

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAR 6 1984
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Big Horn Johnson Street Historic District

and/or common Big Horn Johnson Street Historic District

2. Location

street & number Main Street *Johnson, 1st & 2nd Streets* not for publication

city, town Big Horn vicinity of N/A

state Wyoming code 056 county Sheridan code 033

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>n/a</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>n/a</u> 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 multiple ownership

street & number multiple

city, town multiple vicinity of N/A state Wyoming

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sheridan County Courthouse

street & number Box 686

city, town Sheridan state Wyoming 82801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wyoming Recreation Commission has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1967 (revised 1982) federal state county local

depository for survey records 1920 Thomas Avenue

city, town Cheyenne state Wyoming 82002

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Big Horn Johnson Street Historic District is comprised of buildings of local, historical and architectural significance. The buildings are one and two-story wood frame false fronts dating from the late 19th and early 20th century and are representative of western 'boom town' construction throughout that period. The buildings are spaced unevenly along the main street, reminiscent of efforts to provide a more expansive look to burgeoning communities and protect against the spread of fire. While each of the five contributing buildings have experienced some alterations, (primarily the addition of porches, some storm windows, and asphalt roofing materials)✓ they retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling and association. Boundaries have been drawn to exclude recently constructed intrusions and/or empty lots which do not contribute to the main street image. Windshield surveys indicate Big Horn's main street likely contains the highest concentration of original false front buildings remaining in the state. Big Horn's Johnson Street looks much the same as it did near the turn of the century, complete with authentic false fronts, wood plank walkways and hitching posts and an occasional horse-drawn wagon.

SEE ADDENDUM

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 1881 – 1930 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Big Horn's Johnson Street false fronts are significant as representatives of the growth and decline of western boom towns in the late 19th century. Big Horn was the first town in Sheridan County and temporarily served as the county seat. It was organized to serve travelers along the Bozeman Trail following the military campaigns of 1876–77 which eliminated Indian control of the area. After being bypassed by the railroad in 1892, Big Horn became an agricultural service community for the Little Goose valley and thrived as such into the 1930's. These five buildings embody the distinctive characteristics of boom town false front architecture, popular throughout the west in the late 19th and early 20th century. As a group they represent one of Wyoming's highest concentrations of original main street facades and convey a sense of time and place that is rapidly disappearing in the face of modern booms. The district is likewise important as a representative of one town's ability to adapt to the role of agricultural service communities in the face of a declining boom and as such survive into the 1980's.

SEE ADDENDUM

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ADDENDUM ITEM #9

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than two acres
Quadrangle name Big Horn, WY

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

13	342	2100	49	49	2140
Zone	Easting		Northing		

B

13	342	2100	49	49	1170
Zone	Easting		Northing		

C

13	342	2130	49	49	1170
Zone	Easting		Northing		

D

13	342	2130	49	49	1110
Zone	Easting		Northing		

E

13	342	1150	49	49	1150
Zone	Easting		Northing		

F

13	342	1150	49	49	1150
Zone	Easting		Northing		

G

Zone	Easting		Northing		

H

Zone	Easting		Northing		

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE ADDENDUM

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Molly Mooney, Christy Love, and Sheila Bricher-Wade, WY Recreation Commission

organization _____ date _____

street & number Box 398 Box 40 telephone (307) 672-3068 (307) 674-7278

city or town Sheridan Big Horn state Wyoming 82801 82833

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

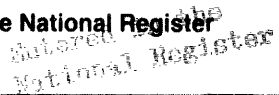
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Alvin J. Baston

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 2/23/84

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



John M. ...
Keeper of the National Register

date 4/9/84

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

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ADDENDUM Item #7 Description

The Bozeman Trail Bar (Block 10, Lots 1216): 1882. The bar is a one-story wood frame building with a gabled roof of asphalt shingles. It is a board and batten false front with a wooden plank porch on the front facade. The porch has a flat roof with a shortened balustrade supported by square posts. The posts are topped with a turned wooden ornament in a newel post fashion. The single central door on the front is flanked by large nine-paned windows and all have plain surrounds. The original brick interior chimney has been replaced with a modern one. A shed roofed wing has been added on the north side with one small square window on the front and the same board and batten exterior as the rest of the building. CONTRIBUTING

The Big Horn Mercantile and Post Office (Block 15, Lots 2-6): 1882. The Mercantile is still functioning in its original use and is a two-story wood frame building with board and batten siding. It has a gabled roof of asphalt shingles and a false front with a simple cornice supported by carved brackets. A wood-plank porch on the front facade is covered by a board and batten shed roof and supported by square posts. The large double door on the front is flanked by large sixteen-light windows and all have plain surrounds. Two large windows on the second floor have been divided, but remain the same size and shape as the originals. Windows have also been added to the second story on both sides as this portion is now used for an apartment. It has an exterior brick chimney on the north side. The new porch is a later addition. CONTRIBUTING

The Store House (Block 15, Lots 2-6): 1890. The store house building is a very plain wood frame, gabled roof false front. The roof is wood shingle and the siding is horizontal flat board. There is a simple cornice on the false front. The double front door is flanked by long narrow six-paned windows, and there is a transom of four lights above the doors. All have plain surrounds. CONTRIBUTING

