

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON Robidoux Pass

Robidoux Pass

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Nebraska

VICINITY OF  
CODE  
31

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

003

COUNTY

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <u>grazing</u>

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple

Dwight T. Ewing

(see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

Route 2

CITY, TOWN

Gering

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska 69341

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Scotts Bluff County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Gering

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1960

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Survey

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED


## CHECK ONE



ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

Robidoux Pass has changed very little since the 1840's. 



Trail ruts can be seen for almost two miles through the valley leading to Robidoux Pass. The pass is generally unimpacted, and still retains its scenic characteristics of a century ago, with the exception of a power line which runs through the valley and crosses the pass about 400 feet south of the summit. The property is privately owned and is used for grazing cattle.

The site of the trading post was determined from surface remains and analysis of the emigrant journals, which place it at the intersection of several ravines near the spring. The post was a small log structure containing the trading establishment and a blacksmith shop. Robidoux and his family lived in tipis near the post.

Several markers have been placed along the road to commemorate the site of the trading post and to mark the burials of several pioneer travelers. On the left side of the road by the ravine is a stone marker states that Father DeSmet and Stansbury passed through this area. Farther down the road on the right side is a small cemetery which contains several unidentified graves and a stone marker placed by the Katahdin Chapter of the DAR.

# 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/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 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      1848-1851

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Robidoux Pass [redacted] was a significant landmark on the Oregon Trail. The trail crossed through a narrow valley at the base of the pass, then wound its way west to the summit. After many days of crossing the dry, flat prairie, travelers were rewarded at the summit of the pass with their first glimpse of Laramie Peak, which they viewed as the Rocky Mountains. Used primarily between 1843 and 1851, this segment of the Oregon Trail also provided fresh water and a good supply of wood for emigrants who had gone without these necessities since leaving Ash Hollow [redacted].

The earliest travelers over Robidoux Pass were probably fur traders and missionaries, who worked in this area during the late 1820s. In 1830 the Smith-Jackson-Sublette trading caravan passed over this route and in 1832, Captain Bonneville camped in the area. The first emigrants over the pass were part of the Bidwell-Bartleson party, who were traveling with Father DeSmet. Francis Parkman, one of the great historians, also camped in this area in 1846. The period of greatest activity, however, came during the Oregon Migration and the California Gold Rush in the late 1840s. Between May and July 1849, a steady stream of gold seekers crossed over Robidoux Pass on their way to the gold fields of California.

By 1849, emigrant journals were reporting the existence of a trading post and blacksmith shop at the pass, run by a man named Robidoux (the spelling greatly varied between journals). The post, which may have been established in late 1848, was the first habitation the emigrants encountered since leaving Fort Kearney. Major Osborne Cross of the Mounted Rifles, who stopped there in late June, 1849, commented that the log post "made us feel as if we were in reality approaching once more a civilized race."

Robidoux was a frenchman who may have been related to the famous St. Louis trading family. However, so little is known about him, that even his first name is disputed. Some sources say it was Joseph E. while others claim it was Basil. What is known about Robidoux came from the journals and diaries of those who stopped at his trading post. It was known that he had an Indian wife and several half-breed children who were baptized by Father DeSmet in 1851. There may have been an encampment of Sioux Indians at the site as well, according to one report.

(see continuation sheet)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Dosch, Donald F. "Robidoux Pass," Regional Report, 1973.  
 Mattes, Merrill J., "The Great Platte River Road. Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, 1969.  
 Stansbury, Capt. Howard. Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. Washington, D.C. 1853.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES see continuation sheet

A [REDACTED]  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [REDACTED]  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C [REDACTED]

D [REDACTED]

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

[REDACTED]

(see continuation sheet)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Stephen Lissandrello, Landmarks Boundary Review Project - updated 7/22/83 Sarah J. Pearce  
 ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service DATE: 11/15/75 National Park Service Rocky Mountain Region  
 STREET & NUMBER: 1100 L Street, NW TELEPHONE: 202-523-5464 Denver, CO (303) 234-2560  
 CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C.

# 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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

7/18/84

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET Robidoux Pass      ITEM NUMBER 4      PAGE 1

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Mrs. Lillian Ouderkirk  
Ouderkirk Enterprises, Route 2, Gering, Nebraska 69341

Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Bennett,      Gering, Nebraska 69341  
1625 Beverly Blvd.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Yount, R.F.D., Gering, Nebraska 69341

Mr. Telford M. Ewing, R.F.D., Gering Nebraska 69341

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

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

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

The post was set up at a point where travelers had to go in a single line around the head of a transverse gully. The spring was nearby, and abundant wood and space for camping was available at the site. Robidoux supplied the emigrants with a variety of services including goods such as whiskey at \$5 a barrel, and some needed supplies. A blacksmith forge was also available for use to make necessary repairs.

Comments on the quality and utility of Robidoux's post varied with the emigrants. Captain Harold Stansbury described the post as a log shanty, with a blacksmith's forge on one end and a grog shop on the other. After several weeks of constant travel, most of the emigrants had need of Robidoux's smithy, either to make minor repairs on their wagons, or to shoe their horses, mules, or oxen. With the wagons coming through the pass in increasing numbers, Robidoux found it more convenient to rent his facilities to those who had need of them. Stansbury reported having waited two hours for a turn at the forge. The rental price at that time was seventy-five cents an hour. Stansbury expressed a veiled contempt for Robidoux's commercial enterprise. The trader, he wrote, stocked his establishment with goods purchased from those emigrants who, by this time were anxious to lighten their loads and were willing to part with their belongings for a little bit of money or nothing. He then sold the articles to subsequent wagon trains, reaping a large profit.

In 1851, the trail through Mitchell Pass opened, and travelers began to abandon the Robidoux Pass route. Mitchell Pass was located about 9 miles from the river and passed through a narrow cut in the bluffs. Although a more difficult route to travel on, this segment of the trail was shorter. It joined the older route at Horse Creek [REDACTED]. The northern route eventually became the trail followed by the Pony Express, and the Mormons. Robidoux eventually moved his post farther south to Carter Canyon, although he continued to operate the post at Robidoux Pass for another year or so. All mention of the trading post disappeared after 1852.

Today, nothing remains at Robidoux Pass except for evidence of the trail ruts, and several markers. Early accounts of the trip through this area note several burials at the pass. Two are visible today, and may be the site of three graves noted by a man named Bruff in July 1849. He identified the dead as Jesse Galen of Independence, Missouri, F. Dunn, age 26, and Joseph Black. Other reports indicate at least 4 nameless emigrants were buried at the post, and the unmarked grave of John Dunn lies somewhere in Sections 8 and 9. Numerous artifacts such as tools, wagon implements, bullets, and other materials were found in this area, indicating the location of the trading post and blacksmith shop.