

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
Oregon Trail Ruts
AND/OR COMMON
Oregon Trail Ruts

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER on the north Platte River .5
miles south of Guernsey

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Guernsey

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
001

STATE
Wyoming

CODE
56

COUNTY
Platte

CODE
031

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"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Historic Site

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
State of Wyoming (Mr. Ned Frost, Wyoming Recreation Commission)

STREET & NUMBER
604 East 25th Street, Box 309

CITY, TOWN
Cheyenne

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Wyoming 82201

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Platte County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Wheatland

STATE
Wyoming

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Sites Survey

DATE
1966

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service**

CITY, TOWN
Washington

D.C. STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 most prominent existing sets of trail ruts on the Oregon Trail are those located in the west half of Section 2, Township 26 North, Range 66 West. Here the trail passes over an eroded sandstone ridge, and the combined effects of wagon wheel wear, and cutting to ease passage over some of the rough places in the road have resulted in a road bed two to six feet deep in the sandstone.

The best samples of ruts lie in an attractive setting. The adjacent valley of the North Platte and the rolling benchlands to the south are covered with high plains grass and assorted bunch grasses, small forbs, and a scattering of cactus and yucca. The "breaks" through which the trail passes have a scattered growth of juniper and lodgepole pine, welcome relief the contrast to the surrounding grassland. The site is well removed from sound of traffic. The town of Guernsey across the river valley, together with the railway and highways through it, are minimized in the view by the backdrop of the Hartville Uplift, several miles to the north.

The only important intrusion into the adjacent lands is a pipeline easement, the scene of some work in 1965. Recent acquisition of the entire tract of land surrounding the trail ruts by the State of Wyoming provides a basis for protection against further encroachment if the State will assign an adequate protective strip along the line of the old "Covered Wagon Drive" easement. In 1975 explanatory signboards, benches and a gravel parking area near the ruts have been added by the Wyoming Recreation Commission. The site is unsupervised and little visitation occurs, leaving the site relatively undisturbed.

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 1841-1869

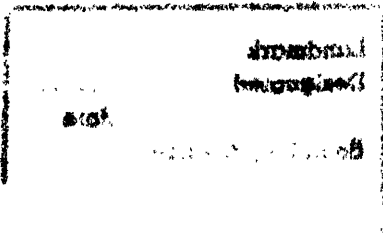
BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Worn from two to six feet into an eroded sandstone ridge located on the south side of the North Platte River about one-half mile south of the town of Guernsey, the Oregon Trail Ruts provide striking physical evidence of the route followed by thousands of Americans in their migration westward across the Plains between 1841 and 1869.

The first recorded use of what was to become the Oregon Trail occurred in 1812, when Robert Stuart and 6 companions followed the route in returning to the East from Fort Astoria in Oregon. In the succeeding years the route was used by numerous traders, trappers, and missionaries; but it was not until 1841 that the first wagon train, that of the Bartleson-Bidwell party, moved westward over the Trail. Over 100 emigrants followed the Trail west in 1842, and over 900, in 1843. In the ensuing years the numbers of emigrants steadily increased, and the Oregon Trail became a clearly defined and deeply rutted road across the country. With the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1869, use of the Trail as an overland route to the Pacific rapidly declined, although sections of it continued to be used locally for many years.

The best preserved of the Oregon Trail ruts are those near Guernsey in Platte County, Wyoming. Extending about one-half mile in length, they are unsurpassed in their clarity and integrity.



9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, "Special Site Report on Oregon Trail Ruts and Related Sites," 1966.
 Hafen and Young, Fort Laramie, 1938.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 200

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,3	52,14,2,0	4,67,82,0,0	B	1,3	52,14,6,0	4,67,71,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,35	20,48,0,1	4,67,71,9,0	D	1,3	52,04,4,0	4,67,86,7,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Oregon Trail Ruts are located in Section 2, T. 26N, R. 66W, near Guernsey, Wyoming. The town of Guernsey intended to lease the southwest 1/4 of section 2 to the State of Wyoming in order to administer the rut sites. However, it is not clear whether the ruts are located entirely in the southwest quarter. Some may be in the northwest quarter. Also, due to a clerical error the lease was made in section 3 rather than 2. Assuming that this error will be corrected, the boundary line includes the southwest quarter of section 2 and the northwest quarter of section 2 south of the North Platte

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 Reviess Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

5-15-76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW.

TELEPHONE

202/523-5464

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 Landmark May 23, 1966
~~State Historic~~
 Boundary Certified:
George F. Kennedy

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 May 11, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 11/24/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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Oregon Trail Ruts

CONTINUATION SHEET Boundary ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

River. This line ensures that all the rut sites are included and also provides an unobtrusive setting for the historic resources. The area included in the northwest section is owned by the town of Guernsey, except for a strip at the western boundary 200 feet wide running north and south between the North Platte River and the southwest quarter of section 2. This plot is leased by Chester Frederick of Frederick Ranch from the State of Wyoming. The boundary is described by the black line on the accompanying U.S.G.S. quadrangle maps.

Addendum:

Beginning at a point on the south bank of the North Platte River approximately 375' north of the Lucindy Rollins Grave site, proceed in an easterly direction along the southern bank of the North Platte River approximately 3500' to a point; thence south approximately 3000' to a point; thence west approximately 3000' to a point; thence north approximately 4700' to the point of origin.