Resource Management Issues and Opportunities

Ranching, Farming, and Homesteading in Wyoming 1860-1960

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Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources

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Front photograph: Johnson County irrigated pasture and Big Horn Mountains.
Photo: Michael Cassity, 2006.

Resource Management Issues and Opportunities Associated with Ranching, Farming, and Homesteading in Wyoming

The management of historic resources associated with ranching, farming, and homesteading in Wyoming is a major opportunity and responsibility for a multitude of people with different backgrounds, professions, and interests, but for some professionals and for federal agencies that management is a requirement. Much of this is simply being a steward of cultural resources and in some instances that stewardship is a public trust. The historic context study, *Wyoming Will Be Your New Home: Ranching, Farming, and Homesteading in Wyoming 1860–1960*, is intended as a guide for use by those professionals and agencies in the evaluation of the resources, but it is a beginning, not an end, in the management of the resources. In particular there remain some issues that require separate and specific attention. One set of issues concerns how to increase awareness of the resources and their significance, another concerns what we do not know and where we need to explore further in the past to understand those resources better, while yet a third includes the various forces and factors that threaten the resources on the ground.

I. Education

In 2007 the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office completed its comprehensive statewide historic preservation plan, *On the Road to Preservation*, which identified seven major challenges for historic preservation.[1] One of the fundamental challenges in that document was the need to "increase public education and outreach efforts." This objective has a special relevance to the management of historic resources associated with homesteading, ranching, and farming, not so much because people are unaware of that heritage in the state, but because that awareness is too often limited to the romantic, the episodic, and the dramatic. Given that the vast majority of the resources in the state covered by this historic context will be evaluated under Criterion A, it is essential that people involved in the management or use of those resources become aware of the historic patterns of which

1. Judy K. Wolf, ed., *On the Road to Preservation: Wyoming's Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2007–2015* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, 2007).

they may be a part, as opposed to just their architectural qualities or their archeological potential. A deeper understanding of the historical patterns associated with this part of the Wyoming past would contribute significantly to the respect, sensitivity, and preservation attention that those resources deserve. This education effort needs to target several audiences including the professional staffs of the preservation agencies and their partners in the state, independent cultural resource consultants, public schools, and the public generally.

The first step in this is to provide training for cultural resource professionals. This has been done previously, in training that drew upon a previous study of ranching and homesteading in the Powder River Basin, with positive results and such training needs to be provided perhaps on a regular, rotating, basis. Ideally, other entities than just those whose daily responsibility it is to manage resources can be included, such as legislators, Wyoming Business Council members, Certified Local Governments, Chambers of Commerce, local urban renewal agencies, and representatives from private organizations and other local, state, and federal entities whose missions and activities from time to time intersect with cultural resource responsibilities.

It is important to reach beyond the cultural resource professionals and the statewide plan encourages exactly that kind of effort. With that in mind, the current Historic Context project has been tasked with preparing other materials, such as a public document for distribution and materials to be made available via the World Wide Web. There may be other opportunities as well for disseminating information about this part of Wyoming's history and those should be pursued to the extent that imagination and resources permit.

II. Opportunities and Needs for Further Research

Anyone who has seriously practiced the pursuit of historical inquiry understands intimately that history is not a static discipline, not a body of information that can be neatly segmented into a matrix of pigeonholes into which events, people, and developments can be neatly sorted as if that categorization itself gives those events, people, and developments significance. Rather, the study of history is an infinitely expanding field, where all concepts and categories are subject to revision and reformulation and where new insights, new evidence, and new formulations are always possible and always needed. The other side of this is that additional research is always needed not just to keep the field healthy and alive but to assure that the subject examined is understood to the greatest depth possible. At one time the study of Wyoming history, as with the study of much of the nation's history, was limited to the chronicling of the state's (and territory's) political institutions and their issues in a fairly narrow context. While professional historical attention has subsequently shed light on many other aspects of the state's history, much remains to be explored. This is not just an academic issue; it is an issue of immediate and pressing relevance to the current study.

