



FORT LARAMIE NATIONAL
HISTORIC SITE

A Resource Assessment

aug 2004



NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

STATE
OF THE
PARKS®

THE FORT LARAMIE ASSESSMENT

Fort Laramie National Historic Site



This painting by Richard Schlecht shows the fort as it looked in 1888.

In 1800, Thomas Jefferson predicted that it would take Americans "one hundred generations" to populate the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. Instead, it took less than four generations for Americans to sweep across the continent. What began as a trickle of explorers and mountain men evolved into a torrent of emigrants following established routes across North America.

Forts were established as trade centers and later as protection and supply posts for these westward bound Americans. The site that became known as Fort Laramie was established as a trading post called Fort William in 1834, ten years prior to

the peak of westward migration, and in 1849 it became a military post. It was one of the major fur trading and military posts in the American West. The fort was closed in 1890, and during the early years of the Depression, hope for saving the fort dwindled. Hopes were rekindled in 1936 when National Park Service representatives visited the site. Impressed with what they saw, they expressed interest in preserving the site to Wyoming Governor Leslie Miller, who launched a successful effort to persuade the Wyoming legislature to purchase the land and deed it to the federal government.

In 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established Fort Laramie National Monument, and in 1960, the site was renamed Fort Laramie National Historic Site. The park's size has been increased twice since original establishment and now totals 832 acres.

Today's visitors have the opportunity to learn about the history of the fort through a variety of interpretive programs. Several buildings, including Old Bedlam, the oldest building in Wyoming, have been restored to their historic appearance, helping visitors imagine what life at the fort was like in the mid-1800s.

The State of the Parks program was launched in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the National Park System. This report conveys the findings of a cultural resources and stewardship capacity assessment of Fort Laramie National Historic Site.

The current overall condition of **cultural resources** at Fort Laramie National Historic Site rates a "fair" score of 65 out of 100. A significant amount of research is needed to develop the park's ethnography program and systematically determine which American Indian tribes are traditionally associated with the site. A cultural anthropologist is needed to forge solid and lasting relationships with the identified groups. Some of the park's historic structures are threatened with deterioration, and a staff mason with specialized skills is needed to direct preservation efforts for lime grout based materials.

The park's **stewardship capacity** received a "poor" overall score of 56. The park has identified 46 unfunded resource stewardship projects totaling \$2,773,000. In addition, several important management plans are missing or in need of updates.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

