

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| STATE: Wyoming | |
| COUNTY: Park | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | AUG 14 1973 |

1. NAME

COMMON:

Colter's Hell

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

On U.S. 14, 16, and 20 approximately two miles west of:

CITY OR TOWN:

Cody Wyo.

STATE

Wyoming

CODE

49

COUNTY:

Park

CODE

029

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|---|--|--|---|
| 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 <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Acquisition: In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> | Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | |
| Agricultural <input 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) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. Reclamation withdrawal, Highway right-of-way |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:

U.S. Government

STREET AND NUMBER:

Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

District of Columbia

CODE

08

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Park County

STREET AND NUMBER:

Sheridan Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Cody.

STATE

Wyoming

CODE

49

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Wyoming Recreation Commission, Survey of Historical Sites, Markers & Mon.

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

49

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER DATE
AUG 14 1973

7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Good <input type="checkbox"/> | Fair <input type="checkbox"/> | Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> | Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> | Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/> |
| INTEGRITY | (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | Altered <input type="checkbox"/> | | | Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | | | | Moved <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | | | | Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |

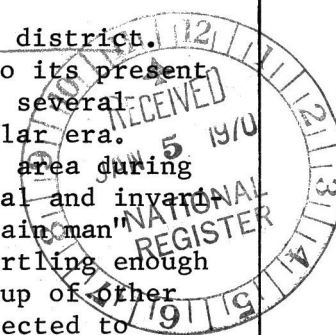
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Colter's Hell" is an almost, but not quite, inactive geyser district. This activity has only been dwindling during historic time to its present stage of almost complete extinction, thus there are existent several accounts of its appearance during a more active and spectacular era. Colter's own descriptions, based upon his exploration of the area during his historic winter journey of 1807-1808, were entirely verbal and invariably received with skepticism. Whereupon he, in true "mountain man" fashion, proceeded to embellish facts which were already startling enough in their own right and, since his audience was usually made up of other fur traders and "mountain men", his embellishments were subjected to further aggrandizement. Therefore it becomes impossible at this late date to form a conception of how he, Colter, sincerely described all of the strange natural phenomena occurring over approximately a square mile of terrain occupying and fanning out from the mouth of the Stinkingwater River Canyon.

But another "mountain man", Joseph Meek, was there in 1830 and has left a description of the place which comes almost direct to later generations through the story of his life on the frontier as he told it to Frances Victor and she wrote it down. During the late months of the fall of 1830 Meek had been cut-off by Indians from other members of his fur brigade and in making his escape had been forced to flee deep into the interior of a region which later became the Yellowstone National Park that is so famous today. There Meek saw at least a part of the geyser fields which are now so well known as to require no description here. Meek was later able to rejoin his brigade which was having its own difficult time crossing, under severe early winter conditions, the rough Absaroka Mountain Range that separates the Yellowstone River Valley from the Big Horn Basin country. Finally the fur brigade won free and came down into the Valley of the Stinkingwater just at the "Colter's Hell" location. Which becomes a good place to take up the exact description set down by Mrs. Victor: ". . . and came upon the waters of the Stinking Fork, a branch of the Big Horn, which derives its unfortunate appellation from the fact that it flows through a volcanic tract similar to the one discovered by Meek on the Yellowstone plains. This place afforded as much food for wonder to the whole camp as the former one had to Joe; and the men unanimously pronounced it the 'back door to that country which divines preach about.' As this volcanic district had previously been seen by one of Lewis and Clark's men, named Colter, while on a solitary hunt, and by him also denominated 'hell', there must certainly have been something very suggestive in its appearance." It is necessary to read this entire chapter of Mrs. Victor's work in order to understand the full import which was that Meek, having just seen a regular geyser district in Yellowstone Park, found Colter's Hell on the Stinkingwater to be, in the year 1830, similar in formation and in spectacular displays.

One other description of "Colter's Hell" comes through the remembrances of Chief Plenty Coups of the Crow nation as he told them to Mahlon Frost and to Mahlon's young son, Ned W. Frost, the grandfather and father respectively of this writer. These remembrances concerned the Crow Chief's own childhood, during the 1840's, when his village camped above the banks

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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Colter's Hell

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description - page - 2

of the Stinkingwater and he, obviously not yet named Plenty Coups, and the other Crow children watched the geysers play.

