

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
Camp Nichols Ranch

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AND/OR COMMON  
Camp Nichols Ranch

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER three miles northwest of Wheelless and  
Kanth Road (not accessible)

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CITY, TOWN Wheelless VICINITY OF 6th

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STATE Oklahoma CODE 40 COUNTY Cimarron CODE 025

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mr. Austin Burdick

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STREET & NUMBER 301 W. Wilson Street

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CITY, TOWN Boise City VICINITY OF STATE Oklahoma

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registry of Deeds - Cimarron County Courthouse

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STREET & NUMBER City Circle

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CITY, TOWN Boise City STATE Oklahoma

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

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DATE

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\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

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DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

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CITY, TOWN STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Camp Nichols is located in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, approximately three miles northwest of the town of Wheelless. The site is 7-1/2 miles southwest of any formal marker (see accompanying photograph).

The ruins are situated on a high point of land between two ravines cut by the forks of South Carrizozo Creek. The topography is broken and wild, bestowing upon the site a scenic beauty accentuated by its isolation and freedom from modern intrusions. One quarter mile west of the ruins, in the shadow of cedar-covered bluffs, is Cedar Spring. This was the water supply for the camp as well as for passing wagon trains. South of the camp one-half mile are exceptional remains of the Cimarron Cutoff. These may be followed for many miles. They vary from gullied ruts on steep slopes to shallow troughs 30 or 40 feet across and 1 or 2 feet deep. They execute sweeping curves around rough outcrops and in descending and ascending the banks of stream courses. Altogether they are among the most impressive trail remains along the entire trail.

Founded by Col. Kit Carson, the camp was composed, it is thought, of approximately 25 buildings. These structures included various officer's quarters, barracks, though at first soldiers lived in tents with stone walls, several guardhouses and by far the largest building the commissary. All buildings were fashioned of local materials, sandstone, adobe and sod.

Presently, there is very little left of the camp. Extensive ruins had been present, walls ranging up to three feet in height. Stones lay on open ground and marked the sites of the original buildings. This condition has changed drastically in recent years as local persons have removed many of the stones for their personal use. Practically speaking, because of its neglect and the indifference of various parties in its preservation, the site's integrity has been destroyed.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Camp Nichols was founded in May 1865 by Col. Kit Carson to protect wagon trains using the dangerous Cimarron Cutoff. The bloody Indian uprisings of 1864 continued into 1865 on the Cimarron Cutoff. Fearing a full-scale Plains war, General James H. Carleton, commanding the Department of New Mexico, ordered Carson to establish Camp Nichols. Camp Nichols was designed to be a desert halfway station on the route of 300 miles between Fort Union and the Cimarron Crossing of the Arkansas. By June, Carson's force of New Mexico and California volunteers had built the camp which occupied an area about 200 feet square, enclosed by breastworks of stone and banked earth.

Camp Nichols was an important post throughout the summer of 1865, providing a way station and rallying point on the most dangerous segment of the Cimarron Cutoff. Its troops escorted wagon trains between Fort Union and the Arkansas. The camp site has all but been lost with the passage of time. There remains however, a collection of the stones used in the construction of the fortification. The property is under single private ownership and is not accessible by the public.

History

Camp Nichols was founded in May 1865, by Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson to protect wagon trains using the dangerous Cimarron Cutoff. It was in the heart of the Comanche and Kiowa Indian country.

With two companies of New Mexico volunteers and one of California volunteers, Carson by June had built six sets of stone officers' quarters and a quartermaster building, and the men had been housed in stone-walled tents. The camp, which occupied an area about 200 feet square, was enclosed by breastworks of stone and earth.

Following establishment of the Post, Carson was to protect the trains with escorts and to attempt negotiation with the Kiowa and Comanche chiefs. He had no opportunity, however, to confer with hostile chiefs, as he was almost immediately called to Santa Fe.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hunt, Aurora, The Army of the Pacific (Glendale, 1951).  
 Sabine, Edwin L., Kit Carson Days, 1809-1868, 2 vols. (New York, 1935).  
 Thompson, Albert W., "Kit Carson's Camp Nichols in No Man's Land," Colorado Magazine,  
 XI, (September, 1934)  
 "Camp Nichol's Condition in 1883 is Described" in The Boise City News Historical and  
 Anniversary Edition, 1968.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA 7

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES 13/685120/4069440

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Camp Nichols was a stockaded fortress measuring 200 x 200 feet. The exterior edge of this original wall, though no longer apparent, is the historic extent of the fortification. From Point A on the 4600 contour line as indicated on the accompanying U.S.G.S. 7.5' series map, Kenton SW, Oklahoma Quadrangle, 1969, proceed west 625', more or less, to a point; thence south 500', more or less, to a point; thence east 625', more or less, to a point; thence north to the point or origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joseph Scott Mendinghall, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

11/26/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

Landmark May 23, 1963

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

Boundary Certified:  
*Joseph F. Mendinghall*

TITLE

DATE

Dec 15, 1978

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/22/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC

LANDMARKS)

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Camp Nichols

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Throughout the summer of 1865, Camp Nichols provided a rallying point for the caravans and also furnished escorts for them. The camp was abandoned in late September 1865.

