

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUN 30 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cooper Mansion

and/or common Cooper Mansion

2. Location

street & number 1411 Grand Ave. not for publication

city, town Laramie, vicinity of

state Wyoming code 56 county Albany code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: unused

4. Owner of Property

name University of Wyoming

street & number

city, town Laramie, vicinity of state Wyoming 82071

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Albany County Courthouse

street & number Fifth Street and Grand Ave.

city, town Laramie, vicinity of state Wyoming 82070

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Albany County Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September, 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Wyoming Recreation Commission, 1920 Thomas Ave.

city, town Cheyenne, vicinity of state 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

Isolated on an entire city block of landscaped grounds, the Cooper Mansion situates near the northwest corner of Laramie's major intersection at Fifteenth Street and Grand Avenue. The stark white structure blends the Mission style and the Pueblo style to create a welcome, peaceful interlude amid the town's busiest, most built-up area. Unlike surrounding buildings, the Mansion has not been altered by modern additions and remains as a prominent landmark along Grand Avenue. Designed by well-known Laramie architect Wilbur Hitchcock and constructed in 1921, the Cooper Mansion has retained its architectural integrity through the years. The Mansion is unlike any other public or private building in the state because of its unique design. The nominated area includes the residential building as well as a small 1½ story stuccoed brick building once used as a squash court-garage. Constructed in 1923 and designed by Wilbur Hitchcock, the squash court-garage has not been changed by modern construction and is similar in design to the Cooper Mansion.

East of the Cooper Mansion across Fifteenth Street, twelve-story tall White Hall towers over all Laramie. A University of Wyoming dormitory, White Hall was until recently Wyoming's tallest building. North of the Cooper Mansion, across Iverson Avenue, a row of two and three story University classroom buildings achieve an odd alliance between local tradition, by using heavily rusticated pink granite, and the International style of architectural. On the block west of the Cooper Mansion a number of fine older homes have given up their yards for new apartment buildings. South, across Grand Avenue, the Cooper Mansion faces a block of evenly spaced older homes and apartment buildings.

The Cooper Mansion has two levels of living area atop a tall foundation. The Mansion's "C" shaped plan measures sixty-four feet on the north and south sides by forty-six feet on the east and west sides. The indent of the "C" is created by east and west tower-like projections flanking a central open space. A brick patio fills the indent on the ground level; above, on the second floor level, beams project forward beyond the front walls to create a massive arbor. The beams terminate in carved ends and four fat Tuscan columns support the arbor at front. On the west side of the Mansion another, similar arbor projects over a porte-cochere entrance. The fenestration pattern utilizes multipaned wood frame windows, the taller having twenty lights or sixteen lights. All windows above basement level have red brick sills.

Wilbur Hitchcock's original drawings for the Cooper Mansion still exist. The plans show the Mansion has an understructure of brick walls four foot thick at the base and battered slightly as they rise nearly twenty-eight feet from the ground. On the exterior, cement stucco four inches thick affixes by means of expanded metal lath bolted to the brick. All structural wood, including the beams that form the two arbors, is cypress wood imported from Europe. Several vertical lattices on the four exterior walls, also of cypress wood, are meant to support a multitude of vines. The Mansion would seem less stark by far if it had as many vines growing on it as the architect intended.

Although the Cooper Mansion has a flat main roof it has also several ancillary roofs that project over first and second level windows and arched openings. Red clay tiles

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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

1917 Wilbur Hitchcock

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cooper Mansion is historically and architecturally significant to both Albany County and the State of Wyoming. Better than any other structure in Albany County, and perhaps the state, the Cooper Mansion represents two significant periods in Wyoming history. As the Cooper family home in the United States, the Mansion serves as tangible evidence to the extent and character of British economic colonialism in the western United States during the late 19th century. Beginning in the 1870's many wealthy young men from Britain came to Wyoming and purchased huge tracts of land on which they sought to establish virtual empires. Collectively call the "Cattle Barons," on the Laramie Plains, Frank Cooper was the leading member of the foreign-born contingent. Frank Cooper developed the first successful means to freeze and transport beeves. His company, the Marsh and Cooper Pacific Express, established Laramie as the cold storage center for the Union Pacific Railroad. The Cooper Mansion also represents the early economic benefits to come to those who discovered oil on their land. When Frank Cooper sold his ranch in 1904 he wisely retained mineral rights. The discoveries of oil at Cooper's Cove and the Rock Creek valley west of Laramie in 1917 contributed to the first oil boom in Wyoming. Because of legal requirements the Coopers had to establish residency in the United States to retain ownership of their mineral rights, therefore, Frank Cooper's children - Richard, John and Barbara- came from Britain to Wyoming in 1920. They commissioned Laramie architect Wilbur Hitchcock to design for them a home like those they had seen in Santa Barbara, California. Many of Hitchcock's buildings still remain in Laramie yet none of them are similar to the Cooper Mansion. Stylistically, the structure is singularly significant because it represents Wyoming's adaptation of the Mission and Pueblo styles in a 1920's residential building. As an interesting combination of styles, the Cooper Mansion is certainly the only structure of its type in the state. Today, the Cooper Mansion acts as a visual reminder of Wyoming's varied and interesting past. The structure's association with the prosperous Cooper family and its distinctive design render it a very important building in the annals of Wyoming history.

