

# DATA SHEET

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Texas
COUNTY:	Brewster
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	APR 14 1975

### 1. NAME

COMMON:  
Homer Wilson Ranch

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Blue Creek Ranch (Oak Canyon-Blue Creek Ranch)

### 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
(See continuation sheet)

CITY OR TOWN:  
Big Bend National Park

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
16th District - Texas

STATE: Texas	CODE 48	COUNTY: Brewster	CODE 043
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### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

### 4. AGENCY

U. S. Government, National Park Service, Department of Interior

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)  
Southwest Regional Office

CITY OR TOWN:  
Santa Fe,

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P. O. Box 728

STATE:  
New Mexico

CODE  
35

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Brewster County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Alpine

STATE:  
Texas

CODE  
48

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: \_\_\_\_\_

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
DC

CODE  
11



STATE: Texas

COUNTY: Brewster

ENTRY NUMBER: APR 14 1975

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Original Appearance: Although Homer Wilson maintained Oak Canyon as his headquarters, he "erected at this location (Blue Creek) a secondary and very substantial ranch house..."<sup>1</sup> "This house was 24 x 60 feet with 16 x 60-foot screened porch on the south side of the house. The house proper consisted of 2 bedrooms, a kitchen, and a large living room near the middle of the north wall. There is a large fireplace in which the mantle is made by very artistic placement of long slabs of stone placed horizontally. Some of these slabs are up to 8 feet in length and placed in a colorful arrangement. The double roof is supported separately by large poles. The ceiling is made of reeds in the pattern that has been used for centuries by the inhabitants of the river. The story goes that Mrs. Wilson wanted the reed ceiling with the adobe mud on top, to which Mr. Wilson agreed. However, since such a roof would leak, he used a 2-inch concrete mixture in place of the adobe mud and above that a sheet metal roof, thus making the house leak-proof. This arrangement not only accomplished its purpose but in addition made the house much cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, as it created an air space between the metal roof and the ceiling. It was a very satisfactory means of insulation. The interior walls carry little if any support for the roof, as this was done by sturdy poles set in cement and holding up the weight of the ceiling and roof. Practically all materials for the construction of the house came from the area. The stone, sand, and gravel came from Blue Creek Canyon, the timber from the Chisos Mountains, and the reed from the nearby Rio Grande. Thus the Blue Creek line camp ranch house may be said to be indigenous to the area.

The floor of the house was made of well-selected flags, while that of the porch was concrete. In addition to the house, there was in the Blue Creek complex a small 1-room house for living quarters for additional ranch help, a small storeroom, an outside barbecue fireplace, a cistern to catch and hold fresh rainwater, a circular corral with a snubbing post for the training of young horses, and a nearby dipping vat and chute. There was also a chemical outhouse, a small chicken house, and a combination rock and tin structure likely used for the storage of salt and other equipment and tools. Access to the Blue Creek house was over a reasonably well-maintained dirt road which came up the valley from Oak Canyon along the flats between Burro Mesa and the Chisos Mountains and then over the ridge into Blue Creek Canyon."<sup>2</sup>

Present Appearance: Of the structures described above, all but the chicken coop still remain. Except for the storeroom and toilet, which are in poor condition, all are "structurally sound, but deteriorating in detail."<sup>3</sup>

1 Casey, Clifford B. Soldiers, Ranchers, and Miners in the Big Bend (National Park Service, 1969) p. 165.

2 Ibid.

3 Brown, William E. & Wauer, Roland H., Historic Resources Management Plan, Big Bend National Park (National Park Service, 1968) p. 22.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1929-1943**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal             | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric            | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation           |   |   | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Big Bend country is considered to be "the last outpost of large-scale ranching in Texas."<sup>1</sup> "The Oak Canyon-Blue Creek Ranch of Homer Wilson was, without doubt, the best example of ranching within what is now the Big Bend National Park."<sup>2</sup> "While Oak Canyon remained headquarters for the entire period of their operation, Blue Creek and the Blue Creek area became the heart of the ranch and its productive activity."<sup>3</sup>

Homer Wilson was born in Del Rio, Texas, in 1892, studied mining and petroleum engineering at Missouri School of Mines, served in Europe during World War I, and returned to the Rio Grande country after the war. In 1929 he purchased ranch land west of the Chisos Mountains, and ultimately expanded his holding to include 44 sections to operate this vast tract he established his home and headquarters at Oak Springs. Later he moved part of his operations to Blue Creek. Wilson developed the ranch and raised his family there during the years up to 1943 when he died suddenly. In 1942 he had deeded the land to the State of Texas during the early days of park land acquisition. The family moved from the ranch by the agreed deadline of January 1, 1945. As one of the largest ranches in the Big Bend area, the Wilson Ranch has local significance. Its structures along with the natural setting provide opportunities to interpret twentieth-century ranch life for this area.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Casey, Clifford B. Soldiers, Ranchers, and Miners in the Big Bend (National Park Service, 1969), p.143
- 2 Ibid., p. 199
- 3 Ibid., p. 165





9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Casey, Clifford B. Soldiers, Ranchers, and Miners in the Big Bend;  
National Park Service, U. S. Dept. of Interior, 1969.

Brown, William E. and Wauer, Roland H. Historic Resources Management Plan,  
Big Bend National Park. National Park Service, U. S.  
Dept. of Interior, 1968.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds 29° 13' 10"	Degrees Minutes Seconds 103° 22' 10"	Degrees Minutes Seconds 29° 13' 10"	Degrees Minutes Seconds 103° 22' 10"		
NE	29° 13' 10"	103° 21' 40"				
SE	29° 12' 40"	103° 21' 40"				
SW	29° 12' 40"	103° 22' 10"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 200

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



NO  
UTM  
CD

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **David G. Battle, Historical Architect** DATE: **Feb. 1974**

BUSINESS ADDRESS: **Southwest Regional Office, National Park Service**

STREET AND NUMBER: **P. O. Box 728** PHONE: **(505) 988-6501**

CITY OR TOWN: **Santa Fe** STATE: **New Mexico** CODE: **35**

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:  
 Yes  
 No  
 None

*Luett Salinas*  
 State Liaison Officer Signature

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is  National  State

*Robert C. Cook* APR 2 1975  
 Federal Representative Signature Date  
 Deputy Assistant Secretary  
 Title

*AR Mortensen*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 4/14/75

ATTEST:  
*W. Hunter*  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date: **APR 9 1975**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE <b>TEXAS</b>	
COUNTY <b>BREWSTER</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	<b>APR 1 4 1975</b>

(Number all entries)

2. LOCATION

The Homer Wilson Blue Creek Ranch is located in Big Bend National Park, approximately 8 miles south of the Santa Elena Junction along Park Route 5. The ranch may be viewed from the highway at this point. Access to the structures is by foot for a distance of approximately one-fourth mile along the dirt road which originally lead to these structures, but which is now closed to vehicular traffic.

7. DESCRIPTION

Natural vegetation has begun to reclaim the area in the immediate vicinity of the buildings. The road has been blocked off at the new paved road to Santa Elena Canyon, and serves as a trail by way of which visitors can reach the structures on foot.

Most of the doors and windows are gone from the structures. All of the interior partitions and fixtures have been removed from the ranch house. In most other respects the various structures and the historical scene itself retain most of their original appearance.

