

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

WARNING

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- * WHEN PHOTOCOPYING OR OTHERWISE REPRODUCING THIS DOCUMENT, BE CERTAIN TO COVER ALL LOCATION INFORMATION, INCLUDING THE ADDRESS BLOCKS, VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, UTM COORDINATES, MAPS OR ANY SECTIONS IN THE TEXT DESCRIBING LOCATION.

Property Name Mud Springs Station Archeological District (BI)

State Nebraska

County Morill

Reference Number 11000618

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Amendment to NPS # 73001068)

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Mud Springs Station Archaeological District (Amendment and Boundary Increase)

other names/site number 25MO72

2. Location

street & number Part of the SW 1/4, Sec. 31 T 18N R 49W, not for publication
or 5.3 miles north and 2 miles west of Dalton

city or town Dalton vicinity _____

state Nebraska code NE county Morrill code 123 zip code 69131

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Michael J. Smith SHPO 13 July 2011
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Jonathan K. Martz Gebert 9/6/11
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only one box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Conflict and Warfare in the North and South Platte
 Valleys of Nebraska, 1864-1865

**Number of contributing resources previously
 listed in the National Register**

1

Amendment Rationale

Mud Springs Pony Express Station was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 for significance at the statewide level in the areas of aboriginal history and prehistory (archeology), communications, transportation and military. Since that time archeological explorations by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Anthropology have uncovered significant artifacts and resources related to Native American and U.S. Military conflicts in 1864 and 1865 along the North and South Platte Rivers. Since its nomination, Mud Springs has attracted both popular and scholarly attention that has increased understanding of its role and significance in frontier history.

This amendment to the Mud Springs nomination is offered to reflect those increases in knowledge and interest, and features two main components. First, to reflect the fact that Mud Springs contributed significantly to many events and trends of western and frontier history, a proposal is made to clarify the name of the nominated site. Second, this amendment adds significant battle-related criteria to the Mud Springs nomination. Archeological explorations by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have assembled significant artifacts and resources related to conflict between Native American and U.S. Military conflicts in 1864 and 1865 along the North and South Platte Rivers. This research has led to the creation of the MPD "Conflict and Warfare in the North and South Platte Valleys of Nebraska, 1864-1865." Mud Springs Station and Rush Creek Battlefield are the first two sites identified as eligible under that MPD.

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DEFENSE: Military Facility

DEFENSE: Battle Site

TRANSPORTATION: Road-Related

(Vehicular/Pedestrian)

INDUSTRY: Communications Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Field/Pasture

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NA

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: NA

walls: NA

roof: NA

other: NA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Mud Springs Station (initially a watering hole on the Overland Trail's Jules Cut-off, then a Pony Express relay station, and finally a transcontinental telegraph relay station) is in southern Morrill County. It is currently covered by short grass pasture with clusters of sage and yucca, typical of the plains of western Nebraska. The site of the station's original corral and two buildings is surrounded by trees, with a monument erected in 1939 jointly by the Mud Springs Women's Club and the Nebraska State Historical Society located between the footprints of the historic buildings (See Photo 1). The station site and a hill rising to its southwest contain intact archaeological deposits from a February 4-6, 1865 battle between the inhabitants of the station and a group of Native Americans, primarily Cheyenne. The site is situated on bench six to eight feet above a dry wash that surrounds the hill and station to the south and east. To the north of the site are two springs, which are both the namesake and original impetus for the construction of the station at this location. These have been dammed to form a pond, which is also currently surrounded by trees. Visible wheel ruts marking the route of the Overland Trail curve down from the northeast to enter the station site from the east, crossing immediately to the south of the monument and original building locations and exiting the property to the west (Bleed and Scott 2009, Jones 1973). Though no original construction is extant, the site of Mud Springs Station has never been plowed and is believed to contain intact archaeological deposits capable of yielding information on the aforementioned historic battle, as well as life at overland trail stations, pony express stations, and telegraph stations. The site is also likely to yield information regarding trail traffic and early communication methods.

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Narrative Description

The valley of the North Platte River in western Nebraska consists of a number of distinct landforms. Rocky outcrops at the valley margins give way to an area of gently rolling hills and depressions which prevail until a distance of roughly one half mile from the river. The land immediately surrounding the river is generally very flat, and is easily traversable by wheeled vehicles (Scott et al. 2010). The rationale for the location of Mud Springs station is made clear in the context of this landscape by understanding its position on the Jules Cutoff, a leg of the Overland Trail. During the Trail's period of greatest use in the mid-nineteenth century, the Jules Cutoff provided a shorter route to Fort Laramie for those travelers coming from the south. Initially running northwest along Lodgepole Creek in present-day northern Colorado, the cutoff turned north, near the future location of Sidney, Nebraska, meeting the North Platte in a little under thirty-five miles. From there, the Overland Trail continued west along the flats on the south bank of the river. The cutoff prevented an unnecessary detour eastward to the route which connected with the North Platte near Courthouse Rock, significantly reducing travel time and being used by travelers as early as 1854, though the route was not formally surveyed until the fall of 1856 by a Lt. Bryan. Two natural springs running in a small muddy draw in the rolling uplands about ten miles south of the river provided an ideal rest stop and campground along the Jules cutoff, as well as representing the only source of fresh water between Lodgepole Creek and the North Platte River (Bleed and Scott 2009, Jones 1973, McDermott 2003).

In late 1859 or early 1860, during the initial route survey for Pony Express service, a home station was constructed near the springs. These buildings were possibly the first permanent structures erected at the site (Jones 1973). During Mud Spring Station's service as a stop on the Pony Express and Overland Trail, a station of the transcontinental telegraph (from 1861), and an outpost of the United States Army (from 1864), the buildings may have undergone one or more periods of modification or reconstruction, as mention of building details and the construction materials utilized varies according to the source. In the summer of 1860, an English sportsman, Sir Richard Burton passed through the Pony Express station, describing a station house and combination open shed/dormitory which (in a concession to the scarcity of timber on the plains) were constructed of sod with roofs of cedar logs. By 1864 two log buildings and a corral were present at Mud Springs, as sketched and described by Caspar Collins, a cavalryman with the United States Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry regiment. According to Collins, the westernmost building measured 35 x 16 feet and was divided between a military squad room and the telegraph office. At the north end of the building, the telegraph office measured 20 x 16 feet and contained a fireplace on the south wall and a door and window in the west wall. The southern end contained the squad room measuring 15 x 16 feet, with the fireplace in the north wall, the door to the west, and one window in the east wall. The eastern structure was a stable, measuring 40 x 20 feet. Two internal walls of sod or adobe divided the building into three rooms of roughly equal dimensions, access between the rooms was provided by one door in each wall. The corral was apparently originally located to the west of both buildings (Bleed and Scott 2009, Jones 1973, McDermott 2003). There is a single mention of a third building through local informants, also a stable. It may have been about 60 feet in length and located on the bank of the dry wash to the northeast of the 40 x 20 foot building (Jones 1973).

