

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

82

1. Name

historic Fort Connah Site

and/or common Flathead Post II

2. Location

street & number U.S. Highway 93 N/A not for publication

city, town Ronan vicinity of congressional district 1

state Montana code 030 county Lake code 047

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Fort Connah Restoration Society, Walter McDonald, Chairman

street & number Box 265

city, town Ronan vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lake County Courthouse

street & number 106 4th Avenue East

city, town Polson state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Montana Historic Site Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September 1968 federal state county local

depository for survey records Montana Historical Society

city, town Helena state Montana

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Fort Connah is located on a small rise in open pasture land, approximately one-half mile south of Ronan, Montana. Only one building stands today on the site of this early fur trading post. Due to the high water table and the presence of cattle over the years, no foundations are present to indicate the location of the other early structures. To date, no excavation has taken place on the site. The potential for future historic archaeological work at Fort Connah to reveal significant information about early Hudson's Bay Company activities and construction techniques is very good.

The remaining building at Fort Connah is a single story, channeled log structure, built ca. 1846. The building faces east southeast toward the Mission Mountains and measures 24' x 16'. It rests upon a loose stone foundation without mortar. The walls are eight feet high. All of the wood used in construction was taken from the surrounding hills. Planks were hand cut for use in the roof and for floor boards. Three fourths of the joints were pinned together with wooden pegs and iron spikes were used to secure the topmost logs flush with the vertical posts. The building today has a centrally located door opening flanked by window openings on either side with 2/2 double hung wooden sashes. Two window openings without sashes are located on the west side. There are no window openings on either the southern or northern sides.

Three sources of documentary evidence indicate the earlier appearance of this building and were used in the planning of the present restoration efforts of the Fort Connah Restoration Society. The building has been altered a number of times through the years and the restoration attempts to return the building to its turn of the century appearance. An 1865 sketch by the Danish-American amateur landscape painter, Peter Peterson Tofft, shows what appears to be the same building (the only one of channelled log construction) with no window openings on the east facade, no chimney or stove pipe, and a roof which appears to cover only a portion of the building. The drill holes which exist today in the heavy wall timbers at the top of each window which may have provided places to start a saw and may indicate that the windows were a later alteration. Another building which apparently was used as a dwelling is portrayed in the Tofft painting which may indicate that the channelled log structure was originally used as a store house. Another early description of the post was given by Thomas Adams, an artist with Issac Steven's Pacific Railroad survey, who stated in 1866 that there were four buildings at Fort Connah: "a wooden building, about 24' x 16', of one-story, with a bark roof; one wooden bastion, about 14 feet square; and two storerooms, each 10 feet square; also a log corral, about 60 feet square." By 1908, photographic documentation shows that the 2/2 double hung windows were in place, a steeply pitched roof covered with wooden shingles had been added to the building, and a brick chimney rose about 1 foot above the ridge line. In the 1930's a porch which spanned the front of the building was added. This porch was removed during the recent restoration, together with all traces of the chimney. The deteriorated bottom log sills were replaced and planking of similar width was used to replace the boards in the gable ends. The building was jacked up and a new stone foundation was laid. Cedar shakes were used to replace the deteriorated wooden shingles.

The nominated property includes the land surrounding the building which is owned by the Fort Connah Restoration Society. This area is thought to encompass the buried foundations of all other early fort buildings. At such time as further testing and historic archaeological research may be carried out at Fort Connah, the boundaries of this nomination may need to be enlarged to include potential Indian encampment sites adjacent to the Fort property.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

10-10-13
10/10/13



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

A non-contiguous parcel of land located 3/8 of a mile to the east of the Fort Site is also included in this nomination. Here, the graves of Angus MacDonald, his Nez Perce - Iroquois wife and over 21 other persons associated with the earliest days at the post are located. Little physical evidence remains of the early fur trading period of Montana's history. In addition, Angus MacDonald's great importance as the first Hudson's Bay Company factor at this site justifies the inclusion of his gravesite in the National Register of Historic Places.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1846-1871 **Builder/Architect** McArthur, McDonald

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Fort Connah was the last Hudson's Bay Company trading post to be built and operated within the boundaries of the United States and represents the final efforts of the British company to stave off competition from American traders west of the Continental Divide. The one remaining building at Fort Connah is a fine example of the channelled log construction technique which was used widely by the Hudson's Bay Company in its fur trading outposts.

