

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

MAY 4 1987

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Fort Atkinson

and or common Fort Atkinson State Historical Park

2. Location

street & number P.O. Box 327 not for publication

city, town Fort Calhoun X vicinity of 1 mile east of Fort Calhoun

state Nebraska code 31 county Washington code 177

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☒ public	☐ occupied	☐ agriculture
☐ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☐ educational
☒ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☒ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☒ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Nebraska State Game and Park Commission
Fort Atkinson State Historical Park

street & number Box 327

city, town Fort Calhoun vicinity of state Nebraska 68023

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Washington County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Fort Calhoun state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Preservation In Nebraska has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date 1971 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society, 1500 R Street

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved date _____
☐ fair	☒ unexposed	(Partially excavated; fort reconstruction in progress)	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fort Atkinson National Historic Landmark is located in Washington County, Nebraska, immediately east of the town of Fort Calhoun, approximately 10 miles north of the city of Omaha, in the southeast corner of Section 2, the south half of Section 12, and the north half of Section 13, Township 17 North, Range 12 East, of the Fort Calhoun Quadrangle (USGS 7.5 minute series).

The site is comprised of two discontinuous archeological districts containing a total of 196 acres. The first consists of the original fort site (barracks quadrangle) and surrounding historic service settlement, including approximately 185 acres containing 27 distinct areas and 179 individual features. The second district is the Fort Atkinson Cemetery, including approximately 11 acres containing 200 individual features, located about 1 1/2 miles north/northwest of the main fort site.¹

HISTORICAL SETTING

British interference in the northwest reaches of the Louisiana Territory during the War of 1812 and concern over the economic stability of the American fur trade in those regions caused the United States to consider a plan for the monitoring and defense of its far west borders. Such concerns resulted in the promotion of a plan by the American government to establish a chain of military installations along the reaches of the upper Missouri River. Congress authorized a military and scientific assembly known as the Yellowstone Expedition to accomplish these measures. However, the initial ambitious plans for a chain of forts fell apart in the wake of the Economic Panic of 1819; as a result, only Fort Atkinson was built. The 1,000 troops sent to establish the chain of defensive forts bivouaced for the winter about 1 mile north of the site known as Council Bluffs, a location noted by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The construction of Fort Atkinson atop the Council Bluffs in eastern Nebraska's Missouri River-Drift Hills region commenced in June of 1820. The fort's establishment by Colonel Henry Atkinson and members of the Sixth United States Infantry and United States Rifle Corps succeeded the previous winter's fort, Cantonment Missouri, located approximately 1 1/2 to 2 miles north of the Fort Atkinson site. Built as a permanent installation, Cantonment Missouri was destroyed by spring floods.

According to contemporary maps and accounts, Fort Atkinson consisted of a barracks quadrangle constructed of logs with bastions located at the northwest and southeast corners, and a powder magazine located at the center of the interior parade ground. Barrack construction resulted in long rows of interlocking cabins 200 yards in length; 8 complexes or log houses measuring 25 feet wide and 250 feet long consisting of 10 rooms each formed the walls of the fort. Each room was equipped with loopholes 10 feet long located on the outside walls. Roofs were built in a shed configuration, sloping to the interior of the quadrangle. Chimneys, doors, and windows were irregularly spaced. Three gates served the complex on the east, west, and north; the

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☒ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☐ architecture	☐ education	☒ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☒ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☒ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☐ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1820–1827 **Builder/Architect** U.S. Army

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fort Atkinson National Historic Landmark is nationally significant and represents an important decade in American western and military history. Its establishment as the westernmost outpost of the new American nation in 1820 reflects national concerns regarding economic and social stability in the upper Louisiana Territory. The closing of Fort Atkinson in 1827 and the establishment of Fort Leavenworth, together with the abandonment of other similar installations, spelled a new era in American history as the nation's attention turned to the far northwest of the Oregon Territory and the desert environs of New Mexico.

The establishment of Fort Atkinson as the largest military installation in the American West in the years immediately following the War of 1812 resulted from both political and economic considerations. The War of 1812 and British activities in the northwestern reaches of the Louisiana Territory alerted the United States to the necessity of an American military presence on the far western frontier. The demand for protection by American fur trade interests also served as an important factor. Together, these considerations caused certain American government representatives to consider plans to consolidate and protect the nation's holdings in the Louisiana Territory, particularly in those distant northwestern reaches that were rich in peltries and, as a result, vulnerable to foreign encroachment.

In 1815 Secretary of War James Monroe suggested the construction of military installations along the upper Mississippi River. Upon his election to the presidency the following year Monroe continued to pursue his original proposal with some modifications in location. Monroe's Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, recommended a plan in 1818 for the location of a military post to be located at the mouth of the Yellowstone River; the proposed site was later moved to a bend on the Missouri River in the lands of the Mandan Indians. The Yellowstone Expedition, under the command of Colonel Henry Atkinson of the U.S. Sixth Infantry, was given charge of the project that included the establishment of a series of forts in the northwest along the Missouri River. Atkinson and his troops, including the rifle regiment of Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Morgan, arrived in the vicinity of Council Bluffs in the fall of 1819. Due to equipment problems and an approaching winter season, the command established Cantonment Missouri. Supplies ran short during the winter and over 160 soldiers perished. In June of 1820 Missouri floodwaters washed the camp away completely.⁸

The rebuilding of headquarters and a permanent fortification took place atop the bluff south of the site of the ill-fated Cantonment Missouri. William Clark had noted the site as a possible fort location in 1804. The first recorded description of the new camp was noted on June 12, 1820, by Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Morgan on the first day at the new fort site:

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEET FOR DESCRIPTION

Acreage of nominated property _____ AND DATA ON TWO DISTRICTS WITHIN BOUNDARY.