In the summer of 1864, US cavalry troops began to be permanently stationed at Mud Springs Station to maintain the continuity of traffic along the Overland Trail and communications through the transcontinental telegraph. The most significant event in the military life of the station took place from February 4-6, 1865, during which the buildings were attacked by a group of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux. The military engagement resulted in the deposition of unique archaeological material relating to the ongoing conflict between Native Americans and the U.S. Army in the North Platte Valley, in the form of a rifle pit (possibly meant for observation) atop the hill to the southwest of the station, dropped and expended ammunition from

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both sides, and potential additional artifacts (Bleed and Scott 2009, McDermott 2003). Though the buildings have since vanished, these archaeological deposits are likely to remain intact, representing a contributing resource offering the potential of significant insight into contemporary conflicts.

After the station's abandonment in 1876, any remaining buildings completely disappeared through natural or human processes in the intervening years. The area reverted to natural short grass pasture, but was never plowed or otherwise utilized in disruptive agricultural processes, preserving the integrity of the archaeological resources. As mentioned above, the Mud Springs Women's Club and the Nebraska State Historical Society jointly erected a stone monument in 1939 between the footprints of the two buildings visible in Collins' 1864 plan. The springs were eventually dammed and the land to the north of the pond became the site of a ranch operation from 1894, when John M. Scherer and his wife took out homestead papers. The area of the original ranch is still inhabited and contains a number of buildings (Bleed and Scott 2009, Jones 1973). These structures are not intended to be included in the present nomination, but are mentioned for the sake of completion. Though the station site is highly significant due to the aforementioned contributing archaeological resources, the only remaining visible evidence of the original Mud Springs Station are subtle Overland Trail ruts entering the station area from the east and leaving from the west.

In 1995, the site was assessed in a ground penetrating radar survey in an attempt to characterize any archaeological remains that may have been present, with inconclusive results. The University of Nebraska, Department of Anthropology funded a metal detector survey at the site in 2006 that yielded significant numbers of artifacts relating to the 1865 military conflict, confirming the presence of significant contributing resources (Bleed and Scott 2009).

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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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHEOLOGY/HISTORIC-ABORIGINAL

ARCHEOLOGY/HISTORIC-NON-ABORIGINAL

MILITARY

TRANSPORTATION

COMMUNICATIONS

Period of Significance

c.1854-c.1876

Significant Dates

1865

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Cultural Affiliation

Native American: Cheyenne, Arapaho, Sioux

Euro-American

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

Mud Springs station was utilized as a stopping point along the Jules cutoff of the Overland Trail beginning around 1854. The period of significance includes the station's use as a military post, Pony Express station and transcontinental telegraph station. The main military conflict between Native Americans and the United States Army took place in 1865, and the period ends upon the site's abandonment as a military station in 1876.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): NA

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Water from Mud Springs was used by pre-Contact Native Americans and, after 1854, by travelers on the Overland Trail. Mud Springs Station served as a Pony Express station in 1860-1861, a station on the transcontinental telegraph line from 1861, and a military post for a permanent complement of troops from 1864. The station's primary significance stems from its association with the Overland Trail as a stopping point and watering hole, as a pony express station, and as a telegraph station. Another event contributing to its significance is a February 4-6, 1865 battle between a group of Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux Native Americans and soldiers of the United States Cavalry. Though no original construction remains are extant, the area of Mud Springs station has never been plowed and the site is believed to contain intact archaeological deposits capable of yielding significant information on the historic battle, as well as the station's larger role in conflict between Native Americans and the United States government in the North Platte Valley in 1864 and 1865 (Bleed and Scott 2009, Jones 1973, McDermott 2003). These resources (the presence of which was confirmed in a 2008 archaeological investigation), along with the site's use as a military outpost along the Overland Trail and a Pony Express and transcontinental telegraph station, illustrate Mud Springs Station's state significance under both National Register Criterion A and D as established by the Multiple Property Document "Conflict and Warfare in the North and South Platte Valleys of Nebraska, 1864-1865."

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

This amendment addresses two specific changes in the Mud Springs nomination. The original nomination described the broad and diverse history of the site and showed that its significance does not rest solely on its rather brief use as a Pony Express Station. To adequately and appropriately reflect its diverse significance, the nominated property must be recorded as "**The Mud Springs Station.**"

The second change to the nomination addressed in this amendment is recognition of Mud Springs' role as a battlefield. The military engagement at Mud Springs was a direct consequence of the Sand Creek Massacre, which had occurred in eastern Colorado on November 29, 1864. Following the attack, large groups of Cheyenne and Arapaho Native Americans began to raid road ranches, towns, and outposts along the Overland Trail in an effort to obtain livestock and supplies during the process of migrating away from the site of the massacre. In early February of 1865, the town of Julesburg in present-day northeastern Colorado was attacked, and by February 4th a mobile Indian community of 2,000 to 3,000 people had reached the area of Mud Springs and established a camp near Rush Creek on February 5th.

While the precise number of soldiers and warriors who fought at Mud Springs is not likely to be known with certainty, the historic records do provide a reasonable approximation for those on the army side. Mud Springs Station was occupied by nine soldiers, presumably a detail from Co. H, Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (OVC) regiment, one telegrapher, and four civilian "cowboys." The rescue party was composed of soldiers from the Eleventh OVC and Seventh Iowa Volunteer Cavalry (IVC) stationed at Forts Laramie and Mitchell. Arriving in separate detachments in the early morning hours of February 5th and 6th, a total of perhaps 230 men arrived to enact the rescue.