ETHNOGRAPHY (PEOPLES AND CULTURES)—NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF PARK HISTORY MUST BE EXPLORED

SCORE: CRITICAL, 33 OUT OF 100

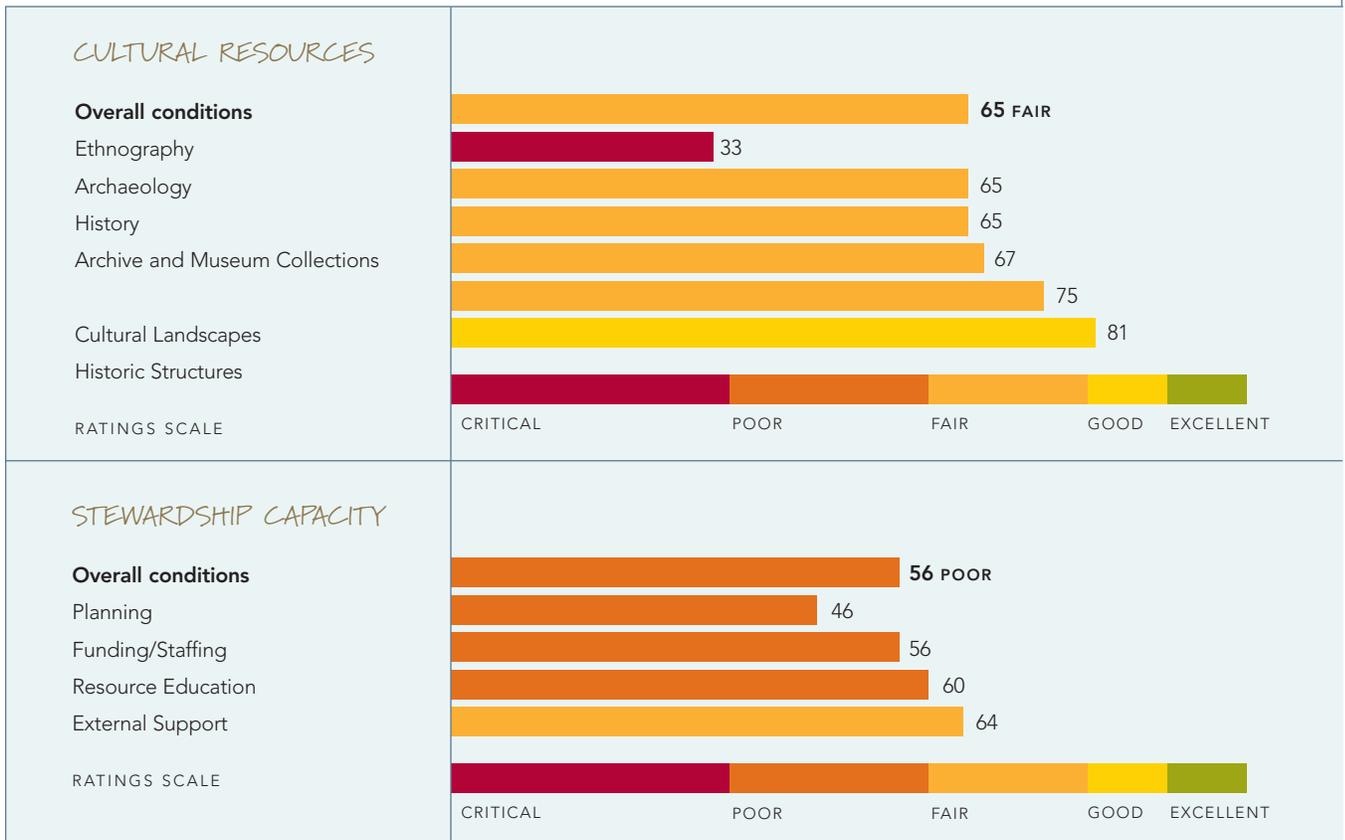
Military life and the fur trade are well interpreted at Fort Laramie. The park's handbook describes the fort's history in two parts: *Fort Laramie and the Changing Frontier* and *Life of the Soldier*. The *Changing Frontier* outlines the fur trade era, while *Soldier* concentrates on the military era. Part of the larger story, however, is missing. The park includes very little interpretation of the complex relationships between American Indians and the American military and settlers, in part, because there is little physical evidence to aid interpretation of the subject. This lack of physical evidence should not prevent the park from fully exploring these relationships.

Existing interpretation focuses on the impacts that Indians had on development of the fort, but there has been no formal examination of the impacts that the fort had on traditional Plains cultures. Conflicts between American Indians and the American military and settlers must be understood in the larger context of the clash of cultures that occurred on the American Plains as white settlers pushed westward and sought control of resources. The treaties that bear Fort Laramie's name were meant to mediate and re-order this clash of cultures, but these efforts ultimately failed. To fully understand the resulting conflicts and their consequences that shaped future relationships between American Indians

and the American military and settlers, the park must consult with the tribes that are traditionally associated with the fort and the surrounding region.

To date, no ethnographic studies have taken place at Fort Laramie National Historic Site, though the park has requested funding to conduct a study. Park staff believe there are 14 groups of people traditionally associated with the site, but because an Ethnographic Overview and Assessment has not been completed, this number is not definitively known. There is little direct contact between the park and people thought to be traditionally associated, but the park has made contact through U.S. mail. Staff send cop-

ies of environmental assessments to a number of American Indian groups, but a more proactive approach is needed to forge meaningful relationships with these groups. The park does not have a cultural anthropologist on staff to identify traditionally associated groups of American Indians and build strong relationships with them. Once traditionally associated groups of people have been identified, the park has an obligation to preserve and protect the resources in the park that are important to those people. For example, the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, signed by the United States and American Indian tribes, affected the Arapaho Nation, the Nakota/



The State of the Parks assessment methodology and other State of the Park reports can be found at <http://www.npca.org/stateoftheparks/> or contact the State of the Parks program at 970.493.2545