It is directly relevant to the very idea of preparing and using a statement of Historic Context. The technical mandate for a National Register of Historic Places statement of historic context is to provide "a standardized means of describing and explaining the significance of a wide variety of properties." To take this further, however, and to repeat the point at which this study began, the notion of "historical context" involves the effort to identify the larger set of circumstances and forces that illuminate specific events by suggesting broader patterns of which those events may be a part or to which they may even be exceptions. Historical context thus is identified by determining what else is happening at the same time and also what happened before and after—there and elsewhere. Facts and events alone do not carry the meaning, or significance, that they do when they are combined with other facts and events so that patterns can emerge. And this study has articulated some of these patterns to help others identify the significance of particular resources they encounter.

This study is not, however, the last word on the subject. This study, rather, is designed to serve as a starting point for the investigation of the history of homesteading, ranching, and farming in the state. There is much yet to be learned. Some of this information and meaning—a honing and perfection of context—will come from surveys of historic properties in specific areas or properties of a specific type. Some will come in further studies

to be commissioned or undertaken in-house. Some will come incrementally in the preparation of National Register nominations or determinations of eligibility of specific properties. Multiple property and thematic nominations are an excellent way to both identify associated resources and to increase our knowledge of the activities with which they were associated. Additional study is necessary to fill in some of the data gaps, revise prevailing assessments, and chart new territory to be explored. This is in the nature of historical inquiry. It is always subject to revision and to greater inquiry. Without that thoughtful and creative historical analysis of the past, we will be locked into the views of others, hoping, with our eyes closed, that they were right and will continue to be right no matter their human limits and no matter what new evidence suggests.

There remains much that we do not know, and that we need to know, to manage those resources better, more wisely. The following areas for exploration present significant opportunities for adding to our knowledge of the state's agricultural history and will doubtless contribute to other parts of the Wyoming heritage also.

1. Irrigation.

At a number of points this study was able to touch on the development of irrigation in Wyoming as an element of homesteading and as a contributing factor in the evolution of ranching and stock-growing as well as other agricultural operations. On the other hand, the development of irrigation projects in Wyoming is a vast and complex subject that requires extensive research and its own, separate historic context. An indication of what is involved in this subject can be found in Casper newspaper entrepreneur A. J. Mokler's comment that "The census of 1930 shows that Wyoming has 2,577 irrigation projects, including Federal, Carey Act, and private development—the latter predominating. These projects deliver water to 1,233,604 acres of land, but are capable of irrigating 1,650,755 acres, or 417,151 more acres than are at present receiving water. It is estimated that fully 3,000,000 acres can be brought under irrigation before full development is reached."[2] Begun as largely privately financed projects that then sold land and water rights to individuals, the reclamation process moved to state projects, and then to federal projects, with each encountering a host of issues (political rivalries, legal and financial problems, engineering techniques, land sales and other

2. Alfred J. Mokler, "Wyoming has more than 2,500 Irrigation Projects," undated typed statement in WPA Collections, subject file 1486.

distribution, technical abilities and progress, bailouts of private, troubled projects by public funds, and more) both unique and shared, and encountered difficulties of one kind or another, some of which have been raised in this study. The physical features associated with irrigation and reclamation likewise require separate treatment, from the large dams and reservoirs to the check gates to the ditches and laterals.

2. Ethnicity and Race.

Studies continue to grow and multiply in this fascinating area and they often generate fresh information with new insights and understandings of old issues and patterns, providing at once a richer texture and a deeper comprehension of historic patterns. While research has broadened our understanding of different parts of the Wyoming population, with additional attention to people of Mexican heritage and to the Basque population, both importantly identified with farming and livestock operations, much remains to be learned about both of these groups including geographic and economic patterns, the subtler issues involved with pressures for assimilation, and the retention of distinctive cultural identities. In this, of course, it is imperative to examine not just the distinctive cultural patterns of these groups but also the complex relationship between work and culture. In the case of both Hispanic and Basque experiences in Wyoming, there is often an intriguing dynamic where pre-industrial cultures and work patterns—in a sophisticated and even global meaning—existed next to systems of work that were increasingly industrial in their organization, mechanical in their operation, impersonal in their regard for the worker, and generally corrosive of social bonds in their application.