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

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G

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H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Patrick O'Brien, Historian

National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office

organization Division of Cultural Resources

date March 1986

655 Parfet

street & number P.O. Box 25287

telephone (303) 236-8675

city or town Denver

state Colorado 80225

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 National Park Service.

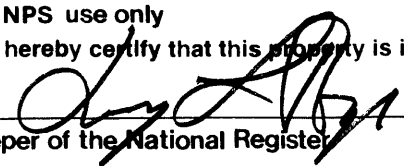
State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

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

Boundary Defined


Keeper of the National Register

date 9/30/88

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

MAY

4 1987

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

riverward or east gate entered the fort under the barracks. A fence surrounded the complex, approximately 50 paces from the outside walls. Outside the fort, a council house was located to the northwest. Other structures on the northwest side of the fort housed artillery functions. A combination gristmill and sawmill were located to the south, as were various other storehouses, fields, and gardens. The riverbank area below the fort served as the location for other buildings, including the bakery, blacksmith shop, and housing for related personnel such as carpenters and laundresses.²

After its closing in 1827, the abandoned fort fell into disuse and remained unoccupied except for occasional visits by local Indian tribes. In 1847 the Mormons established their summer quarters north of the fort site as they moved from Illinois to Utah. Local tradition states that building materials from the Fort Atkinson complex were used in the construction of temporary structures by this group. Sites reflecting these brief occupation periods have not been thoroughly documented. In 1854 the town of Fort Calhoun was platted to the immediate west of the original fort site; an early farmyard from this period occupied the south barracks line of the former fort. Buildings from this last development were removed in 1964.³

CURRENT SITE INTEGRITY

The present-day physical context of the Fort Atkinson National Historic Landmark is that of a combination village/rural setting involving both the developed area of the Fort Calhoun community (population: 700), as well as surrounding farmlands comprised of gently rolling cultivated fields. Both districts have been under partial cultivation for some years. The site is part of the city of Omaha metroplex (population: 607,385).

The barracks quadrangle district is located approximately 50 feet above the level of the Missouri River. The area is generally flat with an elevation of 1,060 feet. To the north is a low hill with an elevation of 1,070 feet. To the south of the barracks quadrangle is a small stream known historically as "Hook's Hollow." The stream course has eroded a 30- to 40-foot channel to the edge of the bluff. Approximately 3/4 mile west of the fortified site, hilly uplands rise to elevations of 1,250 to 1,270 feet and continue to the west at the same elevations for some distance. The Fort Atkinson Cemetery is located in much the same terrain to the north of the fort complex, as noted earlier. The surrounding service settlement occupied both the upland bluff area as well as sites located in the lower river areas below the bluff. The Missouri River, flowing at the base of the bluff at the time of Fort Atkinson's occupation, today runs 1 1/2 miles east from the site at its closest point.

Soil types in the area consist of Monona and Crofton silt loams characteristic of deep, silty loess soils. Soils in the river bottom areas of the east barracks quadrangle are comprised of Haynie and McPaul silt loams, Onawa and Haynie silty clay loams, and Rauville soils, characteristic of recent alluvial developments.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

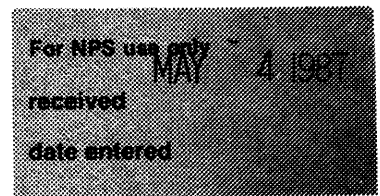
Features occur within and without the corporate boundaries of the town of Fort Calhoun. The majority of known features are located outside of the town's city limits. Potential for future information as a result of projected excavations at the sites are thought to be substantial, based on previous excavation yields.⁴

The first records of archeological investigations date to the 1880s and W.H. Woods who, in the process, may have also discovered remains of the Mormon Summer Quarters at DeSoto, Nebraska. Legitimate archeological investigations and site research occurred during nine different seasons. Marvin F. Kivett managed the 1956 work season, generally consisting of isolated feature excavations along the site's east edge. An overall site map was not made at this time. Excavation was renewed in 1960 under the direction of John Garrett, at which time the first project grid system was established. The system continued to be used for the following two seasons of excavation (1961 and 1964). An error in declination caused the revision and establishment of a permanent grid system in 1970 using the present flagpole as datum. Most earlier features were relocated and linked to the new system. Excavations were accomplished under the direction of Mr. Gayle Carlson and the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1971.

In 1973 the Nebraska Game and Park Commission undertook excavations with an independent archeologist on the site. Other excavations were accomplished by the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1979, 1984, and 1985. The standard unit of excavation used in excavation was the 5-foot square. Standard procedures were generally used; screening of deposits was not accomplished as a matter of course. Backfilling of larger features was often done by power earthmoving equipment.⁵

According to the 1979 Carlson report, area designations were given to groups of excavated and partially excavated squares not included in actual features in an effort to further assist in the tabulation of artifacts. Those area numbers follow in the following order (see listing of contributing and non-contributing features below for a more detailed description):

AREA	LOCATION	INCLUDES ALL OR PART OF FEATURES NUMBERED
1.	South of Feature 80, in southeast part of barracks quadrangle	66, 67, 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 79, 82, 84, 94
	North of Feature 80, same as above	69, 70, 72, 75, 78
2.	In the middle portion of the south barracks	34, 35, 37, 58, 61, 62
3.	In the southwest part of the barracks quadrangle	29, 92
4.	In the vicinity of the west gate	88
5.	In the vicinity of the northwest bastion	60, 63, 64, 85, 86

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 4

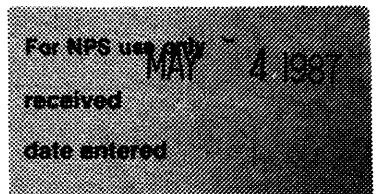
AREA (continued)	LOCATION	INCLUDES ALL OR PART OF FEATURES NUMBERED
6.	In the vicinity of the north gate	54, 48
7.	In the vicinity of the northeast sally port	89, 90, 91
8.	Southwest of the barracks quadrangle	no features
9.	West of the barracks quadrangle	no features
10.	Same as above	96
11.	West of the southwest corner of the barracks quadrangle	87, 95
12.	West of the barracks quadrangle	97
13.	Same as above	93
14.	Same as above	98
15.	Same as above	no features
16.	Same as above	no features
17.	Same as above	no features

