the new lands added to the park by the California Desert Protection Act of 1994. Goler Wash is just within the southern border of Inyo County.

Goler Wash probably first came to the attention of Euro-Americans in 1849. In that year a large overland party passed through the region on its way to the California goldfields. Numbering over a thousand persons, including women and children, with more than two hundred wagons and attendant livestock, this party set out from Salt Lake City in late fall. Fearing the snows of the Sierra Nevada this late in the season, they chose to follow the Old Spanish Trail through the desert, even though it would take them nearly 500 miles out of their way. Though arduous and challenging, the Old Spanish Trail was a well-established route and posed little danger to such a well-provisioned party with its knowledgeable guide. But not long after crossing the Colorado River, with most of the California desert still ahead of them, the majority of the party grew impatient and decided to follow an unknown short-cut which was rumored to follow a more direct route to the California goldfields than the Old Spanish Trail. Unfortunately, it also lay directly across the sink of Death Valley. Shortly after leaving their guide on the Old Spanish Trail, the once-coherent party quickly disintegrated into many small groups, each following a different path. Some wandered for as long as four months before finally making it out of the desert half-starved and nearly dead with thirst. Almost all of their livestock had died or were slaughtered for meat, and most of their wagons were abandoned. As many as eleven persons also died—the exact number remains unknown. The rest only barely survived.

The experience of these 1849 immigrants did much to establish the infamy of the California desert in the minds of Californians for many years afterward. The party had christened this landscape with their despair in the place names they had coined, including Death Valley itself. But they also spread tantalizing rumors of the desert's mineral potential which would have equally lasting effects. One sample of silver ore which some of the immigrants carried out was later smelted and made into a gunsight by one of the survivors. This was the largest object which could be made from such a small amount of ore, but it sparked decades of eager prospecting for the "Lost Gunsight Lode." Another discovery had similar consequences. One of the German members of the party, a man named John Goller, stumbled upon a rich deposit of placer gold as he wandered up a rugged desert wash with another companion. Goller's weakness at the time prevented him from taking accurate note of the location of this wash, but his companion collected some of the gold. The sample seemed rich enough to entice later prospectors to search for Goller's elusive wash for many years.

At first there was little interest in pursuing these rumors. The immigrants themselves were happy to forget the desert after their tragic experience. And its remoteness and inaccessibility kept other prospectors away so long as the northern gold fields remained productive. Within a decade, however, the original finds on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada were either exhausted or had been monopolized by industrial corporations. Independent-minded prospectors were driven to search further and further afield from the original lodes. By 1860, they had crossed the mountains and opened up the eastern slopes of the Sierras. With the exploitation of the extraordinary Comstock Lode during the first half of that decade, the same pattern repeated itself. Initially discovered by solitary prospectors in 1859, the lode was developed by industrial corporations subsidized through the investments of San Francisco banks. The independent prospector had to either hire himself out to a mining company on terms similar to any industrial worker, or he could retain his independence and move on into unexplored lands beyond the developments and hope to find a lode he could develop on his own. Enough prospectors made the latter choice that eventually the mining frontier was extended into the most forbidding landscapes in the West, including Death Valley. Solitary individuals fanned out from the Comstock mines in nearly every direction and began to explore the forbidding transmontane deserts. Suddenly, the rumors of the old 1849 immigrants became interesting as the infamy of the desert these immigrants had once excoriated became a desirable boundary sheltering the hopes of these independent prospectors from the exploitation of the large corporations. By 1865, the first major strike in the southern deserts was made at Cerro Gordo in the Owens Valley, and within a few years prospectors had returned to Death Valley and the surrounding mountain ranges. Many rich mines were discovered throughout the area during the 1870s, giving rise to such important, if ephemeral, mining camps as Panamint and Darwin. But it was not until 1883 that a prospector named Milo Page finally claimed to have discovered John Goller's lost placer lode in the place now known as Goler Wash, after a corruption of the spelling. Page organized the Butte Valley Mining District and worked these high-grade ore deposits for several years using primitive and mostly inefficient milling technology before moving on. But other miners soon followed his lead. In 1889, the Butte Valley Mining Company was formed. This company established a mill in Goler Wash—then known as Goller Canyon—and developed several other sites within the vicinity of Butte Valley. Several mines were operating in Goler Wash by 1892, when the Engineering and Mining Journal described the area as a promising source of high-grade gold placers.

In 1893 rich strikes were discovered in the western Panamints north of the Butte Valley area. Most of these strikes centered on Pleasant Canyon, about fifteen miles north of Goler Wash. The discoveries caused a rush to the area and resulted in the establishment of several important mining towns in the Panamint Valley just west of the mountains, the most important of which was Ballarat. Ballarat reached its peak in 1900, with nearly 300 men working the surrounding mines, the largest of which produced a combined $500,000.00 in bullion that year. Goler Wash and Butte Valley lay on the southern periphery of this activity and were directly affected by it. Operations in the rugged Goler Wash were significantly improved around 1900 with the construction of aerial tramways at two of the mines to facilitate movement of the ore from mine to mill site. Within a year, however, the area went into decline as the ore began to play out. The Tonopah rush carried most of Ballarat's residents away in 1901. The town itself closed in 1917, but sporadic small-scale activity continued in the surrounding mines up through

the 1930s. Much of this consisted of reprocessing the tailings of existing mines, a practice which became increasingly profitable with the introduction of the cyanidization process during the 1930s.

With the abandonment of large-scale operations, solitary individuals moved into the western Panamints to continue work on a humbler and more intimate scale. One example of this activity was Carl Mengel, commonly known as "Peg Leg." Mengel came to Butte Valley some time in the early 1900s. He purchased an existing claim in Goler Wash in 1912 and later acquired other claims in the same area, including the Lotus Mine not far from the current Thomason/Barker Ranch. By 1924, Mengel had settled in a small stone cabin in Butte Valley at the site later known as Greater View Springs. He filed on several small claims here and established a mill. Mengel was typical of the many solitary prospectors working throughout the California deserts from the late 1920s through the 1930s. The only exception to this was his comparatively sedentary nature. Rather than wandering from one prospect to another, he remained at Butte Valley until his death in 1944, patiently working his numerous small claims. As a result, he became closely associated with Butte Valley and Goler Wash in the minds of those who knew the area. His remains were buried at the top of Goler Wash in Mengel Pass.

Carl Mengel had come to the desert specifically to mine, and his presence represented an earlier attitude characteristic of miners for whom the desert is primarily a resource to be exploited for profit. This attitude was typical of most people who had come to the region by this time. But even as Mengel was settling into Butte Valley, some people were already beginning to arrive for entirely different reasons. During the 1930s and 1940s, about five families established recreational ranches in Goler Wash and about the same number in Butte Valley. One of these families, William and Barbara Myers, became close friends of Mengel, and he left them his interest in the Lotus Mine after his death. Another of these families was the Thomasons, who built a similar house next to the Myer site in 1937.

The presence of these recreational ranchers and casual homesteaders reflected a profound change in the way the desert itself had come to be perceived in California by this time. this change had already begun to express itself in the local literature somewhat earlier. by the first decade of the twentieth century, writers like Mary Austin, John C. Van Dyke and George Wharton James were publishing spiritualized encomiums on the desert's inspiring beauty and solitude. Their essays contrasted markedly from the recollections of William Lewis Manly, who had been part of the ill-fated 1849 expedition across Death Valley. Writing many years after the fact, Manly still recalled how bitterly his companions had loathed this arid landscape, which cost them so much:

When these fellows started out they were full of spirit ... but now they were very melancholy and talked in the lowest kind of low spirits. One fellow said he knew this was the Creator's dumping place where he had left the worthless dregs after making a world, and the devil had scraped these together a little. Another said this must be the very place where Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, and the pillar been broken up and spread around the country. He said if a man was to die he would never decay on account of the salt. Thus the talk went on, and it seemed as if there were not bad words enough in the language to properly express their contempt and bad opinion of such a country as this.

Almost six decades later, George Wharton James offered a very different perspective, though one equally colored with Biblical allusions:
...the desert never gives out a false note. In its vocal silence it compels every human soul back upon itself, back to God. Then Truth, pure and unadulterated, flows into the empty soul and men become strong as were Moses, Elijah, Jesus, and Mahomet, after their desert experiences.
Many of the physical characteristics that proved so dismaying to pioneers like Manly—the desolation, the silence and the apparent absence of life and all the resources that sustain it—were precisely where James found the desert's haunting beauty and its spirit, though he acknowledged that the value of these qualities might depend on the person experiencing them. Some men," James continued, "flee to solitude through bitterness of spirit, through hatred of the world, because of disappointment, blight, or sorrow. Others go because in the vastness of the desert the spirit finds freedom and enlargement, and hence peace.
The increasing popularity of James' views is indicated by his relative success as a writer. James published more than forty books and numerable articles, most of which concerned the desert in one way or another. His most comprehensive statement on the subject—The Wonders of the Colorado Desert, from which these excerpts were taken—went through four editions in the United States and one in England.

James' work did much to popularize the deserts of California, but writing alone, no matter how impassioned and persuasive, could not have achieved this result without other changes that were occurring simultaneously in American society. The most important of these were technological. With rapid improvements in the methods of transportation, the deserts were becoming increasingly accessible to the casual visitor. The railroad was the earliest of these technologies to have a significant impact on popular experience. In 1885, the Santa Fe completed its transcontinental line through the Mojave to Los Angeles, and thousands of passengers every year were able to catch a glimpse of the desert from the safe and comfortable distance of their speeding Pullmans. As this vicarious spectacle replaced the physical discomforts and dangers of actual experience, it became easier for people to conceive of the desert in purely aesthetic terms. The florid descriptions of an author like James became more appealing than the dryly matter-of-fact accounts of a diarist like Manly. And James represented an increasing number of Californians in the urban middle class whose education and experience inclined them toward a literary or otherwise aesthetic appreciation of landscape. These urbanites could now visit the desert on occasional excursions by train with relative ease. James himself lived in Pasadena on the outskirts of Los Angeles and only traveled to the deserts he wrote so intimately about as an occasional tourist. The rugged farmers and miners Manly described had long since become a minority in California society.

