

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980  
MAY 1 1980  
DATE ENTERED

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fort Sanders Guardhouse

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Kiowa Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Laramie

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Wyoming

Albany

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Abd.
- MILITARY

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Albany County Commissioners

STREET & NUMBER

Albany County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Laramie

VICINITY OF

Wyoming 82070

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Albany County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Fifth and Grand Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Laramie

Wyoming 82070

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wyoming Recreation Commission, Survey of Historic Sites, Markers and Monuments

DATE

1967 (revised 1973)

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Wyoming Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Cheyenne

Wyoming 82002

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built of rough-cut red sandstone laid up on white lime mortar, the Fort Sanders guardhouse displays a visual congruity with the surrounding landscape seldom matched by more recent construction in the vicinity. On the exterior the guardhouse measures forty-eight feet by twenty-eight feet. Steep gable ends, at peak nearly twenty-five feet tall, comprise the short sides of the rectangular structure. The two-foot thick walls rise without apparent taper. Each exterior opening has a box lintel composed of two-by-twelve inch boards set flush to the wall. Lintels and wooden casements are anchored to the stone with long, hand-forged square nails.

The guardhouse originally contained two major rooms, one for guards and a slightly larger one for prisoners. Within the prison room were two small cells located in adjacent corners, and between them a wood burning stove.<sup>1</sup> Four high and small windows, three still fitted with iron bars pinned vertically into upper and lower transverse iron beams, gave the room's occupants a forbidding view of Wyoming's big sky. The single exterior doorway led to the guard room. That room had three large and low windows, unencumbered with iron bars. A drawing of Fort Sanders,<sup>2</sup> dated 1875 (see illustration), shows the guardhouse had short stone chimneys topping each gable end, but these have fallen or been removed.

After the military vacated Fort Sanders in 1882, the guardhouse probably served as a storage shed. All interior fittings have since disappeared, including the cells and main partition. In 1936 a fire ravaged the building.<sup>3</sup> The window casements and the wall plastering fell, but the stone survived intact. Perhaps then the chimneys were dismantled to allow installation of an overhanging roof, of which only pole rafters and main beam remain. Above one prison room window the wall has fallen, but otherwise the stonework seems solid, with little lost mortar or other signs of weakening.

The soft stone, conducive to marking, bears several names, dates, and initials. The oldest date found by the author is 1875, and many other dates precede the turn of the century. Few remains of a thick interior wall plastering now cling to the stone.

A smaller but similar building, also of red sandstone, once stood just south of the guardhouse, providing quarters for the officer of the guard. This building has vanished, as have nearly all other indications that the site once represented the presence here of the United States Army during the final days of conquest on the Great Plains.

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<sup>1</sup>Frantz, Surgeon J.H., "Report on Fort Sanders, Wyoming Territory," Report to the Surgeon General's Office, U.S. War Department, Washington: Government Printing Office, Circular No. 4, December 5, 1871, p. 353.

<sup>2</sup>Western History Research Center, Coe Library, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, Fort Sanders file.

<sup>3</sup>Laramie Republican-Boomerang, Laramie, Wyoming, July 30, 1936.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fort Sanders Guardhouse is the single substantially intact building remaining on the site of this military reservation, erected in 1866 to protect and defend encroaching modern civilization in the Rocky Mountain West. Initially, Fort Sanders troops aided emigrants traveling the Lodgepole Trail.<sup>1\*</sup> In September of 1868, for example, fort ledgers record the passage of 789 wagons, 1,067 men, 101 women, 184 children, 856 horses, 950 mules, and 3,789 oxen.<sup>2</sup> Fort Sanders troops also protected the Denver and Salt Lake stage line.<sup>3</sup> In the post's sixteen year existence its troops were involved in twenty major skirmishes with Indians,<sup>4</sup> although no battles occurred on fort grounds. Since men garrisoned at Fort Sanders participated in General Custer's military campaign of 1876,<sup>5</sup> it seems likely some probably fell at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

In 1867 the Union Pacific Railroad came onto the high plains of southern Wyoming. Surveyors and engineers, the vanguard of this massive scheme, were particularly vulnerable to Indian attack, and thus needed the aid of Fort Sanders troops. Tie cutters then invaded the nearby mountains, also with military guard, and track layers followed. These large crews were prone to Indian strike and the Union Pacific depended on the force of military might to maintain a rapid pace of construction.