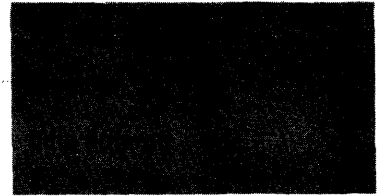
ADDENDUM

During the last century, during the 1870's, Arthur Francis Thomas Cooper of Barten Blount, near Derby, England came to the United States. Traveling west, he arrived in Laramie, Wyoming. He was a member of a well-to-do landowning family and, like many of his age and breeding, was touring the western United States. Enchanted with the country-side near Laramie and convinced of future economic opportunity, Mr. Cooper decided to remain in Wyoming.

A.F.T. Cooper purchased 5,400 acres of land on Rock Creek in both Albany and

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Continuation sheet

Description

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cover these many shed and apron roofs to provide shade and give some earth color contrasts to the bright white walls.

On the south side, second level, three arched openings beneath a steep shed roof create an open air porch. A crudely cast bell hangs in the middle arch. By opening French doors at the back of the porch, air cooled by the shade circulates to the six bedrooms on the upper level of the Mansion. During winter, however, the lower sun shines through the arches and French doors to give warmth to the interior. On the north side exterior a similar first level arcade stands over a brick patio.

Inside, the Cooper Mansion has two distinct halves interconnected on the first and second levels by corridors wide enough to serve as rooms. Although the Mansion appears to face south, in fact its main entrance is on the west side through the porte-cochere. Through this entry one steps into a wide vestibule having walls and an arched ceiling of smooth gray granite. At intervals the granite veneer is articulated by doric pilasters. A grand staircase with geometrically carved newel post and balustrade descends into the classical vestibule. The amiable conjunction of styles, from elements of Art Deco to Classical, underscores the eclecticism of the Mansion inside and out.

From the vestibule one continues east into the main entertaining room, which has on north and south sides French doors opening onto front and rear patios. This room has on its western wall a fireplace with a massive serpentine stone hearth and mantle. The floor of mahogany parquet has around its edge a six-inch wide fret-work pattern of inlaid birch, cherry, and teak. Other lower level rooms have similarly decorated parquet floors. East of the entertaining room is a large dining room, entered through wide sliding doors. North of the dining room is the kitchen area.

From the kitchen area one ascends a narrow staircase into the eastern tower where three servants' rooms share a bathroom. In the western tower, second level, three owner's suites each have two rooms, a fireplace, and a large bathroom with tiled walls. Except for these walls the interior of the Mansion has textured plaster walls with peripheral wood molding set in one foot from the edges. The heating system for the Mansion consists of a coal-fire boiler in the basement to radiators behind brass grilles.

The squash court-garage is a 1½ story stuccoed brick building with a gable roof covered with clay tiles. The south or primary facade is punctuated by a large staircase, balcony on the second story, and 2 large garage door openings. The fenestration is regular with double hung and casement windows. Each window has decorative details and blue shutters. Single or double courses of brick laid in various patterns add to the decorative character of the structure. A very large interior squash court still remains functional.

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Carbon Counties. Stocking his ranch with cattle, Cooper undertook other business ventures including a butcher shop in Laramie which sold meat from his ranch. He sold the ranch in 1904 to Mr. Gardner Haines of Omaha, Nebraska for \$140,000, retaining the mineral rights.¹ Cooper then returned to England. After returning to his homeland, Cooper married a young woman who bore him three children, two sons and one daughter. They were named respectively: Richard Francis, John Hartshorne and Barbara Violet Cooper.

In 1917-18, oil was discovered on the former Cooper Ranch in Laramie, Wyoming. A.F.T. Cooper died shortly after discovery of the resource on December 8, 1918. The three Cooper children came to Laramie from England in 1920 to oversee the investment in Wyoming left to them by their father.

The three children jointly purchased the entire block of Block #4, Grand Avenue Addition from City Realty Company in 1921.² Plans for a house to be built on the newly purchased land were drawn up by Wilbur Hitchcock, architect.³ Some of the plans were drawn up from the personal desires of the three Coopers. Parts of the interior, supplied by the Cooper family, included jade-colored marble fashioned into a mantel piece, Dutch Delft fire tile placed around an upstairs fireplace, a hand-carved wood mantel with griffins plus other designs that were unique to the West.

John Hartshorne Cooper adopted auto racing as a hobby and was killed in an accident while racing in Europe. The two surviving Cooper children, Richard and Barbara, continued to occupy the house in Laramie between World War I and World War II.

After serving in the British Army during World War II, Richard Cooper returned to Laramie with his wife and two children from their marriage, Richard and Sylvia. During the war, Barbara Cooper moved to London and served as a fire warden during the bombings. At the end of the fighting, she also returned to Laramie.