Perhaps upwards of 200 warriors had attacked and stolen stock from Mud Springs Station around 3:00 PM on the 4th of February. As they did not cut the telegraph wire immediately the beleaguered soldiers and civilians were able to send for help via the "talking wire." On the first day, the vastly outnumbered inhabitants of the station remained indoors and exchanged fire with the attackers, who were able to approach the buildings quite closely both on foot and horseback. In the early morning hours on the 5th, First Lieutenant William

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Ellsworth and 36 men of Co. H., Eleventh OVC, arrived at the station from Ft. Mitchell. When the Indians returned the morning of the 5th, they were surprised by the increased number of soldiers at the station and only lightly skirmished with them during the morning. They soon withdrew to the surrounding bluffs. Lieutenant Colonel William O. Collins arrived with an advance party of 25 men from the Eleventh OVC the morning of February 6th. Captain William D. Fouts, Co. D, Seventh IVC, arrived that same morning around 8:00 A.M. with the remainder of the Laramie force, 40 men from Co. D, Seventh IVC and 55 men of the Eleventh OVC. Heavy fighting began soon after Fouts' arrival. Collins describes the fighting that took place on the 6th as a game of "bo peep" in which soldiers and Indians were constantly attempting to improve their positions, popping up just long enough to trade shots before ducking back down. The warriors were interested in obtaining the stock visible in the corral, and spent much of the day harassing the buildings by taking advantage of the rolling terrain. Collins estimates between 500 and 1,000 Indians took part in the attacks on the 6th, including up to 200 who attained favorable positions atop the hill to the southwest of the station. From here, Native forces were able to fire down at the buildings from a distance of only 75 yards while maintaining excellent visibility. Collins was able to organize a mounted charge which drove the Indians off the hill, consolidating the cavalry position on its crest by digging a rifle pit. The Indians, seeing that their opportunity for a victory had slipped away, eventually gave it up in the afternoon (Scott and Bleed 2009).

During the fighting on the 6th of February, Collins telegraphed Fort Laramie before the line was cut and requested a mountain howitzer to be sent to Mud Springs, escorted by an additional force of soldiers. First Lieutenant William Brown's detachment with a 12-pounder Mountain Howitzer arrived at Mud Springs on the morning of February 7th. By this time, Collins had sent a scouting party out to determine the whereabouts of the Indian force, as nothing more had been seen of them since their departure the previous day. Upon ascertaining the location of the Indian camp, Collins' main force marched east on the morning of February 8th, running into the Indians' rearguard at the mouth of Rush Creek on the south bank of the North Platte. Following a two-day engagement, the Indians moved northward while Collins' command returned to Fort Laramie over the following week. In the three-day battle at Mud Springs, no cavalrymen were killed outright and Indian casualties (if they sustained any at all) were quite light (Scott et al. 2010).

A 2006 metal detector survey at Mud Springs confirmed the presence of significant intact archaeological deposits from the 1865 battle. The metal detector was chosen as an investigative instrument due to its proven utility in excavations on many other military sites, and the expected metallic nature of a majority of the artifacts remaining from the fighting around Mud Springs during the Civil War. An area of 40 acres was inventoried, encompassing the ground from the southern bank of the pond, through the station area to the edge of the bench at the dry wash, including the entire southwest hill and extending into the rolling hills one-quarter mile west of the station. Metal detector operators walked transects oriented with topographic features, and upon discovery, each artifact was recorded on a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver and recovered (Bleed and Scott 2009).

A total of 44 cartridges, cartridge cases, and bullets were recovered during the metal detection survey at Mud Springs in 2008, along with a single unfired "top hat" firearm percussion cap and one strap bar segment from a brass 1859-pattern cavalry spur. Following firearm identification analysis, these artifacts indicated the use of at least 21 individual weapons of eight different firearm types during the fighting at the station in 1865. Distribution analysis of the recovered material revealed significant information on the positions utilized and tactics employed by the opposing forces during the engagement. Cartridge cases from 56-56 caliber Spencer and Joslyn carbines, as well as .44-caliber carbines were found scattered around the location of the station buildings and atop the hill to the southwest, consistent with the available firsthand accounts of an Army defense centered around the station, followed by a cavalry charge which retook the hill position from Indian attackers. These weapons are partially consistent with those listed as being used by the Eleventh OVC and Seventh IVC in

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1864 and 1865 ordnance returns. Spencers are mentioned in these sources, but Joslyns are not. However, Civil War ordnance returns are known to be unreliable and often only partially complete, so the Mud Springs artifacts represent a situation in which archaeology may help to clarify inconsistent historical records (Bleed and Scott 2009).

Cartridge cases from the .44-caliber Henry rifle and another carbine type were also recovered from the southwest hill and other areas around the station. These weapons are believed to have been employed by Indian forces at the battle, and their location atop the hill and in other locations on the rolling landscape are consistent with reports of the Indian attackers utilizing the terrain to their advantage (Bleed and Scott 2009).

A depression observed atop the southwest hill was subjected to excavation with a view toward determining its precise nature. Surviving Civil War-era rifle pits are a rarity in the archaeological record, and this example held the potential to provide information on the tactical intentions of the cavalry force during the battle. The roughly circular depression originally measured two meters in diameter and dipped to about 20cm below ground level. Its nature was unclear before excavation, with the current landowner relating that his father had been told that this feature was a pioneer woman's grave site before her remains had been removed. Alternatively, the potential existed that the depression was the remains of a natural blowout, other examples of which are observable on the hill. A test unit was laid out to intersect the perceived western edge of the original feature. Though the profiles of this unit did not indicate a sharply delineated edge which may be expected from an artificial excavation, the fill of mixed gray sand contained charcoal flecks and a number of artifacts, including the unfired percussion cap, four lithic flakes, and the mid-portion of a bifacially-flaked projectile point. More solidly-compacted sandy loam which was sterile of artifacts began at 60cm below the ground surface. The presence of artifacts within the feature's fill, in conjunction with the mention of a rifle pit in firsthand accounts, seems to indicate that the depression on the hill overlooking the station was indeed associated with the 1865 battle (Bleed and Scott 2009).

The rifle pit feature was also subjected to a viewshed analysis in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. This analysis involved the consideration of the rifle pit's location within the context of a computerized Digital Elevation Model (DEM). The DEM contained elevation data for the area surrounding Mud Springs station, and allowed the calculation of the precise land area which was visible from any given point around the station, known as a point's viewshed. When known effective weapon range data were also incorporated, the GIS analysis allowed the effectiveness of different combat positions to be assessed, providing information on both visible land area and targets which would actually be within range of the observer's weapon. In general, an observer near the buildings of the station would have had good all-round visibility of the land near the structures, but long-distance observation to the south, east, and west was prevented by rolling hills, including the southwest hill rising only 75 yards from the station. Conversely, an observer from the rifle pit atop the hill would have had a significant advantage in visibility, being able to take advantage of long-distance views to the north, east, and south, and maintaining moderate visibility to the west. The weapons fan analysis, presenting the selection of targets which would have been available to an observer at each position, also indicated an advantage for the rifle pit on the hill, but not nearly as dramatic. Though some targets would have been available to a soldier in the pit which would not have been to a man in the station, the rifle pit position also included a number of blind spots which would have allowed opponents to approach within 20 meters of the pit without the soldiers in the position being able to retaliate. For these reasons, the GIS analysis indicated that the rifle pit was intended primarily as an observation point to ascertain the movements and detect the approach of potential attackers, rather than as a defensive position in its own right (Bleed and Scott 2009).