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The park should complete ethnographic research and develop healthy, long-term relationships with traditionally associated peoples to increase and improve the quality of interpretation surrounding the fort's effects on American Indian cultures and history. To facilitate these activities, the Park Service should consider hiring a cultural anthropologist to serve Fort Laramie and other nearby park units.
- Park staff should work to build relationships with adjacent landowners and develop strategies to protect the park's historic landscape by minimizing the likelihood of detrimental development on adjacent lands.
- The Park Service should upgrade the current museum specialist position to a museum curator position. The Park Service should hire a historian to conduct additional research and a term archivist to complete an archival survey, catalog more than 5,000 archival items, and develop finding aides.
- The Park Service should expand the interpretation program at Fort Laramie to include the roles of American Indians in the landscape and history of the fort.
- The park should become more active with the Vanishing Treasures program and work to acquire funds from the program to support archaeology projects and a staff person to work on preservation of lime grout based structures.
- The park should explore partnership possibilities with groups such as the Oregon Trail and Mormon Trail Associations and investigate the potential to establish a "friends" group.
- Nearly \$2.8 million is needed to fund the park's resource stewardship project needs. As a priority, Congress and the administration should appropriate \$400,000 so that the Park Service can provide electricity to all exhibit and storage buildings. This would allow for installation of fire suppression, security systems, and HVAC systems to protect the park's archive and museum collections.



The Park Service should work to develop relationships with the descendants of people who were traditionally affiliated with the fort and surrounding region.

HISTORY—HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDIES DATE TO THE 1960S

SCORE: FAIR, 65 OUT OF 100

The park's period of significance is from 1834-1890. Historic themes that occurred during this period at the fort include the fur trade, western emigration, the United States Army in the West, and changing American Indian roles. The primary research theme, as evidenced by park interpretation through signs and extant structures, is the United States Army era.

Historical research about Fort Laramie has been relatively prolific in the past 15 years. Research topics range from the Mormon Trail to the Pony Express to the social history of the fort. Future research projects that need funding include ethnographic studies, a study of the Bozeman Trail, and a history of the site's historic structures. Ethnographic and ethno-historical reporting is critical to the park's history. Such work should include interpretations of the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868 and provide the Indian perspective of these treaties and their modern day consequences. Some of the existing historical documents, such as the social history, include ethno-historical data, but an ethnographic report would tremendously enhance the history of the park. The existing administrative history, completed in 1980, documents park activities from 1834 to 1978. The administrative history is in need of an update, and new chapters, such as one focusing on historic preservation, are needed. Funds have been requested, but not secured, to complete this work.

The park has not had a historian on staff since 1989, but several Park Service historians have assisted the park by authoring the park's social history and other research reports. Declining regional staff levels have resulted in remaining employees becoming responsible for more and more parks. As a result, regional staff have less and less time to devote to each park. Because of the significance of Fort Laramie's role in American history, the park deserves to have a staff historian.

Dakota/Lakota (Teton bands of the Sioux), the Cheyenne, the Crow, the Hidatsa, the Mandan, other Sioux Indian bands, including Brule', Oglala, Miniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, Santee, and the Arikara Nation. These treaties had tremendous consequences for tribal groups that reverberate today.

The Park Service has called the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, "one of the most significant treaties negotiated with [the] Northern Plains Tribes." There are several locations, likely in and around the park, where American Indians camped while negotiating these treaties. Interpreting the sites and explaining the effects of the treaties on tribes would expand the importance of Fort Laramie in American history.

The park has historical base maps of the fort that provide an overview of sites and structures from 1841 to 1890. These maps indicate the presence of three distinct "Indian Camps" along the Laramie River, as well as the location of "Indian Scaffold Graves" west of the town of Fort Laramie's cemetery. Working with Park Service staff, these site locations should be confirmed by tribal groups, honored, and interpreted or not in a way that suits the desires of the tribes. Funds are needed to conduct such ethnographic research.

Fort Laramie should commit to understanding the American Indian story by securing funds for a systematic affiliation study and regularly consulting with associated groups. The park should also consider hiring a permanent cultural anthropologist, to be shared among several park units, to develop constructive, healthy, reciprocal, long-term relationships between traditionally associated tribes and the Park Service. Archaeology, oral histories, and historical documents will help Park Service staff and American Indians create enhanced interpretive programs that provide multiple perspectives and go beyond interpreting the military period of the fort.

