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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Water Holes Ranch

other names/site number NAS # 25CN69; NeHBS # CN00-051

2. Location

street & number na not for publication [na]

city or town Gurley vicinity [X]

state Nebraska code NE county Cheyenne code 033 zip code 69141

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

10/8/92
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

[Signature] 11/12/92
ed in the National Register

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Water Holes Ranch
Name of Property

Cheyenne County, Nebraska
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: road-related, pedestrian-related

Agriculture: agricultural field

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

NA

foundation NA
walls NA
roof NA
other NA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.

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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Archeology: historic, non-aboriginal

Period of Significance

A.D. 1874 to 1881

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

European/American

Architect/Builder

NA

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Water Holes Ranch
Name of Property

Cheyenne County, Nebraska
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 42 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	13	657600	4574520	3.	13	658110	4574040
2.	13	658020	4574530	4.	13	657620	4574050

[] See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Terry L. Steinacher, Historic Preservation Archaeologist

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date June, 1992

street & number PO Box 304 telephone (308) 665-2853

city or town Crawford state NE zip code 69339

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Water Holes Ranch
Name of Property
Cheyenne County, Nebraska
County and State

Section 7, 8 Page 1

Description

The site is located 14 trail miles north of Sidney, Nebraska, at the junction of two unnamed creeks. No structures remain from the original road ranch/stage station trail function. The site is represented by at least eight circular depressions attributable to former structural remains and "water holes" for stock watering. In addition, an excavated and leveled area and several sets of trail ruts are present (see site plan). Current visual integrity of the site setting, in relation to historical accounts, remains high.

The largest depression is located on the north side of the creek, excavated into the slope of the valley. This depression is believed to have been the location of the ranch/station. A linear depression, marking a foot path, leads down from the large depression to the creek and the area of the "water holes." The creek is intermittent in flow, however, it does possess a source of shallow underground water that can be reached by digging. The water holes were excavated to provide year-around water and provide additional room for watering oxen teams. At least eight of the water holes are still visible as depressions. Scattered around these depressions are evidence of camping activity and artifactual material relating to the late 19th century use of the trail.

Other circular depressions at the site appear to represent a well and possibly some former outhouse pits. Near the ranch/station depression is an area of the slope that was graded off and leveled. Oral tradition indicates that the location once had a hotel and was removed after the trail was abandoned. Trail ruts can be seen south of the creek and west of the "water holes."

The site is currently used as a cattle pasture and has never been plowed or cultivated. Preservation of the archaeological features and artifacts is excellent. Some modern trash deposition has taken place in the ranch/station depression and a modern trash pile is located near the creek bed. In addition to the historic component, a thin scatter of prehistoric lithic chipping debris can be found on the upland immediately to the north of the ranch/station depression. Cultural affiliation of this component is unknown. No previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken at this site.

Statement of Significance

Historically significant under the areas of transportation and archeology, Water Holes Ranch was the first watering stop on the trail to the Black Hills after leaving the Union Pacific railhead at Sidney Barracks. The location also served as a stage station and stock ranch. The scarcity of water between Sidney and Greenwood Creek made Water Holes Ranch an important location for teamsters and travelers on the trail during the period from 1874 to 1881. Water Holes Ranch represents one of the few watering stops and road ranch/stage stations on the Sidney to Black Hills trail that retains undisturbed archeological deposits. The property relates to the statewide context Sidney-Black Hills Trail (13.02.01.03).

Historical Background and Significance

The Sidney to Black Hills Trail was a late 19th century wagon trail that helped supply U. S. Army installations and Indian Agencies in Nebraska, and the gold mining operations of the Black Hills in the Dakota Territory. The trail began at the Union Pacific railhead located at Sidney Barracks or Fort Sidney in the southern panhandle of Nebraska. The trail ran almost due north crossing upland plains, sandhills, rivers, and the Pine Ridge escarpment before entering the southern Black Hills. Spotted along

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Water Holes Ranch

Name of Property

Cheyenne County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Statement of Significance (continued)

the trail were stage stations, road ranches, and rest stops for freight wagons. Although communication with and transportation of supplies to the Black Hills gives the trail its name, the origins can be traced to earlier uses. It has been claimed that this route followed an old Indian trail.

In 1873 the original Red Cloud Indian Agency located on the Platte River near present-day Henry, Nebraska, was removed to a new location. The location chosen was some 50 miles to the northeast at a spot on the White River near present-day Crawford, Nebraska. Within a year of the move, social disturbances at the Agency brought military units up from Fort Laramie and a permanent camp, later named Camp Robinson, was established.

This Post and the Agency required a constant stream of supplies. In addition, supplies were also needed for a second Agency, Spotted Tail, and its military guard, Camp Sheridan, established about 40 miles east of the Red Cloud Agency. The nearest line of heavy transport was the Union Pacific Railroad line running east and west across central Nebraska. Although a supply trail ran from Fort Laramie to Camp Robinson a shorter route was noted in 1874 by Lt. Col. James W. Forsyth. This route was suggested and had been used by the Agency's beef contractor, Mr. Bosler.