Two other groups also beg for attention. It is increasingly clear that Americans of Japanese ancestry were an important part of the agricultural workforce in Wyoming well before the Heart Mountain "Relocation Center" was constructed at the beginning of World War II. This work force presumably included both Issei (emigrated to the U.S.) and Nisei (born in the U.S. of immigrant parents). Much more needs to be learned, and one question that can serve as a starting focus for such a study is the connection of the stream of labor with the increasing industrialization of agriculture in the state. The utilization of this group of people in the sugar beet industry before the war is clear and there are scattered references to their presence before the 1930s. This raises two questions that need to be ad-

dressed. One concerns the extent and size of the pre-World War II Wyoming population of Japanese Americans, and the other involves going beyond work and into culture to explore the institutions, values, and traditions within that community of people. It is important to note that each of these research inquiries represents not just an effort to direct polite attention to people who have too often been neglected and marginalized but is part of a vital, critical effort to understand the larger social arrangement of which they were an important part; to understand the people on the margins of an established society is also to understand better the people at the center.

The other group is the immigrants known as Germans from Russia. Distinct from other Germans, these people were descended from Germans who moved into Russia in the late eighteenth century but who migrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to escape the increasing repression of the Tsar. They appear to have settled a number of places in Wyoming, especially in the Big Horn Basin and the lower North Platte Valley, but also around Saratoga, and maybe at other points as well. They appear at first to have been associated with the emerging irrigated farms as family labor units. Various accounts, with unknown actual research bases, suggest that their roles as a labor force in the sugar beet fields was short-lived since they quickly established their own independent farms. Additional research would help distinguish their role in Wyoming agriculture and also help identify particular construction techniques and designs that might be associated with this group.

There are two groups conspicuously missing from these pages, both too frequently also missing from the broader histories of Wyoming. One has to do with the African American population on the homesteads, the ranches, and the farms of Wyoming. Historian Todd Guenther has made valiant steps in his research and has published significant essays in professional journals on the experiences of African Americans in Wyoming, Nebraska, and South Dakota.[3] The number of African Americans in Wyoming has always been small, but their experience, as Guenther's research shows, was invariably associated with obstacles and hazards and injustices that exceeded the already substantial ordeals of their white counterparts on the plains. More work needs to be

3. See: Todd Guenther, "The Empire Builders: An African American Odyssey in Nebraska and Wyoming," *Nebraska History*, 89 (Winter 2008): 176-200; Todd Guenther, "Lucretia Marchbanks: A Black Woman in the Black Hills," *South Dakota History*, 31 (Spring 2001): 1-25; Todd Guenther, "'Could These Bones Be from a Negro?'" Some African American Experiences on the Oregon – California Trail, *Overland Journal*, 19 (Summer 2001): 43-55; Todd R. Guenther, "'Y'all call me Nigger Jim Now, but Someday You'll Call me Mr. James Edwards': Black Success on the Plains of the Equality State," *Annals of Wyoming*, 61 (Fall 1989): 20-40. in addition, see Todd R. Guenther, "At Home on the Range: Black Settlement in Rural Wyoming, 1850-1950," M. A. Thesis, University of Wyoming, 1988.

done in this area and fortunately Guenther is currently preparing a study of African American ranchers in Wyoming.

The second is the Native American population of the territory and state. The history of the various Indian nations in Wyoming obviously intersects with the history of farming and ranching and homesteading at many points. That history is both tragic and complex, often at the same time, as white farmers, ranchers, and homesteaders sometimes viewed the previous occupants of the land they worked to transform as obstacles (see, for example, the strident comments by Joseph Nimmo in Chapter 2 in the Historic Context). But if farming and ranching among whites was sometimes characterized by two (or more) different worldviews, and if farming and ranching included different ways of life that were themselves evolving, if they included the challenges of mechanization and competing systems of land use, and if they involved the role of the government sometimes as adversary, the social environment was that much more complex and volatile when Shoshone and Arapaho people confronted the same issues. Consider the situation in a single year as recorded by Loretta Fowler in her study of Arapaho political economy:

> In 1886, when Arapahoes were farming at a minimal level, the agent took half their hay crop in return for permission to use the mowing machines that had been purchased for the agency. Encroachment on reservation resources by cattlemen and adventurers was rampant. Trespassing stock grazed freely on the reservation; much of the Indian-owned government-issue cattle was stolen, as was reservation timber.[4]

Add to this the subsequent history of replacing communal lands with individually allotted lands, of competition for irrigation water, of acculturation and issues of cultural identity, and of undermining traditions of provision and distribution, and it becomes obvious how little we understand the cultural, social, and economic dynamics involved with Wyoming's Native American farmers and ranchers. This is an area where attention is sorely needed.

3. Women and Homesteading, Farming, and Ranching.

The study of women on Wyoming's ranches, farms, and homesteads is not the *terra incognita* it once was, thanks to a growing number of studies both in Wyoming and elsewhere that raise questions of theory and of application, but more work remains to be done. The single most focused such study, that by Dee Garceau of women in Sweetwater County, has a sharper focus on women in the mining towns than on the farms and ranches and

4. Loretta Fowler: *Arapahoe Politics, 1851-1978: Symbols in Crises of Authority* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 81.

is largely derivative. Paula Bauman's work on women homesteaders is stronger but needs extension to more parts of the state and to draw upon the growing body of work in women's history that examines the lives of rural women in other parts of the country. Moreover, the study of rural women in the years since the 1920s is a significant subject awaiting a first-class researcher who can deal with the problems of class, technology, gender, and modernization all at once.

4. Land Law, Land Issues.

It has been more than a generation since Paul Gates conducted his pathbreaking investigations and wrote his award winning studies on the development of land law, especially the laws governing homesteading. It is past time for those issues to be reconsidered. Gates's conclusions, some of which were overly stretched, were taken as gospel by too many historians and were subsequently repeated without the careful inquiry that Gates himself had used and without the careful choice of words that Gates himself had employed to hedge his assessments. The result has been that homesteading in arid places like Wyoming has been almost universally dismissed as a foolish effort, encouraged by unwise laws, and carrying tragic consequences for the homesteaders, the land, and others who could have put the land to better use. Paul Gates himself came to lament some of this distortion of history, noting in the early 1960s that

> Recent textbook writers have declared that the Homestead Law was "not a satisfactory piece of legislation"; it was "a distressing disappointment"; "farmers only benefited slightly" from it; it ended "in failure and disillusionment;" two-thirds of all "homestead claimants before 1890 failed."

Gates also observed that after land commissioners in the Cleveland administration focused on misuses of the land laws, "Historians have reflected this jaundiced view, relying upon these continued reiterations, and not finding much in the reports about the hundreds of thousands of people successfully making farms for themselves." Finally, Gates also wrote the following: "I must confess that I may have contributed to this misunderstanding some twenty-six years ago . . . ."[5]

This study has attempted to reconsider some of the uses of the homestead laws in Wyoming, but much, much more remains to be done. The field, contrary to the judgment of many in the historical profession who have closed the books on the issue, is actually wide open for research.

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5. Paul W. Gates, "The Homestead Act: Free Land Policy in Operation, 1862-1935," in Howard W. Ottoson, ed., *Land Use Policy and Problems in the United States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963): 31-33.

5. General Research Needs.

A number of assorted lesser issues invite historical inquiry so that we can understand this aspect of our past better. Ranching, farming, homesteading, and other related topics central to this Historic Context have too often been reduced to caricature and frozen in time as unchanging elements on the Wyoming landscape—physically, culturally, socially, and economically. Studies of single ranches, farms, and homesteads over a long period of time, or of groups of them, could help redress this by focusing on the system of production (for home use or for market), the integration of livestock and crop production, the role of barter and the economic organization of the operation, the role of technology and hired labor, generational changes, and, of course, the mix of gender along with other relationships. Not to be neglected in such studies should be an inquiry into the ultimate fate of these operations since a great number of them ceased to exist for one reason or another. hese ranches and farms did not die because of old age; there were specific factors at work that the ubiquitous "hard times" fails to capture, and the bankruptcy, foreclosure, or other distressed transfer of the farms and ranches is too little understood both quantitatively and qualitatively.[6]