Mountain Man Highland/Trading Post (Block 16, Lots 7-9 and part of 11): 1915 and 1929. The Mountain Man Trading Post building was not constructed at the height of Big Horn's boom but represents the continuing desire of the little town to convey a more impressive Main Street facade. The northern portion of this building, constructed in 1915 as the newspaper office is a wood frame false front with a simple cornice. The roof is gabled asphalt shingle and there is a brick exterior wall chimney on the north side. The double door opening has been filled with a custom garage door and the building has horizontal lap siding. The 1929 portion on the south side is a flat-roofed building with a simple cornice and a shed roof porch on the front facade. Although the windows and doors have been changed on this building, it is presently experiencing extensive rehabilitation and is a marginally contributing structure because it retains integrity as a false front and retains much of the original fabric and character of the newspaper office. CONTRIBUTING

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ADDENDUM Item #7 Description (continued)

The Odd Fellows Hall (Block 16, Lot 13): 1894. The Odd Fellows Hall is a wood frame false front of two stories with a simple cornice. It has two double hung windows on the second story front facade with plain surrounds. There are two exterior wall brick chimneys on the north side and double hung windows on both sides. The siding is horizontal lap siding. It has a shed roofed addition on the north side of one story and a two-story shed roofed porch on the south side added in 1980. The Odd Fellows Hall was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in December of 1980. CONTRIBUTING

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ADDENDUM Item #8 Significance

Northern Wyoming experienced effective Indian control until after the military campaigns of 1876-77, but by 1879 homesteaders and cattlemen were hungrily eyeing the area as a source of free land and a fresh start. O.P. Hanna arrived that year and started the town of Big Horn to service the rapidly growing agricultural community of the Little Goose Valley. Encompassing the Bozeman blacksmith shop which serviced the bloody trail during the 1860's (still standing at the end of Main Street and enrolled in the National Register of Historic Places, but not included in the district), Big Horn was the first town in Sheridan County and temporarily served as county seat before Sheridan.

Citizens anxiously anticipated becoming the major city in the area and speculated the railroad would certainly be routed through their community. Their enthusiasm, the financial stimulation from wealthy cattle ranchers, and the town's location along a popular stage route to Montana, helped to support Big Horn's development. In the mid 1880's the little city featured three general stores, a post office, two churches, several saloons and dance halls, a hotel and restaurant, blacksmith shops and liverys, a newspaper office, mills and factories, schools, barbershops, sawmills, photography shops, a cemetery, and even a skating rink. Such rapid growth clearly demonstrates the transition from self-sufficient homesteads scattered throughout the valley to a booming commercial center.

The false front architecture, prominent in most of early Big Horn, is representative of typical western boom towns and was designed to mask the gabled ends of frame buildings and provide a commercial look for main street facades. The false front was a way of providing an urban scale to the small town, or as one scholar comments, "a shape in the vastness." The false front architecture represents the ingenuity of western pioneers, limited by access to materials and plans, in creatively copying the urbanized look of 19th century eastern development. Big Horn's false fronts represent a trend that existed all over the west; communities sprang up virtually overnight, became thriving local entities and then suddenly when the speculative bubble burst, they ceased to grow.

Big Horn's crash came when it was bypassed by the railroad. With the tracks, went the county seat 13 miles north to Sheridan. Unlike many communities which almost immediately disappeared after such a devastating loss, Big Horn survived by becoming a center for community and agriculturally related activities for residents of the Little Goose Valley, and continues in that role in the 1980's. Its false front buildings still standing and in use are associated with the phenomena of frontier boom towns; some survived to become important cities, many became ghost towns, a few adapted to the lesser role of small service communities, all are closely linked with the broad patterns of early western settlement. They embody the distinctive characteristics of architecture adapted to western needs and experiences in the late 19th century, and they retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and therefore deserve to be included on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Continuation sheet and Justification

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The boundary for Big Horn Johnson Street District begins at Point A which is located at the intersection of the alley between Johnson and Main Street and a fence which runs east-west between the Bozeman Trail Bar and the fire station. The boundary then proceeds east to Point B located on the west side of Johnson, directly in line with the aforementioned fence, to the pavement edge. The boundary then proceeds south along the pavement edge to Point C, located on the west side of Johnson on an arbitrary line which extends east-west and lies approximately ten feet north of the north wall of the Trading Post. (This arbitrary line serves to exclude residential properties to the north, from the district.) The boundary then proceeds east to Point D located at the intersection of the aforementioned arbitrary line and the alley between Johnson and Creighton. It then extends south along the west side of the alley to Point E which is located at the intersection of this alley and south Second Street. The boundary then proceeds west across Johnson to Point F which is located at the NE corner of the intersection of the alley between Johnson and south Second. (This allows inclusion of an empty lot on the south side of the general store and store house. The lot is, however, non-intrusive and the boundary defensible because it follows an existing pavement line rather than an arbitrary or imaginary one.) The boundary then proceeds north along the east side of the alley to the point of beginning.

This boundary includes the five structures previously described and small portions of Johnson Street, more specifically described in County Clerk's records as: Lots 12 through 16 Block 10, Lots 2 through 6 Block 15, Lots 7 through 9 and 13 Block 16, and a portion of Lot 11 Block 16.

The boundary for the Big Horn Johnson Street district includes those false fronts retaining integrity while excluding modern intrusions, residential structures and buildings which have suffered extensive exterior facade changes. The boundary includes five contributing structures and limited portions of land as described by the County Clerk's ownership records. All owners have been contacted and are in agreement with the Big Horn Johnson Street historic district.

Surveyor's Co.

BIG HORN HISTORIC DISTRICT - WY

NOT TO SCALE