The information potential regarding the Fort Atkinson National Historic Landmark is an important aspect of the historical archeological investigations. The day-to-day activities of the largest concentration of American military personnel on the western frontier between 1819-1827 are of particular importance when related to larger questions of international politics, national security, the fur trade, and interaction with indigenous Indian groups. The initial establishment of Fort Atkinson reflected concerns of the American government regarding British interference in the fur trade and northwest; its abandonment in 1827 marked a shift in priorities and conditions--the Santa Fe trade and the far northwest had supplanted the upper Missouri River country as immediate concerns.

Artifacts thus far recovered reflect these events. Spanish and Mexican coinage has been recovered on the site; rare examples of military accouterments including hat ornaments and a pike head are examples of the hundreds of items that have given additional dimension and depth to this important decade in American Western history. It should be noted that archival research to date has been almost exclusively limited to typewritten copies of the Fort Atkinson Orderly Books. These copies, made at an unknown date, were edited by the compiler; the location of the originals is unknown. Archival research of other military records or reports has been minimal. Information gained from the archeological investigations will fill important gaps in the present understanding of the fort's historical context. Other than the cited archeological investigations, little has been published concerning the Fort Atkinson site in the way of major works or studies. Archeological investigation will provide information not available through archival research. Information concerning living styles and material culture, the planning and logistics of military installations of the period, and its interaction with both Euro-American and Aboriginal groups are a few of the areas that may be enhanced through further archeological investigation of the site.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 5

Other similar archeological National Historic Landmarks and archeological sites include Fort Osage (1808-1825) in eastern Jackson County, Missouri; Bent's Fort, (1834-1849) located in the vicinity of present-day La Junta, Colorado; and Fort Union, (1829-1867) located on the Montana/South Dakota border.⁶

CONTRIBUTING/NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

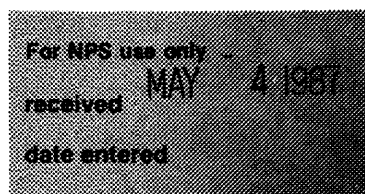
There are 179 contributing features within the barracks quadrangle district (original fort site and service settlement) constructed within or associated with Fort Atkinson's period of national significance, 1820-1827. The reconstructed barracks located in the western section of the barracks quadrangle district was not extant at the time of the landmark's designation on July 4, 1961. As a consequence, it has been determined to be a non-contributing resource within the landmark boundaries. In addition, those 19th and 20th century structures comprised primarily of residences and a modern visitor center and related accommodations (walkways, nature trails, etc.) also do not contribute as they were constructed outside the landmark's period of national significance. Certain archeological features are noted as non-contributing elements since they do not contribute to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which the property was originally nominated as of July 4, 1961. These structures are incapable of yielding important information about the period, and they do not independently meet National Historic Landmark criteria. A total of 10 non-contributing archeological features and approximately 42 non-contributing structures exist in the barracks quadrangle district. In short, all above-grade structures, walkways, and roadways are noted as non-contributing; non-contributing archeological features are noted as such in the archeological feature summary on pages 6-11.

The Fort Atkinson Cemetery District contains approximately 200 contributing features comprised of burials associated with the fort's historic period of significance. The site remains relatively undisturbed, with the exception of a test trench in 1956 and the partial excavation of a grave site in 1958, both executed under the supervision of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

A summary description of the contributing historic features follows. Non-contributing archeological features are noted in parentheses to the right of the year of excavation:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 6

FEATURE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	YEAR EXCAVATED
1. Dirt-walled cellar	1956
2. Irregularly-shaped garbage area	1956
3. Shallow garbage-filled cellar and associated building remains	1956 (previously exposed by road cut)
4. Root cellar or dugout storehouse	1956
5. Outhouse pit	1956
5A. Outhouse pit	1956
6. Brick-walled cellar and portion of barracks foundation	1956 (backfilled; re-excavated in 1970)
7. Outhouse pit	1956
8. Depression tested by north/south test trench	1956
9. Test trench excavated to locate subterranean east entrance	1956
10. Outhouse pit	1956
11. Outhouse pit	1956
12. Circular trash-filled pit	1956
13. Brick and trash concentration	1960
14. Shallow garbage area	1960
15. Limestone concentration	1960
16. Outhouse pit	1960
17. Outhouse pit	1960
18. Outhouse pit	1960
19. Shallow garbage area	1960
20. Dirt-walled cellar	1960
21A. Large limestone base of H-shaped fireplace	1960
22B. L-shaped test trench	1960
22. Blacksmith shop	1960-61
23. Plank-walled structure	1960
24. East entrance	1960
25. Large circular depression	1960
26. Bell-shaped pit	1960
27. Test squares, southwest corner of barracks quadrangle	1960
28. Armorer's shop area	1960-61
29. Circular fire pit	1960
30. Brick wall	1960
31. Shallow clay-lined pit	1961
32. Dirt-walled cellar	1961
33. Large excavation area--middle portion, south barracks	1961-1964 (exclusive)
34. Dirt-walled cellar	1961
35. Nearly circular fire pit	1961
36. Structure of undetermined size or function	1961
37. Test trench, east side of south gate	1961
38. Cellar of undetermined type	1961
39. Cellar of undetermined type	1961

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received MAY 4 1987

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 7

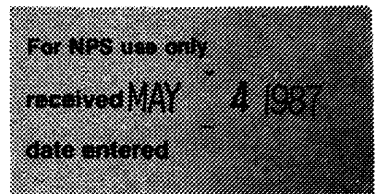
FEATURE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