Richard Cooper built a hunting lodge in East Africa; he enjoyed hunting and traveled all over the world in search of game. Ernest Hemingway was a frequent guest at his lodge. Cooper died at the lodge on January 27, 1952, leaving his wife and two children.⁴ After Richard's death, visitors to the Cooper Mansion in Laramie, Wyoming, included Gene Tunney, World Heavyweight Boxing Champion.

Barbara Cooper spent her time after the war pursuing her painting activities and her interest in archeology. Upon the death of Richard's wife, Barbara brought her nephew Richard to stay with her and her niece, Sylvia, went to stay with her maternal grandparents. Sylvia Cooper visited her aunt and brother during her school vacations. Richard Cooper became the man of the house as Barbara began to age. Before her death Barbara made several donations and scholarships to the University of Wyoming; in 1974 she donated a set of fourteen steel engravings done

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Continuation sheet Statement of Significance

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by E.F. Hicks to the University of Wyoming museum.⁵ The younger Richard died in March of 1979 and his aunt Barbara soon followed afterward in November, 1979.⁶

After the death of Ms. Cooper in 1979, the furniture was sent to the coast and some thirty-three famous paintings by Dutch, English and American artists went to Sotheby, Parke, Bernet, Auctioneers, in New York City. Sylvia Cooper was given the wood-carved mantel piece with griffins and the glass doorknobs from the library doors.

The University of Wyoming recently purchased the Cooper Mansion property and the house now stands deserted, awaiting a decision by the University regarding its future.

1. Laramie Republican Boomerang, April 5, 1904, p.1, col. 1.
2. Albany County Land Deeds, Deed Book 217, pp. 516-518.
3. Original Blueprints - Cooper House, Laramie, Wyoming.
4. Laramie Daily Boomerang, January 30, 1952, p. 3, col. 1.
5. Letter, "Ward Allan Howe, New York City, NY to Miss Barbara Cooper, Laramie Wyoming, August 20, 1946."
6. Laramie Daily Boomerang, November 13, 1979, p. 7, col. 7.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

BOOKS

Burns, Gillespie and Richardson. Wyoming Pioneer Ranches. 1955.

ARTICLES

Laramie Daily Boomerang. October 8, 1886, p.4, col. 3 and 4.
April 8, 1943, p.2, col. 4.
January 30, 1952, p.3, col. 1.
November 13, 1979, p.7, col. 7.

DOCUMENTS

Albany County Land Deeds. Deed Book 217. pp. 516-518. Albany County Courthouse, Laramie, Wyoming.

Letter, "Ward Allan Howe, New York City, New York to Miss Barbara Cooper, Laramie, Wyoming, August 20, 1946," University of Wyoming Art Museum, Jerry Berger, Curator.

Original Blueprints - Cooper House, Laramie, Wyoming. Hitchcock & Hitchcock, Architects, 107 South 5th Street, Laramie, Wyoming.

INTERVIEWS

Interview with Clinton Hitchcock, Laramie, Wyoming, April 13, 1980.

Interview with Elliott Hitchcock, Laramie, Wyoming, November 11, 1980.

Interview with Bernard Sullivan, Laramie, Wyoming, November 19, 1980.

Interview with John A. King, Laramie, Wyoming, October 24, 1980.

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Continuation sheet Verbal Boundary Description Item number 10

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the nominated are defined by curb lines and an arbitrary line drawn from Point C to D. Point A is located where the south curb of Iverson Avenue intersects the west curb of Fifteenth Street. The boundary continues in a straight line to Point B which is located at the intersection of the west curb of Fifteenth Street and the north curb of Grand Avenue. From Point B continue in a straight line along the curb to Point C which is 140' west of Point B. From Point C continue in a straight line directly north to Point D which is located on the curb of Iverson Avenue. From Point D continue in a straight line directly east along the curb to Point A.

The justification for nominating this area is the boundaries surround the Cooper Mansion and squash court to preserve public view of the building from the east and the south, while not encompassing so much space as to make the rest of the landscaped property of the Cooper block unavailable for future development

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Continuation sheet SHPO Certification Item number 12 Page 1

In accordance with the interim rules and regulations published in the Federal Register on November 16, 1981, as State Historic Preservation Officer I believe the Cooper Mansion does not meet the National Register criteria for evaluation. The owner of the property, the University of Wyoming, has twice informed the State Historic Preservation Office they object to the listing of the Cooper Mansion in the National Register. Therefore, I believe the property should be considered ineligible for the National Register and I have not signed Block #12 on the nomination form. Yet, I do certify:
1) all procedural requirements have been met 2) the nomination is adequately documented 3) the nomination is technically and professionally correct and sufficient.

This nomination is being submitted at the request of the state's nomination review authority, the Wyoming Consulting Committee, as it was favorably acted upon by them at their meeting of December 5, 1980.

During the regularly scheduled quarterly meeting of the Wyoming Recreation Commission on January 15-16, 1981, the following motion was made: "It was moved by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Madia, the submission of the Cooper Mansion in Laramie to the Keeper of the National Register be tabled until further information is received from the University of Wyoming; there was no discussion; the motion carried."

For your information and records I am also enclosing copies of the correspondence between the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Recreation Commission.

Alvin F. Bastron

Alvin F. Bastron, P.E.
Director and State Historic
Preservation Officer