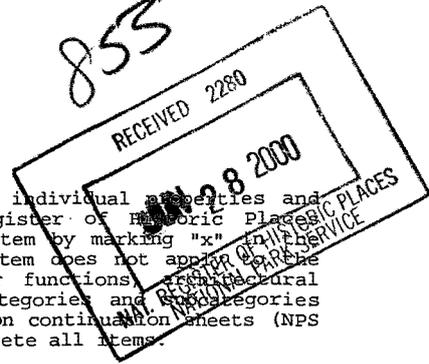


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Tower Ladder

other names/site number Historic Ladder; CK481641

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number Devils Tower National Monument

not for publication     

city or town Devils Tower

vicinity     

state Wyoming

code WY

county Crook

code 011

zip code 82714-0010

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this   X   nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   X   meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this      property be considered significant      nationally      statewide   X   locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments)

*John J. Stevens*  
Signature of Federal Preservation Officer

6.26.2000  
Date

National Park Service  
Federal agency

In my opinion, the property   X   meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Shirley Buckley Waddy*  
Signature of Commenting official

6/12/00  
Date

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office  
State agency



7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

roof

walls

other wood, metal

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(SEE CONTINUATION PAGES)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
Period of Significance 1893-1927
Significant Dates 1893
Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Cultural Affiliation
Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) (SEE CONTINUATION PAGES)

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

\_\_\_ State Historic Preservation Office Local Govt.
\_\_\_ Other State agency University
\_x Federal agency Other

Name of repository: Devils Tower National Monument

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM Reference (SEE CONTINUATION PAGE)

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) (SEE CONTINUATION PAGE)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) (SEE CONTINUATION PAGE)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathy McKoy, Historian, NPS, IMDE-CNR
organization National Park Service date Dec. 1, 1995; revised April 15, 2000
street & number 12795 W. Alameda Parkway telephone (303) 969-2878
city or town Lakewood state CO zip code 80228

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets (INCLUDED)

Maps INCLUDED:

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map indicating location in park.

Photographs INCLUDED:

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items: Photoxeroxes of two historic photographs.

Property Owner

name Devils Tower National Monument
street & number P. O. Box 10 telephone 307-467-5283
city or town Devils Tower state WY zip code 82714-0010

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   7   Page   1  

Tower Ladder  
Crook County, WY  
Devils Tower National Monument  
Multiple Property Submission

=====

**ITEM 7 DESCRIPTION**

Location

Devils Tower National Monument is located in the Belle Fourche River Valley of the Black Hills of northeastern Wyoming. Devils Tower is a unique and dramatic monolith of igneous rock (phonolite porphyry) that rises 867 feet from its base, visually dominating the surrounding countryside. The tower is located in the center of the monument and is encircled by an asphalt-paved trail. The historic ladder is located on the southeast side of Devils Tower, as shown on the accompanying site map.

Physical Description

The present tower ladder consists of a series of wooden stakes connected on the outside by vertical wood planks. One end of each stake is driven sideways into a rock crevice, vertically ascending the southeast side of the tower. Attached with nails and/or bailing wire to the other end of the stakes are 12-foot lengths of 1 x 4-inch lumber. The ladder ascends from about 100 feet above the ground to the summit, and is about 170 feet long. Because of its small scale in comparison to the tower, it is very difficult to see in modern photographs, and visitors to the tower usually must view it through a telescope.

Integrity

Sources vary on the original length of the first ladder: some say it was 350 feet and others say 270 feet; it is uncertain which figure is accurate. At some time during the 1930s, the decision was made to remove the lower 100 feet of ladder for safety reasons (i.e., to prevent climbers from using it). At that time, the ladder was already deteriorated, as seen in a 1932 photo which shows nearly all of the outside rail is missing.

In the summer of 1972, the park restored the remaining 170-foot length of ladder by straightening old stakes; replacing about 18 linear feet of missing pegs; and by attaching a 1 x 4-inch lumber rail (similar to the original) to the outer ends of the pegs. The restoration work was done by a three-man crew (Bruce Bright, Terry Rypkema, and Roger Holtorf) who employed modern climbing and rappelling techniques (ropes and hardware) to haul tools and materials up the side of the tower and to make the necessary repairs; others assisted in the preparations. The crew used machine lumber from the park's lumber yard and bailing wire to tie the pegs to the 1 x 4s in the same manner they appeared to have been tied historically. Very little of the original wire was left.

The restoration was never part of a park master plan. Former Superintendent Homer Robinson said recently, "We just looked at this as a maintenance issue. One day one of the staff came in and said that he and few of the others would like to go up and fix the ladder before it fell down." (Interview, June 2, 1993; on file, Intermountain Region, Denver.) Every attempt, however, appears to have been made to accurately restore the ladder. Terry Rypkema prepared a detailed report to document its restoration ("Report on Old Ladder Restoration Project," monument files). The technical complexity of repairing the ladder even using professional climbing equipment makes apparent the extreme challenges that must have been encountered by the original builders of the ladder, two lone Wyoming ranchers.

