

## JORDAN HOT SPRINGS RESORT (CA TUL 500 H)

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### ABSTRACT

Jordan Hot Springs is a small backcountry resort located within the boundaries of the Golden Trout Wilderness of the southern Sierra Nevada. The Special Use Permit for the resort is scheduled to be terminated in 1990 and the locality restored to its natural state, necessitating an historical evaluation. Analysis of data derived from documentary and archival research, oral interviews, and on-the-ground inspections has demonstrated that the property is unique as a center of historic activity in the early part of the 20th century. In addition to being a popular vacation spot it functioned as a social and economic nexus for the surrounding cow camps and interacted closely with the Forest Service in land management activities. The physical plant offers interesting examples of vernacular architecture found so often in isolated settlements. Nineteenth century remains and nearby prehistoric remains pose intriguing questions for archaeological investigation.

### INTRODUCTION

The Golden Trout Wilderness of the southern Sierra Nevada was created in 1978. Within the boundaries of the wilderness area is an historic resort at Jordan Hot Springs. Jordan Hot Springs Resort is a small backcountry establishment located along Ninemile Creek, a tributary of the Kern River, Figures 1 and 2. At present the resort consists of a main building everyone calls "the lodge" and various other facilities for the care and feeding of people, horses, and mules, Figure 3. For most of this century the resort has been run by a permittee of the United States Forest Service. Because of the recent wilderness designation, the permit will not be renewed after it expires in 1990. The initial plan was to remove the buildings and restore the area to its so-called natural state after the permit terminated. Before that could be done mandatory historic preservation requirements had, of course, to be met and so an historic evaluation of the property was done (Reynolds 1988).

What was found is that Jordan Hot Springs has been far more than just a vacation spot. Long before historic use began in the mid-19th century, prehistoric peoples used the locality and today it is still considered part of the Monache Meadow sacred area by the modern Tubatulabal. Over the years, Jordan Hot Springs developed from a prehistoric seasonal encampment to a vacation spot in the Wilderness. Along the way it also became a nexus of historic activity on the Kern Plateau in the early part of the 20th century. During the period of significance, 1915 to 1938, Jordan was a popular resort for hunters from Southern California, functioned as a social and economic center for the surrounding cow camps, and interacted closely with the Forest Service in land management activities.

