

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAY 1976  
DATE ENTERED JUL 30 1976

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  
Fort McKinney

AND/OR COMMON Sometimes "Fort McKinney #2" to distinguish it from an earlier post of the same name some 60 miles away.

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
c.2 miles west of Buffalo

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Buffalo

VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Wyoming

56

Johnson

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 Wyoming Soldiers and Sailors Home  
Wyoming State Board of Charities and Reform  
Wyoming State Land Board

STREET & NUMBER  
State Office Building

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Cheyenne

VICINITY OF

Wyoming

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Johnson County Court House

STREET & NUMBER  
Main and Fort Streets

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Buffalo

Wyoming

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Historic Markers, Sites and Monuments, pp 22  
Wyoming Recreation Commission

DATE

1967 revised 1973

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Wyoming Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

STATE

604 East 25th Street, Cheyenne

Wyoming 82002

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### Description of the setting:

Fort McKinney lies on a broad terrace of stream-deposited boulders and fill resultant from the formation of Clear Fork Canyon. The upper end of the property lies just below the mouth of the canyon and the foot of the Big Horn Mountains. The other terraces and foothills stretching off to the north and south are covered with short to medium forms of prairie grasses. Cottonwood and willow trees mark the course of Clear Fork past the south side of the tract. Not far away on the mountains lodgepole and ponderosa pine and other conifers supply a forest cover not unlike that that attracted the builders of the fort to this site. Despite seasonal irrigation withdrawals, Clear Fork carries an attractive stream of clear mountain water past the site as it did when the Fort was garrisoned.

The site is so attractive that several years ago a graduate student in recreation-planning prepared a state park plan proposal for the tract (Eugene Galloway, University of Wyoming, 1970.)

This extensive tract contains significant historic remains in the form of foundations, piers, cellars, camp sites, sawmill sites, military and pioneer irrigation ditches over a substantial portion of its area. The extent of the area, the nature of the buildings and other remains and the need for careful planning in future site developments have led to the proposal for nominating the entire tract as a historic district.

### Original Post:

The post at peak of development consisted of barracks for seven companies of troops, at least 14 structures for officer quarters (some of these being "double" sets), together with stables, warehouses, laundress quarters, a hospital, bakery, offices, and auxiliary structures. The older structures were all of logs-in-panels, squared with the sawmill, and built on piers, except for the frame hospital and many frame outbuildings. Of this extensive array of structures which are well documented by ground plans, drawings, and photographs, three major structures survive on site. These, with their original descriptions are:

Hospital: This was the first major frame building to be erected at the post. A very small frame building served as the first hospital in 1878-1879, and was incorporated into the structure of the large hospital as a small wing at the east end when that building was completed in 1881. The completed structure consisted of a main unit, about 25' x 45' a smaller segment about 13' x 30', and the original segment about 16' x 24'. The two main segments were one-and-a-half-story gambrel roof buildings, the half-story rooms lighted by four dormer windows on each side of the main segment, and three dormer windows on each side of the middle segment. The smaller segment was a single-story, gable roofed structure. The entire building was shingle roofed and sided with ship-lap. All lumber except millwork was of native pine, prepared in the post sawmills. Porches were added to

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 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

Fort McKinney possesses historic significance in two major themes relevant to the Wyoming State Historical Plan: Military History of the Indian Wars and the Cattlemen's Frontier.

The year 1876 saw intensive Indian campaigns extended by the army across the whole Northern Plains region. Troops came from posts in the Department of the Platte and swept most of the hostile Sioux and Cheyenne Indians out of present Wyoming, and participated in major engagements in southern Montana as well. By the time the campaigns drew to a seasonal halt in January of 1877, plans were under way for a series of military posts to provide bases from which the troops could prevent the Indians reoccupying their old hunting rounds. One of these posts was located on the west bank of Powder River, opposite the mouth of Dry Fork, and called at first, "Cantonment Reno." Soon renamed, "Fort McKinney" in honor of Lt. J. A. McKinney (killed in the battle with the Cheyennes on Red Fork of Powder River, November 25, 1876), this post was occupied through the spring of 1878. After considerable study, it was abandoned because of poor water, wood and forage supplies nearby, and the name transferred along with the troops to a new site on a broad terrace above Clear Fork of Powder River where that stream exits from the Big Horn Mountains. The new site was occupied and construction activities under way in July of 1878. It lay in a relatively isolated spot, 224 miles from the nearest railroad station (Rock Creek on the U.P.R.R.), and 175 miles from the nearest steamboat landing on the Yellowstone (Terry's Landing). The nearest other military posts were Fort Custer, Montana, 125 miles to the northwest, and Fort Fetterman, Wyoming, some 140 miles to the southeast, and Fort Washakie, Wyoming, 150 miles southwest.

