

THEME: Western Trails and Travelers--Oregon Trail  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# 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 Independence Rock

AND/OR COMMON

Independence Rock

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 23 mi. south of Alcova on Wyoming State Highway 220

CITY, TOWN

~~Alcova~~ Casper

--NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

001

STATE

Wyoming

CODE

56

COUNTY

Natrona

CODE

025

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: historic

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple (Ned Frost, Wyoming Recreation Commission)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

604 East 25th Street, Box 309

CITY, TOWN

Cheyenne

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wyoming 82001

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Registry of Deeds, ETC. Natrona County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Casper

STATE

Wyoming

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1964

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Survey

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 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 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 Rock is a rounded outcropping of granite sticking up out of a relatively level plain sparsely dotted by other similar outcroppings. Geologically it is the top of a buried mountain. The land in the area is level to gently rolling and one can see for 20 miles in every direction from almost any point. Vegetation is limited to short prairie grass, short sage, occasional rabbit brush and yucca, with the exception of a few juniper near the rock outcroppings and some willows and sparse cottonwood trees along the river. Fauna include rabbits, skunk, snakes, deer, antelope, range cattle and a variety of small rodents, eagles, ravens, hawks, sage grouse and several varieties of song birds.

In preparation for the Bicentennial, the State of Wyoming is purchasing land in the area for an Independence Rock State Park. Containing about 1,414 acres the Park will be east of and adjacent to the highway and bisected in the lower portion, next to the Rock, by the Sweetwater River. An alkali lake known as Piaya Lake lies northeast of the Rock. Development will include road construction, utilities, trails, fencing, signing, and the erecting of several long, low buildings. An enclosed map shows all development.

Scenic easements, (protecting views but prohibiting trespass), will be acquired along the highway, Sweetwater River and the Oregon Trail for a distance of approximately five miles each way beyond the limits of the Park. The easements will be 1500' wide and contain over 5,800 acres.

# 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 1830-1850

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Independence Rock was a well-known landmark on the Oregon Trail long before the great overland migrations of the 1840's. In 1840, Father Peter DeSmet called it "the great registry of the desert," since thousands of people travelling west scratched their names on its surfaces.

The Rock lies in the elevated plain between the emigrant crossing of the upper North Platte and the Sweetwater River. The Oregon Trail ascended the latter to South Pass. The Rock lies near the Sweetwater River where the Trail first approaches it, and because of this fact it become a favorite stopping and resting place for the travellers who had been struggling across the almost waterless reaches of the sagebrush upland after leaving the North Platte. Independence Rock soon became famous for the numerous names carved, painted, or written into and on it. It seemed that almost everyone who passed that way had to place his name and the date on the Rock. Some of the earliest travellers along the Trail noticed the word "Independence" carved on the Rock, but just who did it and when is not known. Rufus Sage, who passed the Rock in 1842, noted that its "surface is covered with the names of travellers, traders, trappers, and emigrants engraven upon it in almost every practicable part, for the distance of many feet above its base."

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Mattison, Ray H., "Independence Rock," Historic Sites Survey report, 1959.  
 Wyoming Recreation Commission, "Development Plan for Independence Rock State Park," May 1975.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 170

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	3
3	2, 5
3	1 0
4	7, 0, 7
2	5, 0

  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

1	3
3	2, 5
2	6, 0
4	7, 0, 5
9	5, 0

  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(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, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

October 21, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

# 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 determined according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

**Landmark JAN 20 1967**  
 Designated according to the date  
 Boundary Certified: *Don Turner*  
 DATE Oct. 17, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

11/2/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10

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Independence Rock is a rounded outcropping of granite thrusting upward from a nearly level plain. The vista from its summit extends twenty miles in every direction across ranchland undisturbed by any man-made intrusion other than Wyoming Route 220. This vista contributes greatly to the national significance of the landmark. The boundary itself includes only that part of the vista which provides an undisturbed and unobtrusive setting in the immediate Independence Rock area.

(As shown on the accompanying USGS map:) From a point at the intersection of Schounmaker Ditch and the west curb of Wyoming Route 220, proceed about 1060 meters along the curb to its intersection with the south bank of the Sweetwater River. Proceed east and north about 1000 meters along the bank to its intersection with the section line dividing sections 10 and 15. Proceed due north about 880 meters to Schounmaker Ditch, then about 540 meters west along the ditch to the point of beginning.

The boundaries include property owned by the Hub and Spoke Ranch (Bernard Sun), the Dumbell Ranch (Rusco Inc.), and the State of Wyoming. The State is in the process of acquiring much of the included property as part of the proposed Independence Rock State Park.