

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY**  
**NRHP Nomination Form**

[The paper original of 1973 I had scanned cannot be found, but the text is substantially correct. The proposal was accepted. However, Father Gnidovec told me that the conditions for such a listing was to keep up the buildings in their original state, judged too expensive and impractical. Ed.]

CAMP PILOT BUTTE

ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING

1885-1973

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known)

[PHYSICAL APPEARANCE 1]

In southwest Wyoming is a broad, uniform geologic area in the shape of a right triangle, with its apex near Bondurant, its right angle located near the town of Evanston, and its base extending eastward half the width of the state along the southern Wyoming state line. This area was once overspread with very large lakes, but today contains instead several large basins. The geologic area is bound on the west by several mountain ranges—the Hoback Range, the Wyoming Range, and the Salt River Range—and their southern extensions: the Sublette Range, the Tump [?] Range, Commissary Ridge, and Oyster Ridge. The north and east boundary of this triangular area is formed by the Gros Ventre and Wind River Mountains and the Sweetwater Uplift. On the east is the Rawlins Uplift and the Sierra Madre Mountains. The geologic area is divided into two parts by a large, elliptical, arched fold or uplift sixty miles long and thirty miles wide, the center of which is located east of Rock Springs

near that town's airport. East of the uplift is a compound depression: the northern portion is the Red Desert or Great Divide Basin; the southern portion is the Washakie Basin. West of the uplift is another large depression, the Green River Basin.

Within the elliptical uplift is the town of Rock Springs, situated along Bitter Creek and its tributary, Killpecker Creek whose waters together flow west to empty into the Green River fifteen miles west at the town of Green River. The establishment of the town of Rock Springs was based upon numerous seams of coal which, geologically, are a part of the Rock Springs uplift and dip toward the west. Several miles northwest of Rock Springs is an eminence known as Pilot Butte (elev. 7,921), a topographical landmark known to mountain men as early as 1825. The prominent butte lent its name to a military post established in Rock Springs in September, 1885 following a riot and massacre in that town.

Camp Pilot Butte was established on the north bank of Bitter Creek in the northwest part of Rock Springs, at an elevation of 6,260 feet above sea level. Laid out generally on a north-south line, it encompassed five and one-half acres of cinder-covered, Union Pacific Railroad property. The camp parade ground was the center of what is today a city block bound on the west by Soulsby Street, on the east by Pilot Butte Avenue, on the north by Bridger Avenue, and on the south by Elias Avenue. On the west end of the rectangular parade ground were two, separate structures housing officers, each containing three sets of quarters. Each was a one-story, frame structure painted a freight-car red, having a sloping, shingled roof, and a veranda running the front length of the building. Each set of quarters contained a parlor and dining room connected by an archway to two bedrooms, kitchen, a bathroom and a servant's room. A very small front entry and hallway also led to the kitchen. Within, wall-papered rooms were heated by stoves burning Rock Springs coal. In contrast to the enlisted men's barracks opposite, the officers' quarters had indoor toilets.

The enlisted men's barracks, forming the east boundary of the parade ground, was of essentially the same exterior design and constructed with the same [Physical Appearance -2] materials as the dwelling units for the officers. The barracks was designed for two companies of infantry. Its dimensions were 206 feet long by 28 feet wide, with 12-foot ceilings. With an extension to the rear of the building, 50 feet long by 28 feet wide, it had a "T"-shaped appearance. Two dormitories within the structure contained 12 rooms and a total of 36 beds. Other rooms included dining room, kitchen, cook's room, office, lavatory, storerooms, and a gymnasium containing such equipment as horizontal, parallel and perpendicular bars, arm rings, ladders, two sets of pulley weight apparatus, a vaulting horse, dumbbells and Indian clubs. Barracks rooms were plastered and finished in calamine, and were ventilated by windows and by flues leading from coal stoves.