Troops from Fort McKinney and these "neighboring" posts were responsible for keeping the lately-hostile Sioux and Cheyennes from reverting to their old way of life in a vast region. They were supposed to keep the friendly Crows and Shoshoni from resuming their intermittent warfare with tribal enemies, and to prevent the Arapahoes from becoming embroiled with settlers and other tribes while officials pondered their disposition. They did this work well. They guarded communication lines that included the "Rock Creek Stage Line" providing mail, passenger and express service from Rock Creek on the UPRR to Terry's Landing on the Yellowstone. They built and maintained the first telegraph line into the Powder River country.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fort McKinney records, letters and telegrams sent and received, general orders, special orders, post returns, RG98, National Archives Hill, Burton S., On the Platte and North, Buffalo, Wyoming, 1969.  
 Murray, Robert A., Military Posts in the Powder River Country of Wyoming, 1865-1894, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1968.  
 Murray, Robert A., "The U. S. Army in the Aftermath of the Johnson County Invasion." Annals of Wyoming, April, 1966.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 800 5RR

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,3</u>	<u>36,29,0,0</u>	<u>4,91,07,7,0</u>	B	<u>1,3</u>	<u>36,28,6,5</u>	<u>4,90,91,5,0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>1,3</u>	<u>36,05,3,0</u>	<u>4,90,92,2,0</u>	D	<u>1,3</u>	<u>36,04,8,0</u>	<u>4,91,08,2,0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

East  $\frac{1}{2}$ , Section 5; West  $\frac{1}{2}$ , Section 4; NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 4, and the West  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the Southeast  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 4, all located in Township 50 North, Range 82 West. Tract includes those portions of the Wyoming Soldiers and Sailors Home property known to include historic buildings, historic building sites, along with historic period camp sites, irrigation structures and roads and trails.

## 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

Robert A. Murray, consultant to:

ORGANIZATION

Johnson County Chapter, Wyoming Historical Society

DATE

12 December 1975

STREET & NUMBER

c/o James Dillinger, 385 South Main

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Buffalo

STATE

Wyoming

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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

*Paul H. Shertel*

4-12-76

TITLE

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Wm. H. Murray*

DATE 7-30-76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*Chuck [unclear]*

DATE 7-30-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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the main segment of the building at a date that is now uncertain, though probably in the 1880's, as evidenced by construction techniques involved.

Cavalry Stable: Built in 1894 to replace earlier construction destroyed by fire, this stable was 32' x 200', of frame construction, sided with ship-lap, shingle-roofed, with ventilators of frame construction in the roof.

Barrack: This structure was one of the original infantry barracks of the post. Built of pine logs, squared in the sawmill and erected as logs-in-panels on piers, the structure consisted of a 27 x 100 feet main building and a 28 x 50 feet wing attached by a connecting passage. The building was one story in height, with a gabled, shingled roof. This and the other barracks were plastered inside and finish-floored in 1879. Another frame addition expanded the capacity of each building in the summer of 1893.

In addition, to the three surviving buildings listed above, over half of the built-up area of the post still contains the piers, foundations, cellar depressions, trash pits, irrigation ditches, and other evidence of this once busy military establishment. There have been no major professional investigations of these sites.

Description of Present Condition of Structures that Survive:

Hospital: The main segment of this structure was moved at some point around 50 to 60 years ago to a location about 100 yards southwest of its original site, and placed on a new concrete foundation. It received minor interior modifications to serve the role of a "guest house" for the Soldiers and Sailors Home, but in general has been little changed and very well preserved. Modern composition shingles cover the earlier wood shingle roof. Despite its relocation and modifications, this unit represents the only surviving example of this kind of post hospital, and is one of the few intact units of hospital construction surviving in the West, for this period. The rest of the building was relocated several hundred yards farther away and remodeled into a "cow barn". This unit has been less well cared for and more extensively modified but is still conceivably restorable.

Cavalry Stable: The surviving portion of this stable appears to represent about half of the original length of the building. There have been some changes on the interior, such as the removal of most of the original feed boxes, and some alterations of stall-partitions. Nonetheless, this structure in its present condition is one of the best preserved cavalry stables from the period, to our knowledge. It is clearly restorable as a representative half-structure.

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Barrack: This building stands on its original site, on a foundation added by the army in the improvements made during the 1880's. Siding appears for the most part to be that added at the time the stone foundation was laid. It has a modern composition-shingle covering over the original roof structure. Several door and window openings and some interior partitions have been modified and a poured concrete floor added in a portion of the structure, but it appears to be fully restorable at modest cost.

The surviving buildings from the Soldiers and Sailors Home period include a modern residential facility which due to its recent construction and ongoing operational requirements should be excluded from inclusion in the district.

