

# **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS FOR THE HORSETOOTH SAFETY OF DAMS PROJECT, LARIMER COUNTY, COLORADO: RESULTS OF DATA RECOVERY AT THREE HISTORIC SITES**

**FINAL**

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## Abstract

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Three historic properties are located below the normal pool level of Horsetooth Reservoir, one of several features of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project in Larimer County, Colorado . These sites have been exposed by the drawdown of the reservoir to repair the dams that impound Horsetooth Reservoir, which was constructed and is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation. Site **5LR9949** is a sandstone quarry with multiple features. Site **5LR9961** is a small trash dump with intact deposits. Site **5LR9974** is the site of the Wathen Ranch and second location of the Stout Post Office. In an effort to mitigate the potentially adverse effects that reservoir drawdown may have on these sites, URS Group, Inc. completed directed excavations at these three sites in October and November 2002.

Three trenches were excavated through a multi-room structure (Feature C) at 5LR9949. Portions of seven internal rooms were exposed in these trenches and hundreds of artifacts were collected. Analyses of the features and artifacts contained within these rooms suggest that the focus of activities in this portion of the site was industrial, but the workers brought prepared food items with them. A square feature in front of the room block was probed and determined to be a well.

The trash dump at 5LR9961 was bisected and one half removed. Excavations demonstrated that materials were dumped along the edge of a shallow slope, rather than in a pit. Analyses of the contents revealed that the deposits accumulated gradually over a period of about 40-50 years and the oldest artifacts are found on the bottom of the dump.

At Site 5LR9974, four trenches and several units were excavated. These excavations exposed the foundations of two buildings, possibly the “Stone House” and “Stone Shed” illustrated on historic maps, a small trash pile, and a buried occupational surface. Collected artifacts are representative of domestic activities for the period 1895-1920, even though the site was probably occupied from 1887 until the Horsetooth Dams were completed in 1949.

URS and the Eastern Colorado Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation hosted a Public Archaeology Day on November 9, 2002. About 30 people participated and witnessed firsthand the methods and results of intensive archaeological investigations at a historic site.

These investigations have confirmed that Sites 5LR9949, 5LR9961, and 5LR9974 are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion d (36 CFR 60.4), and potentially adverse effects to the sites have been mitigated. Additional data are quite likely to be recovered from Sites 5LR9949 and 5LR9974 and additional investigations could add to our knowledge of this period in Colorado history. The excavations have nearly exhausted the information potential of Site 5LR9961 and further work here is considered unnecessary.

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