By the late 1920s it became even easier to visit the desert as automobiles became more widely available and increasingly reliable. They quickly began to replace the railroad as the preferred means of travel, especially in Southern California, where progressivist politics allied itself with the new technology as a means for breaking the railroad monopolies. These strong regional sympathies helped promote automobile use and the development of highway infrastructure in Southern California well in advance of the rest of the nation. By 1925 Los Angeles had one car for every three citizens, more the twice the national average. A powerful force behind this regional identification with the automobile was the Automobile Club of Southern California, a

booster association that had formed in 1900. Partially through the efforts of the Club's wealthy and influential directors, the state legislature passed a major bond issue in 1909 to fund the development of a system of paved state highways. The influence of these several events, which all centered around Los Angeles, extended to the deserts and had a profound effect on them. The Automobile Club, for instance, published maps of desert routes and promoted motor tourism through the area. And by 1936 most of the major roads in the California deserts were paved. Existing towns added services to accommodate the new motor tourists, and once remote and forbidding locations became relatively easy to access. Even Goler Wash, which still lay in one of the most remote corners of Inyo County, was now less than fifty miles from pavement.

With increased accessibility, leisure settlements soon began to emerge. These first appeared during the 1920s and ranged widely in type, from the winter colonies of Hollywood millionaires at Palm Springs and resort hotels in Death Valley to simple roadside cabins for middle class motorists. The common denominator of them all was their association with leisure and recreation. This was an unprecedented development for the California desert, where settlement had previously been limited to mining camps and isolated ranches. Some homesteads had also been established around the turn-of-the-century, where a few courageous but naive families had tried to eke a marginal existence out of the arid land, but most of these had failed by the 1930s. The new type of settlement was possible only because it did not need to be self-sustaining like a homestead. The modern transportation infrastructure connected these places with economies and sources of supply outside the region and allowed them to survive, even flourish, independent of the sparse local environment. In fact, the very sparseness of the desert had become a sustaining resource in its own right, as the aesthetic attraction of this landscape now drew paying customers to the resorts, cabins, and vacation homes that were blossoming across the desert playa like flowers after a rain. Automotive technology linked the desert with the urban Southern California economy, while the transformation of aesthetic values, which had begun during George Wharton James' generation, made the very qualities that had once stigmatized the desert as a loathsome waste into a saleable resource.

Most of this development occurred along or near the major road corridors, which had made the new type of settlement possible. But, as the homes in Goler Wash and Butte Valley demonstrate, there were exceptions. These settlements fall within the typology of the new development pattern, because they were primarily recreational in purpose, and because they were made possible only by the changes which had linked this remote desert with the urban economy of Los Angeles and greater Southern California. But in appearance they looked very similar to the primitive style of habitation utilized by the jackrabbit prospector. The pioneer cabin inhabited by Peg-leg Mengel was not very different, at least in physical appearance, from the cabins built by the Myers and the Thomasons. And the fact that Mengel and the Myers became close friends—so close that Mengel willed them his interest in the Lotus Mine after his death—adds substance to this semblance. But the fact remains that Mengel's life and that of the Myers, the Thomasons and the other families recently settled in the area, were fundamentally different, because they were founded on different economic bases.

The Thomason ranch and the other settlements in Goler Wash and Butte Valley represent a unique but not especially unusual hybrid between the jackrabbit prospector on one extreme and the suburban "recreational ranch" on the other. The Thomasons clearly settled in Goler Wash by choice rather than necessity. Bluch Thomason had already fulfilled a career in the Los Angeles Police Department and possessed the economic means, through his retirement pension, to live wherever he chose. Goler Wash appealed to him for aesthetic rather than economic reasons. In this sense, Bluch and his wife Helen cannot be considered homesteaders. By the same measure, they were not miners, even though they filed a claim under the Mining Act and even developed a mine on it. They did so as a hobby rather than from necessity. Again, the evidence for this assertion is given by the fact that they did not need to expend so much toil on a marginal lode when their economic needs were already supplied by Bluch's pension. This was not the case with any of the miners who preceded them in the area, including Carl Mengel.

The same fact divides all of the recent settlers in the region from their mining predecessors. None of these families came here out of necessity. All freely chose the place for aesthetic reasons and came here with the financial means to support themselves, derived from an economy external to the local environment. But at the same time, all of these families chose to live in the same primitive conditions as the prospectors who preceded them at the turn-of-the-century. This commitment to a truly primitive lifestyle was genuine and should not be underestimated. It entailed real hardship, but the hardship was endured by choice out of love for the land itself.

The Thomasons were separated from the miners and prospectors they emulated by economy, but they were separated from other recreationists by choice. In this they occupied a unique but characteristic niche in desert culture. Primitive recreationists like the Thomasons, and the Barkers who followed them, embody a desire to live apart from mainstream American society with its emphasis on material wealth, at least for a time. The desert is one of the places where this desire finds a natural expression. The sparseness of the physical landscape is a tangible reflection of an ideal asceticism. The Thomason/Barker Ranch was an expression and example of this ideal. It was recreational only in the sense that it was not necessitated by economic conditions. In fact, it was permitted by economic conditions but defined by aesthetic and possibly even moral inclinations—that is, by choice. This puts it in another category altogether—the primitive recreational ranch—and makes it uniquely significant within the context of desert habitation and development.

Thomason Era (1937-1956)

Bluch Thomason, a retired Los Angeles police detective, and his wife, Helen Thomason, built Thomason/Barker Ranch in the late 1930s. Attracted to the desert environment of Death Valley and its remote setting, they decided to establish their retirement residence in Goler Wash, on the west side of the Panamint Range. To realize this goal, they obtained claims in 1937 for three small quartz lode mines lower down Goler Wash called the Tommy Group Numbers 1, 2, and 3. They also filed a claim for a 5-acre mill site with an existing spring which they subsequently developed as their home. According to Inyo County locator information, Bluch Thomason co-located the Tommy Group claims with Frank Blair, Orval Caldwell, Jack Bridgen, and his son: Rey, however, no other records were found to suggest these other men

mined in Goler Wash or participated in the development of the mill site (Thomason/Barker Ranch).

Sometime in the Fall of 1939, the Thomasons constructed their house while residing with William and Barbara Myers, who were the closest neighbors 0.4 mile up the wash. The Meyers had built their own residence (the Myers Ranch) about ten years earlier. In an oral interview, Barbara Myers described the Thomason's improvements:

They stayed at our cabin one fall and built their cabin as much like ours as they could. But the Barker [Thomason] cabin, Mrs. Thomason was a small…a really small woman, and she was fascinated by a Pullman coach and so everything was made very small in that cabin for her. And it was funny because Bluch was a great big man, but anyhow it fit Helen. They lived there for a long time, and then they went on a fishing trip one summer and he died on the fishing trip. So then they sold to the Barkers.

According to "Annual Proof of Labor" reports filed with Inyo County between 1939 and 1941, the Thomasons built three temporary tent shelters at their mine, a shop—possibly at the mine. At the Thomason/Barker Ranch site they built the main house, a 1000-foot water line leading from Cave Spring to their house, a small stone workshop/storage building, and a guesthouse and a garage that were later added to the stone workshop. After 1941, the Thomasons stopped filing "Annual Proof of Labor" reports on their mining claim after it failed to produce a worthwhile yield. Bluch and Helen continued living at the ranch full time until 1950 when Bluch Thomason passed away. The Thomason family continued using and maintaining the ranch periodically until 1956 when Helen Thomason sold the improvements to James and Arlene (Kirk) Barker.

During these early years, the Thomasons constructed a small cluster of domestic buildings and structures. With the exception of a small windmill used to generate electricity and the garage, these buildings survive to present day. They include the main residence, workshop/guesthouse, and retaining walls. The buildings were characterized by native stones and corrugated metal that architecturally unified the complex. The building materials, rough-hewn and earth toned, blended with the surrounding environs in color and texture. Because they were tucked closely into the hillside on a gentle slope, the single story buildings maintained a low profile on the landscape.

The Thomasons installed the windmill to generate electricity for the main residence. A photograph taken circa 1940 illustrates that the structure was perched behind the workshop on the slope of the hill. Two electric wires were strung between the windmill and a post, located on the west side of the main residence. It is unknown where the associated battery bank was located, but the most likely place would have been in the workshop, the building located adjacent to the main residence. The windmill and the garage were still present when the ranch was sold to the Barkers. The next series of photographs at the site date to the late 1960s when the site was documented after the Manson arrests, Neither the windmill nor the garage appear in these later photographs and it is unknown when, during the fourteen years of Barker ownership, they were removed or destroyed.

The Thomason construction was characterized by a rustic/naturalistic design aesthetic that reflected the remoteness and ruggedness of the site. They built the walls of the main house and workshop using stones that appear to have been gathered from around the vicinity, judging from the color and size of the stone.