YEAR EXCAVATED

- | | |
|---|--|
| 40. West wall, barracks area | number assigned 1964 |
| 41. Irregularly-shaped limestone fireplace base and associated brick rubble | 1964 |
| 42. Dirt-walled cellar | 1964 |
| 43. Dirt-walled cellar | 1964 |
| 44. Test trench, north barracks wall line | 1964 |
| 45. Dirt-walled cellar | 1964 |
| 46. Foundation trench, powder magazine | 1964 |
| 47. Limestone base for fireplace and associated bricks | 1964 |
| 48. Dirt-walled cellar with collapsed chimney in place | 1964 |
| 49. Surface rubble area | 1964 |
| 49A. Brick and limestone concentration | 1964 |
| 50. Surface rubble area | 1964 |
| 51. Dirt-walled cellar | 1964 |
| 52. Dirt-walled cellar with limed floor | 1964 |
| 53. Northwest bastion area | 1964 |
| 54. North gate | 1964 |
| 55. South wall, barracks area | 1964 |
| 56. North wall, barracks area | 1964 |
| 57. East wall, barracks area | 1964 |
| 58. Dirt-walled cellar with double ash pit | 1964 |
| 59. Surface rubble area | 1964 (number assigned: no excavation done) |
| 60. Post mold pattern, northwest bastion | 1964 |
| 61. Trench, west side of south gate | 1964 |
| 62. Yellow clay area: possible well | 1964 |
| 63. Footing trench, northwest bastion | 1964 |
| 64. Remains: badly disturbed fireplace | 1964 |
| 65. Modern bricked well | 1970 (non-contributing) |
| 66. Modern tile drain | 1970 (non-contributing) |
| 67. Board-lined storage pit | 1970 |
| 68. West-facing recessed gun port | 1970 |
| 69. Base of a single-faced fireplace | 1970 |
| 70. Stone and mortar footing, south end, east barracks | 1970 |
| 71. Brick walk | 1970 |
| 72. Footing trench, southeast bastion | 1970 |
| 73. Intrusive pig burial | 1970 (non-contributing) |
| 74. Pit outside south barracks | 1970 |
| 75. Fire burned area, east barracks | 1970 |
| 76. Brick cellar and pilaster from Howard Beal's house | 1970 (non-contributing) |
| 77. Base of double-faced fireplace | 1970 |
| 78. Base of double-faced fireplace | 1970 |
| 79. Irregularly-shaped ash pit | 1970 |
| 80. Plank-lined drainage ditch | 1970 |

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

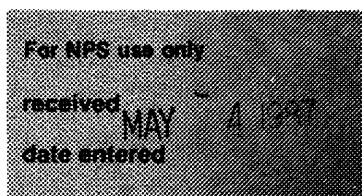
Item number 7

Page 8

FEATURE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	YEAR EXCAVATED
81. Outhouse pit	1970
82. Base of double-faced fireplace	1970
83. Circular hearth	1970
84. Irregularly-shaped ash pit	1970
85. Ash lens	1971
86. Outhouse pit	1971
87. Prehistoric Indian pit	1971 (non-contributing)
88. West gate	1971
89. Northeast sally port	1971
90. Irregularly-shaped hearth	1971
91. Remains of single-faced fireplace	1971
92. Southwest sally port	1971
93. Remains of possible log structure	1971
94. Rectangular pit	1971
95. Prehistoric Indian pit	1971 (non-contributing)
96. Pile of brick and cement rubble and post stub	1971
97. Building remains, possibly attributable to the fort schoolhouse	1971
98. Building remains, possibly attributable to a post- fort -period corn crib	1971
99. Burial in the east part of Fort Calhoun	1960
100. Burial south of the barracks quadrangle: man with a sword in a wooden coffin	Excavator and date of discovery unknown
101. Brick concentration, east edge of Fort Calhoun	unexcavated
102. Brick concentration northwest of barracks quadrangle	unexcavated
103. Brick concentration west of barracks quadrangle (see figure 1: brick concentration number 5)	unexcavated
104. Brick concentration southwest of barracks quadrangle (see figure 1: brick concentration number 6)	unexcavated
105. Brick concentration south of barracks quadrangle	unexcavated
106. Brick concentration east of barracks quadrangle at base of bluff	unexcavated
107. Brick concentration east of barracks quadrangle on the old river floodplain	unexcavated
108. Large burned area south of the barracks quadrangle (uncovered by road construction)	unexcavated
109. Concentration of iron scrap north of barracks quadrangle	unexcavated
110. Spring with octagonal wooden curb	unexcavated
111-120. Not used by Nebraska State Historical Society	
121. Fireplace base in north half of west barracks	1979
122. Fireplace base in north half of west barracks	1979
123. Dirt-walled cellar in north half of west barracks	1979
124. Fireplace base in north half of west barracks	1979

