NPS Form 10-900-b
(Jan. 1987)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

19th Century South Dakota Trading Posts

B. Associated Historic Contexts

III. A. Early Commercial Exploitation and Military Presence/
Fur Trading Posts

C. Geographical Data

State of South Dakota

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date

Statement of Historic Context

Introduction

When President Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, he believed it could serve as a giant reservation for all the Native Americans, especially the eastern Indians who were interrupting the progress of westward - bound Euro-Americans (Wishart 1979:18). In addition, Jefferson understood the giant economic opportunity the new territory could yield in terms of the fur trade. For example, one of the primary purposes of the Lewis and Clark expedition was to ascertain the suitability of the Trans - Missouri West for the fur trade. Lewis and Clark were instructed to make note of the Indian attitude toward the fur trade, types of fur bearing animals encountered, and most importantly, the easiest and most practical water routes across the continent for the purpose of commerce (Wishart 1979:18).

Most Indian societies the expedition encountered were receptive to the Euro-American trade. As a result, in the Upper Missouri region, the fur trade was at the vanguard of Europeon penetration of the area. There was a tremendous amount of money in the fur trade; furs had a high market value at the beginning of the 19th Century and could sustain much of that value even bearing the great transportation costs needed to deliver them to the east coast. Since the Indian was willing to work as the producer, the costs of production were low. The early traders coexisted with the tribes, claiming none of the Indians' land for themselves. They worked within the Indian system already in place to get their furs (Wishart 1979:18).

However, one result of the large influx of Euro-American traders into the Upper Missouri region during the first quarter of the 19th Century was stress on Indian culture. The fur trade accelerated the stress that often accompanies rapid cultural change and in turn was greatly affected by the tension and violence that was a result (Wishart 1979:19). The fur trade brought new technological advances to the native tribes; it also brought

more cultural change in its first years than the native societies experienced since the introduction of the horse.

Trading Posts

By the 1820's the fur industry in the west developed into two systems, each with separate and distinct strategies. In the Rocky Mountain area, a trapping system based on beaver pelts developed around the Euro-American trapper. The trapper procured the pelts, trading them independently at a rendezvous or fixed trading post. They were then delivered via the Platte Overland Supply Route to the respective markets, finally ending up in the eastern United States. In the Upper Missouri region, the fur trade was based around the bison robe. Indians worked at procuring and processing the robes. The robes were brought to trading posts and exchanged for manufactured products; no money was exchanged. The trader's work began when the robes, already processed, were brought to them. Men working at the post would press the furs into packs and prepare them for shipment. After being shipped down to St. Louis, the robes were transported to the eastern markets (Wishart 1979:10). It was much easier for a trading company to develop a monopoly and manipulate exchange rates on the Upper Missouri than in the Rocky Mountain region.

In the 1820's, America began to explore the west, seeing for the first time the massive fortunes the west had in resources. These expeditions also recorded British commercial penetration of the Upper Missouri (Athearn 1967:6). Consequently, Secretary of War John Calhoun warned that unless the United States established a strong military presence deep inside the river country to aid American fur interests, the illegal British traders would develop lasting bonds with powerful Indian tribes (Athearn 1967:12). British fur companies that traded south of the 49th Parallel were in violation of the Treaty of Ghent (treaty ending the war of 1812). This illegal trading might have evolved into large British investments in the Upper Missouri if not for the American Fur Company (A.F.C.) creating a branch western department in 1822. This western department included the Upper Missouri region. The A.F.C., within a few short years, became the

dominant force in the American fur trade and set the standards by which others would follow. It dictated how the fur trade was to be run, crushing any competition that dare infringe its monopoly of trade. This giant endured as ruler in the Upper Missouri fur trade until the trade was exhausted in the 1860's.

The A.F.C. established a system of trading posts throughout the northern Great Plains with three main posts -- Ft. Union, Ft. Tecumseh (later Ft. Pierre), and Ft. William (later Ft. Laramie). These main posts received the trade goods from St. Louis and became the collection point for furs shipped back down to St. Louis. The main posts supported regional posts, which were spread out all over the Great Plains, receiving supplies from, and sending furs back to, the main posts. The regional posts in turn supported temporary trading posts. A temporary post might be a wintering lodge or a small establishment next to an Indian village. Temporary trading posts rarely lasted over one or two trading seasons before being abandoned. This macrame of trading post hierarchy established the A.F.C. as one of the largest commercial enterprises west of the Mississippi River.

