

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wyoming	
COUNTY: Carbon	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
69-04-49-0007	4/16/69

1. NAME

COMMON:
Fort Steele

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Fort Fred Steele

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
SE 1/4 NE 1/4, Section 23, T. 21 N., R. 85 W. 6th P.M.

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE: Wyoming CODE: 49 COUNTY: Carbon CODE: 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
Leo Sheep Company

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Rawlins STATE: Wyoming CODE: 49

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Carbon County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Rawlins STATE: Wyoming CODE: 49

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 40 acres

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Wyoming Recreation Commission Survey of Historic Sites, Markers and Mon.

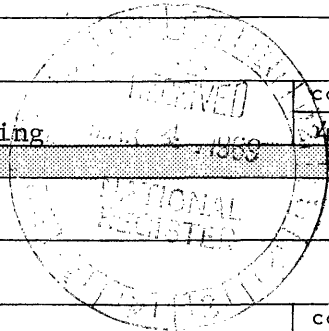
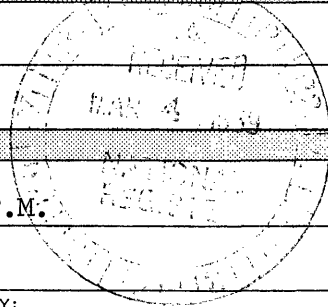
DATE OF SURVEY: Summer-Fall 1967 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Wyoming Recreation Commission, Historical Division

STREET AND NUMBER:
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne STATE: Wyoming CODE: 49

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: WYOMING
COUNTY: CARBON
ENTRY NUMBER: 69-04-49-0007
DATE: 4/16/69
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Original military structures at Fort Steele include a commanding officer's quarters, two large warehouses, a powder magazine and a number of smaller structures. One landowner has fenced off a portion of the grounds to provide a measure of protection. Existing buildings at the Fort are in fair condition and considerable weathering, neglect and vandalism is evident. Long post-military occupation of the Fort site will require research, study and a complete inventory to determine the originality and authenticity of remaining structures. Foundations exist in many places where buildings once stood.

The post cemetery, located on the southwest corner of the Fort grounds, is in fair condition.

The tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad, atop a high earth grade, traverses the central portion of the Fort site. Although presently more pronounced, this feature is consistent with historical conditions.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

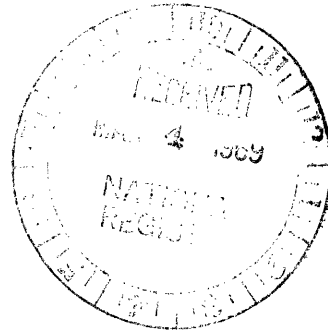
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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 type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theater	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			_____	
		Music	<input type="checkbox"/>			_____	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Fort Fred Steele contributed to national history in the areas of United States Military and Indian affairs, transcontinental transportation and communication, and its history also relates to the cattlemen's frontier and settlement.

See also attached addendum.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coutant, C. F., History of Wyoming, Vol. I (Laramie, Wyoming, Chaplin, Spafford and Matheson, 1899).
 Larson, T. A., History of Wyoming (Lincoln, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	41°	46'	44"	106°	57'	0"			
NE	41°	46'	44"	106°	56'	42"			
SE	41°	46'	33"	106°	56'	42"			
SW	41°	46'	33"	106°	57'	0"			

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Bill Barnhart, Assistant Historian

ORGANIZATION: Wyoming Recreation Commission DATE: Feb. 26, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:
 604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne STATE: Wyoming 82001 CODE: 49

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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: Charles R. Rodermel
 Charles R. Rodermel

Title: State Liaison Officer

Date: February 26, 1969

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

Ernest Allen Cunniff
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: APR 16 1969

ATTEST:

William J. Swartz
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: APR 16 1969

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

STATE Wyoming	
COUNTY Carbon	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
69-04-49-0007	4/16/69

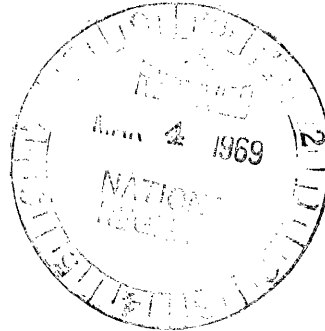
Fort Steele

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

4. Owner of Property

Union Pacific Railroad (part - owner) Omaha, Nebraska 26



FORT FRED STEELE

County: Carbon

Location: On the North Platte River, about 20 miles east of Rawlins, where the Union Pacific Railroad crosses the North Platte River. Interstate 80 crosses the river about 2 miles south of the site of Fort Steele.