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

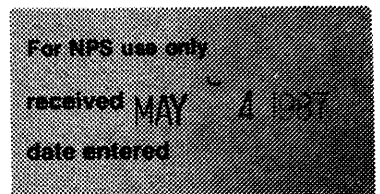
Item number 7

Page 9

FEATURE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	YEAR EXCAVATED
125. Fireplace base in north half of west barracks	1979
126. Fireplace base in north half of west barracks	1979
127. Recent historic fence post stub in north half of west barracks	1979 (non-contributing)
128. East wall line of north half of west barracks	1979
129. West wall line of north half of west barracks	1979
130. South wall line of north half of west barracks	1979
131. North wall line of north half of west barracks	1979
132. Possible east-west cross wall remains in north half of west barracks	1979
133. Possible east-west cross wall remains in north half of west barracks	1979
134. Fireplace base and associated pit near southeast corner of Council House	1984
135. Limestone foundation pier, east wall of Council House	1984
136. Limestone foundation pier, east wall of Council House	1984
137. Limestone foundation pier, east wall of Council House	1984
138. Limestone foundation pier, west wall of Council House	1984
139. Limestone foundation pier, west wall of Council House	1984
140. Fireplace base, north end of council house	1984
141. Fireplace base in Test Area 1, east of Council House	1984
142. Fireplace base in Test Area 2, southwest of Council House (possible Commanding Officer's quarters)	1984
143. Fireplace base, west half of north barracks	1985
144. Fireplace base and associated brick rubble, west half of north barracks	1985
145. Unexcavated cellar stain, west half of north barracks	1985
146. Fireplace base, west half of north barracks	1985
147. Fireplace base and associated fallen brick, west half of north barracks	1985
148. Unexcavated cellar stain, west half of north barracks	1985
149. Fireplace base and fallen brick from fireplace and/or chimney, east half of north barracks	1985
149A. Fireplace base and fallen brick from fireplace and/or chimney, east half of north barracks	1985
150. Fireplace base, east half of north barracks	1985

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 10

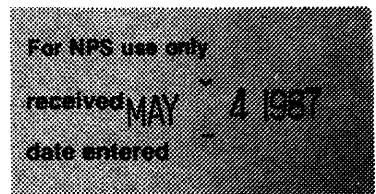
FEATURE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	YEAR EXCAVATED
151. Unexcavated cellar stain, east half of north barracks	1985
152. Fireplace base and associated brick rubble, east half of north barracks	1985
153. Fireplace base and associated brick fall from the fireplace and/or chimney, east half of the north barracks	1985
153A. Fireplace base and associated brick fall from the fireplace and/or chimney, east half of the north barracks	1985
154. Fireplace base, east half of north barracks	1985
155. Unexcavated cellar stain, east half of north barracks	1985
156. Fireplace base, east half of north barracks	1985
157. Unexcavated cellar stain, east half of north barracks	1985
158. Fireplace base, east half of north barracks	1985
159. Possible fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
160. Fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
161. Unexcavated cellar stain, north half of east barracks	1985
162. Fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
163. Possible fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
164. Fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
165. Fireplace base, north half of east barracks	1985
166. Fire pit, probably of fairly recent origin, dug near the east wall of the north half of east barracks	1985 (non-contributing)
167. Pit, also probably recent, just north of F166 and probably dug at the same time.	1985 (non-contributing)
168. Pit, just north of F167, probably also of recent origin.	1985 (non-contributing)

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission independently excavated portions of the Fort Atkinson barracks quadrangle district in August–November 1973 and May–July 1975. The 1973 excavation consisted of a 35- by 5-foot segmented test trench across the projected west barracks wall. The 1975 test revealed the terminus of plow zone depth and a dividing wall between two rooms.

The 1975 excavations involved removal and reserving of sod to a level of approximately .3 feet in an area 25 by 225 feet, the area assumed to contain the actual barracks site. Screening was a part of the procedure and was accomplished with metal screens of .5 inch or smaller dimensions.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 11

Eleven additional contributing features were discovered and 10 areas established during the 1973 and 1975 seasons. Feature numbers have not been assigned and are listed here only as reference for the purposes of this nomination. Area designations were assigned at the time of the excavations. General summaries are listed below:

FEATURES

YEAR EXCAVATED

1. Observed wall line, northwest	1975
2. Burned earth and rubble area	1975
3. Observed wall line, north	1973
3A. Observed wall line-north (see 1973 test)	1975
4. Observed wall line-west	1975
5. Observed wall line-east	1975
5A. Burned earth and rubble area	1975
6. Rubble and burned earth area	1975
7. Observed wall line-south	1975
8. Burned earth area	1975
9. Rubble area	1975
10. General rubble line	1975
11. Burned earth area	1975

AREAS

(All at south range of west barracks wall)

INCLUDES ALL OR PART
OF FEATURES

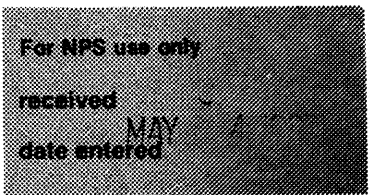
A	1, 2
B	3, 3A, 4, 5
C	4, 5A, 6, 7
D	no features
E	no features
F	no features
G	8, 10
H	no features
I	9, 10
J	10, 11

The majority of items recovered from all seasons of the Fort Atkinson excavations are of a military nature or reflect uses germane to the service settlement located in the immediate vicinity of the fort. Items include military buttons, American, Spanish and Mexican coinage, weapon parts, and various rare examples of period uniform decoration.

A complete discussion of excavations and artifacts is contained in Gayle F. Carlson's Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson (25WN9) Washington County, Nebraska 1956-1971 (Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979), A Preliminary Report On The Results Of The 1984 Excavations At Fort Atkinson State Historical Park (May 1985), and Roye D. Lindsay's Preliminary Report of Archeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson State Historical Park, (May-July, 1975).⁷

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

The corps will encamp on the Ground assigned to each on the Council Bluffs, the tents will be pitched in two ranks, the interval between the ranks will be twelve feet; the tents of the platoon officers will be thirty feet in the rear of the Second rank of the soldier's tents. The Tents of the field or Commanding Officers of Regiments will be thirty feet in the rear of the Tents of the Platoon Officers; there will be three yards interval between the companies in line. The Quarter Master of the Post will point out the places for the vaults. The cooking will be in the rear of the Officers Quarters.

By October of 1820 the fort was sufficiently completed so that the troops could be moved into its protective parameters. Colonel Atkinson informed Secretary Calhoun on October 18, 1820, of the project's progress:

The new barracks were in a state of forwardness on the 1st inst.; indeed, most of the troops were quartered. The rooms were put with round logs, and hewn down without and within; the whole of the infantry, and one block of the rifle barracks, are covered with shingles. Good brick chimneys were made to most of the rooms, and the residue, no doubt, completed by this time. The barracks are dry and comfortable and will probably last some fifteen years; a plan of their construction, and of their defences, shall be forwarded to you on my arrival at St. Louis.