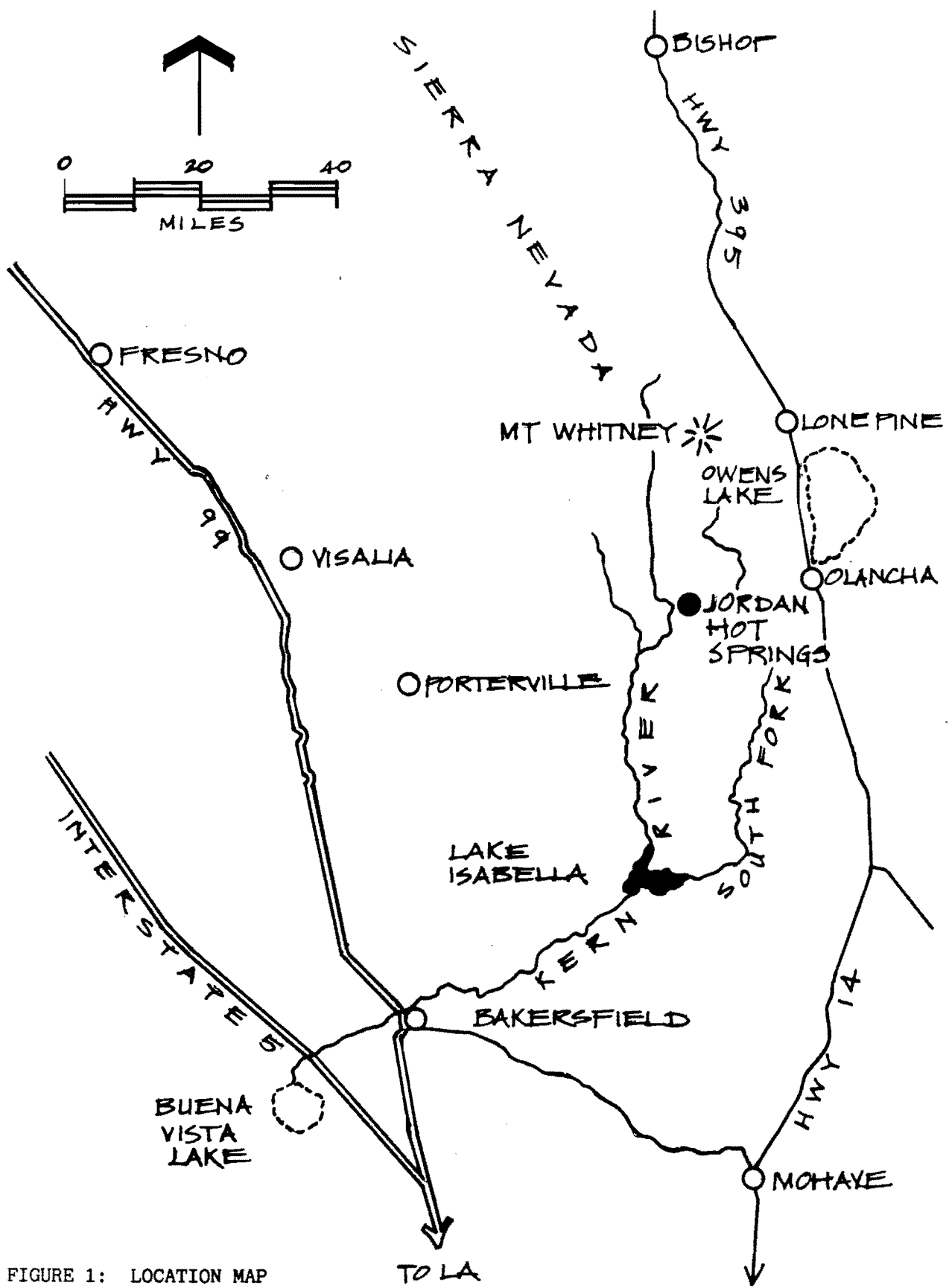


FIGURE 1: LOCATION MAP

## THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The original documents deling with the relationship between Jordan Hot Springs and the National Forests have, unfortunately, been lost. Fortunately, the Inyo and Sequoia National Forests' Cultural Resources Files and Forest History Files contained presidential proclamations, maps, old photographs, and other documents that were useful in establishing the history of Jordan. Administration of the area was originally under the Sierra Forest Reserve. After the Reserve was divided into Forests, it came under the jurisdiction of the Sequoia National Forest. It has switched back and forth between the Sequoia and the Inyo at least twice since 1908. Since the establishment of the Golden Trout Wilderness in 1978, it has been administered by the Inyo.

Inyo and Tulare County histories (Anonymous 1891; Chalfant 1933; Menefee and Dodge 1913; Mitchell 1983; Small 1926), and area specific histories (Johnson in Theodoratus et al. 1984; Larson n.d.; Otter 1963; Reid 1983) provided the contextual history and some of the specific details regarding Jordan Hot Springs.

An investigation of California hot springs was conducted by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS) in the early part of the century. Although brief, the observations made by the field worker, Gerald Waring, during this survey have provided an important time marker in developing the history of Jordan Hot Springs. He found fourteen hot springs along Ninemile Creek, four of which had been excavated to form bathing pools. In addition, Waring (1915:53) noted that:

...although the locality is remote, there are usually parties of campers at the springs throughout the summer. A grove of trees and a convenient meadow make it a very good camping ground, and an old log cabin and rude tables to show that it has long been a camper's resort.

As is the case with so many of the properties we evaluate, the bulk of the information about Jordan Hot Springs itself came from letters, interviews, and family documents. The reminiscences of the folks who lived and worked in the mountains are invaluable and warrant some further discussion.

Bob Burkhardt was the permittee at Jordan from 1972 to 1981. Mr. Burkhardt grew up in the Kernville area and spent a lot of time in the mountains. He had a fair amount of information, most of it based on hearsay, and old photographs of the place. The photos are all black and white and none of them are labeled. Based on other information, however, many of the pictures could be generally dated and were useful for comparative purposes.

At the time of this writing, Bill Carrasco was sixty seven years old. His family had cow camps on the Kern Plateau. The first time he went to Jordan Hot Springs was 1927 when he was seven years old. The family would go in to take the hot baths and visit with people there. He remembers it as a "landmark", a busy place called Jordan Junction. "Always lots of people there. Strings of mules going through there steady. And they packed in from the other side, too. It was, I'd say at that time, by god, it was a mass!" He recalls a store and that packers from Lone Pine would

bring in groceries "and stuff". For the return trip they would back-haul lumber that had been milled at Jordan. As a child he can remember the pack trains with the lumber going out past his family's camp.