ARCHAEOLOGY—EMBRACE
VANISHING TREASURES
OPPORTUNITY

SCORE: FAIR, 65 OUT OF 100

The archaeology unearthed at Fort Laramie to date is predominantly historic and represents farmsteads, hearths, and military structures. The park contains ten official archaeological sites that are identified in the Park Service nationwide database, and according to a Park Service archaeologist, there are nine more that need to be added. Minimal documentation exists for each site. Of the ten listed sites, one is in poor condition, four have been destroyed, and five are in unknown condition. According to staff, approximately 90 percent of the park has not been subjected to a systematic pedestrian survey. The Oregon Trail passes through part of the park, and surveys and documentation of that area are needed.

Funding does not exist for permanent on-site archaeology staff, though the park has been successful in undertaking archaeological work through partnerships with the State of Wyoming, consulting services, and regional specialists. For specific projects, the park receives archaeological assistance from the Park Service regional archeologist in Denver, the Park Service Rocky Mountain Cluster archeologist in Yellowstone National Park, the Park Service Midwest Archeological Center, the University of Wyoming, and the Wyoming State Archaeologist's office.

Archaeological research and planning at the park is handled by the Park Service's regional office. The Wyoming State Assistant Archaeologist is currently engaged in a three-year geophysical survey that includes evaluative testing. He is also

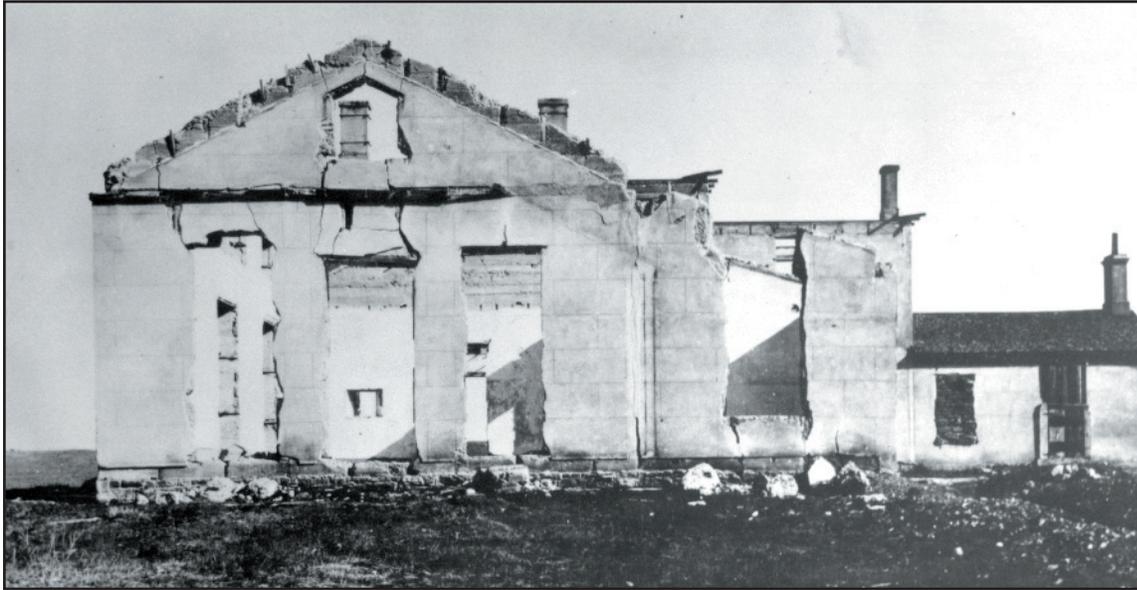
FORT LARAMIE—WORTHY OF
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
STATUS

Fort Laramie National Historic Site is nationally significant and historically important for architectural, settlement and exploration, and military reasons, and the park is associated with several nationally significant historical themes. Because of its multi-faceted significance, the park might be eligible for a change in its designation from a national historic site to a national historical park. According to National Park Service criteria, a historic site has "a single historical feature that was directly associated with its subject," while a historical park contains more than a single historical theme.

Fort Laramie does not have on-site archaeology staff, but relies on partnerships to get work done. Funding for projects and staff could come through the Park Service's Vanishing Treasures program.



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The hospital at Fort Laramie was built in 1873 and could accommodate 12 patients. The building is now in ruins.

updating the Archaeological Overview and Assessment. Investigations have been conducted at the quartermaster's dump, homesteads, and the post hospital. Still, major funding needs include: 1) a pedestrian survey of the park; 2) an investigation of American Indian sites known to exist within park boundaries; 3) continued work at the quartermaster dump site, which is threatened by Laramie River erosion, despite erosion mitigation measures; 4) the 1863 fortification ditch; 5) the 1834 to 1867 cemetery, and 1867 to 1890 cemetery; and 6) the continuing search for Fort William (an early fur trading post located on-site).