Older Soldier and Sailors Home structures include eight cottages built by the State of Wyoming. These are 15 feet wide and 30 feet long, one-story with gabled roofs, of conventional frame construction. They should be evaluated for possible significance in the history of this kind of facility before any exclusion from such a district.

This site is nominated as a historic district because the buildings are dispersed over a substantial tract of land, along with extensive foundation ruins, cellars, and other evidences of military use.

It is believed that modern activities at the site can best be conducted without impact on the historic remains if the site can be accepted as a district so that appropriate planning for further development can be carried on under proper agreements and controls.

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Within the first year of the new post's occupancy, civilian buffalo-hunters operating out of camps on Powder River largely completed the extermination of the main herds on which the Indians had depended in tribal days. By the fall of 1879, range cattle were moving in to replace the buffalo. The presence of Fort McKinney provided just that margin of security needed to attract the cattlemen, and throughout its occupancy by the army, the post was always more or less involved in the range-cattle industry in one way or another. At first it furnished a ready market for beef to feed the garrison and the civilian employees and contractors. Soon it created a sufficient market for forage to encourage the production of irrigated hay on meadows over a wide radius, and the planting of oats on the smaller ranches that grew up in the nearby region. This market, combined with a relatively secure location brought in many small ranchers, and farmers to take up homesteads along the streams of northern Wyoming.

The coming of these independent operators provided competition for water and winter range with the early open-range cattlemen (who mostly represented corporate stockraising interests from southern Wyoming and overseas). Tension grew as the ranges became more overcrowded and overgrazed. Accusations flew back and forth with increasing frequency. Finally in April of 1892, cattlemen and "hired guns" in a strong force came into Johnson County to settle accounts with all that they loosely termed "rustlers". Citizens swarmed to defend their settlements, surrounded the invading party at T A Ranch and prepared to wipe it out. In a dramatic last minute episode troops from Fort McKinney acting under orders from Washington rode up to separate the opposing parties. A detail soon escorted the invading party to Cheyenne, and the matter trailed off in a legal and political tangle. During the rest of the year, troops from this and other posts endeavored to police an uneasy peace. Over the next few years a new land-use pattern evolved in the region's ranching.

Troops from Fort McKinney also participated in the suppression of the "Sword Bearer" faction of Crows in 1887, in the "Ghost Dance" affair in Dakota in 1890-1891, and furnished part of the summer patrols for Yellowstone National Park in its early years.

Following its abandonment, some buildings of the post were disposed of by the federal government, and the remainder turned over along with a considerable tract of land to the State of Wyoming in 1903. Subsequent to that change of ownership, most of the rest of the buildings were

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removed or dismantled. A few of these survive in much modified form in the nearby town. Most were salvaged for building materials. The State built other buildings here that may need a significance evaluation of their own.

Architectural Significance:

Each of the surviving structures from the military period is a unique architectural survival for its type of construction and function in Wyoming. So far as we can determine these survivals are not duplicated with any close approximation anywhere in the West. We believe they deserve preservation on architectural grounds alone, although they possess abundant significance through association with the history of military affairs, settlement and development of the region.

The portion of the site in State ownership also contains the sites of temporary camp sites and sawmill sites that preceeded the construction of the post. These may conceivably be of archaeological interest to the State.

From 1903 to the present time the Wyoming Soldiers and Sailors Home has served as the primary residential retirement facility for veterans. Interestingly, some of its earlier residents were veterans of the Indian Wars. In this role it has in itself played a significant part in the military history of Wyoming and the nation.

Recommended boundaries for the nominated district include those portions of the state-owned tract that are known to have been the sites of buildings during the military occupation of the fort, plus the sites of certain documented military camps, irrigation ditches and roads that served the fort in its historic period, plus a modest buffer strip to help to preserve the historic scene.



## 2. Additional Information, Fort McKinney Nomination.

The enclosed site plan describes a portion of the Fort McKinney historic district, specifically the location of existing fort buildings. The boundaries of the historic site are not shown in the site plan because those boundaries, drawn on the U. S. G. S. map sent with the original nomination forms, enclose a much larger area--800 acres--than can be described in the plan. As stated in the Fort McKinney nomination, there has been no professional investigation of piers, foundations, cellar depressions, trash pits, irrigation ditches, and other evidences of the fort, so the site plan cannot accurately describe such features.

The only building excluded from the historic district, according to the author of the nomination, is a modern residential facility. A picture of the facility accompanies this memorandum. Also enclosed is a photograph that indicates the approximate location of some of the former fort structures.

FORT MCKINNEY  
SITE PLAN 1" = 100'  
DRAWN: 3 JUNE 76 CF

