

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
(Updated Documentation, Name Change, and Boundary Increase)

Other names/site number: Fort Union (32WI17 (ND))/(24RV50 (MT)),
Garden Coulee/Crow-Flies-High Village Site (32WI18)
Mondak Townsite (portion) (24RV591, 24RV592, 24RV593,
24RV595)

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 15550 ND-1804
City or town: Williston State: ND County: Williams County (105) and McKenzie
County (053) ND/Roosevelt County (085) and Richland County (083), MT

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this __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 __meets__ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national X statewide __local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B __C X D X Criteria Consideration E

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☒

Public – Federal

☒

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) ☐

District ☒

Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	buildings
<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>16</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 (site)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

DOMESTIC: institutional housing, camp, secondary structure, village site

DEFENSE: fortification

LANDSCAPE: natural feature

GOVERNMENT: diplomatic building

Current Functions

LANDSCAPE: park, natural feature, parking lot

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling, secondary structure

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER: VERNACULAR

MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE, STONE

Walls: WOOD/weatherboard, stucco, log

Roof: WOOD/shingle

Other: GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Situated along the Missouri River and encompassing 418.53 acres of land on both sides of the Montana-North Dakota border, the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (NHS) Historic District is comprised of all the federal (fee-simple) lands; 66.51 acres of state-owned land; 104.17 acres of private property under scenic easement, and 1.05 acres of state right-of-way. These are all located within the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site boundary. This National Register nomination represents a boundary increase of 177.99 acres and a documentation update, superseding the 1982 nomination. The property name is also changed from "Fort Union" to the "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District," reflecting changes at the site since the 1982 nomination. The resource count also reflects a change from the 1982 nomination, which listed one 240.54 acre site (the "historically significant area" of Fort Union) and several noncontributing resources and features which are no longer present (2024): an interim visitor contact facility, access road and parking lot north of the fort site; four noncontributing house trailers east of the fort site; and an abandoned 1950s era road described as "cut through the terrace edge on the east side of the fort site." Other features

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described in 1982 were “partially buried trash dumps,” described as non-contributing to the site, and attributed to the 1903-1928 community of Mondak.¹

Fort Union Trading Post NHS Historic District retains a relatively high level of integrity. The landscape is distinguished by riparian forest along the Missouri River, terrace lands above and north of the river that have been restored to short-grass prairie, uplands further north that contain northern mixed-grass prairie, and a coulee (Garden Coulee) that serves as the district’s eastern boundary. The landscape connects the various resources together and reflects the continuity of use in the area. The majority of the district is located on the north side of the river, where the reconstruction dominates the landscape from its terrace location overlooking the river.

Nationally significant contributing resources within the district consist of a cultural landscape (one site), seven archeological sites, and nine fully and partially reconstructed buildings and structures representing the appearance of the fur-trade era fort circa 1851. The primary archeological site in the historic district the American Fur Company’s (AFC) Upper Missouri Outfit headquarters: the Fort Union trading post (32WI17 (ND)/24RV50 (MT)). Other fur-trade era sites are the Fort William stockade (32WI988), the Charles Larpenieur Opposition Post (32WI992), the Fort Benton Road (24RV596), and what appears to be two historic trash dumps (32WI989, 32WI900). A seventh archeological site, the Garden Coulee/Crow-Flies-High Village Site, (32WI18) dates to an 1869-1884 period of Native American occupation of the Garden Coulee area and is significant at a state level. While the archeological sites have discrete boundaries, past activities crossed these boundaries both geographically and temporally. Five noncontributing resources are associated with current park operations and consist of two houses, a maintenance building, a water treatment building, and a road system.

Narrative Description

GENERAL SETTING

Most of the lands that constitute the Fort Union Trading Post NHS are located in extreme western North Dakota, but a portion of the district overlaps the state line to include lands in eastern Montana. The region is characterized by scattered cattle ranches and widely dispersed towns, although infrastructure associated with the extraction of shale oil from the Bakken Formation (which underlies northwestern North Dakota, northeastern Montana, and parts of southern Saskatchewan) is evident in wells, pipelines, compressor stations and storage facilities.

¹ The northern part of Mondak is located outside of the Fort Union NHS historic district boundary and has been determined by the Keeper of the National Register to be significant at a local level of significance. This update identifies Mondak community resources that are within the NHS boundary, but which could be added to a Mondak National Register nomination at a future date, following Phase II assessment. See Lynn B. MacDonald, “Determination of Eligibility Notification, National Register of Historic Places, Mondak Townsite (24RV102),” (19 April 1982) reference number 65003630; Fred A. Finney, *An Archeological Overview and Assessment of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota and Montana*, Technical Report 138 (Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, 2016), 65. The Midwest Archeological Center hereafter cited as MWAC.

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The nearest sizeable community is Williston, North Dakota, 25 miles northeast via North Dakota Highway 1804. The climate of the region is continental, with winter temperatures generally ranging between 21 to 3 degrees Fahrenheit, while midsummer temperatures average about 84 degrees, but can reach above 100. Precipitation averages 12-16 inches per year, with most occurring as rain in the months of May, June, and July. In contrast, winters are cold but relatively dry. The growing season averages 115 days, with most commercial agriculture focused on grains, oilseeds, dry beans, dry peas, tobacco, vegetables, melons, and potatoes. The landscape of the historic district, however, has been maintained and restored with an array of plants, shrubs, trees, and mixed grasses native to the Northern Temperate Grassland biome.²

Both this historic district and the administrative boundaries of the Fort Union Trading Post NHS are comprised of two discontinuous parts separated by a transportation corridor containing a single-track railroad grade used by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, and a parallel stretch of North Dakota Highway 1804 that becomes Montana State Highway 327 at the North Dakota-Montana border. Just west of the state border, the highway is intersected by Mondak Backroad 1, which provides access north of the highway to a parking area and trail to the Bodmer Overlook—the topographical location where the artist Karl Bodmer painted “Fort Union on the Missouri” in 1833. The Bodmer Overlook is an NPS-owned, parcel of about 30 acres occupying the northern portion of the historic district. Situated north of lightly grazed ranchlands in which the NPS holds scenic easements, the Overlook provides a panorama of the reconstructed Fort Union, the surrounding prairies, and a free-flowing section of the Missouri River. South of the highway, the unnamed extension of Mondak Backroad 1 is a paved, primary visitor access road that bends southeast to a parking area near the north bank of the Missouri River.

The south portion of the historic district encompasses a gravel terrace situated about 25 feet above Missouri River, and a small portion of land south of the river. The central feature of the historic district is a partial reconstruction exactly in situ of Fort Union Trading Post. The fort is located on the terrace and is surrounded on three sides by restored mixed-grass prairie that extends to the northwest, northeast, and southeast, while the south side overlooks a stretch of riparian forest along the north bank of the river. The reconstruction consists of two buildings and seven structures. The application of white-wash on nearly all buildings and structures historically gave the historic Fort Union an integrated aesthetic, which has been repeated with the reconstruction.³

² Michael R. Komp et al, “Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Natural Resource Condition Assessment; Natural Resource Report NPS/FOUS/NRR—2014/774” (February 2014), 5-8; Mervin Floodman, *Prehistory on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands: An Overview* (Bismarck, ND: US Forest Service/Dakota Prairie Grasslands, 2012), 13-17.

³ Most of the fort structures are whitewashed, but the Bourgeois House is painted white. John Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 119-122; Harvey H. Kaiser, *The National Park Architecture Sourcebook* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 230-232; Charles Van Ravensway, “The Creole Arts and Crafts of Upper Louisiana,” *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*, 12 (April 1956): 213-

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The fort is accessed by a paved path that leads from the parking area to the southwest bastion of the fort. Another path from the parking area gives access to riparian area and—when the river is running low—leads across a shallow back-channel to a large sandbar that has begun to fill in with vegetation. Most of the riparian areas on the north bank of the Missouri River are below what the State of North Dakota defines as the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM). Though some of these riparian lands include acreage acquired by the NPS from private owners; in 2016, the state claimed title to the high-water point on the Missouri River—and thus, redefined the public ownership of 66.51 acres of riparian lands within the statutory boundaries of Fort Union Trading Post NHS. The change in ownership followed marked shifts in river morphology, in which the main channel of the Missouri River has gradually shifted southward. This has resulted in the conditions noted above: namely, an expansion of sandbars and low-lying riparian areas on the north side of the river and an erosion of riparian forests on the south side.⁴

On the eastern side of the district, between the highway and the river, is an area of NPS land that encompasses a portion of Garden Coulee—a drainage and historic travel corridor that runs southward from the crest of the uplands to the Missouri River flood plain. The Garden Coulee area was also the location of the 1869-1884 Crow-Flies-High Village. Accessed by a service road that intersects with Highway 1804, this section of the NPS park unit includes a developed area set aside for employee housing and park maintenance. The developed area sits near the north bank of the Missouri River and about one-half mile east of the reconstructed fort and is removed from the Fort Union viewshed due to its location below the level of the terrace. It is less than ten acres and includes a three-bay shop, two houses, a temporary residential structure, several small storage sheds, a well house, and areas of bare ground where construction materials and equipment can be stored temporarily. Screened by a low bluff and a scattering of trees and shrubs, the maintenance/residential area cannot be seen from the fort or its immediate vicinity. The rest of the Garden Coulee area includes former agriculture fields between the ancient river bluff line and the state highway, as well as some riparian areas in the drainages below the bluff line and along the north bank of the river.⁵

Along with the restored prairies and the careful screening of developed areas, the fort offers a variety of vantage points from the bastions and palisade walkways that approximate and evoke the cultural and historical landscapes of the mid nineteenth century. The Fort Benton Road (24RV596), a historic trace that runs westward from the national park unit's main access road to its west boundary fence, adds another dimension to the connection between landscape, structure, and archeological site. While not considered resources eligible to list per NRHP requirements,

248. It is worth noting that Fort Union's color scheme mimicked that of York Factory, Norway House, and other large Hudson's Bay Company posts.

⁴ On the State of North Dakota's claims to low-lying riparian areas, see National Park Service, "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Cultural Landscapes Inventory" (Omaha, NE: Midwest Regional Office, 2018), 17-18. Midwest Regional Office hereafter cited "MWRO".

⁵ National Park Service, "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Relocation of Shop Road: Environmental Assessment and Assessment of Effect" (June 2008), 3-4; National Park Service, "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Cultural Landscapes Inventory" (MWRO, 2012), 16-17; National Park Service, "Statement for Management - Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site" (April 1989), 3, 8.

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the extensive collection of objects recovered by archeologists since the mid-1980s merit mention here. They correspond to ancient and historic Indigenous use and residence by many cultures within the area and provide key insights on historic Fort Union's material culture, and shed light on the construction, maintenance, and demise of the original fur trade post.⁶

SUMMARY OF ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS⁷

The following chronology gives the highlights of past archeological investigations at the Fort Union Trading Post, with an emphasis on post-1982 work. This summary does not include minor compliance studies that produced negative results. The summary is adapted from that provided in Fred Finney's draft "Archeological Overview and Assessment for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site."

After establishment of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, archeological research was initiated in 1968 and continued for many years thereafter with investigations of the trading post site directed towards the location and delineation of architectural features considered to be prerequisites for the partial reconstruction of the fort. This work covered portions of most of the known buildings.⁸ One of the early NPS geophysical surveys occurred in 1977-1978 marking the beginning of cooperation between John Weymouth (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and NPS archaeologists from the Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC).⁹ By the mid-1980s more detailed archeological information was required to meet the NPS standards for reconstruction. This work centered on the features and buildings to be rebuilt.¹⁰

⁶ Fred A. Finney, "2013 An Archeological Overview and Assessment of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota and Montana (Draft)," (Upper Midwest Archaeology, Contract Completion Report 333, 2013), Lincoln, Nebraska: Midwest Archeological Center, 34, 81, 99.

⁷ This format and narrative follow the physical description Section 7 of Anne Emmons, Theodore Catton, Janene Caywood, Derek Beery, Mark Harvey (Historical Research Associates), (Updated) "Fort Union" National Historic Landmark, Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, February 27, 2015.

⁸ David A. Gillio, "1972 Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," 1973, Report by the University of Colorado, Department of Anthropology, National Park Service, MWAC; William J. Hunt, Jr., *Material Culture Reports, Part I; Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, (32W117), A Critical Review of the Archeological Investigations* (MWAC: 1986; Wilfred M. Husted, "1969 Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota: A progress Summary," 1970, MWAC;" Wilfred M. Husted, "1970 Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota: A Progress Summary," 1971, MWAC; Lawrence L. Loendorf, "Fort Union Backfilling Operation, Summer 1971," (Department of Anthropology, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, 1971), MWAC; Jackson W. Moore, Jr., "Summary of Archeological Investigations, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," 9 October 1968, MWAC.

⁹ John Weymouth, "An Analysis of a Magnetic Survey at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," 23 July 1979, 4, MWAC.

¹⁰ Groover, Mark D. and Melanie A. Cabak, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota, Block 18 Report*, foreword by William J. Hunt, Jr. (MWAC: 2002); Hunt, *Material Culture Reports, Part I*; William J. Hunt, Jr., *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota, Block 19 Report*, (MWAC: 2002); William J. Hunt, Jr., and Lynelle A. Peterson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Archeology and Architecture, The 1986 Excavations*, (MWAC: 1 May 1988); Lynelle A. Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post*

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1979-1981: Beginning in 1979 Dick Ping Hsu and Leslie Perry wrote a draft report combining results from excavations undertaken in 1968, 1969, 1970, and 1972. The Garden Coulee site was assigned archeological site number 32WI18. There was an attempt to fully describe the artifact inventory between 1979 and 1981 by NPS archeologists Dick Ping Hsu and Leslie Perry; however, in-house review of the manuscript identified several inherent problems.¹¹ Unfortunately Hsu transferred elsewhere in the NPS in 1981 and Perry left MWAC in 1982. As a result William Hunt, Jr., and others began a series of material culture reports during 1982 on specific artifact categories for Fort Union that culminated in the production of 10 reports between 1986 and 2002. Six of the reports were produced in 1986 and the remaining four appeared between the early to mid-1990s to 2002.¹²

Early 1980s: During the early 1980s the persistent local interest in Fort Union cumulated in political maneuvering that passed legislation resulting in a congressional mandate and NPS

National Historic Site (32WI17), Montana-North Dakota, Block 15, foreword by William J. Hunt, Jr., (MWAC: 2002); Lynelle A. Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17), Montana-North Dakota, Block 16*, foreword by William J. Hunt, Jr. (MWAC: 2002); Lynelle A. Peterson and William J. Hunt, Jr., *The 1987 Investigations At Fort Union Trading Post: Archeology and Architecture* (MWAC: 1990); Douglas D. Scott, "Utility Trench Monitoring along the West and North Walls, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," Archeological Project Report, 2003, MWAC; Jay T. Sturdevant, "Stratigraphy, Chronology, and Architecture at a Historic Fur Trade Post: A Harris Matrix Application at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," (Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Department of Anthropology, 2001); J. Homer Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17), Montana-North Dakota, Block 20*, (MWAC: 2002); J. Homer Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota, Block 21 Report*, foreword by William J. Hunt, Jr., (MWAC: 2002).

¹¹ Hunt, *Material Culture Reports, Part I*, 43-45.

¹² Carole A. Angus and Carl R. Falk, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VI: Preliminary Analysis of Vertebrate Fauna from the 1968-1972 Excavations* (MWAC, 1986); Steven L. De Vore, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VII: Building Hardware, Construction Materials, Tools and Fasteners*, (MWAC: 1987); Steven L. De Vore, *Beads of the Bison Robe Trade: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, and Pacific Palisades, California: The Bead Society, 1992); Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part IX: Personal, Domestic, and Architectural Artifacts* (MWAC: 1993); Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part X: Native American Burials*, (MWAC: 1994); Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VIII: Artifacts Associated with Transportation, Commerce and Industry, and of Unidentified Function*, (MWAC: 1996); Hunt, *Material Culture Reports, Part I*; William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part II: Food Related Items*, (MWAC: 1986); William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part III: Personal and Recreation Materials*, (MWAC: 1986); William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part IV: Firearms, Trapping and Fishing Equipment*, (MWAC: 1986); William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part V: Buttons as Closures, Buttons as Decoration. A Nineteenth Century Example from Fort Union*, (MWAC: 1986).

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directive to reconstruct the fort.¹³ This prompted a renewed series of large-scale archeological field investigations to inform and to mitigate the reconstruction efforts.

1985: In 1985 MWAC archaeologist Doug Scott investigated the center of Fort Union. The excavation in this location was directed to discovering the Fort Union flagpole and its bracing system.¹⁴ Gillio had previously investigated the Fort Union flag pole area, but because of the scheduled fort reconstruction additional details were necessary for the original flag pole construction.¹⁵ Scott documented a circular picket fence around an upright pole consisting of two split logs connected on a flattened side. The underground bracing system consisted of horizontal boards placed at a right angle. One board fit through a hole made in the flag pole. Boulders, weighing up to 50 lb. each, were placed in the pit fill as an additional shoring mechanism.¹⁶

1986: In 1986 MWAC initiated a multiyear program for the mitigation excavation of structures and features associated with the fur-trading post prior to the Fort Union reconstruction. The excavations represented state of the art historical archeology and occurred under the overall direction of William J. Hunt, Jr. The 1986 activities included establishing a site reference grid followed by excavation of the Bourgeois House, kitchen area, north palisade wall, and the northeast bastion. The 1986 report covered the features and interpretation of the fort construction in the excavated areas, but not the recovered artifacts.¹⁷

Also in 1986 Hunt surveyed a route for a new (current) park entrance road. The proposed route approximated the location of Yellowstone Street in the Mondak Townsite (24RV102).

1987: In 1987 Hunt continued the large-scale Fort Union (32WI17) excavations. This year MWAC investigated the north and east palisade walls and the northeast and southwest bastions. The 1987 report covered the features and interpretation of the fort construction in the excavated areas, but not the recovered artifacts.¹⁸

1988: This was the final year of the large-scale mitigation effort for the Fort Union reconstruction. The 1988 MWAC excavations covered the west and south palisade walls, the main gate, and the Indians and Artisans House. The work was divided into a series of eight blocks numbered 15 to 22. However, the budget for 1989 neglected to fund a 1988 field season report in the same manner as previous years. As a result the blocks were reported individually,

¹³ John Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Scott.

¹⁵ Gillio.

¹⁶ Scott.

¹⁷ Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Excavations*.

¹⁸ Peterson and Hunt, *The 1987 Investigations*.

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and much later in 2001-2002. These reports covered the features and interpretation of the fort construction in the excavated areas, but not the recovered artifacts.¹⁹

The 1986-1988 excavations undertaken for the trading post's reconstruction yielded hundreds of thousands of additional artifacts; however, the artifact inventory from these excavations has not yet been completely analyzed or described. Selected categories of artifacts have served the basis for master's theses, doctoral dissertations, journal articles, and reports.²⁰

1991-2010: During this period most archeological investigations within Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site were performed in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and did not deal with the actual trading post. Rather, many of those projects focused on areas at some distance from the post, such as the Garden Coulee site, and only a few touched upon the immediate fort vicinity. Those investigations dealt with road replacements, prescribed burns, water lines servicing the park, and other projects related to improving park infrastructure. Several reports on the trading post investigations were completed, however, and those are outlined below along with the few projects that related directly to the trading post.

2000: Ann Bauermeister's UNL master's thesis "Chipped Stone Use at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota" reported the chipped stone artifacts from Fort Union (32WI17). The lithics included both pre-fur trade contexts and the fur trade era associated with the fort. The pre-fort lithics, both tools and debitage, represented a mobility based technological organization model. For the fort-era lithics, only the tools fit the same model.²¹

¹⁹ Groover and Cabak; Thomas Hensiak, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota, Block 22 Report*, foreword by William J. Hunt, Jr. (MWAC: 2002); Hunt, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 19*; Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 15*; Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 16*; Sturdevant, "Stratigraphy"; Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 20*; Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 21*.

²⁰ Ann Bauermeister, "Chipped Stone Use at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," (Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, Department of Anthropology, 2000); Kenneth P. Cannon, "Multivariate Analysis of Canid Remains from Fort Union, North Dakota," (paper presented at the 112th Annual Proceedings of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences, Lincoln, 1992), MWAC; William J. Hunt, Jr., *Firearms and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade Frontier: Weapons and Related Materials From Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17), North Dakota*, (Ph.D. diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1989) University Microfilms, Ann Arbor; Lester A. Ross, "Trade Beads from Archeological Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," (Report on compact disk), Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska, in cooperation with the Fort Union Association, Williston, North Dakota; Sturdevant, "Stratigraphy"; Byron J. Sudbury, "Politics of the Fur Trade: Clay Tobacco Pipes at Fort Union Trading Post (32WI17)," *Historic Clay Tobacco Pipe Studies, Research Monograph No. 2* (Ponca City, Oklahoma: Clay Pipes Press, 2009); W. E. Sudderth and Linda J. Darnell Hulvershorn, "The Rare Bone China Gorgets of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Williston, North Dakota," *Historical Archaeology*, 34 no. 4 (2000), 102-121; J. Homer Thiel, "Food and Power: Meat Procurement and Distribution at Fort Union Trading Post, National Historic Site," (Master's Thesis, Arizona State University, Department of Anthropology, 1992); J. Homer Thiel, "Worked Bone Artifacts Recovered During Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, 32WI17, North Dakota," (Report by the Center for Desert Archaeology, Tucson, Arizona, 1998), MWAC.

²¹ Bauermeister.

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Lester Ross, under contract to MWAC, completed a massive study of the trade beads from Fort Union. The report includes a detailed typology of the more than 190,000 beads recovered from the 1968-1972 and 1986-1988 trading post investigations and describes some 345 varieties from the bead assemblage.²²

2001: Jay Sturdevant wrote his UNL master's thesis entitled "Stratigraphy, Chronology, and Architecture at a Historic Fur Trade Post: A Harris Matrix Application at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota" on Block 17 of the 1988 excavations. This was the first of the 1988 blocks on which to be reported. The thesis is notable for use of the Harris matrix to report the historic stratigraphy at Fort Union.²³

2002: As a result of an MWAC initiative began in 1997, the 1988 excavation blocks (15-22) were reported in 2002. These reports cover the feature excavations and stratigraphy at Fort Union (32WI17).²⁴

2003: On July 11, 2003, Douglas Scott (MWAC) monitored the installation of utility lines outside the palisade on two walls of the fort. The new lines extended outside the west wall from the southwest bastion to the northwest corner and then halfway across the north wall on the outside of the fort and terminating at the electric junction box. No artifacts were found in the excavated utility trench. This new utility trench outside the fort walls lay in an area previously disturbed either by a gravel quarry, the 1986-1988 excavations, or the fort reconstruction. As a result no intact features or significant resources were encountered in the utility trench.²⁵

2004: Alicia Coles' 2004 UNL master's thesis entitled "Fort William in Context: Independent Post versus Outstructure of Fort Union" integrated various forms of data in order to produce an understanding of Fort William's role in the Upper Missouri fur trade, and a perspective on the use of exterior versus interior buildings for Fort Union.²⁶

2009: In 2009, Byron Sudbury published his study entitled "Politics of the Fur trade: Clay Tobacco Pipes at Fort Union Trading Post (32WI17)." This work is a detailed description of the nineteenth century clay tobacco pipes found during the Fort Union excavations.²⁷

²² Ross.

²³ Sturdevant, "Stratigraphy."

²⁴ By order of block number, these are Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigation, Block 15*; Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigation, Block 16*; Sturdevant, "Stratigraphy;" Groover and Cabak; Hunt, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 19*; Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 20*; Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations, Block 21*; Hensiak.

²⁵ Douglas D. Scott, "Utility Trench Monitoring along the West and North Walls, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota," Archeological Project Report, 2003, MWAC.

²⁶ Alicia L. Coles, "*Fort William in Context: Independent Post Versus Outstructure of Fort Union*," (Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Department of Anthropology, 2004).

²⁷ Sudbury.

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2018: Two inventories of the Bodmer Overlook area (32WI2414), one by the Fort Belknap Tribal Historic Preservation Office Traditional Cultural Specialist, and one by Jay Sturdevant, identified a small nineteenth century artifact scatter and stone features.²⁸

RESOURCE LIST²⁹

ID #	HISTORIC NAME	TYPE	STATUS
--	Fort Union Landscape	Site	Contributing
32WI17 (ND)/ 24RV50(MT)	Fort Union Trading Post Site	Archeol. Site	Contributing, previously listed on the National Register
32WI988	For William Stockade Site	Archeol. Site	Contributing
32WI989	Historic Trash Dump	Archeol. Site	Contributing
32WI990	Historic Trash Dump	Archeol. Site	Contributing
24RV596	Fort Union to Fort Benton Road Site	Archeol. Site	Contributing
32WI992	Charles Larpenteur's Opposition Post	Archeol. Site	Contributing
32WI18	Garden Coulee/Crow Flies High Village Site	Archeol. Site	Contributing
HS-1	Reconstructed Palisade	Structure	Contributing
HS-2	Reconstructed Southwest Bastion	Structure	Contributing
HS-3	Reconstructed Northeast Bastion	Structure	Contributing
HS-4	Reconstructed South Gate	Structure	Contributing
HS-5	Reconstructed North Gate	Structure	Contributing
HS-6	Reconstructed Indians' and Artisans' House	Building	Contributing
HS-7	Reconstructed Bourgeois House	Building	Contributing
HS-17	Reconstructed Flagstaff and Picket Fence	Structure	Contributing
HS-23	Reconstructed Bell Tower	Structure	Contributing
--	NPS Housing #1	Building	Non-contributing
--	NPS Housing #2	Building	Non-contributing
--	NPS Maintenance Building	Building	Non-contributing
--	NPS Water Treatment Building	Building	Non-contributing
--	NPS Access System	Structure	Non-contributing

²⁸ Jay Sturdevant to Acting Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, "Trip Report or Pedestrian Inventory of Bodmer Overlook, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Williams County, North Dakota," April 24, 2018, MWAC; Jay Sturdevant, Steven L. DeVore, Tim Schilling and Adam Wiewel, "Trip Report, Archeological and Geophysical Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota and Montana, August 6-24, 2018," MWAC. The stone features were identified by the Fort Belknap Traditional Cultural Specialist as two deflated rock cairns that may be possible burial sites, and recommended their eligibility under National Register criteria A and D. "Class III Cultural Survey, Fort Union National Historic Site" August 21-22, 2018. On file, Fort Union Trading Post NHS.

²⁹ This format and narrative follow the physical description Section 7 of the 2015 Fort Union NHL nomination.

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Because the siting of the Fort Union trading post was so dependent upon the area's natural features, the list of contributing resources will begin with the cultural landscape. It is followed by a summary of archeological sites and features. As archeological investigations and research supported the reconstruction work at Fort Union, more recent research has broadened an understanding of the landscape's ethnohistorical significance. Therefore, a description of the site's historic appearance and its role as a unifying feature precedes the individual listings of reconstructed interpretive features, and all non-contributing resources.

1) Landscape: 1 contributing site

The Fort Union Trading Post is located within the general area of the historic confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. This confluence area lies within the Missouri Plateau portion of the Northern Plains physiographic province. In the vicinity of the confluence, the eastward flowing Missouri River occupies the channel established at the end of the Pleistocene and marks the approximate southern limit of glaciation on the plains. The northward flowing Yellowstone River cuts a meandering course through its wide floodplain, entering the Missouri River from the south. Both the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers shift seasonally within their active flood plains, and old meander scars are visible. Natural structural aspects of the Missouri River corridor above the confluence (gravel terraces and high bluffs) that restrict the movement of the river channel and the relationship of the river to the site of Fort Union, located above the confluence, has not changed appreciably. In contrast, the flood plain at the mouth of the Yellowstone River is wider (roughly three miles wide), with fewer structural elements limiting its movement.³⁰

The actual point where the rivers converge has changed many times through the millennia. Most recently, a dramatic shift in the rivers' courses occurred in the 1930s when an ice jam in the Yellowstone River forced that river out of its banks to cut a new channel due north creating a new confluence with the Missouri – approximately 2½ miles east of the previous confluence. As a result of this change, the Missouri River migrated southward, abandoning its historic channel and creating a new course approximately one mile to the south. Today the historic district is less than 1½ miles from the confluence area.³¹

On the north side of the river and below the south edge of the terrace, a band of native trees and shrubs flank the Missouri River, both up- and down-river of the historic site. This area was once part of the riverbed course during the historic period of the fort's occupation and is now part of the river's riparian setting. On low-lying land directly adjacent to the river, cottonwoods predominate, with willow, chokecherry and redosier (or "red osier") dogwood. Slightly higher

³⁰ John L. Allen, "Landscape and Change at the Confluence: From Lewis and Clark to the Present," and Mark Harvey, "Securing the Confluence: A Portrait of Fort Buford, 1866-1895," both in *At the Confluence: Now and Then*, ed. Susan Dingle (Bismarck: North Dakota State Historical Society, 2003), 24-33, and 34-49.

³¹ W. Raymond Wood, "Notes on the Historical Cartography of the Vicinity of Fort Union, North Dakota" (MWAC December 1979); Missouri River Commission, "Missouri River at Mouth of the Yellowstone," Sheet LX, 1884, map file, Fort Union National Historic Site, North Dakota (hereafter cited as FOUS); George K. Dike, "Map of T152N R104W, June, 1901," Surveyor General's Office, 18 December 1902, Bureau of Land Management files, Bismarck, North Dakota; Satellite Image, 28 July 1995, FOUS.

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and drier sites contain mixtures of ash and elm. Along most of the south edge of the terrace, the vegetation is dense enough to screen the river from view. Vegetation is manually cleared from the area in front of the fort to provide views of the Missouri River. On the south side of the river, and within the historic district boundary, is a 10-acre narrow strip of mature cottonwood trees and some willow growing along sloughs and on sandbars in the river. Most of these appear to be decadent stands, as Missouri River flood control projects have eliminated much of the seasonal flooding that periodically recharged the riparian zone, creating conditions suitable to cottonwood regeneration.³²

The terrace upon which the reconstructed fort sits is generally flat—the result of leveling and cultivation undertaken after the period of national significance. A gravel pit created some time after the abandonment of Fort Union was located south of the fort at the edge of the terrace and cut into part of the location of the southwest bastion. The eastern portion of the pit was later filled by the NPS in order to stabilize the area and to facilitate archeological investigations and reconstruction. In 1992 the NPS removed excess fill material in order to reestablish the contours of the terrace and a drainage as they appeared in mid-1800s sketches of the areas. Since 1987 the NPS has been actively restoring the mixed-grass prairie on the terrace area immediately surrounding the reconstructed fort. As of 2014, approximately 165 acres of prairie have been restored.³³ The prairie extends northward from the south edge of the terrace for about one quarter mile to North Dakota Highway 1804/Montana Highway 327. Immediately north of the highway is the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad grade, first constructed as the Great Northern Railroad grade in 1887. The part of the terrace that lies north of the highway remains in agricultural use. Although located within the boundary of the NHS, the owners of the property have a scenic easement agreement with the NPS to keep their land in agricultural use.³⁴

Roughly one-half mile east of Fort Union, the terrace is bisected by a tree-lined drainage feature known as Garden Coulee. During the period of historic use, several vegetable gardens were cultivated within the greater drainage area, which also historically provided an avenue of approach to the fort by Nakoda (Assiniboiné) and other Native groups coming from the north. Historical records describe garden plots below the fort near Garden Coulee, including a plot

³² Steven E. Daron, “Monitoring of Bluff Contouring: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site,” Rocky Mountain Region Archeological Project Report (MWAC, December 1992), 2-3.