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for Fort Laramie's archaeology program exists through the fort's participation in the Park Service's Vanishing Treasures program. Fort Laramie is one of the few parks located outside of the American Southwest that is part of the program, one of the few forts in the program, and the only park in Wyoming that is part of the program. The Vanishing Treasures

program provides project money, funds staff positions, and provides training for participating park units. The park should take full advantage of this program by seeking funding for projects and staff. So far, Fort Laramie has received \$123,000 for lime grout preservation projects. The fort should also complete the Vanishing Treasures module in the Park Service archaeology database. Completion of this module could make the park more competitive and lead to increased program funding for Fort Laramie.

ARCHIVE AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS—UPGRADE THE MUSEUM STAFF POSITION

SCORE: FAIR, 67 OUT OF 100

Fort Laramie's museum and archive collections are extensive. The park's archive is one of the finest collections of documents related to the opening of the American West. It contains letters, diaries, photographs, ledgers, and more. Museum objects range from furniture,

household accessories, textiles, clothing, tools, farm machinery and implements, wagons, furs, hides, weapons, and military accoutrements to military vehicles. American Indian items in the collections include weapons, apparel, ceremonial, household and decorative material, and some prehistoric materials such as manos, metates, and stone tools.

The museum collection also contains almost 80,000 archaeological artifacts dating back to the first 1930s-era excavations; however, 92 percent of these are cared for at the Park Service Midwest Archaeological Center (MWAC) in Lincoln, Nebraska. More than 5,700 archival records associated with the artifacts are also housed safely at MWAC.

The largest threats to Fort Laramie's on-site museum objects and archive are a lack of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) to control relative humidity and temperatures. More than 12,600 history objects, which include site furnishings and textiles, are stored with no or minimum climate control. These items, many of them on display, are subsequently exposed to rodents, insects, ultra violet rays, and other dangers. In addition to these objects, more than 1,300 archival items are stored in buildings that have minimum climate control (heat and a dehumidifier only). Fire suppression and security systems are needed in most of the park's buildings. In order to provide these systems, the park must first provide electricity to all buildings.

In spite of the needs in the storage buildings that lack electricity, the park meets 84 percent of the standards established in the Park Service *Checklist for the Preservation and Protection of Museum Collections*. Some of the park's buildings have been updated and meet storage

standards. Calvary barracks, which houses the majority of the park's museum objects, has a climate control system, but still needs a security system. The visitor center in the commissary also has complete climate control to protect its exhibit items.

To properly protect the park's entire archive and museum collections, Fort Laramie staff need to know the conditions of the items that comprise their collections. The park should hire a team of experts to evaluate and appraise the collections, and a Collection Conditions Survey should be completed to document the conditions of all items. Roughly 3,000 archaeological items and more than 5,000 archival items have not been cataloged. Funding is needed to help Park Service staff execute the cataloging plan.

The current museum staff at Fort Laramie consists of a museum technician and a seasonal staff member. A museum specialist position is vacant because of the recent retirement of an important staff person. Before filling the museum specialist position, it is essential that this position be upgraded to that of a full-fledged curator. This is important for the following reasons: 1) a curator would be better equipped to provide on-the-job training for seasonal staff and the museum technician; 2) a curator would provide enhanced exhibit expertise for upgrading existing displays; 3) and a position upgrade has the potential to increase the profile and usage of the Fort Laramie collections through increased expert marketing of the collection to researchers. The complexity, scale, and historical significance of the Fort Laramie collection and archive call for a higher-level steward.

Fort Laramie needs to work with the Park Service Midwest Archaeological Center to find funding to process the remaining 5,000 archaeological items. The park's onsite archival collection of more than 2,000 items needs a term archivist to complete the remaining cataloging, transfer items to climate controlled storage, develop finding aids to enhance researchers' ability to use the archive, and complete an archival survey. After completion of the archival work, a curator could handle the maintenance of the archive and provide expert care of the museum collections and exhibits.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES—PROTECT ADJACENT LANDS FROM DEVELOPMENT

SCORE: FAIR, 75 OUT OF 100

The landscape at Fort Laramie has received a considerable amount of attention from park staff. A Landscape Analysis and Evaluation inventory was entered into the Park Service Cultural Landscape Inventory database in 2001. A Cultural Landscape Report was also completed in 2001, making Fort Laramie one of the few park units in the Intermountain Region to have such a report. Because of the landscape's association with the development of the western United States, the Park Service regional historical architect believes that Fort Laramie's cultural landscape is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, but it has not yet been listed.

