DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

RECEIVED
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NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE:	
Wyoming	
COUNTY:	
Big Horn	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON:
Bridger Immigrant Road - Dry Creek Crossing

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Bridger Road

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
26 miles east of Cody, Wyoming on U.S. 14-16-20

CITY OR TOWN:
Cody

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Wyoming	56	Big Horn	003

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building	☒ Public	Public Acquisition:	☐ Occupied	Yes:
☒ Site ☐ Structure	☐ Private	☐ In Process	☒ Unoccupied	☐ Restricted
☐ Object	☐ Both	☐ Being Considered	☐ Preservation work in progress	☒ Unrestricted
				☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☒ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☐ Other *(Specify)* Recreational	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
State of Wyoming - Wyoming Highway Department

STREET AND NUMBER:
N. W. of Cheyenne, P. O. Box 1708

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Cheyenne	Wyoming	56

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Big Horn County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
4th and C Streets

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Basin	Wyoming	56

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Wyoming Recreation Commission Survey of historic sites, markers & Mon.

DATE OF SURVEY: 1967 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE
Cheyenne	Wyoming	56

STATE: | COUNTY: | FOR NPS USE ONLY: ENTRY NUMBER / DATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☒ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The concern here is with a wagon road dating from a vanished age and a place where it is crossed by a modern automobile highway. Actually there are two places where this historic wagon road is crossed by modern highways and a nomination for National Register enrollment has been prepared for each of those places. If the reader has already studied the other nomination---Bridger Immigrant Road-Waltman Crossing---he can turn to page 4, otherwise headings 7 and 8 are the same for both nominations.

The Bridger Road, from its starting point within boundaries of the centrally located but not until later founded city of Casper, ran across the northwestern quadrant of Wyoming for a distance of about 225 miles. Then it exited from Wyoming into Montana where, eventually turning in a more due westerly course leading up the Yellowstone River Valley, it continued another 200-odd miles to its destination at Bozeman. Bozeman, an already established town located on the Gallatin River, upstream from the Three Forks of the Missouri, was also located on the eastern fringe of that extensive western Montana mineralized belt then being subjected to its first but already intensive exploitation. A short review of even such a small scale map as one covering highway routes will reveal that the Bridger Road, between its start from the Oregon Trail at Platte River Station (Casper) and its end at Bozeman within the booming Montana mining region, crossed broad prairie lands, extensive foothill terrains, two major mountain ranges besides the tailed-off end of a third, and followed down one important interior mountain valley only to proceed up another one.

In its prairie sections the Bridger Immigrant Road was a wagon road primarily formed by the shod hoofs of teams---oxen, mules or horses---and the imprints of iron-banded wheels rolling under heavy loads. Since the traffic was not exactly teeming and most of it moving in the same direction there was, over long stretches of the route, little reason to turn out of established tracks. Thus the most prevailing appearance of the road was that of two parallel paths cutting straight across undulating plains, grass and sage closing in on either side and a narrow and thinned band of the same plants growing between. But this prevailing example did not hold true at all places or even, sometimes, for rather lengthy stretches. Where the road, having cut through a not very thick sod, encountered sand or mud (gumbo was the worst, and there was plenty of it), the tendency was to pull out and start a new track. Thus, in places, the aspect was that of a series of parallel paths. There were two other reasons for leaving the road and starting a new one. These were the availability of grass and water. According to the season of the year, and according to the amount of grazing done by the draft animals of previous trains, the wagon master might change his route to make use of camping places offering better water or better forage. Thus, as far along the route as broad plains prevailed, two or more divisions of this same Bridger Road might separate by as much as several miles.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Pre-Columbian	☐ 16th Century	☐ 18th Century	☒ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	☒ 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* 1864

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☐ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other *(Specify)*
☒ Historic ND MD	☐ Industry		Immigration
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☐ Science	Settlement
☐ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☐ Sculpture	Indian Wars
☐ Art		☐ Social/Humanitarian	
☒ Commerce ND WY	☐ Literature		
☐ Communications	☐ Military	☐ Theater	
☐ Conservation	☐ Music	☒ Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significant thing here is a road. It is an historic road, an abandoned road and its name is the Bridger Road.

While any road is inherently difficult to maintain, indeed requiring special authority and special taxes to do so, a road abandoned is---owing to dissolution of rights-of-way and deprivation of tax apportionments---a road practically impossible to preserve. Consequently, only two short, representative sections of the Bridger Road have been projected for enrollment in the National Register and to become recipients of any resultant preservation measures. The section of concern in this nomination is named Bridger Road-Dry Creek Crossing.