Which then leads to a final observation. The historical records revealing the lives, circumstances, and experiences of Wyoming's homesteaders, ranchers, and farmers are, like other historical documents, rich, vibrant, and almost always revealing of something more, or other, than what was intended. They are also more limited than one would hope in the pursuit of questions that emerge, but this too is characteristic of the historical research process. hat is especially disconcerting, though, is that the records of these operations actually decline as the chronology moves closer to the present. This too is a reflection of modern society where letters and diaries and journals and other personal and business accounts are sacrificed to other less permanent forms of communication and less revealing forms of accounting. he Wyoming State Historical Society and the Wyoming State Archives have embarked on oral history efforts in the state and some of those interviews have been used in this study. Those continuing efforts, when targeting the state's farmers and ranchers and thoughtfully exploring the tremendous issues of the recent past, the challenging valley through which they have journeyed, can be of inestimable, but doubtless huge, value. In all probability there remain a very few people even who can relate something of the homesteading experience too—for a short while longer.

6. An example of such a study in more recent times, in the Midwest, is the intriguing anthropological study of the loss of land and homes in the farm crisis of the 1980s: Kathryn Marie Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

III. Impacts and Threats to the Resources

The ranching and homesteading resources of Wyoming occur in an environment where often they are not only unprotected from natural and human forces, but are even extremely vulnerable and fragile. They are not in a museum, but are located where they were built and used, at least in most cases where they are eligible or contributing features; they are situated in places where life goes on all around them. They must be managed with that greater environment in mind and the first step in that management is to be aware that they are vulnerable. There are several groups of forces that can be negotiated, mitigated, or otherwise included in the management process—the Section 106 process. Some of these impacts have to do with the homesteading, farming, and ranching world of which they were a part and which continues to evolve. Another set involves a general pattern of urban and suburban development and expansion. And a third category can be found in the state's mineral and energy development. Wyoming's homesteading and ranching resources are fading with each season, and they are disappearing not just as a result of the forces of nature, but at the hands of organized society and too many have already been lost. But the management of these resources is an opportunity as well as a requirement, and addressing the resources and the world of which they are a part today is what the management of these resources is all about.

1. Rural, Agricultural Consolidation.

In the years since 1960, the history of ranching and farming in Wyoming, generally heirs in one way or another to a broader legacy of homesteading and agricultural operations, has been a history that is not always sensitive to its own roots. No matter how much individual farmers and ranchers value their heritage and attempt to preserve it, the practical realities of modern agribusiness are not nearly so kind and deferential to these historic resources. One of the important processes at work in the twentieth century history of ranching and farming in Wyoming has been that of consolidation of agricultural operations, and this pattern has itself taken a toll. In 1935 Wyoming had 17,487 farms and ranches. By 1950 that number had dropped to 12,614 and by 1978 it had fallen to 8,040—less than half the number found in the middle of the Depression. And the size of the remaining farms has increased, from 1,610 acres in 1935 (which was more than twice as large as they had been fifteen years earlier), to

3,651 acres in 2002 (down from 4,182 acres in 1978). Although there has been an increase in the numbers of farm units since then, with a reported 11,069 farms and ranches in 2007, the large pattern remains clear: the multitude of farms and ranches that once operated in the state have been replaced by fewer operations, and even when the trend shifted so that the number has recovered somewhat, that does not mean that the original farms and ranches have been recovered and reconstituted. They have, rather, been replaced by different operations. To express it differently, a great many of the farms and ranches that once existed in Wyoming have not continued, have not survived the turbulence and pressures of agriculture in the last thirty, sixty, or seventy years.