The tower ladder has integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. As the materials and methods of construction used during the restoration were intended as much as possible to resemble the original, the

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Tower Ladder  
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restoration has not resulted in a loss of integrity of materials or workmanship. The ladder thus retains sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

**ITEM 8 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Significance

The tower ladder at Devils Tower National Monument (DETO) is eligible for listing as a historic structure on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A at the local level of significance. The period of significance dates from 1893, when the ladder was first constructed and used by William Rogers and Willard Ripley in their exhibition ascent of the tower, to 1927, when it was last used by stunt climber Babe ("the Human Fly") White. It is significant under the area of Entertainment/Recreation as its initial construction and subsequent use were for the purposes of ascending Devils Tower. The tower ladder is eligible for listing on the National Register under criterion A for its association with the first known ascent by men of the tower. The historic contexts under which the ladder was evaluated are "Recreation and Tourism at Devils Tower National Monument, 1880s-1950" and "Administration and Development of Devils Tower National Monument, 1906-1950." These contexts are included in the Item E of the Devils Tower National Monument Multiple Property Submission; for convenience, pertinent historical information is repeated below.

The most well known Fourth of July event occurred in 1893, when widely distributed handbills advertised speakers, food and drink, hay and grain for horses, dancing, and--the featured attraction--the first climbing of Devils Tower by a local rancher named William Rogers. Rogers and another rancher, Willard Ripley, prepared a 350-foot ladder to the summit of the tower. Pegs of native oak, ash, and willow, 24 to 30 inches in length and sharpened on one end, were driven into a continuous vertical crack found between the two columns of the southeast side of the formation. The pegs were then braced and secured to each other by a continuous wooden strip to which the outer end of each peg was fastened. Before the exhibition ascent, the men planted a 12-foot flagpole on the summit. The construction of the ladder was quite possibly a more hazardous undertaking than the subsequent climbing of the tower.

Conservative estimates say that about 1,000 people came from up to 12 miles away to witness the first formal ascent of the tower. Roger climbed the tower (after the proper ceremonies) in about an hour, and amid cheering from the throngs below, unfurled the American flag from the flagpole. Later in the day, wind tore the flag loose, which fell to the base of the tower. Rogers and Ripley's enterprising wives, who were running a refreshment stand below, tore it into pieces and sold them as souvenirs. Rogers' wife Linnie ascended the ladder two years later, becoming the first known woman to reach the summit of the tower. An estimated 215 people later ascended the tower using Rogers' ladder, the last being "Babe" White ("the Human Fly") in 1927. A portion of the ladder remains on the southwest side of the tower.

Rogers and Ripley's ascent initiated a pattern of sport climbing of the tower that has lasted until the present day. Their capitalizing on the tower's recreational potential took place just after the tower and nearby Little Missouri Buttes were designated a National Forest Reserve and when Wyoming Senator Francis E. Warren introduced a bill urging Congress (unsuccessfully) to create a "Devils Tower National Park" in 1892. Protection of the tower was finally awarded in 1906 when President Theodore Roosevelt designated it as the country's first national monument. The attention drawn to this unique geologic feature and to the recreational

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Tower Ladder  
Crook County, WY  
Devils Tower National Monument  
Multiple Property Submission

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opportunities it offered by Rogers' and Ripley's 1893 ascent most likely contributed to local support for a move toward federal protection of the tower. The 1930s removal of the lower portion of the tower ladder by later park management (rather than total removal of the structure), and the 1972 restoration of the ladder attests to park managers' recognition of the ladder's historic significance. While the tower ladder is primarily associated with the context of Recreation and Tourism (1880s-1950) it is also associated with Administration and Development of the Monument (1906-1950) as its preservation served an educational function in the park that long outlasted its original use.

**ITEM 9 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Daugherty, John, "Devils Tower National Monument: A History of National Park Service Developments Through 1966." Unpublished manuscript, National Park Service, Intermountain Region, Denver, CO.

Mattison, Ray H. "Devils Tower National Monument, A History," unpublished manuscript, National Park Service, 1955.

Devils Tower National Monument archives:  
"Report on Old Ladder Restoration Project, June 27-July 11, 1972," prepared by Terry Rypkema.

Superintendent's Annual Report, January 9, 1973.

Oral Interview:  
Homer Robinson, former DETO Superintendent, June 2, 1993; phone interview by Robert Sontag; notes on file NPS, Intermountain Region, Denver, CO.

**ITEM 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**UTMS**

The UTMS for the ladder are Zone 13, E 522710; N 493720.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Boundary includes only the ladder and the portion of the Tower to which it is affixed on the southeast side. The base of the ladder is located about 100 feet above

The ground and continues vertically for about 170 feet to the summit of Devils Tower. The ladder's location relative to the Tower is shown on the accompanying site map.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary encompasses the entire ladder structure. While the Tower is historically associated with the ladder and with its original function, it is excluded from the boundary of this property, beyond the point of attachment to the ladder.

