

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only  
received **MAR 31 1982**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Robidoux Inscription

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number no address -- T. 18S, R. 24E, Sec. 5 not for publication

city, town Cisco vic.  vicinity of congressional district 01

state Utah code 049 county Grand code 019

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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 type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Frank Spadafore

street & number Route 3, Box 274

city, town Montrose vicinity of state CO 81401

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grand County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Moab state Utah

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Utah Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date March, 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Utah State Historical Society

city, town Salt Lake City state Utah

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Robidoux Inscription is an historical inscription on a small sandstone face, 3 m. high by 1.5 m. wide, on the west side of Westwater Creek, at the place where East Canyon enters the main canyon. The inscription reads:

Antoine Robidoux  
passe ici le 13 Novembre  
1837  
pour etablire maison  
traitte a la  
Rv. vert ou wi(y)te

Beneath the inscription is a large prehistoric pictograph of a red shield.

Westwater Creek is a south-flowing stream which originates in the East Tavaputs Plateau. It provides access from the Colorado River and Grand Valley through the Book and Roan Cliffs to the Tavaputs highlands. From there other streams guide travellers to the White or Green Rivers and the Uinta Basin. Today, Westwater Creek, where it emerges from the Book cliffs, is a deeply entrenched stream; the water table is well below its banks. In early historic times, however, the stream probably flowed closer to the surface and supported more mesic and abundant vegetation. As an access route, Westwater Creek would have provided fresh water and plentiful game and plant foodstuffs. Today, a dirt road runs up Westwater Creek, servicing numerous drill pads and gas wells.

The English translation of the inscription is:

Antoine Robidoux  
Passed Here November 13  
1837  
To Establish A House  
Of Trade (Trading Post At The  
Green River or Winte

From David E. Miller, Utah History Atlas, Map 21

# 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1837 **Builder/Architect** N/A

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Robidoux Inscription is significant not only for its association with Antoine Robidoux, a famous trapper and trader of the 1800's, but also because of the information it provides concerning early trading posts in the Uinta Basin, the trading routes followed into the intermountain area from the south, and "the history of north-south relationships and a continuation of the initial Spanish move into the area" (Wallace 1953:32).

### 1. Antoine Robidoux

Antoine Robidoux (spelled variously as Robideau, Robedeau, Roubidoux) was born in 1794 in St. Louis to Joseph Robidoux II, himself already established in the fur trade. All five of Joseph II's sons were instrumental in opening sections of the Rocky Mountains to trapping, trading and settlement. Other brothers, notably Joseph III, made their fortunes on the Plains and Eastern Slope, and as far west as Yellowstone, but Antoine concentrated on the intermountain corridor, basing his operations in Santa Fe and Taos. To facilitate his trading operations in what was then Spanish territory, Antoine became a naturalized Mexican citizen. Moving north from Taos, Antoine established trading posts on the Gunnison River (Fort Uncompahgre), on the Uinta River near present-day Whiterocks, Utah (Fort Uinta, Winty or Robidoux), and possibly a fort near the confluence of the Green and White Rivers near Ouray, Utah. These forts were established sometime during the 1830's. Historical references to Fort Uinta are few (Rufus B. Sage in 1842, Fremont in 1844, possibly Sir William Drummond Stewart in 1838), but all postdate 1837, although Kit Carson met Robidoux in the Uinta Basin in 1833 (Wallace 1953:20). By 1844, however, when both Forts Uinta and Uncompahgre were destroyed by Utes, the lucrative mountain trade was greatly diminished and Robidoux had essentially retired from it. In 1846 he served as interpreter to General Kearny's army in its march to California. He was severely wounded at the battle of San Pascual and, though he recovered sufficiently to return to St. Joseph, Missouri, and to petition for a federal pension, his health was shattered. He died in St. Joe in 1860.

### 2. The Forts

The Robidoux Inscription has created much controversy in dating and placing the Robidoux forts. The controversy has centered on the "1837" of the inscription (first read as "1831"), and the word "Wiyte" or "Winte". Due to spalling, the third letter is unclear. If the inscription read 1831 and Winte, then it clearly referred to Fort Uinta (Winty) near Whiterocks. But if it read "1837", then the other word must be "Wiyte" (White), for Fort Uinta was assumed to have been constructed in 1831. Therefore, the inscription must refer to a fort near the confluence of the Green and White Rivers. Some historians (Kelly 1935,1946; Stewart 1967) believe that they have evidence of this fort.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

UTM NOT VERIFIED  
NAD 83 NOT VERIFIED

See Continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Dry Canyon, Utah

Quadrangle scale 7.5'

