

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

NOV 20 1987

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bemis, Polly, House
other names/site number Bemis, Polly, Cabin; site 001331

2. Location

street & number n/a; accessible on Salmon River via boat not for publication
city, town Riggins vicinity
state Idaho code ID county Idaho code 049 zip code 83549

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Ronny J. Seer, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Nov. 16, 1987
Signature of certifying official Idaho State Historical Society Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrews 3/4/88
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

recreation and culture/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls wood/log

roof wood/shake
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Polly Bemis House is a one and one-half story log building on a stone foundation. The building faces east; it measures 14'8" by 20'1" on the exterior. On the interior, it has a double-pile floor plan of two rooms on the first story. There is a half-story sleeping loft. Constructed of white fir and red fir timbers left round, chinked, and notched at the corners with square notching, the building has a shallow gable roof supported on log purlins and roofed with hand-split yellow pine shakes. The roof extends a few feet to cover the area in front of the front door. This extension is supported by log posts at each corner. A skirt of split lumber blocks off the gable of this front porch. The house has a gable front with an offset batten door and one gable window, one window on the south wall, two windows on the north wall, and one half-story window set in the west (rear) wall gable. The windows in the east and west gables and on the north wall are non-operable with center mullions. The window on the south wall is a sliding sash window reconstructed in 1985-86 to fit the original opening. Simple window and door frames consist of whipsawn lumber. The joists for the half-story floor are framed into the lateral walls of the building. On the interior the floors on the first and the half stories are splined. Lumber in the building exhibits whipsaw marks.

In addition to the south window reconstruction, the 1985-1986 stabilization and restoration of the Polly Bemis House included total replacement of four deteriorated logs and partial replacement of one log, rebuilding the foundation, new stone floor supports, restoration of flooring with some replacement of deteriorated members with compatible but distinguishable new material, new roofing (replacement in kind), reglazing windows (in original sash), rethinking where needed (replacement in kind), replacing a missing porch post, and porch skirt replacement where members were missing (replacement in kind). In addition, the site was regraded to allow for positive drainage away from the building. The stabilization and restoration work was planned and designed by Fred Walters, preservation technologist, CSW Architects, Boise. The work was completed in November of 1986.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture
ethnic heritage: Asian

Period of Significance

1923-1933

Significant Dates

1923

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charlie Shepp, Peter Klinkhammer
(builders)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Polly Bemis House is significant under criterion A for its association with the social history of Chinese women in Idaho. The house is significant under criterion C as an excellent example of log construction and of the gable-front single-pen dwelling as they were employed in the central Idaho mountains. The building is important as our only inventoried instance of the use of whipsawn lumber. Constructed in 1923, the building was associated with Polly Bemis until she moved to Grangeville in 1933.

Chinese miners came into Idaho nearly as early as white miners, and by 1870, according to some estimates, Chinese made up about half of Idaho's population. (White suppression of the Chinese during the 1890s encouraged most of the Chinese to move to west coast Chinatowns.) With the Chinese miners came a very few Chinese women, most of them prostitutes, about which little is known. Polly Bemis, born in 1853 in northern China, is an exception. Because of her well-documented career as a slave (serving as a dance hostess), boarding house operator and cook, goldsmith, needleworker, gardener, and nurse, Bemis has become famous among Idahoans as a representative Chinese woman. While her life may not actually be representative of the Chinese woman's experience in early Idaho, the fact that much documentation does exist about Bemis makes her story important in Idaho's social history. Her 1923 log cabin, built to replace an older building that had burned, is a part of that documentation, significant for its evidence of the physical conditions of Bemis' life during the period after her husband Charlie Bemis's death and before she became too ill to support herself, moving to a Grangeville nursing home in 1933. Bemis died on November 6 of that year. Her house survives intact with much of its original materials, or reconstructed materials representing replacement in kind.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Elsensohn, Sister M. Alfreda. Idaho County's Most Romantic Character: Polly Bemis. Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1979.
- Yung, Judy. Chinese Women of America. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Idaho Architectural and Historic Sites Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 20 acres

UTM References

A

1	1	1
6	0	4
0	0	5

5	0	3	2
0	1	5	

Zone Easting Northing

B

1	1	1
6	0	4
0	0	5

5	0	3	1
5	5	0	

Zone Easting Northing

C

1	1	1
6	0	4
0	4	5

5	0	3	1
5	5	0	

Zone Easting Northing

D

Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes the Polly Bemis House and the property on which it sits, that portion of the NE 1/4 SW 1/4 section 12 T24N R6E that lies south and west of the Salmon River.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes the Bemis house and its immediate setting; recent recreational housing constructed by the current owner has been excluded from the nominated area.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Eastman Attebery, State Architectural Historian

