

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 15 1980
DATE ENTERED	FEB 3 1981

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Custer Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

T12N, R15E, Section 9, 10

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Custer

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Idaho

— VICINITY OF
CODE

16

COUNTY

Custer

Second
CODE

037

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME United States Forest Service

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Challis

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Idaho

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Custer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Challis

STATE

Idaho

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Idaho State Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1972

—FEDERAL STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Idaho State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

610 North Julia Davis Drive

STATE

Boise

Idaho

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Like neighboring Bonanza, Custer lies in a high mountain valley beside the Yankee Fork river. The town site is located two miles north of Bonanza and close to the old General Custer Mine. After the site was chosen by Samuel Holman in the summer of 1878, the heavily forested benchland was cleared and the logs piled into large stacks. Later, these were sawed into lumber and used to build houses and businesses in Custer, as well as the General Custer Mill.

Building was slow until the General Custer Mill was built about 1880, after which a horde of people moved in. As in other boomtowns, tents, log cabins and frame structures sprang up. Many of the frame buildings were covered with board and batten siding, and all frame structures had steep roofs to shed the heavy winter snows. Log cabins had stronger roofs, generally utilizing purlins and a fairly low pitch. At its peak, Custer had three general stores, one shoe and harness shop, two restaurants, three rooming houses, one butcher shop, two livery and feed stables, one furniture store, two barber shops, two carpenter shops, five saloons, four red light houses, one dance hall, one large hotel, two Chinese laundries, one Chinese store, one Wells Fargo office, one school, one blacksmith shop, and later in 1896, a miners' union hall. At the south end of town was a Chinese community called Custer's Chinatown. The only church ever built in the Yankee Fork district was a Chinese Joss House there. The cemetery, school, and post office were shared by Custer and Bonanza.

About 1960, the majority of the buildings in Custer were destroyed by the Forest Service as fire hazards, and now only a few buildings still stand. These include the ore bin at the General Custer Mill, the old Custer school (now a Forest Service museum), the Empire Saloon, two log dwellings, and a few frame buildings and outbuildings. The schoolhouse is a large, rectangular, one-story structure with a hip roof. It is of frame construction with clapboard siding, and the windows are multi-paned, double-hung sash.

The McKenzie residence is a T-shaped log building with purlins in the low gable roofs. The Empire Saloon, now a Forest Service employee's residence, is a tall, narrow, one-story board-and-batten building with a steep gable roof. It has a shed-roofed addition at the rear. All of these buildings face the single main street. Presently, the Forest Service is developing Custer and Bonanza as interpretive sites. This will include restoration of some of the buildings at Custer.

Inventory on continuation sheets.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first serious prospecting was done in the Yankee Fork district in 1870, but it wasn't until 1877 or so that any settlement began to appear in the remote area. First, Bonanza grew up near the Charles Dickens mine, which began as a very rich seam of ore in a high grade vein. Then two miles northeast, the General Custer Mine began to develop. The mine was discovered shortly after the general's death and named for him. Samuel Holman, a farsighted man who later became Justice of the Peace, saw a need for another town near the General Custer Mine. He located the townsite and prepared it even before the big General Custer mill was built. The town took its name from the mine. By 1888, the town had reached its peak, with over one hundred commercial buildings and permanent homes in Custer.

Gold and silver were both mined from the district, although gold was more abundant. After the General Custer mill, which had thirty stamps at one time, was put into operation, the town prospered for a while. The Custer ran smoothly for over a decade and about eight million dollars came from that mine. The Charles Dickens and other, by contrast, were mishandled and did not produce as the Custer did.

In the late 1880's, both the Charles Dickens and the General Custer Mine and mill were bought by a British concern called the Dickens-Custer Company, Ltd. It worked for a few years until mismanaged funds forced them to shut down in 1892. A concern known as the Lucky Boy took over the British holdings in 1895, and the two towns came alive again. Custer gained the post office and the school and became the stronger of the two towns, although there was apparently no real rivalry. Later Custer became a supply point for the Sunbeam, Loon Creek, Middle Fork and Thunder Mountain mining districts. The Lucky Boy operations halted in 1904 after turning out about one million dollars. Later attempts were made in 1906 and 1907 to drive an 1800 foot tunnel to strike the old Custer vein at a great depth, but not much came of this.

Other developments in the area included a new mill brought in by the Sunbeam Company, and even a hydroelectric plant at the Dunbeam Dam in 1910. By the next year, however, they had to shut down. Custer and Bonanza were already ghost towns. Only miner operations occurred in the area until 1939 when dredging of the low grade placers began, continuing until 1951. Today, there are only a few buildings left in Custer to remind the visitor of this once busy place. This historic district is a combine of ghost town buildings and a fine area for historical archaeology.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Esther Yarber, Land of the Yankee Fork, Denver: Sage Books, 1968.

Twin Falls Times-News, 30 October 1966, 26 July 1964.

Idaho State Journal, Pocatello, 29 April 1966.

Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series #204.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 29 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Custer

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	1	6	8	3	8	8	0	4	9	1	7	5	7	0
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B

1	1	6	8	3	8	7	0	4	9	1	7	4	0	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

1	1	6	8	3	6	0	0	4	9	1	7	1	9	0
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D

1	1	6	8	3	1	1	0	4	9	1	7	0	0	0
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E

1	1	6	8	3	1	3	0	4	9	1	7	1	6	0
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F

1	1	6	8	3	5	2	0	4	9	1	7	3	2	0
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G

1	1	6	8	3	8	2	0	4	9	1	7	6	5	0
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H

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Thomas B. Renk, Site Survey Staff

ORGANIZATION Idaho State Historical Society

DATE 22 March 1974

STREET & NUMBER 610 North Julia Davis Drive

TELEPHONE 384-2120

CITY OR TOWN Boise

STATE Idaho

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 30 June 1974

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 2/3/81

ATTEST:
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION
Regional Coordinator

DATE 1-29-81

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RECEIVED
JAN 15 1980
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

INVENTORY:

Photo

No.
(2)

The schoolhouse is a one-room, one-story frame structure with a steep hip-and-ridge map and nearly square proportions. The sides are fenestrated with three windows, winter boarded, to a wall; the entrance is centered between two windows and opens from a low-railed wooden porch. Differential weathering on the siding suggests that an overdoor has been removed. The schoolhouse is used in the summer months as a museum.

- (1) South of the schoolhouse is the Charles Raines cabin, a rectangular log cabin with front-facing frame gable. The squared logs are fitted with log lap corners in the frontmost section of the cabin; in the earlier, rear section logs are unsquared and corners are of the more primitive saddle-notch type. The walls contain square casement windows; there is a pole-supported overdoor at the front entrance, and a plank porch across the front of the cabin. Sheet metal protects the still visible hand-split shingles of the roof.
- (3) The Pfeiffer house is a neat gable-roofed frame dwelling surrounded by a picket fence. There are several associated outbuildings: a small gabled cabin to the left, and shed roofed structures added to the house itself at right and rear. It is located north of the schoolhouse and on the west side of the road.
- (4) This building with lateral-running gables is at the north end of town. It is constructed of squared logs with well-executed log lap corners, and hand-hewn window frames. It was used as a blacksmith shop and has a broad vehicle entrance on the left side of the facade. The pole-supported roof, unlike most in Custer, is still shingled.
- (5) A small gable-roofed log shelter with particularly low proportions and, large entryway and crudely saddle-notched corners; it was probably erected as a temporary dwelling and continued as a utilitarian building. It is at the south end of town near the Chinatown section on the east side of the road.
- (6) At the north end of town, on the west side of the road, this small cross-planned frame dwelling has a steeply-gabled roof system and tall proportions which approximate "I-house" proportions on a diminutive scale.
- (7) The McKenzie house is near the south end of town on the east side of the road. It is a single-story log structure with lateral-running gables and a rear extension which produces an ell-shaped building. The corners of both sections are crudely overlapped. The logs are barked and squared. Both sections have interior brick chimneys. There is a broad vehicle entrance on the right side of the facade.

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Because mining constituted Idaho's principal industry (which accounted for settlement of the region) when the territory was established, Custer represents a major feature of Idaho's early history. Lode mining--as developed at Custer on a scale matched in very few other Idaho gold camps--brought stability to Idaho's early economy and supported development of agriculture and service occupations.

Custer's buildings also represent a good architectural example of construction in a major nineteenth century mining camp remote from transportation facilities. Few buildings from this era of mining remain in Idaho, and their unusual quality comes from their survival rather than from being untypical. Cultural resources of this kind, once fairly common, have become rare.

As a mining area, Yankee Fork (with Custer a major center) with a production of about \$14,000,000 (now worth more than \$520,000,000) ranks among Idaho's half dozen most important gold camps, out of forty or so. (This present valuation statement reflects prices available January 4, 1980; when Yankee Fork gold increased well over an additional \$60,000,000--more than five times its original value--in just one day.)

Custer also has significance as a pioneer United States Forest Service mining camp preservation and interpretation project--a development important not only to the state of Idaho, but nationally as well.

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PAGE 1

When surveyed will probably be in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 9, and the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 10, more particularly described as beginning at a point, which is a scribed crown in a three-inch pipe cap set in the center of a concrete and rock mound eighteen inches high by four feet in diameter which bears North 40° East 615 feet from USGS Bench Mark H 234, 1960: Thence North 28° West, 79.5 feet to Corner Number 1; thence South 64° West, 1682 feet to Corner Number Two; thence South 16° West 231 feet to Corner Number three, which is the mean high water line on the south bank of the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River; thence in a northeasterly direction along said mean high water line about 3300 feet to Corner Number four; thence North 35° West, 415 feet to Corner Number five; thence South 48° West, 1168 feet to corner Number one, the point of closure; thence South 28° North 79.5 feet to the concrete and rock mound, the point of beginning.

Latitude:

NW 44° 23' 27"
NE 44° 23' 27"
SE 44° 23' 07"
SW 44° 23' 07"

Longitude:

114° 42' 04"
114° 41' 28"
114° 41' 28"
114° 42' 04"

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Custer Historic District
Supplementary Information, December 23, 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Addendum to inventory:

Supplementary photograph 1 Empire Saloon.

This is a one-story gable-front building of board-and-batten construction. A central transomed door flanked by two windows forms a three-bay facade. The front porch, partially enclosed, has a shed roof. The main block has a forty-five degree gable roof with enclosed eaves. The legend "Empire" is faintly visible in the front gable space.

The building is currently used as a summer residence by U. S. Forest Service employees.



CUSTER, IDAHO
1971

Form No. 10-301a
(7/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

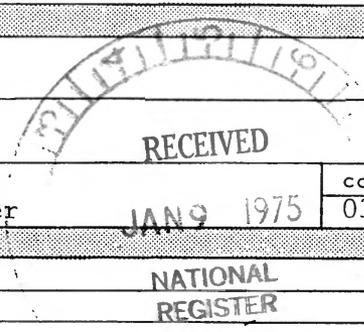
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Idaho	
COUNTY Custer	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Custer			
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: T12N, R15E, Sec. 9 and 10			
CITY OR TOWN: Custer			
STATE: Idaho	CODE 16	COUNTY: Custer	CODE: 037
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: U.S. Forest Service			
DATE OF PHOTO: 1971			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Yankee Fork Ranger Station Clayton, Idaho 83227			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. View of Custer, looking east-northeast along the Yankee Fork.			





FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(Log Cabin) Custer, Custer County, Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October, 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from South East
1 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(Schoolhouse-Museum) Custer, Custer
County, Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October, 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from Southeast
2 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(Pfeiffer House) Custer, Custer County,
Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from South East
3 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(Blacksmith Shop) Custer, Custer County,
Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from West
4 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(Small log structure) Custer, Custer
County, Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October, 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from Northwest
5 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(I-frame House) Custer, Custer County,
Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October, 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from South
6 of 7

JAN 15 1980



FEB 3 1981

Custer Historic District
(McKenzie House) Custer, Custer County,
Idaho

Photographer: Barton G. Nordling
October, 1978

Negative on file at: Idaho State
Historical Society, Boise, Idaho

View from Northwest

JAN 15 1980

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FEB 3 1981

JAN 2 1981

Empire Saloon
Custer Historic District
Custer, Custer County, Idaho

Photographer:
G. Nordling
1978

Negative on file at:
Idaho State Historical Society
Boise, Idaho

View from southwest

Supplementary photograph 1 of 1