In July, 1868 perhaps the most impressive gathering of military leaders since Appomatox convened at Fort Sanders.<sup>6</sup> Two months before, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had received a virtual mandate from his party as candidate for President of the United States. Perhaps Grant considered his election a certainty, for he did little campaigning. He came to Fort Sanders, about as far from the voting public as one could get in those days, accompanied by General William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Sheridan, along with several other high ranking officers. Grant and his retinue came to review a controversy concerning the rail's route across southern Wyoming. Thomas Durant, a vice president of the Union Pacific, had accused Gen. Grenville Dodge, chief engineer of the railroad's construction, or poorly planning the path.<sup>7</sup>

For several reasons this dissension concerned General Grant. As a means of consolidating federal power over the divergent politics of the reunited nation, the railroad had no equal. By opening up a major new avenue of commerce the Union Pacific could undercut the renascent power structures of several recalcitrant southern states. Also, recent developments in Mexico indicated some European countries had an active interest in North American politics. This potential threat to national sovereignty could be deterred by a swift means of conveying military troops to the west coast. At Fort Sanders Grant urged the rapid completion of the railroad and reconfirmed General Dodge's appointment as chief engineer of the Union Pacific.

\*See Addendum A for footnotes.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

J.H. Frantz, "Report on Fort Sanders, Wyoming Territory," Report to the Surgeon General's Office, U.S. War Department, Washington: Government Printing Office, Circular No. 4, December 5, 1871.

Ray Revere, A History of Fort Sanders, Wyoming, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, 1960.

See footnotes for other bibliographical references.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.61 acres

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

QUADRANGLE NAME Laramie, Wyoming

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,3 | 4,4,9 | 9,6,0 | 4,5 | 6,8 | 8,5,0

B 1,3 | 4,4,9 | 9,6,0 | 4,5 | 6,8 | 7,9,0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 1,3 | 4,4,9 | 7,9,0 | 4,5 | 6,9 | 7,9,0

D 1,3 | 4,4,9 | 7,9,0 | 4,5 | 6,8 | 8,5,0

E    |    |    |    |    |   

F    |    |    |    |    |   

G    |    |    |    |    |   

H    |    |    |    |    |   

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE ADDENDUM: ITEM 10

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Headlee, Planner

October 25, 1978

ORGANIZATION

Laramie-Albany County Planning Office

DATE

(307)742-3166

STREET & NUMBER

402 Courthouse

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Laramie

STATE

Wyoming 82070

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Jan L. Nelson*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE February 25, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*W. Ray Luce*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 5/1/80

ATTEST:

*William H. Williams*  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 4.23.80

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CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The establishment of Laramie City in the spring of 1868, situated about three miles north of the Fort Sanders post, prompted the construction of the guardhouse. Life in young Laramie was literally untamed. Gunfights, garrotings, and sordid displays of public drunkenness were common sights. As a short-termed but important hub of commercial activity in the Rocky Mountain west, Laramie provided the soldiers with several means of illicitly exempting himself from military duty. Pack trains heading to Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota gold and silver fields often outfitted in Laramie, and by joining up with a team of prospectors one could escape loathsome servitude and find considerable adventure. Of course several other means of escape were available, and as Laramie's economy bloomed desertion rates at Fort Sanders soared.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, drunkenness and boisterousness were endemic among the troops stationed at Fort Sanders, and when the guardhouse was completed early in 1869<sup>10</sup> it was usually full.<sup>11</sup>

The guardhouse was built mostly of locally obtained materials. Soldiers quarried the stone about six miles from the post and mined lime on the fort grounds.<sup>12</sup> The stone came damp and clay-like from the earth but hardened on exposure.<sup>13</sup> Well paid professional masons constructed the walls of the guardhouse and professional carpenters completed the building.<sup>14</sup> Probably the nails, cell and window bars, and other hardware were created at the fort blacksmith shop, which employed several professional smithies.<sup>15</sup> Likely the roof consisted of whip-sawed rafters and beam cut up at the fort sawmill, a layer of tarpaper, and hand-split pine shingles.

Only a few other buildings in the Laramie region utilized the same red sandstone and white lime mortar used on the Fort Sanders guardhouse, perhaps because the Union Pacific depleted the most accessible sources when erecting the large machine shops and round house (1869) that stood within a mile of the post grounds. Since the demolition of these railroad structures, the Fort Sanders guardhouse appears to be one of the few surviving examples around Laramie of a building made from these indigenous, barely transformed materials. Others in the city may exist under several layers of stucco. However, as an appropriate visual expression of the hardy beauty of the Laramie plains, the Fort Sanders guardhouse has no extant parallel.

After completion of Fort D. A. Russell at Cheyenne late in 1868, the importance of Fort Sanders began to wane. The War Department maintained Fort Sanders until 1882, when the property and buildings were sold and the post vacated.<sup>16</sup> The Fort's bountiful gardens and young trees soon withered and died. Now, only the guardhouse remains.

In 1914 a local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a monument upon the former site of Fort Sanders, about five hundred feet west of the guardhouse.