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Mud Springs Station was attacked in February of 1865 because of its vulnerable position on the Overland Trail and its livestock, which would have proven valuable to a mobile Indian community of several thousand individuals. The engagement, while minor in terms of casualties when compared with others of the Indian Wars, lasted for several days and was an excellent example of conflict between the United States Cavalry and Indians of the western Plains in which both forces employed established fighting techniques and displayed operational behavior consistent with their respective goals and military culture. The engagement at the station was significant in its own right and it is significant when considered as part of the larger Indian-United States conflict in the North and South Platte River valleys in 1864 and 1865 as discussed in related MPD. The battle did not exist in a vacuum. The conflict at Mud Springs were precipitated by events to the south and west in the preceding months, and in turn influenced further developments in the military history and archaeology of the area, beginning with the battle at Rush Creek only a few days later. In addition, there are believed to be archaeological deposits remaining at Mud Springs which have the potential to provide further information on the specific events at the station and the larger conflict as a whole. For these reasons, the site of Mud Springs Station is considered to be highly significant at a state level under both criteria A and D of the National Register.

The battle also had a far-reaching impact on Native American ethnography and ethnic heritage through the retelling by George Bent, who would go on to achieve national significance. As a result of a number of publications, Bent has emerged as an important Native American voice of the frontier period. As the son of the important frontiersman and trader William Bent and his Cheyenne wife, Owl Woman, George Bent grew up within Cheyenne society. He was married to Cheyenne wives and lived with them and his children in Cheyenne communities where he often served as translator and spokesperson. Perhaps most significantly, when he was an old man, George Bent recorded his experiences during the 1860s when he had ridden as a Cheyenne warrior. Most of these letters were sent to George Hyde and George Bird Grinnell who used them as a record of early Indian Wars events, correspondence which resulted in *Life of George Bent, Written from His Letters* edited by Hyde in 1968. In addition, George Bent himself—and not just his recollections—continues to gain significance with the publication of books like *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent* in 2005. With his deep familiarity and obvious sympathy, however, Bent's accounts of events can be viewed as a reflection of Native American perceptions of the early Indian Wars period. And it that light, Mud Springs is one of the very few specific places along with Rush Creek where Bent's observations and accounts can be placed in specific geographic context.¹

Finally, the integrity, appearance, and feel of the Mud Springs Station battlefield add to its significance. The area that was fought over in 1865 has certainly been impacted and modified in a number of ways. Still, the battlefield remains an open and largely undeveloped space that communicates to the modern visitor a feeling of what the area was like when hostile forces met there. There can be no question that that the battlefield contains material record that can be studied with modern methods to expand understanding of both the Mud Springs battle and, more broadly, conflicts that marked America's frontier history. The site is, therefore, eligible at the statewide level under Criterion D for its ability to yield important information about historic Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal military tactics in the United States during the Civil War, an era of frontier warfare that has been largely overlooked.

¹ Rush Creek Battlefield will be nominated under National Register Criterion B for its association with George Bent.

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Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The Mud Springs fight was one of number of clashes that followed the November 29, 1864 destruction of Black Kettle's village of Cheyenne (McDermott 2003; Greene and Scott 2004) by a regiment of Colorado Volunteers. In the wake of that assault, a large community of Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho coalesced and moved toward the security of the isolated Sandhills and the Black Hills. With relatively little opposition, this group attacked Julesburg, Colorado and other ranches and facilities to avenge the massacre and to gather resources. The mobile community numbered some 2,000 to 3,000. They reached the North Platte in very early February, 1865 with a substantial store of captured arms and resources. By no later than February 5th, they established a camp at a place identified as "Rush Creek." This site is reputed to be some miles east of Mud Springs. Composed of families and their gear, this was a substantial base that was maintained until February 9th when, after a sharp battle involving Union artillery and an attack from a "breastwork," the tribesmen staged a strategic withdrawal and crossed the North Platte continuing their northward journey. Fighting at the Mud Creek Station may have started as the Rush Creek camp was being established. For a couple of days the Rush Creek camp appears to have been the operational base from which fighters attacked Mud Springs.

Sir Richard Burton, an English sportsman, who passed through the Pony Express station on his westward travels on August 12, 1860 described it as: "The station was not unlike a Egyptian fellows hut, made of sod half peat with vegetable matter; it is taken up in large flakes after being furrowed with the plough and cut into proper lengths with a short handled spade. The roof was made of cedar timber. We ate in an open shed next to a doorless dormitory. I spent the night in the body of a dismantled wagon to escape the pests of the infested dormitory (Burton 1963)." By 1865 the adobe structures appear to have been dismantled and rebuilt with logs as described by A. G. Shaw, a battle participant with the Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (OVC). Shaw (Jensen 2005:304) stated "There were several buildings, and rooms connected or a part of the same building. The Indians got behind the hill in the rear of the buildings & would crawl to the top and shoot down into the log buildings. There were no windows on that side, but occasionally a bullet went through the chinking and penetrated to the inside, but nobody was hurt."

The Station complex is surrounded by a variety of topographic features. Immediately east of the buildings there is a broad sandy draw. The level of the Station is separated from the draw by a bank that is steep in some areas but less than 20 inches high. A series of hills is located to the south of the building site. The closest of these is less than 100 yards away and directly overlooks the buildings. The buildings have not survived, but their location is marked by a stone monument erected in 1939 based on oral traditions. The site has not been systematically tested, but in 1995 it was assessed with ground penetrating radar (Steinacher 1995). Specific anomalies were not identified.

The Mud Springs fight is presented by both Army and Indian accounts that have been assembled by John McDermott (2003, 1996). The primary Army accounts are the after action report of Lt. Col. William Collins of the Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry (Hewett 1997:203-233). The Native perspective is represented in accounts of the fight left by George Bent, the son of noted trader William Bent and his Cheyenne wife Owl Woman. Bent rode with his Indian kinsmen (Hyde 1983, Halaas and Masich 2005; Grinnell 1956, Haack 2007).

George Bent described the opening phase of the Mud Springs fight in a May 4, 1906 letter to George Hyde. This letter has been cited by several authors (Hyde 1983:183-189; Halaas and Masich 2005; Grinnell

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1956), but the original text presented in a transcription by Stephen Haack (Haack 2007:33-34) presents useful information.