Fort Laramie National Historic Site is a single historic landscape. Historic views from and within the park are contributing components of the park's historic fabric. Because adjacent lands are used primarily for agriculture, the views have retained an

open appearance. However, due to post-military agriculture introducing invasive non-native species, Fort Laramie's existing vegetation does not reflect the type of vegetation that existed during the site's historic period. The park has initiated efforts to restore the landscape, including vegetation programs aimed at maintaining plants that were historically present, a tree-planting program, plans to remove modern maintenance buildings located near the cavalry barracks to a less intrusive area of the park, and a native grass re-seeding project.

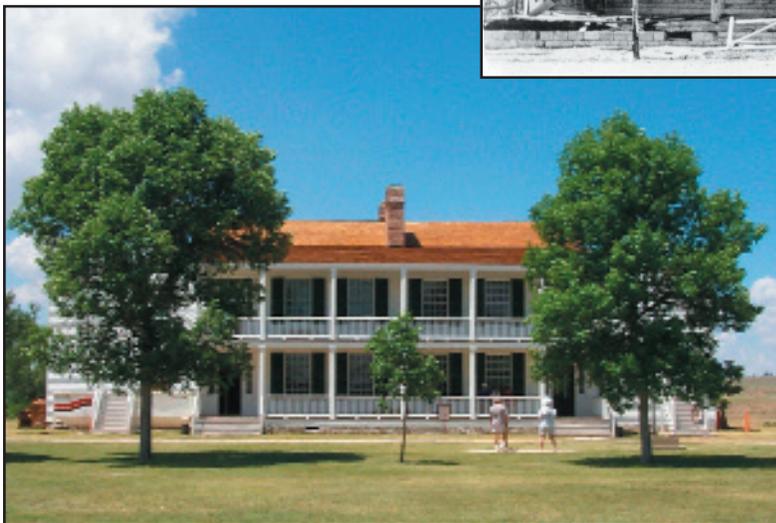
The greatest threat to Fort Laramie's landscape is possible future development along the park boundaries. Adjacent to the park are private farms and ranches that minimally impact the park's viewshed, but a lack of zoning laws means that undesirable developments could occur. Development could impact the park's viewshed, disturb natural quiet, and add light pollution to the park's dark night skies. These impacts would disrupt visitors' sense of being at a rugged, isolated, frontier post. Continuing to build healthy relationships with adjacent landowners could minimize the likelihood of detrimental development on their lands.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES—UNIQUE STONE STRUCTURES WITH COMPLEX LIME MORTAR

SCORE: GOOD, 81 OUT OF 100

Fort Laramie National Historic Site is designated a National Historic Landmark, the highest honor bestowed upon historic places in the United States. The designation is based on the site's level of significance in American history and its high level of historic integrity. Outstanding buildings at the park include Old Bedlam,

Old Bedlam once housed bachelor officers and served as headquarters of the fort. The building deteriorated after the fort was abandoned in 1890, but an intensive restoration effort that began in 1938 and was finished in 1964 returned the building to its former splendor.



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the oldest standing structure in the State of Wyoming; the cavalry barracks, storage room for the majority of the park's museum objects; and the commissary, which serves as the visitor center.

The park's period of significance spans from 1834 to 1890, encompassing the beginning of the Fur Trade Period (1834-1849) and the construction of the American Fur Company's Fort William trading post. However, it is the historic structures relating to the United States military era that are the focus of interpretation at Fort Laramie. These structures have been heavily researched and documented.

Staff work with the Fort Laramie Historical Association to develop education activities that are linked to the

interpretation of historic structures. There are a variety of tour options (audio, ranger-led, and teacher-led) available to students, and 36 interpretive plaques describe the historic significance of park buildings in the context of the park's place in American history. Two interpretive outhouses located on park grounds also aid in interpretation. Further, the most common resource for visitors is the park's official map and guide. It contains a large map showing the park's historic structures and information about those structures, such as construction date and brief histories. The map and guide also provides an overview of efforts to preserve the post after the U.S. Army abandoned the fort in 1890.