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The eight-foot tall stone marker stands along old U.S. Highway 287, as a newer highway has been routed several hundred yards east. Governor Joseph M. Carey spoke at the monument's dedication. These ground were hallowed, he said, by the pioneers and famous persons who once traversed them. It therefore seems appropriate to recommend the present property be placed on the National Register as a means of reaffirming Fort Sanders' importance in the development of the West.

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ADDENDUM A: FOOTNOTES FOR ITEM #8

<sup>1</sup>Frantz, Surgeon J.H., p. 353.

<sup>2</sup>House Executive Document, No. 1, Serial No. 1367, Washington: Government Printing Office.

<sup>3</sup>Frantz, p. 353.

<sup>4</sup>Heitman, Francis B. (Ed.), Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903, II, pp. 428-445.

<sup>5</sup>Revere, Ray, A History of Fort Sanders, Wyoming, unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, 1960, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>This opinion expressed by General Grenville M. Dodge in How We Built the Union Pacific Railway, Senate Executive Document No. 447, Second Session, 61st Congress, 1909-1910, and also by Governor Joseph M. Carey in his dedication speech for the Fort Sanders monument, Laramie Republican-Boomerang, July 19, 1914.

<sup>7</sup>Perkins, J.R., "The Life of Grenville M. Dodge," Trails, Rails, and War, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1929, p. 217.

<sup>8</sup>Perkins, pp. 221-22.

<sup>9</sup>Post Returns, July 1866-1882, Fort Sanders microfilm, Roll 1, Western History Research Center, Coe Library, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

<sup>10</sup>Frantz, p. 354.

<sup>11</sup>Frantz, p. 354.

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<sup>12</sup>Frantz, p. 354.

<sup>13</sup>Frantz, p. 354.

<sup>14</sup>Revere, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>Revere, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup>Revere, p. 123.

<sup>17</sup>Laramie Republican-Boomerang, July 19, 1914.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF FORT SANDERS GUARD HOUSE

A tract of land in Section 17, T15N, R73W of the 6th P.M., Albany County, Wyoming. Beginning at the E $\frac{1}{4}$  corner of said Section 17, thence N00° 05' W. 346.3 feet along the East line of said section to a point on the north R/W of the former Laramie Country Club Road, thence N89° 50' W. 576.4 feet along said R/W to the true point of beginning, thence S00° 10' W 190.0 feet, thence N89° 50' W. 579.3 feet to a point on the East R/W of old U.S. Highway 287, thence N06° 05' W along said R/W 96.3 feet, thence N04° 42' E. 94.6 feet along said R/W to a point on the north R/W of the former Laramie Country Club Road, thence 652.5 feet along said R/W to a point of beginning. 2.61 acres, more or less.

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CONTINUATION SHEET ADDENDUM

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

ADDENDUM: ITEM #10, VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nomination consists of the site of the Guard House and the Daughters of the American Revolution Monument nearby. The site constitutes less than three acres. Rather than nominate the entire site of the post grounds, which is now occupied by several homes and businesses and intersected by U.S. Highway 287, or the entire military reservation which occupied from thirty-six square miles to eight-one square miles during the fort's existence, the Guard House on a small plot of ground shall suffice.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