organization Idaho State Historical Society date September 22, 1987

street & number 210 Main Street telephone (208) 334-3861

city or town Boise state Idaho zip code 83702

11/20/87

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Bemis' cabin was built for her by two neighboring prospectors turned ranchers, Charlie Shepp and Peter Klinkhammer. In form and construction the building represents construction techniques and a house plan that were typical of the ranches and mining country of the central Idaho mountains. The house plan is a single-pen house with a gable front and a front porch formed by an overhanging roof, called a Rocky Mountain cabin by Mary Wilson in her Log Cabin Studies (Ogden, Utah: U.S. Forest Service, 1984). Features that typify central Idaho horizontal timber construction include the use of round logs, chinking, square notching, and the gable roof on purlins and roofed with shakes. With its recent restoration work, the Bemis cabin survives as an excellent example of these techniques. In addition the building exhibits the marks of careful crafting in its splined floor, and it represents our only inventoried instance of the use of whipsawn lumber.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

JAN 19 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

Section number 8 Page 2

BEMIS, POLLY, HOUSE

Additional information provided - January 14, 1988

The Polly Bemis House is significant under criterion A for its association with the social history of Chinese women in Idaho. The house is significant under criterion C as an excellent example of log construction and of the gable-front single-pen dwelling as they were employed in the central Idaho mountains. The building is important as our only inventoried instance of the use of whipsawn lumber. Constructed in 1923, the building was associated with Polly Bemis until she moved to Grangeville in 1933.

Chinese miners came into Idaho nearly as early as white miners, and by 1870, a majority of Idaho's miners were Chinese. Chinese made up about half of Idaho's population. (White suppression encouraged many Chinese to move to west coast Chinatowns in 1886.) With the Chinese miners came a very few Chinese women, most of them identified in census statistics as prostitutes, about whom little is known. Polly Bemis, born in 1853 in northern China, is an exception. She arrived in Warrens around 1871 under an indenture to cover costs of her long trip from China. After she had lived there awhile, Charlie Bemis won her contract in a poker game, and they became business associates. Because of her well-documented career as a dance hostess, boarding house operator and cook, goldsmith, needleworker, gardener, and nurse, Bemis has become famous among Idahoans. While her later career may not actually be representative of the Chinese woman's experience in early Idaho, the fact that much documentation does exist about Bemis makes her story important in Idaho's social history. When Polly and Charlie were married in 1894, their new status marked a significant change in Idaho social history with a modified perception of Chinese elements; a shift from aversion and misunderstanding to interest and eventual pride in Chinese aspects of Idaho's heritage. Her 1923 log cabin, built to replace an older building that had burned, represents that later era and is a part of that documentation, significant for its evidence of the physical conditions of Bemis' life during the period after her husband Charlie Bemis's death and before she became too ill to support herself, moving to a Grangeville nursing home in 1933. Bemis died on November 6 of that year. Her house survives intact with much of its original materials, or reconstructed materials representing replacement in kind.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

JAN 19 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

Section number 10 Page 1

BEMIS, POLLY, HOUSE

Additional information provided - January 14, 1988

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes the Polly Bemis House and the lot on which it sits, that portion of Homestead Entry Survey No. 817 that lies in the NE 1/4 SW 1/4 section 12 T24N R6E, Boise Meridian.

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes the Bemis house and its historic homestead entry lot; a small portion of the homestead entry lot containing recent recreational housing constructed by the current owner has been excluded from the nominated area.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Substantive Review

Bemis, Polly, House
Idaho County
IDAHO

NOV 20 1987

Working No. _____

Fed. Reg. Date: _____

Date Due: 12/17/87 - 1/4/88

Action: ACCEPT

RETURN 12-31-87

REJECT _____

Federal Agency: _____

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Please see attached sheet.

Recom./Criteria Return

Reviewer Noble

Discipline Historian

Date 12/31/87

_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____
Quadrangle name _____
UTM References _____

Please provide a verbal boundary description for nominated property as opposed to location:

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed Beth Grosvenor Boland Date 12/31/87 Phone: _____

Polly Bemis House

Reviewer's Comments:

This nomination does a nice job of demonstrating the resource's criterion C significance. The Polly Bemis House is clearly eligible under criterion C based on the fact that it represents the only inventoried use of whipsawn lumber to construct a log house in Idaho. However, the nomination poses some questions in regard to the justification provided for criterion A.

The nomination states that "The Polly Bemis House is significant under criterion A for its association with the social history of Chinese women in Idaho." However, this point is undermined at a later point in the nomination when the statement is made that Polly Bemis' life "may not actually be representative of the Chinese woman's experience in early Idaho..." Given that her experience may not be representative of the broad patterns of social history in Idaho, and given the obvious personal historical significance of Polly Bemis, would it not make sense to select criterion B rather than criterion A? While this approach would require further explanation regarding what Bemis accomplished as a "slave..., boarding house operator and cook, goldsmith, needleworker, gardener, and nurse," it seems that the use of criterion B would be a better reflection of Polly Bemis' association with this house. The discussion of Bemis' accomplishments need not be lengthy, but there should be some brief explanation of how Bemis achieved significance as a slave, gardener, etc. Of course, the decision can also be made to nominate this house strictly on the basis of its architectural merits.

