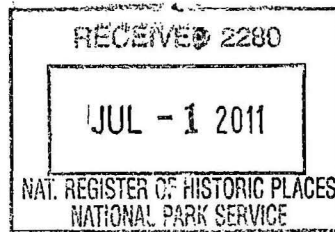


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



533

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District

other names/site number 48SH1753

2. Location

street & number 1753 Victoria Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Sheridan

☐ vicinity

state Wyoming code WY county Sheridan code 033 zip code 82801

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

Mary M. Hopkins 6/27/2011
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain)

Don Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

8-10-11
Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
6	buildings
	district
	site
	structure
	object
6	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture: Fair

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture: Fair

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Stone

Brick

roof: Metal

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District is located within the Sheridan County Fairgrounds, which is a 40-acre tract that was once outside the city of Sheridan on a prominent hill and is now surrounded by a housing development on three sides and one of Sheridan's busiest streets on the north side. The district consists of the 1923 brick Exhibit Hall, three circa 1939 WPA-constructed sandstone buildings, a 1930s frame barn, and the 1950 frame horse stalls. Other than modifications such as doors and some windows, the buildings have changed very little over the years. The octagonal Pavilion is the premier building in the district and symbolizes the fairgrounds as a whole to many. Although the setting has been somewhat compromised due to the large scale of the new grandstand, metal bleachers, and fence that surrounds the track, the district still retains a high degree of integrity of design, location, feeling, association, materials and workmanship.

Narrative Description

Pavilion: contributing

The stone octagonal Pavilion, also known as the Sale Barn, is the premier building of the Sheridan County Fairgrounds. It was constructed by the WPA between 1935 and 1939. The 5,444 square foot building rests on a concrete pad. The Pavilion is constructed of solid random rubble sandstone walls with coursed ashlar sandstone at the eight buttresses, in quoins around the window and door openings, in arched voussoir courses at the windows, and in the four courses above the buttress capstone. The random rubble walls are comprised of a redder variety of stone, whereas the coursed stone provides a buff-colored accent. The standard wall is generally 18 inches thick. The mortar joints are distinctive with a red mortar tuck pointed with a dark grey bead. On the west exterior stone wall is a plaque that reads "built by Works Progress Administration 1935 1939."

The building features 21 large, original steel-sashed arched windows with stone sills. Three windows are symmetrically spaced on five of the eight walls. The other three walls contain centered double-door entries flanked by two of the large windows. The wood doors have two recessed panels, strap hinges, and two-over-two or three-over-three lite transoms. The primary entrance on the north side features sidelites and a divided lite transom. Above the transom is a large sign that reads "Sheridan County Livestock Exhibit and Sale Pavilion."

The roof has wide eaves and is covered with a standing seam metal roof (circa 1998) and topped by an octagonal lantern with seven sets of original paired three-over-three lites. The eighth set has one three-over-three lite and an exhaust fan has replaced the other two lites. The lantern roof is also covered with a circa 1998 standing seam metal roof.

The rubble stone walls are exposed on the interior and painted white and the truss system is visible. There are east and west entrances to the dirt-floored sale arena. Tiered wood-framed viewing stands with built-in benches surround the arena. These are accessed from an aisle supported on low stone walls. Steps on the north and west sides lead to the aisle. Underneath the seating are 20 wood animal stalls. The stalls are separated by wood fences and the floor of the stalls and the perimeter walkway are concrete. The capacity of the building is 420 persons.

Exhibit Hall: contributing

The Exhibit Hall was built in 1923 as the first permanent building of the Sheridan County Fairgrounds. It was designed by architect C.W. Shaver, Jr. and has always served as an exhibit hall. It is a long rectangular building (75' x 150') of solid brick construction and a low concrete foundation. A metal-covered gable roof (circa 1998) is concealed behind parapet walls at the north and south ends which are identical and feature two pilasters that flank the centered double-door entrances.

The north entrance is primarily original and consists of a tripartite set of stile-and-rail wood panel doors that once slid along a top track along with a fourth door that has been replaced with a modern metal man door. The wood doors have six divided lites over two flat wood panels. The metal door has a wire glass lite. There are two windows, one on each side of the doors. Each non-original window has a decorative brick lentil and a brick sill. The arched openings over the north and south entries are currently covered with plywood that conceals large arched steel windows.

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The south side is similar to the north side although the entry has modern double doors surrounded by a wood infill at the sides. The arched transom has been infilled with a sign that reads EXHIBIT HALL. The original round-arched window above the doors is covered with plywood and there are two newer vinyl clad windows that flank the door bay.

The original primary arched entrance, which faces the rodeo arena, is centered on the east side and is set within the end wall that terminates the cross gable. The original double doors have been replaced, and a large area around the entry has been infilled and stuccoed over. The wall extends up to a parapet with a simple pediment and terra cotta trim. A gable roof protecting the entry patio is supported with stucco-clad brick columns. The ten original, 12-light windows on the east side have been replaced with sliding vinyl clad windows. The ten openings in the west wall also have sliding vinyl clad windows or HVAC units.

The interior of the Exhibit Hall is a large open space with a concrete floor, and it has been substantially altered. On the east side is a kitchen, men's and women's bathrooms, and three large storage areas. This area was most likely carved out of the original open space at some unknown time. The attic space, created in the 1970s, covered up the steel open web trusses that supported the roof as well as the large north and south round-arched windows that were most likely steel sash. At one time, there were three central skylights that straddled the ridge.

Until very recently, the majority of the concrete floor of the Main Hall was covered with plywood and a pressed wood product, installed approximately 50 years ago for roller skating. The floor was raised about three inches above the adjacent concrete. The kitchen has similar flooring.

In addition to the County Fair, the Exhibit Hall is used for trade shows, wedding receptions, conferences, auctions and many other events. It is approximately 9,000 square feet.

Stone Barn: contributing

The long stone building rests on a stone foundation and is 13 feet 6 inches by 560 feet, or 7,560 square feet. The south side of the shed-roofed, one-story stables forms a long stone wall that defines part of the border of the Fairgrounds site. The reddish stone building is laid in random rubble with buff-colored coursed ashlar units surrounding the Dutch door entries to the 42 stalls. Each north-facing stall is approximately 11 feet by 12 feet. Other than the stall doors, one can enter the building through a door between stalls 38 and 39. There are also two tack rooms and a bathroom with two stalls interspersed among the horse stalls. The original concrete flooring of one of the restroom stalls is inscribed with "May 1939."

Garage: contributing

The six-bay stone garage faces east and has a shed roof with stepped parapets on the north and south sides. The walls are laid in a buff-colored coursed ashlar with redder stones forming a quoin-like pattern between the bays. One original wood-paneled overhead garage door remains. There are 16 lights (eight have been painted over) in the door and a man door with one large light that has been painted over. The other five doors are plastic overhead doors. There is a pair of six-light, wood-framed windows with a projecting concrete sill on both the north and south sides. On the west side of the garage in the original mortar is inscribed "GUS HEDIN 7-30-1938."

Eaton Barn: contributing

The 32 foot by 100 foot barn has a cut stone foundation, board and batten siding, and a metal gable roof with two gable-roofed ventilators. There are exposed rafter tails. The floor is dirt and the interior space is completely open. There are 10-foot wide slider doors on the east and west sides, with one man door located on the east side and another on the southwest side. The building originally housed draft horses. According to a local source, the Eaton barn is associated with the Eaton family, owners of a popular nearby dude ranch, and was constructed between 1927-1937. The family either gave money for its construction or for the building materials.

40 Horse Stalls: contributing

The 40 Horse Stalls, also known as the White Stalls, measure 200 feet long and 24 feet wide and are covered by a metal roof. They were designed by local architects Cook & Whitney in 1950. There are 40 stalls, 20 on the north side and 20 on the south side, each with a Dutch door. Interior concrete block walls that become parapet walls at the roof line separate every fourth stall from the adjacent four stalls. There is no foundation other than a concrete block placed every 10 feet or so. The roof has wide eaves that are supported by knee braces.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1923-1950

Significant Dates

1923

1935

1939 1950

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Works Project/Progress Administration

Shaver, C. W. Jr., Architect

Wiberg, C. Walter, Architect

Cook & Whitney, Architects

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance, 1923-1950, are the inclusive dates when the six buildings were constructed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The six buildings in the district are the heart of the fairgrounds and an enduring legacy of the county's agricultural and pioneer roots. The three stone buildings are also eligible under Criterion C as excellent examples of the type of public projects funded by the WPA, and the stonework, utilizing local materials and labor, which was characteristic of many New Deal projects. The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District is locally significant. It retains integrity of design, location, association, workmanship, and materials. Feeling and setting have been somewhat compromised by the stadium-like aspects of the large, modern grandstand, and the enlarged track.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District is eligible for listing under Criterion A for its association with the importance of agriculture and rodeo in Sheridan County. The first agricultural fair to be held in what became Sheridan County was in 1885. An annual fair proved to be so popular that a dedicated fairgrounds was constructed by the late 1880s at one location, then moved to its current 40 acre site in 1906. The Sheridan Wyo Rodeo began in 1931 and it, along with the county fair, became two of the most anticipated annual events for county residents. The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District serves as a vital link to the county's agricultural and western roots.

Three of the buildings within the Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District – the Pavilion, the stone stalls, and the stone garages - are also eligible for listing under Criterion C for their association with the architecture of the Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs, specifically the Works Progress Administration (WPA). One of the of the premier WPA buildings in the state, the iconic Pavilion is an excellent example of the stone work that was associated with WPA and New Deal construction. It is also the design of a local architect, C. Walter Wiberg. Rustic in nature, the three stone buildings were built to last and, other than the 1923 Exhibit Hall, are the three oldest buildings on the fairgrounds complex.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Following the Revolutionary War, American agriculture lagged behind Europe where new ideas about selective breeding of domestic animals as well as seed stocks, soil nutrients and tillage methods had transformed the industry. Agricultural societies in the British Isles and Europe composed primarily of gentlemen farmers shared the ideas through formal papers, experiments, and competitions. Although this type of agricultural society was established in the United States by the late 18th century, it never became as successful as its European counterpart because it did not involve the common farmer. A new model of the agricultural society evolved in the young republic, one that included all classes of farmers and began to play an important role in the large-scale improvement of American agriculture. (Avery p. 13, Hokanson p. 30-31) A yearly fair, often sponsored by the local agricultural society, became a primary vehicle for previewing and disseminating the latest inventions and discoveries in the industry to the widespread farming community.

The American county fair has its origins in the agricultural fairs of the early 1800s. What is generally acknowledged as the first American agricultural fair was held in Berkshire County, Massachusetts in September, 1811 and sponsored by the local agricultural society, which had been organized by Elkanah Watson, an international businessman and banker who had retired to a farm in Massachusetts. (Avery p. 12-13, Hokanson p. 28-36)

Watson became interested in improving American agriculture as a way to make the young nation less dependent on England. The first fair featured prized domestic animals as well as "competitive displays of agricultural, mechanical, and domestic arts; demonstrations; lectures; and parades." (Avery p. 12) Watson stressed the importance of the fair as an educational as well as a social event, and particularly wanted women to participate in the fair activities in the belief that if they became involved the entire community would. The fair was such a success that Watson sponsored fairs in the following years where he refined his ideas to include the fair as more than a one-day event, awards for competitions, known as premiums, and a separate day for women's activities. Agricultural fairs, based upon Watson's ideas, became the model for the rest of the country and remain primarily unchanged after 200 years. (Hokanson p. 38)

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The period 1850-1870 is regarded by some historians as the golden age of the American agricultural fair. (Avery p.13) By this time, the fair had become institutionalized in many counties across the country as an important annual event for both rural and town folk. Before the advent of agricultural colleges, wide-spread public education and farm journals, the fair introduced farmers to valuable information regarding new agricultural practices such as irrigation, animal breeds, crop production, and mechanical innovations for both home and farm. Women were very much a part of the fair, which showcased the domestic arts with baked and canned goods, produce from the garden, quilts, and other accomplishments.

The social aspect of the fair took on more importance and became one of the highlights of the summer, second only to the 4th of July. Both adults and children eagerly anticipated the fair as a time to socialize with friends they may not have seen since last year's fair. The fair also provided a venue for entertainment such as sheep shearing, plowing matches, marching band competitions and, in the early 20th century, air and car shows. The county fair was also one of the few places where large crowds could view horse racing. (Avery p. 13)

As Americans moved ever westward during the 19th century, one of the institutions they brought with them was the fair. Historian Drake Hokanson (p. 40) writes that particularly for those on the frontier who worked to re-create the familiarity of the home and town from which they came, "agricultural societies and fairs helped meet the need for social contact as well as for new information about agricultural practices, crops, livestock, and machinery." (p. 41) This was certainly the case in Wyoming in the late 19th century as lands formerly inhabited by Native-Americans in the northeastern part of the territory, including Sheridan County, opened up for settlement by Euro-Americans.

The claim has been made that Sheridan County held the first county fair in Wyoming. The town of Big Horn did host a fair at the George Forsyth ranch in 1885, but Sheridan County had yet to be organized and was still a part of Johnson County. (Sheridan County was organized in 1888 from northern parts of Johnson County.) Johnson County did not officially sponsor that first fair, rather the Johnson County Agricultural Association did. It lasted three days and featured horse racing as the main attraction on the half-mile track.

On August 17, 1889 the *Big Horn Sentinel* newspaper reported on a meeting held to reorganize the Sheridan County Fair and move the fairgrounds from Big Horn to Sheridan. The idea had been stewing for awhile. Various individuals offered sites for the new fairgrounds and a 40 acre lot south of Sheridan was selected. A committee formed to move the fair buildings from Big Horn, construct a track, and put the new fairgrounds, located where Coffeen Avenue and Brundage Lane intersect, in order. The committee agreed to begin work at once.

According to historian Julie Avery, a real county fair must have certain components and one of them is a dedicated fair grounds. At a minimum, permanent grounds usually included some type of exhibit hall for floral or textiles displays (women's exhibits), barns, stalls, pens, sheds, and a grandstand and track if horse racing was a part of the fair. A small ring for exhibiting stock was usually part of the fair grounds, too.

Although it is unknown just what buildings were moved and which ones were built at the new site, the fairgrounds boasted a grandstand, a floral hall, stables, and a polo field by 1894. In 1895, the Sheridan County Agricultural Association advertised its 11th annual fair in the *Sheridan Post*, which featured \$2,500 in "premiums and purses," with admission at \$.50 per adult and \$.25 for children under 14.

In 1906 the Sheridan fairgrounds relocated once more when H. C. Loucks sold 40 acres west of town to the Sheridan County Fair Association, a private entity that incorporated on October 5, 1905. Such prominent Sheridan businessmen as H. C. Alger, E. Gillette and Ralph Denio served as officers. The Association intended to host a "Northern Wyoming fair" with horse races, and offer use of the grounds for other festivals. They planned to transform the 40 acres into a beautiful park and erect substantial buildings and a grandstand. At least part of the grounds was completed in time for the Association's first fair in 1906. These 40 acres, now surrounded by housing developments and roads, remain the site of the Sheridan County Fair today.

The Sheridan County Fair Association believed an up-to-date fair would be "representative of the resources and industrial development of northern Wyoming." (*Sheridan Post*, Oct 27. 1905) The newspaper enthused that Sheridan County's race track and fair grounds "are the pride of the county." The paper also reported that several experienced horsemen pronounced the new track "the best and fastest half-mile track they had ever seen." This type of boosterism was common not just to Sheridan County promotion in the early 20th century. The local fairs served as educational vehicles,

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entertainment venues, and most importantly to the local business community, splendid opportunities to showcase the potential of agricultural development in the sparsely populated western states.

The Association billed the fair as the first annual Sheridan County Fair although technically Sheridan County did not officially sponsor the fair until 1918 when it purchased the fair grounds for \$4,000. In addition to horse racing and agricultural exhibits, the Association wrangled with the idea of having several hundred Indians from the nearby Crow and Cheyenne reservations as entertainment. A stumbling point involved the necessity of providing food for the tribes. Both the Association, and the Commercial Club, composed of businessmen who supported the fair, were short on cash and private citizens would have to be tapped for that expense. *The Sheridan Post* of July 20, 1906 opined that in addition to providing entertainment, the Indians would spend double or triple the cost of feeding them so the merchants would benefit. The Post also noted that the Crow Indians had just sold some of their northern land in Montana and would now be moving closer to Sheridan than Billings, a move that would also increase local business. Unfortunately for the local merchants, the Indians did not attend the fair that year although they participated in large numbers in following years.

Over the next 10 years the fair expanded to include Miner's Day when men from the coal towns north of Sheridan competed for prize money in a tug-of-war and a bicycle race. Sheridan Day featured horse racing of all types, including separate farmers and cowboy races that awarded winners with a new suit, a pair of boots, or a Stetson hat. Other new events included a carnival and a competition for Queen of the county fair. To encourage fair attendance beyond the local communities, the Burlington Railroad dropped their ticket prices by half.

Although they had been part of the fair for years with livestock displays, the local papers rarely mentioned farmers. More participated in the fair once cash awards were offered for a general exhibit of farm products. *The Sheridan Enterprise* of May 7, 1909 stated that "the association would like to make the agricultural exhibit one of the features of the fair, but they cannot do this without the co-operation of the farmers...to bring in displays that will show what this county is capable of producing." The newspaper's entreaties apparently worked for on opening day it declared the livestock and agricultural exhibits the best ever. As usual, the horse racing events garnered the most attention from the local press. By 1927 there were 67 horse stalls, known as racing stalls on a 1927 fairgrounds map.

By the 1920s, the Sheridan County Fair had become institutionalized as an educational and social event for farmers, youth participants, and the county population. Entertainment certainly played a large role in the fair's popularity with such features as a village of Crow and Cheyenne Indians, a carnival, horse racing, and rodeo events which were new to the fair although not new to Sheridan. Two and three-day Wild West Shows had been staged at the fairgrounds and a Sheridan Stampede, known as the Bots Sots Stampede (Crow for large, grand, fine) was organized in 1914 by the Commercial Club. Local ranches, especially the PK Ranch, hosted rodeos which drew large crowds and was said to have inspired another annual event at the fairgrounds that began in 1931, the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo.

Organized and operated by local businessmen at first, the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo became a new and popular annual event at the fairgrounds that continues today. Mid-July dates for the event did not compete with the County Fair or Cheyenne's Frontier Days and the Calgary Stampede, the two largest rodeos in the west. At the early rodeos, the Crow Indians set up an Indian Village and participated in many of the events. They performed nightly dances and paraded through downtown as part of the festival. Like the County Fair, the two-day annual rodeo brought people and money to town and local businesses prospered from the celebration.

During its long history, many different buildings and structures have occupied the Sheridan County fairgrounds. A large exhibit building, also known as the women's hall in the early days, was a mainstay of the fairgrounds. The first such building on the current fairgrounds was most likely frame as a large wooden hall is pictured behind the grandstands in an early photograph. A bandstand and dairy barn are also mentioned in various newspaper articles. The boys and girls clubs (that evolved into 4-H Clubs) used tents in the 1920s to house their exhibits. The 1922 annual report of the County Extension Agent noted that on the second day of the fair "a strong wind blew the tent over and the wind destroyed the exhibits....As a result of this accident the county commissioners have made a levy of seven tenths of a mill for the purpose of erecting an agricultural building."

A *Sheridan Post* editorial on September 7, 1922 asserted "Sheridan County needs a new auditorium for the Fair Grounds. And it is time now to start the movement." The editor noted that it cost the county \$600 to rent the tent that was "wrecked by the wind" and that some of the exhibits were "spoiled," among those the school exhibit. A new exhibit hall was justified as "The people of Sheridan county (sic) have proven this year that the county fair is to be a permanent annual feature.

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This was shown thru double the number of exhibits of any other year, and the keen interest taken by all. This means that we must have permanent buildings, and the most needed before another is an auditorium or exhibit hall." The existing brick Exhibit Hall was designed by C. W. Shaver, Jr. and constructed the following year at a cost of \$30,000.

A headline in the August 30, 1923 edition of the *Sheridan Post* proclaimed "Building Work At Fair Ground Almost Ended." Plumbers, painters, and electricians were putting the finishing touches on "the big new brick and concrete exhibit hall." Another new building for the exhibition of dairy machinery and milk handling demonstrations was being constructed. A new section of the grandstand had been built during the year, and an "old" horse barn was remodeled for dairy cows. The fair board purchased at a cost of \$550 a "supply of substantial chairs" for the grandstand boxes which replaced uncomfortable folding chairs.

The construction of the exhibit hall appears to have been the major building project during the 1920s. Although it is unknown when they were built, exhibit structures for poultry and sheep as well as large stalls, and fencing for cattle and sheep that appear on a 1927 Sanborn map no longer exist.

The most ambitious building project in the history of the fairgrounds took place during the Great Depression when Sheridan County took advantage of federal money offered through the New Deal Programs under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration. One such program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (the name changed to Works Projects Administration during 1939) funded a wide variety of community projects in Wyoming, including rebuilding or renovating city parks, roadways, and sidewalks. Fairgrounds in Torrington, Newcastle, Rawlins, and Sheridan benefitted from New Deal funding.

The first WPA project on the fairgrounds called for dismantling the bleachers and what remained of the old grandstand, along with construction of a new nine-section grandstand. The job was budgeted at \$1,000. On October 28, 1935, the county signed a contract with Fred Noland who supervised the work.

Local Union No. 1384 of Carpenters and Joiners of America was not happy with the grandstand project. On December 6, 1935 the union wrote to Mr. W. F. Peters, Chairman of the Sheridan County Commissioners, to inform him that they had placed the Sheridan-Wyo Rodeo on the Unfair to Organized Labor List. They further stated "It is a rather ...unjust state of affairs when members of our craft...now walk the streets and their means of livelihood denied them on the first major building project in the County for some time. Their places being filled by relief carpenters recruited mostly from the ranks of common labor who are for the most part unskilled...". The union also accused the County Commissioners of "underwriting the scheme of a profit making association and borrowing federal funds for its completion...". In a second letter to Commissioners Peters dated December 10, 1935, the Union stated that "it was decided not to rescind the action of placing the Grandstand Job" on the Unfair list for the union men "feel that they cannot consistently work with non-union men and remain true to their craft organization." Nonetheless, the grandstand was built and remained for almost 60 years until inspectors deemed it unsafe and demolition occurred in 1992.

The second WPA project was much larger and the project proposal, dated August 22, 1938, described it as "Construction of buildings on county owned property - box stalls, sheds, garages and exhibit halls, and perform incidental and appurtenant work." WPA official project number 665-83-2-53 was approved for a total federal cost of \$21,740.00 and a county cost of \$9,775.00. The project was to employ 53 men - five stonemasons, seven carpenters, two painters, thirty laborers, and other miscellaneous personnel. Four-hundred and twenty cubic yards of locally quarried stone were used in the exhibit hall and the stone stalls. The specifications mention a "new rock foundation for cricket building and office"; it does not appear that those two buildings were ever constructed. Part of the project involved demolition of the band shell, 30 box stalls, and a shed, the latter two most likely those that appeared on the 1927 Sanborn map. A frame building was moved and repaired.

By April 17, 1939 the stone garages and the 42 stone stalls were well underway and the general project manager described the garage building appearance as "very good." The stone stalls, or "barns" as they were called, were described as "excellent (sic) as far as constructed." The "livestock exhibit hall" (the stone pavilion) was a different story. It ran over budget and was only 50% completed when work was suspended on November 4, 1939 due to "lack of federal funds" according to project correspondence. The county submitted another application for improvements to the fairgrounds to finish the project which was approved December 18, 1939. The pavilion needed a roof, additional stone walls, bleachers, finishing millwork, painting and "other appurtenant work." Work on the building began anew on February 26, 1940 and the job was completed and signed off on by a WPA administrator in Cheyenne on October 2, 1940.

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Architect C. Walter Wiberg designed the pavilion in 1939. He was born in Sheridan on September 28, 1901. He graduated from Sheridan High School and studied architecture at the South Dakota School of Mines. Wiberg first appears in the Polk's Sheridan City Directory in the 1933-1934 edition where his occupation is listed as carpenter. In 1935-1936 he is listed as an architect with Gustave C. Hollo who began his career in Sheridan as a draftsman with the City Engineering department in 1931-1932 and subsequently was listed as an architect through the 1936-1937 Polk's Directory. Following that year, Hollo is no longer listed although at some point he relocated to Laramie (*Laramie City Directory 1940*) where it is known that he designed a number of houses there that are still standing. Walter Wiberg also left Sheridan and he relocated to Everett, Washington at some point where he died on October 9, 1963.

During the Great Depression, no county fair was held from 1931-1939. However, the Sheridan-Wyo Rodeo, after its initial success in 1931, continued as an annual event throughout the 1930s with some additions and modifications. The new WPA grandstand was a big hit in 1936. The 4-H Club exhibited their stock at the rodeo one year and in 1936 a contest for Queen of the Rodeo was initiated. The rodeo parades continued as did the Indian pageants most years. A big event in 1932, commemorated by a statue that still resides at the park today, was the smoking of a peace pipe between the chiefs of the former enemy tribes, the Cheyenne and Crow. The ceremony made national news.

The county fair resumed on August 28, 1939. The August 28, 1939 edition of the *Sheridan Press* noted that the sheep and beef cattle of the 4-H Clubs were exhibited in the "new stone garage building." The following year, a picture of the new stone Pavilion was featured on the front page of the *Sheridan Press* (August 28, 1940) with the caption "Handsome and Modern." It officially opened at the 1940 county fair.

One of the provisions in the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo's 1931 Certificate of Incorporation stated that "any and all funds, revenues, and profits derived by said association from any of its operations, after the payments of its expenses and debts, shall be used for and applied to the erection of suitable buildings and improvements upon any parks, grounds, or other lands owned or used by said association..." (Ringley p. 48) In order to prepare for the first Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo in 1931, the new association spent nearly \$10,000 improving the fairgrounds. Seating was limited to 2,690 in the existing grandstand which would not hold a rodeo crowd. They funded a second steel-roofed grandstand that provided an extra 1,422 seats. Additional improvements included reinforcement of the old grandstand, demolition and construction of new bucking chutes, pens and corrals, and installation of a new seven foot wooden fence on the west and south sides of the fairgrounds. (Ringley p. 52) A new dance floor was installed over the concrete floor in the Exhibit Hall where dances helped raise money to support the rodeo. (Ringley p. 52)

Over the years, other improvements have been made to the fairgrounds with the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo and the County sometimes splitting the costs, while in other years one or the other entity funded the full cost of the improvement. In 1950, the number of fairgrounds buildings increased with the addition of a 40-stall structure. At about the same time, new bucking chutes and bathrooms were constructed, along with repairs to the arena fence and the grandstand. (Ringley p. 159, 179) A lighting system installed in 1965 meant night rodeos could be held. (Ringley p. 181) For many years, a caretaker lived on the grounds in an "old honey house" and bachelor county employees lived in a bunkhouse. In the 1990s, a mobile home was moved onto the property for the fair director's residence. That structure is now the fairgrounds office and no one currently lives on the property.

In 1988, four months before the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo, the state fire marshal condemned the 1936 WPA-constructed wooden grandstand, declaring it structurally unsafe and a severe life safety hazard. (Ringley p. 246) Last-minute efforts and funding enabled a temporary fix of the structure and the rodeo went on as planned. In 1992, the old grandstand was finally demolished and a new metal grandstand replaced it. As author Tom Ringley stated in his book *Rodeo Time in Sheridan-Wyo*, "many rodeo fans still wish they had the old one back."

At various times over the past twenty years, attempts have been made to move the Sheridan County Fairgrounds to a new location. The case was made that the 1906, 40-acre fairgrounds was too small to accommodate a modern fairgrounds, and the need for a large indoor arena. Two potential sites surfaced in 1998, 112 acres on the Wrench Ranch, which had been proposed in the 1980s, or going together with Sheridan College to build an indoor arena at the college. Sheridan County Fairgrounds Chairman Jim House declared in the *Sheridan Press* (Feb 10, 1998) "We are committed to building a multi-purpose facility for the county" and noted that parking at the current site is a continuing problem during the summer, which would be likely to escalate if the fair board built an indoor arena." This effort to move the fairgrounds apparently died without too much controversy.

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A second attempt to move the fairgrounds surfaced in 2006 and proved to be more contentious within the Sheridan community. On February 13, 2004, the Sheridan Press reported on a proposal to relocate the fairgrounds to an 80-acre site. Two weeks later the newspaper reported that Fairgrounds Manager Bill Overly "believes the fairgrounds would be the logical site for an indoor facility, such as Gillette's Cam-plex" (*Sheridan Press* 2-28-04). Once again, the proposal died and work began on repairs to the rock barns.

The Wrench Ranch proposal came up a third time in 2006 as the site for a new fairgrounds. A hired consulting group recommended the fairgrounds be moved. The Sheridan Press reported that "the proposal to relocate the fairgrounds also has drawn objections from many Sheridan County residents for reasons ranging from the proposed costs (an estimated \$51 million according to the consultant studies) to the loss of the historic site," primarily the Pavilion and the stone horse barns as the newspaper further noted. Four of the five Sheridan County Fair Association board of trustees voted to once again drop the pursuit of a new fairgrounds and to "assess renovation and upgrade of the (existing) fairgrounds" according to the Sheridan Press on November 17, 2006.

No doubt there will be other attempts to move the fairgrounds to a large location where a completely new complex will be erected. Plans were drawn up in 2008 by a consulting firm for a new large arena where the 1923 Exhibit Hall is currently located. The rationale for such a large arena is that modern fairgrounds need to serve multiple purposes in order to be in use year round. The reality is that contemporary fairgrounds must be income-producing entities in order to justify the enormous expense (usually public expense) of constructing them. The emphasis is less on design and more on utility and economy. Additionally, according to Cathy Ambler (p. 328), today's fairscape no longer convey that agriculture is a strong value within a community. They are for the most part anonymous looking and have lost any individual identity.

The six buildings in the Sheridan County Historic District are the heart of the fairgrounds and an enduring legacy of the county's agricultural and pioneer roots. The three stone buildings, especially the Pavilion, are excellent examples of the types of public projects funded by the WPA, and the stonework, utilizing local materials and labor that was characteristic of many New Deal projects.

Historian Cathy Ambler writes "as fairgrounds change in looks, they present new images that convey what a community wants to know about itself and comments on changing community values." (p. 26) In a rapidly changing West, many people in Sheridan and Sheridan County have clearly spoken for the value of tradition when numerous efforts to relocate the fairgrounds have been proposed. The resistance to a "change in looks", to a contemporary fairscape characterized by large metal buildings designed to serve multiple uses, the Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District speaks to the ironic nature of history in the West: the value of tradition versus the desire to promote an often gussied-up past in a modern, anonymous setting, one that is often devoid of any connection to the past. The Sheridan County Fairgrounds District, at least for the near future, will remain as a symbol of, and a direct, legitimate link to, the vibrant and unique history of the county.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Ambler, Cathy J. *The Look of the Fair: Kansas County Fairscape, 1854-1994*. PhD dissertation Volume I, University of Kansas, 1996.

American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Sheridan, Wyo, October 1927.

Avery, Julie A., Editor. *Agricultural Fairs In America: Tradition, Education, Celebration*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum, 2000.

The Big Horn Sentinel, various dates.

CTA Architects Engineers. Sheridan County Fairgrounds: Conditions Assessment of the Exhibit Hall and Sale Barn/Exhibit Pavilion.

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Hokanson, Drake and Kratz, Carol. *Purebred & Homegrown: America's County Fairs*. Madison: Terrace Books, 2008.

Polk's Directory: Sheridan County and Laramie, 1921-1922 through 1940-1941.

Ringley, Tom. *Rodeo Time in Sheridan: A History of the Sheridan-Wyo-Rodeo*. Pronghorn Press, 2004.

Sheridan County Extension Homemakers Council. *Sheridan County Heritage*. Pierre, South Dakota: State Publishing Company, 1983.

Sheridan County Fulmer Library, Vertical File, Sheridan County Fairgrounds.

The Sheridan Enterprise, various dates.

The Sheridan Post, various dates.

The Sheridan Press, various dates.

Wyoming State Archives, Vertical File H80-7, Wyoming Agricultural Fairs.

Wyoming State Archives, Vertical File Sheridan County Fairgrounds.

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, WPA microfilm #116.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 48SH1753

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7.9 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 13 343272 4963065
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the district are irregularly drawn to include the six significant buildings that are located in the south and southwest quadrant of the fairgrounds. Although two of the WPA buildings - the Pavilion and the stone horse stables - are

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within close proximity of each other, the third – the stone garage – is located on the southwest border of the fairgrounds while the brick Exhibit Hall stands nearer the west side of the grandstand.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District is located within south and southeast are of the Sheridan County Fairgrounds which is a 40 acre tract bordered by 5th Steet on the north side, Kentucky Avenue on the east side, Victoria Street on the south side, and Long Drive to the west.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Weidel

organization Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office

date July 15, 2010, March 28, 2011

street & number 2301 Central Ave.

telephone 307-777-3418

city or town Cheyenne

state WY

zip code 82002

e-mail nweide@state.us

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District

City or Vicinity: Sheridan

County: Sheridan

State: Wyoming

Photographer: Richard Collier

Date Photographed: 2-23-2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 14: Exhibit Hall, view to south

2 of 14: Exhibit Hall, view to west

3 of 14: Exhibit Hall, interior, view to south

4 of 14: Stone Barn, Eaton Barn, Pavilion, view to west

5 of 14: Pavilion, view to east

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- 6 of 14: Pavilion, interior, view to east
- 7 of 14: Pavilion, interior, view to east
- 8 of 14: Pavilion, interior, view to east
- 9 of 14: 40 Horse Stalls, view to northeast
- 10 of 14: 40 Horse Stalls, view to west northwest
- 11 of 14: Stone Barn, view to southwest
- 12 of 14: Stone Barn, view to south
- 13 of 14: Eaton Barn, view to west northwest
- 14 of 14: Garage, view to west

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____

telephone _____

city or town _____

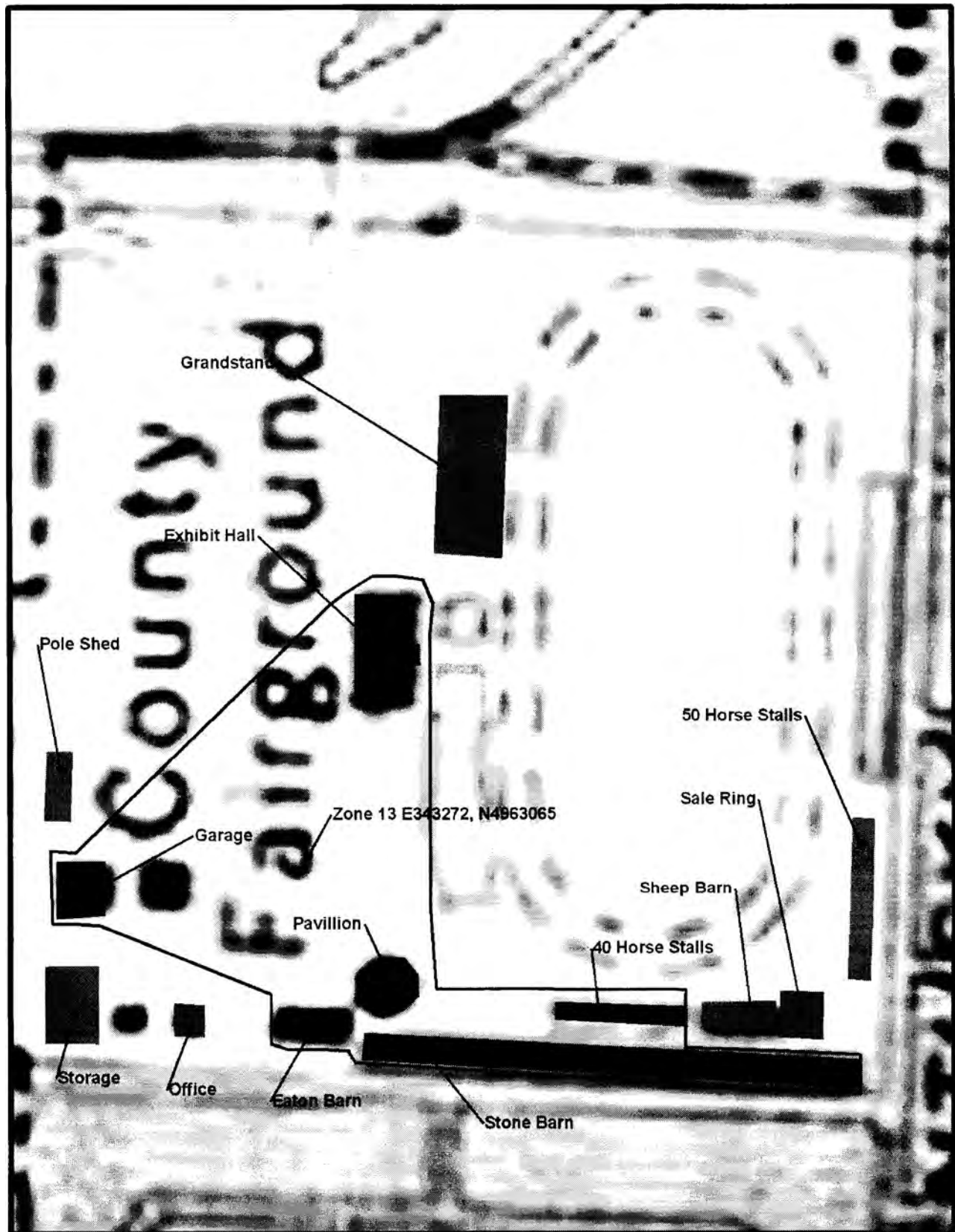
state _____

zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District



— Proposed National Register District
■ Contributing Buildings
USA Topo Maps



75 Meters

T56NR84W sec. 28

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WYOMING, Sheridan

DATE RECEIVED: 7/01/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/22/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/08/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/16/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000533

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 8.10.11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