The impact from consolidation is two fold. In the first place, buildings and structures that were once active components of the operations were no longer needed as diversified agriculture was replaced by more specialized forms. That is nobody's fault in particular, but just a part of the pattern of change whereby the tools, purposes, practices, and functions of agricultural properties evolved, sometimes with incredible speed and power. Those structures that were not needed, those that were not to be recycled into another kind of building, were generally not maintained; priorities simply shifted. In the process, though, sometimes they have even been destroyed. Sometimes they have been moved to another location. Often they have been modified so that they could be put to another use. But many times they have just been left to decay. That is one impact and it has been adverse to the extreme. There is another impact, too, of the changing nature of farming and ranching and the shift in priorities and practice. A building that is unused is generally also a building that is not maintained, and building that is not maintained is a building that falls ready prey to natural elements as well as to other forces of destruction. Often remote, or at least out of sight as well as out of use, they have faded as priorities by new owners, by different operators, by different generations, with different visions of their role on the landscape. Understandable though it is, removal, destruction, renovation, vandalism, weather, wildlife, and sheer neglect have taken a toll on those buildings and structures.

2. Urban and Suburban Development.

Along with the decline of the farming and ranching population has come the decline also of the small towns and villages that once served those scattered farms and ranches. With people moving from the farms and ranches to towns and with the small town merchants following them, Wyoming's cities, never exactly metropolitan areas, have nonetheless expanded their boundaries and encroached upon what previously was often agricultural land. It is not unusual to drive into one of the state's larger communities and see at the edges barns and other remnants of farmsteads

surrounded by housing developments. In some of the more rapidly growing communities this is especially the case and those communities may even be the destination resort areas, from Jackson and Wilson to Sheridan and Buffalo; in fact, any community that is growing rather than declining is bound to confront this question sooner or later. Sometimes this expansion means wholesale clearance of structures on the lands for the development of houses and businesses. Sometimes it means that the historic resources are surrounded by a sea of modern development, in which case the loss of setting is undeniable and the pressure for the loss of the physical resources mounts. The pressures for growth are powerful and they need to be factored into management plans. When city and county management plans acknowledge and guide impacts of urban and suburban development on extant cultural resources, historic resources can be managed as well as other resources—all of them assets to the community.

3. Energy and Mineral Development.

Mineral development is not new in Wyoming and the mineral resources of the state (and territory) have long attracted investors and extractors and most parts of the state can report fields where these industries at one time were busy, and some even flourished, and some still continue. The coal mines of the southern and southwestern parts of the state and the coal mines of the Powder River Basin, the nineteenth century mines at Almy and Hanna and Cambria have had their own cycles of boom and bust, and those cycles have continued through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. And the exploration for and drilling for oil and gas has also been spread around the state. In the years since the end of the period of significance in this Historic Context, however, the major impacts have come from the expansion of coal mining activity in the Powder River Basin and in the various fields in the western part of the state in the 1970s and 1980s, and also uranium mining in the northeast and central parts of Wyoming about the same time. Uranium mining faded, the oil industry is not as pervasive as it once was, though still prominent, and coal mines continue to set records of production, but the boom years for those minerals faded at various points by the 1980s.

The more recent and more aggressive mineral development has been that associated with Coal Bed Methane, a form of natural gas found in and extracted from coal deposits. This gas has been evident for a good while. When the writer Allan Seager reflected back on the summer of his youth in 1923, which he spent at the ranch of a relative outside Sheridan, he recalled one experience in which he and some other young men took a herd of horses to a ranch far to the east, across Powder River. Seager was a newcomer to the ranch, and to the locale, and the rancher introduced him to the area in a curious way. Seager tells that

the rancher he identified as Hargraves "asked me if I had ever been on Powder River before, and when I said I hadn't, he took me to his artesian well. Water was flowing out of a four-inch pipe. Hargraves struck a match and held it to the mouth of the pipe, and I had before me the entertaining spectacle of fire and water coming from the same point. The match lit a blue flame about a foot long that whistled straight out of the pipe, like a torch."[7] While this gas could have been butane or propane, the odds are that this Powder River rancher was cursed with the nuisance of coal bed methane gas in his water. And in that gas lay the basis of the recent boom in the Powder River Basin. In addition the development of natural gas fields elsewhere, including the Jonah Field of the Green River valley, the Pinedale Anticline, the Wamsutter gas field, and other smaller fields have transformed much of the natural and built landscape of the state as well as its social and cultural landscape too. In many instances the expansion has adversely impacted cultural resources, including those associated with ranching and homesteading, since the early 1990s when this development began to soar.