"That night scouts were sent ahead reported ranch on Muddy Springs had soldiers, so early next morning everybody got on their best horses and started for the springs. The village turned north east from here. We went due north for the ranch. When we got near we could hear lots of firing. Lot of Indians had started for this place that night so as to run the stock, but soldiers had all their animals inside the corral. The soldiers were inside of buildings and had port holes to shoot through. We could not tell how many soldiers were in this party. Sand creek ran close to the ranch with high bank. The Indians got behind this bank and shot into the buildings. At noon they turned all their animals loose. The mules and horses ran in every direction. Indians were running after them. Among rules with Indians, who touched the animal with anything in his hand, the animal was his. I understood the soldiers were running out of ammunition. They turned their stock loose so the Indians would leave them and they did so. After this the big village camped about [he gives no number here] miles east of Muddy Springs where we had fight. No Indians were killed in this fight and as I say we could not tell how many whites were killed in this fight. Lots of shooting was done on both sides. All the guns we ever captured were Spencer carbines. They were the best guns at that time and were handy to carry on horses."

Bent's recollections present a number of useful insights. First, he makes it clear that Indian fighters were well armed and that from the outset there was considerable shooting. He clearly states that the station defenders shot from loop holes made in the station wall. It is also significant that although Bent does not mention attacks from the hill south of the Station, his account indicates that the bank of the sandy draw on the east side of the Station was used heavily by the attackers and let them draw very close to where the defenders were based.

Col. Collins and his cavalry were about 90 miles west of Mud Springs at Fort Laramie when word of the attack was received. He left to relieve the station with some 120 men on the evening of the 4th including companies of the Eleventh OVC and some men of the Seventh Iowa Volunteer Cavalry. He also ordered a relief party of Lt. William Ellsworth and 36 men of Co. H Eleventh OVC stationed at Fort Mitchell to Mud Springs. Ellsworth arrived early on February 5th. Collins arrived early on the 6th, having ridden for two nights.

The newly arrived Army troops established a corral of wagons and other materials adjacent to the Station. They kept their stock in this confine and used it as a defensive line for most of February 5th. Army troopers were armed with Spencer rifles, which was confirmed in the archaeological record. Indians were described as using repeating rifles, revolvers, and bows and arrow, also confirmed by the archaeological record, with additional arms identified only by the archaeological evidence. Collins described the fighting on February 6th as a game of "bo-peep" in which both the Army and Indian fighters searched out sheltered spots from which they could stand and surprise their adversaries. The warriors were attracted to horses in the expanded corral. They also harassed the station on horseback and on foot, using the terrain as effective cover to draw close to the station. The fighting spread over a wide area with mounted Indians alternately charging the station and taking shelter from soldier's rifle fire by galloping behind far hills.

On February 6th, the fighting became quite intense. Collins estimated that between 500 and 1000 Indian fighters were involved in the attack. Based on estimates by other observers, McDermott (2003:38) believes the higher number is the most accurate. In addition to continuing to try to drive off horses and mules penned in the corral, Indians also brought groups of up to 200 individuals to the top of the hill immediately south of the station. This brought them within 75 yards of the station buildings and allowed them to send in volleys of bullets and arrows. To deal with those attacks, on the afternoon of the 6th Collins organized an assault by mounted and unmounted troopers on the hill south of the station. After that assault, Indians abandoned the high ground and it was occupied by troopers. They even dug a "rifle pit" on the hill top. Paul Henderson (1951), an early researcher at the site, reported the remains of that pit "and several others" on the hill south of the station.

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Archaeological testing terrain analysis confirmed the feature as a rifle pit dug by the soldiers to allow for a better field of view should the warriors return.

With a secure perimeter and another detachment of 50 men of the Eleventh OVC, who arrived from Fort Laramie with a cannon late on the 6th, the Army was able to leave the station confines. On the 7th, Collins sent out scouting parties to locate the main Indian camp. Following well-worn trails, it was easily located. On the morning of the 8th, Collins led a force of some 185 troopers out of Mud Springs to pursue the Cheyenne and their allies who were by that time breaking their Rush Creek camp and heading across the North Platte. At that point, the battle of Mud Springs was over.

The forces that met at Mud Springs in 1865 were not entirely ready for war. The two sides were familiar with one another and they carried many of the same arms, but the military force protecting the station was very small. The reasons behind their combat, the processes that brought them to their engagements, and the organizations that directed their efforts were all quite different, yet both are clearly reflected in the archaeological record of the Mud Springs fight. Strategically, Indian and Army forces were very different, but recognizable in the archaeological record as well as the historical documentation. Native communities sought materials and war honors, while the mission of the frontier army was occupation and protection of transportation and communication routes. Combat with neighboring societies was a standard part of life for Native communities of the Plains.

Operationally, both sides of the North Platte campaign depended on mobility, but they managed their movements in different ways. Army units operated out of fixed bases from which units were dispatched to areas of operation. They traveled as units carrying the equipment and supplies they needed to project force and protect themselves. Native communities were themselves mobile, either moving to where resources were available or carrying their supports as they moved. Force projection was managed by social units - primarily "military societies" - or small self-selected groups organized by capable leaders who pursued specific tactical objectives. Those objectives might be identified by community leaders for the general good or they might focus on gaining booty or war honors that would increase an individual's social standing.

As a stopping point and watering hole, the Mud Springs Station is significant at the statewide level as a place that marks several events in Nebraska's role in westward migration along the Overland Trail. It is also significant as a Pony Express relay station. As a telegraph relay station it had involvement in the Civil War and the Nation's formulation of a military policy for pacification of the Trans-Missouri frontier and expansion of U.S. settlement on the Plains. It can be linked to military principles of the Civil War era and to both Native accounts compiled by George Bent for early western researchers George Bird Grinnell and George Hyde, and US after action reports and later enlisted accounts. As a well-preserved location, the battlefield offers a largely intact terrain that communicates the feel and appearance of the area where Indian and Army forces met 150 years ago.

The archeological content of the Mud Springs property has been tapped by unsystematic artifact collecting. Systematic survey conducted by the University of Nebraska in 2006 gathered a sample of battle-related artifacts. Even after these activities, however, it is certain that the site retains significant archeological information on warfare and settlement in Nebraska and the surrounding region. Questions that can be addressed with these resources will have to be determined by future generations of archeologists. Questions that can be listed at this time do, however, illustrate the site's potential. The location and construction details of the

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buildings that served as the Pony Express and Telegraph Station will be revealed by systematic excavation. These excavations will also provide specific information on the life and actions of emigrant travelers and initial settlers in the North Platte valley. Excavations around the Station buildings may reveal how the units dispatched to Mud Springs after February 4th were organized as they arrived and began to engage Indian fighters. These insights will be useful as a specific source of information and insight on the archeological appearance of Civil War and frontier Army camps. Such camps were important in Western and military affairs, but they are ephemeral and hard to investigate. Their archeological investigation can grow with investigation of sites like Mud Springs which has a relatively good historical record. Intensive metal detection survey will reveal more information on the distribution and movement of Native American and U.S. troops engaged at Mud Springs. Establishing detailed linkages between battle residues and topographic features will expose the tactical behavior of the two forces. Detail consideration of the terrain at and around Mud Springs will likewise make it possible to determine how Indian and Army forces managed the transit between Mud Springs and the Rush Creek. Such investigations could place Mud Springs more specifically in the 1865 North Platte Valley campaign.