In 1885, when Mahlon Frost established a ranching enterprise nearby, and since that time there have been, except in the river bottom and covered by the stream itself, no active geysers or even visible major hot springs at "Colter's Hell". Apparently the river in deepening its channel has cut the hot springs underground water courses and the only remaining thermal activity by 1885, or indeed today, are those covered by the flowing river waters. Added to this factor, there has undoubtedly been a decrease of the entire activity, both source of heat and quantity of water, since that day during the fall of 1807 when John Colter became the first white man ever to gaze on this seeming earthly "hell".

Today "Colter's Hell", except for a minor geyser or two, which can only lift through the surface of a flowing river during extremely low water -- and a few other stream bed hot springs which are not actually geysers, is extinct. But, lying between the city of Cody and -- two or three miles to the west -- the foot of those mountains which have been cleaved by the river and so frame a mighty canyon gorge, the alert traveler will quickly recognize that he is crossing a geyser region only recently settled into a dormant stage. He will be apprised of this fact by the three separate senses of sight, sound and smell -- the hollow ring of his footsteps; the sight of craters and geyser cones; and the prevailing odor of hydrogen sulfide.

U.S. Highways 14, 16 and 20, here drawn together in one common roadbed, cut immediately through this area called "Colter's Hell" and the road builders have provided turn-outs and parking spaces from which to view the several natural phenomena.



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian ☐

16th Century ☐

18th Century ☐

20th Century ☐

15th Century ☐

17th Century ☐

19th Century ☒

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1807

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal ☐

Education ☐

Political ☐

Urban Planning ☐

Prehistoric ☐

Engineering ☐

Religion/Phi-

Other (Specify) ☒

Historic ☐

Industry ☐

losophy ☐

Exploration

Agriculture ☐

Invention ☐

Science ☒

Art ☐

Landscape ☐

Sculpture ☐

Commerce ☐

Architecture ☐

Social/Human-

Communications ☐

Literature ☐

itarian ☐

Conservation ☐

Military ☐

Theater ☐

Music ☐

Transportation ☐

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

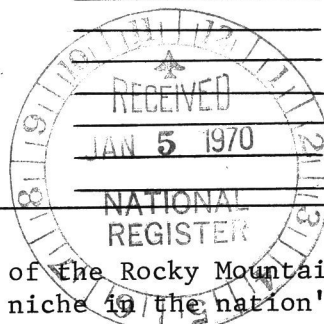
The significance of John Colter to the exploration of the Rocky Mountain west and to the history of that west, and Colter's niche in the nation's literature and legends are all too well-known to require detailed repetition here.

Aside from the leaders themselves and, perhaps, the Shoshone guide-woman, Sacajawea, there is no better recognized name among all of the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition than that of John Colter. And when Colter, in 1806, turned back from that expedition to spend several more years in an unknown mountain vastness he left those others after two years of exploratory travel still many hundreds of miles deep in wilderness surroundings.

Colter's place in history is chiefly based on two episodes and one attribute that made those episodes possible. The attribute was his physique; he was endowed with a physical strength equally competent for performing feats requiring great energy and speed and for withstanding the life draining fatigue of day following day of mountain - wilderness travel. Because of this attribute he was able to survive his famed historic encounter with Black Feet Indians near the Three Forks of the Missouri.

And because of this attribute he could also accomplish his solitary, winter-long fur scouting journey which led to the discovery of Yellowstone National Park. Probably this was the single episode of Colter's career which gained for him the greatest fame. But, besides discovering the region which sixty-four years later was set aside as the first and greatest of all National Parks, Colter on that journey became the first white man that can be definitely and historically pointed out as having entered the bounds of present day Wyoming. While the paths that he followed have been traced with considerable variations by several capable historians and a myriad of other "authorities" the one Wyoming location which everyone can agree that Colter reached was this place which bears his name -- "Colter's Hell". There is no doubt that John Colter when, during the fall of 1807, he stood overlooking the geyser activity below the junction of the two forks of the Stinkingwater so stood the first white man that can be definitely identified and definitely located as

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Harris, Burton, John Colter His Years in the Rockies. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1952.

Vinton, Stallo, John Colter Discoverer of Yellowstone Park. Edward Eberstadt, New York 1926.

