

**DATA SHEET**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED SEP 30 1975  
DATE ENTERED MAY 6 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
\* \* Steptoe Battlefield Site  
AND/OR COMMON  
Steptoe Memorial State Park

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Southeastern outskirts of Rosalia  
CITY, TOWN  
Rosalia  
STATE  
Washington  
VICINITY OF  
#5 - Honorable Thomas S. Foley  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
COUNTY  
Whitman  
CODE  
53  
CODE  
075

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<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:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Multiple  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN  
STATE  
VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Whitman County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN  
Colfax  
STATE  
Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Vol. XII (Soldier and Brav  
DATE  
 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
National Park Service  
CITY, TOWN  
Washington, D. C.  
STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The retreat of the force under Colonel Steptoe in the spring of 1858 covered many miles and was in large part a running battle. This nomination is for the location of the force in its defended camps on the night of May 17 where it was surrounded and from which it subsequently escaped.

The property is located on a knoll about 150 feet above the floor of Pine Creek and just southeast of the town of Rosalia in the west half of the southwest quarter of Section 14, Township 20 North, Range 43 East. Steptoe arranged his forces over the entire summit of this rise in a series of rings; the largest and enclosing the others was about 1,000 feet in diameter and composed of dismounted skirmishers. This area is the basis for the present nomination.

Originally covered with native bunchgrass, the area is used today largely as grazing land. Appearing in the western half of the circle described above is Steptoe Memorial State Park, a small (3.9 acre) park with both deciduous and evergreen trees surrounding a circular grass lawn. The northwest corner of the park contains a gravelled road which circles an obelisk of Barre granite. This monument stands 25 feet in height and bears inscriptions on each of its four sides. The obelisk is surrounded by a low wrought-iron fence.

The 2.06 acre Steptoe Memorial Park was purchased by Rosalia citizens early in this century. A June 15, 1908 dedication ceremony was attended by some 2,200 Washingtonians, including Governor Albert Mead. The property was donated to the Esther Reed Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, who in turn transferred it to the Whitman County Commissioners in 1910. On June 14, 1914, the Esther Reed Chapter unveiled and dedicated the monument which now stands at the park. In 1950 the property was transferred to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and was expanded to include an access strip. The park apparently occupies that part of the camp site in which were located the provisions, pack animals and mounts.

There is little doubt that this site is the location of Steptoe's camp of May 17. Veterans of the retreat numbered among the punitive expedition sent into the same country under Colonel George Wright in late summer of 1858 and Wright's forces also included a topographical draftsman who recorded the area of the spring defeat in some detail. The draftsman would have as a resource those veterans of Steptoe's escape and his renderings show with great detail the distribution of forces on the knoll itself. His maps were reproduced as part of the U. S. Congressional Serial Set of the 35th Congress.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> _PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> _ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> _LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> _RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> _1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> _ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> _CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> _LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> _SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> _1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> _AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> _ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> _LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> _SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> _1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> _ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> _EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> _SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> _1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> _ART	<input type="checkbox"/> _ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> _MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> _THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> _EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> _TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> _1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> _INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> _POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> _INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES May 17, 1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On May 6, 1858 Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Steptoe, U. S. Army commander of Fort Walla Walla, marched north from the fort with a small armed force. The Steptoe command consisted of 158 mounted troops, several friendly Nez Perce Indians as guides, and two mounted howitzers. The purpose of the expedition was to meet the Palouse Indians and to inquire into the rumored depredations of settlers as well as other hostile actions near Walla Walla. In addition, Steptoe hoped to investigate rumored Indian harassments of whites in the Colville area.

After crossing the Snake River, Steptoe's force followed retreating Palouse Indians northward at a "leisurely" pace. On May 16, 1858 the troops, in Spokane Indian territory, were confronted with a jeering throng of some 600 to 1,200 warriors. Not only did the Indians outnumber the mounted troops, but the Hudson's Bay muskets of the Indians had a longer range than the muskets carried by most of the Steptoe command. The Spokanes felt that Steptoe was in their territory to annihilate them, and although he assured them otherwise, the Indians decided that Steptoe should not be permitted to cross the Spokane River, which lay to the north between the command and the Colville area. Also, the belligerent Indians were considering blocking the command's retreat across the Snake River to the south. Such action would have left the force isolated in hostile territory.

The Steptoe command continued to advance until an appropriate camp for that night was found. At that time a retreat was decided upon because further advance without the ability to cross the Spokane River was useless.