In November Atkinson sent Secretary Calhoun a schematic plan of the fort drawn by Lieutenant Andrew Talcott. The illustration depicts the north part of the barracks quadrangle, including the northwest bastion and central powder magazine and also an elevation of the north wall plus various other elevations and cross sections.⁹

The Panic of 1819 and the subsequent Depression in 1821 caused Congress to rethink the original plan for a chain of forts on the upper Missouri River. The Sixth Regiment and the Rifle Regiment were also consolidated as a result of economic cutbacks. As a result, the installation became the only fort constructed in the originally proposed chain of western defense. From the time of its establishment in 1820 to its closing in 1827, it was the United States' westernmost military outpost. Due to Atkinson's effort in behalf of the post's establishment, Secretary Calhoun officially named it Fort Atkinson in January of 1821.¹⁰

In addition to being the westernmost American fort, Fort Atkinson was the largest U.S. military installation in the West at that time. At the height of its occupation, its garrison consisted of over 1,000 soldiers and numbers of civilian workers. The complex included not only the central fort quadrangle but also a grist and sawmill, blacksmith, armory, laundries, a bakery, a distillery, and various other outbuildings and residences. Also included were extensive gardens and orchards.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

Fort Atkinson represented various experimental philosophies regarding military provision and self-sufficiency. Atkinson succeeded in his ambition to make the fort self-sufficient to a great extent. Major General Gaines wrote after his inspection of the Sixth Regiment on September 30, 1822, that the buildings as constructed by the troops (88 rooms with shingled roofs, plank floors, and brick chimneys, plus a powder magazine and various storehouses) were of good size and quality. He also noted a sawmill with a capacity for milling 1,500 feet of planking a day as well as a gristmill capable of milling 150 bushels per day. Gaines noted 506 acres in cultivation at the time of his visit with 410 acres in corn, 49 acres in potatoes, 7 acres in turnips, and an additional 40 acres in various garden enterprises. Estimates regarding the productivity of these fields called for a yield of corn at 20,500 bushels, potatoes at 6,000 bushels. Hay already harvested to the date of the general's inspection trip was approximately 250 tons. Gaines noted that the amount of cabbage, onions, beets, radishes, parsnips, carrots, and other items were considered sufficient for 1,200 men over a 6-month period.¹¹

Atkinson's interest in a self-sustaining outpost may have resulted from his initial loss of personnel in the winter of 1819 at Cantorment Missouri. Such concerns more broadly represent a period in American military history during which a number of new and experimental economic programs were brought forward. Another such experiment, the factory system, enjoyed the final years of its brief existence on the American frontier at approximately the same time, finally giving up its governmental prerogatives in the fur and Indian trade to burgeoning private speculation and development.

The best known and certainly most detailed account of Fort Atkinson at its zenith comes from the observations of that inveterate western sojourner, Prince Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Wurttemberg. In 1823 he described "the good-looking whitewashed buildings of the fort. . ." and the settlement around the same as resembling a small town. In addition to giving a detailed accounting of the fort and its dimensions, he also described the stone powder magazine in the center of the grassy interior parade ground, the council house, the bakery, saw and gristmills, and various houses for cabinet makers and carpenters attached to the fort. In addition to noting storehouses, gardens, and other amenities, Wilhelm described the gristmill as being powered by oxen and that by 1824 the fort supplied its own meat as well as distilled liquor.¹²

Two other known elements of the Fort Atkinson complex were the school and the cemetery. The school was conducted at the fort by non-commissioned officers or privates for the benefit of the children of fort families. Its location is not known; the possibility of a separate building constructed for its use is not likely.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received MAY 4 1987
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

The fort cemetery was located to the north of the barracks quadrangle about 1 1/2 to 2 miles. It is possible that it was established at the same time as Cantonment Missouri and contains the remains of the first winter's 160-plus casualties. It is estimated that the interments in the cemetery serving the fort included approximately 200 grave sites.¹³

According to post records, the daily routine of the fort was carried on in strict military fashion, the day scheduled from reveille at daybreak, with roll call, chores known as "fatigues," breakfast at 8:00 a.m., "daily fatigues," noon roll call, afternoon work, military drilling, and other related duties as assigned. After the evening meal, 20 minutes before sundown, the companies were marched to the parade ground with the band for "retreat." Afterwards, roll call was commenced for the fifth time of the day; the day ended with "tattoo" at 8:00 p.m. in the summer and 9:00 p.m. in the winter months. Each section of the day was announced by either drum or bugle announcement. Melodies such as "Molly Put the Kettle On," "Peas Upon the Trencher," and "Roast Beef" were signals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.¹⁴

Fort Atkinson had seven different commanders, one serving twice: Colonel Henry Atkinson, Colonel Talbot Chambers, Colonel Willoughby Morgan, Colonel Henry Leavenworth, Major W.S. Foster, Colonel A.R. Woolley (2 terms), and Major Daniel Ketchum. Junior officers included names familiar to western military history; many such as Martin Scott, Bennett Riley, Henry Leavenworth, and Stephen Watts Kearny would distinguish themselves in later military exploits.