Victor, Frances F., Eleven Years in the Rocky Mountains and Life on the Frontier. Columbia Book Company, Hartford, Conn. 1877.

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 ONE ACRE | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|----|--|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | |
| | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | |
| NW | 44 ° 31 ' 07 " | 109 ° 07 ' 24 " | | 0 ' ' " | 0 ' ' " | |
| NE | 44 ° 31 ' 13 " | 109 ° 06 ' 48 " | | | | |
| SE | 44 ° 30 ' 37 " | 109 ° 06 ' 42 " | | | | |
| SW | 44 ° 30 ' 06 " | 109 ° 07 ' 30 " | | | | |

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Ned Frost, Historian

ORGANIZATION
Wyoming Recreation Commission

DATE
Dec. 19, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Cheyenne

STATE
Wyoming

CODE
49

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name

Paul H. Steward

Title State Liaison Officer

Date December 19, 1969

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

Robert H. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

8/14/73

ATTEST:

William J. Smutko
Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NW 12/6/19210/4931040
SW 12/6/19210/4931040
NE 12/6/19210/4931040
SE 12/6/19210/4931040

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

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| STATE Wyoming | |
| COUNTY Park | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
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Colter's Hell

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance - page - 2

an explorer of hitherto unknown Wyoming landscapes.

Thus "Colter's Hell" becomes significant on two grounds: Nationally in its relationship to a man who figures prominently in his country's history and legends; and statewide in its position as the first terrain within Wyoming to be subjected to recorded exploration by a white man.



CONTROL SHEET
National Register
Inventory-Nomination Forms

Park Co. Wyo
NPS Number

Colter's Hell

RECEIPT

SIGN OFF

Date of Receipt 1/5/70 Yes No Number AUG 14 1973
Data Page 14 11
Photo(s) 14 11 1
Photo Description(s) 14 11
Map(s) 14 11 1
Map Description(s) 14 11
Logged 14 11
Acknowledged 4/2/70 11 11

Called & will send Need acreage for this site — OK 1/13/70

REVIEW

Historian Comments OK BL 1/13/70
Architect Comments OK when acreage arrives Chamberlain 1/13/70
if checked
et. to
lerk
1/1 Chief Architect 1/1 Chief Archeologist 1/1 Chief Historian
Keeper Comments OK as above noted Muntz 2/11/70

ENTRY

Chief, OAHN Comments
Date of Entry
Registry Clerk Yes No Date
Assign NPS No. 11 11
Acknowledgement Sent 11 11