Finally, a few points concerning the boundaries of the nominated property. The verbal boundary description must actually describe the boundaries and not merely describe the location. Do the quarter sections given in the VBD actually define a portion of the resource boundaries? If not, the boundaries must be described more precisely. Also, the nomination does not clearly explain the decision to nominate 20 acres along with the house. While we would not want to discourage the nomination of 20 acres, this amount of acreage seems to encompass something more than simply the "house and its immediate setting." In the Boundary Justification section, or on a continuation sheet amended to section 7 or 8, please provide a brief explanation of your decision to nominate 20 acres.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or comments regarding the recommendations listed above (202-343-9547).

Bruce Noble, Historian
National Register

87002152

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Bemis, Polly House
Idaho County
IDAHO

Substantive Review

NOV 20 1987

Working No. _____

Fed. Reg. Date: 2/7/89

Date Due: 3/4/88

Action: ACCEPT 3-4-88

RETURN

REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments: *The Polly Bemis House is significant under criterion C as Idaho's only inventoried example of whipsawn lumber used in log cabin construction. The property is also significant under criterion A because its occupancy by Polly Bemis indicates that Chinese women were ~~received~~ more favorably in Idaho after 1920 than had been the case fifty years before. This property dates from a later, different, and important era, and provides Idaho's best illustration of Chinese women during that time.*

Recom./Criteria Accept - A, C
Reviewer Noble
Discipline Historian
Date 3/4/88
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection



Bemis, Polly, House

Riggins, Idaho vicinity

photograph by James P. Campbell

May 17, 1987

negative on file at Salmon River Resort Club,
Boise, Idaho

view from NE

photograph 1 of 3



Bemis, Polly, House

Riggins, Idaho, vicinity

photograph by James P. Campbell

May 17, 1987

negative on file at Salmon River

Resort Club, Boise, Idaho

view from

SE

photograph

2 of 3



Bemis, Polly, House

Riggins, Idaho, vicinity

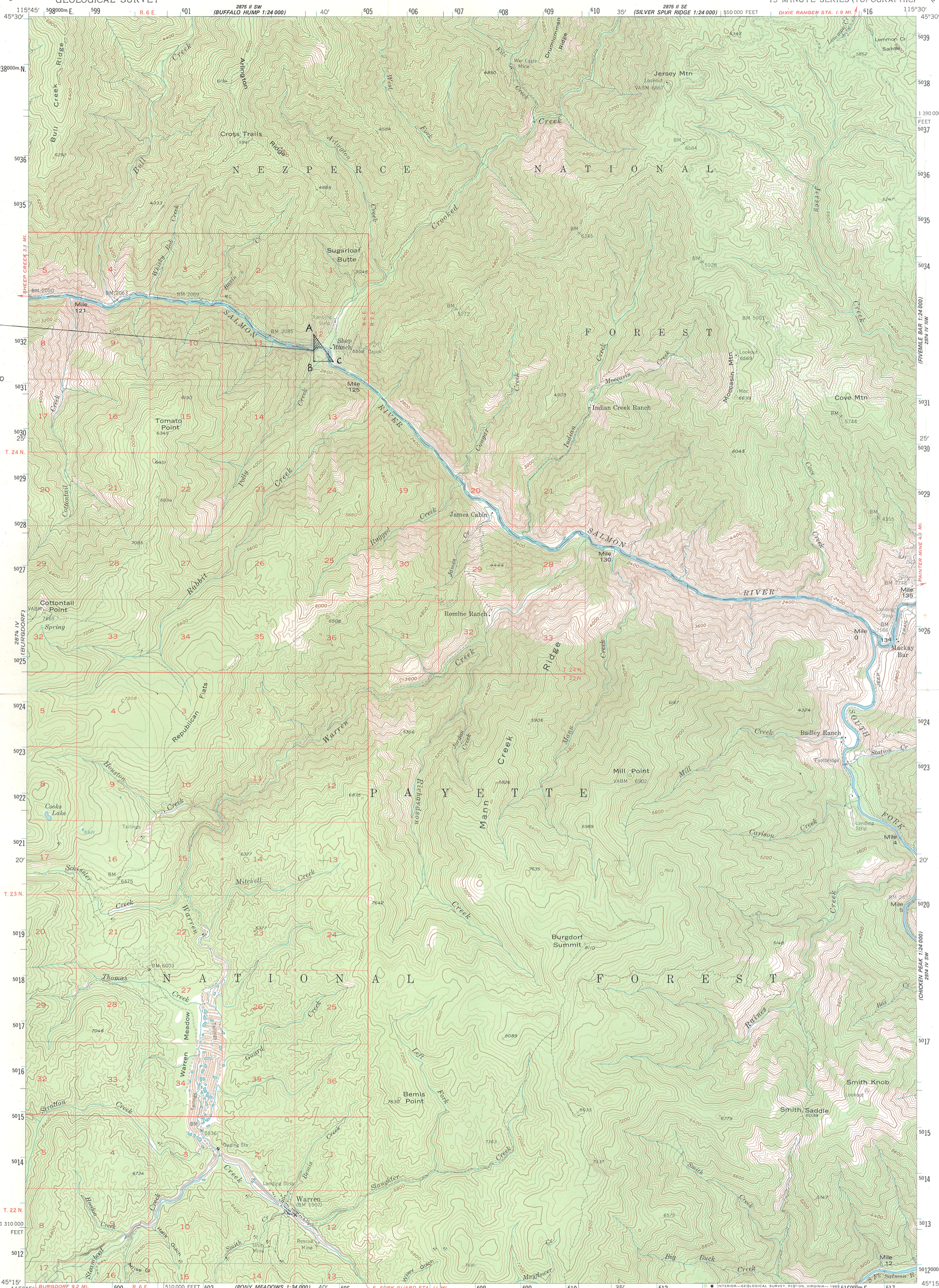
photograph by James P. Campbell

May 17, 1987

negative on file at Salmon River
Resort Club, Boise, Idaho

view from SW

photograph 3 of 3

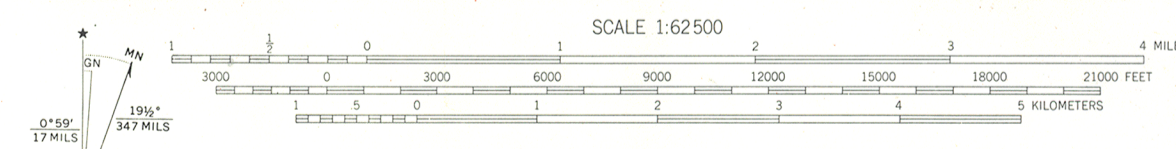


POLLY BEMIS HOUSE

A: 11/604005/5032015
B: 11/604005/5031550
C: 11/604045/5031550

WARREN, IDAHO, QUAD 1:62,500

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography from aerial photographs by multilex methods
Aerial photographs taken 1948. Field check 1956
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Idaho coordinate system, west zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 11, shown in blue
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 15 meters north and 75 meters east
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 80 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

WARREN, IDAHO
N4515-W11530/15
1956
DMA 2874 I-SERIES V793

11/20/17



Salmon River Resort Club

On the 'River of No Return'

October 16, 1987

Thomas J. Green
Preservation Officer
210 Main St.
Boise, Idaho 83702

Dear Mr. Green:

Thank you for your letter of September 23, 1987. I am pleased to know that the Polly Bemis Cabin will be considered by the Idaho State Historical Sites Review Board for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places on October 23, 1987.

After several years of restoration under the direction of Arthur Hart and Fred Walters, I feel the cabin is very worthy of nomination and would urge the Board to consider it.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jim Campbell
President
Salmon River Resort Club and the
Polly Bemis Homestead

JC/rd

cc: Cort Conley

Dr. David L. Crowder
Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer
210 Main St.
Boise, Idaho 83702
208-334-3890



Resubmission

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CECIL D. ANDRUS, Governor

Archaeology/Oral History
210 Main St.
Boise, Idaho 83702
208-334-3847, 3863

Museum
610 N. Julia Davis Dr.
Boise, Idaho 83702
208-334-2120

Library and Archives
610 N. Julia Davis Dr.
Boise, Idaho 83702
208-334-3356

Old Idaho Penitentiary
2445 Old Penitentiary Rd.
Boise, Idaho 83712
208-334-2844

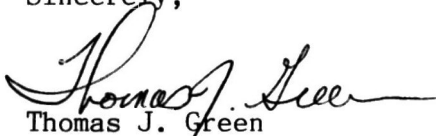
January 15, 1988

Carol Shull, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Carol:

Enclosed is a National Register nomination for the Polly Bemis House, Idaho County, Idaho. The nomination was returned to our office for additional information. Concerning the historic significance of the property, your reviewer offered the erroneous suggestion that the property is unrepresentative of Idaho social history. Chinese women had an experience very different after 1920 from their reception a half century earlier. This property dates from a later, different, and important era, and provides our best illustration of Chinese women during that era. Editorial modifications to clarify this aspect of the property's significance is provided on the enclosed continuation sheet.

Sincerely,


Thomas J. Green
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

Enclosure



JAN 19 1988