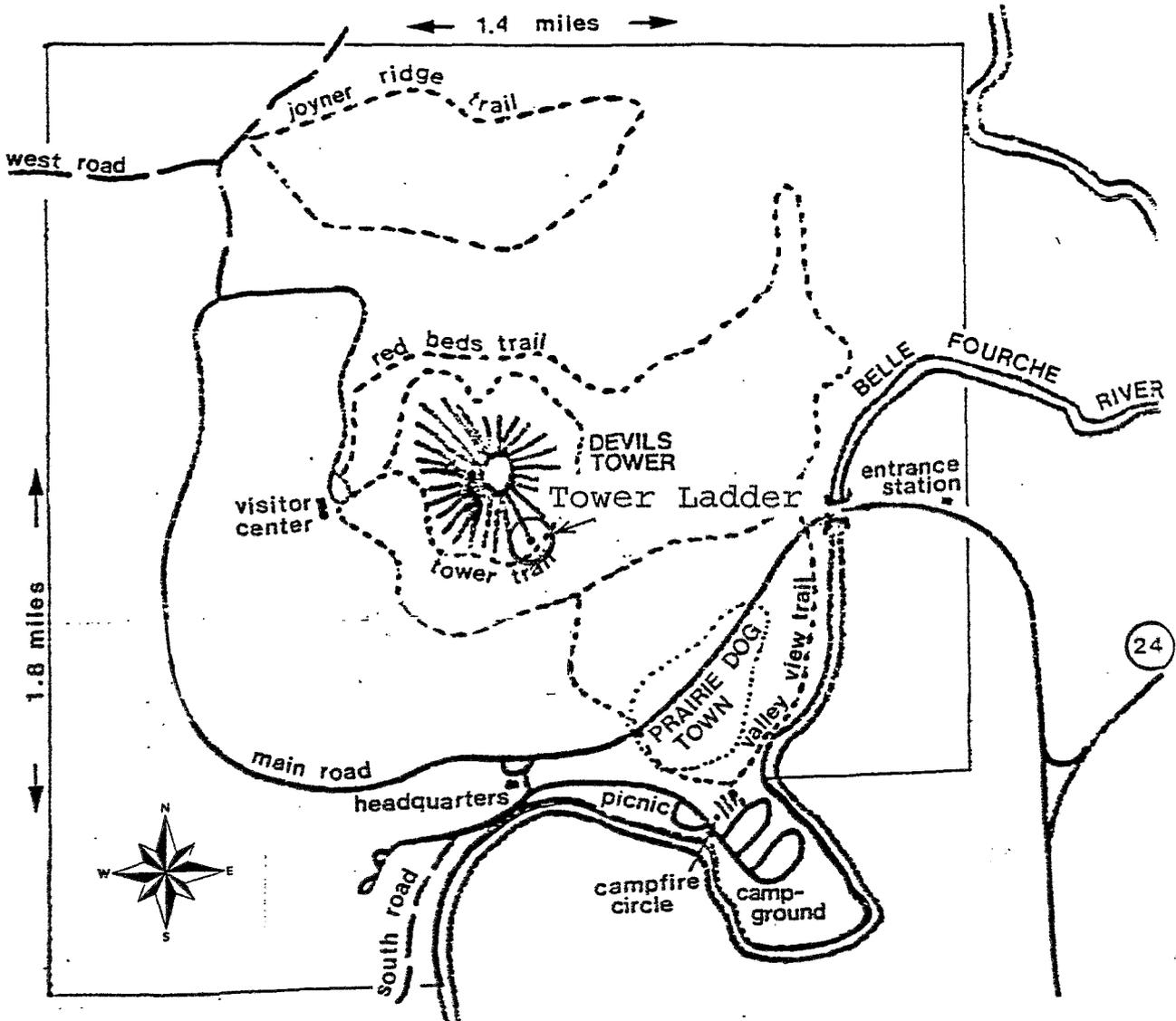
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Section site map Page 5

Tower Ladder  
Crook County, WY  
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Multiple Property Submission

Devils Tower and Tower Ladder  
Devils Tower National Monument



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Tower Ladder  
Crook County, WY  
Devils Tower National Monument  
Multiple Property Submission

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

- 1) Property: Tower Ladder
- 2) Location: Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming
- 3) Photographer: Kathy McKoy
- 4) Date taken: July 1, 1992
- 5) Location of negatives: Devils Tower National Monument

Photo #1 Devils Tower and Historic Ladder, view to North

Historic photographs: (Devils Tower from park archives; photographers unknown; photographs photocopied and appended to nomination)

- 1) Property: Tower Ladder
- 2) Location: Devils Tower National Monument, Crook County, Wyoming
- 3) Photographer: unknown
- 4) Date taken: see below
- 5) Location of negatives: Devils Tower National Monument

Photo #2 Newell Joyner, George Grenier at the base of the 1893 stake ladder,  
Dec. 2, 1932

Photo #3 William Rogers family (no date; estimated ca. 1895).

Other Documentation:

USGS map photocopied and appended to nomination