EDITORIAL PROCESSING

Editor Date
Federal Register Entry
Annual Edition Entry

FILE

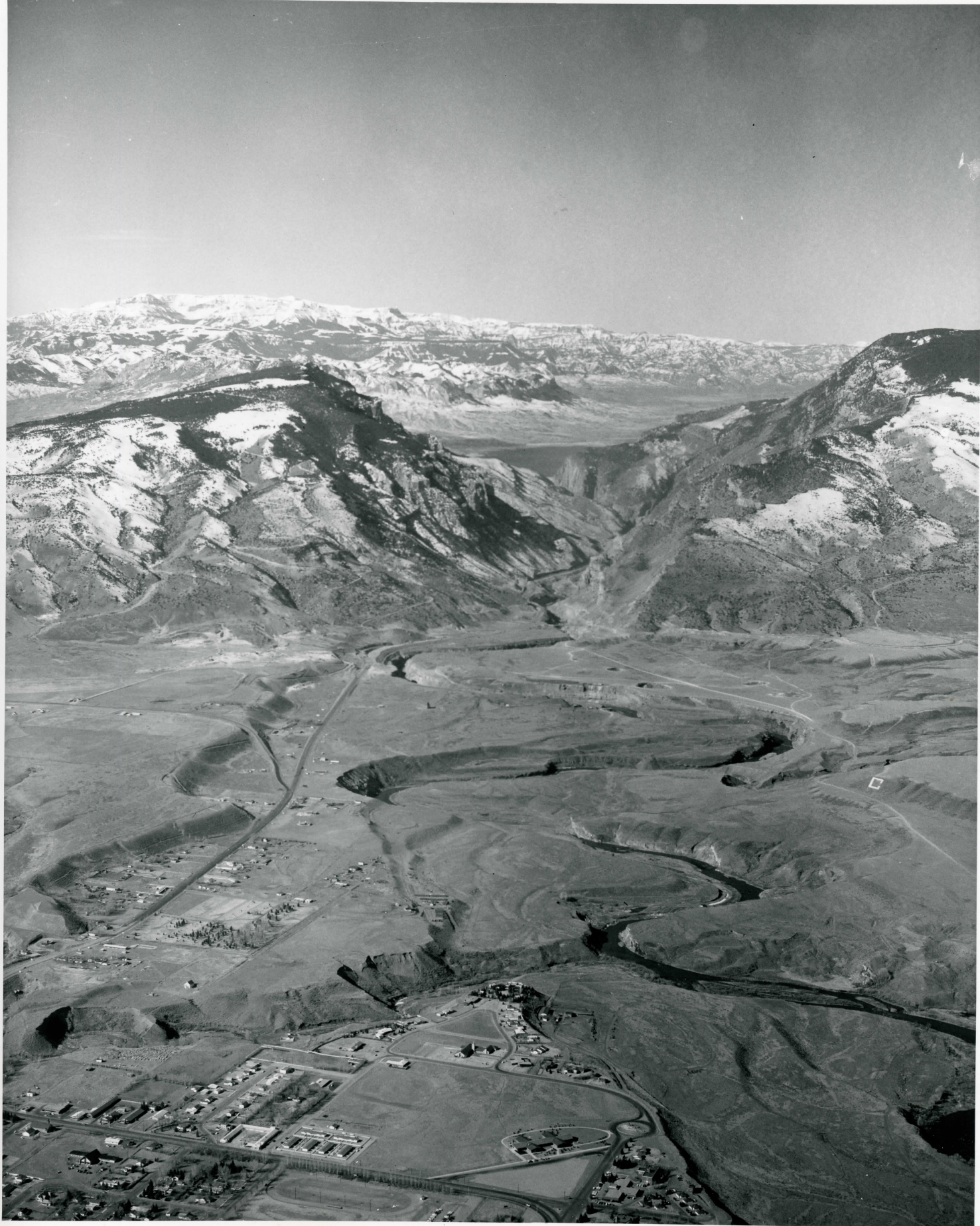
FILE

FILE

FR 10-2-73

WORKING NO.

1-5-70.3



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

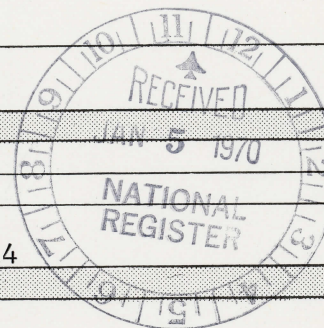
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| STATE Wyoming | |
| COUNTY Park | |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| ENTRY NUMBER | DATE |
| | AUG 14 1973 |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

| | | | |
|--|------|---------|------|
| 1. NAME | | | |
| COMMON: Colter's Hell | | | |
| AND/OR HISTORIC: | | | |
| 2. LOCATION | | | |
| STREET AND NUMBER: | | | |
| On U.S. 14, 16, and 20 approximately two miles west of: | | | |
| CITY OR TOWN: | | | |
| Cody | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| Wyoming | 49 | Park | 029 |
| 3. PHOTO REFERENCE | | | |
| PHOTO CREDIT: Jack Richard, Cody, Wyoming | | | |
| DATE OF PHOTO: 1965 | | | |
| NEGATIVE FILED AT: | | | |
| Jack Richard Photo Studio, Cody, Wyoming 82414 | | | |
| 4. IDENTIFICATION | | | |
| DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. | | | |
| Aerial view over Cody looking West up the Shoshone River. Colter's Hell craters showing at canyon mouth. | | | |



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE

Wyoming

COUNTY

Park

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

AUG 14 1970

1. NAME

COMMON: Colter's Hell

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

On U.S. 14, 16, and 20 approximately two miles west of:

CITY OR TOWN:

Cody

STATE:

Wyoming

CODE

49

COUNTY:

Park

CODE

029

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

U.S.G.S. 15' quadrangle Cody, Wyoming

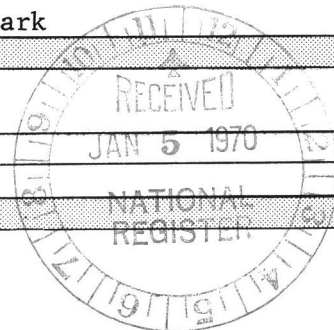
SCALE: 1:62,500

DATE: 1949

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

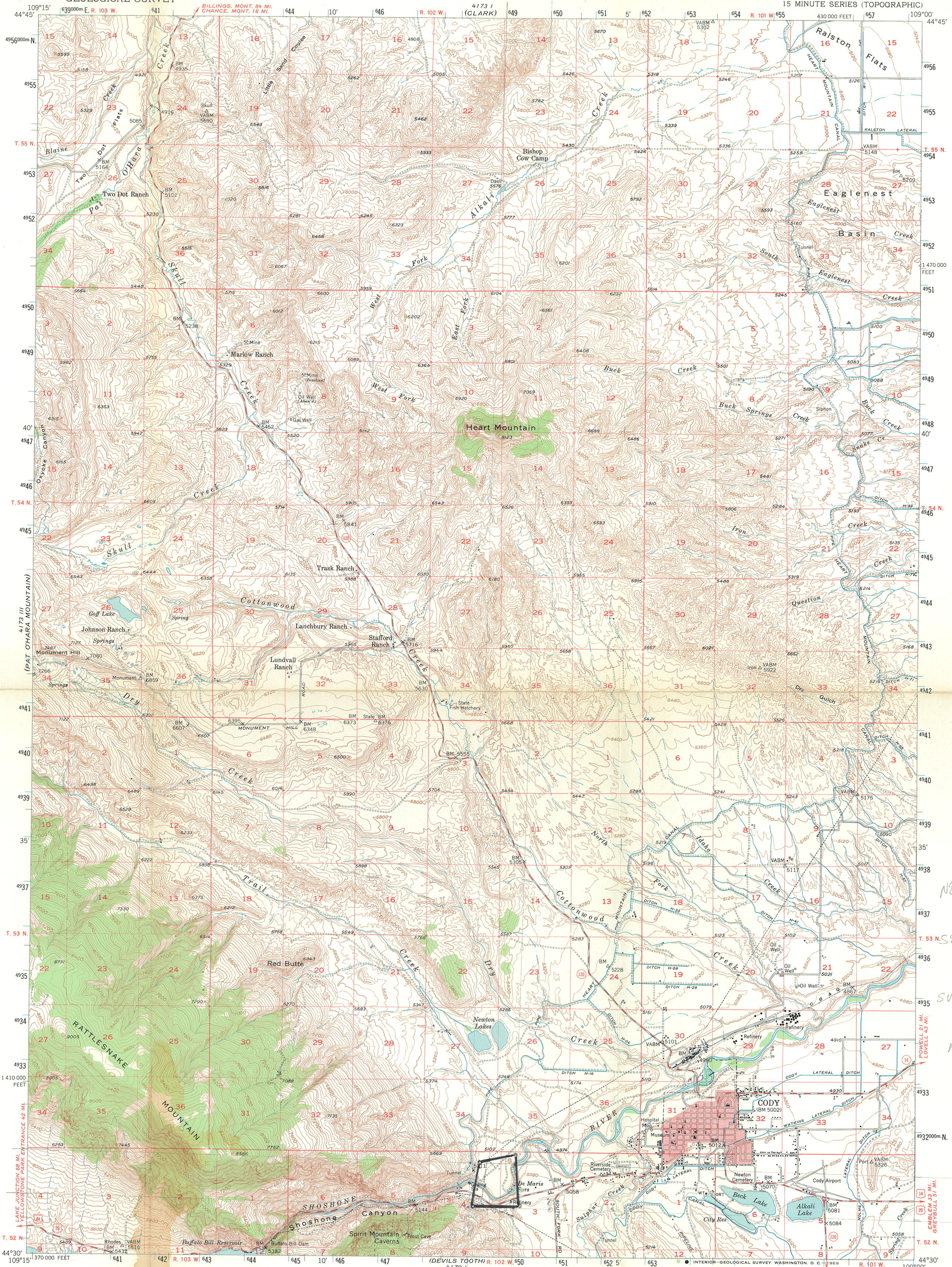
1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CODY QUADRANGLE
WYOMING-PARK CO.
15 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