Mud Springs is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and D as established by the Multiple Property Document "Conflict and Warfare in the North and South Platte Valleys of Nebraska, 1864-1865."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 25MO72

10. Geographical Data [RESTRICTED]

Acreage of Property 9.37 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>13</u>	<u>4573919</u>	<u>665059</u>	3	<u>13</u>	<u>4594129</u>	<u>665440</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>13</u>	<u>4593922</u>	<u>665060</u>	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The original nomination boundary starts at the northeast corner is located north of the school house and runs easterly to a line above the modern dam that creates the Mud Springs pond, thence diagonally southwest along the southern line of the pond to a point on the section line and back to the county road then north to its origin. This amendment extends the west line south to a point on the intermittent creek thence diagonally northeast to a pasture fence joining the old boundary line. The additional area constitutes 9.37 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary follows the 1973 National Register boundary line on the north and east but expands the area to the south and west about 9.37 acres as defined by archaeological discoveries relating to the 1865 Cheyenne attack on the telegraph station.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Benjamin Bilgri, Peter Bleed, and Douglas Scott
organization University of Nebraska-Lincoln date _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68588
e-mail benbilgri@hotmail.com

Mud Springs Pony Express Station
Name of Property

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County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Mud Springs State Archeological District

Location: Dalton vicinity, Morrill County, Nebraska

Photographer: Dr. Doug Scott, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of Anthropology

Date Photographed: February 2007 (Photo 1); May 2006 (Photo 2); 2008 (Photos 3-5)

Photo 1 of 5. Mud Springs Station. The high ground visible on the horizon blocked the view to the east allowing Cheyenne warriors traveling from the camp at the head of Rush Creek to approach Mud Springs without being seen, Aspect: SW

Photo 2 of 5. Archaeological testing of the feature identified as a riflepit dug by Lt. Colonel Collins command to provide protection and a point of observation after the fight at Mud Springs Station, Aspect: N.

Photo 3 of 5. Bullets recovered from the Mud Spring Station Archeological District, 2007 and 2008:

- a.) .36-caliber spherical ball (FS21)
- b.) .36-caliber St. Louis style conical bullet (FS32)
- c.) .44-caliber bullet, unfired but with the nose altered by carving (FS5)
- d.) 0 .44-caliber bullet fired in a Wesson rifle (FS10)
- e.) 0 .50-caliber bullet fire in a 6 right land and groove barrel (FS38)
- f.) impact deformed .50-caliber bullet fired in a 6 right land and groove barrel (FS29)
- g.) .54-caliber spherical ball (FS31)
- h.) .58-caliber Minié ball (FS37)
- i.) .50-caliber bullet mushroomed by impact and fired in a 6 right land and groove barrel, probably an 1886 Winchester (FS26)

Photo 4 of 5. Cartridge cases and unfired cartridges recovered from Mud Spring Station, 2007 and 2008:

- a.) .44-caliber Henry (FS30)
- b.) .44-caliber Wesson (FS19)
- c.) 56-50 Spencer (FS6)
- d.) 56-50 deteriorated Spencer cartridge (FS27)
- e.) .50-70-caliber Benét primed case (FS34)

Photo 5 of 5. Miscellaneous artifacts recovered from the Mud Springs Station, 2007 and 2008:

- a.) M1859 spur fragment (FS45),
- b.) Copper harness rivet (FS24),
- c.) Cut nail spike fragment (FS12)

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Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Nebraska State Historical Society (Mud Springs Station site) and Scott Cape (surrounding areas)
street & number 6824 Road 107 telephone _____
city or town Dalton state NE zip code 69131

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Mud Springs Pony Express Station
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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS [ALL FIGURES RESTRICTED]



Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the Mud Springs Station site. The locations of the hill and riflepit areas are noted to clarify their spatial association. The hill and the surrounding ravines were used by attacking Cheyenne warriors to pin the soldiers down in the station building. About 200 warriors participated in the attack until the arrival of relief forces from Forts Mitchell and Laramie.

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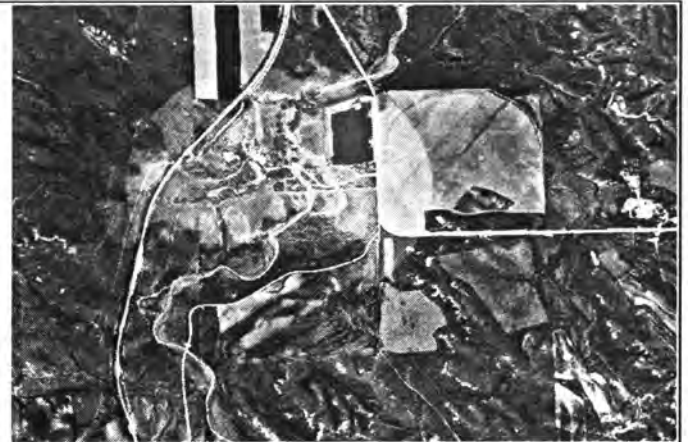
Figure 2. Distribution of Archeological Artifacts by type relating to the fight at Mud Springs Station in February 1865.

Mud Springs Pony Express Station
Name of Property

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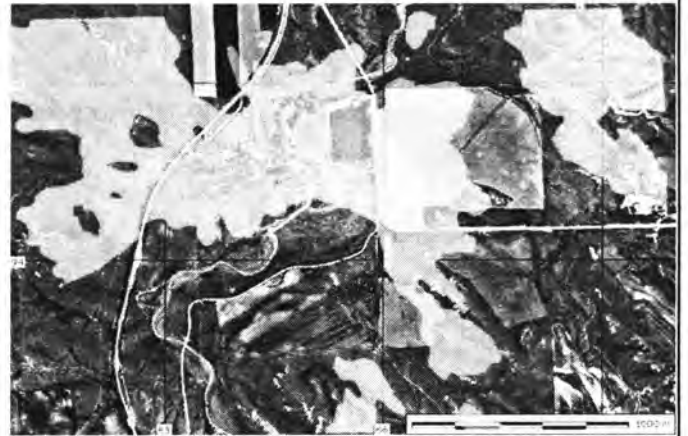
A



B



C



D

Figure 3. Weapons Fan and Viewshed Analysis. Comparison of the weapons fans and viewsheds available from the rifle pit and from the Station buildings. The fans suggest that shooting from the hill (A) offered slight advantage over the Station (B), but the area visible from the rifle pit (C) was larger than the area visible from the Station (D).