³³ Actual acreage varies between sources. Between 160-167 acres are reported in the National Park Service, *State of the Park Report, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site 2015*, State of the Park Series, no. 43 (National Park Service: Washington, DC, 2017), v, ix. Approximately 146 acres of restored prairie are noted in the National Park Service, “A Vegetation Management Plan for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Final Report,” Interagency Agreement Number F1549100005 Natural Resource Report NPS/FOUS/NRR—2012/502, April 2012, 19, FOUS.

³⁴ Daron. The park has 19 restoration units that have been treated for invasive species and seeded with native plants. Some native prairie species have been re-established, but there is little species diversity so far. National Parks and Conservation Association, “Center for the State of the Parks, Fort Union Trading Post,” FOUS; Rodd Wheaton, for Richard Strait, Associate Regional Director, Planning and Resource Preservation, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, to James Sperry, North Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer, 22 April 1988 “Section 106 Compliance, Project No. FOUS-8801,” MWAC.

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cleared by Charles Larpenteur (then a clerk at Fort Union) during an especially wet spring and summer in 1835. He planted potatoes, corn, peas, red onions, radishes, lettuce, parsnips, oyster plant, carrots, curled parsley, beets, onions, cabbage, cucumbers and beans. Fort Union clerk Rudolph Kurz mentioned a garden during his time at the fort in 1851-1852. Kurz noted that a group of Omašêkowak (Cree) (who felt they had been cheated) pulled up some squash vines and turnips as they left the fort. Kurz again referred to some crops growing at Garden Coulee in 1851. Other gardens were reported located across the Missouri on the south bank, or at unspecified areas around the trading post area. During a visit to the fort in 1843, artist John Audubon alluded to a garden that included squash and turnips. When Larpenteur served as Bourgeois for the fort, he made an observation about gardens in 1864 when he commented on a garden on the terrace and two more on the floodplain.³⁵

Less than a mile north of the terrace edge, the land transitions to steep, heavily dissected ravines and rolling uplands. The ravines are generally dry and those few streams that run perennially are alkaline. Beyond the ravines lie the bluffs at the margins of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers – the visual backdrop for the area. These grass-covered hills average from 200 to 300 feet in height and are heavily eroded to talus cones, pyramids, and steep perpendicular faces. At their base lie coal deposits, of insufficient quality to represent a marketable commodity, but historically mined for use by Fort Union and later inhabitants. The bluffs generally run east to west, parallel with the Missouri River. They dominate historic narratives and pictorial illustrations of Fort Union and today largely define the limits to the viewshed from the valley bottom. The gradient of the bluffs at the northern boundary of the historic district precludes cultivation, and they are used for grazing.³⁶

The Bodmer Overlook, nearly 200 feet above the terrace, is an important topographical feature of the landscape. While the overlook is not counted as a separate contributing resource, 30 acres have been assigned state site number 32WI2414, and included a small artifact scatter and a small stone feature. Further Phase II assessment and investigations are needed to determine if the site is eligible on its own for National Register listing.

2) Fort Union Trading Post Site, 32WI17 (ND)/24RV50 (MT): 1 contributing archeological site

The trading post site is the only contributing resource identified in the 1982 nomination, which at that time was “devoid of any standing remains.” All the extant historic cultural resources associated with the Fort Union Trading Post have become archeological remains. The Fort

³⁵ Maria R. Audubon, *Audubon and His Journals*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 180-188; Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, *On the Upper Missouri: The Journal of Rudolph Friedrich Kurz, 1851-1852*, ed. Carla Kelly (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 134; Michael M. Casler, ed., *The Original Journal of Charles Larpenteur: My Travels to the Rocky Mountains between 1833 and 1872*, transcribed and annotated by Erwin N. Thompson (Chadron, NE: Museum of the American Frontier, 2007), 16, 93. All of the gardens and crops noted here were for consumption by fort employees.

³⁶ Audubon, 180-188; and Matzko, 138.

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Union Trading Post Site (32WI17 (ND)/24RV50 (MT)) is associated with the national significance of the district. Within this one contributing archeological site are a number of structural component features and secondary features located both within and beyond the palisaded fur trading post.

In and around the fort's walls, a minimum of 41 identifiable structures are known to have existed, exclusive of American Indian lodges built within and outside of the palisade. Because the fort's primary and ancillary structures were constantly changing over the course of 40 years, this number is neither comprehensive for the period of significance and perhaps not even precise for any single year. Buildings and areas were functionally dynamic and changed use according to need.

Many of the Fort Union Trading Post site features had been assigned an alphanumeric code developed in 1968 to aid in future identification of subsurface structural components. Use of the alphanumeric code continued during subsequent archeological investigations and plans for the partial reconstruction of the fort. For the purposes of this nomination, the features and the numbers assigned do not represent distinct sites or discrete contributing resources, but they help delineate the main components of the Fort Union Trading Post archeological site.³⁷

The following structural remains were entirely excavated during the 1980s:

- the palisade (HS-1) and the palisade bracing system;
- the southwest and northeast bastions (HS-2 and HS-3);
- the front and back gates (HS-4 and HS-5);
- the Indians' and artisans' house (HS-6);
- the bourgeois house (HS-7);
- the blacksmith shop (HS-10);
- the powder magazine (HS-12);
- the flagstaff and picket fence (HS-13);
- the dairy (HS-19); and
- the bell tower (HS-23).

While this alphanumeric system helped delineate specific archeological features and resources, it also provided reference points for better understanding the dynamic nature of the fort complex. Below the Indians' and artisans' house, for instance, archeologists encountered the remains of Fort Union's original blacksmith shop (no structure number assigned), and above this, another

³⁷ Erwin N. Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post Historic Structures Report, Part II: Historical Data Section*, National Technical Information Service, Document PB-203 901 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1968), 163-269; Lynelle A. Peterson and William J. Hunt, Jr. *The 1987 Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post: Archeology and Architecture* (MWAC, 1990), 131; William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, (32WI17), Material Culture Reports Part I: A Critical Review of the Archeological Investigations* (MWAC, 1986), 6. Thompson's work was the first to provide a comprehensive list of structures and buildings that once stood at the trading post. Thompson assigned structure numbers to nearly all known buildings and structures mentioned in the historic record; this numbering system continues in use by the NPS.

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somewhat more recent structure dating to the 1840s whose western half contained a gun shop. Other features below the original blacksmith shop remain, in addition to another possible structure. For the most part, however, the archeological remains of resources from soil horizons that include or overlay the level of the blacksmith shop are no longer in situ. These resources are now in storage and, given the magnitude of the collection, some remain to be catalogued.³⁸ In their places stand ten interpretive reconstructions, which will be discussed in the section on reconstructed interpretive resources.

Within the palisade area the following archeological remains were partly excavated:

- the bourgeois house kitchen (HS-8);
- the dwelling range (HS-9);
- the store range (HS-11); and
- the ice house (HS-30).

Significant elements of the dwelling and store ranges and the ice house still exist in situ and are undisturbed. The same is true for other features and structures (ca. 1828-1832) located beneath the dwelling and store ranges. Other features from the early period of the fort include an original palisade (ca. 1828-1829), interior board fences, boardwalks, gravel walkways, hitching posts, a few small storage buildings, and some cache pits (ca. 1828-1829).

Within the palisade some of the excavated features were retained and incorporated into the partial reconstruction of Fort Union because of their ability to demonstrate scale, sense of enclosure, and the relationship of various functions and activity areas within the palisades. Among these was the site of the historic freestanding kitchen, which was located by its foundation and fireplace immediately behind (i.e., north of) the historic bourgeois house. Because sufficient historical documentation existed regarding the shape and general height of the kitchen roof, a gable roof was reconstructed and set on four steel columns within the original foundation stones. The historic foundation and fireplace of the kitchen were left exposed. Similarly, the site of the dairy—along the interior of the north palisade and adjacent to the kitchen—is identified by exposing its historic flagstones. The locations of the dwelling and store

³⁸ William J. Hunt, Jr., "Historical Archeology: The Fort Union Reconstruction Archeology Project," *CRM Bulletin* 12, no. 1 (1989): 4. The initial decision to locate a reconstructed version of the historic Fort Union on the archeological site was controversial within the NPS and regarded by some as "constitute[ing] an adverse effect" on the historic site. A number of NPS officials and archaeologists in the Rocky Mountain Region Office suggested that any reconstruction of the fort should occur at a locale that would not impact the archeological site. Park Service officials in Washington, DC, took a more sanguine view while local boosters and North Dakota politicians strongly advocated for a reconstruction. See Matzko, 106-115. At present, nearly all of these archeological resources have been accessioned, with between ten to fifteen percent still needing to be catalogued. See National Park Service, *State of the Park Report for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site 2015*, vii.

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ranges, the blacksmith shop, powder magazine, and ice house were outlined with timbers that were set on limestone footings.³⁹

A variety of features probably associated with the 1864-1865 occupation by the United States Army were also found in the mid-1980s. These include storerooms (HS-31) and two privies. One of the privies is located adjacent to the limestone foundation on the interior side of the east palisade; the other is northeast of the Bourgeois House and HS-31.

Archeologists also found evidence of a number of other features never identified or so vaguely described that the feature could not be related to specific structures in the historical record. Along the exterior of the north palisade, evidence of post molds and a board floor may be related to a ramada-like building shown at this approximate location in 1858. Along the interior of the north and east palisade walls is archeological evidence for the palisade bracing system and a series of small, secondary structures built into the bracing system. These secondary structures were situated in each opening under the gallery and included—from east to west along the north palisade—the buffalo calves stable (HS-15), unidentified structure #1 north, the hen house (HS-16), unidentified structure #2 north, the 1864-1865 U.S. Army privy, artist's studio (HS-17), unidentified structure #3 north, the cooper's shop (HS-18), dairy (HS-19) and the milk house, which occupied two sub-gallery spaces. The next three openings beneath the gallery contained multiple ash and trash deposits but provided no structural evidence. A well not assigned an historic structure number was also found within the palisade. This last site also included a post-fort era human interment. Other burials were discovered in the location of the former powder magazine, and within and outside the northeast corner of the fort. All human remains appear to represent post-1867 internments of American Indians, most likely from Hiráaca (Hidatsa) individuals who had lived at the nearby Garden Coulee site.⁴⁰

³⁹ Rodd L. Wheaton, Supervisory Historical Architect, "To Reconstruct Or Not To Reconstruct: Decision Within Documentation" (Rocky Mountain Region n.d. [1984]), 12, Fort Union National Historic Site Historic Resource File 0002, FOUS; Matzko, 120, 123-125; William J. Hunt, Jr., "Origins of Fort Union: Archaeology and History," *The Fur Trade Revisited, Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing/Mackinac Island: Michigan State University Press and Mackinac State Historic Parks, 1994), 381-382. Though perhaps confusing to some visitors, the decision to construct an interpretive "ghost" kitchen and use timbers to outline historic structural features has an important underlying logic. Reconstruction of the kitchen and other structures would have been a very costly endeavor that also exhausted the last of the in-situ archeological record of the historic Fort Union. In addition, because there are almost no historical drawings or historical descriptions of these features, their reconstruction would have been based on speculation.

⁴⁰ William J. Hunt, and Lynelle A. Peterson. *Fort Union Trading Post: Archeology and Architecture. The 1986 Excavations*, (MWAC, 1 May 1988), 92-108; Hunt, "Origins of Fort Union," 382-386; Peterson and Hunt, *The 1987 Investigations*, 113-131; William J. Hunt, Jr., "Digging Up Fort Union – The History and Archeology of Fort Union Trading Post, National Historic Site," (presentations, Omaha Westerners Club, 17 October 1996, and Mid-West Tool Collectors Association Meeting, 20 October 1996), MWAC, 10-12; William Hunt, Jr., to Eileen Star, electronic mail message, 3 March 1998, FOUS Section 106 file, MWAC; Richard L. Jantz and R. W. Mann, "Analysis of a Burial from the Fort Union Trading Post, North Dakota," (Department of Anthropology, University

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There are other archeological features associated with the fur trade era located outside of the palisade that have not been identified as individual sites. They include a rock-lined well (Feature 18) west of the fort's southwest bastion, and the site of a sawmill (ca. 1858) outside the north palisade. Archeologists also found evidence of a substantial structure or structures just beyond the east palisade that might indicate a former corral or portions of an unknown number of small structures. Beyond the west palisade, along the terrace edge near the NPS trail leading from the parking lot to the reconstructed fort, is the site of a possible lime kiln (HS-27) built into the west side of the slope. This earthen feature was identified during the 1986 excavations, and by 1998 was severely eroded. It consists of a large, heat-reddened bell-shaped pit.⁴¹

Surveys in the terrace area revealed the repeated use of tipi sites, presumably used by Nakoda (Assiniboiné) and other Indigenous groups during periods of trading, visiting, and holding councils with government officials. The number and scale of the encampments would have varied depending on the season, the expected volume of trade, or relations between different Native groups. Hearths, post holes, and hide-smoking pits have been identified both inside and outside the palisade, and at the terrace edge. North and east of the fort, archaeology surveys have also encountered evidence of middens, post holes, fragments of fire hearths, cache pits and other features that likely correspond to Fort Union Trading Post's period of national significance and/or the period immediately after its abandonment. These investigations support written and visual records about Native encampments on the terrace. While the number and size of these encampments varied depending upon the season and the status of intertribal relations, they were a regular part of the annual calendar at Fort Union. Other cultural materials encountered—or indicated as magnetic anomalies—have been interpreted as middens or hearths of indeterminate antiquity.⁴²

of Tennessee, 1987), MWAC. Following compliance with NAGPRA, the remains were turned over to the Three Affiliated Tribes; William J. Hunt, Jr., "The Fort Union Reconstruction Archeology Project," 2, copy on file, National Park Service Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, NE; Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17), Material Culture Reports, Part X: Native American Burials and Artifacts* (MWAC, 1996), 8, 19; Finney, 96.

⁴¹ Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Investigations*, 11; William J. Hunt, Jr., to Superintendent Andy Banta, electronic mail message, 3 March 1998, Section 106 file, MWAC; William J. Hunt, Jr., Archeologist, to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, memorandum, 19 May 2000, "Trip report, Post-burn inventory, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS)," MWAC; Peterson and Hunt, *The 1987 Investigations*, 129-130.

⁴² William J. Hunt, Jr., to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, "Trip Report, Geophysical survey of proposed waterline route through Fort Union Trading Post (32WI17) and the Garden Coulee or Crow Flies High Village site (32WI18) Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site." 29 September 1999 memorandum, MWAC; Thomas D. Thiessen, Park Archeologist, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, to Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, memorandum, 15 August 1977, "Archeological investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, March-May 1977," MWAC; Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Excavations*; Thiessen, "1977 Archeological investigations;" Adrienne B. Anderson, Supervisory Archeologist, to Chief, Midwest Archeological Center, memorandum, 25 May 1976, "Trip Report, On-Site Archeological Evaluation, Water Line and Well Construction, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," MWAC; Adrienne Anderson, Supervisory Archeologist, to Chief, Midwest Archeological Center, memorandum, 25 October 1977, "Trip Report, General Management Plan Policy Review Meeting and Onsite Archeological Observation, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," MWAC.

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3) Fort William Stockade Site (32WI988): 1 contributing archeological site

The Fort William stockade was first constructed at the mouth of the Yellowstone River in 1833 by fur traders William Sublette and William Campbell, an early competitor of the American Fur Company's operations on the Upper Missouri River in the 1830s. Subsequently purchased by the AFC in 1834, it was disassembled, transported, and repurposed as a stockade to stable horses and store hay. Various historical sources placed the distance between the stockade and Fort Union within a range of proximity from 60 to 200 yards. At its new location beyond Fort Union's eastern palisade, the stockade was reported to measure 150 feet square. Over the years, the structure was variously used as employee housing (for mostly Métis families), a storage depot, and included a garden space adjacent to or with the stockade. An internecine conflict between some of the Métis families resulted in a destructive fire in 1836. The following year, the structure was sufficiently repaired to serve as a hospital for American Indian victims of the 1837 smallpox epidemic. It was dismantled sometime between 1847 and 1853. Later images show a large, cross-gabled structure in the area in 1853, and a collection of smaller buildings sometime after 1851. There was also a cemetery located southeast of the fort.⁴³

The Fort William stockade, aka. the "old fort," was tentatively located during one of the earliest magnetic surveys by the NPS, conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Midwest Archeological Center, in 1977. In 1978 a second survey of the suspected Fort William location was undertaken and produced a large number of magnetic anomalies that appeared to correlate to known archeological features. A re-analysis of the magnetic data resulted in the identification of four major localized anomalies and at least ten linear anomalous features. Follow-up "ground truthing" excavations resulted in the recovery of numerous historic artifacts. However, this site was not formally recorded until 2006 after an additional geophysical survey had ascertained the entire fort layout. A former two-track service road crossed the site but has been removed. The area has been reseeded with native grasses and is no longer plowed.⁴⁴

⁴³ Located two or more miles east of Fort Union, the original Fort William "opposition post" was rectangular in pattern, with two bastions at opposite corners, and fifteen-foot palisades. John Weymouth, "An Analysis of a Magnetic Survey at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota" (MWAC, 1979). Four fur trade posts were subsequently built on the original location of Fort William. See Thomas D. Theissen, "The Several Forts William (Or Confusion at the Confluence)" (MWAC, 19 September 1986), 1-3; Robert W. Nickel, Acting Chief, Midwest Archeological Center, to Regional Historical Architect, Rocky Mountain Region, memorandum 1 April 1986, "The 'Fort William' Outstructure at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," MWAC.

⁴⁴ Weymouth; Duane Klinner, "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site – Survey of 64 Acres," UNDAAR-West Project Number 2061, Department of Anthropology, University of North Dakota (November 1988), 11, 13, MWAC; Robert W. Nickel and William J. Hunt, Jr., "A Magnetic Gradiometer Survey of the Waterline Corridor at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site" (MWAC, 2000), 3-4; Steven L. De Vore, "Geophysical Investigations of Selected Areas within Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Williams County, North Dakota" (MWAC, 2007), 15, 17; De Stephen L. De Vore and Hunt, Jr., *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32WI17) Material Culture Reports, Part VIII: Artifacts Associated with Transportation, Commerce and Industry, and of Unidentified Function* (MWAC: 1996), 29; Finney, 66.

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4) Fort Union to Fort Benton Road Site (24RV596): 1 contributing archeological site

While there are anecdotal reports that many of the trails in the hills around the fort remain intact, the Fort Union to Fort Benton Road Site (24RV596) is the only historic road identified within the Fort Union Trading Post NHS Historic District. The Fort Union to Fort Benton Road was in use from circa 1830 to at least 1893, when the Great Northern Railroad route was completed. The road is poorly documented in the written record, although nineteenth century paintings of the fort and surrounding landscape during the fort's period of occupation show a series of roads and paths leading from the palisade gates to other activity areas on the terrace and beyond. Located on the west side of the fort, the road is quite visible in a circa 1843 Jean-Baptiste Moncravie watercolor, and on an unattributed 1858 illustration. Moncravie was an *engage*, or contract employee, at the fort. The route was documented in reports describing the results of an 1853 expedition for a railroad route to the Pacific Ocean, and in a journal maintained by an overland freight hauler during a late 1860s trip over the trail.⁴⁵

This resource was documented in 1986, with subsequent recordation in 2000 as part of a grassland post-burn inventory. The site is visible as a long, linear and shallow road depression measuring about 39 x 1171 feet. This east-to-west trending feature likely continues beyond the western boundary of the historic district, but no surveys have been conducted to confirm this. As the road is situated in an agricultural field that has been plowed for years, its historic depth has probably been reduced and its width widened. The east end of the trace was impacted with the construction of a new entrance road to the National Historic Site in 1986. No artifact concentrations were noted to correspond to the site.⁴⁶

5) Charles Larpenteur's Opposition Post (32WI992): 1 contributing archeological site

Charles Larpenteur, who served for several years as a clerk at Fort Union and was the last *Bourgeois* (1864-1865) while the fort was still owned by Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company, established his own trading enterprise after the fort was sold to the Northwestern Fur Company in 1865. Larpenteur's 1867 "opposition post" was a modest adobe and log compound reported to measure 96 x 20 feet with a small bastion. It was located northwest of the Fort Union trading post, adjacent to the trail to Fort Benton. Operations at the post were short-lived, and Larpenteur abandoned the area within a year.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ William J. Hunt, Jr., to Dena Sanford, "Comments on Missouri/Yellowstone Confluence Historic District Nomination," November 2001, MWRO; William J. Hunt, Jr., and Ann C. Bauermeister, "A Post-Burn Inventory of the West Terrace Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS), Williams County, North Dakota, Roosevelt County, Montana" (MWAC, 2002), 9; Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Investigations*, 11; Finney, 69-70.

⁴⁶ Hunt to Sanford, "Comments"; Hunt and Bauermeister, "A Post-Burn Inventory," 8-9, 11; Finney, 70.⁴⁷ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 261; National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota/Montana," 1 June 1998; Finney, 67.

⁴⁷ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 261; National Park Service, "Resource Management Plan, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota/Montana," 1 June 1998; Finney, 67.

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Following the identification of surface artifacts by site staff, a 2006 geophysical survey identified a number of anomalies, including the outlines of two structures. The magnetic data suggested that the site boundaries were fairly well defined on the north and east sides, but the lack of time did not permit additional magnetic survey on the west and south sides of the survey area. A portion of the site area had been destroyed by a twentieth-century gravel quarry, prior to creation of the Fort Union NHS. The site is now covered by native prairie grasses.⁴⁸

Whether or not the Gregory, Bruguier, and Geowey Trading Post Site (circa 1863-1867) is another name for the Larpenteur post remains to be determined. This post had been potentially identified by surface debris, but it has not been recorded with the states of North Dakota or Montana, nor has it been the focus of archeological investigation. Also purported to be located about 200 feet north by northwest of Fort Union, historical records reported its presence at the end of Fort Union's period of national significance. Consisting of two wood buildings, this unpretentious complex was operating by 1863 and photographed in 1866.⁴⁹

6 & 7) Historic Trash Dumps (32WI989 and 32WI990) 2 contributing archeological sites

Located east of the Fort Union Trading Post site, both trash dump sites were identified during the course of a 2006 magnetic survey. Both sites contained numerous magnetic anomalies that appeared to represent historic ferrous objects. The investigations concluded the sites were associated with the fur trade era, and the magnetic survey data indicated they contain intact archeological deposits and features related to the 19th century activities at the trading post that could yield significant archeological information on the local and regional historic activities of the fur trade on the Upper Missouri. Additional archeological evaluation, including ground truthing, however, is warranted.⁵⁰

8) Garden Coulee/Crow Flies High Village Site (32WI18): 1 contributing archeological site

As noted previously, the Garden Coulee area, located roughly 525 yards east of Fort Union, has several important historical associations with Fort Union. Following the demise of Fort Union, the Garden Coulee most likely became the home of an off-reservation Hiráaca (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan) village in the late nineteenth century. Led by Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High), the village was established sometime around 1869 and lasted until 1884. In order to avoid assignment to reservation land, the band of 120 to 240 members left Like-a-Fishhook Village on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation to the east. The band may have relocated to Garden Coulee, although sources differ on the location of the village and its size. The band departed the village in 1884 and moved to the mouth of the Little Knife River—just

⁴⁸ De Vore, "Geophysical Investigations," 15-17; Finney, 67.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 261; "Resource Management Plan," 18; Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 228, 232, 234; Finney, 67, 207.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

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outside the boundaries of the Fort Berthold Reservation. Individuals and groups continued to visit and utilize the Garden Coulee area until 1894 (Fort Buford closed a year later), but all were eventually escorted from the Little Knife River village to the Fort Berthold reservation under military guard.⁵¹

Initially noted in 1973 and recorded in 1976, numerous archeological investigations, analysis of diagnostic artifacts, documentary records and ethnographic evidence identify this site as the most likely location of the Crow-Flies-High Village. Initial identification of the surface scatter found artifacts ranging in age from precontact to the twentieth century. Some archeological deposits date to the last third of the nineteenth century and others extend to the early twentieth century. The material culture also indicates a close association with nearby Fort Buford and includes numerous items of late nineteenth century military origin, as well as glass, metal, and ceramic items of the same time period. Geophysical surveys further identified anomalies as storage caches, storage pits, and hearths. A pedestrian survey and geophysical investigation in 2002 covered a very broad area, and identified additional clusters of magnetic anomalies, and nearly 650 artifacts made of ceramics, glass, metal items, historic miscellaneous material, and lithics.

As a result of these surveys, the extent of the Garden Coulee/Crow-Flies-High Village site has been expanded to encompass an area that extends from NPS entrance road to the housing and maintenance area and westward to the Fort Union Trading Post site, as well as from the terrace edge to about 787 feet to the north. As noted in the description of the Fort Union Trading Post compound, the Hiráaca (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan) did not restrict themselves to this specific area, as human internments discovered within the palisaded area are attributed to the dissident band. Prior to the creation of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, the area had been leveled and plowed regularly.⁵²

⁵¹ Gregory L. Fox, "A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32WI18)," *Reprints in Anthropology No. 37* (Lincoln, NE: J&L Reprints, 1988), *passim*; Geoffrey Jones, David L. Maki and Lewis Somers, "A Geophysical Investigation at the Garden Coulee Site (32WI18), An Historic Native American Village at the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," Archaeo-Physics Report of Investigation Number 46, Archaeo-Physics, LLC, MWAC; Jay Sturdevant, to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, memorandum, 30 September, 2022, "Geophysical Grid Layout and Pedestrian Archeological Survey of Garden Coulee Site (32WI18), September 9 – September 21, 2002," MWAC. Fox suggests that their main reasons for choosing a location near Fort Buford included protection from Lakḥóta and Dakḥóta due to the proximity of the military force at the fort, the abundance of game, the proximity to the Binnéessippeele (River Crow), with whom the Hiráaca had close ties, and the continued presence of a trader at Fort Buford.

⁵² Fox, 15-20, 41, 68; Thomas D. Thiessen to Superintendent, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, memorandum 15 August 1977, "Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, March through May 1977," MWAC; Adrienne B. Anderson, "Archeological Survey, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," (MWAC, 1973); Anderson, "Trip Report—On-Site Archeological Evaluation, Water Line and Wall Construction," 1976; Finney, 61; Adrienne B. Anderson to Manager, Midwest Archeological Center, memorandum, 14 October 1977, "Trip Report - Construction of Road into Staff Housing Area at Fort Union Trading Post NHS," MWAC; Anderson to MWAC memorandum, 25 October 1988; Scott Stadler to Manager, Midwest

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FORT UNION HISTORIC APPEARANCE

When historic Fort Union was first laid out in 1828, the greater confluence area of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers was both a geographic nexus and an ecological oasis that sustained an abundance of life since time out of memory. Enriched by sediments from periodic floods, the Yellowstone and Missouri Confluence area was interlaced with small channels, wetlands, and backwater sloughs that sustained riparian forests that paralleled the two rivers, wet the prairies, and supported a host of mammals, fish, ground birds, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks and a throbbing array of insects and avian life. Shifts in river levels, new meanders, and flood deposition were the primary drivers of species diversity, since they triggered an ever changing mosaic of old and young forests, river islands, cutbanks, wet and dry prairies, short-grass uplands, and an array of environmental niches that sustained an almost unrivaled concentration of plant and animal life on the Northern Plains. These conditions proved essential to the construction of the fort, the sustenance and provision of the historic fort's early employees, and the long-established appeal of the area to the AFC's Indigenous trading partners.⁵³

Charles Larpenteur described the area as "a beautiful site, abounding in the best of timber, above, below, and opposite the fort, and with all kinds of game."⁵⁴ Within these riparian forests of cottonwood and willow in the floodplains, backed by elm, ash, and box elder in drier areas behind, a dense understory abounded with chokecherry, service berry, buffalo berry, gooseberry, wild plum, grapes, and honeysuckle. The grasses that grew near the river were dense and tall, but gave way to the vast expanses of mixed-grass prairie beyond. Through most of the year, the river teemed with large fish, turtles, and waterfowl, while the prairies and forests supported bear, deer, bison, elk, and pronghorn—with the last three most common in the surrounding prairies. All of these animals and resources were a central draw of the area for Native peoples, where they found sustenance, a material basis for extended congregations of related and allied peoples at the intersection of major travel corridors. The same native grasslands that supported bison and elk would later serve as forage for imported domestic livestock, including beef and dairy cattle, and horses owned both by the company and the American Indians who frequented the post. In some low-lying sites, the native grasses grew so abundantly that Fort Union's employees harvested it as hay, carting it to the fort from distances of up to 10 miles.⁵⁵

For the purposes of the nineteenth century fur trade, the siting of the historic fort was ideal. Access to the trading post was both overland and by water. The gravel terrace contained sufficient level ground to allow for post construction, with sufficient open areas to the northeast and west that could accommodate the lodges of Native groups that came to trade with the AFC

Archeological Center, memorandum, 5 December 2000, "Excavations Related to Waterline Construction, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (FOUS)," MWAC; Midwest Archeological Center, "Garden Coulee, 2002 Research," www.nps.gov/mwac/garden_coulee/research.htm, accessed 11 March 2020.

⁵³ Allen, 2-8.

⁵⁴ Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833-1872* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 92.

⁵⁵ Allen, 7-12.

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and each other. The main channel of the Missouri River flowed by the base of the terrace, which greatly facilitated river transport and eased the process of unloading and loading steamboats, the first of which arrived in 1832. Depending on the volume of water and the position of the main channel, moving cargo to and from the boats docked below the fort required a walk of 25 to 100 yards from the river's edge to the front gate of the fort.⁵⁶

The AFC used the available stands of cottonwood as the primary building material to construct palisades and structures, as well as the carts, boats, and firewood used by employees. Cottonwood was not ideal for any of these purposes. It is a soft wood with twisted grain, prone to rot and deterioration. These characteristics ensured that maintenance and repair at the fort would be a constant concern, but the abundance and proximity of cottonwood at least ensured that the materials for maintaining and rebuilding the fort were always at hand. Exacerbating the need for frequent maintenance were the strong and nearly constant winds which further stressed the buildings and structures. Fire proved a constant risk, if an infrequent event. Maintenance and reconstruction of the fort was therefore continual.⁵⁷

Though work on the fort was a near constant concern, NPS archeologist William Hunt has identified three distinguishable "construction phases" that occurred between 1828 to 1867 and correspond to changing economic and cultural conditions. The first construction phase produced "Fort Union I" (circa 1828 - circa 1835) and corresponds with the original construction and early expansion of the trading post. During this initial phase, AFC partner Kenneth McKenzie became the dominant force in the northern Rock Mountains fur trade east of the Continental divide and on the northern plains. At the time the fur trade centered on small furs (primarily beaver) and bison robes. "Fort Union II" developed during the second phase (circa 1833 - circa 1852), a period of maintenance and remodeling. The second phase coincided with a shift toward bison robes rather than furs and involved closer engagement and trade with tribal nations in the region. This was the period when Fort Union reached the zenith of its cultural and economic influence, as well as the time when equestrian peoples—especially after the smallpox epidemic of 1837—fully displaced horticultural peoples on the Missouri River and became the dominant force in regional trade networks. The "Fort Union III" of the third phase (circa 1850-1867) reflected a slow decline marked by intermittent shortages of trade goods, and a loss of profitability and/or decline in the demand for bison products. This period also coincided with the increasing dominance of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Great Sioux Nation), which exercised pressure on the trading community and undermined Native communities that had long traded at historic Fort Union. In terms of the fort itself, this period was marked by a steady decline in the condition of the buildings and structures. This third phase can be further subdivided into a civilian and a final military era, ending with Fort Union's fur trading operations in the 1860s.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Barbour, 44.

