

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAR 28 1986

date entered MAY 9 1986

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

Substantive Review

**1. Name**

historic Dale Creek Crossing

and/or common Same (48AB145 - Smithsonian number)

**2. Location**

street & number N/A not for publication

city, town Ames Monument  vicinity of

state Wyoming code 056 county Albany code 001

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Richard C. Williams See Sheet for Additional Ownership Information

street & number P.O. Box 1127

city, town Laramie n/a vicinity of state Wyoming

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk Albany County Courthouse

street & number 501 Grand Avenue

city, town Laramie state Wyoming

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title U.W. Public History Class has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984 n/a federal n/a state n/a county n/a local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Cheyenne state Wyoming

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>    N/A    </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Dale Creek Crossing is located approximately twenty miles southeast of Laramie, Wyoming on a high windswept plain featuring vegetation such as prairie grasses, sage, scrubby pines, and a few forsaken cottonwoods. It is just four miles west of Ames Monument which marks the highest point on the Union Pacific route of the first transcontinental railroad (8,247 feet). Both are located in an area of the state characterized by rocky surface and unusual massive rock formations in various stages of exposure by the elements.

Situated on the Dale Creek Gorge, Dale Creek Crossing consists of approximately twelve piers and two abutments of granite masonry spaced evenly along a northeast-southwest line. The two largest piers rest in the bottom of the gorge and measure approximately 96' x 11' x 7 1/2 '. The two abutments lie directly opposite each other on the brink of the gorge. The piers were constructed for the first Dale Creek Bridge, in 1868, and have remained virtually unchanged since that time. The abutments were added circa 1885 and employ a finer form of stone masonry than the earlier piers. These abutments remain unaltered as well. Both piers and abutments are constructed of native Wyoming stone cut and fit by hand without the use of any type of mortar. The Dale Creek Gorge is in the same natural, undeveloped condition it was in 1868.

The first Dale Creek Bridge was a wooden structure 720 feet in length. 480 feet of this was Howe Truss of thirteen 40 foot spans. In 1876 the wooden bridge was replaced by an iron one manufactured by the American Bridge Company of Chicago, Illinois. It was constructed upon the same 1868 piers. The new bridge acquired the nickname "Spider Web" because of its fragile appearance. Stronger girder spans were added in 1885 because of heavier cars and locomotives. The large masonry abutments are also believed to have been added at this time. In 1901 the bridge was replaced, abandoned and then dismantled. The stone and masonry piers and abutments remain intact and unaltered though the bridge itself is gone.

# 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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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** 1868–1901      **Builder/Architect** Union Pacific Railroad Laborers

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Dale Creek Crossing is significant for its association with the establishment of the transcontinental railroad which opened the west for settlement following the Civil War. Though the bridge itself has been removed the site still embodies some distinctive characteristics of early transcontinental railroad bridge construction through the hand fitted stone piers and abutments which remain intact. These stone figures exemplify a 19th century engineering achievement which allowed the transcontinental railroaders to span the 130 foot deep 713 foot wide Dale Creek Gorge (the largest obstacle in building the mountain portion of the line) to continue their tracklaying race west. Construction of the bridge required implementation of state of the art technology, imagination and ingenuity which resulted in revolutionizing the existing transportation system and secured the final taming of the American West. This site retains a very high degree of integrity of setting, location, feeling and association and an acceptable degree of integrity of materials, workmanship and design which contribute to its dramatic sense of time and place.

SEE ADDENDUM

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Best, G. M. Iron Horses To Promontory San Marino: Golden West Books, 1969.  
 Galloway, J. D. The First Transcontinental Railroad New York: Simmons-Boardman, 1950.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property See Attached Sheet for Geographical Date

Quadrangle name Approx. 15 Acres

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UTM References

A 

1	3
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4	6	2	0	7	5
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4	5	5	0	2	5	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

1	3
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4	6	1	7	7	5
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4	5	5	0	0	5	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	3
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4	6	1	6	0	0
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4	5	5	0	1	2	5
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D 

1	3
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4	6	1	7	0	0
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4	5	5	0	3	0	0
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E 

1	3
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4	6	1	9	6	0
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4	5	5	0	3	7	5
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F 

1	3
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4	6	1	9	5	0
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4	5	5	0	2	5	0
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G 

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H 

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### 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 Mark L. Gardner

organization U.W. Public History Class

date November 28, 1984

street & number 1003 Harney Street

telephone 307-742-2379

city or town Laramie

state Wyoming

## 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

*Robert H. Bush*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 18, 86

### For NPS use only

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

*William B. Bushong*  
 Keeper of the National Register

date 5/9/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Continuation sheet Dale Creek Crossing

Item number 4

Page 1

Dale Creek Crossing is owned by two different parties.