The Bridger Road is not a thing of wide historic significance. Still, it was founded and laid out by old Jim Bridger, great mountainman, fur trader and---for decades---foremost figure in the region centering on Wyoming but overlapping to include major portions of other Rocky Mountain-High Plains states. Bridger's connection is enough in itself to make this road a matter of historic significance within the State of Wyoming.

Otherwise the significance of the Bridger Road is that of a minor link in a chain of historic circumstances which make up an interesting chapter of national history. These circumstances took shape just before and during the Civil War and were resolved, at least in their most important aspects, when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads met at Promontory Summit, Utah in 1869.

Actually, the first of these circumstances pre-dated the above cited time period. That was the existence of the Oregon Trail and the consequent hostility aroused in Indian tribes across whose hunting grounds it passed. At Fort Laramie in 1851, a great peace parley had been held over this matter. There tribal lands had been established and confirmed by treaty. The prime hunting grounds lying to the north of the Oregon Trail and between the Black Hills and the Bighorn Mountains, commonly called the Powder River Country, had been acknowledged as lands to which the Crows, Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahoes all had claims. The government had pledged to keep white men out of that country; in return the Indians were to respect the white man's use of the Oregon Trail.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hebard, Grace Raymond & Brininstool, E. A., The Bozeman Trail, Cleveland, Ohio, Arthur H. Clark Co., 1922

Raynolds, W. F., Report on the Exploration of the Yellowstone River. Washington Government printing office, 1868

Walker, Tacetta B., Stories of Early Days in Wyoming., Casper, Wyoming, Prairie Publishing Co., 1936

Jensen, Henry, Personal communication, April 1, 1970

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	44°	27'	34"	108°	31'	44"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 5 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Ned M. Frost, Chief, Historic Division

ORGANIZATION: Wyoming Recreation Commission

DATE: 5/17/73

STREET AND NUMBER: 604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne

STATE: Wyoming

CODE: 56

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name Paul H. Westedt
Paul H. Westedt

Title Historic Preservation Officer - Wyoming

Date August 2, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

A R Mortensen
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 1/17/75

ATTEST:

Charles A. Perry
Keeper of The National Register

Date 1-15-75

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

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Physical Appearance - 2

But where the Bridger Road encountered major natural obstacles---as the crossing of mountains, or the fording of a river, or a section of badlands travel---there the road was bound to draw together into a single double-track. And in such places the road was not entirely formed, as on the prairies and plains, by the simple passage of teams and wagons. At least on the sharpest climbs and descents there was some attempt at grading, the same was true of the worst ravine crossings and at high bank approaches to river fords. At these places, certainly plain to any eye during the time of use and still visible to the knowledgeable observer today, teams had been unhitched from their freight loads and hitched instead to implements that had been carried along as a part of that freight. These implements were such rudimentary road building machines as rock plows and slips or (perhaps a more precisely accurate name) drag scrapers. Over difficult terrain, then, there existed sections of road which had, observably, been actually built---been actually graded rather than formed by the action of passing traffic. Today, evidence of such work is in some places entirely vanished, at other places only discernible to the practiced eye, but in yet other places it is still being freshly worn---though by rubber instead of iron---and is plainly visible.

Deductible from the foregoing is the fact that the Bridger Road led its wayfarers past all the general types of western scenery. Thus they saw both distantly and near at hand, indeed on either side, desert landscapes, rolling prairies, mountain passes, canyons, rivers, verdant valleys and plantless badlands. Also, customarily, the wayfarer saw many native animals. Today there isn't too much change in this scenery, flora and fauna. The country, excepting the verdant valleys, is not thickly settled; wilderness scenes still predominate over ones portraying civilized activity. Much of the animal life inhabiting the road's environs remains the same. The present-day rancher, or the oil company geologist, or the disciplined archaeologist, or the undisciplined pot hunter, tooling his multi-geared and four wheel-powered contrivance along the dim tracks of an old and vanishing road, is apt to descry descendants of the very bands of antelope, groups of mule deer, flocks of sage grouse, and pairs of coyotes observed by old Jim Bridger when, leading that first immigrant wagon train, he cut tracks sharp and deep to mark the route of a new roadway.

It seems to be an accepted belief oft-times expressed, at least oft-times heard in the west, that the roads we travel today began as trails worn by the hooves of migrating wild animals---most of them bison. Supposedly, the unerring instinct of these wild creatures led them via the finest pasture lands, past the sweetest waters, over the gentlest grades and through the easiest passes. Then came that pedestrian, aboriginal man, to follow these animal made migratory routes. Millenniums later, after he had obtained

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the horse---so the belief runs, he stooped to widen and smooth the trails so as to provide an easier passage for his mounts, his pack animals and his trailing travois. But probably the facts were that his widening and smoothing of these trails was more the result of use than his preparation for use by this newly-acquired servant and his newly-developed techniques of caravan transportation. Still, and this time in keeping with more definitely known facts, it is true---marks of stone implements still exist to prove it---that these aboriginal people did, especially in mountainous terrain, improve to an extent and, most evident, mark with blazes and cairns some of the most important of these migratory routes.