⁵⁷ Barbour, 45-48.

⁵⁸ During the archeological excavations of the 1980s, MWAC archeologists identified a beginning date for the original period of Fort Union construction at 1829, although subsequent reports document initial construction of the

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During the first construction phase, Fort Union underwent two distinct development periods. The first was a hastily built facility dating from 1828-1832. It was replaced between 1833 and ca. 1835.⁵⁹ James Kipp with the AFC's Upper Missouri Outfit may have supervised the work and possibly been responsible for the overall plan.⁶⁰ Skilled workmen (carpenters and masons) came from St. Louis, but the majority of labor was done by *Canadien* (French-speaking) *engages* from Quebec. The first palisade was a parallelogram measuring roughly 178 feet along the north and south walls and 198 feet along the east and west walls. Composed of square-hewn logs, split planks, and half-round logs, it was situated to avoid shallow drainages east and west of the construction site while maximizing the perimeter and utilizing the greatest amount of flat land. The 15- to 16-foot-tall palisades were constructed of pickets hewn from cottonwood, using a *poteaux-en-terre* (posts in ground) construction technique familiar to the *Canadien* and Creole laborers. In this system vertical timbers, typically hewn flat on their exterior faces, are set in long shallow trenches and secured with heavy stones and rammed earth. At the top was attached a *cheval-de-frise* (a portable frame covered with spikes). The palisade design varied among the walls. Sections on the south side used two alternating inner and outer rows of 5 to 8-inch-wide pickets. The north (and less substantial) palisade was built of 2 to 3-inch-thick split planks, intermittently supported by round posts on the interior. Large square posts anchored the southwest and northwest corners. Two-story high bastions, thought to have been constructed "log-cabin style," of cottonwood, were located at opposing corners of the palisaded enclosure, and had "pointed" roofs, embrasures, and cannon. Within the palisade were a range of eight to ten log houses and stores and an ice house.⁶¹

The first of the many dramatic and consequential modifications occurred in February 1832 with reconstruction of the bulk of the western palisade and building range (a line of connected buildings) following a late-night fire. Then, between 1833 and circa 1835, there was a complete reconstruction of the palisades, bastions, manager's house, store, powder magazine, and the

palisade to late 1828. Peterson and Hunt, *1987 Investigations*, 105; Hunt, "Origins of Fort Union: Archaeology and History," 383-385; William J. Hunt, Jr., *1988 Archaeological Investigations of The Indians' and Artisans' Houses, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, Montana-North Dakota, Block 19 Report* (MWAC, 2020), 33. Hunt notes that each subperiod overlaps slightly with the next to reflect the years of transition from one to the next. On the changing dynamics of American Indian populations, trade, and relative strengths, see Pekka Hämäläinen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 248-269.

⁵⁹ Barbour, 44.

⁶⁰ Barbour, 45. Kipp's involvement has not been confirmed, and the palisade's haphazard construction is not in keeping with the man's reputation. However, deteriorating weather conditions during the fall and winter of 1828 may account for this. See Hunt, "Origins of Fort Union: Archaeology and History," 383-385.

⁶¹ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 17; Hunt, "Origins of Fort Union: Archaeology and History," 382-385; J. Homer Thiel, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32W117), Montana-North Dakota, Block 20* (MWAC, 2002), 58-59; Lynelle A. Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32W117), Montana-North Dakota, Block 15* (MWAC, 2002), 79; George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 Volumes (1844; reprint, New York, 1973), 21; Barbour, 47; Prince Alexander Philip Maximilian zu Wied, *The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied: April–September 1833*, Vol. 2, ed. Stephen S. Witte and Marsha V. Gallagher, trans. William J. Orr Paul Schach, and Dieter Karch (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) 138.

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Indians' and artisans' house. It was essentially a complete replacement of the earlier post structures. A new palisade expanded to 237 x 245 feet in 1833, with pickets built on a stone and mortar foundation, possibly *poteaux-sur-sole* (posts on sill). Visiting artist Karl Bodmer captured the fort's exterior appearance that year. However, after the north and west palisades collapsed during a December 1833 windstorm, replacement construction incorporated a reinforcing network of bracing and cross bracing set at roughly 12-foot intervals. Massive gates hung within the new north and south palisade walls. The main gate measured 12 feet wide x 14 feet tall, and the north gate measured 10 feet wide. Replacement of the cottonwood corner bastions occurred in 1834. The new bastions were described as two stories tall, with embrasures and pyramidal hipped roofs. They averaged 22 feet square and stood 27 to 28 feet tall; the lower 22 feet built of stone. The walls measured 3 feet thick and were whitewashed. Balconies were built at the top of the second stories. After 1837 the palisade's south entry area of "Fort Union II" included a strong room that measured about 12 x 32 feet with two sets of double gates at either end. This picket-lined space was created after the smallpox epidemic of 1837, and prevented unauthorized access to the fort's interior courtyard. In about 1843 Moncravie painted a treaty of peace image depicting unidentified American Indians and U.S. officials or AFC officers. The painting was installed over the gates and may have been removed by 1851-1852. The treaty image is captured in Moncravie's circa 1843 painting of the fort, which depicts a flagstaff atop both bastion's roofs; a bison weathervane is shown on the northeast bastion and an eagle weathervane on the other. Between 1853 and 1858, a third, wood story was added to the southwest bastion. The improvements to the palisades provided no protection from the elements, however, and the courtyard became a muddy mess during foul weather. Boardwalks documented in various paintings, sketches, and photographs are presumed to have provided the relief that numerous attempts to improve site drainage failed to do.⁶²

Within the palisades the various buildings likewise experienced multiple evolutions. Immediately west of the main gate three iterations of the Indians' and artisans' house were constructed over time. All three were built in a similar fashion although each one was built more solidly than the last. All three consisted of two rooms. The construction form of the first building (1828) was *poteaux-sur-sole* and *piece-sur-piece* with vertical structural members set on logs positioned at right angles to the foundation axis. The first iteration, measuring about 20 x 60 feet, sat directly on the ground. This Fort Union I phase building stood immediately next to the palisade, and the palisade may have served as a back wall. The east room was a working space for artisans. It had a dirt floor, a forge on its south side, and work area in the center of the room. A larger west room housed Native American visitors. Entry was on the north side, from the courtyard. Hearths rather than formal fireplaces provided heat, and the roof was probably gabled, equipped with smoke holes, and covered with bison robes topped with dirt and sod. The

⁶² Peterson and Hunt, *1987 Investigations*, 110-113; Barbour, 49; Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Excavations*, 92-94; Hunt, *Block 19 Report*, 53. See also Jean-Baptiste Moncravie, watercolor, Fort Union circa 1843, the Midwest Jesuit Archives, Missouri Province Collection, De Smetania Series IX C9 108, St. Louis, Missouri; Karl Bodmer, 1809-1893, "View of Fort Union, the Assiniboina breaking up their Camp, Tab. 28, 1841," Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2001662>, accessed 6 December 2022.

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Fort Union II Indians' and artisans' house was built circa 1835 and stood about 8 ½ feet in from the palisade. It was approximately the same size as the earlier building and used the same wall construction style and roof design.

Unlike the earlier building, the second iteration stood on log footers, and access to the east reception and trade room was from a passageway formed by the double gates. The west side served as a work area for a tinner, blacksmith, and gunsmith. Each room was heated by a fireplace. A small room, or "trade shop," situated south of the reception room and within the palisade bracing, shared an opening with the reception room through which goods were exchanged. It is likely that the bracing system was used to support this room's walls, roof and floor. A second window, on the fort's exterior wall, could be opened from the trade room, for trade when security was particularly high.

During the Fort Union III phase, the Indians' and artisans' house was rebuilt between 1852-1853 and placed on a stone foundation. Construction was again *piece-sur-piece*, with squared corners secured with dovetail joints. One central chimney serviced the two rooms, and the wood floors were covered with dirt. Shingles covered the gabled roof. A new element was a three-story flag tower added to the north side of the building. Several contemporary drawings show a flagpole and flag at the top of the tower. An 1858 sketch by visiting German Missionary Moritz Braeuninger, and an 1860 photograph by James D. Hutton document that each room had an entrance off the courtyard, consisting of a one-story gabled vestibule or porch with picket side railings. The east room vestibule was flanked on both sides by a single large window. The tower stood between the entrances, surmounted by a small gallery with railings. A courtyard-facing door on the north side of the tower provided access. At each upper floor one centrally-placed window on the north side provided illumination; simple triangular "pediments" provided a decorative detail over the ground floor door and upper windows.⁶³

During the "Fort Union II" construction phase, two long buildings were aligned along the interior east and west palisades. Along the west side was the 119 x 21-foot, gabled dwelling range, or apartments for employees. This range replaced "Fort Union I" range of about 120 x 24 feet, which had been destroyed in the 1832 fire. Historical evidence suggests that the replacement range was built *poteaux en coulisse* (i.e., with grooved posts) over the existing foundation and divided into six nearly equal compartments. Along the east side, a 25 x 157-foot store range contained a luggage storage room, a retail store, a wholesale warehouse, a meat

⁶³ Hunt, *Block 19 Report*, 68-73, 89-93; Peterson and Hunt, *1987 Investigations*, 114 (citing personal communication with NPS Rocky Mountain Regional Office Regional Historic Architect Richard Cronenberger, 1988), and 126-127. See "Missionsblatt" No. 7, 1 April 1859, Fort Union print based on Moritz Braeuninger sketch, Google Books, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/Mz9CAAAAcAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PP2&dq=Evangelisch-lutherisches+Missionsblatt+1859, accessed 6 December 2022; James D. Hutton, "[Fort Union?] 0AD," photograph, Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11447600>, accessed 6 December 2022.

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storage room, and a fur press room. The gabled frame building was sided with weatherboards. It had a garret and a stone-lined cellar measuring roughly 30 x 12 feet.⁶⁴

At the north end of the enclosure stood the bourgeois house and, behind it, a bell tower, kitchen, and dairy. The bourgeois house, the most elaborate fur trade era structure on the upper Missouri, was depicted graphically with two very different appearances between 1833 and 1866. During the middle part of the "Fort Union II" period, graphics by Moncravie (circa 1843) and visiting missionary Father Nicholas Point in 1847 depict a 1½ story house, with weatherboard siding painted white, green window shutters, and a red-painted shingle roof with four dormers. Two chimneys penetrate the roof, equally spaced at a distance from the gable ends. Its appearance was similar to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century French Colonial or French-Canadian design. On the south wall was a full-width veranda (described as a "piazza" in 1843) that used an extension of the building's roof as its cover. Turned posts supported the roof in 1843. A picket fence extending the width of the house was painted brown. The first floor contained four rooms and a central hall; the attic was apparently one open space that was subsequently subdivided into three rooms. The bourgeois house was remodeled between 1848 and 1850, and its primary façade documented by artist Rudolph Kurtz in 1851. Alterations included an additional story added to the central section, between the chimneys, and a gallery on the top of the roof. The chimneys were extended, the veranda removed, and in its place built a narrower and centrally placed 18 foot-wide, two-story gabled porch supported by eight columns. It was painted white with red shutters, with blue porch columns and red porch railings. Some earlier shutters were reused and enlarged for the second story windows. The roof gallery had blue posts, white pickets and red railings. The picket fence and four hitching posts were painted red. In the gable of the upper porch was painted a portrait of Pierre Choteau, Jr. In 1864 a stairway was added to the front of the house.⁶⁵

Archeological investigation determined the bourgeois house foundation measured 75 x 22 ½ feet and uncovered evidence that this building, in its 1 ½ story form, was built between 1832 and 1834. Its veranda may have been remodeled up to four times. The house replaced an even earlier bourgeois house located slightly to the north, and immediately adjacent to the original north palisade. The 1832-1834 house was built on stone foundations apparently recycled from a fire-damaged building or old fireplace, or both. Construction of these foundations followed a Georgian period technique, in which the stones were laid on top of boards or timbers as a means

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 201-204; Wilfred M. Husted, "1969 Excavations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, North Dakota: A progress Summary," (MWAC, 1970), 19-21; Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 14-15, 18-19.

⁶⁵ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 185, referencing the Moncravie water color; Father Nicolas Point, *Wilderness Kingdom: Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains, 1840-1847*, translated and introduced by Joseph P. Donnelly (Chicago: S.J. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1967), 248; and Rudolph F. Kurtz, *Bourgeois House 1851*, the Midwest Jesuit Archives, Missouri Province Collection, De Smetania Series IX C9 107, St. Louis, Missouri.

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of providing additional stability. A similar technique was found in the design of foundation support for the remodeled porch.⁶⁶

North and behind the bourgeois house was the log kitchen, which never appeared in any illustrations of the fort, although a maintenance description in 1864-1865 mentions the tasks of daubing and whitewashing the walls. Between the kitchen and the bourgeois house was a 10 x 6-foot bell tower that was first graphically depicted in 1851-1852. It had a pointed roof and what appeared to be a decorative lightning rod and was probably connected to the north outside wall of the house. Archeological excavations suggested that the kitchen measured about 20½ x 16½ feet, and though there was historic reference that the floor may have been “paved,” this was not confirmed in the 1986 excavations. North of the kitchen, and situated within the palisade buttresses, was the 9 x 8-foot dairy, which had a paved floor.⁶⁷

Other larger buildings and structures within the palisade included an ice house, powder magazine, a blacksmith shop, and a flagstaff. The 24 x 21-foot log ice house, located north of the dwelling range, had a door in the floor and a rope ladder to access ice stored below grade. The upper floor was used for a time to store lumber. The ice house may have been demolished and reconstructed between 1847 and 1851. The roughly 24½ x 16½ foot limestone powder magazine, attributed to a stonemason named Miller, had whitewashed walls 4 to 6 inches thick, a barrel-vaulted interior, double doors, and stood north of the store range. The 25 x 20½ foot blacksmith shop may have had two forges in its interior and was located west of the Indians’ and artisans’ house. A door on the east wall provided access and was flanked on both sides by a single window. In the center of the palisade stood a 60 to 63-foot flagstaff equipped with bracing at the base and wood climbing pegs. In 1843, it is known that at its base was a vegetable garden and a cannon, surrounded by a roughly circular “railing and panel work” fence 16 feet in diameter. The flagstaff was no longer depicted by visiting artists after 1853 and was replaced by a “new” rectangular tower in the southwest quarter of the post.⁶⁸

Space against the palisade and under its gallery provided a location for a number of smaller structures. Horse stables described in 1843 were located along the west and south palisades, measured 117 x 10 feet, and accommodated 50 horses. A charcoal house was probably included within the horse stables on the west side. Stables for bison calves were located against the north palisade behind the kitchen in 1843, as was a hen house, an artist’s studio, and a cooper’s shop. Less mention was made by visitors of built resources outside the palisade, although images reference a variety of structures over 30 years.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 185-193; Hunt, *Material Culture Reports*, Part I, 60; Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Investigations*, 83-96; Hunt, “Origins of Fort Union,” 386-388; Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 11.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 195, 219, 227, Hunt and Peterson, *1986 Investigations*, 102-104.

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 205-208, 241; Husted, “1969 Excavations,” 22-24; J.D. Hutton, photograph of Fort Union, 1860; Douglas D. Scott, ““This Flag-Staff is the Glory of the Fort”: Archeological Investigations of the Fort Union Flagpole Remains,” (MWAC, 1986), 6.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 209-217.

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Resources located outside the protected confines of the fort included a boat yard used for construction of the small mackinaws that provided auxiliary downstream transport. The circa 1843 Moncravie painting depicts a boat dock on the north bank of the Missouri, directly in front of the fort, but this structure was not captured by other visiting artists before or after 1843. The composition of this bank of the river may have been such that a more permanent dock was unnecessary. A distillery was installed in 1833, but was in operation for only a short time, as the manufacture of alcohol was suspended in 1834. Charcoal kilns were described as being located south of the river in 1843, and the locations may have moved many times.⁷⁰

Fort Union occupants planted gardens at different times within and beyond the palisades. Prince Maximilian reported in 1833 that Fort Union had no garden and was skeptical that any would prove successful. Yet by 1835 at least three gardens were planted and produced vegetables. The first seeds and sets were planted in May and included potatoes, corn, peas, red onions, radishes, lettuce, parsnips, carrots, yellow French radishes, celery, curled parsley, oyster plant, turnips, dwarf beans, pole beans, cabbage, onions, and cucumbers. A 1½ -acre garden established in Garden Coulee is believed to be the main garden and was fenced. A garden south of the river was reserved for the sprawling and slow-to-mature crops of corn, squash, pumpkin, melons, and beets, and may have been fenced. The distillery house yard grew radishes and “tongue grass.” Another small garden was created within the fence around the flag staff. In 1843 there were two gardens, one planted at the mouth of Garden Coulee and the other attached to the Fort William stockade.⁷¹

Use of the terrace area also included stock enclosure. Stock included hogs, oxen, cattle (milk and beef), and horses; in 1833, fort visitor Prince Maximilian reported that the interior of the fort was filthy, due to the 50 to 60 head of horses picketed in the courtyard each night. Additional stock was secured in the Fort William stockade to the east. In addition to serving as the primary horse corral, this facility was used to secure the winter's hay supply and as an auxiliary (protected) habitation area. As noted previously, the stockade would later be used as a hospital for Indian victims of smallpox. This structure is shown in Moncravie's circa 1843 painting of the fort. A second fenced area shown in the 1843 sketch is interpreted as a graveyard. This Euro-American cemetery was located about 100 yards east of the main fort.⁷²

Numerous pictorial and written historic accounts document, and archeological investigations confirm, that American Indian camps dotted the prairie west and north of Fort Union. In 1851 Swiss artist Rudolph Kurz described a Nakoda (Assiniboine) camp in a manner that would have been familiar to predecessors. “A group of gaily colored tents,” he noted, “with their attendant poles from which are suspended trophies, such as scalps, buffalo beards, strips of red cloth, etc.,

⁷⁰ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 264-266.

⁷¹ Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 264; David Wishart, “Agriculture at the Trading Posts on the Upper Missouri, Prior to 1843,” *Agricultural History* 47 (January 1973), 61.

⁷² Alicia Caporaso, “Six Upper Missouri River Trading Posts: Trends in Organization,” *South Dakota History*, 38 (Winter 2008), 322-324; Barbour, 49.

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... men walking about, youth at their games, girls carrying water, women trudging in with wood, cleaning and scraping hides; horses grazing or near their owners' tents ... a multitude of dogs.⁷³

RECONSTRUCTED RESOURCES (CRITERION CONSIDERATION E)

While no historic buildings or structures associated with Fort Union survive above grade, the partial reconstructions in the form of two buildings and seven structures are considered contributing resources within the historic district boundary.

Built between 1985 - 1991, the reconstructions within the Fort Union Trading Post NHS Historic District are maintained and managed as historic buildings and structures in the park's building inventory, but they are not represented as authentic historic property. Rather, they serve as the primary interpretive resource for the NPS unit. A number of smaller objects, historic and reconstructed, are also on-site. For instance, a number of the original stone blocks that display chisel marks are used as benches throughout the site.⁷⁴ Outside the palisade, a variety of objects, reconstructed by volunteers according to original designs (but not designed or built to the same level of exactness as the reconstructed buildings and structures), have been placed to aid with interpretation. These include pit saw frames and a huge robe press in front of the palisade that add to the historic scene. In the summer months, a small grouping of canvas tipis is erected outside the north palisade gate.

While a variety of sources from the 1830s to the 1860s informed the design process, the NPS based the partial reconstruction of the fort on its appearance circa 1851—which corresponded with the 1851-1852 residence of Rudolph Kurz—a Swiss artist, diarist, and American Fur Company employee who produced detailed drawings and observations of Fort Union and the people who worked, visited, and traded there. Other sources of visual documentation from the 1830s to 1866 informed the design process. The artifact materials recovered during the 1980s excavations, and their contextual information, significantly contributed to the reconstructions. Ultimately, the reconstructions were both informed and limited by the extent of knowledge gathered from the written, pictorial, or archeological record. In instances where information was lacking or silent on necessary detail, existing historic resources of the same era as Fort Union were visited, and architectural details copied in order to complete reconstruction. In some instances, archeological resources were also incorporated into the reconstructions.

Observing the goal of accuracy and authenticity, the "Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis" (a document that guided the reconstruction process) delineated between historical and archeological facts and assumptions. The reconstruction team did understand that their final design never existed in its exact form during its period of occupation. In addition, the design team also needed to balance historical accuracy with modern building codes and maintenance

⁷³Erwin Thompson, *Fort Union Trading Post: Fur Trade Empire on the Upper Missouri* (Williston, North Dakota: Fort Union Association, 1994), 68.

⁷⁴Richard Cronenberger to Dena Sanford, "Fort Union Original Stones: Notes to Dena Sanford for NHL Nomination," 16 April 2002, MWRO.

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requirements. The first stage of the Fort Union reconstruction occurred in 1985 with the completion of the flagstaff and picket fence enclosure, followed in the winter of 1986-1987 with the bourgeois house and bell tower. Reconstruction of the palisade and bastion occurred between 1988 and 1989, followed by the Indians' and artisans' house in 1990-1991.⁷⁵

9) Reconstructed Palisade (HS-1): 1 contributing structure

The palisade was reconstructed in 1988-1989, according to historical literary and graphic documentation and the archeological record. The palisade is 20 feet tall, 237 feet long along the north/south walls and 245 feet along the east/west walls. It is constructed using a *poteaux-sur-sol*, or posts-on-sill, method. The pickets (historically, the 1832 rebuilt palisade was reported to be between 16 to 20 feet high) are made of large, square timbers and reinforced at intervals with an interior framework of cross-braces on stone footings.⁷⁶ In consideration of maintenance needs, the palisade was reconstructed of Douglas fir instead of cottonwood, and the foundations supported by concrete footing capped with a foot of limestone. The foundations are set at the original height, set approximately one foot below finished grade. The historic southeast corner stones were reinstalled, and a drain discovered underneath the northwest corner was reconstructed using some of the original stones.⁷⁷ The archeological remains of the dairy structure, located adjacent to the north palisade, were retained in place, although the north wall directly under the palisade sill was reconstructed to support the sill. The whitewashed wood members are supported by cross bracing. The timbers for the 10 x 10-inch bracing were cut with a band saw to create the appearance of the original pit saw marks (visible in historic photographs). The timbers were subsequently connected using the mortise and tenon technique used historically. A gallery 5 feet below the top of the palisade extends around the interior of this resource.

⁷⁵ Richard Cronenberger, "Design for Permanence: Historic Accuracy and Modern Construction," *Indians & Traders: Entrepreneurs of the Upper Missouri: Fur Trade Symposium 2000 Proceedings* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 2001), 136; *Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis* (Washington DC: National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1979) *passim*. While a Kansas limestone was used for the bastions and foundations, Cronenberger identified the possible location of the original quarry for the Fort Union construction. Drawing on the historical record, Cronenberger and two Fort Union staff members discovered a site approximately two miles north of the NPS unit, which included a limestone ledge, and "several piles of stone, neatly gathered and ready to be loaded..., [but since] covered with lichen and other surface growth." Richard Cronenberger, "Fort Union Recollections," 26 January 1988, unnumbered page 7. Copy on file MWRO.

⁷⁶ Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 123; Lynelle A. Peterson, *1988 Archeological Investigations at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32W117), Montana-North Dakota, Block 16* (MWAC, 2002), 63-64; Thiel, *1998 Archeological Investigations*, 59-61; Thompson, *Historic Structures Report*, 272, citing Denig.

⁷⁷ Cronenberger to Sanford, "Fort Union Original Stones"; Cronenberger, "Design for Permanence," 139-142; Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, "Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis," August 31, 1979, drawing 436/80029, Sheet 22 (Technical Information Center, Denver Service Center, Lakewood, Colorado), 5, 9; and "Fort Union Recollections January 26, 1998," unnumbered page 7. Many of the stones incorporated into the reconstruction were subsequently removed, but it is not clear when or to what purpose. It is likely that some of the stones were repurposed to support the timbers that outline the foundations of the dwelling and store/warehouse ranges, powder magazine, and ice house.

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In the 1990s volunteers constructed two wood, one-story sheds between the bracing on both the south and west palisades. Known as the hunter's and carpenter's shacks, they are used for the storage of interpretive materials and other purposes. Though no evidence indicates that any such structures were in these positions, the sheds were intended to represent the type of more temporary structures that appeared and disappeared during the historic period. They are not based on historical and archeological evidence. Likewise, in 2018 a timber frame "blacksmith shop" was built as an extension of the palisade's cross bracing system. Due to their small size, these additions are not being counted as separate non-contributing resources, but it should be noted that their presence does not reflect the same professional rigor applied to other full and partial reconstructions within the palisade.

10 & 11) Reconstructed Southwest & Northeast Bastions (HS-2, HS-3): 2 contributing structures

While the circa 1834 bastions were built mostly of stone, the whitewashed reconstructions are made with a concrete masonry block core faced with heavy stone. They sit on concrete foundations and include basements. As part of the reconstruction process, some of the excavated quoins in the southwest bastion foundation were reinstalled, and not whitewashed. Original stones and quoins reused for the northeast bastion were incorporated at or below eye level on walls outside the palisade. The existing stone threshold for the southwest bastion was reused.⁷⁸ The bastions stand two stories high, are whitewashed, and have pyramidal, wood-shingled roofs painted red. The first and second stories have cannon ports and gun ports on the exterior walls. There are observation balconies near the roof eave. The roof structures for these bastions were patterned after the roof structure of the original, contemporary bastion at Fort Benton, Montana. New hardware was crafted based on the original hardware excavated from the site.⁷⁹ Each bastion is topped with a weathervane, with an eagle on the southwest bastion and a bison bull on the northeast bastion. The bastions historically served as watchtowers, storage rooms for armaments and ordnance, and as vantage points from which to observe the sweeping view of the river and of the plains.⁸⁰

20 & 13) Reconstructed South Gate and North Gate (HS-4, HS-5):⁸¹ 2 contributing structures

⁷⁸ Only those familiar with original stonework would be able to identify the historic material in the northeast bastion. See Cronenberger, "Fort Union Stones."

⁷⁹ The bastion at Fort Benton, while an adobe structure, survived with few modifications, and the roof structural system was original. Historical Architect Richard Cronenberger measured Fort Benton's bastion, and used the details to design the Fort Union bastion roof structural system. He also visited Fort Snelling in Minnesota to measure the bastion gun portal opening, cannon openings and various doors and gates. National Park Service employee and historical blacksmith George Ainsly crafted the hardware. Cronenberger, "Review of the Draft," 3; Cronenberger, "Design for Permanence," 137.

⁸⁰ Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 6-8; Matzko, 122-123.

⁸¹ While ostensibly part of the palisade, these structures have been identified separately, following the convention established by Historian Erwin Thompson in his 1968 *Historic Structures Report*.

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Reconstructed in 1989 the south (front) gate measures 14 feet 5 inches tall x 12 feet 2 inches wide. It consists of a set of doors set in a timber frame, hung by wrought iron strap hinges, and constructed of wood planks. The exterior planks are set diagonally, while the interior planks are vertical. The outer doors are part of a reconstructed controlled area walled on the east side, framed by the Indians' and artisans' house on the west, and blocked by a second set of gates on the north. The back/north gates are also wood plank doors, hung by wrought iron strap hinges, and measure 9 feet 10 inches tall x 10 feet 2 inches wide. The original stone apron just outside the north (back) gate and excavated at the site was reinstalled in place; likewise, the entrance stones at the south gate were removed by the archeologists, numbered, and reinstalled in their original location, and set on a new foundation.⁸²

14) Reconstructed Indians' and Artisans' House (HS-6): 1 contributing building

The log-walled Indians' and artisans' house reconstruction (1990-1991) was more conjectural. While there were some written descriptions, the only graphic documentation available at the time that depicted the exterior was of the sod roof and east walls. An 1851 interior drawing by artist Rudolph Kurtz documented a portion of the interior.⁸³

While the written analysis of the archeological investigations had not been completed prior to reconstruction activity, the reconstruction design relied on archeological remains, including wood material as reference for the floor beams and floor planks, and locating the doors and front walkway.⁸⁴ Construction begun in 1990 resulted in a one-story, two-room building following the *poteaux-en-coulisse* construction method with dovetail corner notching used on the west end. The original hearth stones to the fireplace in the east room (Indian reception room) were reinstalled in their original location, with new stones added to replace missing originals. The trade shop was reconstructed between the Indians' and artisans' house and the palisade, forming a portion of the wall for the controlled space inside the front gate. The reconstruction included a basement vault to serve as the park's curatorial facility. The basement is accessed by a one-story wood shed built between palisade bracing, and was never present historically, but would have been typical of the period.⁸⁵

15) Reconstructed Bourgeois House (HS-7): 1 contributing building

Like the original on which it was patterned, the reconstructed *bourgeois* house is the central feature of the reconstructed fort. While the process of reconstruction of the bourgeois house

⁸² Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 8-10, 22; Cronenberger, "Fort Union Original Stones."

⁸³ Rocky Mountain Region Historic Preservation Team, 22-23; Rudolph F. Kurtz, "Indian-Artisan House," 1851, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma; idem, "Interior of Fort Union." National Park Service Archeologist William Hunt maintains that there were almost no historical specifications for this structure, and that no written descriptions existed; see Hunt to Sanford, "Comments," 3.

⁸⁴ Cronenberger, "Review of the Draft," 5.

⁸⁵ Cronenberger, "Review of the Draft," 5-6; idem, "Fort Union Original Stones;" Matzko, 123-126. Matzko also notes that the artisans had been displaced by 1851, so the name "Indians' and artisans' house" for this reconstruction is not entirely applicable, 205.