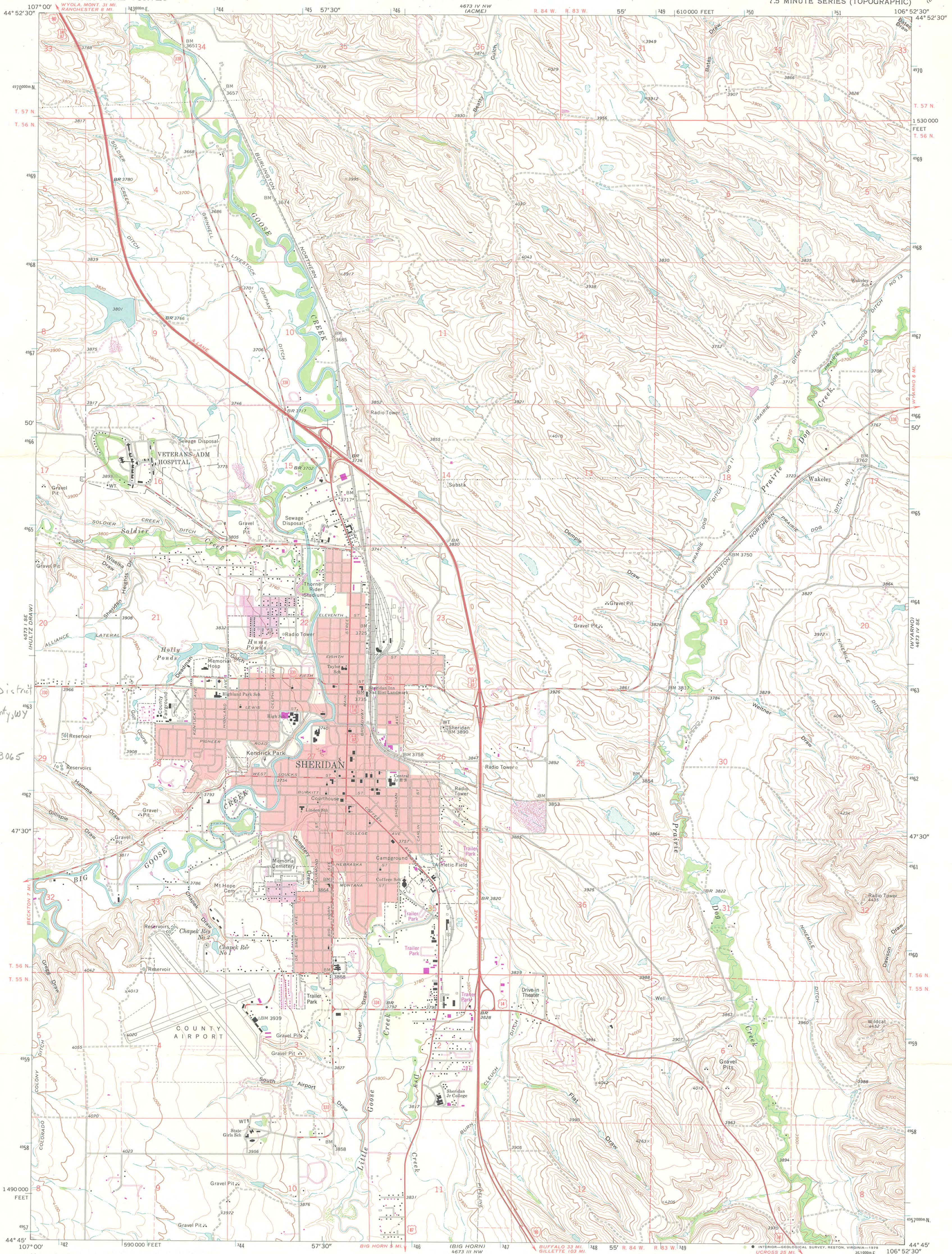
RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

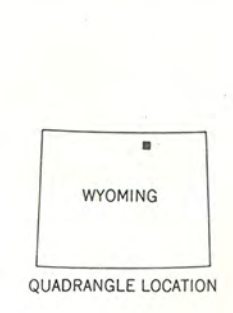
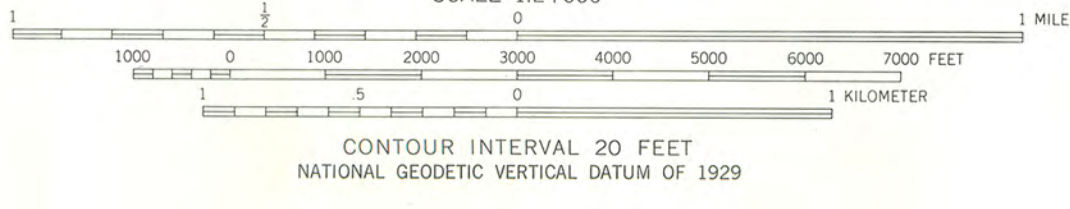
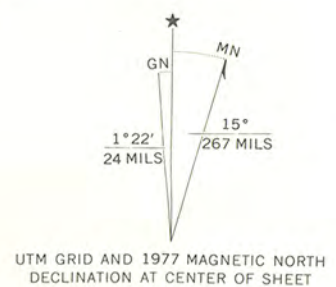


Sheridan County
Fairgrounds Historic District
Sheridan, Sheridan County, WY

UTM References
1- 13 343272 4963065

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1968
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Wyoming coordinate system, east central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 13, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1976. Map edited 1977. This information not field checked



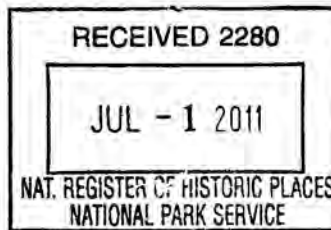
ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

SHERIDAN, WYO.
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1968
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ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.

Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources



State Historic Preservation Office
Barrett Building, 3rd Floor
2301 Central Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Phone: (307) 777-7697
Fax: (307) 777-6421
<http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us>

30 June 2011

Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

Re: Submission of the Educational Facilities in Wyoming, 1850-1960 Multiple Property Documentation Form and the Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District Nomination

Dear Mr. Loether:

The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office is submitting the Educational Facilities in Wyoming, 1850-1960 Multiple Property Documentation Form and the Sheridan County Fairgrounds Historic District nomination for National Park Service review. The State Review Board reviewed and Mary Hopkins, the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer, approved and signed the nomination.

Please contact me at 307-777-7828 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kara Hahn

National Register Coordinator
Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
2301 Central Avenue
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-7828



Matthew H. Mead, Governor
Milward Simpson, Director