The next impelling force to make an impression on this western road-making scene was the fur trade as personified in the mountainman. The mountainman discovered that the Indian of the high plains and mountains---swift though the latter had been in taking advantage of opportunities offered by his new possession, the horse---was still in the process of trying out, of discarding or improving on, new techniques and new conceptions. For the most part this mountainman was perfectly content with the aboriginal mode of life, he was more than willing to live by those standards and to take a hand in improving techniques without changing basics. However, he was aware of one or two mechanical devices that had not yet been discovered by his Indian confreres. One of these devices was the wheel. He made use of the wheel to bring supplies and trade goods out from the civilized frontier and to carry his wealth in furs back to the market place. In so doing he widened the aborigine's trails into double-tracked affairs which he dignified by the name of road. Within present confines of Wyoming, this sort of activity had been going on for something more than three decades before Jim Bridger found cause to lay out the Bridger Road.

James Bridger had been concerned in this mountainman wagon road business from the start and, like that original fur trade road that established the first double tracks along what eventually became the famous Oregon Immigrant Trail, he followed the old migratory bison's and aborigine's trails in laying out this new road. In fact, in its point of origin at the Platte River Station, it was from that first established fur trade road, the Oregon Trail, that this new road turned off in a northwesterly direction and headed for the bustling gold fields of western Montana. So much for the westerner's commonly expressed belief that his whiteman's highways follow trails existing since time immemorial and, although used between times by the redman, first shaped by the hooves of migrating beasts. Up to the time of this so called Bridger Road, and including it, that belief is surely more correct than it is erroneous.

Physical Appearance - 4

It is also correct to believe that a modern highway leads, in this same northwesterly direction, from Casper, Wyoming (the old Platte River Station) to Bozeman, Montana. But it is erroneous to believe that this modern road follows a buffalo migration trail and old Jim Bridger's wagon road. The engineers responsible for building this present highway had very different circumstances to meet than did Bridger. They had no worry that the travelers who used their road would be concerned about the availability of forage and water; up to a distance of one hundred miles the closeness of watering places made little difference and the presence or lack of grass mattered not at all. For them, having powerful construction machinery and blasting powders at their service, a canyon presented no insurmountable obstacle. And a canyon road was shorter and could be built for faster travel than could be built an over-mountain road---longer in its very essence and further lengthened, as measured both in distance and travel time, by the necessity to construct switch-back gradients and sharp, short-radius, reverse turns.

The truth is that this modern highway follows the old Bridger Road scarcely at all. It does, however, cross the Bridger Road route in two widely separated places, both of them interesting for divers historic and geographic-scenic circumstances. One of these places is hereby named Bridger Immigrant Road-Waltman Crossing and the other, the subject of this particular nomination for enrollment in the National Register, Bridger Immigrant Road-Dry Creek Crossing.

The Dry Creek Crossing of the Bridger Immigrant Road with Wyoming U.S. Highway 14-16-20 is, as measured along the latter, 26 miles east and slightly south of Cody, Wyoming. Here the modern road crosses the historic road at right angles. Highways 14-16-20, here merged in one route, are the chief routes of travel for midwestern and eastern tourists planning to enter Yellowstone National Park through its eastern gateway. As such, the road has a general east-west axis and for more than 100 miles before reaching the Yellowstone East Gate it does follow an almost exact east-west bearing.

The Bridger Road at the Dry Creek Crossing was established on an almost due north course. This had been its general direction ever since it started to cross the Bighorn Mountains 35 miles west of Waltman Crossing and 80 miles west of Platte River Station (Casper), its starting point. The road came down off the north side of the Bighorn Mountains and entered the Bighorn Basin Valley about 85 miles to the south of Dry Creek Crossing; from Dry Creek Crossing it continued north another 35 to 40 miles at which point, being close to the hydrologic divide between the Bighorn River (or rather its tributary the Stinkingwater---later the Shoshone) and the Clark's Fork (for Capt. Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition) of the Yellowstone, it

Physical Appearance - 5

passed out of Wyoming into Montana. All of this 125 mile-long section of his road within the Bighorn Basin had been the oldest of old stomping grounds for Jim Bridger. He had first ventured along this route in 1823 while a member of the Ashley Fur party which rediscovered famous South Pass early in 1824. Since that first trip through the Bighorn Basin Bridger, as a leader of fur brigades, had returned time and again to trap the beaver-bountiful streams flowing out of its surrounding mountains.