Military discipline proved to be a problem at times not only with enlisted men but with commandants as well. Colonel Chambers was court martialed for having the ears cut off a deserter. He was sentenced to be reduced in rank for one month; the court "earnestly recommended" that the sentence be rescinded. The guardhouse was similar in style to other similar facilities of the day. In addition, other disciplinary tools such as the "horse" (a device used for public exhibition and whipping of criminals) and the choke box were used. Disciplinary problems were similar to those encountered at other military installations of the period: murder, insubordination, riots, theft, embezzlement, desertion, and intoxication. Dueling, although technically outlawed, was observed on at least two occasions. Punishments ranged from hanging to dunkings in the Missouri River or the stoppage of whiskey rations.¹⁵

Fort Atkinson served as a point of supply and meeting for various far western fur traders and explorers. Jedidiah Smith, Edward Rose, Hiram Scott, Jim Beckwourth, James Clyman, Thomas Fitzpatrick, William Ashley—these and other adventurers and traders were familiar with the outpost and made use of its protective influence. The fort's Indian Agent Benjamin O'Fallon, nephew of William Clark, later entered the fur trade as an independent agent. Interaction with other private fur trading establishments, such as Fort Lisa, by the establishment of auxiliary posts, such as the First Infantry's Cantonment Barbour, served to underscore the United States' concern in the wellbeing of American fur trade representatives and their interests.¹⁶

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received MAY 1 1983

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 5

The outpost's interaction with indigenous tribes was for the most part peaceful; many working relationships were established with tribes such as the Omaha, Ponca, Pawnee, Iowa, Oto, and Missouri. Colonel Henry Leavenworth's punitive expedition against the Arikara, in retaliation for an attack on American fur traders in the spring of 1823, proved somewhat inconclusive; its merits are still debated by western historians. An additional expedition in 1825 proved to be successful in councils with the Mandan, Gros Ventres, Ponca, Sioux, Cheyenne, and Crow tribes.¹⁷

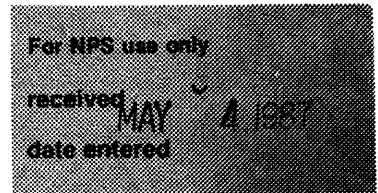
By 1825 new developments concerning military and economic considerations in the far west began to have an impact on the future of Fort Atkinson. The post was in need of substantial repairs. A "hurricane" or tornado further damaged the fort and served to compound the problem. In addition, the replacement of outdated ordnance, particularly firearms, was anticipated as a great expense. Housing for civilians had deteriorated to such an extent that the laundresses and others were moved inside the fort, thus causing additional problems. Clothing was inadequate and pay was 8 months in arrears. The American fur trade was well established and the British threat, once so sinister, now seemed if not resolved, at least stabilized. It was becoming increasingly apparent that the interests of the United States were turning farther west to the Oregon Territory and southwest into the regions of Santa Fe and Mexico. Atkinson, in a report to General Jacob Brown in 1825 reflected these new foci, noting that Brown's suggestion to send an expeditionary force farther up the Missouri River was not required; all necessary troops could be supplied from Fort Atkinson. Soon after, even Fort Atkinson found itself supplanted by new interests in the Oregon country and Mexico.

Fort Atkinson was abandoned by the U.S. Army in 1827, the same year as the opening of Fort Leavenworth in present-day eastern Kansas. Troops were reassigned to Jefferson Barracks outside St. Louis, Missouri. Usable materials were either reissued to other military units or shipped to the newly established Fort Leavenworth. The closing of Fort Atkinson and the establishment of Fort Leavenworth, together with the earlier 1825 abandonment of Fort Atkinson's sister factory system installation, Missouri's Fort Osage, marked a new era in western and military history as interest in experimental military concepts waned and focus turned to the far northwest and the southwest. The northern reaches of the Great Plains remained relatively unsettled until later years when American obsessions with gold and railroads finally culminated in the last of the Indian wars and the settlement of those former fur trade lands of the far west.¹⁸

The fort quickly deteriorated. By 1830 Prince Paul of Wuerttemberg noted only a "heap of ruins and the smoke of Indian camps" in the area. By 1833 Prince Maximilian of Wied von New Wied stated that only the stone chimneys and a brick storehouse remained; Karl Bodmer, a Swiss artist attached to the Prince's expedition, made a watercolor of the site. Nathaniel Wyeth offered much the same description on his return from Oregon the same year. The noted Roman

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 6

Catholic missionary Father Pierre Jean De Smet stated that on his visit to the site in 1839, "Some rubbish and remains from the old fort were still visible, and some remaining roots of asparagus were still growing in the old garden."

In 1847 the original fields of the fort site were put into cultivation as part of the Mormon "Summer Quarters" during their migration to Utah; building materials from the fort may have been used at their settlement, located between present-day Fort Calhoun and Blair near DeSoto, Nebraska. Hostile Indian activity forced Mormon evacuation in 1848. In 1854 the first permanent civilian settler, Anselm Arnold, acquired a tract of land near the original fort location, and in the summer of the same year the community of Fort Calhoun was surveyed and platted by Colonel Lorin Miller immediately to the west of the old fort site.¹⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory and Nomination Form: Fort Atkinson, Nebraska," 1961-1979; Gayle F. Carlson, Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson (25WN9) Washington County, Nebraska 1956-1971, (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979) pp. vii-ix, 13-49; Gayle F. Carlson to William P. O'Brien, January 9, 1987, (attachments) pp. 1-2.

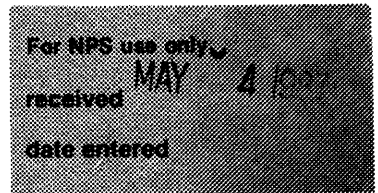
²Sally A. Johnson, "The Sixth's Elysian Fields--Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs," Nebraska History, Vol. 40, No. 1, March 1959 (Reprinted in Fort Atkinson On The Council Bluffs: second reprint with minor plate changes, August 1972), pp. 1-2. Stephen Long's scientific portion of the expedition continued into the unknown territories. Prince Paul Wilhelm, Duke of Wurttemberg, as quoted in Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, pp. 4-5,7. Laundresses' residences were noted as being located on the riverbank until 1826, at which time they were moved to an unspecified location.

³Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, p. 1.