The Thomasons also added ornamental landscaping to the property. An unpaved driveway entered at the front of the site and directed the visitor around a small roundabout in front of the main entrance to the house. The edges of the driveway and roundabout were planted with olive, fig, pomegranate, and peach trees providing definition to this circulation system. Overall, the Thomasons created a sequence of spaces from exterior to interior that smoothly transitioned from the rugged/inhospitable surroundings of Goler Wash to the more manicured and serene environment at the ranch. They planted a mix of at least seven deciduous trees near the main residence—spaced in an informal pattern. During this time, two trees appeared approximately four or five years old, while the remaining five were saplings. The largest of the trees was planted along the entry road and was at least 12 feet high. It resembled a fruit tree such as an apple or peach. The second tree stood perhaps seven feet high at the time the photo was taken. It was planted near the workshop and resembled a small fig. The remaining saplings, too small in the historic photograph to be identified, were about five feet high. The trunk of one of these saplings was partially painted white, a common method used to either protect tree trunks from sun damage.

According to the photo ca. 1940, it appears that the Thomasons were actively irrigating their trees. A one-inch waterline extended from the spring to saplings on the property. To increase the effectiveness of the irrigation, the Thomasons also built small berms of stone around some of the trees, allowing water to pool around the trees and percolate to the root system. Topsoil was spread around the base of the trees in a wide circumference—a common horticultural practice to improve soil quality when transplanting trees and shrubs.

The circulation system included an entry road, stone stairway, concrete patio, and stone patio. A narrow 10-foot-wide driveway, about 200-feet in length, connected the entrance gate with the turnaround, and was the sole means of entry into the site. The driveway looped in front of the main residence, rising to meet grade with the entry stairs, and was lined with partially buried stones, that defined the edges of the roadway.

A simple unsurfaced parking area was built between the entry road and the workshop and provided access to the south side of the workshop.

A stone stairway linked the turnaround with the front entrance of the main residence. It was approximately seven feet wide and included five steps. The risers varied in height, from four to ten inches, giving the stairway a distinctive rustic appearance. In addition, a stone patio was constructed between the main residence and workshop. It was comprised of very large flag-stones, resembling the stones used for the other buildings. The stones were placed in an informal pattern in the earth without mortared joints.

History 1. This image, taken circa 1940, shows the main residence, workshop, retaining walls, and ornamental vegetation. Note the windmill located behind the workshop. View north (DEVA collection).

Barker Era (circa 1956-1971)

By 1956, the rights to the property (including the mine and residential area/mill site) were acquired by Jim and Arlene "Kirk" Barker from Oklahoma. Jim Barker had recently attained a comfortable level of financial independence as a factory builder and recipient of government contracts. Like the Thomasons, the Barkers were drawn to the desert environs of Death Valley and followed various mining pursuits such as chelate uranium (ibid. p. 12, 74). After acquiring the property, the Barkers began to make alterations to the site. They enlarged the house and added a 5000-gallon swimming pool, a bunkhouse, and an entrance gate. They also made improvements to the infrastructure including the road, spring, and pipeline. By 1957 all of the major improvements to the property had been completed—marking the end of the period of significance

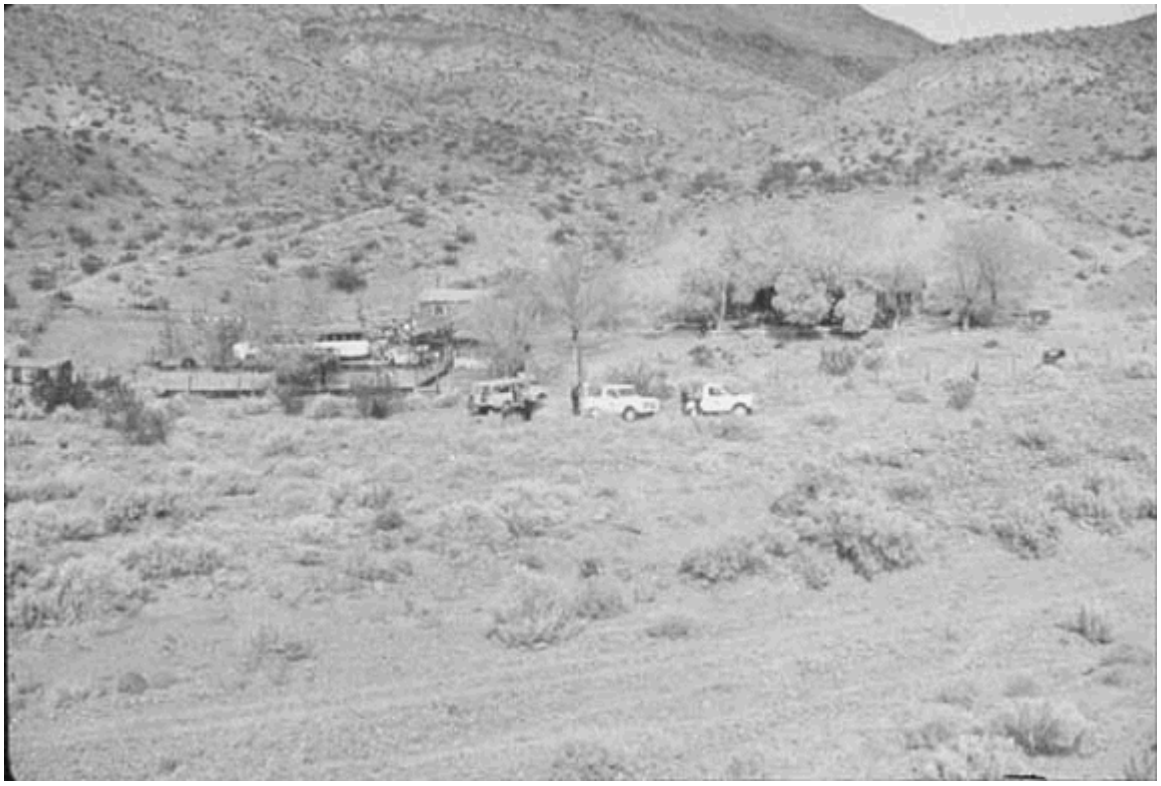
From 1956 until 1959 the Barkers located and filed "Annual Proof of Labor" records for one mine located away from the property (elsewhere in Goler Wash) and for the Chespa Mill Site (Thomason/Barker Ranch). The Barkers continued to enhance the ranch's rustic character. The swimming pool, like the workshop and main house, was constructed of native stone and was neatly tucked into a low-lying swale. The bunkhouse, although still rustic in character,

introduced a new material to the palette—that of vertical rough-hewn logs with mortar chinking. A large, 10-foot-tall wooden entry gate, visually compatible with the new bunkhouse, was erected with an overhead sign reading "J—K/Ranch" (pronounced Jay Bar Kay Ranch—presumably for James Barker). This style of entry is representative of Death Valley ranch vernacular.

By the mid-1960s the Barkers were operating a total of four mines and maintaining the mill site. It is unknown exactly when the Barkers stopped living at Thomason/Barker Ranch, but by 1968, Arlene Barker (then either single or living alone most of the time) was residing in a cabin at Indian Ranch north of Ballarat. Although she retained legal rights to the property, the ranch was generally deserted and only occasionally occupied by itinerant prospectors.

Using 1969 photos, it is evident that the saplings planted in the 1940s had matured into 30-foot-high trees, which created shade and privacy on the south side of the main residence. The ranch looked like an oasis within the desert. The peach, olive, pomegranate, and cottonwoods began to form a thriving, mature over-story, creating a respite from the intense sun and heat exposure just beyond the gateway.

It is also apparent, based on the trunk girth and height, that the Barkers planted additional deciduous ornamental trees on the western side of the property, concentrating them between the entrance road, the chicken coop, and the bunkhouse, and along the southeast corner of the property. A small grouping of trees had been planted around the main residence, providing shade on the south side of the residence. The planting was dense, completely obscuring the south elevation of the main residence. An additional three trees were planted on the southeast corner of the main residence. Other trees planted provided shade near the chicken coop, entrance road, and bunkhouse and may have been fruit trees. The area behind the main residence was bare. Another area, north of the feed trough and storage shed, was completely devoid of vegetation and was apparently used as a corral.



History 2. This is an image of the building complex in 1969, view north (DEVA collection).

History 3. The building complex was heavily vegetated with trees, with a sparsely planted understory. Note the Manson bus in the left hand side of the image. View northwest, 1969 (DEVA collection).

History 4. Image illustrating the entrance gate. Note how the entrance road was lined with stones in 1969 (DEVA collection).

History 5. In 1969, the main residence was heavily shaded on the south side of the building. View south (DEVA collection).

Charles Manson Family (1968-1969)

The fall of 1968, the peaceful history of Thomason/Barker Ranch was forever changed when Charles Manson obtained permission from Arlene Barker to indefinitely occupy the ranch with his “Family”. During this era, many of those labeled by the media as hippies and others associated with the counter culture were seeking solace and escape from the pressures of modern society. For these individuals, the secluded environs of Death Valley, like other remote areas, represented an alluring sanctuary far removed from the repressive trappings of the urban “establishment.” In the eyes of many long-time Death Valley residents accustomed to the idiosyncrasies of prospectors and desert rats, the Manson Family appeared on the surface no more unconventional than other newcomers who frequented the desert byways and canyons.

Favorable descriptions of Goler Wash were provided to Manson by 17-year-old Cathy Gillies, a recently inducted Family member and grandchild of Barbara Myers. Agreeing that the location would likely meet their needs, the Manson Family began a phased move to Goler Wash. The first of many forays to Goler Wash consisted of seventeen adults and two babies, journeying from Los Angeles in a reconditioned school bus. They hiked the arduous last five miles from the mouth of the canyon to the Myers Ranch, their original destination. Their school bus would later be driven to the Thomason/Barker Ranch by way of the eastern route over Mengel Pass,

an equally challenging and (for the bus at any rate) debilitating accomplishment (Murphy 1993:16 and 21). Manson eventually selected Thomason/Barker Ranch rather than the Myers Ranch as the Family's base of operations. He went so far as to seek Arlene Barker's permission to stay at the ranch, deluding her that he was the composer/arranger for the Beach Boys musical group and only intended to stay there a short while with a few others. He later offered to buy the improvements from her, but his inability to demonstrate his financial wherewithal quickly brought an end to the negotiations.

