

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wyoming	
COUNTY: Park	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER APR 3	DATE 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Irma Hotel

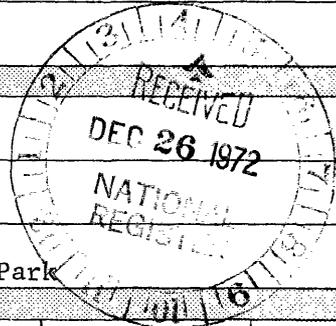
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Irma Hotel

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
1192 Sheridan Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Cody

STATE: **Wyoming** CODE: **56** COUNTY: **Park** CODE: **029**



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Irma Hotel, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:
1192 Sheridan Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: **Cody** STATE: **Wyoming** CODE: **56**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Park County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:
1002 Sheridan Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: **Cody** STATE: **Wyoming** CODE: **56**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Wyoming Recreation Commission

DATE OF SURVEY: **Summer-Fall-1967** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Cheyenne** STATE: **Wyoming** CODE: **56**

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated
(Check One)		(Check One)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present physical appearance of the Irma Hotel does vary, but mostly by reason of changed surroundings, from its appearance at the completion of construction in 1902. Principal among these changes is a two-story annex built of cream colored bricks, housing fourteen new guest rooms on each floor, which was, in the early 1930's, raised against the Irma's west side and connected with it at each level by means of interior passageways. This newer, light-in-color brick-work is scarcely in aesthetic keeping with the native building materials and consonant architectural lines of the old hotel. But, in being attached to the west side of the original structure, it is attached to the least conspicuous place and-overall-it is a sort of an "out of sight, out of mind" not too objectionable feature of the total building's present day appearance. Besides, the annex stands on a separate lot of its own, to the west of the parent structure, and so does not need to be considered and has not been considered a part of the historic property.

The Irma Hotel occupies the southwest corner of the intersection of Sheridan Avenue with 12th Street, in the center of downtown Cody, Wyoming. It covers, including a wide veranda extending along its east side, practically the entirety of a 100'x150' business lot. The old main entranceway, recently closed in a major interior remodeling program which has not otherwise affected the exterior, opened cornerwise from the lobby directly onto the Sheridan Avenue-12th Street interchange. In order to accomplish this feat the architect eliminated the final reach of the buildings' northwest corner and substituted for it a canted wall, no more than ten or twelve feet in length, and that canted wall is the ever-so-narrow, but true, front of the hotel. To reiterate then, the Irma faces neither to Sheridan Avenue on the north nor to 12th Street on the east, but to the northeast--to the intersection of the two streets.

Originally the Irma possessed, features it still retains, two other entrances for guests. One of these was west on Sheridan Avenue and led directly into a spacious bar and billiard room, a place that has since been converted into the hotel restaurant's dining room. At the opening of the Irma in 1902 one of the most talked-about features was the cherrywood bar and back-bar installed in this saloon. It had been made in France and came to Colonel Cody as a gift from Queen Victoria of England in appreciation of a command performance, staged for her court, by the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. This bar has been kept in perfect condition and is still in practical use today, behind the dining room counter.

The other entranceway was south on 12th Street and opened, as it still does, to the main ground floor corridor, to broad stairs at the edge of lobby and to the back where was located the original dining room. Today the lobby has become a bar and cocktail lounge and the old dining room is replaced by offices and shops but the wide, solid oak stairway still leads, by easy rises and wide landings, to upper story guest rooms.

The back sides, the south end and the old west side (now covered by the annex), were built of common-type red bricks. But the front sides, the

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century 1902 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A total of five historic places located in or near Cody, Wyoming and each possessing a specific relationship to Colonel William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) are believed to be worthy of nomination for enrollment in the National Register of Historic Places. These places are: one, T E Ranch; two, Buffalo Bill Campground; three, Pahaska Tepee; four, Irma Hotel; and five, (under slightly different circumstances), Buffalo Bill Historic Center.

Since every nomination to the National Register should---and under form chart guidance must---provide a purview of the prospective registry's significance and since each one of the places mentioned in the foregoing owes its founding in one way or another to a common vision and execution of the resulting plan, the immediately following introductory sketch applies equally to all five places and has been framed as a common section to all five of the separate nominations. Thus these five historic places form a little group of their own and their individual nominations for enrollment in the "Register" are submitted together, but this submission is not as a block with a "take all or none" implication. Indeed, and to the contrary, the five are offered on the basis of individual merit and the failure of any one of them to win approval by review-authority should not reflect on the decisions that authority may make as regards the other four.