From: Bleed, P and D. Scott 2009 Archeological Reflections and Interpretations of the Battle of Mud Springs, February 1865. *Great Plains Research*. Vol 19(1):13-26.

Mud Springs Pony Express Station
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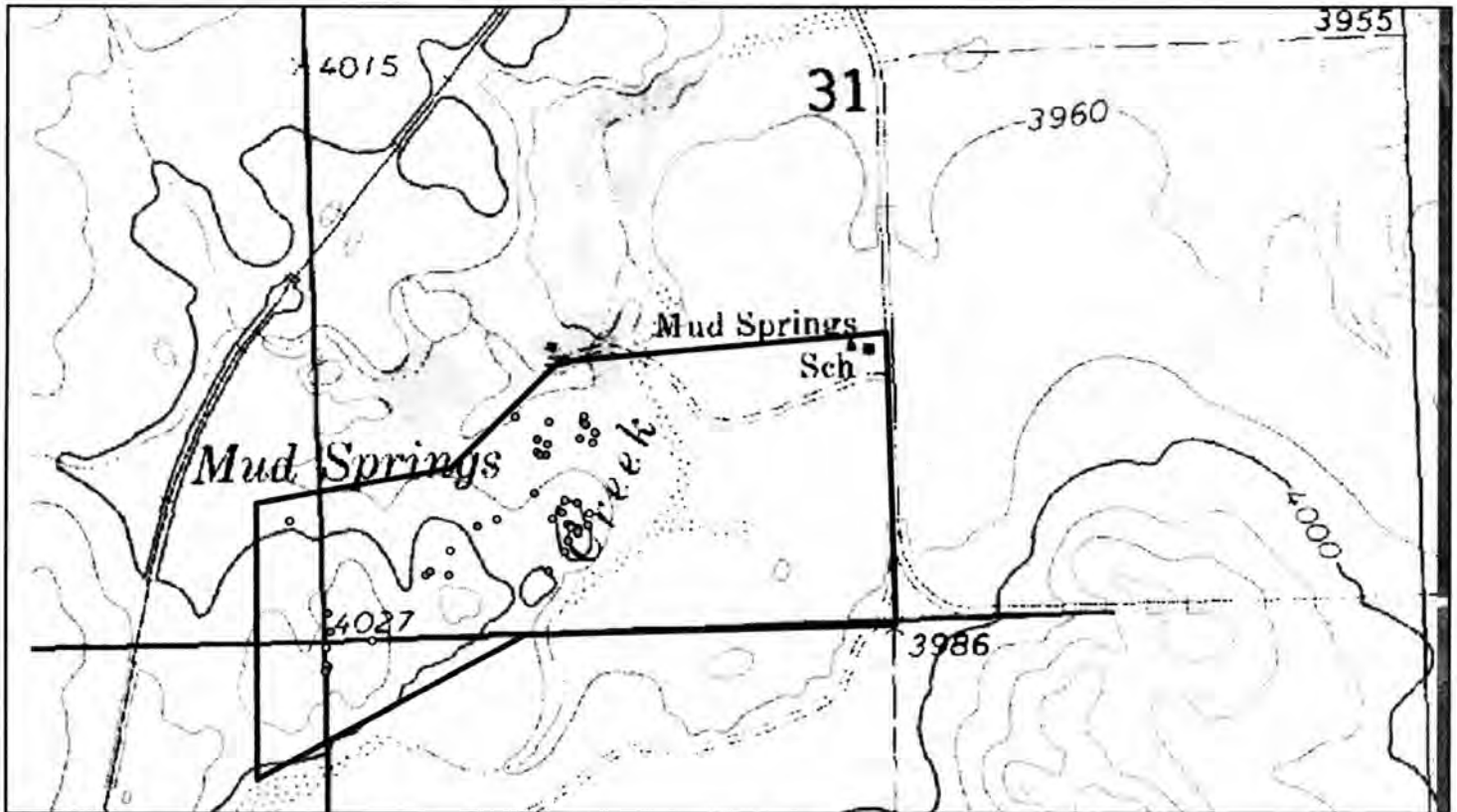


Figure 4. Site Map. The triangle on the lower left, southwest portion of the map shows the additional area of boundary expansion. The dots in the enclosed area represent artifact finds related to the February 1865 fighting at Mud Springs Station.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Mud Springs Station Archeological District (Boundary Increase)

MULTIPLE NAME: Conflict & Warfare in the North & South Platte Valleys of Nebraska, 1864-1865 MPS

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Morrill

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/15/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/30/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/06/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000618

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT ___ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

In addition to the boundary increase, this is also updated documentation. add a name change

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER Suber _____

DISCIPLINE Archeology _____

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 9/6/11 _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/ see attached SLR Y/

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Mud Springs Archeological District (25MD72)
[Amendment/Boundary Increase]

Dalton vicinity
rural Morrill County
Nebraska

Photo 1 of 5

NE - Morrill County - Mud Springs AD - Amendment - 0001

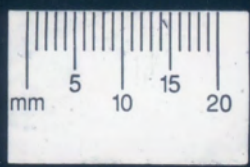
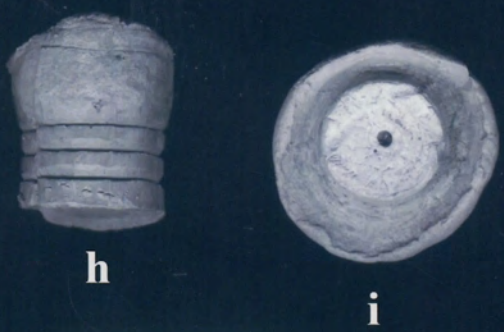


Mud Springs Archeological District (25M072)
[Amendment and Boundary Increase]

Dalton vicinity
rural Morrill County
Nebraska

Photo 2 of 5

NE Morrill County - Mud Springs AD - Amendment - 0002



Mud Springs Archeological
District (Z5MOTZ)

[Amendment and Boundary Increase]

Dalton vicinity
rural Morrill County
Nebraska

Photo 3 of 5



a



b



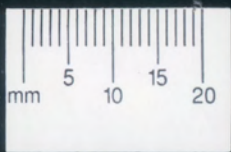
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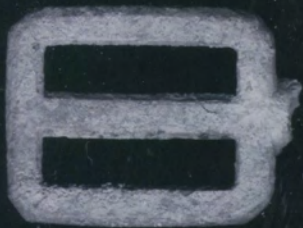
Mud Springs Station Archeological
District (25M072)