Charles "Tex" Watson, a member of the Manson Family currently serving a life-term in prison for the Tate-LaBianca murders, described his initial perception of Goler Wash and the Barker and Myers ranches when the Family first arrived in 1968:

The wash, even by day…was unbelievably rugged. It could take a good half a day to work your way up on foot, and even the toughest jeep would have a hard time against the boulders and narrow turns. The ranches themselves were about a quarter of a mile apart. Myers Ranch was in very bad condition, rundown and vandalized, but Thomason/Barker Ranch had a solid little stone ranch house and a swimming pool, even sheets on the beds. Later the place would be described as derelict and dilapidated, but we had less exacting standards.

The secluded desert setting was conducive to Manson's ultimate objectives of inculcating his followers with his bizarre messianic prophecies of "Helter Skelter," the notion that an imminent race war between blacks and whites would consume the nation. According to his beliefs, he and the Family, as the chosen elite, would weather the violence in a subterranean world in the desert. They would subsequently emerge and take control of the black population whom he considered inferior but who would be the initial victors of the race war.

It was while they were living at Thomason/Barker Ranch that members of the Manson Family made a foray back to Los Angeles and murdered pregnant actress Sharon Tate and four of her house guests. Then, in the same night, they entered another home and killed Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. The Tate-LaBianca murders caused mass fear and paranoia among Los Angeles residents who could not begin to predict when the next murder might occur or who the next victims might be.

In September 1969, about one month after the still unsolved Tate-LaBianca murders, members of the Manson Family were apprehended by a team of California Highway Patrol, Inyo County, and NPS law enforcement personnel at Thomason/Barker Ranch on suspicion of theft and arson, ending their year-long occupation of the ranch. It wasn't until the Manson Family was incarcerated that the magnitude and horror of their violent acts were fully revealed.

During the Manson Family occupation of the ranch, the entryway roundabout area was expanded to the west to create more parking space for the bus and the dozens of other vehicles that the group had acquired. Because they were only at the ranch for a short period of time, the physical character of the site did not differ greatly from when the Barkers inhabited it. There are accounts that the Manson Family used the swimming pool as a giant makeshift washing machine and that they vandalized and left extensive debris throughout the site when they were

incarcerated, but other than the expanded parking area, no permanent change to the character of the site occurred.

After the Manson Family's arrest, Arlene Barker continued filing "Proof of Annual Labor" reports at all four of her mining claims and the Chespa mill site (Thomason/Barker Ranch) until 1971. According to these reports, Arlene Barker repaired and improved the water supply and road, and repaired damages to the property caused by vandals (presumably the Manson Family). But it appears she never moved back to the Thomason/Barker Ranch. By the mid-1970s, Mrs. Barker sold her interest in her last remaining mine, the Willow Springs placer mine, located at the head of Anvil Canyon adjoining Butte Valley. Unlike the Myers, neither the Thomasons nor the Barkers ever patented their land. Therefore, after Arlene Barker abandoned her claims to her mines and mill-site (her ranch), she forfeited her rights to all their improvements, including the entire Thomason/Barker Ranch complex. As a result, Thomason/Barker Ranch fell back under BLM jurisdiction where it would quietly remain for another twenty years.

Bureau of Land Management Era (1971-1994)

Under management by the BLM, the era of retirement or recreational mining in the Southern Panamints ended, and a new era of recreation commenced. Outdoor enthusiasts explored, four-wheeled, and camped in and around Goler Wash. Thomason/Barker Ranch, and other abandoned mining cabins in the area (such as the Newman Cabin and the Keystone [a.k.a. Lotus] Mine Cabins) became overnight destination for these recreationists.

Due to a lack of funding and personnel, the BLM's Ridgecrest field office was unable to care for the dozens of cabins located throughout their district. In 1989, Steve Smith with the Ridgecrest field office initiated the "Adopt-a-Cabin" program as a creative solution to maintaining historic or abandoned structures. Smith coordinated volunteers and obtained materials to help preserve several abandoned structures within his jurisdiction. The Newman and Keystone cabins located west of Thomason/Barker Ranch in Goler Wash were officially part of this volunteer program. For better or worse, the "Adopt-a-Cabin" program provided momentum and enthusiasm among well-meaning visitors to stabilize, maintain, or reconstruct other cabins that were not officially part of this program. It is unknown whether Thomason/Barker Ranch was officially in the "Adopt-a-Cabin" program, but according to BLM personnel it is likely that unsanctioned stabilization, maintenance, and/or alterations occurred at the ranch during this era.

Photographs from the fall of 1969—when the Manson Family was taken into custody—show that the fruit trees and other deciduous trees had matured. During the period of BLM management of the site, these trees continued to flourish and several eucalyptus in the southwestern part of the site, planted after the Barkers left the site, began to take form. All of the vegetation was enhanced by occasional watering by visitors who would manipulate the pipe system to irrigate individual trees and maintain the oasis-like environment the trees provided. Without maintenance, tree-of-heaven, an aggressive and fast growing exotic, began to sprout up throughout the site creating dense copses around the workshop and bunkhouse.

Other changes included the addition of two metal outdoor chairs that were permanently affixed to the ground at the top of the knoll behind the structures. The chairs were strategically placed to overlook the entire ranch and to provide expansive views of Goler Wash.

Further changes to the property during this era reflect two decades of benign neglect. The BLM did not have the budget or personnel to attend to Thomason/Barker Ranch upkeep; and without the benefit of permanent residents to care for and maintain the property, time, weather, and the occasional vandal took their toll on all of the structures at Thomason/Barker Ranch.

The National Park Service Era (1994-Present)

Thomason/Barker Ranch was transferred to the National Park Service in 1994 when the California Desert Protection Act changed Death Valley's designation as a national monument to that of a national park. At this time, Death Valley acquired an additional 1.3 million acres of private land and public lands administered by the BLM—including the land on which Thomason/Barker Ranch resides. Not much changed in terms of the management of the site when the land shifted to the National Park Service's jurisdiction. There was still very little, if any funding dedicated to maintenance, and because Thomason/Barker Ranch was located over three-hours from the National Park Service headquarters in Cow Creek, it was not part of a regular maintenance or monitoring program.

Thomason/Barker Ranch has continued to serve as a destination for four-wheeling enthusiasts and other park visitors touring the area. The ranch, now infamous because of its short association with Manson, is also a popular destination for those intrigued by the Manson phenomenon. The full spectrum of visitors has left behind ephemera such as artwork, newspaper clippings, sage incense, and logbook entries. Additional features such as firepits and random footpaths have developed during this era as well.

Today, the complex includes: the main cabin, workshop, bunkhouse, storage shed, chicken coop, fences, gates, rock walls, circulation system, and ornamental vegetation. National Park Service personnel and the occasional visitor have conducted minor repairs and maintenance of the ranch structures and NPS personnel have also periodically irrigated the landscape vegetation, ensuring its survival throughout the scorching summer months.

Endnotes

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Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

Thomason/Barker Ranch was evaluated as a historic site. Contributing landscape characteristics include: Buildings and Structures, Circulation, Natural Systems and Features, Vegetation, and Spatial Organization.

Natural Systems and Features: Two aspects of natural systems and features strongly influenced how the Thomasons originally sited and designed their ranch: the proximity of a year-round source of water, and the hospitable topography which provided shelter from winds, protection from flash-floods, and an expansive view to the south.

Spatial Organization: Natural features were integral to spatial organization on the site—how individual buildings and structures were placed on the site. The variable slopes on the property, the views to the southwest, and the proximity to water all influenced the site's layout.

Buildings and Structures: Between 1937 and 1957 the Thomasons and the Barkers built 12 structures. Of these original structures, only one has been lost—the windmill built by the Thomasons in 1940.

Circulation: The existing circulation system includes four features that date to the period of significance: entry road, stone stairway, concrete patio, and stone patio. An informal system of unsurfaced footpaths is also present, but no evidence dating it to the period of significance was found.

Vegetation: During the period of significance, ornamental vegetation was planted in specific areas of the property to create shade and to produce fruit. Despite the fact that these trees have not been properly irrigated or maintained over the past several decades, their original, informal pattern is still discernible. The photographs provide evidence that the tree of heaven, cottonwood, grape, and eucalyptus that are growing on site post-date the period of significance.

Integrity
Thomason/Barker Ranch retains all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. The site reflects the spatial organization, physical components, and historic associations that it attained during the period of significance, 1937-1957. The landscape characteristics and associated features convey the significance of the historic site with the majority of historic fabric remaining from the period of significance.

Location: Thomason/Barker Ranch remains intact in its original location dating to the period of significance. Because it is located on public lands and because navigating over the inhospitable terrain makes reaching the site extremely difficult, Thomason/Barker Ranch has retained its isolation within the undeveloped Goler Wash. Geographical features such as the perennial spring, the floodplain, and gentle slopes that were integral in the Thomasons' decision to site the ranch in this location remain the same as they were during the period of significance.

Design: The ranch buildings, structures, circulation patterns, and detailing from the original design still exist. Even though measures are needed to ensure that these structures and other features are stabilized, they still convey historic design patterns and intentions of the owners during the period of significance.