Ownership: Fort Steele is privately owned. Principal ownership is by the Leo Sheep Company of Rawlins, with portions of the fort grounds and some original buildings owned by individuals and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Interest Phase: Fort Fred Steele contributed to national history in the areas of United States military and Indian affairs, transcontinental transportation and communication, and its history also relates to the cattlemen's frontier and settlement.

Sources:

Coutant, C. F. History of Wyoming. Vol. I, Chaplin, Spafford and Matheson, Laramie, Wyoming, 1899.

Larson, T. A. History of Wyoming. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1965.

Prepared by: Bill Barnhart

Summary:

Fort Fred Steele was one of three military forts established along the Union Pacific Railroad to provide protection for the line, its builders, and the communities that later developed along its course. To a lesser degree, the fort provided protection to "trail" travelers in the area and partially filled a void north of the Platte River created by the abandonment of the Powder River forts in 1868. During the last "Indian Wars" on the Northern Plains, Fort Steele was utilized as a support and supply base for troops in the field. Throughout its existence, the fort exerted a stabilizing influence in the surrounding vicinity and served as an important rail point for shipping and receiving. After abandonment by the military, the fort developed into a community along the route of transcontinental travel.

At the end of the Civil War, the task of constructing a transcontinental railroad began in earnest. The Pacific Railway in October of 1864 had provided meaningful inducements to promoters in the form of increased government loans and land grants. The Central Pacific Railroad began building eastward from the west coast, while the Union Pacific moved westward from Omaha, Nebraska. Both companies hastened to out-do the other and capitalize on the federal subsidies.

The Union Pacific completed two hundred and sixty miles of track in 1866, two hundred and forty in 1867, and almost five hundred in 1868. Cutting through the heart of Indian territory, the need for military protection for the rail workers readily became apparent. Continuing Indian-white conflicts also dictated the necessity for continued

protection of the rail line after its completion. Fort John Buford (later renamed Sanders) replaced Fort Halleck along the Overland Trail in 1866. Situated on the Laramie Plains, Fort Buford's location was chosen in anticipation of the forthcoming railroad construction. Military and political leaders made the decision to establish a line of protective forts along the Union Pacific route. Close proximity of a series of forts to the Union Pacific Railroad would allow troops to reach points of disturbance north or south of the line very promptly.

In July, 1867, the railroad reached the terminal tent-city of Cheyenne and Fort D. A. Russell was established nearby. The next spring the railroad reached Fort Sanders and pushed westward across the Plains, pausing briefly at the North Platte River. John Hughes provided transportation across the river with a ferry, but soon an impressive new trestle bridge was completed. At this juncture, the military leaders decided to establish an additional post between Fort Sanders and Fort Bridger.

Col. Richard I. Dodge, 30th U. S. Infantry, proceeded to the locality and chose a site on the west bank of the North Platte River just opposite the railroad crossing. On June 30, 1868, Fort Fred Steele was established, the grounds laid out, and construction started. The post was named in honor of Major General Frederick Steele, 20th U. S. Infantry, a hero of the Civil War who had recently died.

Existing conditions required the troops initially assigned to Fort Steele to spend most of the first summer giving protection to the work crews employed in the railway construction. Little was accomplished toward the completion of permanent buildings the first year.

The usual group of "end-o-tracks" followers soon showed up along the Platte River. During the layover at the Platte, two communities sprang up in the vicinity of Fort Steele. The first was just east of the river crossing and was called "Brownsville." Its population consisted of an assorted and sordid mass of humanity whose chief goal was to relieve the rail workers of their pay rolls. Drinking, gambling and carousing was a favorite and full time occupation. Speculation in land lots ran rampant. Soon Col. Dodge of Fort Steele drove the squatters from Brownsville to a new town called "Benton" platted two miles west of the river. The revelry quickly resumed at the same high pitch and Benton proved to be "one bad town." After a few weeks the "Hell-on-Wheels" citizenry of Benton disappeared, en mass, headed on down the tracks to the next promising location. Both Brownsville and Benton consisted of easily moved structures of canvas and wood and when the time came these towns quickly faded into oblivion.