### UMT References

A 

1	2	6	4	7	8	C	0	4	3	4	8	6	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Robidoux Inscription is located approximately one mile southwest of the northeast corner of T. 18S, R. 24E, Sec. 5. The nominated area includes the Inscription and pictograph beneath it - a small sandstone face 3 m high by 1.5 m wide. None of the surrounding ground surface is included.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dorothy Sammons Lohse

organization Utah State Historical Society date 1980

street & number 300 Rio Grande telephone 801-533-6017

city or town Salt Lake City state Utah 84101

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Melvin T. Smith

title Melvin T. Smith, State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/15/82

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>7-13-82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>7-16-82</u>
Chief of Registration	

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

1

Other historians, however, refer to the fallacy or "folklore" (Marston 1969) that Fort Uinta was constructed in 1831 and insist that the inscription in fact refers to Fort Uintah which was established in 1837. The 1831 date for the construction of Fort Uintah appears to be based on two facts: Carson's 1833 meeting of Robidoux somewhere in the Uinta Basin (probably near the mouth of the Duchesne River); and the inscription "Denis Julien 1831" on a rock a few miles below Whiterocks, Utah, confirmed site of Fort Uintah. However, there are no published references to Fort Uintah which pre-date 1837. It is entirely possible that Fort Uintah did not exist before that date.

What of the word "Wi(y)te" in the inscription? The case for "Winty" runs as follows: First note that the sandstone is spalled and cracked around the "y", making positive identification of the letter difficult. Secondly, note that Robidoux used the French ("Vert") when referring to the Green River; logically, he should have used the French (Blanc) when referring to the White. Robidoux was an educated man, from one of the best families in St. Louis. He spoke at least three languages. He was not an illiterate. Perhaps most persuasive is the accent over the final "e". If Robidoux was using the English word "white", even if he spelled it "wiyte", it is unlikely that he would have spelled or pronounced it "why-tay", which is the pronunciation implied by the accented "e". The accent over the "e" would be more reasonable if the word was "winte" (win-tay) or Winty: the Uintah. This suggests that Fort Uintah was not built until 1837 or 1838 and that, until that time, other smaller posts served the Uintah Basin.

However, the notion that Fort Uintah was built in 1831 still prevails and this argues strongly for a reading of "White" rather than "Winty". On some maps the Green River crossing near present-day Ouray (and near the confluence of the Green, White and Duchesne Rivers) is marked as "Fort Robidoux", which may indicate that Robidoux upgraded Kit Carson's winter quarters there sometime after 1837. The ruins of an old adobe fort at that location also support such a reading (Kelly 1935, 1946, 1947; Stewart 1967). Stewart feels that the adobe fort on the Green is the one in the inscription, but that it was abandoned after one season because of flooding and that the fort near Whiterocks was built soon after. It should be noted too that the adobe fort described by Stewart (1967) fits the inscription whether it reads "White" or "Winty". Although the main river joining the Green from the west is now called the Duchesne for its entire length, to the mountain men the Duchesne was the tributary stream and the Uinta was the main channel. Thus, for Carson, Robidoux and others, the Winty, not the Duchesne, emptied into the Green.

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

No doubt the controversy will not be resolved without new documentary evidence or careful archeological investigations of the two fort sites. There are as many possible explanations as there are researchers, but in the meantime the inscription offers some tantalizing clues to western historians and archeologists.

3. The Trail

Many maps show that the branch of the Spanish Trail from Fort Uncompahgre to the Uinta Basin crossed the Tavaputs Plateau further east in Colorado. The inscription's location implies that at least one branch of the Spanish Trail came west into Grand Valley before turning north. It is unlikely that after years in the area Robidoux was breaking new trail. In any case, the inscription is important to any studies of historic trails and trade routes.

4. Preservation

The Westwater Creek area is currently seeing a lot of energy development and increased human traffic. Already the inscription is pocked with bullet holes. A rubber-latex mold of the inscription was made for the Utah Westerners, a private amateur group, and donated to the Utah Museum of Natural History where it is now exhibited. The mold has been restored somewhat; the bullet holes have been removed. The Utah Westerners clearly saw the significance of the inscription and sought to preserve it. In the meanwhile, steps such as listing on the National Register should be taken to preserve the original Robidoux Inscription.

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

- Kelly, Charles, 1935, letter to Alfred Reagan, cited in Marston 1969.  
1946, The Forgotten Bastion: Old Fort Robidoux. Utah Magazine,  
pp.24-25, 40-41
- 1947, Captain Francis Marion Bishop's Journey. Utah Historical Quarterly,  
Vol. 15.
- Marston, O.D., 1969, Denis Julien. In The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of  
the Far West, L.R. Hafen (ed.), Volume VII, pp. 177-190.
- Stewart, George, 1967, The Old Adobe Fort on the Green. Salt Lake Tribune,  
Home Magazine, pp. 4-5. November 19, 1967.
- Wallace, William S., 1953, Antoine Robidoux: 1794-1960. Glen Dawson: Los  
Angeles.
- Miller, David E. Utah History Atlas, Privately Published, Salt Lake City,  
Utah, 1968.