Setting: The setting, as defined by the ornamental vegetation, natural systems and features, and spatial organization, remains much the same as it was during the period of significance. The location of the ranch within a gently sloping wash with expansive views of Goler Wash and the Southern Panamints is unchanged. The functional zones and proximity to a year-round water source remain intact. The natural scrub vegetation within and around the ranch exhibits the same patterns and characteristics that it had during the period of significance: open, creosote and sage expanse. Most of the ornamental vegetation established during the period of significance remains, although many of the trees have overgrown during the last 35 years of abandonment and are considerably less manicured than during the period of significance. However, the additional vegetation is compatible with the intent of establishing an oasis-like environment.

Materials: Thomason/Barker Ranch retains most of the original materials including extensive mortared rockwork, corrugated metal roofing, multi-pane windows, and wooden framing and accents—all still present and functional. Although more recent materials have been added, such as Plexiglas window panels in the bunkhouse and PVC irrigation pipe, the existing material palette is essentially the same as it was during the period of significance.

Workmanship: The workmanship includes the extensive mortared rockwork of the main house walls and distinct ornamentation such as bottle-glass tiling. These examples of workmanship are still intact and discernible. Throughout the main house exterior walls as well as the stone patio at the main house, the Thomasons used colorful bottle bases to accent the rockwork—all of which is still intact. Most of the rockwork at the main house is still intact, although stabilization is needed for the rockwork at the workshop and along the main house stairs and patio.

Feeling: The feeling of the “historic scene” of Thomason/Barker Ranch is conveyed through the retention of most of the site’s original forms and features within the broader expanse of Goler Wash. Other than degradation of some of the structures and neglect of the ornamental vegetation since its abandonment 35 years ago, the site has not been altered. Additionally, the bulk of Goler Wash has changed very little since the end of Thomason/Barker Ranch’s period of significance; as visitors travel up the unsurfaced four-wheel drive road through the narrow canyon of Goler Wash to Thomason/Barker Ranch, they pass by mining adits, mining complexes, cabins, vegetation patterns, and views that are relatively unchanged since the period of significance.

Association: Thomason/Barker Ranch still conveys association with the events that made it significant. Specifically, its association with those who wished to escape urban life in exchange for the freedom and isolation of desert life and its association with small-scale mining in the Southern Panamints are reflected in the layout of the site, the location of the site within the relatively unchanged Goler Wash, and the remaining landscape features on the site. The present analysis does not assess whether Thomason/Barker Ranch still conveys association with Charles Manson or the Manson Family—further research would be needed.

Aspects of Integrity: Location

Design

Setting

Materials

Workmanship

Feeling

Association

Landscape Characteristic:

Natural Systems and Features

In 1940, when the Thomasons constructed their vacation home, they chose a location that was remote, close to a water source (Cave Spring), and flat enough to accommodate a small complex of buildings. It was the natural spring and topography of Goler Wash that had the greatest overall influence on the Thomason's layout of the property.

Cave Spring is 200 feet east of the ranch. The ranch was sited down hill from the spring, creating a head of pressure for the waterline that supplies the main residence, swimming pool, and irrigation system. Without the pressure provided by gravity, the Thomasons would have been forced to pump the water into a holding tank to make the system operable.

Thomason/Barker Ranch sits on a gentle southern exposed slope perched above the flood-plain. This location protects the ranch from seasonal flash-flooding—a common occurrence in Goler Wash. The southern exposure and sloped terrain at the ranch provide opportunities for impressive, wide angle views of the canyon and region, all from the comfort of the front porch of the main residence.

These natural landscape features directly influenced the design and layout that was developed in the 1940s.

Spatial Organization

Natural features such as the presence of water, topography, and views were integral to the spatial organization on the site. Because the ranch is located at the bottom of a gentle southwest facing slope, it is sheltered and protected from winds. The ranch was sited on a terrace just above the floodplain—ensuring that the property would not be affected by the seasonal flash flooding that often occurs in Goler Wash. Thomason/Barker Ranch is sited approximately 200 feet west of perennial Cave Spring that provides gravity-fed water through a pipe system to the residence.

The building cluster associated with domestic living is located at the top of the driveway and consists of the main building, workshop, and bunkhouse. The cluster is accentuated by the presence of landscape shade trees including tree of heaven, cottonwood, and large shrubs such as pomegranate. The back of the living area is defined and protected by the steep slope to the northeast. The combination of buildings, the verticality of the slope, and dense vegetation create a presence that is distinct from the openness of the natural environment of Goler Wash. The front porch is oriented to face the southwest, taking advantage of the expansive, 180-degree views of Goler Wash and the Southern Panamints.

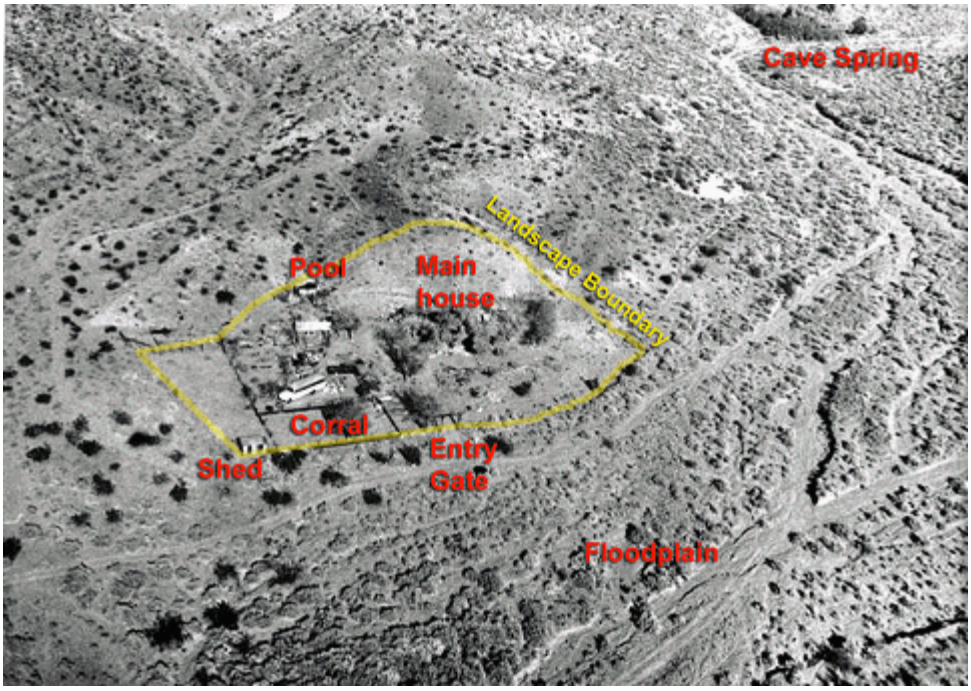
The swimming pool is located behind the living area, in a natural swale that presumably is the site of a small, ephemeral drainage that runs during the wet season. The siting of the pool appears to have been chosen strictly on the bowl-shaped landform in which it resides and is unrelated to the overall design scheme for the building complex.

The agricultural area is located in the southwestern part of the property, adjacent to the entrance gate. This 40-foot x 80-foot area was sited on the flattest part of the five-acre ranch and is clearly marked by barbed wire fencing. It seems to have been intentionally sited away from the living area.

Spatial organization is a landscape characteristic that dates to the period of significance. The original arrangement of buildings and structures and vegetation is still readable; and the relationship of the buildings to natural features such as topography, a year-round source of water (Cave Spring), and views remains intact. As a result, spatial organization at Thomason/Barker Ranch is a contributing characteristic of the setting.

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Spatial Organization 1. This wide angle image illustrates how the Thomason/Barker Ranch building comples sits on a relatively level terrace within the Goler Wash (PWR 2005).



Spatial Organization 2. Overview from 1969 showing how ranch relates to natural systems and features such as the spring in the upper right corner, and the seasonal wash at the bottom of the frame.

Buildings and Structures

In 1940, the Thomasons constructed their vacation home on the outer edge of Death Valley, creating a small cluster of domestic buildings and structures. With exception of a small windmill used to generate electricity, these buildings and structures remain today. They include the main residence, workshop, and retaining walls. Native stone walls and corrugated metal roofs characterized these buildings, architecturally unifying the complex.

The use of local materials was probably the most economical and practical choice in the construction of the residence. Goler Wash was extremely remote in the first place, but moreover, nearly impossible to access by truck. It was fortunate that the natural geology of Goler Wash could provide the Thomasons with an unlimited supply of stones, which served as the best building material to insulate the interior from the extreme temperatures of the desert.

The building materials, rough-hewn and earth toned, blended with the surrounding environs in color and texture. The stones ranged in color from brown to light tan and averaged about 10-12 inches in diameter. The wood trim, window sashes, and doors were painted a muted green. Because they were tucked closely into the hillside, the single story buildings also maintained a low profile on the landscape. The combination of these two factors had the effect of visually tying the structures to the canyon hills of Goler Wash, an integration of the built environment with the natural geology of the landscape. This architectural style was consistent with the rustic/naturalistic aesthetic prevalent in the 1930s that blended rural buildings with their natural surrounding. This architectural style was expressed throughout the west during this time (Good, 1990, III).

Today, these buildings and structures are the foundation of the site's integrity. Twelve structures are currently listed on the List of Classified Structures (LCS) including the main house, workshop, bunkhouse, chicken coop, shed, swimming pool, feed trough, entrance road, stone berms, stone retaining wall, stone stairs, and gates and fences. The spring dates to the historic period, but is not listed on the LCS.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Main House

LCS ID 057721
HS-091

Thomason/Barker Ranch main house sits on a gentle slope above the other buildings. Although the residence is small and best described as a rustic stone cottage, it has the largest footprint and massing of all the buildings, making it the focal point of the ranch complex. The building footprint is L-shaped, covering an area of 25-feet x 32-feet. All elevations of the building are of uncoursed stone, set in mortar, and punctuated by several multi-pane windows with wood sashes on all sides. Decorative glass bottles are randomly built into the mortar on the west elevation. A gently sloped shed roof, extending seven feet out from the building, covers the front porch running the length of the south elevation. Wooden posts set into concrete support the shed roof. A lattice hangs over the west patio, linking the west elevation of the main

residence with the Thomason/Barker Ranch workshop. The main residence also has gable roofs with board and batten redwood siding in the gable ends and a roof material of tin.