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involved a great deal of exactitude and care, it still followed a guiding principle of the larger reconstruction project. Namely, the building needed to serve present-day needs while presenting a realistic and evocative presence. The front and side exteriors of the bourgeois house therefore were built to appear exactly as they did in 1851. While the interior was not reconstructed due to the lack of substantive nineteenth century documentation, the archeological excavations of interior fireplaces guided the design team's spatial layout for recreation of the first floor interior walls and locations of the clerk's room, dining room, central hall, and office. As part of the reconstruction, in 1986 the original hearthstones were reset in the area of the original chimney structure but relocated opposite their original orientation. The interior houses administrative offices, the archives, a small museum, and the visitor center.⁸⁶

Historic photographs and drawings reviewed in stereo pairs allowed NPS historical architects to interpolate vertical dimensions of the bourgeois house. Horizontal dimensions were revealed through archeological excavations. Pictorial accounts revealed finish details, roof line, and fenestration style and placement. Paint colors were based upon narrative descriptions. Based on archeological information, the floor plan was duplicated to the extent that the stairs and fireplace locations were retained on the first floor. A picket fence enclosing the area in front of (south) and about 12 feet from the house, was reconstructed based on historic drawings, photographs, and archeological evidence.⁸⁷

While the bourgeois house was built with modern construction techniques, the central (two-story) section and porch presents an exterior reconstruction reflecting the Greek Revival architectural style popular in 1850s America's urban centers and seats of power. It is a gabled, two-story building with one-story wings, all aligned on an east-west axis. It measures roughly 75 x 22 feet. The wood shingled roof is painted red. A two-story central porch is on the south (main) facade, and a gallery is located on the top roof. Each porch includes a balustrade. The bourgeois house is sided in white-painted clapboard with corner boards, while the porch railings are painted blue and red. The window openings on the south wall, first floor, contain 8-over-12 light double hung wood sash units, have green-painted wood shutters, and are symmetrically arranged about the central porch—four on each side of the front door, and three on each side of the porch. The second-floor windows, one on each side of the porch on the south side, are also 8-over-12 light, but larger than those on the first floor.⁸⁸ The one-story wings each have one

⁸⁶ Cronenberger, "Review of the Draft," 3-4; idem, "Design for Permanence," 137; idem, "Fort Union Original Stones". Detailing for the bourgeois house was based on a variety of sources. These included elements from the 1849 "Old Bedlam" building at Fort Laramie National Historic Site. Second floor details were inspired by the 1865 ranch house at Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. First floor porch columns were based on period columns from New Orleans, and the second floor porch column design was inspired by columns depicted in drawings of the steamboat *Bertrand*. Matzko notes that supervisory historical architect Rodd Wheaton surmised that the columns were salvaged from a steamboat. Matzko, 204.

⁸⁷ Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Investigations*, 94-95.

⁸⁸ This reflects differences in window pane size. The first-floor panes are 7" x 9" while the second floor panes are 8" x 10." The reconstruction team made this distinction to interpret what would have been the difference in historic material sources. The first floor is indicative of the French/New Orleans influence, while the second floor

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small gabled dormer with a six-over-six light window. There are two stone chimneys, one on each end of the central two-story section. Two four-panel doors are set within the central porch, one on each floor. There is one off-center door on the both the west and east sides of the first floor. On the north side, two functional windows are located on the second floor, central section.

An original design feature that was not exactly recreated is the foundation. Archeological investigations in 1986 determined that the original stone foundation rested upon the ground surface, and in a number of places was underlain by boards or timbers. This was a construction technique commonly used throughout the Georgian period. Roughly shaped sandstone was used on the south, and portions of the east and west sides (those sides most visible to visitors). Other portions of the east and west sides, and all of the north side, utilized granitic and unshaped rocks.⁸⁹ The reconstruction included a basement and full concrete foundation, with the house set at its historic elevation. To represent the original foundation, a stone veneer was applied at the appropriate elevation, and incorporated some of the original stones, primarily on the corners.⁹⁰

16) Reconstructed Flagstaff and Picket Fence (HS-13): 1 contributing structure

Using the 1851 Kurtz sketch as the primary visual reference, the 63-foot-tall flagstaff is made from two log poles, spliced together at the crosstree frame 40 feet above grade, and connected with two steel compression collars. The lower pole is about 20 inches in diameter. Atop the pole is a copper fish weathervane. Three diagonal braces support the flagstaff at the base. The staff's base is set approximately 8 feet into the ground, in the original staff's location. The white picket fence is roughly 12 feet in diameter, is 2½ feet tall, and made of 1 x 2 inch rough-cut boards. The flagstaff was replaced after a 2007 windstorm destroyed it, with the original 1985 hardware reused.⁹¹

17) Reconstructed Bell Tower (HS-23): 1 contributing structure

The three-story bell tower has the same siding and roofing material as the bourgeois house. There are first floor door openings on the east, north, and west, with the doors painted green. The third floor is open with a protective railing; the timber roof structure is pyramidal in shape and equipped with a bell and lightning rod. The bell design is of the era of the fort's construction.

panes reflect material from St. Louis. Cronenberger to Sanford, electronic mail correspondence, 29 May 2012, MWRO.

⁸⁹ Archeological investigations further found a wider foundation on the north side, suggesting that the builders may have intended the bell tower to be an integral part of the bourgeois house structure. Hunt and Peterson, *The 1986 Investigations*, 83-84.

⁹⁰ Cronenberger, "Fort Union Original Stones." Two or three of the best-carved stones excavated on site were incorporated into the museum collection, and these were primarily from the Bourgeois House foundation.

⁹¹ The local chapter of the Muzzle Loaders fur trade organization volunteered to construct the flagpole and provide materials; it was dedicated on July 6, 1985.

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NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

In concert with reconstruction of the fort and restoration of the surrounding prairie, all non-contributing resources referenced in the 1982 nomination have been demolished. New NPS housing and maintenance facilities have been located out of the primary viewshed of the reconstructed fort, below the edge of the terrace at the southeast corner of the Historic District. This was once a channel of the Missouri River.

1) NPS Housing # 1: 1 noncontributing building

Housing unit #1 is one story, has a hipped roof with overhanging eaves, and lap siding above a stone veneer at the base of the walls. The roof is covered with asphalt shingle. The front, southeast-facing façade features two large projecting gables. The northern gable includes a smaller, nested gable with large, plate glass arched windows; the southern gable covers a two-car garage. The main entrance is between these gables. Small open patios are located on the southwest sides.

2) NPS Housing # 2: 1 noncontributing building

Housing unit #2 is identical to housing unit #1.

3) NPS Maintenance Building: 1 noncontributing building

The maintenance building is a one-story, gabled structure sided in metal. Three overhead doors are located on the east side.

4) NPS Water Treatment Building: 1 noncontributing building

The small, cinderblock water treatment building has a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingle. A pedestrian door is located on the south side.

5) NPS Access System: 1 noncontributing structure

Two paved vehicular access roads lead south off the state highway. One is a one-half mile, two-lane public access road that parallels the west side of the National Park unit boundary/Historic District boundary and incorporates a parking area and a smaller circular parking lot. The parking area is sited within a former gravel quarry that postdates the period of significance. A concrete path leads from the parking area to the south entrance of the reconstructed fort. Nearby, an unpaved pedestrian trail leads to an overlook with an interpretive sign at the south edge of the parking area. The parking area and the majority of the trail are located below the level of the fort, so that neither is readily visible from the terrace.

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The east access road is also two lanes and serves the NPS housing/maintenance area. Like the west access road, this eastern route is located along the edge of, and generally below, the terrace level.

UNEVALUATED RESOURCES

Though much of the historic Fort Union has been excavated, a great deal of in situ archeological materials remain undisturbed throughout the Fort Union Trading Post NHS' historic district. These include locations of debris scatter, other artifacts, and magnetic anomalies that merit further investigation in the future. Some are recorded sites, others are not. They include American Indian encampments, a lime kiln, at least one cemetery, and a boat yard. Many are characterized by a broadly scattered and diffuse assemblage of American Indian artifacts recorded as part of various archeological investigations. They include flakes, shatter, core and biface fragments, and at least one fragment of a stone pipe. In addition, while the archeological sites assigned Smithsonian trinomials have discrete boundaries, past activities crossed these boundaries both geographically and temporally. It should be recognized that not all archeological remains from these sites are significant for and contributing to the NR district.

While such materials are often associated with precontact, protohistoric or historic American occupations, there have also been numerous precontact objects identified, some dating to 1050 BCE (before common era) or earlier. Archeological information indicates that people related to the area's horticultural earthlodge dwellers occupied the terrace edge sometime between 1400 and 1700 CE (common era), possibly in temporary encampments. It is also likely that the fort site's favorable location near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers also sustained communities of pedestrian nomads who long predated the occupations of horticultural villagers by centuries and millennia. During the excavations of historic Fort Union, a wide array of lithics, ceramics, and other small artifacts were recovered. Based on the nature of the materials and the strata where they were most frequently encountered, many of the lithic materials correspond to the Late Archaic Period (circa 3050 BCE to 1 CE), while the ceramics and associated lithics are representative of the Mortlach complex (circa 1525-1780 CE) which is most prevalent in northeastern Montana, northwestern North Dakota, and southern Saskatchewan—and is likely ancestral to historic and contemporary Nakoda (Assiniboine) communities in the region. Collectively, the archeological resources within the boundaries of the historic site have the potential to provide insights into the use and evolution of this key geographic area over time. Discrete areas within these sites have been disturbed at various times over the past century, but there is ample evidence that much can still be learned from further archeological study—especially when done in concert with historical research and the insights of associated Native peoples. Future research and analysis will indicate if such features or sites are eligible for National Register listing.⁹²

⁹² On potential Nakoda (Assiniboine) connections to the Mortlach complex, see Dale Walde and David Meyer, "Pre-contact Pottery in Alberta: An Overview," *Manitoba Archaeological Journal*, 16: 1-2 (January 2010): 154-159.

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Mondak Townsite (32WI416 (ND)/24RV102 (MT), Multiple Site Numbers)

A description of the site and material culture resources within the Fort Union Trading Post Historic Site associated with the Mondak Townsite are included here, but are not identified as a contributing resource at this time, as a Phase II archeological assessment will be required.

Mondak Townsite is situated in Roosevelt County, Montana. East Mondak, a small addition platted at a later date, is located in Williams County, North Dakota. The early 20th century community of Mondak (1903-1928) once extended from the southernmost edge of the terrace to the north for approximately one-half mile on a gradually rising slope. Docks on the north side of the Missouri River accommodated riverboat service. A portion of this former townsite is located within the westernmost section of the Fort Union Trading Post NHS's historic district, south of Montana State Highway 327 and the Great Northern Railroad right-of-way and includes features from the state line to the district's western boundary. The north-south Mondak Backroad 1 (historically called Yellowstone Kelly Street), and the parking area at the head of the Bodmer Overlook trail (historically called Hedderich Avenue) are under easement agreements with the NPS. The residential and commercial center of Mondak lies north of the highway and railroad right-of-way and is outside the Fort Union Trading Post historic district.⁹³

When initially recorded as an archeological site, two numbers were assigned, one for each state: 32WI416 for the North Dakota portion and 24RV102 for the Montana portion. These site numbers are for resources associated with the residential and commercial center of Mondak and are not within the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site. However, the description of the community site is provided here for relevance to the Mondak-associated features identified within the historic district. Portions of the townsite are under cultivation, including most of the area in North Dakota, although the principal business and residential portions in Montana are not. Three ruins remain standing in the residential and commercial center: the jail, the sheriff's office, and the county vault. The foundation ruins of the 1912 Mondak School are also visible. This core area included a bank, two hotels, three or four stores, a post office, multiple grain elevators, warehouses, a church, a newspaper, a town hall, a brick school, an electric generating plant, saloons and bordellos. By 1920 approximately 300 people lived in Mondak. A 1982 National Register of Historic Places determination of eligibility for this core area in Montana identified structural remnants present from approximately 43 additional town buildings. The remnants are generally made of poured conglomerate or randomly laid sandstone or granite cobbles, along with associated debris, such as brick lathe and window glass. Some cellars contained debris that

The term "Common Era," or CE, is the chronological equivalent of Anno Domini, or AD. On the historic and ongoing importance of the NRHP site and the Confluence area for contemporary Native communities, see Kaitlyn Chandler, "Fort Union Ethnohistory: Final Report, September 29, 2014," prepared for National Park Service Midwest Region [M.N. Zedeño, Principal Investigator and Editor]; and Zedeño et al, *Cultural Affiliation Statement and Ethnographic Resource Assessment Study*, 42-52, 67-72, 75-85, 88-99, 103-113, 117-127, 135-143, 147-154, 164-175, 216-234.

⁹³ MacDonald, "Mondak Townsite."

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determined to be of recent (mid-twentieth century) origin.⁹⁴ Today, 40 years later, these foundations and other structural features are still present but less visible.

The 1982 determination of eligibility suggested that portions of the Mondak Townsite within the Fort Union NHS boundaries had lost integrity and should be excluded from the nomination. Since 1982 archeological investigations undertaken within the National Historic Site park boundary and south of the state highway identified additional concentrations of early twentieth century materials, suggesting associations with Mondak. The material included glass, ceramic, and metal items, and some stone foundations, and one structural depression that contains upright posts. Some of the stone for building foundations may have been taken from Fort Union and reused. In 2000 the NPS Midwest Archeology center identified ten concentrations of material that were, recorded as a series of discrete sites: 24RV591, 24RV592, 24RV593, 24RV594, 24RV595, 32WI416, 32WI899, 32WI900, 32WI901, and 32WI902. Five of these sites (24RV591, 24RV592, 24RV593, and 24RV594, and 32WI902) may be eligible for including on the National Register under Criteria A, C and D, but must first undergo a Phase II level of assessment. If determined eligible, the sites would most logically be included in an amended Mondak Townsite National Register nomination or amended Determination of Eligibility.⁹⁵

The other five sites assigned state site numbers which are considered non-contributing are 24RV590, 32WI899, 32WI900, 32WI901, and 32WI996. Site 24RV590 appears to have good site integrity, but may not be significant under the fur trade context due to the restricted type of artifacts that occur at the site (vehicle maintenance). Site number 32WI996, an historic trash dump site, has been recommended as ineligible for the National Register at this time due to site disturbance. Sites 32WI899, 32WI900, and 32WI901 do not appear to meet any National Register criteria at this time.⁹⁶

Another potential component feature of the general Mondak Townsite that merits Phase II assessment are the remains of a Nueta (Mandan) earth lodge replica visible on the terrace between the reconstructed Fort Union and the Missouri River's north bank. This lodge was constructed in 1925 as part of a Fort Union promotional event sponsored by the Great Northern Railroad. Archeological investigations in 1987 encountered the remains. In 1988 the earthlodge appeared as a ring-shaped, low earthen ridge measuring approximately nine m (29.5 ft) in diameter and positioned adjacent to the outer south side of the Fort Union 1833 palisade foundation. While reconstruction of the Fort Union palisade's southeast corner impacted the site, an estimated 95% remains.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ MacDonald, "Mondak Townsite," Section 7; Finney, 63.

⁹⁵ Patrick Kuntz, "DOWL HKM: Secondary Highway 327 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory in Roosevelt County, Montana; STPS 327-1(8)1 Bainville – South," (Billings, Montana: Ethnoscience, Inc., October 2013), 23-27; Finney, 69-70; Finney, 68-70; and Alice M. Sweetman, "Mondak: Planned City of Hope Astride Montana-Dakota Border," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 15 (Autumn, 1965), 12-27.

⁹⁶ Hunt and Bauermeister, 10.

⁹⁷ Finney, 30-31, 59, 100, 203.

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ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRITY

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District retains a relatively high level of integrity for all seven aspects of integrity. With regard to *Location, Design, Workmanship, and Materials*, the vast majority of the resources associated with the Fort Union Trading Post Archeological Site (32WI17 (ND)/24RV50 (MT)) are either in situ or catalogued and in storage onsite at the NPS Visitor Center within the reconstructed Bourgeois House. Much of the historic Fort Union complex has been excavated—an action which did impact the in-situ archeological resources—it is assumed that unexcavated portions of the site are largely undisturbed. This is partly owing to the fact that large amounts of stone precluded plowing of the main site area. As noted in the Fort Union NHL nomination, “excavations undertaken in advance of reconstruction and the installation of any associated infrastructure revealed outstanding preservation of archeological deposits across large areas of the site, and there is no reason to believe that remaining areas will have been subject to greater degradation.”⁹⁸ For archeological resources associated with the Garden Coulee site (32WI18), these sites have experienced few physical impacts. The Garden Coulee site has experienced very little excavation, with pedestrian and geophysical surveys leaving minimal impact. Consequently, nearly all identified materials within these two sites remain in situ.

It should be noted that across the terrace, plowing for agricultural use from the 1890s until creation of the National Historic Site had the potential to disturb all archeological features, to the depth of approximately 8 inches. However, there is ample evidence that much can still be learned from further archeological study of the site, especially when done in concert with historical research and the insights of associated Native peoples. The cultural materials associated with the Mondak Townsite (32WI416 (ND)/24RV102 (MT)), while not proposed for inclusion as a contributing archeological site at this time, appear to likewise be lightly impacted by cultivation.

The *Location, Setting, and Materials* of the cultural landscape are also high. The physical environment was generally lightly used and little modified in the nearly 100 years between the abandonment of historic Fort Union (1867) to the year it was first made a unit of the National Park Service (1966). There have been changes to the terrace area, due to irrigation, plowing and leveling. Native prairie vegetation and the expanses of timber along the floodplain are largely gone. However, since the 1980s the historic district’s landscape has largely been restored to mid-nineteenth century conditions through a series of environmental restoration projects. It is therefore compositionally and visually similar to the period of the 1850s. And while upriver damming and river regulation has controlled the power of the Missouri River, and the river has shifted its course over time, the river is clearly visible from the Fort Union terrace. The river’s movement within the floodplain is still evident in the riparian area, and native trees and shrubs have reestablished themselves on the north bank of the Missouri River. As a consequence, the historic district’s present conditions easily retain integrity of *Feeling*; conveying the historic sense of both the fur

⁹⁸ Emmons, et al., 34; and Finney, 100.

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trade and post fur-trade era at this location near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers.⁹⁹

The historic district also meets the National Register Criteria Consideration E: Reconstructed Properties, since the partial reconstruction of historic Fort Union is both “accurately executed” and situated in a “suitable environment” that conveys conditions as they existed in the 1850s. Consequently, the reconstructions in the historic district have high degrees of *Design* and *Workmanship*. Built on the foundation lines of the original structures, the reconstruction of Fort Union “re-established the original design intent and spatial character of the fort.” In doing so, the reconstructed fort also restored a historical—and intentionally dramatic—feature from the site’s period of significance. In this way, *Setting*, *Feeling*, and *Association* are considered high. The reconstructed palisades, bastions, and bourgeois house are a visual focal point that can be viewed from both the north and south bank of the Missouri River, adjacent prairies, and the Bodmer Overlook. The bastions and palisade catwalks also provide dramatic vantages on the surrounding landscape and offer visual experiences that closely approximate the scenes depicted in sketches, paintings and photographs from the period of significance. In sum, the visual and spatial patterns of the reconstructed fort, the views of and from the fort, and the physical setting of the historic district all reflect the period of significance and contribute to the integrity of the district.¹⁰⁰

Considering the previous six integrity criteria, the historic district shows clear *Association* with historically significant individuals, U.S. policies, conflicts, and commercial endeavors in the Trans-Mississippi West during the mid-nineteenth century.

The resources within the boundaries of the historic district have been managed in a manner that meets the purpose of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, “to commemorate and interpret the significant role of the fort as the preeminent fur trading post on the Upper Missouri River, and to preserve its resources.”¹⁰¹ This has been achieved through environmental management programs that have included prairie restoration, removal of invasive plants, and efforts to sustain forested riparian areas. The placement and screening of non-contributing features such as the main visitor parking area, access roads, the maintenance and staff residence area, and other elements of park infrastructure, have also maintained a sense of timelessness—or even time travel—among visitors. Much of this has been accomplished through careful attention to viewsheds, which seek to mimic if not re-create mid-nineteenth century vantages. The Bodmer Overlook, which is situated in the upland prairies to the north of the main visitor area,

⁹⁹ Emmons, et. al., 34.

¹⁰⁰ NPS, “Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site” (2012), 5.

¹⁰¹ National Park Service, “Foundation Document, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site,” NPS 436/120807, June 2013.

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includes sweeping views of the reconstructed fort, surrounding lowland prairies, the river and associated riparian forests, and the distant river bluffs to the south.¹⁰²

¹⁰² M. R. Komp, et al, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site: Natural Resource Condition Assessment. Natural Resource Report. NPS/FOUS/NRR—2014/774* (Fort Collins, Colorado: National Park Service, 2014), *passim*; National Park Service, *Natural Resource Technical Report: Plant Community Composition and Structure Monitoring for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, 2012 Annual Report* (2013), *passim*.

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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.) (32WI18)

- ☒ 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.)

- ☐ 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

ARCHAEOLOGY—Historic Aboriginal, Historic Non-Aboriginal

COMMERCE

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE—NATIVE AMERICAN

ART

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MILITARY
SCIENCE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1828-1867 (Fort Union, nationally significant)

1869-1884 (Garden Coulee/Crow-Flies-High Village Site, state level of significance)

Significant Dates

1828, 1832, 1833, 1837, 1864, 1866, 1884

Significant Person

Edwin T. Denig

Cultural Affiliation

European-American
Métis
Nakoda (Assiniboiné)
Chippewa-Cree
Nueta (Mandan)
Omaškékowak (Cree)

Hiráaca (Hidatsa)
Apsáalooke (Crow)
Lakota
Káínawa (Blood Nation)
Siksika (Blackfoot)
Apsáalooke (Crow)

Architect/Builder

American Fur Company
United States Army
National Park Service, Richard Cronenberger

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (NHS) Historic District is nationally significant under Criteria A, B, and D as one of the largest and most important fur trading posts in the Upper Missouri River Region, which operated from 1828 to 1867. During this time the privately-owned Fort Union dominated the North American bison robe trade as the center of an economic empire that connected the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers confluence to the mid-nineteenth-century global economy.¹⁰³ Areas of significance are Commerce, Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage-Native Americans, Science, Art, Military, Politics/Government, and Transportation. Criteria Consideration E is identified for

¹⁰³Finney, i.

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reconstruction of several fur-trade era buildings and structures. The historic district is also significant at a state (regional) level under Criteria A and D for associations with the Garden Coulee/Crow Flies High Village Site (32WI18), likely occupied from 1869-1884 by a dissident band of Hiráaca (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan). Areas of significance are Ethnic Heritage-Native Americans and Politics/Government.

In terms of cultural history and national development, Fort Union also functioned as a vortex for the destructive impacts of settler colonialism and resource extraction upon Indigenous cultures, alliances, and economies, as well as the concomitant changes in the relationships between competing and affiliated Native groups. The fort further served as a locus for American Indian responses to non-Native incursions, and as a site for the remote exercise of United States economic and political hegemony that was initially expressed through commerce and ultimately exercised through coercive diplomacy and military force. Given the ancient and historical significance of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence, and the area's central importance to the American Fur Company (AFC) operations, the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District also illustrates the central role that geography, geomorphology, and topography play in the articulation of historical process—and the degree to which U.S. national interests altered the meaning and use of the locale for Native peoples.

Criterion A, national significance

Under Criterion A, the fort represents the impact of white settlement and resource extraction upon native cultures, alliances and economies, including changes in the relationships between established tribal groups. The fort represents American Indian response to non-Indian incursion; United States political hegemony secured first through commerce and ultimately through force; and the central role of geography and topography—of natural space—to historical processes. For nearly 30 years Fort Union served as the Missouri River terminus for steamboat traffic, and as a result was a destination for many explorers.¹⁰⁴ The fort played an important role in scientific explorations, as many visiting scientists collected specimens in the area; and Fort Union or persons associated with the fort are listed as the type locality for some species. Fort Union traders Alexander Culbertson and Edwin Denig themselves acquired and contributed specimens to important American Museums, including the National Museum (Smithsonian Institution) and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Fort Union also played host to important artists of the time who documented the flora and fauna of the area. One artist, George Catlin, conceived of the concept of the country's first "national" park while traveling up the Missouri, and visiting Fort Union. Fort Union also played a role as an intermediary in government relations. Fort Union and its staff served as a diplomatic outpost. It hosted government representatives (Indian Agents), expeditions, and played a role in the treaty-making and government-to-government relationships through the distribution of annuities. A contributing resource in the district, the Fort Benton Road Site, is a small section of what is said to be "one of

¹⁰⁴ Finney, 16.

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the most important and earliest overland commercial routes in Montana from the early 1830s through 1883 when the Northern Pacific Railroad completed its transcontinental line.”¹⁰⁵

Criterion B, national significance

The Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site is nationally significant under Criterion B in the area of Science/Conservation, for its association with Edwin T. Denig, Fort Union *Bourgeois* from 1848-1856. Denig’s career at Fort Union resulted in significant and sustained contributions to science. These included production of pioneering, and still influential, ethnographical studies of Northern Plains tribal nations, contributions of natural history specimens from Fort Union to the National Museum (i.e., Smithsonian), and created the earliest sustained compilation of weather data from Upper Missouri on behalf of the U.S. Patent Office and the National Museum. Denig’s comprehensive study of five Indigenous nations in the Upper Missouri regions became influential in the years after his death in 1858 (substantial portions were plagiarized by the famed geologist and surveyor Ferdinand Hayden), but it did not receive full scholarly attention until parts of the full manuscript were discovered and pieced together from the mid-20th century. This ultimately led to the publication of *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboines, Crees, and Crows*, which has remained in print since 1961.¹⁰⁶

Criterion D, national significance

The historic district qualifies under Criterion D for its potential to yield information of major scientific importance by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States, specifically the early nineteenth century in the Trans-Mississippian West and Upper Missouri River. It is expected that archeological data derived from the site of Fort Union potentially can affect anthropological theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree. Although much of the historic Fort Union palisade area has been excavated, a great deal of in situ archeological materials also remain undisturbed. Areas of significance are Archeology-Historic Non-Aboriginal, Archeology-Historic-Aboriginal, Commerce, Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage, and Military. Archeological investigations at the NHS have produced an extraordinary collection of cultural material from the fur trade era and earlier periods. Major archeological investigations were made in 1968-1972 and 1985-1988 for the partial reconstruction of historic Fort Union on the original site. During the most intensive period of archeological work (1986-1988), excavations yielded approximately 2,235 stratigraphic units (SU’s) using single context recording and the Harris matrix. Fort Union has yielded more than one-half million fur trade era artifacts kept for curation. The SU’s consisted of horizontal depositional layers as well as vertical pit and post features. Along with previous studies and stored artifacts from earlier

¹⁰⁵ Hunt to Sanford, “Comments”; Hunt and Bauermeister, “A Post-Burn Inventory,” 8-9, 11. Quotation from Rich Aarstad et al, *Montana Place names from Alzada to Zortman: A Montana Historical Society Guide* (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2009), 590-591

¹⁰⁶ John C. Ewers, “Biographical sketch” for Edwin Thompson Denig, “Of the Crow Nation,” *Anthropological Papers No. 33 of the Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington: U.S. Printing Office, 1953), 1-6; Edward M. Bruner, “Review of Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri,” *American Anthropologist*, 64 (June 1962), 65.

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excavations, the resources have already provided key insights on historic Fort Union's material culture as well as shed light on the construction, maintenance, and demise of the original fur trade post. In addition, the district, and the Missouri Yellowstone Confluence more broadly, encompasses a vast array of archeological resources that correspond to ancient and historic Indigenous use and residence within the area, and that with future study have the potential to provide key insights into the broader human history of the district.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the Fort Union Trading Post Archeology Site (32WI17 (ND)/24RV50 (MT)), other identified sites within the historic district closely associated with historic Fort Union have previously been considered potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. These include the Fort William Stockade Site (32WI988) and the Charles Larpenteur's Opposition Post Site (32WI992), which both underwent geophysical investigations in 2006. Based on preliminary findings, it is expected that these sites will yield significant archeological information on the local and regional historic activities of the fur trade of the Upper Missouri—particularly in relation to the first and last few years of historic Fort Union's existence. However, this expectation also comes with the caveat that additional archeological evaluation is warranted.¹⁰⁸

Criteria Consideration E, national significance

In accordance with National Register Criteria Consideration E, the full and partial Fort Union reconstructions are justified for listing because they were accurately executed in a suitable environment; they are presented as part of a restoration master plan; and no other building, object or structure with the same association to Fort Union Trading Post has survived. Their design was based upon the level of detail provided in archeological, written, and pictorial records concerning historic construction and appearance. These resources are built on the location of the original structures. The justification for Criteria Consideration E is the same for the justification provided in the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Landmark nomination, NHL Exception 6. Namely, the reconstructions were designed to be as accurate as possible, were presented in a dignified manner, and were reconstructed as part of a formal design plan. This plan, the 1979 "Fort Union Reconstruction Analysis," was subsequently modified to reflect additional historical research and excavation.¹⁰⁹

Criteria A and D, state significance

The Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District is significant at a state (regional) level under Criteria A and D for associations with the Garden Coulee/Crow Flies High Village Site (32WI18). The Garden Coulee Site represents a pivotal time in United States and American Indian history, when the Federal government policy towards Native groups changed from one of commerce to conflict. This change was driven in part by a change in Euro-American perception about the viability of the Great Plains for white settlement, and by popular Euro-

¹⁰⁷ Finney, 2-5; and Chandler, 20-24.

¹⁰⁸ Finney, i.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Douglas D. Scott, "This Flag-Staff is the Glory of the Fort": Archeological Investigations of the Fort Union Flagpole Remains, with a Contribution by John R. Bozell" (MWAC, 1986), 20.

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American opinion that Native peoples should be confined to reservations and taught the arts of “civilization” (made to farm the land and give up traditional cultural practices). For the Hiraacá (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan), it was a time of complex cultural change and social interaction with Europeans and Euro-Americans. The site is also an ethnographic resource; the village’s residents were culturally connected to the Hiraacá (Hidatsa) and Nueta (Mandan), and those connections are recognized today as being culturally significant to the members of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

Pending Potential Criteria A and D, local significance

Once additional Phase II archeological assessments have been complete, a portion of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site’s archeological resources may be significant at a local level under Criteria A and D for associations with the community of Mondak (1903-1928). If determined eligible, the sites might be most logically included in an amended National Register nomination that includes resources within and outside of the National Park Service boundary.¹¹⁰ Mondak was a boom town of the early twentieth century, catering specifically to the North Dakota liquor market after the state became “dry” in 1890. The town represented a fairly widespread response to Prohibition. The commercial and residential core was determined eligible for listing on the National Register in 1982 in the areas of historic archeology, architecture, commerce, economics and exploration settlement (period of significance: 1903-1928) for its ability to shed light on the boom town phenomenon on the Northern Plains. Mondak rapidly developed into a prosperous commercial, political, and entertainment center, and perished just as quickly when its particular product and associated vices were no longer in demand.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ A future amendment for the Mondak Townsite may wish to consider Criterion D, for the potential to yield important historical information addressing research questions such as environmental factors in the location and development of a frontier town; social factors active in the organization of a frontier town (i.e., the juxtaposition of the red light district to the residential or business district); kinds of businesses and services available in a frontier town; kinds of activities that occurred in different portions of the town, such as in the saloon areas as opposed to the purely commercial or residential districts; various activities that occurred inside domestic structures; kinds of merchandise, tools, foods, and other items imported to the town and their original source; and kinds of items locally manufactured or produced for consumption.

¹¹¹ MacDonald, “Mondak Townsite,” Finney, 63-65; Patrick Kunz, “DOWL HKM: Secondary Highway 327 Class III Cultural Resource Inventory in Roosevelt County, Montana; STPS 327-1(8)1 Bainville – South,” Billings, Montana: Ethnoscience, Inc., October 2013, 23-27.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:

First designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961 under the theme of “Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830–1898” (subthemes “The Fur Trade” and “Military and Indian Affairs”), the site was subsequently made a unit of the National Park System in June 1966 as Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site.¹¹² As a consequence of this new designation, the National Historic Site (NHS) was automatically placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as required by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Preparation of a formal Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site National Register nomination followed in 1982, comprised of 240.54 acres of the south half of the NHS as a “site” --the area of the terrace on which stood Fort Union subsurface ruins, and the riparian setting.¹¹³ The significance of the site was defined by its historical associations rather than its in situ archeological and cultural resources of that history, although one area of significance identified on the nomination was historic archeology.

This document increases the boundary and amends the documentation of the existing (1982) National Register listing for the Fort Union Trading Post site (NRIS #: 66000103). It incorporates a substantial increase in knowledge about the area, its resources, and development of the NPS unit since 1982. This document includes additional areas and periods of significance, and identifies contributing and noncontributing resources, including reconstructions not present in 1982. The boundary is expanded from 240.54 acres to 418.53 acres. The 1982 nomination identified a nationally significant district associated with the fur trade era in the areas of Archeology, Architecture, Art, Commerce, Exploration/Settlement, Military, Science, and Transportation. While not identified as such in 1982, these correspond to National Register Criteria A, B and D. The document removes from listing five temporary buildings that were present in 1982 (an interim visitor center and four house trailers). Because of the extent and variety of resources, the status of Fort Union Trading Post NHS is changed from a site to an historic district.

Prior to initiation of the 1982 nomination, National Park Service personnel were in the midst of implementing the first General Management Plan (1978) for the NHS, which called for historical and archeological research in support of an “authentic reconstruction of the fort.”¹¹⁴ Over the next decade the Fort Union Trading Post NHS underwent one of the most extensive archeological investigations ever conducted by the National Park Service, which informed the

¹¹² The NHL boundary encompassed approximately eight acres, and within which only cellar pits were known to exist.

¹¹³ Mary Shivers Culpin, “Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 5 January 1982. While not identified specifically as such, a variety of non-contributing resources were described, including temporary modern facilities necessary for park operations, and “trash dumps” primarily attributed to the nearby former community of Mondak. The temporary facilities and trash dumps have since been removed, and the prairie restored.

¹¹⁴ U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *General Management Plan, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site*, (Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1978), RMP-4-5.

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partial reconstruction of the fort complex as it appeared, circa 1851.¹¹⁵ This effort, along with subsequent research and ethnographic study, the restoration of the landscape to mid-nineteenth century conditions, and the extension of archeological investigations to other sites and features within the boundaries of the NHS prompted the need to amend both the NHL (2015) and the National Register nominations.

The array of archeological studies conducted within the boundaries of the historic district since the late 1970s provide a wealth of insights on life and commerce at Fort Union. Moreover, the remarkable trove of archeological resources (and associated reports) provides additional perspective on—and tangible evidence of—ancient as well as historical Indigenous use and residence within the area. In the three decades since the partial reconstruction of Fort Union was completed, the NPS has produced a host of reports related to archeological investigations, environmental assessments, ethnography, historical contexts, and material culture. When coupled with a growing number of academic studies on the Upper Missouri fur trade, American Indian history and ethnohistory, labor history, environmental history, and regional history, these studies have fostered a greater understanding of the history, landscape, reconstructed features, and archeological resources within the Fort Union Trading Post Fort NHS Historic District.

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

THE CONFLUENCE AREA

Situated near the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, and some 1,760 river miles from St. Louis, Fort Union was the keystone of the American Fur Company (AFC) operations in the Upper Missouri River Basin. The strategic location served as a boundary for a number of American Indian tribes and was a long-established Indigenous travel corridor. For the AFC, the confluence area represented the company's goal to unite two important Indian trade areas: the Upper Missouri Villages and the Rocky Mountain trade areas. The rivers would subsequently serve as a transportation corridor for Euro-American exploration, commerce and military operations, making the area one of the most important places in the northern Great Plains.¹¹⁶

In ways that meant different things to Native peoples, fur trade employees, visitors, investors, and government officials, Fort Union became a nodal point for life on the Northern Plains. From

¹¹⁵ Archeological investigations began and continued through the 2010s, with additional work continuing through the present. For a summary of the archeological investigations, see Ann Emmons, et. al., 6-11; and "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," a summary of Fort Union investigations [ca. 1995], unnumbered page 3, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska. Development of visitor and management infrastructure also generated further archeological investigations in accordance with the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

¹¹⁶ Mark Harvey, "A History of the Missouri-Yellowstone River Confluence" (unpublished manuscript, North Dakota State Historical Society, 2002).

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the late 1820s to the mid-1860s, the fort complex and the confluence area were a center of commercial exchange, cultural interaction (among and between different groups), physical sustenance, and adaptation. The company's and its successors' various enterprises included direct trade with Native peoples, the acquisition, storage, and shipment of furs, skins, hides, bison tongue, and meat from posts along the Upper and Middle Missouri River to St. Louis, and the provisioning of these same posts along with their affiliated traders. Over time the AFC also acquired contracts to supply U.S. Army posts and Office of Indian Affairs agencies, the transport of U.S. Mail, and the delivery of annuities (i.e., annual provisions for Native groups that entered into treaties with the United States). Most of this varied commerce coincided with the advent of the steamboat era on the Upper Missouri, which commenced in the spring of 1832 when the AFC's *Yellow Stone* successfully navigated the winding, shallow, and often treacherous river from St. Louis to Fort Union. While steamboats did not completely replace the keelboats, flatboats, mackinaws, and pirogues that previously handled all of the waterborne cargo on the river, the application of industrial technology sustained AFC's domination of the Missouri River trade for three-and-a-half decades.¹¹⁷

The confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers was able to support a substantial development like Fort Union, allowing the AFC to counter the aspirations of its competitor, the much larger Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), while engaging with most of the same peoples and resources as its northern rival. (The HBC concentrated its trade in the northern edge of the

¹¹⁷ While Fort Union is generally associated with American Fur Company (AFC), the ownership and management of Fort Union and other posts along the Missouri River reflected an amalgamation of interests and expertise. This included veterans of the North West Company who—after that Canadian company was forced to merge with the Hudson's Bay Company—established an aggressive fur trading operation they named the Columbia Fur Company (CFC). Led by Joseph Renville, Kenneth McKenzie, William Laidlaw and Daniel Lamont, the CFC sought to dominate the fur trade in what is now Minnesota and eastern North Dakota while also gaining access to markets and financing in St. Louis, where the Chouteau family had long held sway. In the meantime, the fur trade on the Upper Missouri River and areas to the east was plagued with a host of small fur trading operations (aka "outfits"). By the late 1820s and 1830s, these unstable dynamics led to a merger of sorts, whereby Astor's AFC bought out the CFC and joined forces with its owners. The firm of Berthold and Chouteau signed on to supply trade goods as well as store pelts, robes, and furs in its St. Louis warehouses. The CFC was subsequently rechristened the Upper Missouri Outfit (U.M.O.) and functioned as a subsidiary of the Western Department of Astor's AFC. In terms of personnel, the early administration of Fort Union was largely handled by the men formerly with the CFC. Astor subsequently sold the Western Department in 1834 to the newly formed Pratte, Chouteau and Company. Astor also sold the Northern Department, which focused on the Great Lakes region, to his partner Ramsay Crooks. By 1842, as the Great Lakes trade declined, AFC declared bankruptcy, and eventually folded in 1847. While Fort Union and associated posts on the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers lasted another two decades, references to the "American Fur Company" continued. Given Astor's renown, and the multiple interests that were brought to bear on the creation of Fort Union, keeping the name "American Fur Company"—or simply "the Company"—was both the easiest and most obvious way to avoid unnecessary complications in how to reference the company. See Steven S. Walske and Richard C. Frajola, *Mails of the Westward Expansion, 1803-1861* ([Davis, CA]: Western Cover Society, 2015), 237, 240; Barbour, 29, 30; John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1855* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 3-25, 201, 241, 259; Michael M. Casler, *Steamboats of the Fort Union Fur Trade: An Illustrated Listing of Steamboats on the Upper Missouri River, 1831-1867* (Williston, ND: Fort Union Association, 1999), 1-14. Historic river miles come from Missouri River Commission, *Map of the Missouri River from its mouth to Three Forks, Montana* ([Washington]: Government Printing Office, 1895).

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Northern Great Plains region, in the South Saskatchewan, Assiniboine, Souris and Red river basins.) This mutually competitive dynamic had been intrinsic to the North American fur trade since the early seventeenth century, when two, and sometimes three imperial powers pursued common but opposing interests in the same general region. Such competition also came with certain opportunities for Indigenous communities. Situated within their own homelands, among resources that outside powers coveted, Native leaders often used formal and informal diplomatic settings to exploit the fears and desires of competing imperial interests. In councils with representatives of one or another empire, Native leaders noted the benefits of their engaging with a rival empire. In this manner, Native peoples “played-off” their would-be suitors to gain better trading terms and stronger alliances.¹¹⁸ However, this imperial insinuation into Indigenous communities substantially disrupted a much earlier Indigenous system and would ultimately result in dramatic and damaging impacts to Plains tribes.

UPPER MISSOURI RIVER AREA TRIBES AND THE PLAINS INTERBAND TRADE SYSTEM¹¹⁹

Although the American Fur Company's main goal at Fort Union was to obtain the trade of the Nakoda (Assiniboine), the fort also served as a crossroads for trade and social interactions with other Plains Indian groups including the Omašêkowak (Cree), Ojibwe, Nakawemowin (Plains Ojibwe), Dakhóta (Dakota, aka Eastern Sioux), Nueta (Mandan), Hiráaca (Hidatsa), Aaniiih (Gros Ventre), the Metis, Piikáni (Blackfeet), and the Apsáalooke (Crow). These groups had long established trade relationships developed as part of their own interactions on the Northern Plains, which could be characterized as a fluid and fluctuating pattern of conflict, alliance, and interband political change.

American Indian groups living in the upper Missouri River region were an ethnically diverse group of people, possessing similar resource procurement techniques and material culture characteristics.¹²⁰ A main distinction is that some incorporated agriculture and permanent villages with hunting practices (Nueta, Hiráaca, Aaniiih), while other groups adopted a nomadic

¹¹⁸ Theodore Binnema, “The Case for Cross-National and Comparative History: The Northwestern Plains as Bioregion,” in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 17-41; Peter S. Morris, “Regional Ideas and the Montana-Alberta Borderlands,” *Geographical Review* 89, no. 4 (1999): 469-90; Randy William Widdis, “Borderland Interaction in the International Region of The Great Plains: An Historic-Geographical Perspective,” *Great Plains Research* 7 (Spring 1997): 105-111. On imperial borderlands and the various relations that occurred within them, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Bradley J. Parker, “Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes,” *American Antiquity* 71 (January 2006): 77-100; Gilbert C. Din, “Empires Too Far: The Demographic Limitations of Three Imperial Powers in the Eighteenth-Century Mississippi Valley,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 50, no. 3 (2009): 261-92.

¹¹⁹ The following text in this subsection is excerpted verbatim from Ann Emmons, et al, 40-44.

¹²⁰ John C. Ewers, *Indian Life on the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968).

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hunting lifestyle (including the Piikáni, Apsáalooke, Nakoda and Omašškêkowak).¹²¹ Prior to the heyday of the bison economy, nomadic bands were autonomous, mostly small, and followed a round of seasonal movement, joining other bands only in semi-permanent winter encampments. Later, larger groups formed to slaughter and process bison in sufficient quantities to trade and acquire wealth. Bands might also congregate for ceremonies or warfare. The bands worked within a clear division of labor, with the men hunting and raiding while the women processed hides and conducted other domestic activities.¹²² Women also did the majority of work packing and unpacking camp and maintaining the lodge. Kinship was bilateral, although the wife most often joined the husband's band. Bands were often headed by the most meritorious member of the family. The chief was the leading member of the band council, which consisted of every man who had achieved success in hunting or warfare.¹²³ Wealth and generosity, accompanied by bravery in action, factored into prestige and power for male Plains American Indians.

The ceremonial systems and political organization of Plains groups complemented their economic system, which included not only subsistence activities but also trade and warfare. Trade was an integral part of the economic cycle between Plains groups as well as later with Euro-Americans. Well-maintained trade ties meant access to items that gave both prestige and superiority. Positive trade ties were maintained and developed through friendships and kinship ties, both fictive and real. In the same way, raiding and warfare acted as a means to redistribute materials between groups that did not have friendly economic relationships.

Trade in European goods began as an extension of the Plains Interband Trade System (inter-group trade relationships), which developed during the precontact period. Items were exchanged from the Pacific Coast to the Plains, from the Plains to the Southeast via the eastern Woodlands, and between the Plains and the Southwest. Items traded included shell, bison hides, salmon and pemmican, and raw lithic materials, like Knife River flint and obsidian.¹²⁴ Trade essentially

¹²¹ Groups of sedentary villagers also took to the plains in search of bison herds. Conversely, the burgeoning robe-trade economy created the need for large groups of hunters and warriors, with the result that Plains nomads began adopting social organization styles similar to those of horticultural groups, since they were better suited to handle large aggregates of people. In-depth and wide-ranging discussions of Northern Plains ethnic groups are available. Denig's work comprises the main body of local descriptions of historic Plains Indian lives. Other descriptions have been gleaned from the journals of Lewis and Clark, Karl Bodmer, Freiderich Kurz, George Catlin, John Audubon, Father De Smet, la Vérendrye, Washington Matthews, Prince Maximilian du Wied, Thaddeus Culbertson, Alexander Henry the Elder and Alexander Henry the Younger. Later scholarly works on ethnic groups associated with the Fort Union area include numerous works by Robert Lowie, John Ewers, Clark Wissler, Michael Kennedy, David Mandlebaum, John Milloy, Royal Hassrick, David Miller, Raymond DeMallie, David Rodnick, and Roy Meyer. Mark D. Mitchell, *Crafting History in the Northern Plains: A Political Economy of the Heart River Region, 1400-1750* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), explores in part the trading role of the village peoples, particularly the Mandan, in late prehistoric and early historic times.

¹²² Raymond J. DeMallie and David R. Miller, "The Assiniboine," *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 13: Plains*, Ray DeMallie, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 575

¹²³ Ibid., 576.

¹²⁴ W. Raymond Wood, "Northern Plains Villages Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 1-17; Donald J. Blakeslee, *The Plains Interband*

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occurred in two ways: at fairs conducted by the Shoshone in what is now northern Wyoming and south-central Montana; and by the Sioux on the eastern margins of the Plains and at the upper Missouri horticultural villages, which served as permanent trade centers. Items changed hands with no prescribed routes.¹²⁵

Early Plains trade relationships were not based solely on the desire to acquire material goods; instead, they served as a means of risk management and maintaining alliances and communicating with neighboring ethnic groups. The Interband Trade System incorporated predominantly redundant goods: the transfer of items had more to do with the maintenance of relationships than an actual need for items.¹²⁶ In essence, the goods traded were obtainable by anyone living on the Plains. Groups had access to most materials in the system without the aid of trade. This pattern may have been motivated in order to manage risk. If the subsistence base failed for one group, then its ties to other groups in the system fostered opportunities to seek assistance from economic partners. The pattern of redundancy also brought about specialization in hunting and horticultural lifestyles as various groups observed opportunities within the system and adapted themselves to meet them.

Early fringe trading with Euro-American markets began to have profound effects on Plains groups. Although subsistence patterns and traditional religious and social patterns were maintained, the most obvious effects were the increases in mobility and interaction resulting from the adoption of the horse as the main method of transportation. The presence of the horse had direct implications to traditional methods of establishing prestige and accumulating wealth and caused changes in subsistence patterns. Differential access to horses created differences in wealth between groups and initiated horse raiding, a fierce competition over accesses to non-aboriginal goods, and territorial disputes over once common hunting lands. With competition the frequency of intergroup warfare increased.

Scholars place varying emphasis on the appearance of non-native trade goods and their relationship to the Plains Interband Trade System. Early studies tend to place heavy emphasis on the horse and gun for the creation of large-scale trade systems, while more recent discussions tend to find the origin of the Plains Interband Trade System in prehistoric patterns.¹²⁷ Regardless of the antiquity of the system, Euro-American fur traders actively used it to their own benefit.

Trade System: An Ethnohistoric and Archaeological Investigation, (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1975).

¹²⁵ Wood, "Northern Plains Villages," 155.

¹²⁶ W. Raymond Wood, "Contrastive Features of Native North American Trade Systems," *University of Oregon Anthropological Papers*, 4; W. Raymond Wood and Margot Liberty, "Northern Plains Villages Cultures: Internal Stability and External Relationships," and "Plains Trade in Prehistoric and Protohistoric Intertribal Relations," *Anthropology on the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980); Blakeslee, *The Plains Interband Trade System*; Ewers, *Indian Life*; and Joseph Jablow, "The Cheyenne Indian in Plains Trade Relations: 1795-1840," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, 12 (1951).

¹²⁷ John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); and Jablow, "The Cheyenne Indian;" Blakeslee, *The Plains Interband Trade System*; Derek S. Beery, "The

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From the perspective of trade and gender, men's roles in intertribal exchange rose with the importance of horses as a particularly valuable trade item. Horses supplanted food and clothing as the primary object of trade. Indian women continued to trade, but their exchange assumed a secondary role. As noted by Historian Michael Lansing, having found their trade roles limited by the new male-dominated horse exchange, Indian women expanded on their existing female role in kinship relations. These marriages or liaisons "symbolically and tangibly united different groups and prepared the way for vigorous trading sessions. Whether fictive or real, kinship ties were essential for positive trade relations and gradually created a role for women as intertribal go-betweens.¹²⁸

Due to their ability to trade fur for firearms via the Hudson's Bay Company York Factory (located at the southwestern shore of Hudson Bay), the Nakoda (Assiniboine) and Ojibwa (Cree) were able to establish themselves as middlemen in the system. With superior firearms, they pushed south onto the Northern Plains, placing pressure on groups like the Atsina and the Piikáni (Blackfeet), who had been powerful players in the prehistoric and protohistoric trade system. The latter two groups were among the earliest bison hunters on the Northern Plains and had a wide regional subsistence base, yet they were pushed west and south, away from prime fur trapping and bison hunting territory north of the Missouri River in Montana and Canada. The Sahnish (Arikara) and Ojibwa (Cree) also used their superior armaments to prevent the Nueta (Mandan), Hidatsa, and Piikáni (Blackfeet), from accessing the area around York Factory, placing themselves between competing smaller posts on the Assiniboine and South Saskatchewan Rivers (in present-day Manitoba and Alberta), the Cypress Hills (straddling present southern Alberta-Saskatchewan border) and the Upper Missouri Villages.¹²⁹ The Nakoda (Assiniboine) traded with the Plains groups, passing on their own second-hand items for greatly increased prices, thus enticing the Plains bands into the use of non-native goods. They maintained their position as middlemen by allowing only second hand items to flow onto the Plains proper and charging sufficient prices for the used items to buy new ones for themselves.

Gradually the position of the Nakoda (Assiniboine) was undermined by changes in the fur trade. In 1805 new fur trade districts were established on the North Saskatchewan River. The establishment of these posts gave the Atsina, Blackfeet, and Gros Ventre direct access to trading establishments and integrated them into the fur trade economy. It also eliminated the role of the

Montana Masks: Implications of Shell Mask Gorgets to Trade Between the Plains and Southeast," (Master's thesis, University of Montana 1998); Katherine A. Spielman, "Late Prehistoric Trade Between the Southwest and Southern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 28 (1983): 283-308.

¹²⁸ Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 2000): 415, citing Berry, 68, 77; Wood, "Northern Plains Village Cultures;" and Martha Harrous Foster, "Of Baggage and Bondage: Gender and Status Among Hidatsa and Crow Women," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 17, no. 2 (1993): 121-152. Lansing notes that the decline in status for Plains women with the introduction of the horse may not have applied to Crow or Hidatsa women.

¹²⁹ Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 59; David R. Miller, "The Role of the Assiniboine in the Fort Union Fur Trade," Fur Trade Conference, Fort Union, 2000, 11.

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middleman, forcing the Nakoda (Assiniboine) to assume a role as producers in the European trade system. By 1820, however, the Metis (First People of Canada who trace their descent to mixed European and First Nations parentage) were settling in Woodland/Parkland regions north and east of the Great Plains, and assumed the role of provisioners to the trading posts. Deprived of both the role of middleman or provisioner, the Nakoda (Assiniboine) pushed south to take control of prime bison and fur territory along the Missouri River and actively increased their role as hide producers in the fur trade economy. This action severed many important exchange ties and intensified the economic competition on the Northern Plains.

The Piikáni (Blackfeet) were aware of the trade relationships between the Euro-Americans and their enemies. A similar situation was occurring in the south, with the Apsáalooke (Crow) and Shoshone and the horse trade. Similarly, the Sahnish (Arikara) had been effective middlemen in the Plains Interband Trade System and had an early control over both American Indian and Euro-American access to Plains trade items. However, as the fur trade pushed up the Missouri, the Sahnish (Arikara) were bypassed, losing their economic advantage. As a direct result, both the Piikáni (Blackfeet) and Sahnish (Arikara) became hostile to American traders' attempts to enter their areas. While the Piikáni (Blackfeet) continued to maintain their ties with the British traders in Canada, Sahnish (Arikara) resistance was aimed at all white traders.

Early traders on the Northern Plains during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries initially worked independently within the Plains Interband Trade System. Their main access points for these traders were the Nueta (Mandan), Hiráaca (Hidatsa), and Sahnish (Arikara) villages on the upper Missouri where they took advantage of the villages' locations and trade relationships to acquire furs and other manufactured items from nomadic bands. This scheme not only provided the white traders with the materials produced in the villages but also effectively brought in the items manufactured by nomadic groups as they traveled to interact with the villagers within the Interband Trade System. In effect, the traders introduced replacement "luxury" items into the economy, to their benefit and to the benefit of the traditional middleman positions. It would be a very brief time before the corporate fur trade industry set its sights on the upper Missouri.

CREATION OF FORT UNION TRADING POST

Fort Union had its genesis in the British-*Canadien* fur trade of the early nineteenth century, when, after years of destructive and often violent competition, the North West Company was forced to merge with the HBC in 1821 by order of Parliament. In the fallout, a number of former employees of the NWC endeavored to create small private companies of their own around the western end of Lake Superior and the prairies between the Upper Mississippi and the Upper Missouri rivers. One of these companies, the Columbia Fur Company (1821-1827), was a small partnership of "Nor'Westers" who were headed by Kenneth McKenzie. The company ultimately sold out to John Jacob Astor's AFC, and the remaining partners reorganized as the Upper Missouri Outfit of the AFC. In 1828, McKenzie tasked a group of men with building a post at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers to facilitate trade with Nakoda

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(Assiniboiné) who lived and hunted in the region. Construction continued over the next year, and the first iteration of Fort Union was complete by the time McKenzie moved the headquarters of the Upper Missouri Outfit of the AFC to the confluence in 1829.¹³⁰

Along with a direct trade relationship with the Nakoda, and by extension their relatives and allies who lived further north and west, Fort Union also provided a strategic gateway to the Northern Plains trade as far north and west as present day Saskatchewan and Alberta, and—by way of the Missouri River—to American Indian nations that lived near the Rocky Mountains. Among the latter, the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), composed of three closely related nations that included, from south to north, the Piikáni (aka Piegan), Káínawa (aka Kainah or “Bloods”), and the Siksiká (aka “Blackfoot”), was by far the most powerful. Long opposed to American trappers and traders within their southern territory since the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Niitsitapi defended their collective resource base and enjoyed privileged access to HBC trading posts in the Saskatchewan and Athabaskan river basins. As early as the winter of 1830-1831, however, a large group of Piikáni (aka Piegan) were enticed to visit Fort Union and assess the quality of its trade goods and prices. After being generously feted by Kenneth McKenzie, the Piikáni agreed to have a fort built within their territory. McKenzie subsequently directed James Kipp to oversee construction of what became Fort Piegan just above the confluence of the Marias and Upper Missouri rivers. The early trade in beaver pelts and bison robes that would have otherwise been sent to the HBC was an extraordinary coup for McKenzie and the Upper Missouri Outfit. However, it would not be repeated for several years. Towards the end of 1831, HBC officials from the Oregon Country and Fort Garry (in present-day Winnipeg) encouraged the Káínawa (Blood) to redirect the trade of the Niitsitapi down the Saskatchewan River. The Káínaa agreed and also sent a group to destroy Fort Piegan, which was accomplished in early 1832.¹³¹

Unwilling to forfeit a potential advantage over the HBC, McKenzie made another attempt to establish trade with the Niitsitapi. Because the British company was primarily focused on the beaver trade, McKenzie recognized that he could monopolize the bison robe trade with the Niitsitapi, and likely acquire a fair portion of beaver pelts. A new and larger fort on the Upper Missouri would also put the Upper Missouri Outfit closer to fur trapping brigades in the mountains to the south, and thus another outlet for using trade goods and credit to acquire furs and pelts. With these interests in mind, McKenzie sent Alexander Culbertson, who was then a newly arrived clerk at Fort Union, to establish a new post and develop close ties with the Piikáni

¹³⁰Casler and W. Raymond Wood, “The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Fur Company: Rethinking the Fur Trade on the Northern Great Plains,” “Old Forts Never Die”: The Middle Missouri Fur Trade, 1738-1850” (presentation, 2018 National Fur Trade Symposium Bismarck, North Dakota September 26-29, 2018). This is the most comprehensive study of the relationship between McKenzie, the Columbia Fur Company, and the establishment of Fort Union.

¹³¹Theodore Binnema, “Allegiances and Interests: Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) trade, diplomacy, and warfare, 1806-1831,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, 37 (Autumn): 329-333; David Smyth, “The Niitsitapi Trade: Euro-Americans and the Blackfoot Speaking peoples to the Mid 1830s” (PhD diss., Carleton University, 2001), 58-66; Barbour, 25, 81, 157; R. G. Robertson, *Competitive Struggle: America’s Western Fur Trading Posts, 1764-1865* (Boise, ID: Tamarack Books, 1999), 200-203.

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and their relations in the Niitsitapi. Soon after his arrival at the site of what became Fort McKenzie, Culbertson married a young Piikáni woman who is only identified in the historical record as the daughter of a Piikáni leader named "White Buffalo." The marriage transformed Culbertson from a stranger to a relative, connecting him to his wife's familial relations and the networks of reciprocity they entailed. The trade relations were subject to a wide array of outside factors, including the needs and priorities of the other elements of the Niitsitapi, but the social and commercial relationship largely held after Culbertson's wife died sometime in the 1830s, and became even stronger after a second marriage in 1840 to Natoyist-Siksina', a young Káínaa (Kainah) woman who also came from a highly esteemed family.¹³²

In the 1830s, while the market for beaver was still viable, Culbertson's commercial and diplomatic relations with the Piikáni, and by extension the Niitsitapi, allowed the AFC to control the beaver pelt trade in the Upper Missouri River country. A somewhat different scenario played out with similar results in the Yellowstone River Basin, where independent trappers and sometime traders like James Beckwourth and Robert Meldrum lived among the Apsáalooke (Crow). Both men preferred to trade at Fort Union and other AFC posts for a series of connected reasons: they could more easily move pelts and trade goods along the Yellowstone to the confluence area, AFC prices for pelts were competitive, the choice of trade wares was extensive, and there were ample opportunities to associate with people pursuing the same kind of livelihood. These connections also served as an entre for groups of Apsáalooke, inveterate rivals of the Niitsitapi, to also engage with the remote marketplace at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.¹³³

Through the 1830s McKenzie and his successors maintained virtually uncontested control of the fur trade from the Upper Missouri River to the eastern slope of the Continental Divide and handled the lion's share of the Rocky Mountain fur trade by sending caravans of trade goods to the annual rendezvous. The only serious challenge to the American Fur Company was the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.¹³⁴ Other competing firms working in the area regularly failed within a few years. In 1832, William Sublette, one of the partners of the Rocky Mountain Fur

¹³² Lesley Wischmann, *Frontier Diplomats: Alexander Culbertson and Natoyist-Siksina' among the Blackfeet* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 36-38, 45, 60. Though it occurred within Indigenous territories, beaver trapping was largely conducted by European American and Métis trappers.

¹³³ James P. Beckwourth, *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth*, ed. T. D. Bonner (University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 198-204; Keith Alger, "Robert Meldrum and the Crow Peltry Trade," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 36 (Summer, 1986): 36-47; 69-70; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76, 80-81.

¹³⁴ The American Fur Company also competed in the Rocky Mountain fur trade, sending caravans to the rendezvous, and building a fort on the Upper Missouri in Blackfeet country. Persistence was not the only factor in the American Fur Company's success. The advent of steamboat navigation on the Upper Missouri was crucial to opening trade with the Blackfeet. The American Fur Company could offer premium prices to the Blackfeet for bison robes because these items could now be transported downriver in bulk. The Blackfeet had not been able to get much for the bison robes from the Hudson's Bay Company to the north, because this product was difficult to transport by canoe down the Saskatchewan River. In addition, the American Fur Company lured the Blackfeet trade away from the British by the liberal use of liquor. Mattison, "Fort Union: Its Role," 189; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1946-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 28-29.

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Company, formed a company with a Scots-Irishman from St. Louis named Robert Campbell. Their short-lived plan to build rival posts wherever the American Fur Company had a presence began in 1833 when the men built Fort William two and a half miles below Fort Union on the same side of the river. By 1834, McKenzie's partner in the UMO, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., bought the company from Sublette in St. Louis. The stockade surrounding Fort William was dismantled and brought to Fort Union where it was erected and provided a protected horse corral and hay storage area, and overflow housing. A garden space was located within or adjacent to its boundary.¹³⁵ Eight years later, another competitor built a fort near Fort Union. The company, known as both the Union Fur Company and Fox, Livingston and Company, constructed the fort near the site of the old Fort William. It was named Fort Mortimer although it was often called Fort William. Originally made of wood, it was later reconstructed with adobe. This fort persisted for three years. In 1845, the Union Fur Company sold its holdings to Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company.¹³⁶

By the early 1840s, as the beaver trade collapsed, Fort Union served as a focus of American economic power and wealth in the borderlands of the Northern Plains. The construction of Fort McKenzie also allowed the AFC to maintain a favorable position near the Rocky Mountains after the rendezvous period had ended. The advent of steamboat navigation in the 1830s proved crucial to this western dominance, since it allowed the AFC to transport the heavy bison robes the Piikáni (Blackfeet) had previously sought to trade to the HBC, and instead send them in pirogues down to Fort Union where they would be stored and then transferred to a steamboat headed for St. Louis.¹³⁷ After the collapse of the peltry trade in the late 1830s, which ruined all potential competitors, the AFC was well positioned to dominate the bison robe trade as well. Unlike beaver pelts, bison robes were almost exclusively obtained from Native equestrian hunters who lived and hunted in the Red River Basin to the east of the Fort Union, the Upper Missouri River Basin to the west, the Yellowstone River to the southwest, and areas around the Black Hills and Powder River Basin to the south of the trading post. Fort Union was ideally situated for accessing this growing trade, in large part because the confluence area was an ancient and important intersection on the plains that provided an excellent rendezvous point for

¹³⁵ Harvey, "A History of the Missouri-Yellowstone River Confluence," 38.

¹³⁶ Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 47-48. Historian Barton H. Barbour devotes a chapter in his book to the question of whether the Upper Missouri Outfit established a monopoly. He points out that contemporaries often leveled charges of monopoly because monopolies were antithetical to the American ideology of economic development. Barbour concludes that the UMO "never attained a functional monopoly for more than a year or two at a time, and then only during brief interludes between periods of stout competition. It took time for opposition firms to amass capital, purchase goods, arrange for transportation, and establish trading posts in the country. Whenever a competitor failed or sold out to the Company, therefore, a temporary condition of monopoly might prevail, but only by default, and only until a new competitor arrived on the scene." Barbour, *Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 178.

¹³⁷ Ray M. Mattison, "Fort Union: Its Role in the Upper Missouri Fur Trade," *North Dakota History*, 29 (1962): 181-208; Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West*, 28-29.

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American Indian, First Nations, Métis, and European Americans who were prepared to trade with the AFC and the other peoples who came to trade there.¹³⁸

LITTLE EMPIRE OF THE NORTH

Between the late 1830s and late 1850s, historic Fort Union embodied the growing commercial reach of pre-Civil War America. Aided by steam power and tethered to global networks of trade, it was a remote but important nexus of trade—where pelts, hides, dried bison meat, tongues and other products of the “Indian trade” were counted and packed for shipment to St. Louis, and then on to markets in eastern North America, Europe, and Asia. By the same channels, large quantities of metal implements, fabrics, ribbons, blankets, cookware, glass beads, firearms, alcohol, and various other trade goods were carried by steamboat to Fort Union the following spring. All of these steps were subject to environmental conditions, from the shifting course of the Missouri River, the abundance or scarcity of bison and other animals, droughts, floods, and the severity of winter conditions. The networks of ancient travel routes and peoples that long intersected in the confluence area were also crucial elements of the trade, as were the social, cultural, and diplomatic relationships that sustained cross-cultural exchanges between traders and Native peoples. In other words, Fort Union provided a forum where national and global markets interfaced with regional conditions, and where different peoples pursued their interests by variously accommodating or contesting the actions and motives of others.¹³⁹

The operation and management of Fort Union involved a sharp hierarchy divided into four tiers of personnel, with wages and living conditions reflective of ranking. The top level was occupied by owners, partners, and officers, including the post head clerk or *bourgeois*. All three owners of the AFC’s Western Department (i.e., members of the Choteau family) were of French-North American upper-class backgrounds. The three owners or partners of the Upper Missouri Outfit were Scottish, with roots in the Canadian fur trade. Occupying the second level of hierarchy were those in mid-level management, including clerks, traders, interpreters, and guides. These employees were predominantly French *Canadien* or Métis, from a broad region of North America extending from the St. Lawrence River to the Mississippi Delta. Third were skilled and unskilled employees who manned the boats or who worked about the forts tending livestock, farming, hunting, and performing tasks at the trade shops (blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters, and shipwrights). Boat operators were generally *Canadien*, tradesmen were a mix of French and Anglo-Scot backgrounds, and the majority of the voyageur class (i.e., boatmen) had French surnames. The servant class included African Americans, though none were listed as wage

¹³⁸ Eugene D. Fleharty, *Wild Animals and Settlers on the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 299; Sunder, 17; Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 95-104.

¹³⁹ Richard White, “Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings,” in *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in the Atlantic World*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 305-314; Wilcomb E. Washburn, “Symbol, Utility, and Aesthetics in the Indian Fur Trade,” *Minnesota History*, 40 (Winter, 1966): 198-202; Mary K. Whelan, “Dakota Indian Economics and the Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory* 40 (Spring, 1993): 246-276; James L. Clayton, “The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890,” *Minnesota History* 40 (Winter, 1966), 210-220; Sunder, 131-152.

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earners. At the bottom tier were those who supplied goods or services on a non-contractual basis. By 1851 a craftsman could expect to receive \$250 per year; a workman's assistant \$120 or less. A hunter could receive \$400, in addition to his harvested hides and horn. An interpreter earned \$500, while clerks or traders who spoke Native languages could demand up to \$1000. The number of men employed fluctuated dramatically as demanded by the amount and profitability of trade. In 1833, when the peltry trade was at its peak, staff was reported to number 100, while 15 years later, during a year of diminished bison herds and poor trade, paid staff at Fort Union numbered just 10.¹⁴⁰

While all employees received board and lodging, the quality varied by status. For example, the living conditions of clerks, officers, and visitors in 1847 included breakfast fare of fried bison and venison, along with wheat flour breakfast cakes with cream and butter. A meal described in 1851 by visiting artist Rudolph Kurz provided even further description of class distinction. While the bourgeois' table enjoyed chocolate, milk, butter, omelets, fresh meat, and hot bread, with soup and pie frequently served on Sundays, a second table for hunters and workmen consisted of meat, biscuit, and black coffee with sugar. Guests and dignitaries enjoyed the same fare as the bourgeois, from dining at the bourgeois' table, to honorific recognition upon arrival and departure. This included raising the flag and firing a three-gun salute from the fort cannon.¹⁴¹

Fort Union employed the most people on the Upper Missouri and served as a headquarters for the Upper Missouri Outfit; several clerks could be employed at the same time. Interpreters were usually drawn from individuals with long experience in the Upper Missouri country; such staff had often married a Native woman and lived among her people for parts of each year. Other interpreters included Métis people, the offspring of Native and non-Native peoples who generally had a good deal of experience with different Native communities as well as with French or English-speaking parents. Hunters were generally brought in on seasonal or annual contracts to supply meat for employees at a particular post. *Engagés* is a term that applied to a variety of contract employees who were "engaged" for a set period of time to work at any number of skilled and unskilled jobs. These included working as carpenters, blacksmiths, in construction, tending and herding horses, handling boats, putting up hay, transporting goods between posts by boat, pack horse, or dog sled (in winter), and helping facilitate trade when it involved large groups. For the most part, *engagés* and hunters tended to be Métis from the Red River settlement near present-day Winnipeg.¹⁴² While personal relations between employees and with Native peoples certainly varied, work and socialization was fairly common at all of the Upper Missouri posts. Much of this was built on familiarity, since short-term and long-term

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 61-63; William R. Swagerty and Dick A. Wilson, "Faithful Service under Different Flags: A Socioeconomic Profile of the Columbia District, Hudson's Bay Company and the Upper Missouri Outfit, American Fur Company, 1825-1835," in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 243-268.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 59, 61, 63, 66; Barbour, 57, 78.

¹⁴² Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 141-144.

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employees, as well as some Native peoples, often worked at or traded with more than one post.¹⁴³

While racial categories and nationality often corresponded with these positions, a fur trade post was a kind of intimate company town whose society functioned in a cultural island where people lived, and often assumed a personae, that would have startled people in the places from which they hailed. McKenzie and James Kipp, for instance, were married to Anglo women and Indigenous women at the same time, a practice common with the fur trade for centuries. While these situations did not raise an eyebrow on the Upper Missouri, they likely triggered a good deal of disdainful whispers when they visited their “legal” families. These unions were referred to as “county marriages” or as the French put it, *a la facon du pays* (in the fashion of the country). Absent a clergyman or formal document, such marriages did not have legal standing. Nevertheless, they functioned according to the hybrid contexts in which they occurred (i.e., as a cross-cultural partnership that facilitated trade and diplomacy, involved shared labor, provided companionship, and reared children). Such relationships with Native women were also typical, especially among those from communities where polygynous marriages were common. More importantly, they also served as important political and diplomatic institutions that facilitated cooperation, alliance, kinship, and trade.

Bourgeois Edwin Denig explained the strategic and personal dimension of “country marriages” Fort Union clerk Rudolf Kurz in 1851:

Men in charge of trading posts like to marry into prominent Indian families when they are able to do so; by such a connection they increase their adherents, their patronage is expanded, and they make correspondingly larger profits. Their Indian relatives remain loyal and trade with no other company.¹⁴⁴

These financial and diplomatic interests also coincided with private obligations to assist wives’ relatives and to cultivate mutually favorable relations with a diverse array of people.

The women who entered into such relationships were active participants in a process that garnered them increased authority, as noted by historian Michael Lansing:

Native women involved in these unions were ... active[, ...] strong willed, ... [and able] to assert themselves. Influenced by the fluid social dynamics of trade, the nature of relationships between Native women and Euro-American men on the Upper Missouri varied widely. Through their roles as mediators, economic

¹⁴³ 4 William R. Swagerty, “A View from the Bottom Up: The Work Force of the American Fur Company on the Upper Missouri in the 1830s,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43 (Spring 1993): 18-33; Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade*, 117-120.

¹⁴⁴ Kurz, *Journal*, 156. For a more sustained assessment of bicultural marriages in the fur trade, see Michael Lansing, “Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868,” *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 31 (Winter 2000): 413-433.

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informants, cultural transmitters, companions, producers, and consumers—all in the context of liaisons and intermarriage—Native women gained status in [Native] and [non-Native] eyes. As these women recouped and redefined older positions of power on a margin defined by [American] Indian-white contact, collusion, and exchange, they acted as agents of change in their Plains societies.¹⁴⁵

More often than any other group of fur trade employees, *engagés* who spent long periods in the fur trade usually married Native women and jointly raised families at fur trade posts and Native villages. Many of these people and their children would remain in the Upper Missouri after the fur trade ended, often joining established Métis communities or becoming part of First Nations and American Indians groups.¹⁴⁶

Fort Union remained the head of navigation until the last years of its existence, but it was never the terminus of the Missouri River trade. The AFC interests extended beyond the confluence area, southwestward into the vast broken plains of the Yellowstone River Valley, along the northern tributaries of the Missouri River, and eastward toward the open prairies of the Souris River Basin and the Red River Valley. By the mid-1840s, the persistence of large bison herds and developing trade relations to the west led to the establishment of Fort Benton near the confluence of the Marias and Missouri rivers in 1846—some 525 river miles beyond the mouth of the Yellowstone. The new fort was well-situated for carrying on the bison trade with the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) and A'aninin (Aaniiih, Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), and offered the potential of further engaging the Apsáalooke (Crow) to the south. These efforts were bolstered by an 1855 treaty between the United States, the Niitsitapi, and other American Indian nations that effectively made Fort Benton both a center of trade as well as a stand-in for the U.S. government during the annual distribution of treaty annuities. Such an arrangement proved doubly profitable for the AFC, since the Company held the lucrative contracts for transporting government merchandise up the Missouri River and gained from the additional trade that accompanied the annual distribution of goods near Fort Benton. This situation became even more promising in the summer of 1860, when the steamboat *Chippewa* extended steam-powered navigation to Fort Benton—which thus became known as “the world’s innermost port.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Lansing, “Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage,” 414-415. Also see John C. Ewers, *Indian Life*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 75-94; Bruce M. White, “The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade,” *Ethnohistory*, 46 (Winter 1998): 130-138.

¹⁴⁷ Theodore Binnema, “Allegiances and Interests,” 348-349; Ryan Hall, “The Divergent Wests of Isaac Stevens and Lane Bull Finding Motive in the 1855 Blackfoot Treaty,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 105 (June 2014): 107-121; William E. Lass, *A History of Steamboating on the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 15-18, 21, 42; Lesley Wischmann, *Frontier Diplomats: Alexander Culbertson and Natoyist-Siksina Among the Blackfeet* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clarke Co., 2000), 222-233, and *passim*. Fort Benton was preceded by a number of short-lived forts in the 1830s and 1840s (Forts McKenzie, Judith, Lewis, Clay, and Piegan), which were abandoned due to poor location, declining trade, and/or structural deficiencies.

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While these developments greatly augmented the AFC's position across the Upper Missouri River Basin, Fort Union remained the central hub of the Company's various enterprises. Along with better connections to St. Louis by steamboat, administrative authority over other AFC posts, and direct relations with Nakoda (Assiniboiné), Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree), Nakawemowin (Plains Ojibwe), and other Native groups that came to the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence to trade and receive treaty annuities. Among other contemporary upper Missouri fur trading posts such as Fort Clark, Fort Pierre Chouteau, Fort McKenzie and Fort Primeau, Fort Union remained the "Grandest" and most important fur trade establishment on the entire Missouri River. This pre-eminence continued into the early 1860s, but rapidly declined when the ecological, commercial and political underpinnings of the Northern Great Plains fur trade began to falter.¹⁴⁸

ARTS AND LETTERS

The same conduits that brought beaver pelts, bison robes, and other proceeds of the fur trade to St. Louis and the world, also brought people from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean to Fort Union and its environs. From the first voyage of the steamboat *Yellow Stone* until the 1860s, when the decline noted above began to set in, Pierre Choteau, Jr. (principal of the AFC) hosted artists, scientists, journalists, missionaries, and adventurous aristocrats, as well as official U.S. government explorations and surveys. Such hospitality allowed Choteau to engage with some of the leading minds of the age, but also served as way to burnish AFC's reputation and to allow Choteau to gain public recognition as a generous benefactor of the arts, religion, literature, science, and government. Visitors were usually awestruck when they first caught sight of the fort, which gleamed like a white citadel in a land of "pristine beauty and wildness."¹⁴⁹ They utilized Fort Union as a base for pursuing their various endeavors in the region, and invariably kept journals of their work, their surroundings, and the people they encountered. The visitors, and the private writings and correspondence of various Chief Factors, clerks, and employees produced a vast array of words and images that defined, and continue to inform, understandings of the region, its peoples, the fur trade, and the so-called frontier of the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰

From the 1830s and through most of the 1850s, the work produced by Fort Union's visitors played a significant role in shaping Euro-American images of and a greater national awareness of American Indians and the landscapes of the Northern Plains. Together with published and

¹⁴⁸ Chandler, 107-118, 158-161. Treaty annuities were the items, materials, and foodstuffs that the federal government delivered to American Indian nations on an annual basis—for a set period of years—in accordance with the terms of a land cession treaty.

¹⁴⁹ Quotation from George Catlin, *Letters and Notes* 1:18.

¹⁵⁰ Collectively, these written materials, along with the sketches and paintings of visiting and resident artists are the primary source for the historic details represented in the reconstructed Fort Union. For a lengthy treatment of renowned visitors to Fort Union, see Barbour, 66-108. It is worth noting that Isaac Sprague accompanied John James Audubon during the latter's expedition (discussed in the following pages), to paint the landscape settings for Audubon's depictions of birds and animals.

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unpublished documentation from fort employees Edwin Denig, Charles Larpenteur, and Alexander Culbertson, their art, journals, and published writings continue to inform present-day understandings of early- and mid-nineteenth century American Indian lifeways on the Northern Plains, on the material culture and social dynamics of the fur trade, as well as the native flora and fauna of the regions. These visitors included artists George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, Isaac Sprague, and Rudolf Friedrich Kurtz; naturalists John James Audubon, Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuweid, Dr. George Stuckley, and James G. Cooper; geologist Thaddeus Culbertson; explorer and geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden; and ethnographer Lewis Henry Morgan. Other Europeans who traveled to Fort Union included Prince Paul of Württemberg, Lord Richard Grosvenor, Sir William Drummond Stuart, Prince William Nicholas of Nassau, artist Karl Ferdinand Weimar, Lord George Gore, and General Philippe de Trobriand.

In terms of contemporaneous ethnographic information, the most notable non-Indigenous sources include amateur ethnographer and post trader Edwin Thompson Denig, naturalist Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied; artists George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and Rudolph Kurz; and missionary Pierre-Jean De Smet. In the realm of what is broadly termed natural history, Fort Union hosted the geologist Thaddeus Culbertson; Lewis Henry Morgan, who was one of the founders of American anthropology; and the naturalist John James Audubon who produced influential studies of wildlife during his time on the Upper Missouri River. In one form or another, all of these men described (in prose, paint, or both) their impressions of American Indian cultures and individuals, the landscapes of the region, and the fort. All of these impressions, regardless of their artistic or literary quality, are of value for the detail that they provide regarding life and labor at Fort Union as well as the physical characteristics of the historic fort itself and of life at the fort.

Though he was as much a Jacksonian Era self-promoter as anything else, George Catlin produced a vast array of artistic and ethnographic observations—which he used in a series of public lectures across the United States and Europe, and subsequently published in a two-volume collection entitled *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians* (1844). During his five-month trip from St. Louis to Fort Union and back, Catlin produced almost 170 paintings, including landscapes, portraits, and village scenes. Moreover, Catlin made damning indictments in his *Letters and Notes* on what he described as the “contaminating vices and dissipations introduced by the immoral part of civilized society,” and decried the “most pitiable misery and wretchedness” endured by American Indians as a consequence of the fur trade.¹⁵¹ While these sentiments derived from his experiences on the Upper Missouri River in 1832, Catlin did not express them for many years after. Indeed, he went out of his way to flatter Chouteau and the AFC. In early 1833, for instance, he wrote a letter for publication that lauded the “vast importance” of the company’s ability to “oppose the British influence” in the region and “secur[e] to the U.S. a share of the Fur Trade of our own Country.” He also advocated for a lifting of the ban on alcohol in “Indian Country,” and intimated a need for the government to ease restrictions on the AFC for fear that rival companies would weaken

¹⁵¹ Catlin, quoted in Barbour, 71, 73.

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this important commercial institution. At the very least, Catlin recognized that complimenting Chouteau would advance his quest to paint and speak about Native people, which in turn would provide him with the renown, respect, and remuneration he craved.¹⁵²

The year after Catlin's sojourn at Fort Union, the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer visited Fort Union in the company of his patron Prince Maximilian of Wied Neuwied. Art Historian David Hunt has observed that while Prince Maximilian, a trained naturalist, compiled notes for a detailed travel narrative, Bodmer "was hired to produce a pictorial documentary of Maximilian's travels in North America. Nothing in his work suggests anything other than an attempt to approximate reality, although one must admit that in several of his paintings, his vision transcended his view. This is particularly the case with many of his landscapes, which are appreciated today for their aesthetic merit as much as their documentary value."¹⁵³ The same can be said of Bodmer's portraits of individuals and groups from the Nakoda (Assiniboiné), Dak'hóta (Dakota, aka Eastern Sioux), Lakhóta (Lakota, aka Teton Sioux), Nueta (Mandan), Hiráaca (Hidatsa), Sahnish (Arikara), Aaniih (Atsina, aka Gros Ventre), Omaškêkowak (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) individuals and groups. As Mary Terrence McKay notes, Bodmer "captured not only a multitude of ethnological detail, but rendered with haunting accuracy superb portraits of" each subject's distinctive features and dispositions.¹⁵⁴

Bodmer and Maximilian resided at Fort Union for two weeks in 1833 in early summer (June 24—July 6), and again for several weeks in October after returning from Fort McKenzie (on the Missouri River near the mouth of the Marias River), then headed down river for a brief sojourn at the AFC's Fort Clark (about ten miles downriver from the mouth of the Knife River in central North Dakota) before heading back to St. Louis where they made preparations to return to New York. During the course of their travels along the Upper Missouri, Maximilian and Bodmer produced 250 images (by Bodmer), filled several journals, and acquired crates of botanical, ethnological, and zoological specimens. Aside from the drawings and preliminary paintings, all of these items were lost when the steamboat *Assiniboiné* was destroyed by fire while making a return voyage to St. Louis the following year. Despite this loss, Maximilian published German, French, and English editions of his *Travels in the Interior of North America*, each accompanied by lithographs of Bodmer's paintings. As the historian Barton Barbour writes, the two-volume

¹⁵² Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 55-58; quotations on pp. 57-58. On the growing prominence of romanticized depictions of American Indians in early nineteenth-century art and literature—and their representation as noble manifestations of the American continent and thus fodder for cultural nationalism, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 86. Catlin is celebrated for making the first proposal for the creation of a national park or, as he put it, a "Nation's park." For his ideas, and how they mirror the conceits of his times, see Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9-10.

¹⁵³ Quotation from David C. Hunt, "Forward," in Robert Linholm and W. Raymond Wood, *Karl Bodmer's America Revisited: Landscape Views Across Time* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), x.

¹⁵⁴ Quotation from Mary Terrence McKay, "Introduction," in *Karl Bodmer: Engravings from an Expedition* (Santa Fé: Zaplin-Lampert Gallery, 1990), 2.

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work represented a remarkably “extensive and important ... collection of Upper Missouri Indian materials.”¹⁵⁵

George Catlin and Karl Bodmer were very different artists, but they equally influenced how their European and American contemporaries, and subsequent generations, viewed Native peoples in the Trans-Mississippi West. Catlin’s works were quickly rendered, but they were invariably accompanied by his ideas about the subject matter—whether in lectures or his publications. In this regard, Catlin presented himself as a witness and translator of Native cultures and their homelands. Bodmer, on the other hand, endeavored to present his subjects with a scientific precision sheathed in the aesthetics of Romanticism. As William H. Goetzmann noted, Bodmer, like Catlin, “felt that in his contact with the Indian he was in touch with sublime nature in all its mysterious power Ironically, [their] highly charged visions of a paradise on the verge of extinction [were] intended to preserve a way of life,” but they also inspired subsequent federal and commercial explorations that laid the groundwork for undermining and transforming the region and its people into a new region that promised a “glorious national future.”¹⁵⁶ In this way, both men contributed to the vision of Native peoples as noble and doomed; a trope that preceded Catlin and Bodmer by several years, but one they (perhaps) inadvertently promoted in their art. The same was true of “nature’s beauty” (to quote Catlin), which was destined to become the material basis that would transform the still-young United States into a powerful nation state. These ideas were hardly new or unique to either man, but they provided some of the most compelling iconography of what constituted “real Indians” and “untouched nature,” two concepts that continue to inform non-Indigenous conceptions of history, landscapes, and first peoples in North America.¹⁵⁷

Within a decade of Catlin’s and Bodmer’s journeys up the Missouri River, a growing number of scientists and naturalists collected specimens in the Fort Union area, as did two of Fort Union’s *Bourgeois* (Alexander Culberson and, later, Edwin Denig), and had them shipped to the National Museum (precursor of the Smithsonian Institution) and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. In 1843 the famous but aging naturalist John James Audubon traveled to the Upper Missouri, accompanied by the artist Isaac Sprague (who specialized in landscapes, botanical, and ornithological subjects), ornithologist Edward Harris, taxidermist John G. Bell, and Lewis M. Squires who served as Audubon’s scribe. The group arrived at Fort Union on June 12, 1843, which they used as a base for acquiring hundreds of specimens for Audubon’s last published work, *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* (1845-1848). Explorer and geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden, who later became instrumental in the creation of the U.S. Geological Survey, accompanied Gouverneur K. Warren’s railroad survey of the North-Central Great Plains in 1856-1857, which used Fort Union as a temporary base of operations. Specimens collected

¹⁵⁵ Barbour, 81.

¹⁵⁶ William H. Goetzmann in David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher, *Karl Bodmer’s America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 22.

¹⁵⁷ See also John C. Ewers, *Artists of the Old West* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 95; and J. Gray Sweeney, “The Artist-Explorers of the American West, 1860-1880” (Ph.D. diss., Indian University, Department of Fine Arts, January 1975), 11.

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near Fort Union by Dr. George Stuckley and James G. Cooper of the 1853 Pacific Railroad Survey (which effectively mapped the future route of the Great Northern Railway), and by Thaddeus Culbertson, are now housed in the Smithsonian Institution. For some of these men, their work at Fort Union is memorialized in the type locality that has been designated for species that include the Audubon, or northern, grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys leucogaster missouriensis*), the Hayden's shrew (*Sorex cinereus*), the Maximilian pocket mouse (*Perognathus fasciatus maximillian*), and the Audubon bighorn (*Ovis canadensis auduboni*).¹⁵⁸

EDWIN DENIG: *BOURGEOIS*-ETHNOLOGIST

Though not nearly as famous as any of the people named above, Edwin Denig produced a remarkable piece of scholarship of lasting significance while serving as the *Bourgeois* of Fort Union. Born in central Pennsylvania in 1812, Denig left his family home in the fall of 1832 and set out for St. Louis to find work in the fur trade. He was most likely recruited by Alexander Culbertson that summer, who very likely filled him with tales of the western trade and the prospects of great fortune now that steamboats had begun to navigate the Missouri River. Denig was hired by the AFC in 1833 and began a clerkship at Fort Tecumseh (later renamed Fort Pierre) that April. During his first winter on the Dakota prairies, he managed a trading house on Cherry Creek (along what is now the southeastern boundary of the Cheyenne River Reservation). He was subsequently transferred to Fort Union in 1837, where he became the chief clerk in 1843 and subsequently rose to *Bourgeois*—a position he held until his retirement six years later.¹⁵⁹

In 1833, perhaps while stationed at Cherry Creek, Denig married a Lakhóta woman named šiná wamní'omni (Whirlwind Blanket). The marriage resulted in a son, Robert Jean Baptiste, in 1837 and daughter Sarah in 1844. šiná wamní'omni and Sarah remained near the vicinity of Fort Pierre and their Lakhóta relations, but Robert lived with his father at Fort Union during the latter's time as chief clerk (1843-1847) and *Bourgeois* (1847-1855). While at Fort Union, Denig married a Nakoda (Assiniboine) woman named Hai-kees-kak-wee-yah (aka Little Deer Woman), with whom he had a son named Alexander and two daughters named Ida and Adeline. This second marriage was later formalized through a Catholic ceremony in St. Louis and lasted the rest of Denig's life.¹⁶⁰

At the age of 42 years, Denig retired from the AFC in 1856, and he and his wife and four children moved to the Red River Settlement in the vicinity of Fort Garry and the future city of Winnipeg. In 1858 his life was cut short by a likely bout of appendicitis. Along with trusts

¹⁵⁸ There is some dispute that the Audubon bighorn is not a distinct species, and its taxon is currently defined as "inactive," or possibly extinct. See *iNaturalist*, *Audubon's Bighorn Sheep* <<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/503419-Ovis-canadensis-auduboni>> (accessed 5 February 2020)

¹⁵⁹ The outline of Denig's career is well covered in John C. Ewers, "Literate Fur Trader Edwin Thompson Denig," *The Montana Magazine of History*, 4 (Spring, 1954), 3-7.

¹⁶⁰ A forthright and sympathetic portrait of Denig's life and his marriages can be found in a book written by or for one of his relatives; see *The Manoe-Denigs: A Family Chronicle* (New York: Thomas A. Wright, 1924), 47-51.

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deposited “in the hands of the Hudson’s Bay Company” to be used for the support of his family members in Canada, he also set aside funds to pay for the education of each child, with one additional caveat: that none of “my children should be taken to the United States to be educated ... [so] long as their mother is alive Some school at Pembina or Red River Settlement is preferable or a private teacher if funds allow.”¹⁶¹

While his career and family life were successful, the tragedy of his early death was compounded by nearly a century of neglect for his detailed and extensive study of the American Indian nations most closely associated with Fort Union; namely, the Nakoda (Assiniboine), Ojibwe (Cree), Lakota (Lakota, aka Teton Sioux), Sahnish (Arikara), and Apsáalooke (Crow). Denig’s ethnographic work was richly informed, methodical, extensive, and conscientious. When portions of his manuscript were discovered in 1949 by John C. Ewers and confirmed by a handwriting expert as the work of Denig, they had languished in the archives of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis for several decades. Some of this work stemmed from Father Pierre Jean De Smet’s request that Denig prepare a study on the Nakoda. Denig’s insights were conveyed to the famed Jesuit missionary in a series of letters ultimately published in 1863, with attribution to Denig, in *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters by Rev. P. J. De Smet*.¹⁶² Denig also prepared a second document in 1854 in response to a circular distributed by Henry R. Schoolcraft, who received a commission from the U.S. Congress to produce a six-volume work entitled *Indian Tribes of the United States*. Denig’s contribution totaled 451 pages but was not incorporated into Schoolcraft’s project. Instead, it was filed with De Smet’s papers, where it remained unnoticed for 76 years.¹⁶³

Denig’s manuscript consisted of short histories of five American Indian nations. The sections on the “Sioux, Arikaras, Assiniboines, and Crees” were finally published separately in the Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society between 1950 and 1952. The final section on the Apsáalooke (Crow) was published as *Anthropological Paper 33* of the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1953.¹⁶⁴ However, Denig’s manuscript on the Nakoda (Assiniboine) was by far his most comprehensive.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ This and the following paragraph are based on Chris Vickers, “Denig of Fort Union,” *North Dakota History* 15 (April 1948): 134-43; Ewers, “Literate Fur Trader Edwin Thompson Denig,” 8-9; and Lawrence J. Barkwell, “Edwin Thompson Denig and His Metis Children,” *Louis Riel Institute*, 2011
<<https://www.scribd.com/document/63729541/Denig-Edwin-Thompson-b-1812>> (accessed 2 June 2019); “Memorable Manitobans: Edwin Thompson Denig (1812-1858), *Manitoba Historical Society*
<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/denig_et.shtml> (accessed 2 June 2019). Quotations of will are from “Denig and His Metis Children.”

¹⁶² Rev. P. J. de Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters by Rev. P. J. de Smet* (New York: James B. Kirker, 1863).

¹⁶³ These papers had been tucked into a part of the Culbertson Collection at the Missouri Historical Society.

¹⁶⁴ This and the following paragraph are drawn from John C. Ewers’ “Biographical sketch” for Edwin Thompson Denig, “Of the Crow Nation,” *Anthropological Papers No. 33 of the Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington: U.S. Printing Office, 1953), 1-6. Quotation reflects the subtitle used in the publication of Denig’s work.

¹⁶⁵ Rev. P. J. de Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries*.

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In 1855 Denig planned to write his own comparative ethnology of the Northern Plains in a manner that foreshadowed the use of “culture areas” by early twentieth century anthropologists. He also proposed to examine the significance of the fur trade on the ongoing development of Northern Plains cultures. He transmitted the document for government use as “A Report to the Hon. Isaac I. Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory, on the Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri, by Edwin Thompson Denig.” The report submitted to Stevens was subsequently augmented by the materials that were found in the archives of the Missouri Historical Society and published in 1961 as *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri: Sioux, Arickaras, Assiniboinés, Crees, Crows*. More than 100 years after it was written, Denig’s work was praised as “...one of the most important authorities on Indian peoples of the Northern Plains in the mid-nineteenth century.”¹⁶⁶

FUR TRADE CONSEQUENCES ON NATIVE CULTURES¹⁶⁷

The period of Fort Union’s operation as a fur trading fort brought profound consequences to the indigenous populations. Among these were pandemics that decimated whole communities, and an undermining of the material, economic, religious, social, and domestic bases that defined their cultural and social life. Most Northern Plains groups experienced a loss of military power, a great reduction in Native autonomy, and the implementation of a tribal level of leadership where it had previously not been important, and the continued differentiation in wealth among the various Plains groups. Other significant changes included homogenization of the material culture and shifts in the economic, religious, social, and domestic structures of Plains bands. Aside from depopulation, perhaps the most detrimental result was the loss of the bison herds upon which the Plains Indian based much of their culture. Although these changes to American Indian lifestyles cannot be attributed to the presence of a single fur trading post, Fort Union is representative as a case study. The Nakoda (Assiniboiné), were perhaps most affected by their association with the post, and bands frequently resided near the fort. Other groups who were impacted by the activities at Fort Union included the Apsáalooke (Crow), Piikáni (Blackfeet), Cree, and the horticultural villagers. The villagers were affected by the river traffic to and from Fort Union and the lower Missouri River posts. The Sioux did not frequent the Fort Union vicinity until later historic events pushed them into the area from the east, even though they had frequent earlier interactions with the village groups.

The unthinkable but unavoidable consequence of the fur trade occurred in 1837, when the AFC steamboat *St. Peters* carried smallpox up the Missouri River. Population losses were staggering throughout the region and compounded the personal and collective traumas of past epidemics that still haunted Native communities. Equestrian peoples who were more mobile and lived in less concentrated communities tended to have lower infection rates than the densely populated

¹⁶⁶ Edward M. Bruner, “Review of Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri,” *American Anthropologist*, 64 (June 1962), 658.

¹⁶⁷ The following text in this subsection is excerpted verbatim from Ann Emmons, et. al, 54-61.

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horticultural communities along the Missouri River. However, this dynamic did not hold for the Nakoda (Assiniboiné), who were very closely associated with the trade at historic Fort Union. According to Edwin Denig they suffered a 60% population loss in a matter of months.¹⁶⁸ Several sources provide estimates of the loss of life during specific disease episodes. It has been demonstrated that loss of life due to disease epidemics was responsible for shifting the balance of power between the various ethnic groups such as the Nakoda (Assiniboiné) and the Piikáni (Blackfeet) several times. The Upper Missouri villages suffered greatly due to their settled lifestyles. In some cases, as with the Nueta (Mandan) and Sahnish (Arikara), the epidemic losses caused them to seek retribution on the traders who imported the diseases.¹⁶⁹

The waves of population growth and decline contributed greatly to the patterns of social and political change on the Northern Plains during the fur-trade era. Nearly every resulting pattern discussed has ties to the need of Plains groups to reconstitute themselves and regain power in the market economy. Decimated populations provided competitors opportunities to take over the trade monopolies. Often, groups less adversely affected by episodes of disease were able to block the previous middlemen and took over the role.¹⁷⁰ Opportunities like this allowed the Sioux to become powerful to the east and effectively ostracized the Sahnish (Arikara) from the trade system.

Drastic changes resulted from depopulation as entire groups were left without their original roles in the trade economy, either as middlemen or as producers. In order to regain their ability to compete, they formed new alliances, sometimes with previous partners or former enemies. This created "new" ethnic groups and caused the diffusion, and in some cases disappearance, of political, religious, and social ideals. These patterns were widespread; over the course of the fur-trade years, Denig estimates that the epidemic diseases killed no less than 15,000 to 20,000 individuals.¹⁷¹

The American Fur Company activities in the upper Missouri region affected the traditional Plains Indian economy more than any other fur trade company.¹⁷² The new trade pattern removed the position of middlemen from American Indian hands and forced all groups to become producers and clients. Village Indians intensified their role as producers of horticultural

¹⁶⁸ Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 71-73; Miller, "Role of the Assiniboiné." This was not the first epidemic to which the Assiniboiné had been exposed. During 1780-1782, the Assiniboiné had carried smallpox north after a raid on the Hidatsa. Early counts do not effectively show population changes from this epidemic, however Miller's 2000 paper demonstrates that between 1809 and 1823, the Assiniboiné population increased from approximately 5,000 to over 23,000. He references a number of population counts from McGillivray, Fiddler, Henry the Younger, McDonald, and Renville from Hudson's Bay Company posts in Canada.

¹⁶⁹ David Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 67-69.

¹⁷⁰ William R. Swagerty, "Indian Tribes in the Trans-Mississippi West to 1870," *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 4: A History of Indian-White Relations*, ed. William Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 361.

¹⁷¹ Denig, *The Assiniboiné*, 461.

¹⁷² Swagerty, "Indian Tribes in the Trans-Mississippi West," 370.

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products for supply to the forts and the Nueta (Mandan) and Hiráaca (Hidatsa) made trips to trade their garden products at Fort Union.¹⁷³ Likewise, the Nakoda (Assiniboiné) entered the Plains economy as producers and adapted the homogenous culture of nomadic bison hunters, increasing competition within the system. This shift by the Nakoda (Assiniboiné) was a conscious decision on the part of bands to incorporate themselves into the trade economy. Also, as the fur traders became efficient in incorporating Indian custom into the trading operations, they drew bands into the system by creating a dependence upon trade goods. To a certain extent, the relationship between the Indians and the fort personnel was symbiotic, as the whites depended upon the American Indians for a vast majority of their food supply and livelihood. However, as the relationship progressed, the fort personnel were able to make the native population dependent upon them.

As traders came to understand the Plains culture better, they were able to effectively place themselves within the spheres of Indian trade. They developed allegiance to their own posts by adapting traditional fictive kinship ties and trading ceremonies. In several cases Denig describes the ritual behind the arrival of a trading party at Fort Union. These trading rituals were often expensive and ceremonious, with Fort Union firing the cannons in welcome and providing gifts of alcohol, tobacco, and other items.

Kinship ties were used to secure trade through intermarriage. American Indian women's proactive roles in these relationships can be seen as an extension of the kinship relationships already in place. Using their labor and sexuality as a means of ensuring good relations with the new outsiders, native women put intertribal and interracial relationships at the center of trade exchange. They acted as cultural and physical intermediaries, and in the process, regained a measure of their precontact status. In the words of historian Michael Lansing, "through their roles as mediators, economic informants, cultural transmitters, companions, producers and consumers... Native women gained status in Indians and white eyes." In doing so, they helped usher in significant social, economic and environmental changes on the Upper Missouri that helped end traditional Plains Indians ways of life.¹⁷⁴

Fur traders represented a new market for native women, and the relationships that grew between the groups was appealing to both in terms of economic, social, and political perspectives. Traders represented material wealth and technological knowledge. Exchanging goods with men placed the women in the same economic arena as their male kin. Edwin Denig reported that the Sahnish (Arikara) exchange at Fort Union was carried on by the women, often the prominent traders and consumers at the fort. Denig noted that the women "... bring the corn by the pansful or the squashes in strings, and supply themselves by the exchange with knives, hoes, combs, beads, paints, etc ... It may be observed that though the women do all the labor of tilling they are amply compensated by having their full share of the profits." Families of these women also

¹⁷³ Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 102.

¹⁷⁴ Lansing, 413-414; also citing Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, eds., *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman, 1995); and Devon A. Milhesuah, "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History," *American Indian Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1996): 15-28.

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reaped material and political benefits, as sharing and gift-giving among relatives was expected behavior.¹⁷⁵

As at other fur trade forts, Fort Union's role in the fur trade economy resulted in the intermarriage of fur trade employees and native women. Most Fort Union bourgeois, including Denig and Culbertson, had American Indian wives. United outside the fort in 1840, Culbertson remained married to Natawista or Medicine Snake Woman, from the Piikáni (Blackfeet) tribe, for 30 years. Denig married Hai-kees-kak-wee-yah, or Little Deer Woman, until Denig's death. The bourgeois who married into prominent American Indian families found their status in their wife's band or tribe elevated, and their patronage expanded.

These and other cross-cultural marriages facilitated the role of native women as economic brokers, and elevated their status as integral to successful trade. Native women served as interpreters, critical for cross-cultural communication. As economic brokers, they allowed their bourgeois and clerks access to "insider information" regarding tribal trading desires, and ensuring trade with her kin. In turn, native women living at fur trade forts could inform their relatives "updates on the latest goods, company policies, and spousal trading plans."¹⁷⁶ By building real and fictive kinship bonds with trade partners, and understanding kinship responsibilities, trade ties were fostered and expanded—the same strategy that had been used in the Plains Interband Trade System.

This is not to say that native women's roles were defined solely by their marital relationship to Euroamerican traders. It was not unheard of for women in Plains Indian societies to become warriors. Perhaps one of the best examples is Bar-chee-am-pe, (Pine Leaf or Woman Chief), a Gros Ventre who had been taken captive by the Apsáalooke (Crow) when she was a young girl. Bar-chee-am-pe, an accomplished hunter and warrior, often visited Fort Union to trade. She was a respected and celebrated leader among the Apsáalooke (Crow) and among whites at Fort Union. Her story was recorded by Denig, who wrote that she could kill four or five bison, cut up the animal, and bring the meat and hides home, all on her own. Regarding her prowess as a warrior, Denig wrote of her escape from her enemies, and entering the gates of Fort Union to shouts and praises from whites and her own people.¹⁷⁷

Overall, the trade pattern created displacement. Nakoda (Assiniboiné) bands continued their decline as middlemen while the American Fur Company placed their own professionals in the position at every opportunity. This affected ethnic group relations. The new role of the Nakoda (Assiniboiné) as clients and customers within the bison economy gave them limited options.¹⁷⁸ Their only outlet was their ability to price shop between competing Canadian markets and

¹⁷⁵ Lansing, 416-418, citing Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*, ed. John C. Ewers (Norman, 1961), 46-47; and George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Conditions of the North American Indians*, 2 vols. (1844; reprint, New York, 1973), 1: 120.

¹⁷⁶ Lansing, 421, 426.

¹⁷⁷ Leslie Coffman, "The Women," Fort Union Trading Post Site Bulletin, summer 2014, citing Denig.

¹⁷⁸ Miller, "Role of the Assiniboiné."

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American posts.¹⁷⁹ As a counter result, the fur traders sought effective ways to gain the allegiance of bands. Working within the ceremonial structure of the earlier trade patterns was key to maintaining positive trade relationships with the Indians. Gift giving became the mainstay in trading relationships, a process that the fort personnel viewed as necessary but regrettable, since it cut into the profits. The major items dispensed in the gift giving tended to be alcohol, tobacco, or clothing that demonstrated some sort of allegiance to the post (i.e., military clothing).

Gift giving ceremonies helped foster both allegiance and dependence among the Plains groups. Allegiance was predominantly gained through the distribution of military type accoutrements while dependence was fostered through the distribution of alcohol and tobacco.¹⁸⁰ By 1832 the American Fur Company's use of alcohol as an inducement to trade had become a serious problem for Indians.¹⁸¹ A U.S. ban on the use of alcohol to cement trade relations was ineffective as the competing British companies still continued its distribution. As a result, Fort Union continued to use alcohol illegally to maintain trade relationships.¹⁸² Only the Apsáalooke (Crow), the Ojibwa, and the Sahnish (Arikara) were able to forestall dependency on the alcohol trade, but only until after the decline of the bison trade.¹⁸³ Denig noted the suffering dealt the American Indians by this competition between companies.¹⁸⁴

The American Fur Company accommodated the subsistence, consumption, and overall trade patterns of the Indians in order to obtain every marketable commodity they produced for fort profit.¹⁸⁵ The early expectations were for the production of furs, then robes, meat, grease, and pemmican.¹⁸⁶ The robes and furs were marketed for export and the food production served to sustain the fort employees. This is not to say that the tribes were forced into the pattern or had little choice in matters. The groups were still adept at bartering and would take nothing less than a fair price, as they were not completely reliant upon the trade items. Also, as Denig complained, they were skilled in forgetting about debt from lines of credit.¹⁸⁷

While kinship ties and gift-giving fostered relationships, dependency was the result of continued introduction of trade items into the economy. As the once diverse Plains cultures came to resemble each other more and more, the trade fostered competition over materials, land, labor,

¹⁷⁹ Alan M. Klein, "Political Economy of the Buffalo Hide Trade: Race and Class on the Plains," in John H. Moore, ed., *The Political Economy of North American Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 148; Miller.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) 139, 142.

¹⁸¹ Klein, "Political Economy," 148.

¹⁸² Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 70.

¹⁸³ Lewis O. Saum, *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), 213-215.

¹⁸⁴ Denig, *The Assiniboine*, 458.

¹⁸⁵ Swagerty, "Indian Tribes in the Trans-Mississippi West," 369.

¹⁸⁶ Miller, "Role of the Assiniboine."

¹⁸⁷ Denig, *The Assiniboine*, 459.

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and resources.¹⁸⁸ The key to success in this competition was in access to horses and guns. Horses were necessary for transportation and were increasingly relied upon for hunting. This became the motivation for raiding.¹⁸⁹ Guns, while dispensable for hunting, doubled the chances of success in raiding and gave greater efficiency of killing small animals and humans.¹⁹⁰

The increasing number of metal implements introduced to Indians through trade required maintenance. The tribes became very dependent upon the local blacksmith to fix broken items or for the company to replace them. Similarly, as hunting and warfare styles were modified to include rifles, bands needed to obtain sufficient amounts of ammunition and have the weapons and tools maintained.

As Fort Union became the home post for the Nakoda (Assiniboiné), new roles and relationships developed for the Indians and for the fort employees. The Nakoda (Assiniboiné) became the fort's primary suppliers of robes, furs, and food, and also acted as interpreters, security, and, once again, as middlemen for longer distance trade. In turn, the fort became supplier of blacksmithing, hospital care, a broker of peace between bands, and a place for safe community recreation with other related bands and ethnic groups.¹⁹¹ The American Fur Company policies succeeded in creating job dependency by giving young men jobs as "security guards" at the fort. These relationships were long term.

Perhaps the most visible change in Plains groups' social and political systems was the consolidation of bands into larger groups, sometimes inter-ethnic, to strengthen themselves in the face of increased competition from other bands. For example, the Nakoda (Assiniboiné) and Ojibwa (Cree) organized themselves into single units, in response to hostilities with the Blackfoot and Sioux.¹⁹² As a response to an increase in the size of the basic social and political unit, Plains hunters began to adopt some of the social organizational structures that had previously only been used by the more sedentary, horticultural groups, such as police societies.¹⁹³ The consolidation of the villages of Sahnish (Arikara), Hidatsa, and Mandan (Mandan) were responses to a similar situation. Reconstitution of the political organizations also helped increase the trading power the groups maintained with the American Fur Company.¹⁹⁴ These changes were reflected in each level of social organization of Plains bands, from the individual to that of the entire linguistic group.

The notion of profitability became important within the newly adopted corporate system of exchange, undermining the traditional social and religious systems of hunting and horticultural

¹⁸⁸ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 180.

¹⁸⁹ Miller, "Role of the Assiniboiné."

¹⁹⁰ Denig, *The Assiniboiné*, 466.

¹⁹¹ Klein, "Political Economy," 151; Swagerty, "Indian Tribes in the Trans-Mississippi West," 370.

¹⁹² Susan Sharrock, "Crees, Cree-Assiniboines and Assiniboines: Interethnic Social Organization on the far northern Plains," *Ethnohistory* 21 (1974), 116.

¹⁹³ Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, 180.

¹⁹⁴ Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West."

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groups.¹⁹⁵ Corporate kinship disappeared and was replaced by an individualistic economy where it was important that each individual hunter keep track of his personal kill. This pattern has been attributed to a weakening of kinship structure and traditional patterns of authority.¹⁹⁶ Gender class differences developed (often based upon youth and strength) within bands and further erased previous leadership patterns.¹⁹⁷ As class differences became defined, heredity and inheritance began to figure more prominently in a family's retention of power and prestige. This affected the band's external relationships because the chief's personal animosities were often reflected in his personal trade relationships, alliances, and conflicts.¹⁹⁸ Hereditary leadership caused these tensions to become ingrained, as it was most likely that a leader's children retained the same animosity or friendships.

As the roles of class and prestige changed, the role of women also changed. A man needed to have as many wives (providing skilled labor to process hides into robes) as he could reasonably afford in order to provide robes to trade in the new economy. As has been mentioned earlier, women's role in the production of marketable goods may have put them at a disadvantage and took away some of their original power.¹⁹⁹ Regardless of the outcome, given the loss of population resulting from diseases, the acquisition of wives to contribute to the family economic endeavors became even more difficult. Increased wife raiding, captive taking, and inter-band marriage became necessary.

Various groups often threatened war as a mechanism to protect their territory and defend their personal trade monopolies. Their aggression was aimed toward other Indian groups, but also focused similar aggressions against local forts. They strove to maintain superior relationships by threatening the posts with these aggressive tactics.²⁰⁰ For example, the Apsáalooke (Crow) treated Fort Cass as a component of the Indian economy and included it in their systematic raids, eventually bankrupting the fort.²⁰¹

The market economy affected the reactions of the traders toward the Indians as well. The typical trader's view of Indians was that they were difficult to civilize and egotistical. The egotism was driven by the Plains Indians' status and prestige system, which the traders viewed only with tolerance because they understood that American Indians maintained a great deal of freedom and

¹⁹⁵ Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 95; Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West."

¹⁹⁶ Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, 181.

¹⁹⁷ Klein, "Political Economy," 157.

¹⁹⁸ Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 55-56.

¹⁹⁹ See John C. Ewers, "The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, With Comparative Materials from Other Western Tribes," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 159 (Washington, 1955), Robert H. Lowie, *The Crow Indians* (New York: Farrar and Reinhart, 1935), and Klein, "Political Economy."

²⁰⁰ Klein, "Political Economy," 148.

²⁰¹ Fort McKenzie provides another example of the Indians' incorporation of forts into their own flexible systems of alliance and aggression. After years of positive trade interactions, several poor choices upon the part of the staff of Fort McKenzie resulted in hostile aggression. The Blackfeet, after enduring several episodes of diseases and mistreatment by the fort, quickly changed attitudes and began to implement hostilities upon white traders. Wishart, *Fur Trade of the American West*, 61.

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autonomy.²⁰² Traders were also aware of the mistakes made by their predecessors and how prior trade policies had placed many of the Plains groups in competition with one another, resulting in inter-ethnic hostilities.²⁰³ For this reason they understood their latent roles as peacekeepers, actively maintained peace treaties, and made numerous attempts at inter-group concessions and compromises.²⁰⁴

Fort Union and the fur trade also wrought tragic results to Northern Plains tribes with its acquisition of bison robes, following the collapse of the beaver trade. Populations already devastated by epidemics increasingly dedicated their time and energy to bison hunting in order to rebuild the health of their communities and access trade goods. Because robes did not fetch the same prices that pelts had just a few years prior, traders encouraged increased hunting for a market economy that demanded high returns on low costs.²⁰⁵ For equestrian Native peoples still living with the consequences of the 1837 epidemic, participation in the bison robe trade was essential, especially since the trade goods they acquired had become more central to their material needs and cultural expressions. This dynamic allowed the AFC to successfully transition away from the peltry trade, and with larger steamboats able to transfer heavier cargo, dominate the robe trade of the Upper Missouri River Basin.²⁰⁶ But the new focus on a single resource (robes) made Native communities increasingly vulnerable to resulting declines in bison populations.

A number of historians beginning with William T. Hornaday in 1888 have tried to reconstruct the chronology and manner of the destruction of the bison as well as the sheer numbers of these animals that once roamed the Great Plains. Hornaday and subsequent historians in the early twentieth century described the hunting pressure that began during the fur trade but characterized it as mere prelude to the wasteful slaughter that accompanied the coming of railroads and hide hunters in the 1870s and early 1880s.²⁰⁷ Recent scholarship has tended to show that the decline began much earlier, in the 1820s and 1830s, and that the original numbers of bison were so great

²⁰² Saum, *The Fur Trader and the Indian*, 204.

²⁰³ Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West," 362.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

²⁰⁵ By 1835 trading posts had been established within the territory of each of the major Plains ethnic groups. These included Fort Clark at the Mandan/Hidatsa Villages, Fort Tecumseh among the Arikara, and Fort Union at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers. Other forts that influenced Plains groups during the nineteenth century included Fort Piegan, established in the territory of the Blackfeet, and Fort Cass established in Crow territory. See Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West," 370.

²⁰⁶ Isenberg, 93-97; Connie A. Woodhouse, Jeffrey J. Lukas, and Peter M. Brown, "Drought in the Western Great Plains, 1845-56: Impacts and Implications," *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 93 (September 2002): 1485-1494. Also see Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854-1856*

(Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16; and United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress, 1849-1850* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1850), 132.

²⁰⁷ Burlingame cites William T. Hornaday, "The Extermination of the American Bison," *Smithsonian Reports*, Part II (Washington, 1888), and Isaac Lippencott, "A Century and a Half of Fur Trade at St. Louis," *Washington University Studies*, Vol. 3. Part II, No. 2 (St. Louis, 1916), among other sources.

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as to sustain a heavy excess of killing over reproduction for some fifty years.²⁰⁸ The American Fur Company continued to enjoy a successful profit between the 1840s and the 1850s, regularly marketing 90,000 to 100,000 robes per year in St Louis.²⁰⁹ Yet by 1855, Fort Union employee Edwin Denig observed a shortage of bison robes.²¹⁰

The pressure on the bison on the Northern Plains fell heaviest along the Missouri River, where the fur trade centered in the 1830s and 1840s. The first outside threat to a precarious situation came in the late 1840s and early 1850s, when migrants from the eastern states pushed onto and across the Central Plains toward the Oregon Territory and California. As large herds of livestock trampled and chewed their way through the lush grasses along the Platte River, and emigrants cut down cottonwood groves for firewood and to repair wheels, axles, wagons and miscellaneous equipment, they undermined the key locales where bison, people, and horses spent their winters for countless generations. Settlers moving up the Missouri River Valley took lands formerly considered unsuitable for white development. Because the pressure on the bison was not spread evenly throughout the Northern Plains, fur posts on the Upper Missouri probably experienced a decline in the trade sooner than scattered fur posts elsewhere. Fort Pierre reported a trade of 75,000 bison robes in 1849 – over two-thirds of the robes produced in the Northern Plains that year. But by the early 1850s, the bison were practically eliminated from this area. Even as the total number of robes shipped to St. Louis increased through 1860, the number of robes collected by the Upper Missouri River posts declined – from an estimated 110,000 in 1849; to 89,000 in 1853; then to 50,000 in 1859.²¹¹

The consequences to Northern Plains tribes were devastating. Along with their acceptance of the market economy and the resultant changes to social and political patterns, the groups lost their knowledge of past subsistence strategies. This plunged them into a state of poverty, reliance on newly created government Indian agencies, and the first major step towards loss of freedom.²¹² The fur trade also lost its main source of labor.²¹³ The groups who had contributed the most to the trade economies of the upper Missouri and Northern Plains (namely the Nakoda (Assiniboiné), Piikáni (Blackfeet), Nueta (Mandan), Hiráaca (Hidatsa), and Apsáalooke (Crow)) became increasingly dependent upon the Indian agents and rejected opportunities to join the Sioux — with whom they had been in conflict for decades — in their battle with the government.

Through the mid-1850s the trials of war and the effects of declining herds caused hunger and disease to stalk the Native nations that had previously traded in large numbers along the Middle

²⁰⁸Isenberg; Dan Flores, "The Great Contradiction: Bison and Indians in Northern Plains Environmental History," in Charles E. Rankin, ed., *Legacy: New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*. (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1996).

²⁰⁹ Swagerty, "Indian Trade in the Trans-Mississippi West." 367.

²¹⁰ Miller, "Role of the Assiniboiné;" Denig, *The Assiniboiné*, 620-626.

²¹¹ Ibid., 106.

²¹² Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 212.

²¹³ Rhoda R. Gilman, "Last Days of the Upper Mississippi Fur Trade," in *People and Pelts: Selected Papers of the Second North American Fur Trade Conference*, Malvina Bolus, ed. (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1972), 127.

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Missouri River. Conversely, these changes also caused more powerful groups, especially the alliance of Lakǰóta, Tsétsǰéstáhesē (Cheyenne), Hinono'eino (Arapaho), to move into better hunting areas to the north. While these moves directly challenged the Apsáalooke (Crow) in the Yellowstone River Basin, they also prevented the peoples who hunted bison to the west and southwest to access Fort Union. It would signal difficulties for Fort Union as a viable fur trade fort.²¹⁴

THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT

In a competitive and often cut-throat business like the nineteenth century fur trade, economic diversification and political patronage were essential for longevity and success. Not unlike the fur trade corporations of the British and French empires, Fort Union also often functioned as an adjunct of the federal government through its contracts to transport U.S. officials, the supply of federally financed expeditions, and the communication of Native concerns to government officials and vice versa. In the realm of treaty making between the United States and Native peoples, Fort Union and its staff served as a diplomatic outpost that hosted government representatives (Indian Agents), distributed treaty annuities (i.e. annual distributions of food, materials, tools, and credits that were intended to compensate for land cessions and transform Native peoples in to “civilized” communities. Government contracts for the transport and distribution of annuities was a profitable enterprise for the AFC and its successor companies, and supported maintenance of the steamboats. Alexander Culbertson, who served as the *Bourgeois* of Fort Union in 1840, and was subsequently elevated to the Superintendent, functioned as a de facto representative of the government, especially in matters relating to Native peoples.²¹⁵

In 1851, along with the Jesuit missionary Pierre-Jean DeSmet, Culbertson was part of a small escort that led a delegation of Nakoda (Assiniboine), Nueta (Mandan), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), and Sahnish (Arikara) to the 1851 Horse Creek Treaty council near Fort Laramie, where Culberston was appointed as an official interpreter and special agent of the U.S. Government in matters regarding treaty making. Accompanying Culbertson was Mató Wįtko (Bear that is Crazy, or Spirited; aka “Crazy Bear”) and two other Nakoda, constituting the entire Nakoda delegation to the council. The men were four of an estimated 10,000+ attendees, including Oglála, Sičhąŋǵu and other Lakǰóta, Tsétsǰéstáhesē (Cheyenne), Hinono'eino (Arapaho), Apsáalooke (Crow), Sahnish (Arikara), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Aaniiih (Atsina or Gros Ventre), Nueta (Mandan), and Hiraacá (Hidatsa). The treaty council had been arranged by the Federal government, with the

²¹⁴ Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 40-45, 52-55; Isenberg, 107, 109, 119-120. These conditions were compounded by the onset of prolonged drought. See also Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854–1856* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16; and United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Transmitted with the Message of the President at the Opening of the First Session of the Thirty-First Congress, 1849-1850* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1850), 132.

²¹⁵ Barbour, 25, 29-34, 88-93, 157, 180-187, 198-206, 223-224.

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intent to identify traditional tribal territories; to establish roads, military and other posts within the territories to ensure safe passage of increasing numbers of non-natives through the areas; to establish peace among tribal groups; and to distribute annual annuities to compensate American Indians for their loss of land and natural resources. Native perspectives on the intent of the council differed. As suggested by Historian Raymond DeMallie, Plains, tribal member signatures did not mean that the Indigenous groups agreed with the terms of the treaty but rather expressed validation of the treaty council. The Lakȟóta made it clear that they expected the lines to change as conditions changed, but the treaty included language that called on the U.S. Army to police the treaty boundaries and punish trespassers or aggressors. The delineation of tribal territories would later be used by the U.S. government in subsequent treaties to define tribal reservations. The treaty also reflected the U.S. government's failure to understand Plains tribe society and process of determining leadership through consensus and reasonable dissent. Insistence that a "principal or head chief" sign on behalf of each tribe, and assume responsibility for the entire nation ignored the autonomy of individual bands and was bound for failure.²¹⁶

For Mató Wítko, the role that U.S. officials expected him to play proved a heavy burden amidst several recent sorrows that derived, in one form or another, from the dysfunction and discord that flourished in the midst of chronic illnesses, epidemics, conflict with stronger nations, declining trade, dependency, and three generations of accelerating population loss that reduced the Nakoda from 10,000 people in 1790 to less than 4,800 in 1850.²¹⁷ Fort Union clerk Rudolph Kurz, who occasionally shared his living quarters with Mató Wítko when the latter made extended visits to the post, considered it a great honor that "'Uncle Sam' appointed *Ours Fou* [French for "Crazy Bear"] chief of the Assiniboin." He made this comment in his journal on October 31, 1851, but just four weeks later he recognized that the "newly acquired title is not recognized." "Neither the Absaroka [Apsaaloke, aka Crow]", with whom the Nakoda were working through a tentative peace, "nor Assiniboin accept him" as a chief.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Raymond J. DeMallie, "Touching the Pen: Plains Indian Treaty Councils in Ethnohistorical Perspective," in *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, ed. Frederick C. Luecke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 38-46; Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28-32; Catherine Price, *The Oglala People, 1841-1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 27-37. Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: A History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 224-247. For the text of treaty ratified by the U.S. Senate, see "Treaty of Fort Laramie with Sioux, Etc.," in Charles Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties Vol. II* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 594-596.

²¹⁷ On some of the fall-out from the treaty and the killing of Mathó Wayúhi, see Kingsley M. Bray, *Crazy Horse: A Lakota Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 32-33; Paul N. Beck, *The First Sioux War: The Grattan Fight and Blue Water Creek, 1854-1856* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 15-16. Population numbers from DeMallie and David Reed Miller, "Assiniboine," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 596.

²¹⁸ Rudolph Kurz, *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 115: Journal of Rudolph Friederich Kurz*, trans. Myrtis Jarrell, ed. J. N. B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1937), 216, 20, 242. While this section uses primary materials related to the Horse Creek treaty, as well as the writings of Rudolph Kurz and Edwin Denig, it also draws on the insights of Fred MacVaugh's essay "'The Furious and Fearless Actions of a Crazy Bear': The Peace-Seeker Nearly Everyone Opposed," <<https://www.nps.gov/fous/learn/historyculture/crazy-bear.htm>> (accessed 6 December 2019).

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After one of Mató Wįtko's brief sojourns with Kurz, the latter noted that Mató Wįtko knew "perfectly well that "the days of "hunting for a livelihood" were numbered, if not over, and thus he and his people (in the short-term at least) desperately needed overdue annuities that were promised in the 1851 treaty. In January 1853 Mató Wįtko determined to travel to St. Louis and speak with Alexander Culbertson, a former *Bourgeois* at Fort Union and Fort Benton, who had assisted the U.S. government at the Horse Creek Treaty and had also become a Director in the AFC with responsibilities for the Upper Missouri posts. Culbertson was already aware of these concerns, and conveyed them to federal officials. They responded by authorizing the release of supplies already at Fort Union to the Nakoda—in lieu of the long-delayed annuities, along with a commitment that the U.S. government would fully reimburse the AFC. When Culbertson arrived in late January with the written orders from the office of the Superintendency of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, a grand display of goods was placed within the interior of Fort Union.²¹⁹

Further evidence of Fort Union's changing role as a proxy for the U.S. government as a center for annuity distribution, and harbinger of change to the Great Plains followed. Later in 1853 Isaac I. Stevens arrived at Fort Union as part of his survey of the Northern Pacific Railway route from Minnesota to the Pacific Northwest. Among his extensive wagon loads of equipment and supplies, Steven's brought that year's annuities for the Nakoda. Culbertson and his wife subsequently joined Stevens on his westward survey, providing information on the route to the Rocky Mountains as well as diplomatic assistance during the expedition's time among the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy). Three years later, Gouverneur K. Warren was also hosted at Fort Union when his party of soldiers, surveyors, engineers, and scientists came through the area as part of the Central Pacific Railroad survey, which moved west along the Yellowstone River. In 1866 Fort Union was the site of two treaty councils held with the Northwest Treaty Commission. One council was with the Nakoda and the other with the Apsáalooke, with both involving the U.S. Army's plans to establish a military post to protect river traffic from the Lakḥóta (Lakota). Neither treaty was ratified by the U.S. Senate, in large part because the Army had already embarked on plans for what would become Fort Buford.²²⁰

The crises that afflicted the Nakoda in the early 1850s were certainly compounded by the Horse Creek Treaty of 1851, but they were also unique to the Nakoda. The nation had welcomed the construction of a fur trade post within its territory. Over the next few decades, the Nakoda became the AFC's primary trading partners at Fort Union, and often advanced their own and the AFC's interests by defending the area from occasionally aggressive actions of the Piikani (Blackfeet) from the upper reaches of the Missouri River, the Siksika (Blackfoot) from the northwest, and the Nēhiyawēwin (Plains Cree) from present-day Saskatchewan. The Nakoda also formed close social bonds with people who worked for the AFC. Moreover, two esteemed women made important marriages with two different *Bourgeois*: Hítáḥcawíya (Deer Little

²¹⁹ Kurz, *Journals*, 300; Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 597-98; Joseph Agonito, *Brave Hearts: Indian Women of the Plains* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot Press, 2016), 54.