Construction began in 1846 under the direction of Neil McArthur. The following year, Angus McDonald, an experienced Hudson's Bay Company factor, arrived to take charge. He named the post "Fort Connen" after a river in his native Scotland; through local usage, the name evolved into "Connah." McDonald remained at the Fort until 1852 when he moved to Colville (Washington) to assume supervision of the entire district as Chief Trader. Later post masters included Michael Ogden, son of the famous British trapper-explorer Peter Skene Ogden. Also, McDonald's son Duncan, born at Fort Connah in 1849, became its clerk from 1867 to 1871. In 1871, as the Hudson's Bay Company withdrew from the United States, Angus returned to close down the trading post. He later acquired the property and settled into retirement until his death in 1889. He and other members of his family, which had played a prominent role in the development of this region (his grandson, Walter, is currently president of the Fort Connah Restoration Society) are buried in the cemetery a short distance from the old post.

Fort Connah escaped the attention of the U.S. government officials since it was neither completed nor occupied when the 1846 Oregon Treaty was signed which gave the U.S. complete ownership of the land to the 49th parallel. In 1850 the U.S. government forbade the continued operation of British posts within Indian territory. Since Fort Connah was providing urgently needed buffalo products and horse accouterments which could not be obtained in sufficiently large quantities anywhere else west of the Continental Divide, the Hudson's Bay Company ignored the edict. In the 1860's the creation of the Flathead Indian reservation, the influx of settlers encouraged by the construction of the Mullan Road, and the discovery of gold, and the increasing competition from American traders, ended the isolation and monopoly of the Fort Connah operations. The Fort finally closed in 1871, by which time its role as an outpost of the fur trade has ceased to be vital in the midst of advancing settlement.

The channelled log construction techniques used at Fort Connah may be traced back to Denmark during the Middle Ages where it was called Bulhouse construction. The style then spread to northern France where it was referred to as the "Colombage Style". From France, these construction techniques were brought to the North American continent with the fur traders of the mid-eighteenth century. Here it was referred to as the "poteaux sur sole" (posts on the sill) of "pieux en terre" (piles in the ground). The Hudson's Bay Company used the channelled log construction techniques extensively as their fur trading outposts moved further westward from Montreal during the Nineteenth Century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

McDonald, Duncan, "Letter to C.N. Kessler, 1918, Montana Historical Society.
 Partoll, A.J., "Fort Connah: A Frontier Trading Post, 1847-1871." Pacific Northwest Quarterly, October, 1939, pp. 399-415.
 Partell, A.J., "Angus McDonald, Frontier Fur Trader." Pacific Northwest Quarterly, April, 1951, Vol. 42 #2.

10. Geographical Data UTM + AREA NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 4.198
 Quadrangle name Fort Connah Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>1</u>	<u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>1</u>	<u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The site includes 4.02 acres surrounding the remaining building (see attached deed) and a non-contiguous parcel of 0.178 acre which includes the cemetery. NE¹/₄NE¹/₄SW¹/₄, Section 13, T29N, R20W

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

David G. Conklin, State Planner, Susan W. Curtis, Historian, Fredric L. Quivik,
 name/title Kingston Heath, Patricia Bick, Architectural Historians.

organization Montana Historic Preservation Office date April 1981
 street & number 225 North Roberts telephone (406)449-4584
 city or town Helena state Montana 59620

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marcella Slafey
 title Deputy SHPO date 3-10-82