William F. "Hardrock" Jordan, a descendent of John Jordan, passed away several years ago. An unpublished manuscript he wrote about the building of the Jordan Trail provided quite a bit of useful information.

Ethel Olivas was born in 1908 in Lone Pine and, like Bill Carrasco, spent her summers growing up in the mountains. When she was 10 or 11, she was staying with her aunt and uncle at their cow camp up Red Rock Creek, about three miles north of Jordan. That summer they went to a dance at the resort. Mrs. Olivas remembers Jordan at that time as a big resort with an outside dance floor. In 1938 she and her husband, Henry Olivas, began construction on a cabin in Monache Meadows. The logs for it were milled at Jordan Hot Springs.

Maurice Parker was 71 years old when he and his wife sent me a letter with their recollections. From 1920 to 1971 the Parker family camped at the public campground east of the resort. Mr. Parker first went into Jordan at the age of seven in 1923. A store was there that had been in service for several years. According to his recollection, the Forest Service required the permittee to maintain a store and to carry mail out once a week. When Mr. Parker was a teenager, he and his friends sometimes carried the mail out as it was fun for the boys and spared the men a trip.

Clarence Purnel was the permittee from 1941 to 1964. In 1941 he, his brother Elmo, and Tom Mader bought Jordan from a Mr. Simmons, a realtor in Whittier, California. The resort was not in operation at that time. When Mader died, Mr. Purnel bought his share and the Purnels ran the place under their own permit until 1964 when they sold it to Dr. Reginald Stocking. After selling, Mr. and Mrs. Purnel stayed and ran the place for two more years. The resort was closed during Purnel's tenure for a couple of years during the second world war. Mr. Purnel also had much second hand information to share.

Clyde Robinson is President of the Foundation for the Kern Valley Indians and was the Chairperson of the Kern River Indian Council until recently. He was born in 1924, and raised in the Kern Valley. As a young man he worked as a cowboy in the mountains. Mr. Robinson recalls that one of the original buildings at Jordan was used as a drop where people could send in mail and provisions for others to pick up. But Jordan Hot Springs has another, deeper meaning for him and his people: "I have been told by my ancestors that Jordan Hot Springs and the area surrounding it are part of the Monache Meadow sacred grounds" (Robinson n.d.).

Ron Wermuth (n.d.), the current Chair of the Kern River Indian Council and a tradition Tubatulabal Medicine Man, corroborates this and additionally states that Native Americans continue to use the area for religious purposes.

#### THE JORDAN TRAIL

As with so many places in California, the historic development of Jordan Hot Springs began with the discovery of precious metals. In 1860 gold and silver were found in the Coso Range east of the Owens Valley. In

July of that year the Alta California reported that assays from Coso samples yielded \$1,226.59 worth of silver and \$20.45 worth of gold per ton of ore (Chalfant 1933:129-130).

Nearly all of the miners heading for the new lode departed Visalia. Men on foot and horse or mule made their way over the mountains as best they could. Wagons perforce went the long way around. It is no surprise, then, that immediately on the heels of the new discovery came the call for a direct route over the Sierra (Chalfant 1933:129-130).

In the summer of 1861 John Jordan blazed a trail from Visalia to Olancho on the then existing western shore of Owens Lake, Figure 2. He had Native Americans on his work crew and in many places the approach they took followed aboriginal trails. Two routes were blazed that spring and summer, splitting at the Kern River. The trail up Ninemile Creek and by Jordan Hot Springs was called the "early trail"; this is what we know of today as the Jordan Trail. The other route was never completed (Jordan n.d.). In the fall of that year, Jordan formed a corporation and petitioned the Tulare County Board of Supervisors for a franchise to build a toll trail from Visalia to the Owens Valley. In 1862 the charter was granted, with the added proviso that the trail would be widened into the much needed wagon road. Tragically, Jordan was drowned in the Kern River that next summer (Chalfant 1933; Jordan n.d.; Larson n.d.; Menefee and Dodge 1913; Mitchell 1983).

In 1863, a subscription of \$1600 was raised in Visalia and the Jordan Trail was completed by G. W. Warner (Larson n.d.; Menefee and Dodge 1913). The initial plan to turn the Jordan Trail into a toll road was never realized. In 1864 the McFarland Toll Road Company completed the road over Greenhorn Mountain and Walker Pass, thereby relieving the pressure to turn the Jordan Trail into a wagon road (Chalfant 1933; Jordan n.d.).