The foundation is slab on grade and a three-foot high stone retaining wall supports the front porch. The mortared stones resemble the main residence in size, color, and texture. A wide stone stairway is integrated into this structure on the west end of the building's wall linking the driveway to the main house. The stairs are supported by the retaining wall. It is in poor condition today, with many of the original stones missing.

A concrete porch, approximately 350 square feet in area, is located at the front entry of the main residence. It is approximately 50-feet long and six-feet wide. The concrete is over two inches thick, showing signs of weathering. The patio is cross-sloped at a one-percent angle towards the driveway. It is cracked over much of the surface and in some places completely missing. There are signs of differential settlement, which creates an uneven surface. It is in poor condition.

Today, the main residence is in poor condition overall, but is intact, retaining much historic fabric. The mortar and stonework that make-up the outer walls of the building are intact. The window frames show signs of rot in places. The concrete surfaced porch has many cracks. The door jam on the front entrance is shimmed with stones with gaps in the siding around the frame. The roof of the building is collapsing over the entrance door and kitchen. The stone patio on the west side of the structure is stable. The NPS recently replaced two rotten and vandalized original wooden posts at the edge of the concrete patio with 4-inch x 4-inch posts.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Workshop

LCS ID 057722
HS-092

Of all the historic buildings, the workshop is in poor condition and its integrity as a structure severely compromised. Constructed with uncoursed rubble stone in 1940 by Thomason, the workshop mirrors the main residence in materials and architectural style, but has a much smaller rectangular footprint of 22-feet x 10-feet. The foundation of the building is concrete and the floor is unsurfaced earth. The walls are constructed with approximately 12-inch diameter stones set in mortar, framed by rough-hewn wood painted in a worn, muted red tone. The roof ends are gable and the roof is corrugated metal. Originally the structure consisted of a single room workshop adjacent to the main house. Soon after it was built, the Thomasons added a guestroom and a one-car garage. The garage is no longer extant, and the guestroom is severely deteriorated. Overall the building has suffered a great deal of damage to the stone walls, windows, doors, and roof. The west elevation of the structure (the guesthouse portion) is completely lost. The stones of the structure have been removed from the site; the roof over this elevation has recently been stabilized with two-by-fours. DEVA staff believes that a friend of the Barker family may have conducted this stabilization effort in early 2005.

The east elevation is in disrepair: the door is missing and the multi-pane window is missing (although the frame still exists). At least half of the stonework on the east elevation of the building is missing. Several timbers and window jams remain and continue to support the roof. The remaining stonework is intact.

The south elevation is missing a door and several multi-pane windows. A portion of the stonework has been lost on this elevation, especially on the western end. The corrugated metal roof has collapsed or is missing all together in several areas. The wood framing of the roof is warped.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Bunkhouse

LCS ID 057723
HS-093

Built in 1957, the bunkhouse has a distinctive striped appearance because the exterior walls are vertical, rough-hewn logs with mortar chinking. It measures 20-feet x 13-feet and the foundation is concrete slab on grade. The building has a three paneled front door and a small wood door in back. The windows have wood sashes and screens. Due to vandalism, the original multi-paned glass windows were replaced by the NPS with Plexiglas. The roof ends are gable with horizontal log siding. The roof is 2-inch x 4-inch construction with a composite roofing material. The northeast corner of the composite roof is missing.

Today, the bunkhouse is in disrepair. Portions of the roof are missing and portions of the structure’s framing are warped.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Chicken Coop

LCS ID 057725
HS-095

Built in 1957, the chicken coop is a rectangular 10-foot x 12-foot wood framed building made from 2-inch x 6-inch dimensional lumber. All elevations of the building are characterized by an eclectic mix of chicken wire and corrugated metal siding. The roof is of chicken wire. A Fremont cottonwood tree (Populus fremontii) and several spruce brush (Peucephyllum schottii) are growing out from within the structure. The timber framing has rot, the corrugated metal siding is rusting and in some places unattached. The trees and shrubs have damaged the chicken wire and roof frame.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Shed

LCS ID 057724
HS-094

Built in 1957, the shed has a rectangular 7-foot x 13-foot footprint. The building has a dirt floor and no foundation and is framed with narrow rough-hewn timbers and 2-inch x 6-inch dimensional lumber. It has an eclectic mix of corrugated and flat metal walls and roof. The building appears to have been used for target practice with bullet holes in the exterior walls. The building is in poor condition, overall. The framing is warped and the metal walls and roof are rusting and damaged by bullets.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Swimming Pool

LCS ID 057726
HS-096

The pool is sited in a low-lying swale behind the bunkhouse at the toe of the hill and was built by the Barkers in 1957. The water to fill the pool was likely gravity fed from Cave Spring. The pool is a pear-shaped rock and concrete structure, measuring approximately 10-feet x 20-feet and ranges between three to six feet in depth. It has a sloping floor of concrete with cracks and earth over much of the surface. On the exterior of the structure, the walls are of concrete; they are formed with a series of horizontal ridges on the south elevation. The remaining elevations are of stone set in mortar. Like the other stone buildings in the complex, the swimming pool appears rustic and almost disappears into the landscape. Today, the swimming pool is inoperable. Litter is strewn in the base of the pool. The concrete surface is cracked in many places. The mortar in the stone walls requires repointing.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Feed Trough

LCS 057728
HS-098

Built in 1940, the trough is located on the north side of the shed. It is seven-feet long and four-feet wide and framed with heavy timbers. A curved metal plate forms the base of the trough. The structure is intact and in fair condition.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Gate and Fences

LCS ID 057727

HS-097

The historic fence is constructed with 4-inch x 4-inch dimensional lumber wood posts and strung with barbed wire. The fence is aligned around the perimeter of the property and access through the fence is limited to the entrance gate on the southern side and a small, three-foot wide opening on the eastern side which provides access to the spring.

The entrance gate is an overscaled portal with a swinging board gate. The gate is 10-feet tall and 11-feet wide and built with 12-inch x 8-inch posts and an 8-inch x 8-inch chamfered cross beam. The NPS stabilized the gate with 2-inch x 4-inch braces. The hinges are new.

The fences consist of old peeler poles or two inch pipe and are strung with four strands of barbed wire. The historic posts are set into the ground and have rock pile foundations. Many of the wood posts are rotting, especially near the ground. In many places, the fence is failing altogether—particularly on the south side of the property. The metal pipe posts are set in concrete. A separate, internal fence system marks the chicken yard. It is supported by wood posts. The lower third of the fence is corrugated metal and the upper two-thirds is strung with two or three strands of barbed wire.

Cave Spring
No LCS ID

Cave Spring and the water catchment and conveyance system are located about an eighth of mile east of the property. The two-inch water line, installed by the NPS in the 1990s, leads from this spring, under the fence, to the irrigation system. This new line replaced a two-inch pipeline, remnants of which still exist. The spring itself is contributing to the cultural landscape, but the conveyance system no longer retains integrity and is non-contributing to the cultural landscape.

Stone berms
LCS ID 451426

Stone berms built by the Thomasons pool water around olive trees in the front yard. The stones ring the trees for irrigation. The stones vary in size, but in general, they are smaller than the stones used for the residence.

Stone Retaining Walls
LCS ID 451516

A stone 50-foot long retaining wall is aligned in front of the main residence. It is associated with the entry road turnaround. The curvilinear wall is approximately three-feet tall and organic in character. The stones are set in recessed mortar. This wall is in good condition.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Barker Ranch Main House