Trading procedures on the plains differed greatly from those in the Rocky Mountains. In the Rocky Mountain trade, Euro-American trappers brought their furs to rendezvous or fixed posts, in exchange for cash or trade goods. On the other hand, in the Great Plains trade, the Indians brought their robes to fortified, stockaded posts to trade for Euro-American goods, as Indians had little use for currency. At the post, the Agent welcomed them with small gifts or a gunpowder salute if an important chief accompanied the party (Wishart 1979:35). Often, trade was conducted without the two parties ever meeting face to face. Robes would be passed through an opening in the front gate and the trade goods passed back in the same manner.

Trade was conducted continuously throughout the year. The robes that brought the most money, however, were from bison killed between November and February. Because of cold weather, these robes were thicker and plusher than those taken during the rest of the year. Robe production by the A.F.C. was 40,000 per year during most of the 1830's. That figure increased to over 90,000 robes per year by the next decade and reached an average of 100,000 bison robes annually by 1850 (Sunder 1965:17).

The early Euro-American trade goods were either manufactured in England or the eastern United States. They were transported to St. Louis in late winter or early spring, ready to be shipped to trading posts for the fall trading season. A.F.C. records indicate the most common trade item were blankets followed by knives, kettles, guns, and powder. The markup on these goods traded to the Indians could range anywhere from 80 to 2,000 percent depending on the item, the particular post, the trader, etc. This markup was deemed necessary to cover the cost of trade and return an investment to the shareholders (Sunder 1965:36). Liquor was legally traded until 1832, when the government outlawed its sale to Indians. After 1832, illegal liquor sales were used more as an incentive to trade than the actual trade item itself. Legal or not, alcohol was an integral part of the trading process during the entire fur trade era.

Transportation and communication between the main posts and St. Louis was a long and tedious process. It took more than a month via steamboat to get the furs from Fort Pierre to St. Louis, another four weeks to get to New York, and almost two months to get the furs to European markets. Communication was virtually stopped during the long winter, the post became an isolated little pocket of white civilization. From the time the Missouri River iced over, until the spring thaw, the only communication link between St. Louis and the Upper Missouri was the so called "winter express". During January, two or three men were sent by dog sled from Fort Union and St. Louis to meet at Fort Pierre with officials there. At this winter meeting, the post traders made requisitions for the upcoming season. Officials from St. Louis would give the traders market information that would determine exchange rates for the next year (Wishart 1979:79).

The A.F.C's monopoly on trade in the Upper Missouri region was never broken until the trade wore out by 1870. There were several firms that attempted to establish opposition in the region. Their success was varied; some companies lasted less than a year, others longer. The end result was always the same; the A.F.C either overbid the opposition for robes and waited for them to crumble or simply bought them out on the spot. The A.F.C. had the capital to sustain short term losses for long term gains.

A trading post served many interests and functions, not only were they safe depots for furs and supplies, but they were the most visible imprint of the whole fur trade on the Upper Missouri. The posts also served as social centers where "...news, ideas and customs were diffused among the various Indian tribes and between the Indians and the traders" (Wishart 1979:87).

The main post and temporary posts were generally in the shape of a square or a rectangle. Encompassing this configuration were wooden palisades or pickets anywhere from ten to twenty feet high. Most had pickets loopholed for muskets. There was often a wooden walk plank bracketed to the wall enabling a sentry to observe the ground outside the enclosure. The main system for defense were bastions or blockhouses. These bastions were located at opposite corners of the post, connected to but outside the enclosure. At the larger posts, bastions also housed cannon for protection against possible siege. These posts were so well fortified that the military used the same basic design when they established frontier outposts in Dakota Territory during the second half of the 19th Century.

Life at these trading posts was boring, monotonous, and physically demanding. Cut off from the rest of the world, most of the traders time was spent receiving and dismissing bands of Indians who came to trade, cutting wood for steamboat fuel and post maintenance, receiving returns from subposts, and baling and pressing furs for shipment to St. Louis.

Inside the post there was a definite caste system. At the top of the hierarchy was the bourgeois, the manager in charge of operations at the post. The bourgeois had a spacious house, ate the best food, and maintained total control over all aspects within the post. Almost without exception, he was a partner in the company that owned the post. The manager was responsible for all furs and trade goods stored at the post; it required great leadership and administrative ability. Next in the hierarchy was the clerk(s). This man was entitled to the same social rank as the manager, taking control of the post when the manager was gone. Duties of the clerk included keeping records and taking inventory. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the engages, men brought up from St. Louis to work at the trading posts. Many had romantic images of life in the wilderness; the actual jobs rarely lived up to those images. The work was hard and living conditions rough. Often 30 to 40 engages lived in quarters about the same size as the manager. Not surprisingly, bison meat, either fresh or

dried was the most important food source to the traders. Over half of all the meat at trading posts was supplied by Indians (Wishart 1979:100).

Decline of Fur Trade

The decline of the fur trade in South Dakota can be traced to the westward expanding American frontier and the repercussions of that movement. Despite slaughtering upwards of 150,000 bison yearly, the fur trade had not seriously altered the balance of bison herds by 1855 (Wishart 1979:213). Rather, it was the implementation of railroads which gave "sportsmen" easy access to the roving herds. These "sportsman" almost brought the extinction of the bison. This is not to say that the traders did not plant the seed for slaughter. By furnishing the Indian with guns and the incentive to produce hides and tongues well above their need for subsistence and inter-tribal trading, the Euro-American traders were also involved in overproduction and the senseless slaughter of the bison (Wishart 1979:213).

By 1865, the fur trade in South Dakota was all but over. The bison were moving west, like America itself. The two could not coexist together. The advent of white civilization proved to be the death of the fur trade in South Dakota. Trading posts declined in direct proportion to the onslaught of whites into the region. Once the most visible imprint of white civilization along the Upper Missouri; most fur trade posts were burned by the owners soon after abandonment. Those not immediately burned were often used to fuel hungary steamships traveling on the Missouri.

Once prevalent along the Missouri River and her tributaries, those remaining fur trade posts that escaped destruction or inundation have today been reduced to subsurface historic archaeological sites.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Archaeology/ Historic non-aborginal	1843-1845	N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

☒ See continuation sheet

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(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88000583 Date Listed: 5/27/88

Brown's Post
Property Name

Brown
County

South Dakota
State

19th Century South Dakota Trading Posts MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

John J. Knoerl
Signature of the Keeper

5/27/88
Date of Action

==========

Amended Items in Nomination:

Item 8. Area of Significance
Add Historic-aboriginal
Commerce
Exploration/Settlement

Verified by phone with:

Todd Kapler
Historical Archaeologist
South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Trading Post

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

☒ See continuation sheet

☐ See continuation sheet for additional property types

II. Description

Trading posts that once operated within present day South Dakota were located in areas with easy access to viable waterways (such as rivers), ample vegetation, and accessible raw building materials of sufficient quantity to sustain extended subsistence by Euro-American traders. In the vast timberless plains of central South Dakota these combined variables were found only along the Missouri River.

Almost without exception, Upper Missouri trading posts can be divided into three categories: main post, regional posts, and temporary posts. The main post was the artery of the fur company that owned and operated it. It would receive the trade goods via St. Louis and was the collection point for furs shipped back to St. Louis. The Main post must be located near a large river having access to St. Louis and enough room to land steamships, therefore, most were located near the Missouri River. Erected with generous dimensions, the defense systems included large pickets which formed a stockade and bastions at the diagonal corners which housed cannon and were loopholed for muskets.

Though on a smaller scale, the regional post was erected with the same considerations afforded the main post. Generally stockaded, it was located near a river or well traveled path that connected it to the main post. Regional posts supplied temporary posts with trade goods and received those furs collected at the temporary post for shipment back to the main post. A temporary post was often nothing more than a shack located near an Indian village from which small amounts of subsistence trading was carried out. These establishments rarely lasted for more than one trading season before abandonment; the locality of Indian camps during the trading season often dictated where the temporary posts were situated.

Today, most trading post sites have been inundated as a result of the construction of four Missouri River dams and the resulting reservoirs in the 1950's. While most of the remaining sites are characterized by having one or more depressions, other attributes include surface artifact scatter, subsurface artifacts and features, and evidence of Euro-American cultural debris. Site boundaries included both natural and/or artificial boundaries such as an entrenched fire pit or a terraced edge of a plateau. There are no sites that have above-ground surface features such as walls or hearths. All sites are subsurface and should be categorized as "subsurface historic archaeological sites".

III. Significance

The property type is significant under Criterion A, events that have made a significant contribution to the state's history. trading posts offered the first sustained Euro-American presence in the state and were the impetus for a unique interdependence of two cultures upon one another. A commerce alliance was established which offered material goods instead of currency, to the mutual benefit of both cultures.

The property type is also significant under Criterion D, since some of the trading post sites have been previously excavated by the Smithsonian River Basin Surveys (RBS) in the 1950's. The results of the extensive RBS excavations of the archaeological sites along the Missouri River are analyzed and published through the Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin in Washington D.C. Other sites, through subsurface archaeological testing have revealed the potential to yield important information such as how Euro-American trade goods were introduced, and the importance of those trade goods to the indigenous population in various aspects such as burials and inter-tribal trading. In addition, the property type may yield information on trading patterns and types of trade goods that influenced Euro-American/Indian relations.

IV. Registration Requirements

The following procedures were incorporated into this study. Any further survey and evaluation of this property type should utilize this same methodology.

Members of the property type eligible for nomination to the National Register were identified three ways. First, a thorough records search was initiated which included state and federal archives, libraries (public and private), and previously published reports (both CRM and secondary sources). The records search was undertaken to ascertain the names, number, and locations of property types within the state.

Following the records search, archaeological field investigation was implemented to test for some evidence of mid 19th century Euro-American provenience. Shovel testing was used to establish site boundaries and record subsurface soil stratigraphy, artifacts and features. Non-diagnostic surface and subsurface artifacts such as nails, glass and manufactured ceramics must be associated with the time frame of the fur trade era (1800-1865). Recorded surface and subsurface features were analyzed in conjunction with previous excavations of known fur trade posts in order to compile a list of non-artifactual attributes distinctive to the fur trade such as depressions, soil stains, and/or cultural debris.

Finally, previous excavations of known trading posts, though not presently listed on the National Register, were investigated to determine the condition of the property. If the integrity of the site remained intact, field notes and published reports from the excavation were incorporated into the study.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

[X] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: _____

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Todd Kapler Historical Archaeologist

organization State Preservation Center date _____

street & number 3 East Main P.O Box 417 telephone 605 677-5314

city or town Vermillion state SD zip code 57069

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Beginning in April 1987 a study was initiated under the auspices of the South Dakota Historical Preservation Center to research, evaluate, and survey all remaining trading post sites within the state. The purpose of this study was twofold. First, a complete listing of all operable trading posts in the state was obtained for possible inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places. Second, the study would result in a report serving as the first model project in the historic archaeological component of the state historical preservation plan.

The study was performed over a six month period by Todd Kapler, historical archaeologist at the preservation center in Vermillion, South Dakota. The importance of the fur trade in the state's early historic period warranted a full comprehensive study of all trading posts that once operated within the state.

In order to ascertain both the names and number of sites within the state, a thorough records search was initiated in state and federal archives, libraries, and state CRM files. To compile a complete listing of all trading posts that once operated within South Dakota was unrealistic at best. It was possible, indeed likely, that over 100 - perhaps as many as 200- trading establishments once existed in the state. Most of these "trading posts", however, were small, crude shacks that rarely lasted for more than one trading season. Trading posts were described superficially in company journals, personal diaries, and manuscripts in very general terms. For example, two particular entries made in the Fort Pierre journals mention "Post on the White River" and "Laidlaws Establishment on the Forks of the Cheyenne". Most traders of the time probably KNEW where Laidlaws establishment was; unfortunately the luxury of that personal knowledge is not available today.

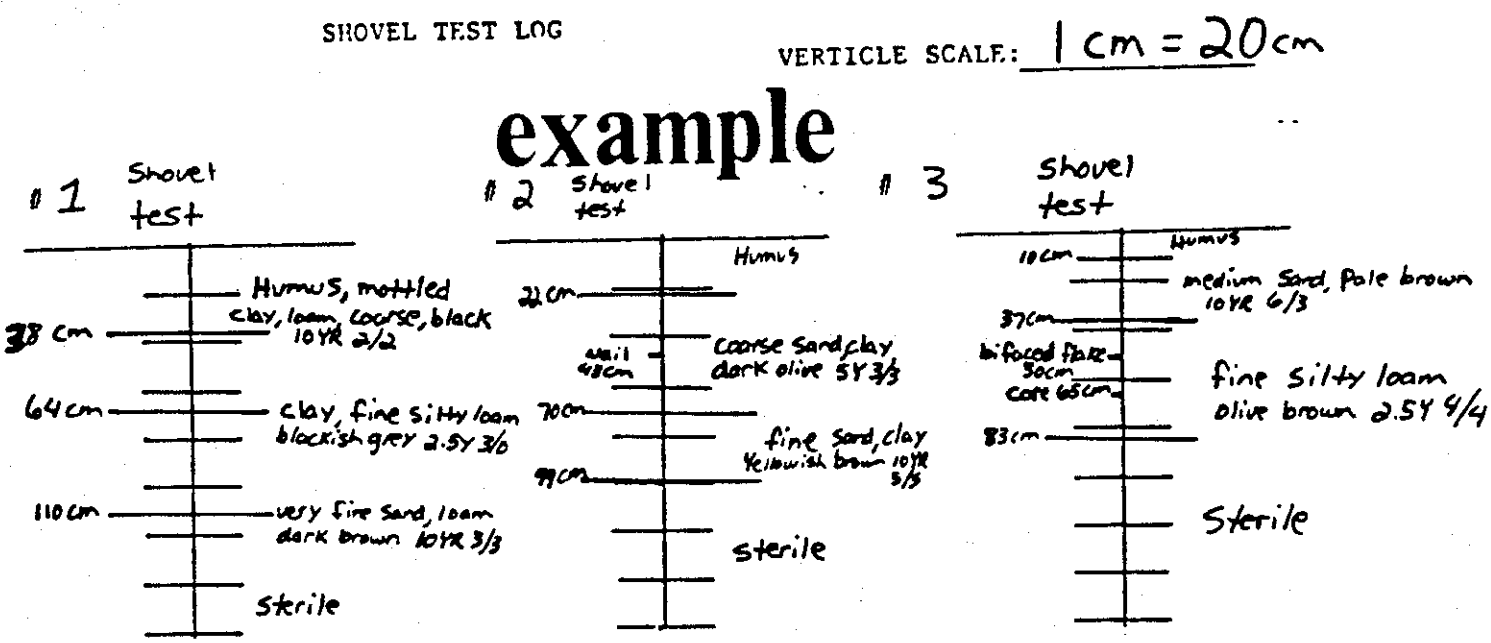
A search through existing National Register files indicated there are presently three trading posts on the National Register of Historic Places: Fort Manual, Fort George, and Fort Pierre Chouteau. Therefore, these sites are not included in this discussion.

The records indicated that a majority of the identifiable sites were along the Missouri River; however most were inundated or destroyed during the 1950's with the construction of four Missouri River dams and the flooding of the lands which produced reservoirs. Because the historic maps and primary sources placed individual forts or posts in relation to the Missouri River before the dams, a system of calibrating their modern location was devised using aerial photos of the Missouri River before and after dam construction. Upon determining the position of the original sites, those sites not inundated were plotted on modern USGS Quad maps.

The next step was to perform archaeological surveys to establish the boundaries of each site. There was no consistent methodology applied to these surveys. The particular terrain, the sites accessibility and knowledge from previous investigations often dictated how each survey was performed. Whenever possible, both surface reconnaissance and shovel testing was used to establish boundaries needed for the National Register nomination process. Often nature provided the modern boundaries such as the edge of a terrain, or a body of water. Other boundaries were dictated by manmade intrusions such as a road, ditch, or field under cultivation. When shovel testing was performed, it involved digging approximately 60cm holes into the ground and recording soil texture and soil color with the assistance of the Munsell soil color charts. Soil stratigraphy was recorded with the use of a shovel test log (fig. 1) to assist in determining disruptions that might indicate foreign intrusion such as foundations, post molds, or even rodent disturbance. The displaced soil from these holes is then passed through 1/4 inch screen to assist in the recovery of artifacts or cultural debris.

In addition to the testing done by the historic preservation archaeologist, there were intensive excavations during the 1950's by the Smithsonian River Basin Survey (RBS) of two trading posts not presently listed on the National Register. Information from the RBS excavations, done prior to the implimentation of the Missouri River dams, was used in conjunction with the data recovered by the historic preservation archaeologist as part of this multiple nomination. A total of four trading post sites were deemed to have enough integrity intact to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Figure 1. Shovel test log (example).



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