



PS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 Willis House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 621 Winchell Avenue not for publication

city or town Encampment vicinity N/A

state Wyoming code WY county Carbon code 007

zip code 82325

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.)

Maile Brichy-wade
Signature of certifying official

Date 1/31/01

State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Hotel

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling (residence)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movement

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block

roof asphalt shingle

walls cast concrete

other _____

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.)

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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE _____

Period of Significance 1908-1950

Significant Dates 1908 Built
1931 Boarding House

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
Willis, Lydia M.

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Ball, Harry

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Grand Encampment Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.4

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>13</u>	<u>349500</u>	<u>4563140</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

____ 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 Ronald & MaryL. Peryam Noton

organization _____ date _____

street & number 621 Winchell Avenue telephone (307) 327-5101

city or town Encampment state WY zip code 82325

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 Ronald E. & Mary L. Peryam Noton

street & number 621 Winchell Avenue telephone 307/327-5101

city or town Encampment state WY zip code 82325

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Willis House
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The Willis House is a two-story, modified American Four Square style house. The house is a standout in the small town of Encampment due to its size and the use of formed concrete block; it is the only two-story masonry clad residential building in the town. The rectangular-shaped building which measures approximately 26 - ½ feet by 50 feet, rests on a concrete block foundation with a full basement with an exterior entrance and coal chute on the north side, and five hopper windows that are now boarded over. A slightly beveled molded concrete water table surrounds the house above the two to three feet high foundation. The house is clad in alternating rows of molded concrete block in a variety of sizes and textures, including ashlar and brick-like finish. Concrete quoins define the corners of the building.

The asphalt shingle-covered gable roof features large clipped gables on the east and west sides, a projecting clipped gable on the north side, and a projecting gable-on-hipped roof extension on the south side that covers a three-sided, two story bay. Roof details include cornice molding, flared wide eaves with a wainscoted soffit, and a molded concrete frieze with an egg and dart pattern above acanthus leaves.

The primary entrance is on the west facade. Seven newer concrete steps lead up to the hipped roof open porch which is supported by three molded concrete posts that rest on a molded concrete balustrade. The building is accessed by a three-paneled, single light door. A bay projects under the porch roof and has one large single light window which is flanked by a smaller double-hung window on each side. A two story bay on the south side repeats this window pattern on a somewhat smaller scale on both the first and second stories. Other windows in the building are single or paired double hung windows or single light windows. Most windows have molded concrete lintels and flat concrete lug sills. The back entry on the east side was formerly a small open porch supported by a single molded concrete column. It was enclosed probably in the 1930s and sided with pressed tin panels. A three-paneled, single-light door with a transom above leads to the porch interior.

In the 1930s, a wood framed wash shed was added to the northeast side of the building. The shed is covered with pressed tin siding. The shed is accessed from the porch interior and its three NPS

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windows are now boarded over.

Most likely the interior was intended to be more ornate than it eventually became in its circa 1930s finished state. The simple woodwork and lack of ornamentation on the walls is indicative of a Depression-era finish rather than an earlier, more decorative interior suggested by the exterior. Belying its four-square exterior is an unusual interior floor plan on the second floor. The layout reflects the building's original intended use as a house of prostitution. There are five rooms on the second floor, three of which have prominent alcoves where no doubt the bed was located, probably behind a curtain. A bathroom is also located on this floor.

The log barn predates the house, is located to the northeast of the house near the alley that runs east of the property, and measures approximately 21-1/2 feet by 46 feet. The building has five rooms and was formerly used as a stable. A second story hay loft spans the entire building. Log corners are simple square and round notches. The barn has a dirt floor and primary access is located on the north side.

Both buildings exhibit integrity of design, setting, location, feeling, association, workmanship, and materials. The house is especially unusual in that its interior was designed as an upscale house of prostitution for an obviously well-heeled and successful madam and businesswoman. Although many former houses of prostitution were located in commercial buildings in various Wyoming towns are still standing, the Willis House appears to be unique in that it was a relatively upscale residential building that was planned to function as a house of ill-repute. It may be the only one of its type in the state. Except for the circa 1930s wash shed addition and rear porch infill, new concrete steps, window replacements in 1999 that respected the original light configurations, and a new door on the north side, the exterior remains very similar in appearance as it was when constructed in 1908.

