

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wyoming	
COUNTY: Sheridan	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 718.56.0003	DATE 8/12/71

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Connor Battlefield

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Battle of Tongue River

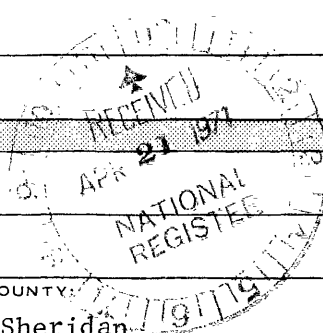
**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
NW $\frac{1}{2}$  NE $\frac{1}{2}$ , Section 19, T.57N., R.85W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Ranchester

STATE: Wyoming

CODE 56	COUNTY: Sheridan	CODE 033
------------	---------------------	-------------



**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Recreational</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
State of Wyoming, administered by the Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne

STATE: Wyoming

CODE: 56

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne

STATE: Wyoming

CODE: 56

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission, Survey of Historical Sites, Markers & Mon.

DATE OF SURVEY: Summer - Fall 1967     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne

STATE: Wyoming

CODE: 56

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER: 718.56.0003  
DATE: 8/12/71  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered			<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		
			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved		
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

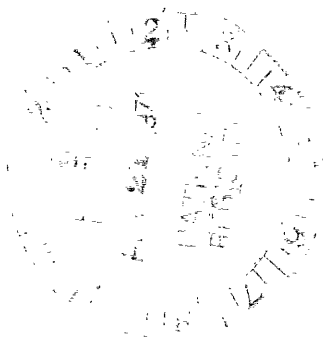
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Connor Battlefield Site is in Sheridan County in north central Wyoming adjacent the small community of Ranchester. Originally being an Indian campsite its physical properties represent no more than a well-situated level and protected stretch of river bottom. Many large trees occupy the battle site with cottonwoods predominating. Three sides of the Site are bordered by the Tongue River which flows in a meandering fashion along the west, north and east sides of the campsite. The river, the trees, the native vegetation and the presence of the Big Horn Mountains in the distance all blend to give the area a highly scenic quality.

Today there are no physical remains of the battle in evidence but a commemorative marker has been erected on the grounds. It is a granite rock pyramid 8' x 8' x 12' high, with a bronze plaque that reads: "Connor Battlefield State Park. Here, August 29, 1865, troop and Indian scouts commanded by Gen. P. E. Connor, destroyed an Arapahoe Indian village. Erected by the Historical Landmark Commission of Wyoming, 1936."

Aside from this marker the actual development of the Site has been along recreational lines. There are a number of picnic tables, cooking grills, and a one sanitary facility. Road access has recently been improved; a footbridge has been constructed across the river to facilitate foot traffic from Ranchester; and the river bank has been diked and rip-rapped to prevent flood damage.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**6. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1865

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               |  | <u>Indian Warfare</u>                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        |   |  |   |

RECEIVED  
APR 21 1971  
NATIONAL REGISTER

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Battle of Tongue River, August 29th, 1865 (the site of which has now become known as the Connor Battlefield) represents the single most important engagement of the Powder River Indian Expedition of 1865. The Powder River Indian Expedition was a punitive military campaign conducted during that year to suppress the hostile Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians committing depredations along the emigrant trails on the Northern Plains. Though the Tongue River Fight was a decisive victory for the military, the overall success of the Powder River Expedition was inconclusive, particularly in view of subsequent events.

The direction of the general plan of the campaign was the responsibility of Major General Grenville M. Dodge, then in command of the Department of the Missouri. Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor was given command of the field operations. Connor, an Irishman by birth, grew up in the United States and at an early age joined the Army. He later fought in the Mexican War under General Zachary Scott. Joining the "gold rush" after the war, he went to California and became active in civic, fraternal, and military affairs around Stockton. With the coming of the Civil War Connor was commissioned a colonel in the Third California Infantry and led volunteer troops into Utah to campaign against the Shoshone and Bannock Indians. On January 29, 1863, at the Battle of Bear River, he destroyed an Indian village, killing some 300 Indians and capturing 175 horses. This, combined with his effective defense of the Overland Stage Line operations, gave Connor the reputation of being a successful Indian fighter.