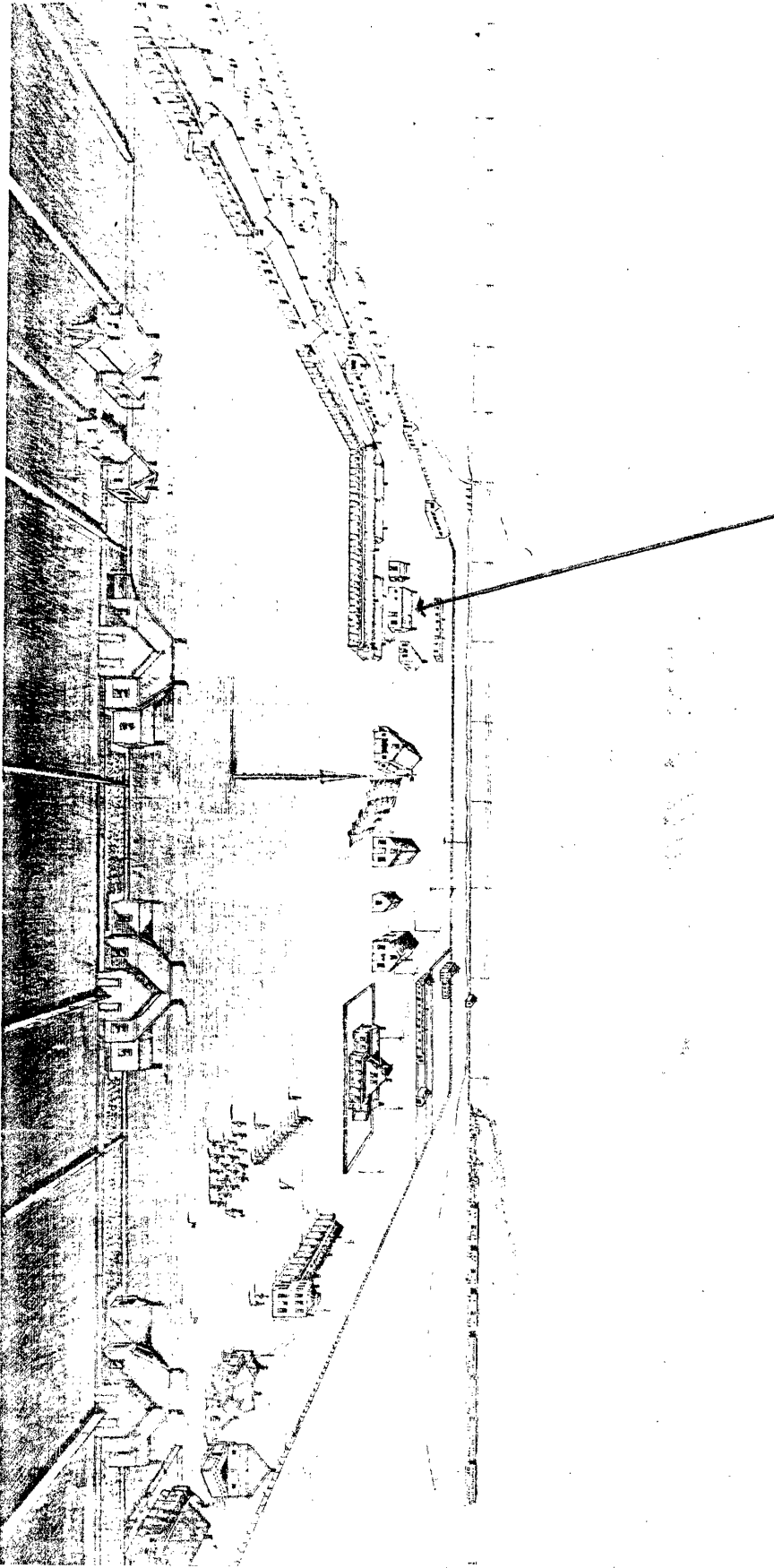
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ADDENDUM B:  
Illustration Referred to in Physical Description  
 Drawing of Fort Sanders Military Post, looking west.

Drawing courtesy Western History Research Center, Coe Library, U. of WY., Laramie, WY

*Guard House*



Fort Sanders, W. Y., 1876.

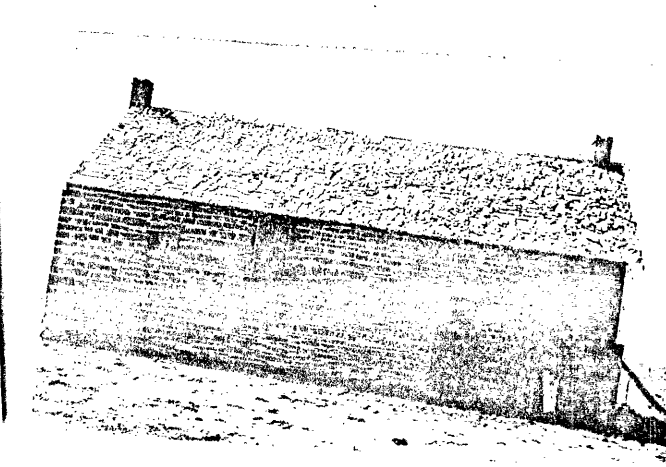
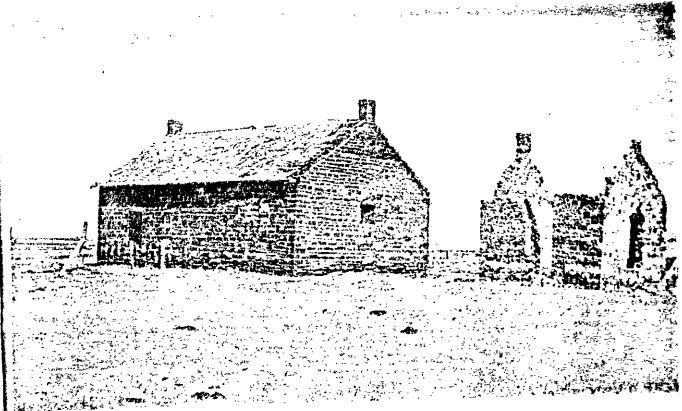
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CONTINUATION SHEET ADDENDUM C . . . . . ITEM NUMBER . . . . . PAGE

Three views of the Fort Sanders Guardhouse and quarters for the Officer of the Guard. These photos were taken in 1933.



courtesy, Western History Research Center, Coe Library, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming