

Independence Lock NHL
Aug. 1975



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Independence Rock NHT

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Independence Rock. An outstanding landmark on the Oregon-Mormon California Trail. Devil's Gate may be seen in the left background. A painting by William H. Jackson.



Independence Rock, one of the best known landmarks on the Oregon Trail, in Wyoming. Located about 65 miles southwest of Casper, Wyoming. Camera pointing to the northeast.

Photo by Mattison
July 1959



Independence Rock, ^{wyo} one of the most significant sites on the Oregon-
California Trails. _^

National Park Service Photograph, July 1959



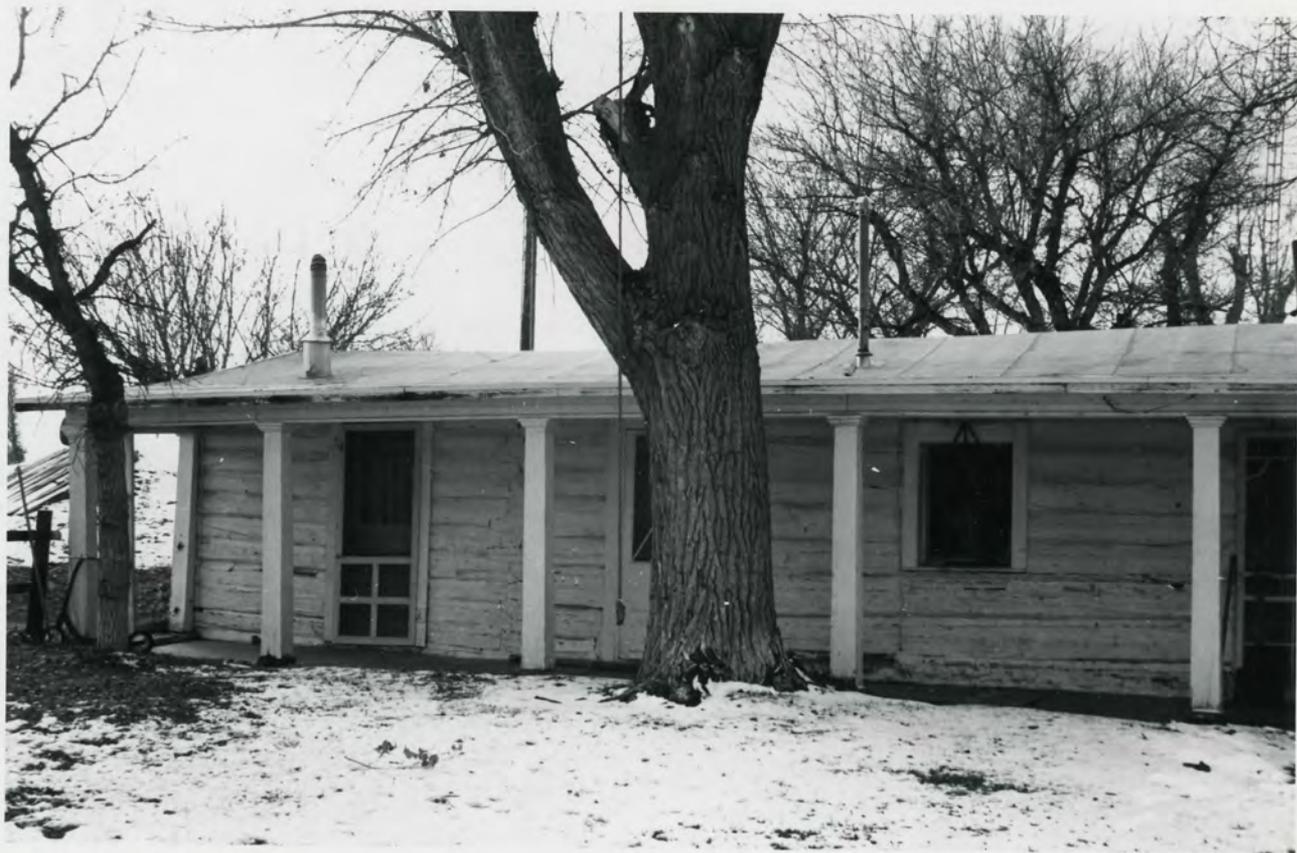
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NHL
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

Independence Rock, one of the significant landmarks on the Oregon and Mormon Trails in Wyoming. Camera pointing to the northeast.

Photo by Mattison
July 1959

*Independence Rock,
Natrona County, Wyo.*



Independence Rock

The forty acres of Independence Rock are under four owners. Presently, the State of Wyoming is in negotiation with the ranchers owning property to acquire the entire acreage covered by the monolith. Videotape running 27.0 minutes to 29.7 minutes of the several plaques placed by various organizations on the Rock are shown. National Park Service National Landmark status has not been made. Site is eligible. Land status of the eligible landmark may be obtained from Mr. Ned Frost, Wyoming Recreation Commission Chief Historian.

The State of Wyoming Highway Department has a turnout parking area and wooden interpretive sign established at the site in addition to the metal signs affixed to the Rock. Protection of the signatures on the Rock is minimal. Plaques and early signatures are protected by a high aluminum pole and wire fence. However, the gate was unlocked at the time of the inspection and some vandalism, notably spray can painting of the Rock, is being noticed.



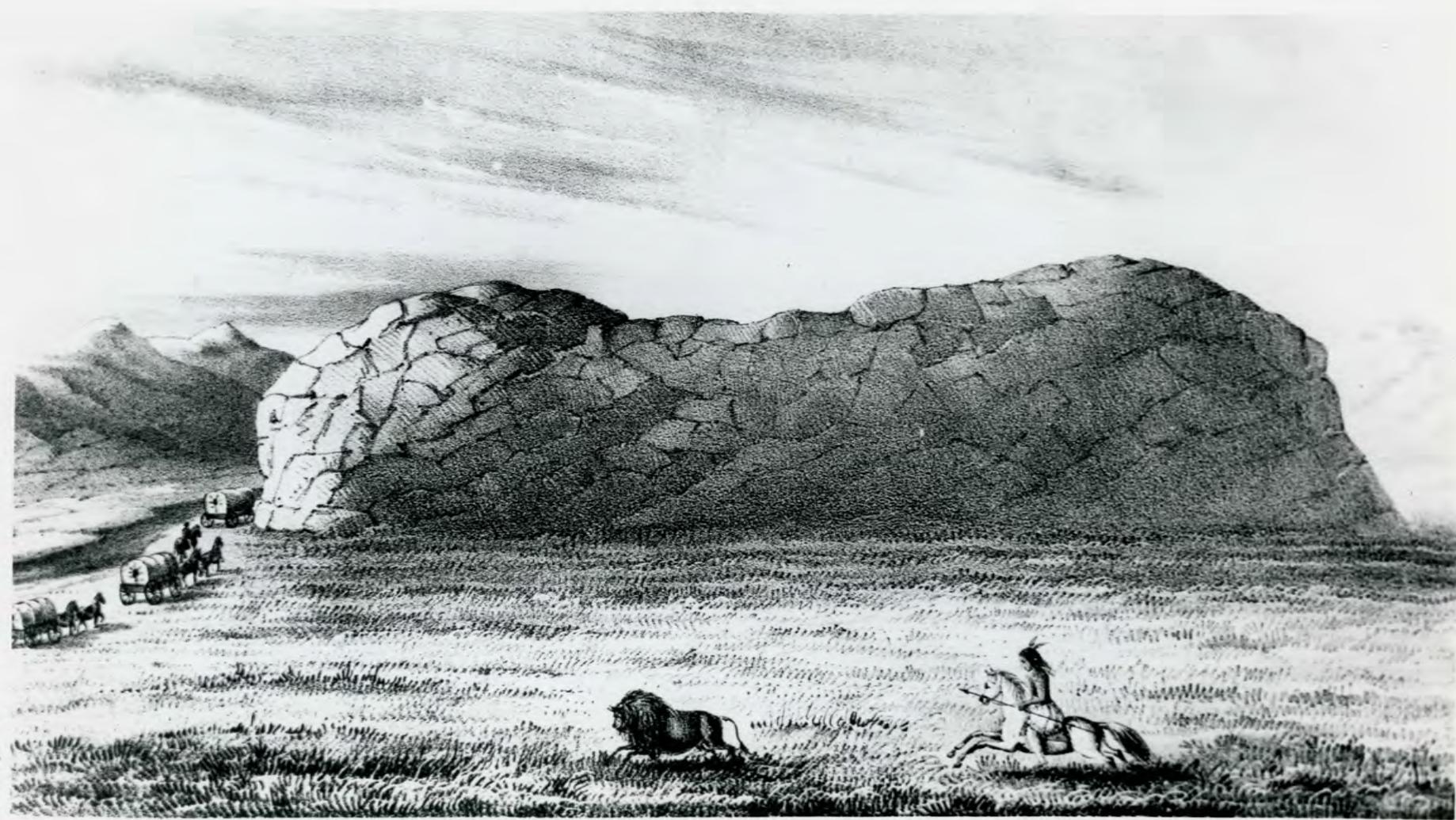
Independence Rock, ^{Wyo} Green Mtns in back
▼ Todd Webb



DARK ROCKS 1880

M. J. Ayer, age 29, 1849





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from
Senate documents - series 587 (Sen. Doc. 31st Cong. 2nd Sess. v. 1, 1836-51)

North East view of Independence Rock
Aug. 9th, 1849



J.H. BAUGHMAN
MARTIN H. & TOM
JULY 4 1880

W. HANKS
1880



M. H. JACKSON
1932

SWEETWATER RIVER AND VALLEY FROM TOP OF INDEPENDENCE ROCK, WYO.

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~~Photo by~~ *Painting by W. H. Jackson*

Bike Controversy

(Continued from page 7)

NST and the Appalachian NST—where bicycles are banned in those areas the Forest Service administers.

"It has become evident that some personnel within the Forest Service do not embrace the vision and philosophy that national scenic trails are intended to be premier hiking trails," says Menke. "Nor do they believe that national scenic trails should be accorded a little different (special) management treatment compared to other forest trails that do not have the NST designation."

In a letter to Kelley following the decision, Tom Gilbert, Superintendent of the Ice Age, North Country, and Lewis and Clark National Trails summarized his objections:

"The order leaves the steepest, most sensitive portions of the trail open to mountain biking. Almost certainly resource damage and user conflicts will continue and grow on those portions. The portions remaining open to biking also happen to be, in our opinion, the most scenic portions of the trail in the Forest.

"The issue paper statement that hikers can experience solitude on the closed portions of the trail sets a low standard for a national scenic trail. The primary users for which the trail is intended — hikers — should have the opportunity to

NPS Calls on Trail Partners To Guard Against Mountain Bikes

In the wake of the Manistee mountain bike decision, the Madison Trail Office of the NPS issued the following statement. (Reprinted from North Star, newsletter of the NCTA, Oct.-Dec. 1996).

"During the last several years, the Partnership for the National Trails System has, on many occasions, stressed the importance of a unified voice to speak for the National Trails System, based on the belief that what affects one trail in the System affects them all. It is imperative that hikers, trail enthusiasts and fellow members of the National Trails System stick together on this issue. The mountain bike community is a potent force already working to secure access to more of the North Country Trail, as well as portions of the other national trails. We must work together to reverse the Manistee National Forest decision and to prevent similar decisions from taking effect along other national trails.

"The ultimate tragedy, we believe, would be an outcome in which hikers are displaced by the volume or pattern of mountain bike use, or the trail deterioration attributable to mountain bike or horse use, and find themselves having to relocate and rebuild to obtain a trail that provides the kind of experience they are seeking. The trail we have today was created to be the North Country National Scenic Trail. Hikers should not be pushed off to other routes of secondary scenic quality and recreational enjoyment."

experience solitude along the most scenic segments that the trail has to offer. It seems that the Congressional intent of making national scenic trails the nation's 'superlative' trails is somehow being lost in the process of trying to make our limited resources 'all things for all users.'"

This decision in the Manistee National Forest has created the conditions for upper level talks between the Forest Service and the Park Service regarding ways in

which local decision making can occur without damaging the value and intent of the components of the National Trails System. What is needed is a communications system which sensitizes district and park staff about the importance of the trails and sets up an appeal process so that both sides can take unwelcome decisions to a higher level for arbitration. In addition, ongoing monitoring must be in place to determine if decisions should be altered to minimize adverse environmental impacts.

Foundation Established to Save Threatened Independence Rock

by Lesley Wischmann, OCTA

To those who traveled west in the 19th century, Independence Rock was an important landmark. Its significance is testified to in numerous historical documents as well as on the rock itself, where dozens of emigrant signatures remain. But today Independence Rock is threatened.

Independence Rock is a designated Wyoming State Historic Site, but in 1992 the Wyoming Legislature cut all funds for its protection and interpretation. With no one guarding the site, modern-day graffiti has proliferated on the rock. Even more alarming, pieces of rock are being removed as souvenirs. With the Mormon Trail Sesquicentennial celebration scheduled for this summer, there is real reason to be concerned that Independence Rock may be loved to death.

Pat Thompson, administrator of the Independence Rock Historic Site for the Wyoming Division of State Parks & Historic Sites, is working to address these concerns. She is seeking funding from the Wyoming Legislature and the National Park Service to staff the site on a seasonal basis. She has also established the Independence Rock Protection Fund to be used specifically for needed equipment, repair, hand tools and maintenance. The Fund is accepting donations at P. O. Box 1596, Evansville, WY 82636.

For further information, please contact Pat Thompson by telephone (307-577-5150) or e-mail (PTHOMP@misc.state.wy.us).

WY PHL

INDEPENDENCE ROCK (56-72-00048-00).
Devil's Gate, Natrona Co. State and private
ownership. A site associated with early fur
trade, emigration, and cattle frontier history.
Design and installation of six interpretive plaques
and a sign. \$1,500.00.

FUNDED