Fort Laramie's official List of

Classified Structures, or historic structures, is the most up-to-date in the entire Intermountain Region. Park Service regional historical architects assessed and updated structural conditions and threats and compiled the updated information. There are 46 structures on the list, of which 17 are in good condition, 20 are in fair condition, and nine are in poor condition. The high percentage of buildings in fair to good condition can be attributed to the park's superintendent, the facility manager, who has historic preservation training, his staff, and his work with Park Service regional historic architects. Staff make structural preservation a high priority and continually assess and try to improve resource conditions. The park is fortunate to have the preservation history dating from the 1930s for many of its buildings.

The largest threats to the park's structures include pest infestation, weathering, and aging, which cause structural deterioration of lime grout and wood structures. The Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), a Wyoming state threatened species, has taken up residence in several buildings such as the sutler's store. Staff are working to mitigate the structural deterioration caused by the bat infestation, and are working to secure funds to combat the hazardous materials and working conditions generated by the growing amounts of bat waste.

Structural deterioration of lime grout structures is caused by weather. These structures were built to be temporary and so they were not reinforced. Also, the composition of the lime grout is labor intensive and complicated, requiring specific technical skills. The buildings were not intended to be permanent and were built with no foundations, which is

another reason for the difficulty in maintaining them.

While staff are assertive in pursuing funding for historic structures maintenance, several needs remain. For example, most of the fort's historic structure reports are more than 40 years old, and new, up-to-date reports are needed. In addition, Fort Laramie needs a skilled mason to more fully provide for the preservation of the many significant lime grout structures located at the park. The variety of materials and architectural styles, combined with the number of buildings and standing ruins at Fort Laramie, present an ongoing maintenance struggle. The park also needs to install fire suppression systems in most of its historic structures, and security systems are needed in all structures. Conservatively estimated, Fort Laramie has more than \$1.5 million in deferred maintenance needs.

STEWARDSHIP CAPACITY

FUNDING AND STAFFING—UNFUNDED RESOURCE PROTECTION PROJECTS TOTAL NEARLY \$2.8 MILLION

SCORE: POOR, 56 OUT OF 100

The most significant factor affecting a park's ability to protect and steward its resources is the Congressional funding it receives. In 2004, Fort Laramie had a budget of \$1.2 million that supported its 16 permanent staff, seasonal employees, supplies and project work. These staff worked to serve the 50,000 people who visited the park in 2003, a number that is down from much higher levels a decade ago.

While the park needs new staff positions that would bring new expertise, such as a preservation mason in facility

management, more seasonal interpreters, and a term archivist, this assistance could largely be accomplished through a reallocation of staff. Only a few additional needs exist that might not be covered by reallocating staff.

The park has identified 46 important projects that should be undertaken to ensure resource protection, but these remain unfunded. The total price tag for these specific projects is nearly \$2.8 million. In addition, depending on which visitor center alternative is chosen, upwards of \$5 million is needed to complete that and the facility maintenance building project. Many of the highest priority resource projects involve fire protection and security. For example, the park currently has a failing fire protection system that places irreplaceable resources at risk; an electrical system needs to be extended to historic structures to provide protection against fire and theft; and increased protection against intruders is needed for park buildings.

Other resource needs involve on-going maintenance of the park's 46 historic structures. Within the list of unfunded projects, \$1.5 million is needed to address maintenance projects. About \$60,000 is needed to maintain the unique lime grout mixture that soldiers used to construct the fort's buildings. Its application requires specialized skill and knowledge that only a preservation mason can provide. Other projects involve rehabilitating entire buildings such as the commissary, rehabilitating parts of the cavalry barracks, the post trader's store, and the post surgeon's quarters, and repairing portions of structures that have deteriorated with age.

PLANNING—SEVERAL PLANS NEEDED

SCORE: POOR, 46 OUT OF 100

The park has done a reasonably good job developing plans that are essential for resource protection. However, Fort Laramie's 1993 General Management Plan focuses too much on the location of a new visitor center, instead of providing guidelines to direct management decisions. A new General Management Plan is needed.

Plans that are currently used to guide management include the Cultural Landscape Report (draft, 2001), Vegetation Management Plan (2002, addresses exotic invasive species), and an Inventory and Monitoring Plan (to identify all natural resources at the park and track their conditions). A Fire Management Plan has been drafted and should be finalized before the end of 2004.