The same year the Greenhorn summit road was built, the famous Wheeler Expedition traveled over the Jordan Trail during the course of its explorations (Otter 1963). But the greater part of the trail's use was by anonymous miners, settlers, and traders. According to Small (1926) many of the trails leading into the mountains connected up with the Jordan Trail. It was an important link between the Owens Valley and the Central Valley, and between the settlements in the mountains and the valley centers. Jordan Hot Springs, as a stop-over on an important trail, was on its way to becoming a center of activity on the Kern Plateau.

#### HISTORIC THEMES REPRESENTED AT JORDAN HOT SPRINGS

##### Recreation

The most important historic theme represented by the standing buildings at Jordan Hot Springs is recreation. Recreational use of the Sierra Nevada came about almost as quickly as the discovery of gold (Reid 1983). By the late nineteenth century backpacking and hiking in the remote southern Sierra became popular. The Jordan Trail was used by visitors on foot and horse, including some Sierra Club outings (Larson n.d.).

It is not certain precisely when Jordan Hot Springs became a vacation spot. By the early 20th century, it was a destination for tourists and by 1916, at the latest, it had become a commercial enterprise (Carrasco n.d.; Parker n.d.; Sequoia National Forest History Files; Waring 1915).

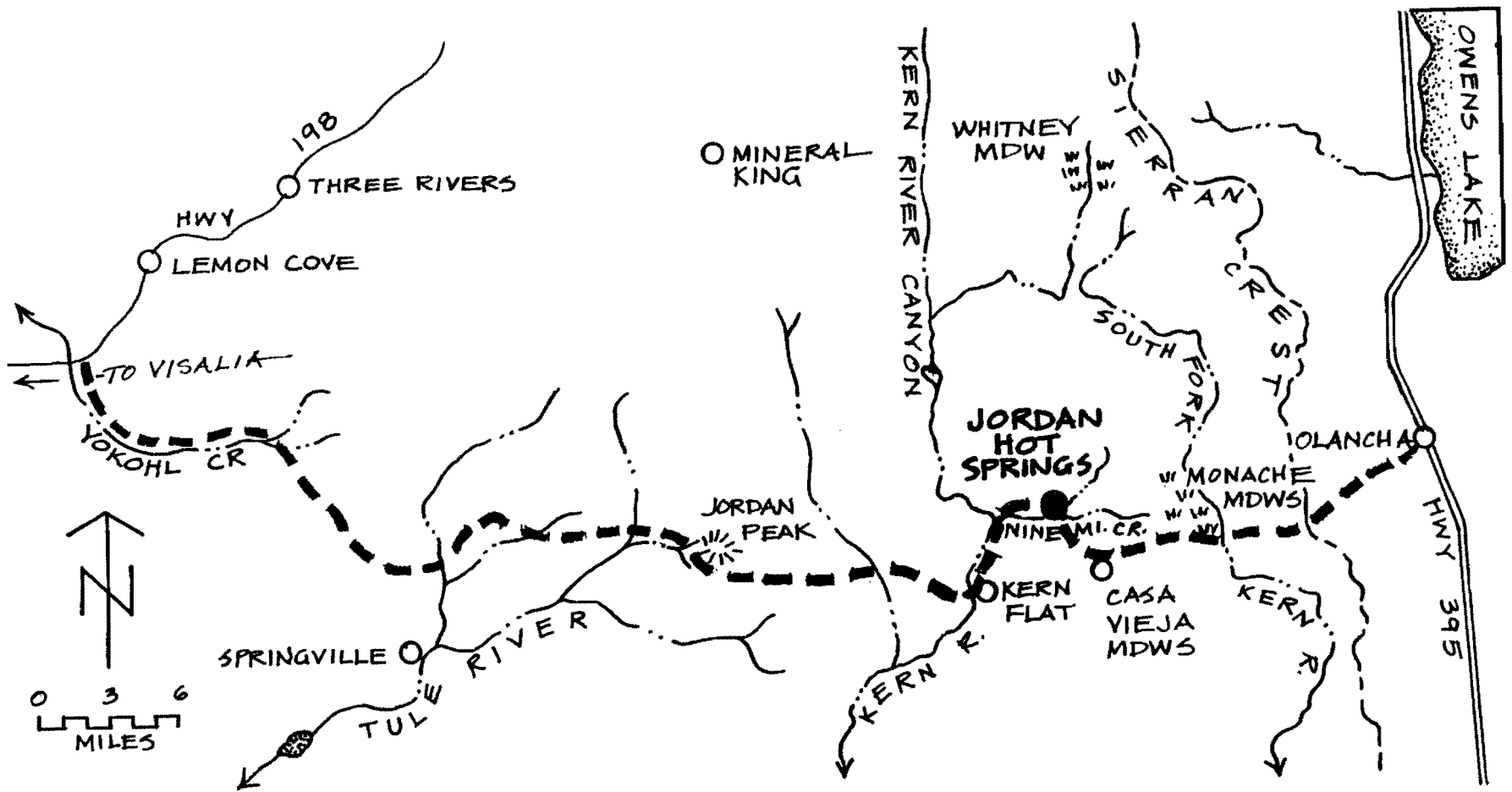


FIGURE 2: THE JORDAN TRAIL

### Federal Land Management

Another theme represented at Jordan Hot Springs is Federal land management. In fact, without the requirements of the Forest Service that the permittee maintain a store and carry out mail (Parker n.d.; Wermuth n.d.), it is an open question whether Jordan would have become the center that it did.

Officially, Jordan Hot Springs came under the administration of the Forest Service when it was created; however, the earliest evidence we have of Federal involvement with the place is a telephone line shown on the Sequoia National Forest's 1916 Recreation Map. The telephone line was put in by the Forest Service, as were all of the earliest telephone lines in the southern Sierra, to assist in fire detection and suppression (Johnson in Theodoratus et al. 1984). This