[Amendment and Boundary Increase]

Dalton vicinity
rural Morrill County
Nebraska

Photo 4 of 5

NE-MorrillCounty-MudSpringsAD-Amendment-0004



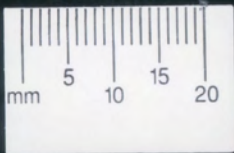
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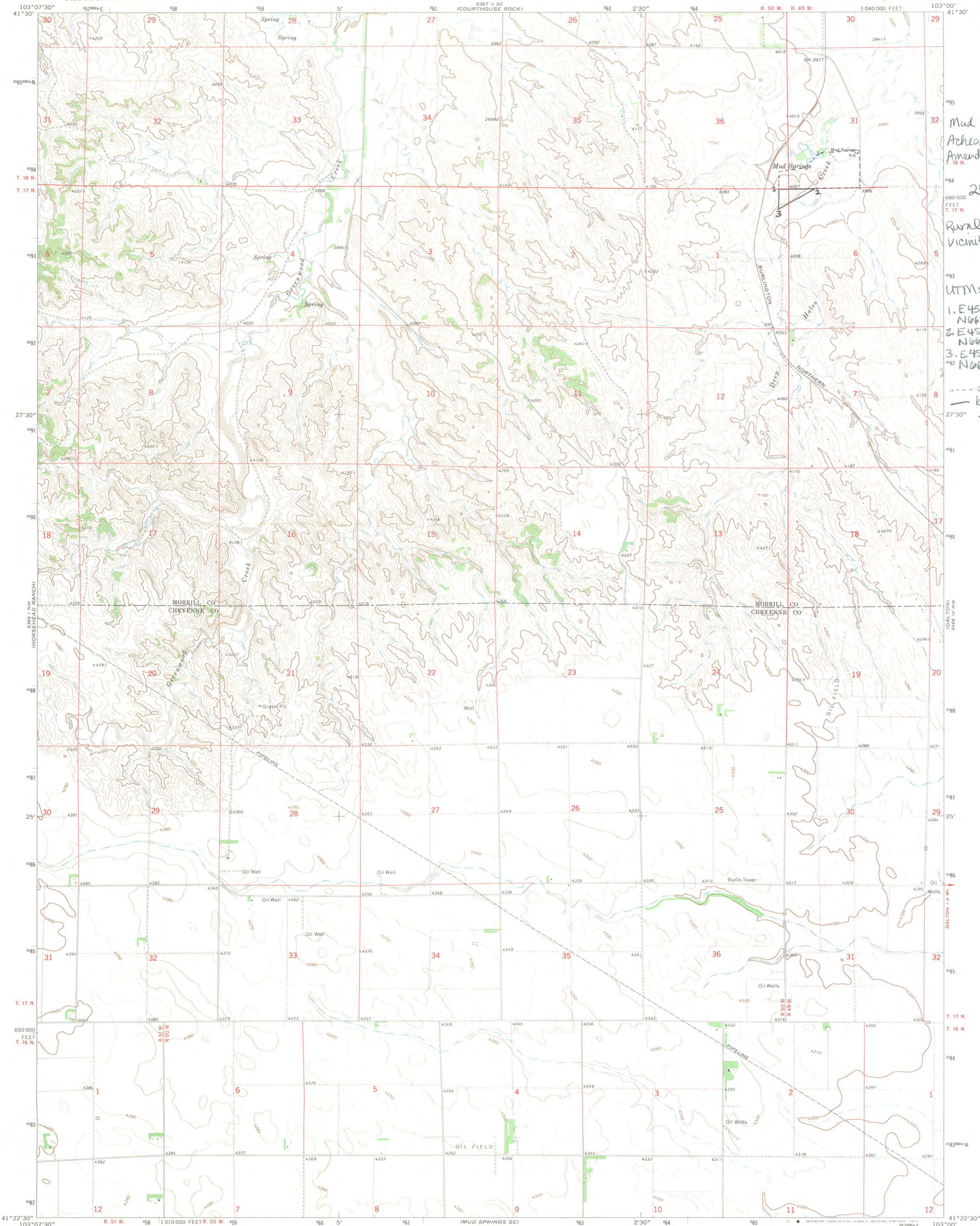
Mud Springs Station Archeological
District (25m072)

[Amendment and Boundary Increase]

Dalton vicinity
rural Morrill County
Nebraska

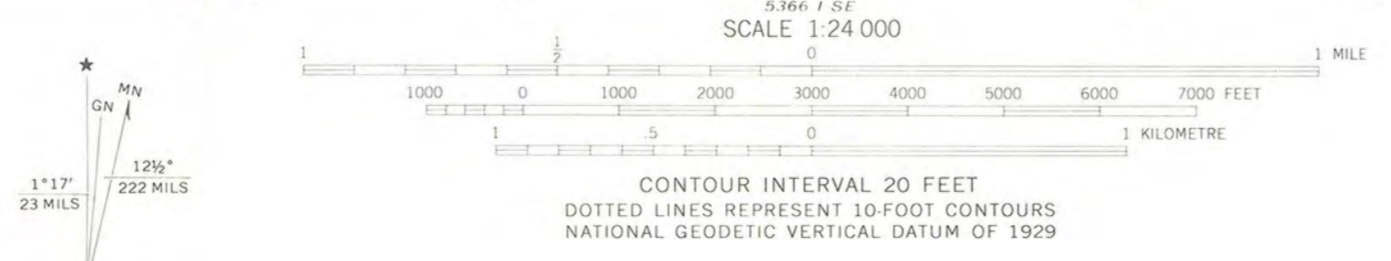
Photo 5 of 5

NE-MorrillCounty-MudSpringsAD-Amendment-0005



Mud Springs Station
Archeological District
Increase
25M072
Rural Morrill Co.,
vicinity of Dalton
UTMs: Zone 13
1. E 4573919
N 665059
2. E 459392
N 665060
3. E 4594129
N 665440
--- original boundary
— boundary increase

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1972. Field checked 1972
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Nebraska coordinate
system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 13, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road



MUD SPRINGS, NEBR.
N4122.5-W10300/7.5
1972

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Nebraska
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



July 14, 2011

J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Mud Springs Station Archeological District (Amendment & Boundary Increase)
NPS #73001068
Morrill County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the above resource. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

1500 R Street
PO Box 82554
Lincoln, NE 68501-2554
p: (800) 833-6747
(402) 471-3270
f: (402) 471-3100
www.nebraskahistory.org