A notable event occurred during Fort Steele's first summer. Stirred by controversy over the Union Pacific line, an interested General U. S. Grant and General William T. Sherman came out on the line to investigate for the government. General Grant was then slated for the presidency. With them came General Philip Sheridan, commanding the Military Division of the Missouri, General August Kautz, General Joseph H. Potter, General William S. Harney, General Frederick T. Dent, General Adam J. Slemmer, Union Pacific Vice-President Thomas Durant and Director Sidney Dillon. Since Fort Steele was in an embryo stage, it is unlikely that the group spent much time there. However, as General Grenville M. Dodge commented,

"probably no more noted military gathering had occurred since the Civil War."

The early years at Fort Steele saw the Indians constantly making their presence known, but the Indians did not represent the only problem. Soon after the completion of the railroad, a class of white men appeared in the vicinity of Fort Steele equally as dangerous as the Indians. They frequently ran off horses, mules, and beef cattle belonging to the military and resold them elsewhere. On one occasion they managed to lift a safe from the quartermaster tent at the fort and relieve the military of \$1,800 in cash. A man known as Musgrove, considered the leader of the outlaws in the vicinity of Fort Steele, was captured and taken to Denver. Here he was hanged for his part in the depredations along the line. It was hoped that the hanging of Musgrove would discourage the outlaws, but on January 31, 1869, the same group of renegades stole twenty-five horses and mules from Fort Steele. Troops from the Fort gave pursuit and managed to recover the loss. All through 1869 and for some years following, the garrison at Fort Steele continued its active role of maintaining law and order and providing protection for the growing communities in the region.

Through the 1870's, Fort Steele provided military support for troops in the field for other military establishments isolated from the railroad, and for the various expeditions undertaken during the height of Indian war conflicts. For the most part, conditions remained relatively peaceful along the Union Pacific, no doubt due to the existence of the protective forts. Fort Steele continued to grow into an impressive permanent post through the seventies, and was an economic asset to the area.

Thousands of railroad ties were shipped from Fort Steele to other points on the railroad, floated down the North Platte River by timber cutting companies operating in the Medicine Bow Mountains. Fort Steele also represented a center for social entertainment, such as was available at the time. Put together, the many aspects of Fort Steele's presence on the frontier represented an important stabilizing and civilizing influence.

Perhaps the most important single event in Fort Steele's military activity occurred during the Ute uprising in 1879. That fall, the Ute Indians located at the White River Agency in Colorado turned upon white rule. The Indians had not found farming to their liking, preferring to go on hunting forays during the summer and spend unlimited time engaging in their favorite pastime of horse racing. Nathan C. Meeker, Indian agent at White River, plowed up the Utes' favorite race track and pony pasture and threatened a work-or-starve policy. When a sub-chief assaulted Meeker, he called for military assistance to put down the impending rebellion.

An expedition was formed at Fort Steele under the command of Major Thomas Thornburgh with orders to proceed to the White River Agency and protect civilians at the agency. Thornburg left Fort Steele September 22, 1879, with two companies, twenty-eight wagons and an ambulance. Traveling south, the expedition soon reached the Milk Creek branch of the Yampa River. Here the Utes ambushed the soldiers. Besieged behind their wagons, the expedition subsequently suffered 13 casualties and the death of Major Thornburgh. Unable to take the offensive, the remaining command needed reinforcements. Joe Rankin, a scout for the party, slipped through the Indian lines after dark, and returned to Rawlins and Fort Steele to

secure help. His spectacular ride, a distance of 170 miles, was accomplished in an amazing 28 hours. Five hundred troops from Fort D. A. Russell, led by Colonel Wesley Merritt, traveled to Fort Steele and then moved south to relieve Thornburg's besieged party. During the conflict, the Indians at the White River Agency killed several white men, including Agent Meeker, and kidnapped a number of white women and children. Military troops then moved to the White River Agency and remained there during the winter. In January of 1880, even General George Crook was at Fort Steele to personally assist in transportation matters involved in supporting the troops at White River.

Peace and progress continued around Fort Steele during the early 1880's. Considered no longer necessary to military objectives, the post was abandoned August 7, 1886. After military abandonment, many local residents proceeded to make Fort Steele their home.

After the advent of the automobile, in the early 1900's, the community of Fort Steele found itself located on the Lincoln Highway, a major transcontinental roadway. Eventually the highway was relocated and Fort Steele gradually lost its population. Today it is largely deserted and, though a number of original buildings remain standing, neglect is evident throughout the old fort site. The Union Pacific Railroad still passes through the old Fort but it has long since ceased to be a stopping place.

For years, countless people traveling east and west, the important and not-so-important, have passed through or by Fort Steele with little realization of its role in the frontier development of the United States. Many people hope that it may somehow be saved from the ravages of time.