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The Willis House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and B. The Willis House is significant for its association with the settlement of Grand Encampment during the heady days of the copper boom and because of its association with the lives of two prominent families who contributed greatly to commerce in the area. Constructed in 1908, near the end of the copper boom days, the Willis House was built by Mrs. Lydia M. Willis with unique masonry materials to be a deluxe house of prostitution and the headquarters of the Willis business empire. Mrs. Willis had a network of houses of prostitution with two in Rawlins, probably one in Rock Springs, and one each in Saratoga and Encampment. Not only did the Willises have the prostitution business, they also owned saloons, a coal and lumber yard, a hotel in Rawlins and Mr. Willis bred racing horses. In 1931, the house was acquired and finished by Mr. Charles Deo Terwilliger, a locally prominent and respected rancher and merchant. Each of these families contributed in many ways to the history and commercial development of the Platte River valley and Carbon County. Visitors and locals have always expressed great interest in the historic and stylish Willis House. It is a real standout because it is the only two-story masonry residence in Encampment.

Grand Encampment was first named by white men when the fur trappers came to trade with the fur traders at "Camp le Grande". Then, when the Union Pacific railroad was built through Wyoming in 1868, timber workers by the hundreds, accompanied by hunters to find game for the camps, came into the Sierra Madre Mountains to fell trees and float them down the Encampment and North Platte Rivers to supply the railroad with ties. Soldiers who came West to protect the railroad builders from the natives found the valley to be beautiful and fertile and some stayed or came back later. Beginning about 1877, pioneers arrived from Colorado to homestead along the rivers and their tributaries. Ed Haggerty, a sheepherder according to legend but really a geologist from England, while prospecting the Sierra Madre area, found rich copper deposits in the mountains above the valley in 1897 and began to mine. As a result of the mine's success, the area boomed.

The town of Grand Encampment was officially platted, incorporated and lots sold in 1897 by Willis George Emerson along with four other men. Miners, geologists, speculators, saloon keepers, shop keepers and all sorts of camp followers who sought opportunity poured into the valley. The town

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developers got rich from all these people drawn to the area by the copper and gold, which was also discovered in the nearby mountains. Encampment became the commercial center for clothing, grubstake, entertainment and hot baths for the miners. The town boom lasted for eleven years, from 1897 into 1908. At the turn of the century, Encampment was a thriving town with 9 stores, 2 hotels, 2 restaurants, 9 saloons and 2 brothels.

The census of 1850 listed Lydia M. Propst as four years old, living in Pendleton County, Virginia. From her son Lee's obituary in The Encampment Roundup of February 27, 1941, his parents were Edward and Lydia Propst. Edward died after the Civil War, supposedly of complications due to lack of proper food, and Lydia brought Lee and a brother and sister to Rawlins about 1886. Although no records can be found of the union, Lydia at some time married S.L. (Jerry) Willis, a horse breeder who introduced trotting horses into Wyoming and Colorado and built the first racetrack in Rawlins at the site of the present day Carbon County fairgrounds. According to articles in the Grand Encampment Herald (GEH) and the Carbon County Journal, the Willises traveled extensively. Mr. & Mrs. Willis started several businesses in Wyoming and Colorado including horse breeding, saloons, lumber and coal yards, and houses of ill repute. In 1898, the Rawlins' City Council got rid of all the "houses" north of the railroad tracks, so Mrs. Willis turned the brothel at the corner of Buffalo and 5th Street into a hotel, leaving only her "sporting" house on the southside.

The Willises decided to move to Encampment to join the boom. Mr. Willis, according to articles in the GEH, built a saloon at the townsite of Battle in the Sierra Madre Mountains. Then, in 1898, he "is building a residence, 22 by 24 . . . on the lot adjoining his saloon building . . ." [in Encampment] which was located across the alley from the property where the deluxe house was to be built ten years later. Mrs. Willis no doubt ran her business right there in the residence on Rankin Street next to the saloon. On May 19, 1900, Mrs. Willis placed an ad in the Carbon County Journal to sell an 8 room house in Saratoga, a 12 room house in Rock Springs and the saloon and 6 room house in Encampment. Mrs. Willis's business was not written up in the papers, nor acknowledged in polite society, but prostitution was a fact of life in the West where many men came to town every payday. Although the subject was ignored in the better families, some respected gentlemen also availed themselves of the services because, according to one old timer, "You know there was no

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birth control available." The business of prostitution played an important, but often overlooked, role in local commerce.