is an illustration of the symbiotic relationship which existed at that time between the land managing agency and the resort. For example, folks from Jordan reported fires and fought them (Burkhardt n.d.; Carrasco n.d.), horses from Casa Vieja Ranger Station were shod at Jordan (Trimm n.d.), and the Forest Service used the sawmill to mill lumber for the bridge across Ninemile Creek (Purnel n.d.).

### The Cow Camp Era

The final theme associated with Jordan Hot Springs is seasonal livestock grazing. When the Forest Reserves were established in 1893, a systematic and sometimes bloody program of sheep removal was undertaken and gradually, those sheepmen who could switched to cattle. According to Johnson (in Theodoratus, et al. 1984:264):

The switch from sheep to cattle-grazing brought with it a marked change in land use in the southern Sierra. Cattle, unlike sheep, did not need the constant presence of a herdsman, and the cowboy, traveling by horse rather than on foot, had more rapid mobility. A cattleman could thus drive his stock to the mountains for the summer, and from a 'base camp' oversee the herd's well-being. With the herdsman's camp at a fixed location the whole family could move together to the mountains for the summer.

This led to the rise of a clearly delineated historic episode that we can refer to as the cow camp era. Johnson (in Theodoratus et al. 1984:319) places this era between ca. 1900 and 1950. Looking at a map of the southern Sierra, one is struck by the number of places labeled "Cow Camp". The meadows of the Kern Plateau all had their camps, and the folks from these camps would come to Jordan to visit, attend dances, use the baths, and pick up or drop off provisions and mail. Cabins in many of the camps in the area were made of lumber milled at Jordan after the sawmill was brought in (Burkhardt n.d.; Carrasco n.d.; Olivas n.d.; Parker n.d.; Robinson n.d.).

### CONSTRUCTION EPISODES

The evidence gathered from oral and documentary research, and from on-the-ground observations indicate that there were four separate episodes at Jordan Hot Springs. The first three were construction episodes during which most of the standing buildings at the resort were built. The fourth episode has been primarily maintenance.