A reconnaissance of the route was conducted in the summer of 1874 by 1st Lieutenant Lawson of the Third Cavalry assisted by two Sioux guides, Two Lance and Fire Lightning. The route, beginning at the railroad stop of Sidney Barracks, would cut some 55 to 60 miles off of the route from Fort Laramie. In the fall of 1877 the route was officially surveyed by Capt. W. S. Stanton establishing the distances, watering locations, and staging points that came to mark and be used by this stretch of the Sidney to Black Hills Trail:

	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Cp. Robinson to		
White River	0.76	Crossing
Junction	0.90	Road to Red Cloud Agency and B. Hills
White Clay Cr.	6.31	Stream 4' x 3"; Grass and Wood
Niobrara R.	12.93	Stream 25' x 1'; Grass, No Wood, Stage Ranch
Stage Ranch	11.95	
Snake Cr.	13.90	Str. 8' x 1'; Grass, No Wood, Stage Ranch
Red Willow Cr.	16.20	Water; Grass, No Wood, Stage Ranch
Junction	6.87	Road to Fork N. Platte River
N. Platt R.	6.28	Wooden Bridge; Store, Plenty Grass, No Wood
Pumpkin Cr.	7.16	Str. 10' x 6"; Grass, No Wood
Greenwood Cr.	6.23	Str. 6' x 4"; Crossing, Follow Creek
Junction	0.38	Road to Ford N. Platte R.
Stage Ranch	1.85	Junction, Upper Road to Water Hole
Leave Greenwood	1.07	Crossing; Water, Grass and Wood Along Creek
Water Holes	12.93	Stage Ranch; Water in Holes, Grass, No Wood, Junction with Upper Road from Greenwood
Sidney	14.00	On the Union Pacific Railroad (Stanton 1878)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Water Holes Ranch

Name of Property

Cheyenne County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

Statement of Significance (continued)

In the fall of 1874, the Custer Expedition into the Black Hills confirmed the presence of placer gold in the Hills. Before winter set in, miners had entered the Hills. At this time the Black Hills were part of the Sioux Reservation lands and by treaty right no Whites had a right to enter the area. The Army was now placed in the position of enforcing the treaty and expelling gold seekers.

The U. S. Government attempted to buy the Hills during the summer of 1875, however, the Sioux were unwilling to part with an area they considered to be sacred. Continued intrusions by gold seekers, impatience by the U. S. Government, and defensive reactions by the Sioux culminated in the Sioux War of 1876. With the defeat of the Sioux, the Black Hills were ceded to the United States. This opened the flood gate to miners and those who supplied them with necessities and comforts.

The Black Hills had two natural directions from which supplies could be obtained. To the east lay the steamboat landings and railheads along the Missouri River, to the south the Transcontinental Railway line of the Union Pacific in central Nebraska. Both sources had advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of the southern route lay in its distance, all weather capability, and travel over non-reservation area. The only major disadvantage was the North Platte River.

The North Platte River was not significantly deep except in periods of spring run-off or localized rain events, however, it had a wide, sandy bottom. This made it difficult to ford heavy wagons. Reports of wagons that normally used seven yoke of oxen to pull required up to twenty-one yoke to get across the Platte. This impediment to the route was removed in 1876 when Henry T. Clarke constructed a substantial bridge.

The Camp Clarke Bridge was constructed across the North Platte River about 3 miles west of present-day Bridgeport, Nebraska. The Clarke bridge consisted of a 61 span truss bridge of wooden beams with a length of about a half-mile. A toll was charged for use of the bridge, and a store, hotel, blacksmith shop and corral were established at the south end. A blockhouse was built at the north end and a detachment of troopers from Fort Sidney protected the bridge.

With the opening of the Camp Clarke bridge in May of 1876, the trail began to carry an increasingly heavy share of the traffic to and from the Black Hills. By the summer of 1876 a Pony Express service and a Stage Line were operating. A number of freight firms such as Pratt and Ferris, D. T. McCann, A. S. Van Tassel and others began using Sidney as their supply point. Besides the larger firms, many independents operating one or two wagons utilized the trail.

For the next 5 years, the trail would service the travelers and supply needs of the mines in the Black Hills. The greatest traffic was carried in 1877 when 50 to 75 freight wagons would often leave from Sidney in a single day. The trail was especially important during the winter months when the more northern supply routes would often be closed due to weather.

By 1879 the gold rush was over and company mining began to dominate. The amount of people passing over the trail diminished, however, the freight demand remained high. With the completion of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad line to Pierre, South Dakota, use of the trail began to dramatically fall off. By the following year most of the traffic had shifted to the shorter route from Pierre. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Water Holes Ranch
Name of Property
Cheyenne County, Nebraska
County and State

Section 8, 9, 10 Page 4

Statement of Significance (continued)

importance of Water Holes Ranch as a watering stop on the trail declines significantly in 1881. The trail appears to have been completely shut down by the winter of 1882.

Watering and resting stops like Water Holes Ranch provided the links that maintained a steady flow of material and people along the trail. Water Holes Ranch represents a well preserved and restricted time capsule of archaeological information on the trail and cultural expression that created it.

Bibliography

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- Clarke, Henry T.
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1934 Old Waybills. New York.
- Lass, William E.
1972 From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting. Nebraska State Historical Society Publications 26. Lincoln, Nebraska.
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1949 The Sidney-Black Hills Trail. Nebraska History 30(3):203-225.
- Stanton, W. S., Capt.
1878 Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1878: Appendix RR, Annual Report Upon Explorations and Surveys In the Department of the Platte for 1878. Copy of Camp Robinson to Sidney Barracks route and distances report in research collections of Fort Robinson Museum, Nebraska.

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the ploygon whose verticles are marked by the following UTM reference points: 1-13 657600 4574520; 2-13 658020 4574530; 3-13 658110 4574040; 4-13 657620 4574050.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Water Holes Ranch

Name of Property

Cheyenne County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 10 Page 5

Boundary Justification

The four boundary points selected include the western portion of a fenced cattle pasture which encompasses the archaeological features of the Water Holes Ranch site. This includes trail ruts west of the ranch site.