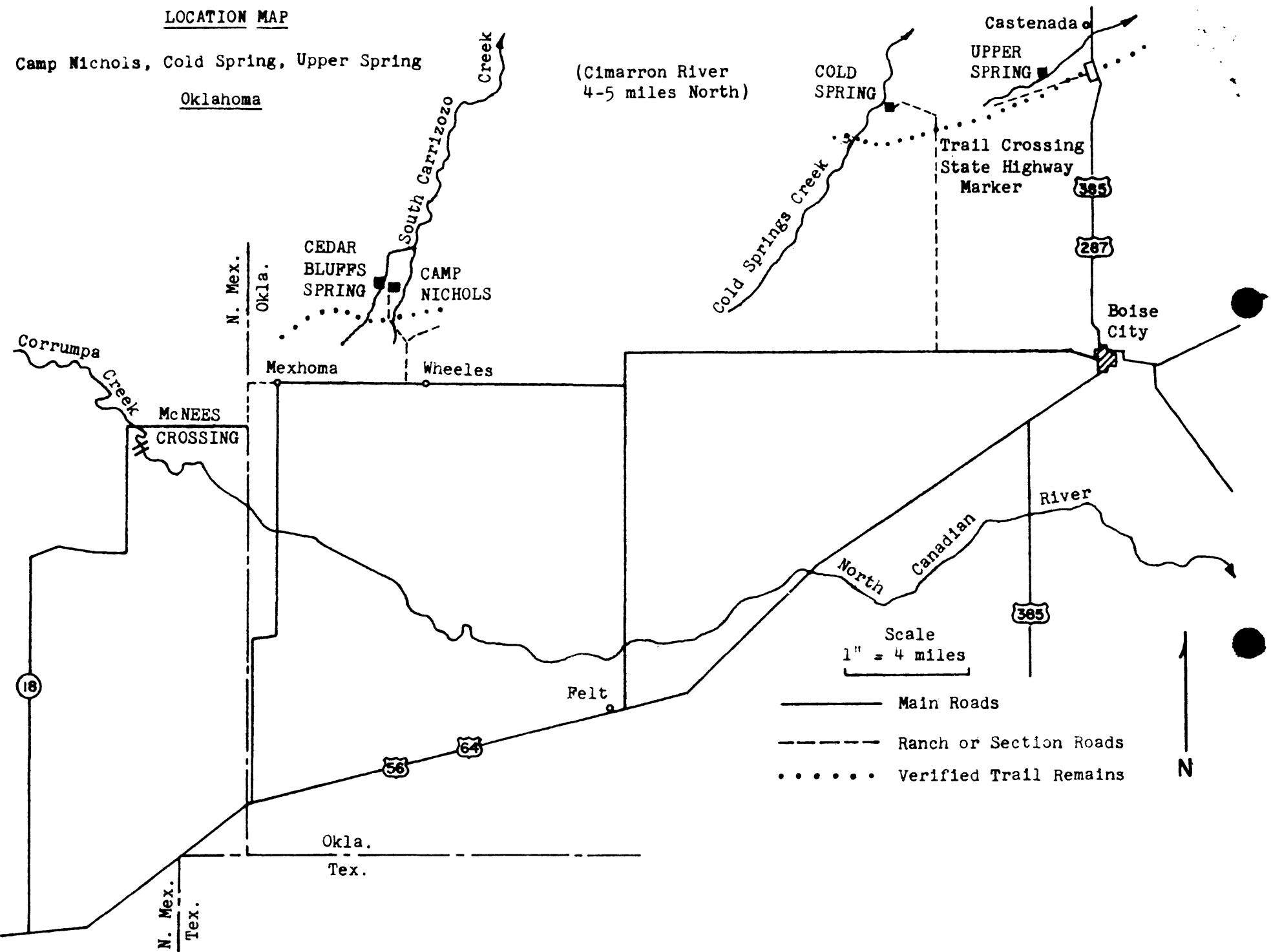
The Camp Nichols site illustrates the theme of military protection of the Santa Fe Trail; in association with nearby Cedar Springs--an important trail camp, it is the most significant Santa Fe Trail site on the 50 mile stretch of the trail in Oklahoma.

LOCATION MAP

Camp Nichols, Cold Spring, Upper Spring

Oklahoma

(Cimarron River  
4-5 miles North)



CEDAR  
BLUFFS  
SPRING

CAMP  
NICHOLS

South Carrizozo  
Creek

COLD  
SPRING

UPPER  
SPRING

Trail Crossing  
State Highway  
Marker

385

287

Boise  
City

Corruppa  
Creek

McNEES  
CROSSING

Mexhoma

Wheeles

North  
Canadian  
River

385

Scale  
1" = 4 miles

- Main Roads
- - - Ranch or Section Roads
- ..... Verified Trail Remains

N

N. Mex.  
Tex.

Okla.  
Tex.

18

36

64

Felt

Artist's Conception of Camp Nichols  
The Boise City News- 1968