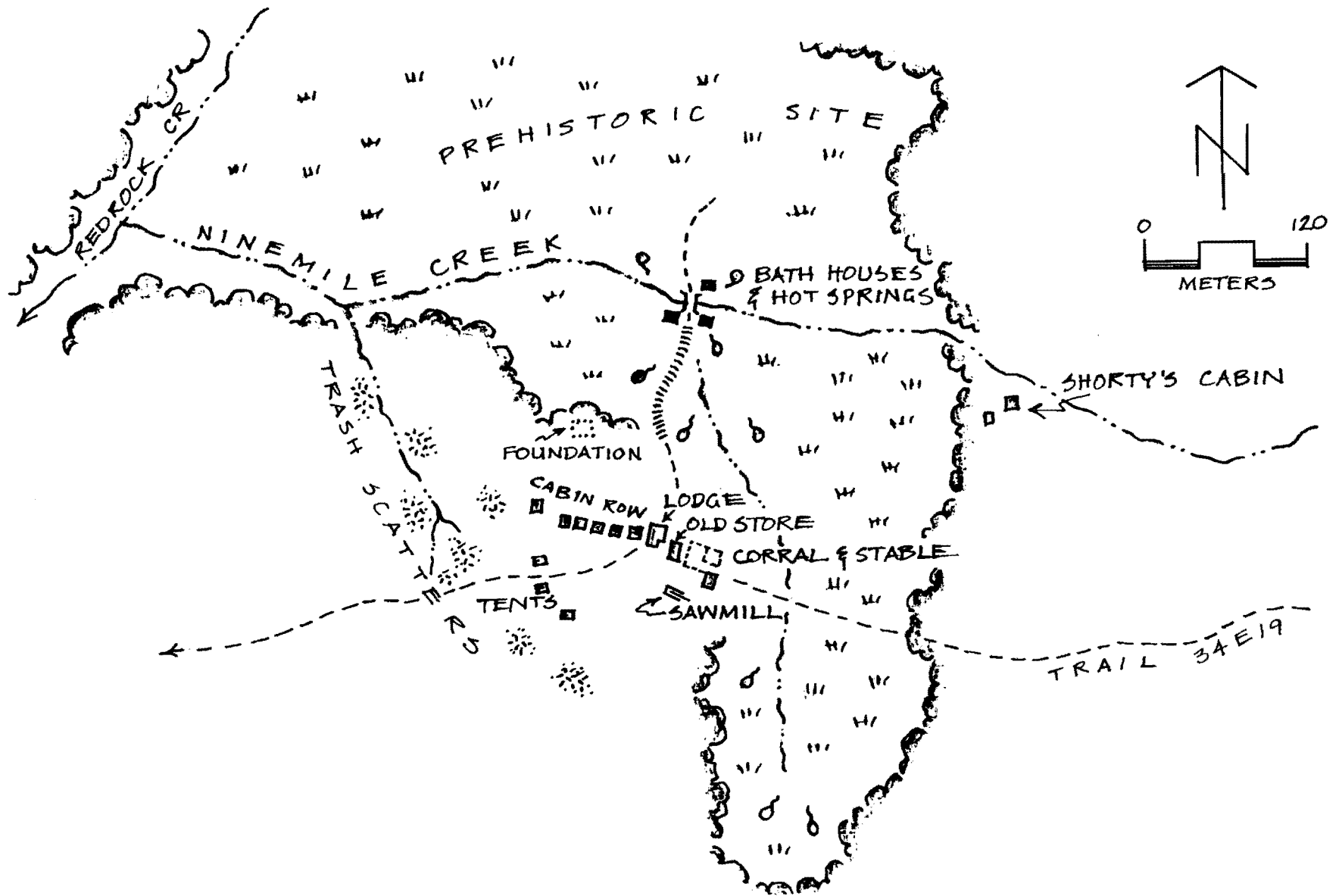


FIGURE 3: JORDAN HOT SPRINGS



Episode #1, Pre-1915: Log Construction. This episode saw construction of the rock foundations in the front pasture and possibly the original lodge.

Episode #2, ca. 1915 - 1923: Shake Construction. In this episode the old store, the original tack shed, and the original cabins were built.

Episode #3, ca. 1925 - 1938: Milled Lumber Construction. During this episode the lodge, the tent platforms, and Cabin #6 were added.

Episode #4, ca. 1940 - present. Maintenance. The present layout of the resort was established by this time and, with a few minor exceptions, all of the standing buildings had been erected. Maintenance is the primary activity from here on.

Nineteen fifteen was chosen as the dividing line between the first and second construction episodes because it was in 1915 that the USGS published the monograph cited above (Waring 1915). Assuming that Waring's visit was made a year or two before the monograph was published, it was a decade and a half into the twentieth century before the resort was really developed.

It was sometime in this period that the first building(s) is said to have been erected. In the front pasture are some enigmatic stone foundations. They measure approximately 12 by 15 meters and are divided lengthwise by a floor joist. There is an opening, as if for a door, on the northeast corner.

According to Purnel (n.d.):

Before [John] Jordan drowned, he and his two sons had started a lodge in the front pasture. His sons were going to stay there all winter and build it but one of them got blood poisoning in his hand and they had to leave. Some of the foundation is still there.

Burkhardt (n.d.), on the other hand, was told that the foundations were built in 1870 and that there is a map or plans with that date in the Tulare County Courthouse. When the county offices were visited in May of 1987, no one there had any knowledge of such a document. Burkhardt (n.d.) also stated that the first lodge was built in the 1890's and was made of split logs. This lodge subsequently burned down.