NE 12/650 046
4931 250
SE 12/650 130
4930 050
SW 12/649 100
4930 000
NW 12/649 210
4931 040
W

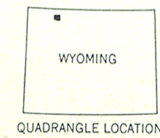
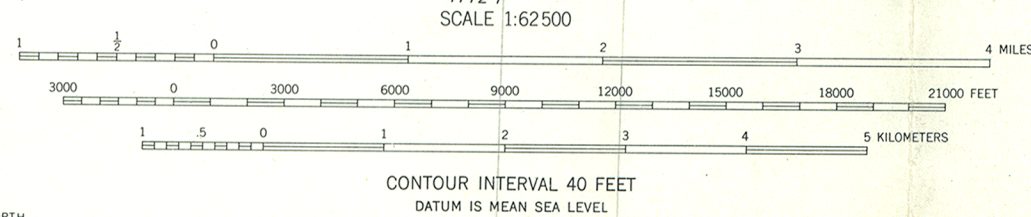
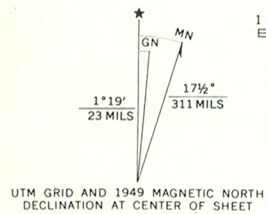
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
as part of the Department of the Interior program
for the development of the Missouri River Basin
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods
Aerial photographs taken 1944. Field check 1949.
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Wyoming coordinate system,
west central zone

Red tint indicates area in which only
landmark buildings are shown

Dashed land lines indicate approximate location

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 12, shown in blue

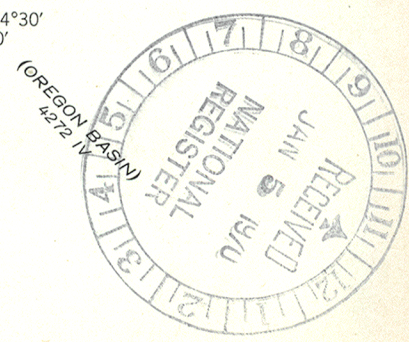


Medium-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Unimproved dirt ———
U. S. Route ——— State Route ———

CODY, WYO.
N4430-W10900/15

1949

AMS 4173 II-SERIES V774





604 East 25th Street, Box 309, Cheyenne, Wyo. 82001

Telephone: Area Code 307 — 777-7695

LYLE BENTZEN
President

STANLEY K. HATHAWAY
Governor

PAUL H. WESTEDT
Director

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Hilltop Addition
Douglas 82633
BILL NATION, Treasurer
2221 Van Lennen Avenue
Cheyenne 82001

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Thayne 83127
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Evanston 82930
Duane Redman
Dubois 82513

January 26, 1970

Mr. Robert Gamble
Office of Archeology and
Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Gamble:

I apologize for my delay regarding the Colter's Hell proposal for nomination to the National Register and in answering your question concerning the number of acres within the proposed district as well as ownership of those acres. The delay was because my attention was forced to other matters which took me out of the office for several days.

I think that it would be advisable to hold the Colter's Hell proposal in abeyance until I can make a trip to Cody and investigate land ownership a little more thoroughly--We may wish to file a change in the boundaries to exclude any possible private lands. I have been reviewing the National Register Newsletter in regard to privately owned land and it seems better to not include any if it is not necessary to do so. And in this case it may not be necessary. However, the Bureau of Reclamation withdrawal will in no way effect the proposal. This withdrawal concerned canal and power line placements long since installed and not injuring the site. The site is downstream from the reservoir and so can never be flooded.

It will be about a month before I will go to that section of the state. After I have investigated Court House records in Cody, I will contact you again. In the meantime I trust that any delay concerning Colter's Hell proposal will not effect the other proposed nominations.

Sincerely,

Ned Frost
Historian

NF:bao

"Dedicated to the Development of Public Outdoor Recreation"

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE **WYOMING**

Date Entered **AUG 14 1973**

Name

Location

Colter's Hell

**Gody vicinity
Park County**

Also Notified

**Hon. Gale W. McGee
Hon. Clifford P. Hansen
Hon. Tano Roncalio**

Director, Midwest Region

**State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Paul H. Wastedt, Director
Wyoming Recreation Commission
604 East 25th Street
Box 309
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001**

PHR MMOTT: pc1 8/15/73