Following the wholesale Indian attacks along the Emigrant trails during 1864 and early 1865, Connor was placed in command of the newly created District of the Plains. The decision was then made to conduct a major campaign into the Indian country north of the Platte River in order to secure the lines of white travel and communications. Three columns were organized to provide a three-pronged attack. Colonel Nelson Cole lead a column along the eastern side of the Black Hills then circled in a northwesterly direction. Colonel Samuel Walker was the officer in charge of a center column which went from Fort Laramie to the western side of the Black Hills and also circled northwesterly to the Powder River. The Cole and Walker columns eventually joined up before coming in contact with Connor's left column which had proceeded up the eastern flank of the Big

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Powder River Campaigns and Sawyers Expedition of 1865. Edited by Hafin, LeRoy R. and Ann W. (The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, 1961.)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		44° 54' 20"	107° 9' 42"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.2 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Bill Barnhart, Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Wyoming Recreation Commission** DATE: **December 10, 1970**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**604 East 25th Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Cheyenne** STATE: **Wyoming** CODE: **56**

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Paul H. Steward

Title Liaison Officer, P. L. 89 - 665

Date 4-7-71

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

James A. Connolly  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

**AUG 12 1971**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST

William M. Montague  
Keeper of The National Register

Date **JUL 29 1971**

12/3293-  
490/150  
CO

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Wyoming	
COUNTY	
Sheridan	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71.8.26.0003	8/12/71

(Number all entries)

Statement of Significance - page 2

Horn Mountains. Connor's column, guided by an aging Jim Bridger, left Fort Laramie in the latter part of July traveling up the Platte, thence north to the Powder River. On August 12th Fort Connor (later renamed Fort Reno) was established on the banks of the Powder River.

Except for minor skirmishes with roving war parties Connor's forces made little contact with the hostiles until late August when a band of 500 Arapahoes under Chief Black Bear and old David was discovered on the Tongue River. At 7:30 on the morning of the 29th the attack began lead by General Connor. Dashing onto the plateau of the Indian encampment, he paused to let his men form on line and then, without breaking stride, charged the village. Into the village the fighting waged hand to hand. Although the soldiers were outnumbered they managed to rout the Indians. Connor and a handful of soldiers pursued one group in a running fight for ten miles to the canyon of Wolf Creek but was forced to retire back to the village around noon. The subsequent job of destruction of the Indians' abandoned property, estimated at 250 lodges and contents, required about two hours. Buffalo robes, blankets, furs, tepee covers, and dried meat were heaped on the lodge poles and fired. Atop these the dead soldiers lost in the fight were placed, to be burned also as a preventive against Indian mutilation. Captains North and Palmer, along with the Pawnee scouts, rounded up some 1100 Indian ponies (Connor estimated 500 horses, mules and ponies) and together with a few Indian prisoners the main force moved south, harrassed by and beating back the Arapahoes who were bent upon retribution for their recent misfortune.

This skirmishing lasted until after dark but Connor had managed to destroy the Arapahoes' capacity to wage war and had killed over sixty of their number (Connor estimated 35 warriors killed) including the son of Chief Black Bear. Seven women and eleven children captives were eventually released. Thus ended the Battle of Tongue River.

For all practical purposes this also marked the end of the Powder River Indian Expedition. The right column under Colonel Cole prematurely ran out of supplies and was saved from complete disaster by the narrowest of margins. Termination of the campaign was ordered by General Pope, August 22, 1865, and General Connor was recalled from his command. He had been plagued with bad luck from the start because of the delay of supplies and this combined with the poor management of his right column, the short-timer attitudes of many of the troops, and the early fall storms all proved too much for an impressive showing against such a worthy adversary. A few additional Indians were killed both before and after the Battle of Tongue River but the objective of completely chastizing the Indians on their home grounds had not begun to be realized.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Wyoming	
COUNTY	
Sheridan	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
11.8.56.0003	8/12/71

(Number all entries)

Statement of Significance - page 3

To a great extent General Connor's lack of success was due to the military and political climate that prevailed in the United States following the Civil War. Later Indian campaigns followed a very similar strategy as Connor's and initially suffered many of the same misfortunes including disaster in the case of Custer. As it was, little of lasting value can be attributed to the Powder River Expedition and almost two more decades of Plains warfare lie ahead. Had Connor been given the whole-hearted military support he desired and been allowed to continue his campaign a different chapter may have evolved in the final days of the Indian Wars. But for the Indian the results would have been no less tragic.