Waring (1915) reported a "rude log cabin". It is possible that he was referring to a structure which stood on the old foundations. The Inyo's 1923 Tract Map indicates an "unfinished log house" in the same spot. To what degree it was unfinished, or perhaps decayed, is unknown. Given the uncertainty surrounding the earliest remains at the resort, this feature more than any other invites further investigation.

On the Sequoia National Forest's 1916 Recreation Map Jordan Hot Springs is shown with a telephone line running into it. Ethel Olivas (n.d.) recalls that when she went to a dance at Jordan in 1918 or 1919, the shake buildings were in place. The memories of a child of 10 or 11 might be brought into question but certainly by 1923, as shown on the Jordan Hot

Springs Tract Map, the original shake buildings were built. The Tract Map shows fencelines, two "bath houses" down by Ninemile Creek, an "unfinished log house" in the front pasture, fencelines to the east and south of the resort and a ditch leading to the resort from an unnamed tributary of Ninemile Creek. The resort itself is shown as containing six buildings: three "shake cabins", a "canvas kitchen", a "shake store", and a building simply labeled "shake". Altogether, this brackets the second construction episode as occurring after Waring's visit and before the time when the resort was transferred to the Inyo. There is no doubt that what is today Cabin #1 was built at this time. (The cabins are numbered 1 through 6 with #1 immediately to the west of the lodge and #6 the furthest away, Figure 3. Cabins #2 and #3 are more problematical. A 1924 photograph shows the cabin row as ending where Cabin #1 now stands. The most likely scenario, based on the degree of similarity of construction between all three cabins is that the other two were moved to their present location in the next construction episode. The construction of the cabins is similar to that of the old store, described below.

The "shake store" is referred to today as the old store. It is currently used as a store room and bunk house for the staff. The hand-made shakes it was originally roofed with are underneath the corrugated roofing; more or less intact on the east side of the roof, but nearly gone on the west side. The siding is also made of shake nailed on with wire nails. The whole building is a mish-mash of hand-hewn beams and milled lumber that were probably added as repairs were made. The door jambs are of hand-hewn beams; the hinges are hand carved and consist of two eyes, one of which is the end of the crossbeam of the door, and the other is attached to the wall, joined by a peg. The floorboards are very rough, but this may be the result of age. They are regular enough in size to suggest that they were milled. If this is the case, they were either packed in when the old store was originally built, or added when the sawmill was brought in ca. 1925. Regardless, the floor presents another interesting bit of carpentry as the floor boards are held in place not with nails or spikes but with hand-carved wooden pegs.

The third construction episode began ca. 1925 when Walter Dow, who owned the Dow Hotel in Lone Pine, purchased the lease at Jordan in order to expand his business into the back country (Carrasco n.d.). At this time the sawmill--in ruins today--was brought in, as was the water wheel which ran the washing machine. The old washing machine was a sort of a drum attached by a flywheel to the pelton wheel. The dining room of the lodge was added to the front of the canvas covered kitchen and walls were added to the kitchen during this period. It was not until Purnell took over in 1941 that the kitchen part of the lodge was finally roofed over (Burkhardt n.d.; Purnell n.d.).

Today, the lodge is the focus of activity at the resort. It is a two-room building (kitchen and dining room) sided with vertical milled lumber. In some cases the bark was left on the outside of the boards. The lodge has an almost museum-like sense to it because of all the historic artifacts that have accumulated in and around it. An old telephone box can be seen near the kitchen door, and inside in the dining room is a 1930s Forest Service field telephone next to a treadle sewing machine. In the kitchen is a beautiful old SHIPMATE castiron stove that was supposedly

brought around the Horn and packed into Jordan on some indeterminate number of mules.

At this time the tent platforms (Cabins #4 and #5), and Cabin #6 were all built from lumber milled at Jordan. The platforms had clapboard sides; Cabin #6 is board-and-batten.

It is not known how long Walter Dow ran the resort. The Parkers (n.d.) say that by 1935 a Walt Gregg, who had pack stations at Quaking Aspen and Lloyd Meadow, had the permit. The Inyo National Forest Map for 1934 shows landing fields at Monache Meadows, Templeton Meadow, and Tunnel. According to nearly all of the informants, people from southern California would fly into these air fields and then pack down to Jordan Hot Springs. People would also pack up into Jordan from both the east and west sides of the Sierra.

The sawmill was still in operation in 1938 when Ethel and Henry Olivas built their cabin in Monache Meadows (Olivas n.d.). This is the last known use of it before the Purnels took over in 1941.