Of course, in the last decade or more, the mineral development has been enormous, and the drilling for and capturing of it continues to increase. This has generated an impact and it will continue to cause an impact on the historic resources of the area. The nature of this impact is more than meets the eye at first glance. The roads for drilling, the drilling rigs themselves, the well pads remaining, and the associated ponds for the water extracted with the gas, as well as the increased traffic and general infrastructure, have overlaid a topography where once the windmills and stock dams were sometimes the most prominent built features, and this activity and its potential impact on historic resources continues to grow. Resources may be compromised simply by being located where a well is to be drilled, where a pond is to be created, or where roads are planned to access the well pads, and in those cases the adverse impact is unmistakable and concrete.

But there is also the matter of viewsheds and indirect impacts. The integrity of a resource includes not just its physical authenticity and location, but its association with, in this case, ranching and farming and homesteading, and its feeling, the ability to convey what it would have felt like to have lived or worked on that ranch or farm. Since an essential element of that life was often a conspicuous degree of isolation, the presence of nearby modern mineral activity can obviously compromise that integrity of feeling. The National Register defines feeling as "a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time."

7. Allan Seager, "Powder River in the Old Days," *The New Yorker*, August 17, 1957, 32.

Wind farm near Arlington. Photo: Michael Cassity, 2008.

In the effort to draw upon alternative energy sources, there has also been a major push within the last decade in the development of wind energy through the construction of wind turbine farms in places in Wyoming where the wind blows, which is a considerable part of the state. The American Wind Energy Association has tabulated that construction and indicates that, as of the end of March 2009, Wyoming had ten major wind farms, seven of them with more than twenty-nine turbines.[8] The Glenrock and Rolling Hills Wind Farms in Converse County each reported ninety-nine turbines while the Wyoming Wind Energy Center near Evanston reported one hundred forty-four. The continuing expansion and development of new wind farms is proceeding quickly, powerfully, and sometimes with equally powerful adverse effects that derive from construction, from compromised viewsheds (both day and night) and from the miles of access roads that serve the farms.

Thus mineral or industrial development within the viewshed becomes a critical matter to be addressed, not in a black and white, absolute, manner, but in a way that considers the integrity of the building, structure, district, or landscape and the nature of the development and how visible and obtrusive the threat is—how much it compromises the sense of the history that the resource would otherwise be able to convey. The adverse impacts can be, thus, not just actions that take place physically on top of the resource but also those that occur some distance away, even across a property line. They can be not just obvious but also extremely subtle.

8. American Wind Energy Association, Resources, on the world wide web at http://www.awea.org/projects/Projects.aspx?s=Wyoming

4. "Benign Neglect."

Industrial, mineral, and wind energy development can (and has and will) seriously and permanently impact these historic resources. But an equally powerful and destructive force and an equally adverse impact as the *active* obliteration or compromising the integrity of the resources, has been the process of what is sometimes, but mistakenly, referred to as "benign neglect." It is indeed neglect, but it is not at all benign. Sometimes that neglect has been intentional, but often it has not, under the flawed assumption that if someone is not actively and consciously prying the boards loose or burning the buildings down, it is being managed in accordance with responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. The default choice of "not managing," is itself, of course, only a more subtle form of management with equally devastating results, the same as sanctioning the destruction of the building. To watch while the remnants of the past crumble or are carried away, or to turn away from the fatal process of "mouldering ruins" while structures continue to decay, is to contribute to the erosion of the marks of historic human activity in the area. "Benign neglect" constitutes an abdication of the responsibility mandated by law and violates sound resource management principles.

At a minimum, the threats and impacts to the ranching, homesteading, and stock-raising resources of Wyoming require a proactive program of identification, determination of eligibility or contributing status, and sustained preservation management.