Almost from the city's very founding date, at least only shortly thereafter, four of these five historic places were components of either Cody itself or its environs while the remaining one, though coming later, was a natural outgrowth of particular circumstances which contributed to that founding. Opening of the first of these (at least the first within the actual town site) together with the rise of several scattered business and residential structures plus the designation of a United States Post Office bearing the Cody, Wyoming title were all established facts by August, 1896. From the beginning, and probably in a greater extent than is normally the case, geographical location---first in the general sense and second in the exact sense---had a decided impact upon the commercial and the cultural development of a composite community which was a blend of already partially established ruralization with brand new urbanization.

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Foote, Stella., Letters from Buffalo Bill. Foote Publishing Company, Billings, Montana, 1954.

Dohse, Robert E., Personal Communication, July 20, 1972.

Frost, Richard I., Personal Interview, February 11, 1972.

Park County, Official Records, County Clerks Office, July 31, 1972

Russell, Don., The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill. University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.

Sell, Henry Balckman and Weybright, Victor, Buffalo Bill and the Wild West. Oxford University Press, New York, 1955.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "	44°	31'	35"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "	109°	03'	26"	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **one third of an acre.**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Nedward M. Frost, Chief, Historical Division

ORGANIZATION: Wyoming Recreation Commission

DATE: 8/23/72

STREET AND NUMBER:
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne

STATE: Wyoming

CODE: 56

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION
<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>Paul H. Heston</u></p> <p>Title: <u>Wyoming State Liaison Officer</u></p> <p>Date: <u>August 23, 1972</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Robert W. Utley</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date: <u>4/3/73</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>H. Bradford</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date: <u>3/22/73</u></p>

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Statement of Physical Appearance - 2

north end and the east side, were built of two different kinds of native stone. The part of the ground floor wall which incloses the lobby and the area behind it where the original dining room was located is built of stream-bed, smooth-washed, many-hued cobblestones. The remainder of the ground floor walls and all of the second floor walls are built of stone blocks quarried from a ledge of tough, grey sandrock which outcrops a short distance south of the town. Under certain slanting rays of sunlight a tinge of red can be discerned---streaking sections of the grey blocks and creating a pleasing effect.

The roof of the hotel proper, and a large part of the roof of the one-story veranda, are circled by ornate wooden railings. On the canted wall section that is the hotel's front, over the old ground floor main entrance and the second floor window directly above, Buffalo Bill had his constructors emplace a large, sculpted red-stone buffalo bull head. Above this bust of an old bull buffalo, indeed above the general cornice line but beneath its own small-sheltering-mock-gable, the title "THE IRMA" is spelled out in large, raised lettering.

Originally, before the annex was built, the Irma possessed forty second floor guest rooms. Of these: some had no plumbing facilities whatever; some had lavatories and only two or three had bathrooms. Presently the new owners have just completed remodeling twenty-two of these rooms into ten attractively appointed suites. These new accommodations are "furnished in the Victorian Period mode." Each suite has been named for a character out of local history and the management reports that the "Buffalo Bill Suite could be rented forty times every day."

The remodeling has been thoughtfully and tastefully carried out. For example, many of the plumbing fixtures used are patently antiques---marble stands and intricately worked faucets---but antique and modern designs have been fitted together to create comfortable, functionable and aesthetically pleasing bath rooms and sitting rooms.

Of course the Irma, Buffalo Bill's own hotel, is an historic place capable of drawing interest on that account alone. But it is proving that prospective customers, attracted through historic interest, can indeed be induced to become registered guests. Indications are that the Irma is one historic hotel that will prove capable of meeting competition in the age of technocracy.

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Statement of Significance - 2

In the first or general sense, this community was located within the Rocky Mountain area and so the arid-lands west, a region just then very much a subject of national interest owing to the explorations, researches, teachings and lobbying efforts of a remarkable man, Major John Wesley Powell. This was the man whose theory of "arid-lands culture" was about to culminate in establishment of the United States Reclamation Service. In the second or exact sense, the community was so located as to cover what would shortly become the eastern gateway to Yellowstone National Park; equally important, it snuggled closely against the irregular---valley and mountain ridge following---boundaries of the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve. This was the reserve, set aside by President Harrison's 1891 executive order, which would shortly become the basis of several of the first National Forests and which was already recognized and receiving careful study by leaders of the then budding national conservation movement. Furthermore, and lying between these general and exact senses of location, this community was situated in the Bighorn Basin of north-western Wyoming, an area only recently and sparsely settled and so lacking any strongly developed local history which might shape the growth of a new town.

Throughout the Rocky Mountain region as elsewhere in the history of an ever receding until finally vanished western frontier, the materialization of towns and cities fell into two general categories: those that happened; and those that were planned. The first, probably the prevalent category, was the result of previous rural developments creating a demand for urban functions at an hitherto unconsidered location; the second was the result of planned urban development at a selected location exerting an anticipated influence on a surrounding rural area. The first might be called happenstance towns; the second were definitely planned towns. Since Cody, Wyoming was a planned town in an area where urbanization proclivity, in fact most proclivity, was toward the happenstance, it appears that a general characterization of urban happenstance in the time and the place of the Cattleman's Frontier will aid in understanding the differing and peculiar circumstances leading to the founding of Cody and establishment of the several historic places with which we are here concerned.

Happenstance towns appear to have been the usual occurrence on the Cattleman's Frontier. Seeing an opportunity in some local geographical site, some one opened a combined general store and saloon (or, more often, vice versa) for the trade of already established ranching concerns. On a frontier where rails, as yet, seldom intruded and no vessels other than prairie schooners navigated, horses played an exclusive roll in determining the sites of commerce. Thus a store and saloon venture might end where started and die a lone death, or it might be followed by such another venture as a combined livery barn and smithy service. Only then, and literally care for horseflesh was the first rule, there might follow an establishment based on human needs,



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Statement of Significance - 3

offering such services---not necessarily comforts---as beds and meals. Later, when such establishments as churches and schools might already have materialized, the place was finally incorporated and added to the growing list of officially recognized towns.

The Bighorn Basin of northwestern Wyoming, an interior mountain valley comprising (depending on amount of included mountainous terrain) some 12,000 to 15,000 square miles, was one of the last large areas of the west to be settled. Its turn finally came during the last year or two of the 1870 decade when several operators brought in herds of Oregon and/or Texas cattle and founded ranches. Settlement though not rapid was steady and based on the general Cattleman's Frontier pattern. By 1895 when Colonel William Frederick Cody (Buffalo Bill) and several associates came into the Basin country to put their preconceived development schemes into practice, three or four small towns---separated by distances of 50 or more miles---had already been established. The 1890 authorization for a new county, Big Horn, had been passed by the Wyoming Legislature and, following a few years wait for accumulation of sufficient supporting valuation, its organization was in the immediate offing. Still, there was no real urban community in the entire northwestern quadrant of the Basin and this was the area upon which the new developers had focused their attention. The already established ranching industry throughout the main valley and the various branch valleys of the Stinkingwater (later Shoshone) River appealed to them as one resource which would help to support their proposed town but they had other considerations in view.

Those considerations involved primarily a grandiose project which would ultimately place more than 100,000 acres of arid but fertile land under irrigation (see Buffalo Bill Dam enrollment in the "National Register"). They also intended to capitalize on the general public's growing disposition to see, travel through and play in such unspoiled natural environments as Yellowstone National Park and the new National Forests soon to be formed from the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve. And, finally, they saw yet another opportunity for urban growth in proposals for exploitation of indicated mineral wealth, largely carboniferous but not overlooking some evidence of precious metals. As regards the last potential, it is interesting to note that Buffalo Bill's first personal interest in the Bighorn Basin occurred in 1870 when General Phil Sheridan detailed him to guide O. C. Marsh, famous Yale professor of paleontology. He guided Marsh around Ft. McPherson, Nebraska, on some hunts, mostly buffalo, and spent considerable time with him on Marsh's return from the Bighorn Basin and was excited and interested in what Marsh told him about the area and its possibilities for development. Marsh and other scientists in the party had been more than enthusiastic concerning both the richness in the present geological era's soil deposits and in past era's carboniferous

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Statement of Significance - 4

deposits as discovered in coal beds and indicated by structures favorable to the formation of large pools of petroleum. Their guide had been so greatly impressed by the scientists' enthusiasm that he always retained that impression.

That growth based on all contributing factors was slower in developing---and took stranger twists---than Buffalo Bill and his fellow founders foresaw should not be set down so much as a fallacy in vision as an error in timing. They certainly woefully underestimated the period of necessary growth time before profitable returns could be expected, but both growth and profits did eventually materialize.

Even in its earliest years the town of Cody became an urban center marked by the correlation, if not the rapidity and magnitude, with which its growth responded to the foresight and plans of its founders. While it provided all of the usual features characteristic of urban development on the then just commencing to vanish Cattleman's Frontier, it demonstrated a propensity to become something more---to become, however small, a true city embodying its own multiple, peculiar and distinctive attributes of culture and commerce.

Any and every place has at least one characteristic attribute. Therefore, within the just given definition of a city the key word is, of course, multiple; it is the multiplicity of interests, of characteristics, of attributes which distinguishes a city from a place, possibly larger, that has only one compelling reason for existence. That Cody, this embryonic town of 1896 founded in a remote corner of what was itself only a pastoral and hence scantily populated region, could have achieved transformation into true city status was certainly more than a little due to the vision and genius of its principal founder. Granting that it needed almost a half century to attain that status, it was clearly the early years---the getting off to the right start---which, no matter the length of time involved, made the achievement possible.

There in that remote locale and in the circa 1900 years it was Buffalo Bill, a man known and esteemed throughout the world, whose wish was magic. It was Buffalo Bill who could induce a captain of industry to build a seventy miles long railroad spur; who could, from among a long list of waiting and qualified sites, persuade a new founded bureaucracy and the purse string holders in Congress to choose a particular reclamation project; who could pick out a new, mountain-winding route of entry into a great national park and receive support from a great President of the United States with words to the following effect: If my friend Bill Cody says a road can be built there then I know it can be built, so let us get on with building it.

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This was a Buffalo Bill who was desperately trying to save and invest some of the profits from his Wild West show business, sometimes very great profits which were always, somehow, slipping from his grasp. But it wasn't just a case of investment with him. Here he had found a country that he loved, a country which still possessed---in that far reaching mountainous and forested wilderness against which it backed---at least the semblance of a frontier and with that semblance a way of life that had always appealed to him. He meant this place to be his home; and he meant to so invest his money that this homeland would support him throughout his years of retirement.

So, knowing his Cattleman's Frontier towns and knowing how they developed, he was certain that this town, whatever else happened to it, would need from the start a livery barn including necessary hayracks and loafing corals. He also knew that visitors and sojourners using this stabling service would themselves need a place to stay and that many of them, by choice or consideration for expense, would want to camp as, in coming, they had camped along the way. In short, some visitors to this new town would be looking for a campground close by the stables where their more favored livestock were provided feed and shelter. He proposed to establish those two business services, stables and campgrounds, himself.

Buffalo Bill, of course, foresaw the need for a hotel, but he thought that need was for something more than just the ordinary cow-town "meals and beds" venture. The same thinking governed as regarded the saloon business. He was content to let someone else provide the first services along all such human need lines. For he had in his mind the plans for a really outstanding hotel, one featuring lobby, bar, dining room and other accommodations that would appeal to the type of worldly visitors he envisioned as coming to Cody in ever-increasing numbers. He believed the town would become a staging point and outfitting headquarters for sight-seers touring Yellowstone Park; for big game hunting sportsmen; for vacationers making summertime pack-horse trips into the mountains; and for clientele patronizing a newly developed industry, the dude ranches. And he believed it would also serve as a base of operations for businessmen while investigating ranching, mining and other industrial potentials throughout the surrounding country or while on inspection trips to undertakings already in a developing or operating phase. He also saw that with the many different opportunities for rural development that a fairly numerous class of country dwellers would be settling in the surrounding area who, when they came to town for business or pleasure, would patronize such a hotel as he had in mind.

But all of these potentials depended upon two other things, a railroad leading into Cody and a wagon road leading from such a railhead into Yellowstone National Park. He needed to be certain of both before building his hotel

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and, in 1896, neither of these things was yet a certainty. Four years later they were, and then Buffalo Bill went ahead with plans for the hotel which opened for business in 1902.

But before then, indeed from the beginning in 1895, Buffalo Bill had two other enterprises, both of a rural nature, which he wanted to get started. He wanted a ranch of his own in this country and, when the road to Yellowstone was finished, he wanted to have established just outside the entrance to that Park, a place offering accommodations---meals, lodging, guiding and hunting services, etc.---to vacationers following that route of entry into the national park, or to such other charms of an extensive and variable mountain-wilderness as might attract them. The first of these enterprises, named for the brand its cattle wore, was the T E (E) Ranch which he acquired and stocked the very year, 1895, of his arrival. The second, bearing a Crow Indian language name meaning "Longhair's Lodge" was Pahaska Teepee and it was completed and open for business in 1901---almost as soon as the completion of the road whose wayfarers it was intended to serve.

In light of the various reasons that have been cited so far for establishment of this "planned" town, it seems necessary to further explain and stress the original purpose that had brought these associates together and that resulted in development of Cody and the surrounding country.

Major John Wesley Powell and his theory of "arid lands culture" has already been mentioned in the foregoing but, although undoubtedly the most informed student of the subject, it would be a mistake to believe that he was the only man interested in providing for irrigation development of the many promising sites throughout the arid western states. In 1894 the Carey Act, named for Senator Joseph M. Carey of Wyoming, became a national law. Under its provisions the federal government could give, to a participating state, lands found feasible for irrigation projects when the state provided proof of ability and determination to proceed with development. Wyoming so arranged its participation that private developers secured a water right for some definite large or huge acreage and built a canal to bring the irrigation waters to numerous smaller, privately owned tracts of land. The state sold these small tracts for a nominal price per acre to the individual; the developer's profit was in the water right and the water which he delivered and sold to these private owners. But the developer's expense was not entirely in the engineering and construction of the project; he also had to colonize that project, that is find the prospective owners and induce them to buy from the state and establish their farmsteads.

Buffalo Bill and his associates undertook such a Carey Act project, with a water right for some what more than 100,000 acres, in 1895. Mr. George T. Beck moved from Sheridan, Wyoming (where he had established a ranch and

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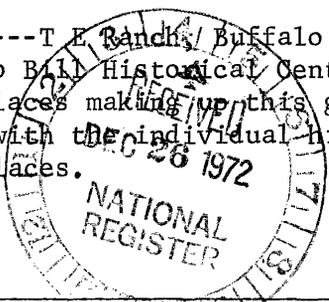
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built a flour mill at a place named Beckton) to manage development of the project. He laid out the new townsite as well as a canal that would carry water to about 10,000 acres, and these two implementations of the total project the private developers were able, but only with great difficulty, to carry through to a conclusion. The larger scheme, the Shoshone Reclamation Project---still in 1972 not entirely completed but with 94,000 acres currently under irrigation---they were totally unable to finance. In 1904 they turned the water rights for these lands back to the State of Wyoming; the State re-issued those rights to the Federal Reclamation Service which commenced actual construction in 1905 and was serving water to the settlers under the project's first unit, about 15,000 acres, previous to 1910.

George T. Beck laid out the townsite of Cody using numbered streets on the north-south axis and avenues bearing names of the associates on the east-west axis. Thus there was a Salisbury Avenue; a Rumsey Avenue; a Bleistein Avenue; an Alger Avenue; and a Beck Avenue. To this sequence of names there were one or two exceptions---a Wyoming Avenue and the town's main street, a Sheridan Avenue. Remembering that Buffalo Bill had served as scout under Phil Sheridan it isn't difficult to conclude for whom that main street is named. Beck recommended, and the others agreed, that a teamster should be able to easily turn a six horse team and freight wagons around on any street of the new town, so the streets were all 100 feet wide.

Buffalo Bill, in 1896 the principal founder of a town, died January 10, 1917. By that time the total community (urban and rural) which he had done so much to advance was securely established, being solidly based on multiple, strong and growing enterprises. As he had foreseen, this land possessing a varied natural and aesthetic wealth had attracted a cosmopolitan population. However, these cosmopolites proved to hold one united interest; they, or at least a majority of them, recognized the genius of the founder who had departed. Within days following his demise they had organized a Buffalo Bill Memorial Association and this is an association that has grown and thrived since birth. Very shortly it acquired property on what was then the western edge of small but growing Cody and out of this real estate there arose the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. The present Center comprises two great museums and a gallery of western art that must be ranked as truly a treasury of national importance; it is, in its composite, one of the outstanding cultural loci in all of Wyoming.

These then---T E Ranch, Buffalo Bill Campground, Pahaska Teepee, Irma Hotel and Buffalo Bill Historical Center, in order of founding---are the five historic places making up this grouping. The theme from this point on is concerned with the individual historic significance of each of these five separate places.



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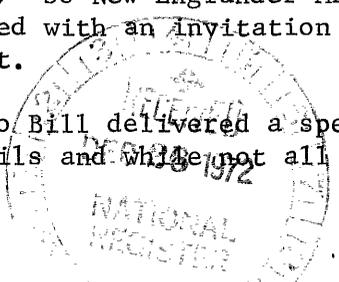
As previously set forth, Buffalo Bill had convinced himself that if such developments as a railroad coming into Cody and a wagon road extending from the town into Yellowstone National Park should become realities, then the town would possess the potential to support a much finer hotel than could ordinarily be found in a Cattleman's Frontier community. By commencement of the year 1901 both the railroad and the wagon road were under forced construction measures and rapidly progressing toward their respective completions. Buffalo Bill, in keeping a promise made to himself and others, had the building of his hotel underway. Its name, The Irma Hotel--for one of his daughters--had already been selected.

Like so many other affairs in his chronically over-extended financial condition, it is difficult to ascertain just how Buffalo Bill managed the start of this enterprise. But whatever the arrangements, construction was well along toward completion with no one questioning who the actual owner might be when, on September 22, 1902, he acquired the property by purchase in the name of William Frederick Cody.

The Irma was opened with a gala party on November 18, 1902. It established, on that first day, a reputation as a center of social activity which it has maintained throughout the seventy following years. Colonel Cody sent invitations (see photo form section) to a long and diverse list of guests. Those accepting and arriving included, besides a large representation of local citizenry, residents of such distant places as Denver, Chicago, New York and even some from foreign lands. The crowd was cosmopolitan, it included cowboys, Indians and ranchers; soldiers, politicians and industrialists; and showmen, artists and writers. Frederick Remington was present and he drew a caricature, only a few dashed off lines and curves, but nevertheless an unmistakable Remington (see photo form section). This caricature, a young lady sitting side saddle of a galloping steed, he labeled "Irma going to Irma". Irma was then a young maiden lady, in fact her engagement to Lieutenant Clarence Stott was announced during that hotel opening party.

Colonel Cody had founded his own newspaper, The Cody Enterprise, and brought from Washington, D. C., one Colonel J. H. Peake, an accomplished journalist, to be its editor. Thus he was assured of competent local editorial coverage of all events and details of Irma's opening. But it was thought desirable that the eastern press should also be represented at this important western affair. So New Englander Mr. Charles Wayland Towne of the Boston Herald was provided with an invitation and--it seems reasonable to think--an expense account.

Buffalo Bill delivered a speech at the banquet ceremonies. He wore white tie and tails and while not all of his ranch country neighbors could find in their



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wardrobes such formal attire, it is a certainty that they wore the best they owned. Mr. Towne, however, reporting in his Boston paper had the entire assemblage clad in boots, spurs and chaps--a total disregard for facts which almost earned for him a quick end to duty and a slow ride home via boxcar. But his Wild West Show press agent pointed out to Buffalo Bill the publicity value of such reporting to New England readers and the old scout bridled his indignation.

Instead he took Towne along on the immediately following big game hunt which outfitted from his T. E. Ranch. This party included some seasoned individuals, men who had seen their share of Indian campaigns and other hardships and gone on to make their marks in the settlement of the country's last frontier. When Towne returned he had much fascinating copy to transmit to the "Herald". In fact he was impressed enough with the west to stay on for a year as a guest and publicity man at the Irma. Finally returning to New England, he blossomed into a literary authority on the ways of the west, its men and beasts.

Despite this auspicious opening, or--more likely--foretold by it since as host he bore a heavy burden of expense, it is doubtful if the Irma was ever a financial success during Buffalo Bill's proprietorship. For one thing the town and the surrounding community was not developing as fast as he and the other founders had hoped; for another his own entertaining--of hunting parties and numerous other guests concerned with his various promotions--was a too heavy load for the Irma and overtaxed its ability to show a profit.

He also had the cares and troubles of a large family and often discontented spouse. These were factors which entered into the operation of the Irma. Always there was some family member looking to him for provision and one resource available to him was the jobs that the Irma could provide--all the way from manager down to bell-boys and stable messengers. Often, and for long periods of time, he and his wife, Louisa, were in a state of disagreement. His customary recourse under those circumstances was to give her anything but affection and her practice was to accept all that she could get from him. Finally, in 1913, hard-pressed financially from all sides, Buffalo Bill deeded his Irma Hotel to his at the time estranged wife, Louisa M. Cody.

Buffalo Bill died on January 10, 1917 and one month later, February 10, 1917, the Irma Hotel was foreclosed upon and sold at public sheriff's sale to one, Barney Link. However, on December 22, 1917, it was deeded back to Mrs. Cody by Henry A. Luce, administrator of the estate of Barney Link. Louisa M. Cody, widow of Buffalo Bill and owner of the Irma Hotel, died in 1921. On March 12, 1925, the executors of her estate sold the Irma and all of its contents to Henry T. Newell and his wife, Pearl C. Newell, for the sum of \$28,000.

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Not the least important phrase in the immediate foregoing sentence is "and all of its contents", for the Irma contained many treasures collected by Buffalo Bill. These ran the gamut from simple photographs and Wild West Show posters lining corridor walls to large canvases from the brushes of recognized artists which hung on lobby, dining room and bar room walls. However, 1925 was somewhat before the growth of value in western scene paintings which at that time--except for a Remington or a Russell, neither of whom happened to be represented here--were not thought of in terms of great monetary value.

Mr. and Mrs. Newell, besides being good managers, had bought the Irma at the right time. In 1925 the development of the motor car, and with it better roads, was resulting in a large increase among tourists visiting Yellowstone National Park. But this increase in automobile travel had not yet resulted in the development of outlying motels--indeed the name "motel" was not yet invented--and old, established down-town hotels were still the natural over night places for at least the more affluent motorists. The Irma did so well that it was necessary to build an addition and, about 1930, the Newell's raised a two story, twenty-eight room, cream colored brick annex tight against the old west wall of the Irma and occupying most of the space of the adjoining lot. Of course, the bar business had died with the advent of prohibition in 1918, and the old bar in the Irma had, under outside lease, limped along as a pool hall operation.

But the Irma bar and billiard room was a large, well designed and well lighted place. The Newells closed up the old dining room at the south end of the hotel and remodeled that space into their own living quarters. Then they opened--using the bar room facility as the dining hall--a truly fine restaurant. This restaurant, still operating today, has always received good patronage from local citizens as well as tourists to the extent that, even during bad times for small town hotels, it has helped to make the Irma a continuously profitable operation.

Under order of probate court in the matter of the will of Henry T. Newell, his wife, Pearl C. Newell, succeeded to sole ownership of the Irma Hotel on April 2, 1940. Mrs. Newell operated the business practically up until her own death in 1965. Shortly before that time she executed a will leaving the Irma-owned Buffalo Bill collection to the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association for display and safekeeping in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Her will went on to provide that her property (in a sizable portion the Irma Hotel) be converted into a trust fund, the interest from that fund to support an elderly widowed sister until that sister's demise, and then the trust to become an endowment for the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, its principal inviolable but the interest available for any purpose beneficial to the center.

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Following Mrs. Newell's death the Irma was sold, on February 18, 1966, to the Cowgill Agency, Inc., a transaction reportedly in the range of a quarter of a million dollars. The Cowgill Agency never operated the Irma as a business. Their function was that of an interim financier and on March 1, 1966, the Agency sold the Irma to M. G. Coley, who was already leasing and operating the hotel's restaurant. Mr. Coley continued to operate the restaurant but at the same time remodeled the twenty-eight guest rooms in the annex part of the hotel. On October 20, 1971, he sold the Irma to the Irma Hotel, Inc., a corporation wholly owned by Robert E. and Ruth M. Dohse, who are at this time the operators.

Mr. and Mrs. Dohse are currently engaged in an extensive remodeling of the Irma's interior as explained under the Description heading of this nomination form.