The present episode began when Clarence Purnel, along with his brother Elmo and Tom Mader bought Jordan from a Mr. Simmons, a realtor from Whittier, California (Purnel n.d.). The Purnels held the permit for twenty-three years. While there, they restored the water wheel to run the old washing machine and used it for several years until a generator was brought in. The generator ran lights, a deep freeze, and a new, electrical washing machine. They also restored the sawmill used it for awhile. Among other things, the Forest Service milled lumber on it to build the bridge across Ninemile Creek. By this time mail and some of the supplies were flown into Monache Meadows from Lone Pine (Purnel n.d.).

In 1964, Reginald Stocking got the permit. The Purnels stayed on and ran the resort for a couple more years, and they and members of their family have continued to visit Jordan to the present time (Purnel n.d.). After the Purnels left, Dr. Stocking did not run Jordan as a resort. He used it instead as a kind of private retreat for himself and his acquaintances. Pat Trimm (n.d.) and others remember having to camp out at "Shorty's Cabin" during Stocking's tenure.

When Bob Burkhardt took over in 1972 he and his wife re-opened it as a resort and operated it until 1981. (Burkhardt n.d.) During this period of time the Golden Trout Wilderness was established and the whole direction of land management in the area changed. In 1981, the permit passed to the Bob and Tiese Quinn; today it is held by Jim and Julie Porter. The resort as it stands today is shown in Figure 3.

#### EVALUATION

Jordan Hot Springs Resort began as a destination for people coming into the high country for recreation. Upon interaction with the Forest Service, it developed into a center, or nexus, of historic activity on the Kern Plateau. More than any other settlement in the area--cow camp, ranger station, or resort--it exemplifies all of the diverse cultural elements and historic events that occurred in that area in the first half of the 20th century.

Jordan also contains two extant styles of vernacular architecture; buildings made of poles and shakes (construction episode #2) and buildings made of lumber milled on site (construction episode #3). The term "vernacular architecture" is used to mean a building not designed by an architect but one that was built to someone's mental template of what a cabin, a barn, or a lodge should look like (National Park Service 1987). In isolated settings, these kinds of buildings often contain examples of self-sufficiency. Needed items are made of materials on hand as, for instance, the hand-carved wooden hinges in the old store and in the shake cabins.

Several research domains can be profitably addressed at Jordan Hot Springs with further research. These range from Native American-Euroamerican relationships to success and failure on the American frontier, and are detailed in the Historical Evaluation of Jordan Hot Springs (CA Tul 500) (Reynolds 1988). Two are of particular interest to archaeologists and will be outlined here.

The first research domain deals with the 19th century use of the locality. This can be addressed by archaeological investigations of the older portions of the trash scatters located to the west of the resort and at the old foundations in the front pasture. The age and function of the building which stood on the foundations are unknown. Was it intended as a residence, a way-station, or a recreational lodge? Or was there some other use? So far we have no knowledge of how Jordan Hot Springs fit in with the mining and trapping that was going on in that part of the woods in the 19th century. Could the earlier portion of the site be associated with activities that are no longer apparent or remembered? Was Jordan Hot Springs important to the sheepmen who proceeded the cattlemen? We do know that the Jordan Trail was used on the "great round" that the Basque and other sheep herders followed.

The second research domain is a cross-cultural comparison of land use. It is well known that a good spot is a good spot. Most ranger stations, campgrounds, resorts, and ranches are located on top of prehistoric sites. Despite the fact that this phenomenon is well known, it has not been systematically investigated. At Jordan Hot Springs we have an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast land use strategies. And also to inquire what effect prehistoric settlement patterns had on land use choices made by Euroamericans; after all, it was Native Americans who led John Jordan to Jordan Hot Springs.

The obvious physical commonalities at Jordan Hot Springs are the location along a major trans-Sierran route, the attraction of the hot springs, and the good hunting and fishing. On the other hand there are some striking differences. The prehistoric site is located on the north side of Ninemile Creek at its confluence with Redrock Creek, in an open area that receives full sunlight. The historic site is located on the south side of the creek, in the shade, near wet meadows with plenty of water and forage for stock animals.

In summary, then, Jordan Hot Springs is an historical district representing the theme of Recreation. During the period of significance (1915 - 1938) it functioned as a resort, a partner in land management with the Forest Service, and as a seasonal social/economic center for the Kern

Plateau. It contains intact examples of two styles of vernacular architecture from this period. Regional research questions can be addressed by further study of the resort and the adjacent prehistoric site. The property possesses integrity and had local (southern Sierra Nevada) significance under National Register of Historic Places criteria a, c, and d (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations Part 60.4).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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