Feature Identification Number: 113368

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Feed Trough

Feature Identification Number: 113380

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Barker Ranch Bunkhouse

Feature Identification Number: 113370

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Chicken Coop

Feature Identification Number: 113372

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Shed

Feature Identification Number: 113374

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Swimming Pool

Feature Identification Number: 113376

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Workshop

Feature Identification Number: 113378

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Gate and Fences

Feature Identification Number: 113382

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Spring

Feature Identification Number: 113384

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Stone Berms

Feature Identification Number: 113386

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Stone Retaining Walls

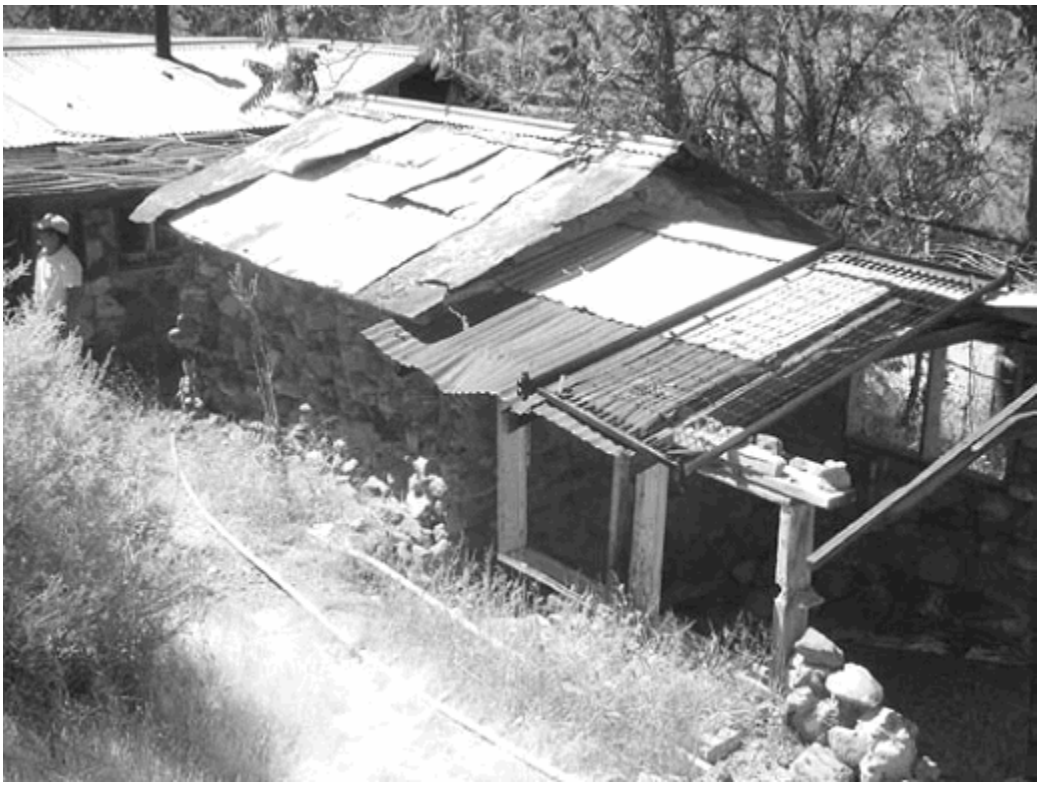
Feature Identification Number: 113388

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

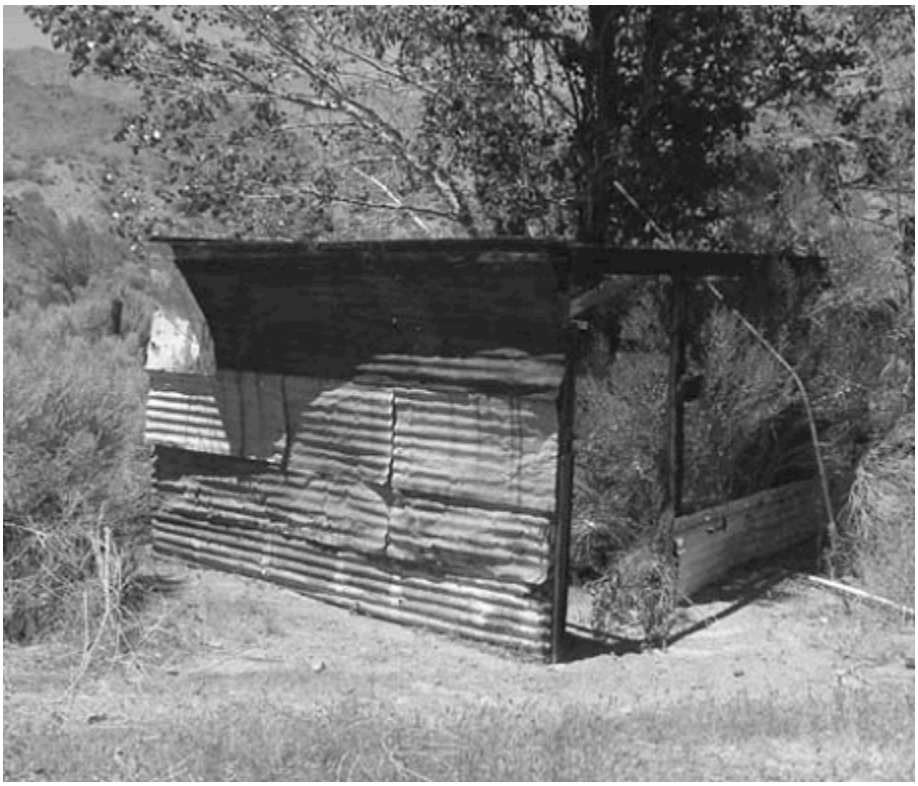
Buildings and Structures 1. Image showing the south and west elevations of the main residence (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 2. The east elevation of the main residence is in good condition (PWR 2005).



Buildings and Structures 3. North elevation of the workshop. The main residence is seen on the top left of image. The west end of the workshop is in poor condition (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 4. Image of the east and north elevations of the bunkhouse. The architecture represents a departure in the use of materials. Instead of stone, this structure is constructed with vertical siding with chinking (PWR 2005).



Buildings and Structures 5. The chicken coop is constructed with an eclectic mix of materials including corrugated metal, dimensional lumber, and chicken wire. View south and east elevations. (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 6. The storage shed, located on the southwest corner of the property (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 7. The swimming pool is constructed with stone set in mortar and resembles the main residence in character (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 8. The entrance gate is constructed with dimensional lumber. It is over ten feet in height (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 9. Perimeter fence marks the original boundary of the Thomason/Barker Ranch. It is comprised of wood posts and barbed wire (PWR 2005).

Buildings and Structures 10. Image of the fence adjacent to the chicken coop. The lower third is corrugated metal, the upper two thirds is barbed wire (PWR 2005).

Circulation

The circulation system at Thomason/Barker Ranch includes an entry road, stone stairway, concrete patio, stone patio, and several dirt foot paths. These landscape features date to the historic period and are a contributing landscape characteristic within the historic site.

Entry Road
LCS ID 451555

During the historic period, a single lane driveway about 200-feet in length was aligned between the entrance gate and the turnaround, and used as the sole means of entry into the site. A photograph taken in the early 1940s shows that the road was narrow, curvilinear, and unsurfaced. It looped in front of the main residence, rising to meet the grade of the entry stairs.

Today, the entry road remains in its historic alignment—it follows the lay of the land and has no special cuts, fills, or ditches associated with it. It remains narrow, measuring approximately 10-feet wide; and its edges are defined by partially buried stones. Over time, the road has been eroded by the elements, leaving it in fair condition.

Historically, an unsurfaced parking area was located between the entry road and the workshop. Today, this open area remains intact. The parking area intersects the entry road and provides access to the western side of the property and to the south side of the workshop. In 1969, this parking area was used to access the workshop. Unlike the entry road, which is edged with stones, this segment of the driveway appears as undifferentiated open space.

Stone Stairway
LCS ID 451562

The stone stairway links the turnaround with the front entrance of the main residence. It is approximately seven-feet wide and includes five risers. The risers, comprised of stone set in mortar, vary in height from four to 10 inches, giving the staircase a distinctive and varied appearance. The risers are in fair condition, but the retaining wall used to support the south side of the stairway is damaged by vandalism, leaving the stairway in an overall poor condition.

Stone Patio
LCS ID
451559

A stone patio is located between the main residence and workshop. It is comprised of large, irregularly shaped, flag stones, resembling the color and texture of the stones used for the buildings. The stones are laid in dirt and are placed in a random pattern. This patio covers an area of approximately 200 square-feet, and remains in an overall state of good condition.

Non Contributing

Foot Paths
During the historic period, unsurfaced pathways were formed to access the top of the knoll behind the main residence. Today, a system of several dirt pathways crisscrosses the landscape, leading up and down the knoll and to the east entrance of the property, where it links with a trail to the spring. It is unknown whether any of these paths date to the period of significance however, they are compatible with the cultural landscape.

Parking Area
The Manson Family expanded the parking area further to the west to accommodate their school bus and several other vehicles they had accumulated. This portion of the parking area is not well-defined and is primarily located between the corral and the bunkhouse. It is not a contributing feature of the cultural landscape.

Character-defining Features:

Feature: Entry Road

Feature Identification Number: 113390

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Stone Patio

Feature Identification Number: 113392

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Stone Stairway

Feature Identification Number: 113394

Type of Feature Contribution: Contributing

Feature: Footpaths

Feature Identification Number: 113396

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Feature: Parking Area

Feature Identification Number: 113398

Type of Feature Contribution: Non Contributing

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Circulation 1. The entry road is the primary means of access onto the property. The road is narrow and unsurfaced. View north towards the workshop (PWR 2005).

Circulation 2. Image showing the stone stairway near the front door of the main entrance. The stones are set in mortar (PWR 2005).

Circulation 3. The stone patio is located between the main residence and workshop. The large stones are set in earth and complement the masonry at the main residence (PWR 2005).

Circulation 4. The concrete surface of the front porch is located on the south elevation of the main residence (PWR 2005).

Vegetation

A number of ornamental trees and shrubs remain at the site, including a concentration of historic and volunteer trees. Based on historic photos, it is evident that many trees planted during the period of significance are no longer alive. The plantings are distributed informally throughout the property. On preliminary inspection they include one cottonwood (Populus fremontii), one Siberian elm (Ulmus pumila), six eucalyptus (Eucalyptus sp.), one mulberry (Morus rubra), three peach (Prunus persica), one fig (Ficus carica), one locust (Robinia sp.), four olive (Olea sp.), five pomegranate (Punica granatum), and several trees of heaven (Ailanthus altissima). All of the plant identification is subject to verification from the park botanist. Although some individual trees may not date to the historic era, they remain in historic planting areas—concentrated around the main residence, the southeast fence line, bunkhouse, and chicken coop—echoing the layout of the plantings in 1969.

Some changes to the overall character of the plantings have occurred since the period of significance ended. The trees historically planted in front of the main residence have been lost in recent history. The open character of the corral area has been replaced with creosote bush. The trees and shrubs have grown together, probably as a result of the irrigation system built and managed by the NPS. Additionally, because the vegetation has not been pruned or maintained (other than irrigating), it has gained an unkempt, overgrown quality—particularly around the bunkhouse and workshop where original trees of heaven and dozens of their volunteers have created dense massings.