Dry Creek Crossing is centrally located on the floor lands of the Bighorn Basin. It affords as good of a view point of the total environs peculiar to this mountain locked valley, and the Bridger Road route across it, as any other. Here in the vicinity of Dry Creek the landscape is semi-desert---the rainfall on the valley floor is only 8 or 9 inches over the course of a year. But off to the east, in view, and to the south, over a rim of hills out of view, are extensive irrigated lands---testimony to the much heavier rainfall in the mountains and the rivers which flow from them across the valley floor. Looking up, and on all sides, the viewer is surrounded by mountains. These are comparitively low and rounded ridges to the north and south, but they are high, rugged, massives---bearing glaciers and banks of perpetual snow---to the east and the west.

The immediate terrain is variable in the extreme, it is not true badland scenery but it verges on that condition. There are wide bench lands, sharp escarpments, minor watercourses and valleys, deep cutting coulees and individual buttes. The elevation at Dry Creek Crossing is approximately 4,600 feet, to the north, a mile or two, rises one of these individual buttes---its elevation about 5,000 feet. The Bridger Road crosses under this butte's western shoulder, if the viewer guesses that the name of this little mountain is Bridger Butte he will be correct. Turning east or west from this northerly view the contrast is one of much greater elevations, bands of forests and grass covered slopes. At the very skyline to the east is Cloud Peak, highest mountain in the Bighorn Range. Its elevation is 13,165 feet; on the western skyline stands Franks Peak, highest mountain in the Absaroka Range its elevation is 13,140 feet.

Such is the appearance of the country at Dry Creek Crossing where the Bridger Road, a double track extending across broken terrain, breaks the growth of sage brush.

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(July 1969)

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Addendum to heading 7, (Physical Appearance), in answer to National Park Service's WASO No. 8 form request, made December 3, 1974:

What remains of the Bridger Road today at the Dry Creek Crossing (including crossing of U.S. Highway 14-16-20) is best described through referring to the accompanying photograph.

The view in that photograph is almost due north; it is the view from a stand about 500 feet south of the present Highway 14-16-20 which runs parallel with the course of Dry Creek, 200 yards beyond, from left (west) to right (east), completely across the mid-section of the picture. To the north, a mile or two away, low and flat-topped, rises Bridger Butte.

Near the left (west) side of the photograph a highway traffic sign is plainly in view. Immediately behind that sign (north of it and leading north) are discerned two parallel tracks, these are the Bridger Road. These tracks follow off the benchland, by way of the draw on the left, down onto the Dry Creek bottom-lands. Across the creek, making use of the draw coming in from the north, the tracks - discernable by their whiteness - can be seen climbing back onto the benchland. From there they are lost in the photograph but would be observable to man's eye, as folds of the terrain permitted, all of the way over the rise which culminates in Bridger Butte, but passing from sight to the left (west) of the Butte itself.

Thus, there are one or two miles of the Bridger Road insight (to the north) from the point where that road crosses U.S. Highway 14-16-20. But do not imagine that these tracks would be so plainly discernable were they not receiving continued use today - from sheep wagons and from the rubber tires of such four wheel drive vehicles as are used by trappers, prospectors, pothunters, archaeologists, historians and off-highway pleasure seekers.

Remains of the Bridger Road to the south, that is, behind the stand taken by the viewing photographer, are much more difficult to identify. That is because it has been turned into a graded, well used secondary road. The junction of this modern secondary road with U.S. Highway 14-16-20 is only partially within the photograph, midway of the extreme left (western) edge. There, if one looks closely, he can see a second highway traffic sign which is a "stop sign" for traffic entering the highway off this secondary road to the south. That road continues south, just as did its forerunner the Bridger Road, to enter, over a low pass, the Greybull River Valley. That irrigated valley is now a prosperous ranching and farming area, hence the reason for the secondary road which is really a rancher's and farmer's shortcut to the town of Cody.