A glance at a plan of the post reveals the existence of a variety of other buildings or structures which no longer exist including hospital, commissary, canteen, bakery, beer cellar, ice house, barber shop, sergeants' day room, school house, guard house, gun shed, carpenter shop, wagon shed, chicken houses, stables and corrals. When Camp Pilot Butte was established in 1885 little vegetation was to be found on the grounds of the post, although small grass plots—planted on soil brought from a distance and watered frequently—were started in front of the officers' quarters. Southwest of the camp was the 25-foot-deep gulch of Bitter Creek. A channel of water flowed through it intermittently, but in the spring the water was very high and turbid. However, most of the time the gulch was dry except for scattered, stagnant pools of water, for not only the town but also the coal mines and the camp emptied their sewage into Bitter Creek. According to the medical history of the post the bed of the creek was used as "a common receptacle for filth, garbage and refuse of all kinds." Salvation from the odiferous situation was afforded by dependable winds—winds which could also build snowdrifts, sand dunes and piles of garbage in front of homes and business establishments. The creek was not only the home of

sewage, but its precipitous banks contained dugout caves and shanties of all kinds inhabited by the social dregs of the town.

Immediately north of Camp Pilot Butte was Chinatown, a combination of company housing and assorted, jerry-built dwellings. The post medical historian termed sanitary conditions there “poor”, and noted that garbage was thrown out from huts without concern for its removal. West of the camp were no dwellings. To the southwest were piles of burning slack which at times probably cast a pall over the town. East and south of the camp was Rock Springs, a cosmopolitan town where one could find a host of nationalities—English, Scotch, Welsh, Scandinavian, Finn, Slovenian, Italian and Tyrolese—and a corresponding variety of neighborhoods whose sanitary conditions ran from “clean to filthy.” Rock Springs was unplanned and grew like a plant without cultivation. This was necessarily the case because of the topography of the land, the coal mines, and the railroad line and its spurs. The result [Physical Appearance-3] was a maze of streets and alleys which is still confusing to today’s visitor to the town. Compounding the topographic problem of Rock Springs today is the fact that past, extensive coal mining has caused some subsidence of the ground above the mines, and has given rise to the expression that “Rock Springs is sinking.”

Today the property of the Camp Pilot Butte Historic District is owned by the parish of the Catholic Church, Saints Cyril and Methodius. Only a remnant of Camp Pilot Butte remains in the form of two buildings which probably are not extraordinarily significant in terms of architecture. They are: the southern-most set of the two officers’ quarters, and the enlisted men’s barracks. The north set of officers’ quarters was removed in 1969 in order to make room for the construction of a multi-purpose parish center, while the remaining officers’ quarters serves two purposes: the south portion is a rental, dwelling unit, and the north portion is utilized as an annex to the parish school. At the east end of the former post site the soldiers’ barracks serve as the main parish school building. While the remaining officers’ quarters has experienced very little remodeling, the

soldiers' barracks has seen extensive remodeling including the addition of brick facing on the basic frame structure. All other camp buildings have been removed and what was once the parade ground has been paved with asphalt to serve as a school playground. Included within the Camp Pilot Butte Historic District is a building between the officers', quarters and the soldiers', barracks, and located at the south end of the parade, ground. It is a two-story, frame building constructed not long after the official abandonment of the camp. Having once served as the home of a mine superintendent of the Union Pacific Coal Company, it has since been remodeled and today is a convent for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, women who serve the parish mainly as school teachers. Today there are some -trees on the site of the former post, where once there were none. Bitter Creek, which was immediately south of the post, has since been diverted to the north. Immediately north and across the street from the parade ground, where Chinatown once stood, is a public elementary school. Generally, over the years Camp Pilot Butte has become surrounded by the growth of Rock Springs homes and businesses. Thus the appearance of Camp Pilot Butte today is much different from that when it was abandoned in 1899.

[STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE 1]

One of the economic foundations of the Territory and State of Wyoming was, and still is, coal. Wyoming is rich in the resource so valuable to the economy, a resource which was especially valuable to the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1868 coal mines were opened at Carbon in central Wyoming and further west of Rock Springs. The following year mines were opened at another point—Almy—along the Union Pacific line. The rapid growth of the coal industry in Wyoming is reflected by production figures for the three years 1868, 1875 and 1880; 6,925 tons, 208,222 tons and 527,811 tons, respectively. Early mining was done by the Wyoming Coal and Mining Company, whose stock was once nine-tenths owned by Oliver Ames and five Union Pacific directors. But in 1874 the Union Pacific established its own coal department. The coal business was a profitable venture for the Union Pacific and was the “salvation” of

the company, according to its former president, Charles Francis Adams. Seams of coal had been noted near the present site of Rock Springs during the first half of the nineteenth century by mountain men, and official government explorers such as Captain Howard Stansbury. But it was not until 1868, when the bed of the nation's first transcontinental railroad was laid through the area, that Rock Springs was to assume significance. The route of the railroad was, at that point, the same as that of the Overland Trail which carried the bulk of transcontinental traffic prior to the construction of the railroad. Rock Springs had been one of many stopping points along the trail used by emigrants and the stagecoaches of Ben Holladay, but it was bituminous coal which provided the real foundation of Rock Springs prosperity and growth until about 1950, at which time the railroad converted to diesel power.

According to Historian T. A. Larson, in the early years of the Wyoming coal industry the labor policies of the Union Pacific Coal Company were similar to those of other employers. That is, laborers who went on strike were fired and replaced by those who would work for what the company offered them. In 1871 Thomas Wardell of the Wyoming Coal and Mining Company fired striking coal miners, replacing them with Scandinavians who accepted two dollars a day, less than the wage previously paid. The result was that federal troops had to be sent from Fort Steele, over 100 miles to the east along the U. P. route, to maintain order at Carbon and Rock Springs. The Union Pacific Coal Company took the same course of action [Statement of Significance – 2] in 1875. In that year the pay for mining coal was cut from five to four cents a bushel. When miners struck because the cost of provisions did not experience a corresponding reduction, they were discharged and replaced by Chinese laborers. Fearing trouble, the Union Pacific requested Territorial Governor John Thayer for protection, whereupon Thayer asked General George Crook for federal troops. Two companies of troops each were sent to Carbon and Rock Springs to protect company property, but did not remain long since no further trouble developed.

Chinese laborers had migrated to the United States as early as 1848, following the discovery of gold in California. In 1862 Congress prohibited the importation of Chinese coolies although many were later employed in the construction of the Central Pacific Railway portion of the first transcontinental railroad. Despite anti-Chinese feeling, especially in California, the United States and Chinese governments in 1868 signed the Burlingame Treaty which accorded Chinese subjects in the United States most-favored nation treatment. Continued friction between whites and Chinese led to the modification of the Burlingame Treaty in 1880. By the Treaty China recognized the right of the United States to regulate, limit or suspend Chinese immigration but not absolutely prohibit Chinese laborers. In 1882 Chinese immigration was suspended for ten years, a suspension which later became permanent.

In Wyoming Chinese-white friction developed later than in California. Chinese were brought to Wyoming as section workers in 1870, and made their appearance in Rock Springs during the coal-miners' strike of 1875. It was at that time that they were brought as laborers to that western Wyoming coal town by Beckwith, Quinn and Company, a firm which furnished coal miners of all nationalities for the Union Pacific Railroad. Within two weeks of the strike, 150 Chinese and 50 whites resumed mining operations. It was not until 1885, a decade after the 1875 strike and three years after Chinese immigration to the United States had been suspended, that a major incident took place at Rock Springs. By that time, 331 Chinese and 150 whites were employed in the Rock Springs mines, although there were many more of both categories who were otherwise occupied in the town.