On May 17, 1858 the troops began a slow retreat. Mounted, hostile warriors from the Spokane, Palouse, Coeur d'Alene, and probably other tribes followed them. At that time Father Joseph Joret, S. J., of the Coeur d'Alene Mission arrived but was unable to calm the situation. Shortly after eight o'clock in the morning the Indians attacked.

The Steptoe strategy was to continue the retreat but to ensure that the troops always held strategic ground. For several hours the slow retreat was mixed with skirmishes, the din of gunfire, whoops of angered Indians, and occasional howitzer blasts. The Steptoe command attempted to gain Ingossomen or Tohotonimme Creek (present-day Pine Creek) but was unsuccessful. By early afternoon the weary soldiers took refuge atop a hill overlooking the creek valley. (Steptoe Memorial State Park is located on this hill.)

While the Steptoe command took cover in the bunchgrass and brush near the creek, the Indians surrounded the hill. By evening, when fighting had subsided, not more than

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Burns, Robert I. The Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966, pp. 199-230.

Manring, Benjamin F. Conquest of the Coeur d'Alenes, Spokanes and Palouses, Spokane: Inland Printing Co., 1912, PP. 30-251.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 18

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,1	47,2	3,2,5	5,2	3,0	6,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
B	1,1	47,2	6,2,5	5,2	3,0	6,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C	1,1	47,2	3,2,5	5,2	3,0	3,4,5
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Steptoe Battlefield Site, a circular site is encompassed in a square beginning at point "D" bearing SW 58 degrees, 250 feet from the SW corner of Steptoe Memorial State Park, in Section 14, T20N, R43E; thence due east 1000 feet; thence due north 1000 feet; thence 1000 feet due west and thence 1000 feet due south to the point of beginning, containing 18 acres more or less. The bearing given is a true bearing.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Based on information supplied by Nicholas J. Manring

ORGANIZATION

Whitman County Historical Society

DATE

November 25, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 95

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Garfield

STATE

Washington 99130

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Sub M. Skolick*

TITLE

State Conservator

DATE

September 15, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

10/1/76

*W. M. Skolick*

DATE

5/16/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*Charles Skolick*

DATE

5.5.76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Peltier, Jerome. Warbonnets and Epaulets, Montreal: Payette Radio Limited, 1971, pp. 63-289.

Phelps, Netta W. "Dedication of Steptoe Memorial Park", The Washington Historical Quarterly, II (July, 1908), pp. 344-351.

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three rounds of ammunition per soldier remained. The officers determined that an immediate continuation of the retreat was the only viable course of action.

While the dead and the howitzers were buried, light-colored horses were covered with dark blankets and loose buckles were adjusted in order to expedite an unnoticed escape. After a careful reconnaissance revealed no Indians along the south slopes, the command left the hill at ten o'clock in the evening. At approximately midnight the Indians attacked the summit only to find it deserted.

The Steptoe command continued, unmolested, until after ten o'clock the next evening. At that time the troops descended into the Snake River Canyon and encamped with some friendly Nez Perce Indians. On May 22 the Steptoe force returned to Fort Walla Walla with recorded losses of seven dead and thirteen wounded.

The Steptoe (Tohotonimme) battle was a major Indian-U. S. Army confrontation in what is now known as the Inland Empire. The encounter was the last defeat of the U. S. Army by Indians in Eastern Washington. The long range results of the battle include:

1. The Steptoe defeat delayed the commencement, by the Lieutenant John Mullan command, of the U. S. Army military road from old Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton on the Missouri River until hostilities north of Walla Walla had subsided. (Lieutenant Mullan had planned to begin traveling into the Spokane plains from Fort Walla Walla in mid-1858.) Without the Steptoe defeat and the ensuing campaign of Colonel George Wright, the Spokane Indians probably would not have allowed the Mullan party the use of the Spokane land.
2. The Steptoe defeat caused Brevet Brigadier General N. S. Clarke, Commander, Department of the Pacific, to order, on July 4, 1858, Colonel George Wright of Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory, to take command of "not less than six hundred men" at Fort Walla Walla and to achieve "punishment" and "submission" of those Indians responsible for the Steptoe defeat. Colonel Wright's "Expedition Against the Northern Indians" lasted from August 7 until October 5, 1858. The campaign included the Battle of Spokane Plains and the Battle of Four Lakes -- both considered by the whites as victories -- and the concomitant destruction of Indian food reserves and horses. Additionally, Colonel Wright negotiated the Nez Perce Tribe Treaty, the Coeur d'Alene Indians Treaty and the Spokane Nation Treaty.