Signed - December 23, 1974 Paul H. Westedt, Director

Paul H Westedt

(Number all entries)

Statement of Significance - 2

The next circumstance, opening the cited time period, was the discovery of gold in western Montana. Shortly a major stampede was on to the new mining fields and the country was rapidly settled. The route from civilization's frontier on the Missouri to these Montana gold fields was along the Oregon Trail until the Snake River was reached in Idaho where a branch road, turning 90° to a practically due north course, led into western Montana. From Fort Laramie, major military post on the North Platte---halting point for immigrants and place of decision regarding continuation of travel, it was, following the Oregon Trail route, about 750 miles and six weeks travel time to the Montana gold fields. About a third of those miles and a third of the travel time was due to the right-angled course formed by the westerly trending Oregon Trail and the northerly trending Montana road which led off from it at the Snake River. In 1863 John Bozeman, familiar with the country, laid out an immigrant and freight road that changed this Fort Laramie-Snake River-Montana right-angled route into a triangle of which it formed the hypotenuse. The saving in miles and time promised by this Bozeman Road had a powerful effect on Montana bound immigrants who arrived at Fort Laramie already suffering from all the farfetched impatience usually associated with gold fever.

In addition to being almost as short as the geometer's straight line, Bozeman's road possessed the advantages of easy terrain and good pasture lands. These were important considerations to men who drove draft animals already weary from a long journey and already gaunt owing to a scarcity of forage in the over-grazed environs of the Oregon Trail. The road's disadvantage was that it cut across the Powder River Country, across treaty guaranteed hunting grounds, and the Sioux and the Cheyennes and the Arapahoes took a dim view of that transgression. The result was that some who traveled this road did get to the gold fields sooner than they would have otherwise; some were later, having lost their draft stock and finished their journey on foot; and some never got to Montana, nor yet did they ever return to Fort Laramie.

Jim Bridger sized up the situation---one road that was short but extremely dangerous; one road that was relatively safe but so long and onerous as to play out many men and teams along the way. He said that he could scout a road that would incorporate the best points and eliminate the worst points of the other two. In 1864 he laid that road out; it was known from the first as the Bridger Road.

In fact, so certain was Bridger of his route that he started out---what for anyone else would have been a necessary reconnaissance---by leading an immigrant train. And he all but beat John Bozeman, leading another train via his own road, to the gold fields. It should be explained that Bridger's point of turn-off from the Oregon Trail gave him about a 60 mile (2 to 3 days travel time) advantage over Bozeman---a distance that his immigrant train had had to

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Statement of Significance - 3

travel before he took over its guidance. On the other hand Bridger's train had to build roads in places along the way, a job that had already been accomplished along the Bozeman Road.

Bridger's Road and the Bozeman Road were about the same length---the essential difference in that regard being that 60 miles longer the Bridger users had to journey on the Oregon Trail. The chief difference in location was that the Bridger Road went west of the Bighorn Mountains, in Crow and Shoshone country; the Bozeman Road was east of the Bighorn Mountains, in Sioux, Arapahoe and Cheyenne country. The latter Indians could be provoked into making war against white men; the former Indians knew better than to do so under any circumstance. Bridger's Road besides being longer (by the additional 60 miles of Oregon Trail travel) crossed rougher terrain, poorer pasture lands and more rivers than the Bozeman Road. It was probably a slower route by three or four days travel time---which meant that it was faster than the Oregon Trail roundabout way by ten or twelve days. It was far safer than the Bozeman Road and probably equally as safe as the Oregon Trail way. It was a compromise road.

Like so many compromises, the Bridger Road didn't appeal to a great many people. There were always more people using the Oregon Trail and more people using the Bozeman Road than there were people traveling the Bridger Road. Still, in each of its several years of use as a route to the Montana mining districts, there were always some travelers who chose to go by Bridger's way.

As to remaining circumstances of national historic import, again the Bridger Road is only of secondary consequence. The specie wealth stemming from the Montana mines was of vast importance to a government engaged in civil war. Official eyes were shut to the transgression of the Powder River tribal lands and, in fact, the hard pressed Union forces managed to raise a military expedition to aid the immigrants and freighters using the Bozeman Road. After the war troops were sent and forts established to guard the Bozeman Road. However, some historians are inclined to the viewpoint that the strategy behind these troops and the forts was as much to divert the hostile Indians from the building Union Pacific Railroad as it was to protect a short-cut road to the Montana gold fields. In any event the Indians proved able to hold their own in the fighting along the Bozeman Road. As soon as, in 1868-1869, the railroad had been built far enough west to provide for an even shorter wagon haul into western Montana, the government withdrew its troops and forts from along the Bozeman Road. It was not until the next decade when new gold discoveries---this time in the Black Hills---again caused trouble, that the final chapter in the Bozeman Road's relationship to Western Indian Wars history was written. The climax of that final chapter was the great

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Statement of Significance - 4

Indian victory at the Battle of the Little Bighorn; but the end was the inevitable defeat of the Sioux and their Arapahoe and Cheyenne allies.

Addendum to National Register of Historic Places Property Map Form, in answer to National Park Service's WASO No. 8 form request made December 3, 1974.