In 1908, because business must have been good, Mrs. Willis hired Mr. Harry Ball to build a great stone house in the center of the boomtown. Mr. Ball was a local Encampment man with a fine

reputation as a carpenter and architect. Mr. Ball had a large contracting business throughout the area and later erected the Historic Virginian Hotel in Medicine Bow, WY, made famous by the author, Owen Wister. Mr. Ball was an innovator. According to an article on page 1 of the GEH of September 11, 1908, Ball & Scofield Cement Works manufactured cement blocks molded to resemble stone because they were cheaper than bricks. Mrs. Willis's deluxe house was built of this modern material.

On September 16, 1907, Mrs. Willis had purchased the two lots which include the large log barn. Since Mr. Willis was into breeding as well as racing horses, he probably used the barn and property for that purpose. The 1912 tax list showed that Mr. Willis had "25 bronchos" valued at \$150 while in 1910 an unknown number of horses were valued at \$40.

Mrs. Willis was a grand lady who cared deeply for her girls (based on personal letters of correspondence). She and Mr. Willis accompanied the body of one girl from Pearl, CO, to Rawlins to be shipped home. She paid for the funeral of another, publishing a letter of thanks to the people of Encampment who were kind enough to help. Mrs. Willis wrote to former employees asking them to come back to work for her or, if not available themselves, to send new girls, no doubt, in anticipation of the opening of her deluxe house. The replies she received show she was well liked by these girls. She must have been like a mother to them.

Mrs. Willis appears to have been a model business owner. Her name is listed along with prominent businessmen as donating to various fund-raisers. The Willises were in the official register of voters in Encampment in April 1903, October 1912 and October 1918. Mrs. Willis traveled frequently, visiting her many relatives and keeping track of her businesses. Insurance records of 1919 indicate that she had a house in Denver as well as a place in Saratoga with the furnishings insured by the Hartford Fire Insurance Company. Old timers in Saratoga say that house was also a house of ill NPS

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fame, with a balcony on the second floor where the pretty girls enjoyed the view. These girls never showed up at church but could be seen buying fine ribbons and lace at the sewing shop.

The Encampment copper boom went bust in 1908. The bust was the result of several factors: transporting the copper to market was difficult without a railroad; three fires caused extensive damage to the smelter and halted mining operations. When the price of copper began to decline drastically, the mine and smelter shut down and there were no more miners coming to town to support the local businesses. The town of Grand Encampment was becoming a ghost town. Money was probably tight for Mrs. Willis because she never finished the inside of the great house but just boarded up the windows. Between 1908, when the house was built, and 1931, when the Terwilligers bought the property, the house changed hands 18 times, probably for taxes.

It is not known when the Willises left Encampment for good. In 1915, Mr. Willis served as Justice of the Peace for the Town of Grand Encampment and as Town Marshal in 1916. There was an editorial in the newspaper responding to some of the Encampment residents' grumbling about Mr. Willis's morals when he first got his law enforcement jobs. Lydia Willis died in Brighton, Colorado in 1926, her body brought to Wyoming for burial, probably in Rawlins. There is no record of what happened to Mr. Willis. Mrs. Willis' son, Lee Propst, ran a service station in Encampment for many years. He and his wife, Maude, lived in the original frame house on the lots Mrs. Willis first acquired in Encampment. Lee died in 1941. After Maude died in 1961, the house on Rankin Street and the log barn were sold to the Town of Encampment.

After the copper boom ended, ranching became the business of choice in Encampment. A newspaper article appeared about one young man, Mr. Charles Deo Terwilliger, whose new ranch was being run very well. Charlie, as he was known, was not new to the Platte River valley. He first arrived in August of 1899 on a stagecoach from Walcott, transferring in Encampment to ride a freight wagon up to the townsite of Battle. He had been mining in Colorado and heard about the boom near Encampment, so he came to seek his fortune. Charlie staked a claim up in the mountains, but had to earn his living selling supplies in the hardware store he built in Battle. The only original structure at the Battle townsite surviving today is the small log building outside Battle where he NPS

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stored his gunpowder and dynamite.

In the early 1900's, Charlie moved the store to Encampment where his mother and father joined him. His father, Elmer, a brickmason, built a brick "terrace" house on Winchell Avenue just up the hill from where Mrs. Willis would soon begin building her deluxe house. Elmer also did masonry work on the Ferris Mansion in Rawlins, built flues for the train depots in Saratoga and Walcott, and was in Laramie in 1905 "doing masonry work on the government building." About that same time, Charlie left Encampment for the mines in the Nevada area, where he did make his fortune, not in mining but, as legend goes, selling water to the gold and silver miners. He also owned at least three lumber yards as well as hardware and grain stores in Nevada. Unfortunately, he lost most of his fortune when a bank folded. He returned to Encampment and bought a ranch on Cow Creek in 1909. His success in ranching allowed him to increase his holdings along Cow Creek through the years. He designed and built an irrigation ditch, still known today as the Terwilliger Ditch, off Cow Creek on the ranch now known as the Silver Spur.