⁴Ibid., pp. 1-4, passim; William Patrick O'Brien, telephone interviews, January 30, 1987: Omaha, Nebraska, Chamber of Commerce; Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, City Hall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 7

⁵Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, pp. 13-22; Marvin F. Kivett, "Excavations at Fort Atkinson, Nebraska: A Preliminary Report," Nebraska History, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1959. (Reprinted in Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs: second reprint with minor plate changes, August 1972), pp. 39-66; Gayle F. Carlson, "A Preliminary Report On The Results Of The 1984 Excavations At Fort Atkinson State Historical Park" (for the Nebraska State Historical Society, May 1985), passim; Royce Lindsay, "Fort Atkinson State Historical Park: Reconstruction and Archeological Studies" (for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1975), passim.

⁶Interview with Gayle Carlson, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 3-4, 1986; Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson pp. 37, 48-49, 50-120; "Excavations at Fort Atkinson" in Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, pp. 53-66.

⁷Ibid., p. 13-48; Gayle F. Carlson to William P. O'Brien, January 9, 1987, (attachments) pp. 1-2; "Excavations at Fort Atkinson" in Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, pp. 50-53, passim; Gayle F. Carlson, "A Preliminary Report On The Results Of The 1984 Excavations At Fort Atkinson State Historical Park" (for the Nebraska State Historical Society, May 1985), passim; Royce Lindsay, "Fort Atkinson State Historical Park: Reconstruction and Archeological Studies" (for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1975), passim.

⁸"The Sixth's Elysian Fields--Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs," in Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, pp. 1-2; Robert G. Athearn, Forts of the Upper Missouri (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 2-3; Herbert S. Schell, History of South Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961) pp. 56-61; William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 39-45.

⁹Report of Lieutenant Colonel Willoughby Morgan, June 12, 1820, and letter of Colonel Henry Atkinson, October 18, 1820, as quoted in Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, p. 3.

¹⁰Forts of the Upper Missouri, pp. 5-6; Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, p. 2; History of South Dakota, pp. 57-58.

¹¹Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, p. 4.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, p. 53.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only
received MAY 4 1988
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 8

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 5-7, 15-16, 18.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 25, 31, 37; Forts on the Upper Missouri, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 10-11; Fort Atkinson on the Council Bluffs, pp. 30-31, 36.

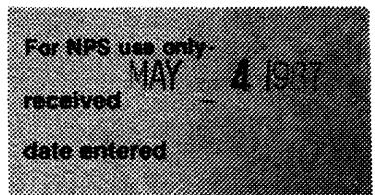
¹⁸Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁹Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, pp. 9-11. By 1867 even the original name of Fort Atkinson had been forgotten. Even Atkinson himself had been disposed to refer to the site by the name of Fort Calhoun.

²⁰Archaeological Investigations at Fort Atkinson, pp. 1, 11-22; Interview with Gayle Carlson, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, December 3-4, 1986. The proposed 1979 boundaries have been retained after examination of the most recent archeological survey reports.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

MAY - 4 1987

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

Boundaries for the Fort Atkinson National Historic Site are as follows:

UTM REFERENCES—Zone 14

Barracks Quadrangle District:

Point	Easting	Northing
A	749 690	4593 740
B	749 960	4593 670
C	749 990	4592 960
D	749 795	4592 320
E	750 140	4592 960
F	750 110	4593 115
G	750 120	4593 180
H	750 020	4593 250
I	749 910	4593 440
J	749 820	4593 541
K	749 730	4593 677

Acres in Barracks Quadrangle District: Approximately 185

Cemetery District:

Point	Easting	Northing
A	748 700	4594 799
B	748 620	4594 720
C	748 570	4594 639
D	748 555	4594 540
E	748 820	4594 540
F	748 810	4594 600
G	748 790	4594 640
H	748 750	4594 680

Acres in Cemetery District: Approximately 11

Total approximate acres for Fort Atkinson National Historic Landmark Boundary:
196

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Barracks Quadrangle District:

Beginning in the northeast 1/4 of the southwest 1/4 of Section 12, Township 17N, Range 12E, Washington County, Nebraska, at a point where the local road crosses a creek; thence west 2,300 feet to UTM Point B; thence south 2,400 feet to the south section line of Section 12 to UTM Point C; thence southeast 2,700 feet to contour line 1050 in the northwest 1/4 of the northeast 1/4 of Section 13, Township 17N, Range 12E, Washington County, Nebraska, to UTM Point D; thence northeast 1500 feet to the roadway and north section line of Section 13 to UTM Point E; thence north 450 feet following the creekbed to UTM Point F; thence north/northwest following said creekbed along UTM Points G, H, I, J, and K to beginning.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received **MAY 4 1987**
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 2

Cemetery District:

Beginning at a point at the edge of the bluff in the southeast 1/4 of the southeast 1/4 of Section 2, Township 17N, Range 12E, and following contour line 1050 to the southwest through UTM Points B, C, and D to the south section line of Section 2; thence, east along said section line 800 feet to UTM Point E; thence, north along the east section line of Section 2 200 feet to UTM Point F; thence, along elevation line 1050 through UTM Points G and H to beginning.

Photographs of existing features, artifacts, and general site context are attached to this revised nomination.

The National Historic Landmark's boundaries for the two discontinuous historic districts contain the majority of features, excavated elements, and those important unexcavated elements associated with Fort Atkinson. The boundaries of the barracks quadrangle district also include certain significant features located within the Fort Calhoun community such as period burials and brick concentrations. The inclusion of these important archeological features necessitated the inclusion of a number of non-contributing modern residential residences within the city limits of Fort Calhoun. Some elements, such as the historic spring/dairy area on the west side of the town of Fort Calhoun are not included. Conversations with Mr. Gayle Carlson, archeologist for the Nebraska State Historical Society, who has been involved in many of the excavations, noted that the integrity of the dairy site has been substantially compromised. The boundaries adequately address all resource protection considerations.²⁰