On September 2, 1885 a fight erupted in Number Six Mine in Rock Springs resulting in the beating of two Chinese. Later that day a mob of 150 whites, about half of them armed with Winchester rifles, attacked Chinatown killing 28 Chinese, wounding fifteen and chasing several hundred others out of town. Chinatown was set afire and Chinese property valued at almost \$148,000 was destroyed in the event known as

the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre. Most of the Chinese who escaped the massacre initially went west, following the railroad tracks toward the town of Green River. A train picked up the Chinese [Statement of Significance – 3] both east and west of Rock Springs and took them to Evanston, where there was also strong anti-Chinese feeling. The following day Territorial Governor Francis E. Warren arrived at Rock Springs in order to make a personal investigation, following which he went to Evanston where he sent several telegrams to President Grover Cleveland, requesting federal troops. Meanwhile in Rock Springs the situation was still unstable, although the uprising was over.

Governor Warren found troops difficult to secure but on the night of September 5, pursuant to Special Orders Number 86, Department of the Platte, September 5, 1885, two companies of troops of the Seventh United States Infantry arrived in Wyoming Territory. One of them, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, was stationed at Evanston. The other, under the command of Colonel Chipman, was stationed at Rock Springs. Colonel McCook at Camp Murray, Utah Territory was then ordered to send six more companies of troops. On September 9, one week after the massacre, the six companies arrived— five from Fort Bridger and one from Camp Douglas. On that day four of the six companies escorted the Chinese refugees back to Rock Springs, where they were lodged in boxcars near the tent encampment of the troops.

As long as the whites in the region felt ready to deny the massacre was wrong, federal troops were necessary to prevent another outbreak or possible massacre. One week after the troops escorted the Chinese back to Rock Springs the men who were assigned the investigation of the incident reported that the ninety soldiers on duty were overworked and ought to be reinforced. However, the situation gradually became calm and, in fact, Governor Warren asked for removal of the troops as early as September 15. Later, on October 5, 1885, in compliance with Special Orders Number 103, all troops required for the emergency except for



two-companies-were removed. Camp Pilot Butte at Rock Springs and Camp Medicine Butte at •Evanston remained as temporary military posts.

Following the incident sixteen men, including Isaiah Whitehouse, member-elect of the territorial legislature, were arrested by the Sweetwater County sheriff and taken to jail at Green River. They were released when a county grand jury brought in no indictments. Eventually the Union Pacific Coal Company discharged 45 white miners and the Rock Springs mines were reopened, although for a time more trouble loomed as a possibility. On September 30, five hundred white miners went on strike but after two months the strike was unsuccessful and the strikers went back to work.

It is not necessary to pursue in detail the evidence relative to the massacre of the Rock Springs Chinese since that has been done thoroughly in other works. Nevertheless, the causes of the episode should be understood in a general way. The situation which resulted in the massacre is complex, as one might expect, but hindsight provides us with a fairly clear picture. At the [Statement of Significance – 4] bottom of the Rock Springs disturbance was the economic competition between whites and Chinese beginning in 1875 when the Union Pacific Coal Company brought Chinese into the town to replace those who were on strike. The Chinese worked for wages which the whites could not accept, and could not join the strike probably in the fear that they, too, could be replaced. Economic competition was intensified by the feeling of the whites, whether or not it was supported by fact, that the Chinese received preferential treatment from the Union Pacific Coal Company. The Chinese were also accused of paying for their positions in the mine, an accusation which was not substantiated one way or the other. But the fact that the Chinese would not join in a strike against the coal company must have been a significant cause of ill-will between the two groups. Obvious racial and cultural differences between the Occidental and Oriental laborers was also an important factor in the intense feelings

which were created. The frustration of the whites, although not expressed by violence, was also directed against the Union Pacific Coal Company. The company was accused by them of discrimination in hiring and working practices, of robbing laborers by the use of false weights, of discharging laborers for not voting "right" in a school election, and of compelling laborers to patronize the company store. These problems were not alleviated by a local newspaper press which clamored, "the Chinese must go!" Finally, the Knights of Labor, a national labor organization which grew rapidly in America during the 1880's, played a role by generally spearheading opposition to employment of Chinese labor in America. In 1878 its national membership was only 9,287. By the end of 1883 it was 51,914 and by 1886, at the peak of its power, it had a membership of 700,000. The Knights worked for the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and its organizational work in Rock Springs dated from 1883.

The chief significance of Camp Pilot Butte as a historic site is in relationship to the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre, for the post was established as a result of that incident. State, national and even international ramifications of the Chinese massacre make Camp Pilot Butte a site of great significance in Wyoming. The Chinese massacre which led to the establishment of the post is a symbol of nineteenth century anti-Chinese agitation in the United States, especially in the west. But it is also important in itself.

Although anti-Chinese eruptions had taken place previous to the one in Rock Springs, the latter was one of the worst, if not the worst outbreak against the Chinese in American history. Although it was not the most costly in terms of property lost, it is significant for the great number of Chinese killed. According to one writer, the riot is of further significance in that it was "the first incident in a sustained anti-Chinese movement in the west." The massacre is important for its international ramifications, in that treaty negotiations between the United States and China on the subject of immigration of Chinese laborers was jeopardized by the delay

in securing [Statement of Significance-5] compensation for victims of the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre. It stirred up a legal issue in American diplomacy since the United States made compensation, in the form of a monetary gift, to the victims of the massacre even though America claimed no legal obligation to make such payment. American politics was another area touched by the episode. The slow reaction of President Cleveland to the emergency may have contributed to a Republican victory in the national election of 1888. Further, the strong anti-Chinese position of the powerful national organization, the Knights of Labor, was weakened by the riot, although there is no proof that the Knights were responsible for the event. Finally, the practice of sending United States troops to protect foreigners on our own soil has not been a common practice in American History, and the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre is unique in this regard.

On the state level, the major political significance of the event is that Governor Francis E. Warren, acting as swiftly and strongly as he did during the Rock Springs crisis, achieved a reputation which was a benefit to his personal political career. The massacre was the only example of industrial warfare in state history, and was not to be repeated since Chinese immigration was suspended by 1882. The Chinese who remained to work in the Rock Springs mines eventually returned to their native land or finished out their careers and lives on United States soil. One interesting result of the Rock Springs episode is that Fred Ames, a director of the Union Pacific Railroad Company, in gratitude to Governor Warren for the strong position taken by Warren during the tumult, and thus helping to preserve Union Pacific property, used his influence to provide the city of Cheyenne with the finest railroad depot along the Union Pacific line at that time.

No major flare-up between whites and Chinese in Rock Springs or elsewhere in Wyoming took place following the bloody 1885 episode, but troops remained at Rock Springs for 13 years until the beginning of the Spanish-American War. [Troops remained at Camp Medicine Butte

in Evanston until April, 1887.] By that time the tent encampment on the banks of Bitter Creek grew into a substantial post of frame buildings constructed for the military by the Union Pacific Coal Company. A few old photographs, an outline plan of the post, and a document entitled, "Medical History of Camp Pilot Butte," provide us with some information regarding Camp Pilot Butte, but until past records are thoroughly researched the history of the post and its relationship to the Wyoming territorial and statehood period during the years, 1885-1898 must remain incomplete.

[Statement of Significance - 6] Following the official abandonment of the post on March 3, 1899, until 1951, its buildings were utilized as dwelling units by the Union Pacific Coal Company, which had originally built the post. The officers' quarters on the west end of the post and the soldiers' barracks on the east end were used to house coal company workers, particularly foremen and lesser company officials and their families. Between the two a home was built for the company mine superintendent, a two-story, frame dwelling originally containing about-ten rooms. Located on the approximate site of the post commissary, the building was later remodeled and used as a boarding house.

In 1950 Camp Pilot Butte came under new ownership and the property began to serve a new purpose, that of Catholic education. Two Rock Springs Catholic parishes, Our Lady of Sorrows and Saints Cyril and Methodius, began about the same time financial campaigns for the construction of parochial schools. The campaigns came at a time, following World War II, when the percentage of private schools as compared to public schools was growing. The movement toward private education, toward the expression of a "need for choice" in education, climaxed in the mid-1960's. The construction of these two parochial Rock Springs schools was a part of that larger movement. Our Lady of Sorrows School was completed and opened in 1952. The history of the parish school of Saints Cyril and Methodius began in 1949 with negotiations between the parish and the Union Pacific Coal Company for

the purchase of the Camp Pilot Butte property, the projected site of the parish school. Negotiations were completed in May, 1950 and the parish bought a piece of land 130 by 280 feet at a cost of \$32,285. On that property was one building remaining from the era of Camp Pilot Butte, and the two-story home of the mine superintendent. The latter was leased by the parish and remodeled in 1951 to serve as a convent housing the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. In the summer of 1952 the parishioners of Saints Cyril and Methodius purchased the remaining property and structures on the city block which was once Camp Pilot Butte. The total cost of all the land came to over \$111,000 and when final payment was made in January, 1953 the convent building was donated to the parish. [See plan of post, "Camp Pilot Butte".]

The school planned for the newly-acquired parish property, designed by architects Kellogg and Kellogg of Rock Springs and Cheyenne, was to cost an estimated \$150,000. However, when bids were opened on August 13, 1950 the lowest bid was \$166,905. A fund-raising campaign by the church brought only \$65,000 and the bid was thus rejected. It was then decided that the soldiers' barracks could be remodeled to serve as a school in lieu of the projected new building. The Kellogg Lumber Company of Rock Springs was awarded a remodeling contract for an estimated \$60,000, and work was begun in November, 1950. In [Statement of Significance – 7] less than a year the remodeled building, containing eight classrooms, was dedicated for use as a school. Much credit for the campaign work to establish the school was given to a long-time Rock Springs priest, Monsignor Albin Gnidovec (1894-\*\*\*), pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius since 1931.

Teachers assigned to the school were the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The Sisters came to Rock Springs from Xavier, Kansas in time to begin-teaching the year the parish school was opened, but members of their organization first came to Wyoming much earlier. The order originated in Nashville, Kentucky under the leadership of Mother Xavier Ross, but under the advice of the famous missionary to the

Indians, Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, the Sisters began work in Indian Territory, Kansas. From there, members of the group spread out to various western states, including Wyoming. They first came to Wyoming in 1876 when two Sisters arrived at Laramie, sent there by Mother Xavier to nurse the sick and disabled of all races, colors and creeds. Saint Joseph's Hospital in Laramie and De Paul Hospital in Cheyenne are also manifestations of that charitable spirit.

The School opened in 1951 with an initial enrollment of 196 students in grades one through six, with six full-time teachers. That enrollment jumped as the school added a seventh grade the following year, and an eighth grade in 1953. In 1960 volunteer workers of the parish, in anticipation of increased enrollment, remodeled the north apartment of the south officers' quarters, transforming it into a classroom and rooms for teachers. Peak enrollment was 323 students in 1961-1962, by which time also the faculty had grown to nine full-time teachers, including two full-time lay teachers. Enrollment tended to decrease after 1961 until 1970-1971 when it dropped to 160, with six full-time and two part-time instructors. The drop is attributed to the closing of seventh and eighth grades which, in turn, was due to educational costs and the lack of teaching Sisters. Finally, in 1971 it was decided that the parish of Our Lady of Sorrow should operate grades one through three and Saints Cyril and Methodius grades four through six.

In 1965 much of the original camp parade ground, used as the parish school playground, was paved with asphalt. A building program to construct a new parish center was begun in the spring of 1968 and in April, 1969 the north officers' quarters was torn down to make room for the new structure costing \$120,000. The center was designed for school and parish functions, and community group activities, and had its grand opening on April 12, 1970. This building is to be excluded from historic district status. The south portion of the south officers' quarters today remains a rental unit, but appears to be in disrepair and may not remain standing long without stabilization work. The north apartment is in

better condition due to its use as a classroom. The last major, remaining post building—the soldiers' barracks— will probably stand for some time since it is used by the parish as the main [Statement of Significance - 8] school building. The most significant factor relative to the preservation of remnant Camp Pilot Butte structures is that they are being used, and will continue to remain standing as long as a use is found for them.