In 1904, Miss Laura Van Camp came to Encampment to visit a former neighbor and friend from Grand Island, Nebraska. The GEH of February 17, 1905, records that she "is to again become a resident of this city. Miss Van Camp will graduate in music from the conservatory at Grand Island." Apparently, Laura visited Encampment every summer. The GEH reported on May 8, 1908, she "is well known here as an excellent teacher of instrumental music and will take pupils." Meanwhile, Charlie was passing through town regularly doing his banking and buying cattle, hay and other supplies from as far away as Colorado. In 1911, Charlie and Laura were married. While living on Cow Creek, Laura gave birth to three children. But Charlie's fortunes were again set back when the dam of the Cow Creek Reservoir broke high in the mountains, the flash flood roaring through his ranch doing a lot of damage and killing most of the livestock. Because of that disaster and the coming of the Great Depression, Charlie was reduced to selling his registered cattle/calf units for \$25.00.

In 1931, Charlie and Laura bought the empty and unfinished Willis House for \$800.00, putting

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Laura's name on the deed. Charlie, with the help of Laura's brother, Arthur Van Camp, proceeded to finish the interior of the house, scrounging materials wherever they could and even going as far as Denver for salvage. The kitchen was smaller than the one on the Cow Creek ranch, so the extra extension leaves from the dining table were used as part of the stairs to the second floor. They built the cabinets which are still in use today. The ice boxes the men built are still in place with drainage right down to the basement. Since Mrs. Willis had not planned a place for washing clothes, Charlie built an attached wash shed at the back porch which is used today as a storage shed.

Laura put to good use the bedrooms that Mrs. Willis had designed for other purposes by running a boarding house for teachers. Vera Schultz Oldman, cofounder of the Grand Encampment Museum, recalled that she lived in Laura's house beginning in 1931 when she came to teach in the schools, before she married a local rancher. Laura gave piano lessons in town as she had done at the ranch and several of her students went on to have careers in music.

Jean Terwilliger Dodd, their younger daughter, remembers how happy her mother was to be able to live in town, although money was very tight. Since the ranch was going downhill fast, C.D. worked at several jobs, including delivering coal from the mines and cutting and delivering ice from the Encampment River. He also worked in the Englehart Hardware Store in Encampment and eventually bought the store and ran it for many years. Charlie sold the Cow Creek ranch in the 1940's.

People remember gathering in the elegant living room for concerts and teas, and a Halloween party was so memorable it was still discussed sixty years later by the old timers. Laura continued renting out rooms until her health failed and she died in 1943. Charlie lived alone in the house, except for visits from his three children and ten grandchildren, until his health failed in the mid-1960's.

Charlie Terwilliger died in 1967 and my mother, Gail Terwilliger Peryam, inherited the house. Gail bought the barn from the Town of Encampment in 1969. Gail Peryam died in 1976 and David Peryam, her husband, died in 1992. In 1996, Mary L. Peryam Noton, granddaughter of Charlie and Laura, inherited the house and barn from her father's estate. From the mid-1960's until 1998, the house was used only as a summer vacation place.

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Encampment has not become a ghost town as the editor of the Grand Encampment Herald feared in 1909. Encampment has survived, although the "Grand" was dropped by the U.S. Postal Department when the post office first opened in 1897. Mining, tie hacking, a secret Air Force monitoring station and timbering have come and gone. Today, ranching and tourism keep the town alive and Encampment is now home to those who run and support these industries. Many retirees have returned to the valley they fell in love with during their working or wandering days and have brought others. The Grand Encampment Museum complex is exceptionally fine. It and two sites in the Grand Encampment Historic District were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Many visitors to the Grand Encampment Museum ask about the old stone house in the middle of town. The Willis House is unique in Encampment's history: an elegant house built at the end of the great boom, left vacant for 23 years and then finished to be used as a family residence and a boarding house. People are fascinated by the story of the Madam who never lived in her deluxe house of prostitution.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Willis House is located on Lots 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, Block 26, Town of Encampment (also known as Town of Grand Encampment), Carbon County, Wyoming.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the Willis House are defined by Wyoming Highway 70 on the south, Winchell Avenue on the west, a residential property to the north, and an alley to the east. Only the Willis House and its landscaping on lots 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are included within the boundaries of the nomination.