There are some important planning gaps, however. Development of a Structural Fire Plan that would identify what historic objects should be removed first from each of the park's buildings in case of fire is a high priority for the park. The park's Historic Resources Management Plan dates back to 1973 and needs to be updated to meet current historic resources management scholarship. The park also needs a new Collection Management Plan. Planning for archaeological and ethnographic resources is in desperate need of funding. The ethnographic interpretation opportunities and Park Service requirements are not currently being met.

RESOURCE EDUCATION—SMALL STAFF EDUCATES THOUSANDS OF VISITORS

SCORE: POOR, 60 OUT OF 100

Communication with the public about a park's values and their significance to our nation is critical to resource stewardship. Fort Laramie spent nearly \$160,000 in fiscal year 2003 to employ two permanent and three seasonal interpretive rangers who made 48,000 visitor contacts and provided nearly 9,000 visitors with formal interpretive programs. The park's student educational program grew by more than 30 percent, reaching 4,400 students from area schools, and the park received an excellent rating from all teachers who brought students to the park in 2003. In addition, more than 16,000 visitors viewed the park's audio-visual program.

The park enjoyed these successes in spite of the fact that the visitor center at Fort Laramie is 40 years old, contains

outdated exhibits and audio-visual presentations, and does not have adequate space to conduct group programs. Thousands of visitors do not use the outdated center. A new facility is needed to serve visitors, but the use of an existing historic building or expanded adaptive use of the current building should be explored before new construction is considered.

Interpretation at the park focuses on the military, emigrants, women, pioneers, and the fur trade. Much more work is needed on the history of American Indians at the fort so that park staff can gain a deeper understanding of this history and communicate American Indian perspectives of historic events to park visitors.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT—ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS COULD BENEFIT PARK

SCORE: FAIR, 64 OUT OF 100

Fort Laramie staff alone cannot fully achieve park resource protection without help from others. Volunteers, partnerships, park support groups, and Congress make enormous contributions to help with resource protection efforts.

In fiscal year 2003, 177 volunteers contributed nearly 8,500 hours to the park, the equivalent of adding almost four employees to its staff. Volunteer projects included helping to organize the park's archives, archaeological research, interpretation, and helping to guide park tours for the disabled, which almost tripled in number from the previous year.

The Fort Laramie Historical Association manages the park's bookstore and provides the park with \$36,000 in support from the sale of books and other interpretive items each year. Potential for other partnerships exists with the Mormon Trail Association and the Oregon Trail Association. Formation of a "friends" group for Fort Laramie could also benefit the park.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- **Support or become a member** of the Fort Laramie Historical Association (www.fortlaramie.com), other regional organizations, or NPCA (www.npca.org/support_npca).
- **Volunteer in the Parks.** Many parks are looking for dedicated people who can lend a helping hand. To learn about opportunities at Fort Laramie National Historic Site, please visit www.nps.gov/volunteer/ or contact the park at 307.837.2221.
- **Become an NPCA activist.** When you join our activist network, you will receive Park Lines, a biweekly electronic newsletter with the latest park news and ways you can help. Join by visiting www.npca.org/takeaction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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STATE OF THE PARKS®

On average, less than 10 percent of the National Parks Service's annual budget is earmarked for management of cultural resources and just 20 percent is targeted for natural resources. In most years, only about 7 percent of permanent park employees work in jobs directly related to preservation of park resources.

The National Parks Conservation Association initiated the State of the Parks® Program in 2000 to assess the condition of cultural and natural resources in national parks, forecast future conditions of those resources, and determine how well equipped the National Park Service is to protect the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policy-makers and the National Park Service improve conditions in national parks and ensure a lasting natural, historical, and cultural legacy for future generations.

State of the Parks® cultural resource assessment methodology is based on National Park Service cultural resource management guideline

standards. For information about the methodology, other reports in this series, and the State of the Parks® Program, contact National Parks Conservation Association, State of the Parks® Program, P.O. Box 737, Fort Collins, CO 80522. Phone: 970-493-2545; Fax: 970-493-9164; E-mail: stateoftheparks@npca.org.

The National Parks Conservation Association, established in 1919, is this country's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving, and enhancing the U.S. National Park System for present and future generations by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them.

- * Nearly 300,000 members
- * 8 regional offices
- * 35,000 activists

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