Richard C. Williams owns that part of Dale Creek Crossing which lies on the south side of the section line that borders sections 10 and 15 of T.13N. and R.72W.

Doris Bennett, of Denver, owns that part of Dale Creek Crossing which lies on the north side of the section line that borders sections 10 and 15 of T.13N. and R.72W. This includes a larger portion of the crossing.

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Continuation sheet

Dale Creek Crossing

Item number 8

Page 1

Dale Creek Crossing is significant for its role in the history of the first transcontinental railroad. After reaching Sherman Summit in 1868 the Union Pacific Railroad crews pushed on to Dale Creek Gorge. 130 feet deep and 713 feet wide, the gorge was the biggest obstacle to the building of the mountain branch of the line. It required an unusually large bridge incorporating the latest bridge-building technology. The first Dale Creek Bridge was a wooden structure completed on April 23, 1868 at a cost of \$200,000. Resting upon piers of granite masonry, the bridge was 720 feet in length, of which 480 feet was Howe truss of thirteen 40 foot spans. The bridge quickly became an attraction for Overland travelers and is pictured and described in several early transcontinental railroad guides. Just to the north of the bridge sprang up a short-lived railroad camp named Dale City. In 1876 the wooden bridge was replaced by an iron one (cost: \$39,450) manufactured by the American Bridge Company of Chicago, Illinois. It was constructed, upon the same 1868 piers, under the supervision of Civil Engineer J. A. Evans. This new bridge had a fragile appearance and consequently acquired the nickname of "Spider Web." The Spider Web was no less an attraction to sightseers. Both bridges were captured upon the photographic plates of such famous western photographers as Andrew Russell, William Henry Jackson, J.E. Stimson and C.B. Savage. Because of the heavier cars and locomotives that were traveling the line, stronger girder spans were added to the Spider Web in 1885. The large masonry abutments at each end of the bridge are believed to have been added at this time as well. In 1901 the Union Pacific rerouted the line, abandoning the bridge for a 900-foot long, 130-foot high earth fill of Dale Creek a little over a mile to the southeast of the old crossing. The Spider Web was dismantled that same year and the iron girders were used in other sections of the line. Dale Creek Bridge, in existence from 1868 to 1901, symbolized to many Americans a bond between westward expansion and American ingenuity. The amazing structure defined and overcame the "wilderness" that Americans always seemed to be at odds with in the 19th century. Dale Creek Crossing today, with its piers and abutments of native stone, is significant as a remnant of the old union Pacific line, as the site of a tremendous engineering achievement and as a symbol of America's westward expansion.

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Continuation sheet Dale Creek Crossing Item number 10 (VBD) Page 1

The boundary for Dale Creek Crossing begins at the 8000 ft. contour line on the east side of Dale Creek in the S 1/2, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 10 T13N, R72W, just south of the 8010 bench mark, (Point A). An arbitrary straight line extends southwest approximately 1500 feet through the NW 1/4, NW 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4 Section 10 T13N, R72W and meets the 8,000 ft. contour line on the west side of Dale Creek in the NW 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4, Section 10 T13N, R72W, (Point B). The boundary then follows the 8,000 ft. contour North approximately 1000 feet (Point C) then another 1200 feet to a point directly west of the 8010 bench mark (Point D). The boundary then extends in a straight line across the gorge approximately 1500 feet to a point just north of the 8010 bench mark located on the 8,000 ft. contour line (Point E). The boundary then follows the 8,000 ft. contour line south approximately 500 feet (Point F) then approximately 700 feet more (Point F) to the point of beginning.

This boundary includes most of the S 1/2, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SW 1/4 Section 10 T13N, R72W; most of the NW 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4 Section 15 T13N, R72W; and the NW 1/4, NW 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4 Section 15 T13N, R72W. The boundary is defined by natural contour lines where possible and two arbitrary lines used to connect the contours where there is no logical natural defining line. The site defined within these boundaries includes the crossing site, a minimum portion of the historic railroad grade, the bridge ruins, and a minimum of necessary land area.