Contributing

Five pomegranate trees are planted along the entryway, adjacent to the main house and near the bunkhouse. These trees date to the period of significance and are in good condition.

One fig tree is growing in front of the entryway roundabout and is in good condition.

Four olive trees are planted along the front entrance and the roundabout. They help define the edge of the property and the entryway and remain in good condition.

Three peach trees are planted adjacent to the entryway and east of the main house. Like the olive trees, these trees help define the entryway. The trees contain considerable deadwood and are in poor condition.

A Siberian elm is planted on the southeast corner of the main residence. It appears to be the oldest tree on the property. It is approximately thirty feet tall and has a spread of almost 30-feet. The tree visually dominates this area of the property. It contains considerable deadwood and is in fair condition.

Potentially Contributing

One mulberry tree located behind the bunkhouse and one unidentified fruit tree located within

the eucalyptus grove may contribute to the cultural landscape. It is unknown whether these trees date to the period of significance. They are both in poor condition.

Non-Contributing

Three species of plants at Thomason/Barker Ranch do not appear in photographs taken during or immediately after the period of significance. They include eucalyptus, cottonwood, and grape. It is unknown whether any of the tree of heaven were planted during the period of significance. Today, the six eucalyptus are the tallest trees on the property, some rising at least 40 feet. They are concentrated near the main residence and the southeast corner of the property. A single cottonwood tree is planted adjacent to the chicken coop. This tree is more than 10 years old. In addition, a volunteer grapevine grows in and around the chicken coop.

Summary

Despite the loss of some historic vegetation and the introduction of new species, vegetation is a landscape characteristic that contributes to the overall setting of the landscape. In general, the existing ornamental trees and shrubs were planted in specific areas of the property to create shade and to produce fruit. The north side of the residence remains open, while the west side of the property, once a corral, has filled with native shrubs.

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:

Vegetation 1. These two photos illustrate how the overall character of the ornamental plantings remains from the historic period. View north. (Left image 1969, DEVA collection; Right image PWR 2005).

Vegetation 2. Due to irrigation recently implemented by the NPS, understory vegetation has established in several areas of the property. View southeast (Top image 1969, DEVA collection; Bottom: PWR 2005).

Condition

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 06/01/2005

Stabilization Measures:

Thomason/Barker Ranch Main House:
1) Stabilize stone retaining wall: replace missing mortared stones; 2) Concrete patio: patch concrete surface; 3) Replace missing siding around front door jam; 4) Stabilize collapsing roof.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Workshop:
1) Stabilize roof; 2)Stabilize walls: wood framing, and siding.

Bunkhouse: Repair leaking roof.

Chicken coop: Remove vegetation (cottonwood tree, grapevine or other plant materials) that damage structural integrity.

Shed: Reinforce wood framing of walls and roof.

Swimming Pool: Reappoint stones to prevent further damage to the structure.

Thomason/Barker Ranch Gate and Fences: Repoint wood posts in concrete.

Stone stairway: Repoint stones to south cheek wall of stone stairway.

Impacts

Type of Impact: Fire

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Description: Late 2004 or early 2005 a fire of unknown causes partially destroyed the storage shed (outbuilding) attached to front porch of the main house. The remains of the structure are unstable and apt to deteriorate rapidly. In addition to potentially adversely affecting the site, the instability may pose a safety issue for visitors to the ranch. The NPS could stabilize the structure to a state of arrested decay.

Type of Impact: Removal/Replacement

External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	The outbuilding affected by the fire in 2004, has also been the recipient of unauthorized repair. At the time of the field visit, some framing had been installed, although much of the collapsed structure remained untouched. The NPS could stabilize the structure to a state of arrested decay to discourage non-NPS personnel from creating more adverse impacts to the historic fabric.
Type of Impact:	Structural Deterioration
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Over the years, all of the structures have suffered from deterioration. More frequent maintenance could help ensure that no further deterioration will occur.
Type of Impact:	Vegetation/Invasive Plants
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Tree of heaven have sprouted around most of the living area, the eucalyptus in the front area of the ranch have also grown out of control. A partnership among NPS natural and cultural resource managers should consider removal of these trees.
Type of Impact:	Vandalism/Theft/Arson
External or Internal:	Internal
Impact Description:	Overnight and day-use visitors have unlimited access to all parts of the property. They have built campfire rings, graffitied the walls, and made a mess of the building interiors. More frequent maintenance by park staff and more educational outreach to park visitors could help curb some of this vandalism.

Landscape Stabilization Cost Explanatory Description:

Stabilization costs to be determined by DEVA park staff.

Treatment

Treatment

Approved Treatment: Preservation

Approved Treatment Document: General Management Plan

Document Date: 04/01/2002

Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative:

The NPS will develop and implement a systematic, integrated program to identify, inventory, monitor, evaluate, and nominate archeological sites, historic properties, cultural landscapes, and ethnographic resources, to the National Register and will manage, protect, and preserve such listedproperties in a way that will preserve theikr documented archeological, architectural, ethnographichisotric, or research values."The NPS will develop and implement a systematic applied cultural resource research program to ensure that (1) there will be adequate baseline information on location, condition, threats, and significance/integrity of resources. (GMP 2002:41-42)

Approved Treatment Completed: No

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Date: 04/01/2002

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

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Citation Title:	The Land of Little Rain.
Year of Publication:	1903
Citation Publisher:	Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co.
Citation Type:	Narrative
Citation Location:	Multiple, LOC

Citation Author:	Bard, Robert Charles
Citation Title:	"Settlement Pattern of the Eastern Mojave Desert." doctoral dissertation
Year of Publication:	1972
Citation Publisher:	University of California at Los Angeles, 1972. [SRLF].
Citation Type:	Narrative
Citation Location:	Doctoral Dissertation, located at UC Los Angeles Library

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Citation Title:	Study of Second Home and Recreation Property Market in the California Desert. Draft report for the Bureau of Land Management.
Citation Publisher:	Menlo Park, CA: SRI International
Citation Type:	Narrative
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Citation Title:	Wilderness By Design
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Citation Publisher:	University of Nebraska Press
Source Name:	Library of Congress/Dewey Decimal
Citation Type:	Both Graphic and Narrative
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Year of Publication:	1976
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Citation Author:	Good, Albert H.
Citation Title:	Park and Recreation Structures
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Citation Title:	Transcript of Taped Interview with Barbara Myers
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Citation Author:	Harder, Emmett
Citation Title:	These Canyons are Full of Ghosts
Year of Publication:	2001
Citation Publisher:	Real Adventures Publishing
Source Name:	Library of Congress/Dewey Decimal
Citation Type:	Narrative
Citation Location:	Multiple, LOC

Citation Author:	Inyo County
Citation Title:	Annual Proof of Labor, Land Patents, and Mine Locator Records
Year of Publication:	0
Citation Publisher:	Inyo County Recorder's Office
Citation Type:	Narrative
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Citation Author:	James, George Wharton.
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Citation Title:	Background to Historic and Prehistoric Resources of the East Mojave Desert Region.
Year of Publication:	1976
Citation Publisher:	Riverside, CA: Archaeological Research Unit, University of California at Riversi
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Citation Location:	UC Berkeley Library: [Banc. F868 .S14 .K5].

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Citation Title:	Desert Passages: Encounters with the American Deserts.
Year of Publication:	1985
Citation Publisher:	Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press
Citation Type:	Narrative
Citation Location:	[UCB MN E161 .5 L56]

Citation Author:	Lingenfelter, Richard E
Citation Title:	Death Valley and the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion.
Year of Publication:	1986
Citation Publisher:	Berkeley: University of California Press
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Citation Author:	Van Dyke, John C.
Citation Title:	The Desert: Further Studies in Natural Appearances.
Year of Publication:	1901
Citation Publisher:	New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
Citation Type:	Narrative
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Citation Author:	Manly, William Lewis
Citation Title:	Death Valley in '49: Important Chapter of California Pioneer History.
Year of Publication:	1894
Citation Publisher:	San Jose, CA: The Pacific Tree and Vine Co.
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Citation Title:	A History of Land Use in the California Desert.
Year of Publication:	1978
Citation Publisher:	San Diego: Westec Services, Inc. for the Bureau of Land Management
Citation Type:	Both Graphic and Narrative
Citation Location:	[UCB Biosci QH541 .5 .D4 W47]

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Citation Title:	"On Beyond Reason: Homesteading in the California Desert, 1885-1940." Southern California Quarterly 64.4 (1982): 297-312.
Year of Publication:	1982
Citation Type:	Narrative
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Citation Author:	Theodoratus et al.
Citation Title:	Death Valley National Park Cultural Affiliation Study
Year of Publication:	1998
Citation Publisher:	National Park Service
Citation Type:	Narrative
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Citation Author:	Unrau, Harlan D.
Citation Title:	A History of the New Lands Added to Death Valley National Park by the California Desert Protection Act of 1994.
Year of Publication:	1994
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Citation Title:	DRAFT National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Barker Ranch
Year of Publication:	1997
Citation Publisher:	Denver: National Park Service
Source Name:	DSC/TIC
Citation Type:	Narrative
Citation Location:	DEVA Cultural Resources Files

Death Valley National Park

National Park Service
Barker Ranch Cultural Landscape Inventory

BARKER RANCH

Barker Ranch
Existing Conditons Map

Produced by
National Park Service,
Pacific West Region
Cultural Resources Program
Oakland, California
August 2005

Notes:
All features were mapped using GPS. The final map was produced by Gretchen Stromberg using ArcVIEW and Photoshop 7.0.

0 15 30 60
Approximate scale in feet.