²²⁰ Lesley Wischmann, *Frontier Diplomats: Alexander Culbertson and Natoyist-Siksina' among the Blackfeet* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 182-196, 214-223.

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Woman) married Edwin Denig in 1837 and Amáŋpiyawíya (Makes Cloud Woman) married longtime AFC employee Charles Larpenteur in the late 1840s or early 1850s when he was a clerk or a free trader. The lasting association the Nakoda had with a single trading post was quite unique among equestrian peoples, who tended to move throughout an extensive territory while trading at various posts and with different Native communities. However, their movement away from the Nehiyaw-Pwat (Iron Confederacy) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries eventually diminished the once-powerful Nakoda, and coincided with a period of population decline and territorial restriction by multiple equestrian peoples to the north, east, and west.²²¹

END OF FORT UNION AND CREATION OF FORT BUFORD

The issues that led to the Fort Laramie/Horse Creek Treaty of 1851 predictably gave way to a similar set of concerns in the 1860s when a gold rush to present-day western Montana brought an invasion of would-be Argonauts through key hunting territories in the Upper Missouri River Basin. Steamboat companies shifted to the business of supplying gold miners, farmers, and soldiers. Bison migrations were affected by the movements of people from the East and herds reduced by market hunters who supplied meat to growing mining camps. While these developments led to sporadic conflict on the Northwestern Plains, a more dramatic situation developed along the Minnesota River to the southeast of Fort Union. After a decade of treaty violations by U.S. officials and citizens, Euro-American homesteaders invaded the reserved treaty lands of the Isáŋyathi Dakhóta (aka Eastern Dakota, or Santee Sioux), abused Native residents, cleared fields, and hunted game. An ensuing series of conflicts commonly known as the Dakota War of 1862 resulted in a crushing defeat of the Isáŋyathi Dakhóta, a mass public hanging of thirty-eight Dakhóta men, and expulsion to the western side of the Missouri River.²²²

For a host of ecological, commercial, and cultural reasons, Fort Union became a moldering institution in the midst of a collapsing fur-trading world that it helped engender and destroy. When occupied by troops in 1864, Fort Union initially served as a temporary military-post for Company I of the 30th Wisconsin Infantry, charged with protecting a large stock of supplies deposited at the fort by General Alfred Sully. After prosecuting the “Dakota War” of 1862-1863, Sully began preparations for what became known as the “North Western Indian Expeditions” (1864) against the alliance of Lakota, Ōhméseestse (Northern Cheyenne), and Nank'haanseine'nan (Northern Arapaho). As Sully marched overland through the Badlands to the Powder River, he sent Company I of the Thirtieth Wisconsin Regiment to occupy Fort Union and hold it as a supply base for operations in the Yellowstone Valley. The first troops arrived on June 13, 1864, on board the steamboat *Yellowstone*. The remainder of the company arrived four

²²¹ DeMallie and Miller, “Assiniboine,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, 573-583.

²²² Jerome A. Greene, *Fort Randall on the Missouri, 1856-1892* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2005), 184-187; Barbour, 201-203, 214. For a compelling study of the Dakota-US War, see John Peacock, “An Account of the Dakota-US War of 1862 as Sacred Text: Why My Dakota Elders Value Spiritual Closure over Scholarly ‘Balance’,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37 (January 2013): 185-206.

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days later on the steamboat *Welcome*. Sully himself arrived on August 12. Sully had given thought to establishing a fort at the site of Fort Union but was not impressed by the location or the condition of the fur post, describing the fort as “an old dilapidated affair, almost falling to pieces.”²²³

Company I remained at Fort Union through the winter of 1864-1865, guarding supplies and making the fort a target for more harassment and raids from Húnkpapha Lakhóta (Hunkpapa Lakota) and other members of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Great Sioux Nation). By then, the raiders had killed all the livestock at the post, destroyed the kitchen garden, and suppressed most of the post trade with the Nakoda (Assiniboine). The fort itself was in poor shape. There were no further incidents until a few weeks before the troops’ departure, when a party of three soldiers went out to hunt and was attacked by about two dozen warriors. One soldier and one warrior were killed. On June 4, 1865, the company was relieved of its duty at Fort Union by two companies of the First U.S. Volunteer Infantry and boarded the *Yellowstone*.²²⁴ Their replacements were Confederate prisoners of war who volunteered to serve on the frontier rather than languish in prison camps. On August 13 most of this company departed, leaving only a lieutenant, a doctor, and eighteen soldiers to guard the government supplies. In the meantime, a steamboat arrived with the news that the North Western Fur Company had purchased Fort Union from Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company.²²⁵

In June 1866, while Sully was campaigning in the Powder River country, a construction crew encamped at the confluence to begin construction of the new fort. On June 11, 1866, Colonel Sackett arrived at Fort Union to reconsider whether the Army could adapt the old fur post for its own use. Originally considered a strategic site for successful trade with the native populations, the confluence area would be identified as an equally strategic location for military undertakings against those same people. Colonel Sackett agreed with General Sully's earlier disparaging appraisal of Fort Union and recommended instead either the site of old Fort William, seven miles by river below Fort Union, or a location at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone. One day after Sackett made his inspection, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel William G. Rankin arrived at Fort Union with Company C of the Thirteenth Infantry. Two days later, Rankin commenced work on Fort Buford at the confluence.²²⁶

²²³ Mark Harvey, “Securing the Confluence: A Portrait of Fort Buford, 1866-1895,” *At the Confluence: Now and Then* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2003), 34-37; Doreen Chaky, “Wisconsin Volunteers on the Dakota Frontier,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 80 (Spring 1987): 162-178; Barbour, 236-239.

²²⁴ Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 79-85; Sunder, 260.

²²⁵ Thompson, *Fur Trade Empire*, 86-89. For a history of James Hubbell's Northwest Fur Company enterprise, see William E. Lass, “The Northwest Fur Company in the Fort Union Region,” *Fort Union Fur Trade Symposium Proceedings, September 13-15, 1990* (Williston, North Dakota: Friends of Fort Union Trading Post, 1994): 69-88.

²²⁶ U.S. Congress, House, “Protection Across the Continent,” 39th Cong., 2d sess., Ex. Doc. 23, 1867; Ronald Phil Warner, “Fort Buford: Sentinel on the Northern Plains, 1866-1895,” (Master’s thesis, University of North Dakota, 1986), 29-30.

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During the initial Fort Buford construction period, soldiers were attacked on several different occasions by Húnkpap̃a Lakhóta (Hunkpapa Lakota) led by Tháthánka Íyotake (Sitting Bull), with a few casualties on both sides. In the winter of 1866-1867, the fort was besieged on a number of occasions, with soldiers and civilian laborers occasionally assaulted and harassed when they were cutting wood, guarding livestock, or conducting other tasks beyond the fort area. By the spring of 1867, however, the number of soldiers at the fort increased several-fold, and the strength of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Great Sioux Nation) and its allies had been undermined by multiple U.S. military campaigns on the Plains. The final days of Fort Union passed ingloriously, though somewhat peacefully, with the deteriorated facility dismantled in 1867 for reuse at Fort Buford or burnt as firewood. Constructed to convey power, solidity and permanence in a wilderness frontier, Fort Union enjoyed tremendous success for many of its 39 years as a trading post. The next era of development at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri areas focused on Fort Buford and increasing confrontation between the Sioux and the U.S. military, culminating in the Great Sioux War.²²⁷

The first iteration of Fort Buford was constructed over several years: in 1866 and 1868, and then expanded in the early and mid-1870s. Once completed, it became an instrument for a new order on the Northern Plains; one defined by industrial processes, railroad surveys, map makers, federal power, and the exercise of military force. As such, Fort Buford and its Sixth Infantry troops served as a bastion from which the U.S. could project its authority via the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. Though it served as a staging area for troops heading to the Northern Plains, the main purpose of Fort Buford was to support what might be described as the early templates of future national policies. In 1872, for instance, troops were sent to join a large force of infantry and cavalry that had been assembled from multiple posts to protect railroad surveyors and construction crews in the Yellowstone Valley—along the route of what became the Northern Pacific Railroad. The following year, two companies journeyed with the steamboat *Key West* up the Yellowstone as far as the mouth of the Powder River, and thus established a sort of mid-continent “beach head” for railroad construction and the supply of expected military campaigns. A month later, three more companies were dispatched to accompany three steamboats carrying supplies to Lt. Colonel George A. Custer, tasked with overseeing the construction of a cantonment for railroad crews. Fort Buford is also associated with the Niimípuu (Nez Perce) leader Hinmatóowyalah̃t̃q̃it̃ (aka Chief Joseph) who, along with other Niimípuu, was incarcerated at the fort in October 1877. Four years later, Tháthánka Íyotake surrendered to the U.S. Army at Fort Buford after he made his decision to return from Canada to live among his Húnkpap̃a and Lakhóta kin.²²⁸

Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (CROW FLIES HIGH) AND GARDEN COULEE²²⁹

²²⁷ Mark Harvey, “Securing the Confluence,” 34-37; Chaky, 162-178; Barbour, 236-239.

²²⁸ Harvey, “Securing the Confluence,” 37-42, Chaky, 162-178; Barbour, 236-238.

²²⁹ This section is closely informed by material on the Crow-Flies-High village in Chandler, 162-171.

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Shortly after Fort Buford's construction, a mostly Hiraacá (Hidatsa) band led by Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow Flies High) likely established a village a few hundred yards to the east of the old Fort Union Site, in the Garden Coulee area. The village had its origins in a schism that dated back to the smallpox epidemic of 1837, when the Hiraacá and Nueta consolidated their populations into one village on the Knife River to better protect and feed itself. Strategically the move made perfect sense, but the effort to consolidate the surviving members of various bands created a host of issues. Various bands were defined by their associations with particular elders, keepers of sacred bundles, and leaders associated with war, peace, hunting, and other core elements of social life. When the three bands of the Hiraacá (Awatixa, Awaxawi, and the Hiraacá proper) and Nueta (Mandan) came together in one village, there was overlap and some disagreement between the leaders of each community. While the Awatixa and Awaxawi tended to be more culturally conservative, with affinity for inherited rituals and rites, the Hiraacá (like their close kin the Apsáalooke (Crow) were inclined to see personal visions as sources of power and affirmations of leadership skills. While these inclinations did not lead to schisms in the wake of the epidemic, they nevertheless marked a distinction within the large community.²³⁰

Sometime in the late 1860s, a division developed between an Awaxawi leader known as Poor Wolf and an Hiraacá proper leader known as Bobtail Bull. Both possessed some of the most sacred bundles within their respective communities, and lead some of the important ceremonies. Since both could not lead at the same time, they decided to separate. Bobtail Bull and his warleader, Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High), led their community to the Garden Coulee area around 1869, at about the same time the first iteration of Fort Buford was under construction. While the move represented serious concerns about leadership and community cohesion, it also reflected the poor conditions at Fort Berthold, near Like-A-Fishhook Village, where food and material rations were insufficient for all the people living in the area. General William Hazen, who commanded Fort Berthold, understood that supplies were insufficient for the Hiraacá and Nueta, and had no qualms about the movement towards Fort Buford.²³¹

Once established, the village included as many as two dozen relatively small earth lodges (approximately 10-12 feet in diameter) and seven cabins. Besides a place for residence, work, and community, the village served as a base from which hunting parties could move up the Yellowstone River to traditional hunting areas, as well as utilize important eagle catching areas near the Confluence. The village also housed the families of men who went away to serve as scouts for the troops stationed at Fort Buford. While most of the Crow-Flies-High Band was composed of Hiraacá, it also included some Nueta (Mandan), Sahnish, and Nakoda (Assiniboiné)

²³⁰ Alfred W. Bowers, *Hidatsa Social and Ceremonial Organization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 245-247; Matzko, 24; Rebecca Toupal and Kacy Hollenback, "Fort Union Trading Post Native American Oral Traditions: Draft Report," Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson, 2008 (Copy on file at the Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service), 13.

²³¹ Toupal and Hollenback, "Oral Traditions," 230; Gregory L. Fox, *A Late Nineteenth Century Village of a Band of Dissident Hidatsa: The Garden Coulee Site (32W118): Reprints in Anthropology*, vol. 37 (Lincoln, NE: J & L Reprint, 1988), 246.

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individuals and families. The namesake Garden Coulee site allowed for some cultivation which supplemented diets, but was never enough for community self-sufficiency.²³²

The move to the Garden Coulee area was not exactly a social divorce, and archeological evidence for caches of corn suggest that the people living near the Confluence traded with their kin at Like-A-Fishhook. Since the people at Garden Coulee seem to have devoted more time to hunting, with closer access to better hunting areas, the proceeds of the hunt may have been what the Garden Coulee residents used in trade. The area was not a shining land of plenty, however, and it was sometimes dangerous to leave the confines of the village to harvest crops, hunt, or gather native foods. In lean times, which became more frequent over the years, the people at Garden Coulee became dependent on food stuffs from Fort Buford. During the worst of times, this meant using food scraps and offal from the post's butchers and cooks. Other food supplies that were still edible, but not worth storing or sending to another post, were also provided to the residents of Garden Coulee. Such resources were especially important for older people left behind in the village, when large groups went out to hunt.²³³

In many respects, life at Garden Coulee was made possible by Fort Buford. Men were often employed as scouts, guards, woodcutters, teamsters, and mail carriers between Fort Buford and Fort Berthold. In return they were paid in rations or additional annuity goods, and their efforts were reciprocated by the presence of soldiers who could foil attacks from distant Native groups or help retrieve stolen horses. Perhaps even more than men, women occupied a central role in the economic life of the Garden Coulee community. They made and sold leather goods and moccasins, did beadwork, and made what the purchasers considered souvenirs, such as small bows and arrows. Although prostitution was not part of a remunerative exchange system within Indigenous communities, something akin to prostitution occurred at Fort Buford. When venereal disease became all too common at Fort Buford, officers took measures to prevent women from residing within the fort complex. Whether those measures were for the protection of Native women, or the soldiers, is not known, nor is it clear if the policy had its intended effects. Dances accompanied by drums and chanting were also presented at Fort Buford, and generally garnered material and cash donations as well as food rations.²³⁴

The Confluence area was also a sacred space, filled with stories and sacred resources, as well as the necessities of daily life. Not surprisingly, then, it also served as the venue for important gatherings and ceremonies. In 1874 and 1879 military officers and even the *New York Times* made note of an important summer ceremony that occurred at the former site of Fort Union. Though it was identified as a Sundance, the ceremony was almost certainly the NaxpikE, a

²³²Steven L. De Vore and William J. Hunt, *Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site (32W117) Material Culture Reports, Part X: Native American Burials and Artifacts* (Lincoln, NE: National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center., Lincoln, 1994), 23; Fox, *Garden Coulee Site (32W118)*, 41; Toupal and Hollenback, "Oral Traditions," 242-243; Gilbert L. Wilson, 'Hidatsa Eagle Trapping,' in *Anthropological Papers of the American Natural History Museum*, vol. 30 (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1928), 95.

²³³ De Vore and Hunt, *Material Culture Reports, Part X*, 31; and Chandler, 166.

²³⁴ Chandler, 167-168.

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multi-day ceremonial event that as Alfred Bowers described it in the early 1930s, “provided a formal institution for the transfer of bundle rights from a father to his son. In addition, it provided an opportunity for others to fast and thereby receive vision instructions to purchase their own fathers’ bundle rights to this and other ceremonies. The ceremony also provided the [larger community] with an opportunity to observe young men’s abilities to endure the torture features of the ceremony.” In its specifics, the NaxpikE serves as a “ritual reenactment of torture undergone by a mythical character called Spring Boy but thwarted by his twin brother Lodge Boy. The twins had made themselves unpopular with the local gods, especially Spring Boy, who was taken to the sky by a sky chief named Long Arm. Lodge Boy rescued Spring Boy, and in the process they threatened to cut off one of Long Arms’ hands.”²³⁵

The NaxpikE ceremony and the ability for the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band to hold it “off-reservation” and very near the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence indicates that life at Garden Coulee, despite its many challenges, was a place of perseverance, renewal, and community self-determination. This is further borne out by the 15 years the band spent in the area. In some respects, they left the area out of necessity, but also on their own terms, in 1884. With Fort Buford slated for closure in 1895, and the commensurate reduction of supplies and rations that would occur with staff reduction and projects postponement, the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band would no longer have an outlet for trade or remunerative labor. This pending change also came in the wake of a directive from Captain William Clapp, the U.S. Indian Agent at Fort Berthold, informing Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh that his community could not receive rations at the Fort Berthold reservation unless it resided within the reservation’s boundaries and accepted individual allotments of land. With game declining and their food stores almost empty, the “dissident” group at Garden Coulee was escorted to the Fort Berthold reservation. When they arrived, the 126 Hiraacá, 23 Nueta, and one Sahnish member of the community reconstituted themselves near the mouth of the Little Knife River and the eastern bank of the Missouri River. Located at the northwesternmost point of the reservation, and thus as close to the Yellowstone-Missouri Confluence and as far from the Agency as possible, the Beericgá Máaguhdaa Neesh (Crow-Flies-High) band once again became a powerful faction within the larger Hiraacá community.²³⁶

²³⁵ First quotation from Bowers, 320. Description of the Spring Boy and Lodge Boy story and its relation to the NapikE is from Robert L. Hall, *An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 21. Also, “Doings in the Indian Country: The Sun-Dance of the Gros Ventres [Hidatsa]” *New York Times* (28 July 1879) p. 1.

²³⁶ Chandler, 171-172; Matzko, 25; Jay T. Sturdevant et al., *Garden Coulee: 19th Century Hidatsa Archeology* <https://www.nps.gov/mwac/garden_coulee/history.htm> (accessed 14 December 2019). The push to have the community return to the Fort Berthold reservation coincided with the implementation of the Dawes Severalty Act (1887), which carved reservations into individual parcels of land that would become the property of families or individuals. All remaining lands not claimed by or assigned to tribal members were then opened up to non-Native homesteaders. See Arrell M. Gibson, “Indian Land Transfers,” in *Handbook of North American Indians: History of Indian-White Relations*, 4, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn and William C. Sturtevant (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 226–229.

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MONDAK

Established in 1903, Mondak was the last community to occupy any part of the current Fort Union Trading Post NHS Historic District. Like Fort Union, the town was established at a geographic crossroads, with the intersections largely derived from the historical processes that followed the demise of the old fur trading post. With the commercial and center of the small town situated to the north of the Great Northern Railway, and the rest of the town stretching south toward the Missouri River, Mondak became something of a remote transportation hub. With ferry service across the Missouri River, and railroad connections to Chicago and the West Coast, Mondak became a transshipment site and market center for surrounding communities and ranches. The other geographic feature that defined Mondak was the invisible line of 104° 2' West Longitude that marks the boundary between North Dakota and Montana. The town was first platted in 1903, with commercial and residential lots on both sides of the state line. Because North Dakota was "dry," and Montana "wet," Mondak's initial investors sought to exploit the differences in state laws by selling beer and spirits to North Dakotans. Success in this venture gave rise to new investments, which included the construction of grain elevators, a bank, hotels, and stores. A number of the first construction projects also benefitted from the nearby ruins of Fort Buford, where building materials and whole structures were available for the taking.²³⁷

Over the course of a few years, Mondak acquired the appearance of a small prairie town. Though the town itself was founded on capital associated with selling alcohol within steps of a state where it was illegal, Mondak soon boasted a church, a brick schoolhouse, a newspaper (the *Yellowstone News*) and a small electric power generating plant. Given the town's primary source of revenue, however, Mondak was better known for its saloons, illicit gambling houses, and prostitution. Associated, "respectable" businesses also included stables, hotels, short-term boarding houses, and restaurants that mostly served visiting clientele.

Mondak ultimately died on the sword that first allowed it to thrive. The town went "dry" in 1919, when the Montana Legislature voted to enact statewide prohibition. Within a year, the town also lost its position as the provisional county seat, which transferred to the community of Poplar. On top of the sharp decline of revenue associated with alcohol and gambling, Mondak also lost access to some of the labor, revenue, and government contracts associated with being a county seat. The construction of the Snowden Bridge, completed in 1913, had badly undermined the local ferry service at the time, and after 1919 also contributed to the general abandonment of Mondak. Without a reason to stop, and as automobiles became more ubiquitous in the 1920s,

²³⁷ This and the following paragraph are based on Alice M. Sweetman, "Mondak: Planned City of Hope Astride Montana-Dakota Border," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 15 (Autumn 1965), 12-27; and T. Weber Greiser et al., "Testing and Evaluation of Cultural Resource Site 24RV102, the Mondak Townsite, Roosevelt County, Montana," Historical Research Associates, Missoula, Montana for the North Dakota State Highway Department, Bismarck, Contract Number NDSHD 35-0006-1081.33, 36-38. Please note that the document cited here does not provide a definitive number of construction projects that benefitted from salvaged material at Fort Buford. Since both the fort and the town no longer exist, the number is probably unknowable.

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Mondak had little to nothing to offer travelers. Community members moved away. In 1925 the name of the Mondak post office changed to Fort Union, Montana, but it closed in 1928, the year a fire destroyed most of the remaining buildings.²³⁸

THE UPPER MISSOURI HISTORICAL EXPEDITION

Despite the site's history, perhaps the largest gathering of Native peoples at the Confluence area occurred in 1925, during the Great Northern Railway's efforts to promote rail travel on Northern Oriental Limited by promoting historical and scenic locales along the route from Minneapolis to Seattle. One of the most promoted stops was held at the former site of Fort Union, where a four-hundred strong "Indian Congress" of Sahnish (Arikara), Hiraacá (Hidatsa), Nueta (Mandan), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Piikani (Blackfeet), Káínawa (Blood Nation), Siksika (Blackfoot), Ojibwe (aka Ojibway, or Chippewa), Apsáalooke (Crow), A'aninin (Atsina, Aaniiih aka Gros Ventre), Dakhóta (Dakota) gathered at the Confluence.²³⁹

The Indian Congress was one of the most elaborate events in the Great Northern's two-year promotional program, known as Upper Missouri and Columbia River Historical Expeditions, held in both 1925 and 1926. Intended to boost tourist ridership in the summer months, the Great Northern sought to construct monuments along its line, and published a series of brief descriptive booklets for its passengers to provide a sense of historical drama to the lands they crossed.²⁴⁰ While the Great Northern planned to build a commemorative version of Fort Union, it ultimately balked at the effort and cost associated with such an undertaking. Nevertheless, corporate action reflected an assumption that public virtue was assumed to reside in corporations and the "company man". This point was made especially clear in a newspaper editorial on the Great Northern's Historical Expeditions:

Sentiment has indeed come to be an integral part of the modern business structure. Sentimental considerations observed by many business institutions bring to them a measure of respect and sympathy—a comradeship from the public—that mere success and fair dealing cannot alone engender. The recent action of the Great Northern Railway Company in leading the way toward a more general dissemination of

²³⁸ Matzko, 27-32; MacDonald, "Mondak Townsite," U.S. Department of Transportation, "Bridge Replacement- Mondak Bridge, Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota, or Roosevelt and Richland Counties, Final Environmental Impact Statement," 22 November 1982, 5-13 to 5-14; Kuntz, "DOWL HKM" 23-27; Finney, 63.

²³⁹ On "vanishing race," see Allison Robbins, "Scoring *The Vanishing American* (1925) in the American West, *American Music* (Spring 2018), 102-132, which discusses a film made in Glacier National Park with the active assistance of the Great Northern.

²⁴⁰ These concerns were best captured by Grace Flandrau, who wrote promotional books and pamphlets for the Great Northern Railroad. See especially *The Columbia River Historical Expedition of 1926* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1926?]); *Frontier Days Along the Upper Missouri* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1926?]); and *A Glance at the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (n.p.: Great Northern Railway, [1925?]); Lisa Blee, "The 1925 Fort Union Indian Congress: Divergent Narratives, One Event, *American Indian Quarterly*, 31 (Fall 2007), 582-88.

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knowledge of the early history of ... the Northwest is a sentimental business activity which is bound largely and vitally to benefit this commonwealth while redounding to the credit and increasing the respect for the railway company.²⁴¹

Like the Exposition that preceded it by some two decades, the Great Northern also sought to capitalize on a peculiar American penchant to combine learning with leisure. As historian Cindi Aron noted in her book, *Working at Play*, recreation was already long associated with education and self-improvement, from the week-long camp revivals and Chautauquas to World Expos and museums. What later became known as heritage tourism was just beginning to develop in the 1920s as a particular niche market, one that continued to be closely associated with other developing forms of self-improvement leisure for the rest of this century, particularly outdoor activities. All of this came to an end in the 1930s, however. The automobile had already cut into the efforts of railroad promotions in the 1920s, while the Great Depression crippled the nascent tourist industry and, more importantly, destroyed the public credibility of corporate leaders. In short, the commemoration and interpretation of Fort Union would ultimately pass to the National Park Service.

BECOMING A PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

The Upper Missouri and Columbia River Historical Expeditions in 1925 and 1926 brought a level of attention to Fort Union that it had never enjoyed before. Little more than an “old ruin” to people in surrounding towns, the site of the former trading post was valued more as a source a gravel, a stray arrow point, or an old metal clasp that might be repurposed for another use. For trade historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries certainly knew about the significance of Fort Union, and mention of the site might have struck a chord with people passingly familiar with the works of George Catlin. However, it was not until Ralph Budd, a born promoter and executive with the Great Northern Railway, made the site a centerpiece of the Great Northern’s Upper Missouri Historical Expedition, and floated the idea of reconstructing the fort, that people in the region began to take notice of the history that lay underfoot. After Passage of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which “declared that it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States,” interest in protecting, preserving, and interpreting sites like historic Fort Union suddenly had a legal basis. As historian John Matzko notes, this legislation “envisioned federal acquisition of historic properties beyond the precontact ruins and battlefield parks that were then almost the only historic properties held by the park service.”²⁴²

²⁴¹ Text is from the clippings files of the Great Northern Railway at the Minnesota Historical Society; quoted in Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 137.

²⁴² *Historic Sites Act of 1935*, 49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C. sections 461-467.

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Not long after the Historic Sites Act became law, a supervisor in the Department of Interior with a personal interest in the fur trade and Fort Union, delegated a young historian to compile a short history of the old fort with an eye toward its subsequent acquisition. By 1937 this idea had ballooned into a full review of the site's conditions and an evaluation of its historical significance. This task fell to Edward Hummel, a North Dakotan who had recently earned a Master's degree in history from the University of Minnesota. Hummel was thorough and completely enamored with the subject, and readily concluded that the site and subject of Fort Union was a perfect example of a new NPS thematic topic, "Exploitation of Natural Resources to 1870." Hubbel went even further, however, in suggesting that the fort might be reconstructed if "visitation would justify such extreme measures." While the suggestion of a young historian with a mid-level patron in the Interior Department was not enough to bring his vision to life, it did find purchase among North Dakota state officials who saw an opportunity to expand on a nascent park system, and thus further tap Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) funds to develop the site, alleviate unemployment, and help reinvigorate the badly depressed economic conditions in far western North Dakota.²⁴³

The Fort Union Trading Post became a state historic site in 1938, though it did not benefit from CCC or Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding. Although certainly disappointing to Hummel, Matzko considers this denial as a blessing in disguise since it spared the Fort Union Trading Post site from undergoing a cursory reconstruction that "might have so compromised the integrity of the site that it could never have been accepted into the National Park System."²⁴⁴ The historical significance of the site was unquestioned, but at the time of Hummel's report there was some doubt that the site he identified was the Fort Union location. Such concerns proved unfounded, and the site of historic Fort Union was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961, and then a National Historic Site in 1966. While the foundation lines of various structures were still discernable, none of the original structures remained when the park was established. However, it was clearly recognized that Fort Union National Historic Site encompassed a rich trove of archeological evidence from the fur trade era, as well as periods that pre-date and post-date its period of significance.

When Congress declared Fort Union Trading Post a national historic site in 1966, no original buildings remained. Local citizens organized the Friends of Fort Union and strongly supported the reconstruction of the fort. When Congress mandated reconstruction of portions of the fort on the site itself, a period of intensive archeological investigations (1986 to 1988) overseen by the NPS Midwest Archeological Center provided information on the cultural chronology of the site and the fort's structural history.²⁴⁵ The investigations served as mitigation documentation as

²⁴³ Quotations and narrative in this paragraph draw from John Matzko, "The Fort Union of the National Park Service," in *At the Confluence: Now and Then*, ed. Susan Dingle (Bismarck: North Dakota State Historical Society, 2003), 34-35. Also see Matzko, *Reconstructing Fort Union*, 46-64; Edward A. Hummel, "Special Report, Fort Union, North Dakota," 1938, MWAC.

²⁴⁴ Matzko, 49-51.

²⁴⁵ "Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," a summary of Fort Union investigations [ca. 1995], unnumbered page 3. Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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well. The resultant scientific record ultimately included ten Material Culture Reports and seven reports focusing on specific excavation blocks, as well as numerous theses, dissertations, journal articles, book chapters, and other publications on Fort Union archeology. The NPS updated the NHL nomination in 2015 to incorporate the information, and to identify all nationally-significant contributing resources.

Today, a partially reconstructed fort exists at exactly the same location as the original, built over a period from 1985 through 1991, with information gained from extensive archaeological investigations, historic paintings, and archival documentation. Visually accurate reconstructions of the palisade walls, Indians' and artisans' house, two bastions, and bourgeois house stand as a life-size stage to teach visitors about the site's significance. The entire fort is a large walkthrough exhibit that provides visitors with the feeling of a frontier post. With the partially reconstructed fort as a centerpiece, historical interpretation at Fort Union Trading Post focuses on the reconstructed fort buildings, used to tell the stories of the fur trade, exploration, fort construction, and relationships with and among American Indians. This multifaceted approach appeals to diverse audiences, from fur-trade enthusiasts and people traditionally associated with the region, to those less historically and regionally connected.

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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): HS-1 to HS-7, HS-17, HS-23

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 418.53 acres

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UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or ☐

NAD 1983 ☒

Zone	Easting	Northing
1. 13 N	572080	5317970
2. 13 N	572385	5317975
3. 13 N	572385	5317575
4. 13 N	572490	5316800
5. 13 N	572505	5316073
6. 13 N	572505	5315300
7. 13 N	570866	5316101
8. 13 N	570876	5316314
9. 13 N	570839	5316711
10. 13 N	570861	5317150
11. 13 N	571716	5317514

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

The boundary of the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District includes all federal lands (246.80 acres) within the National Park Service (NPS) administrative boundaries of Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site, as well as 66.51 acres of state-owned land; 104.17 acres of privately-owned land in which the Federal government holds scenic easements, and a 1.05-acre state right of way. Collectively, these lands total 418.53 acres land within parts of Sections 5, 7, 8, 17, 18 of T152N R104W and Sections 13 and 24 of T26N 59E.²⁴⁶ See attached USGS topographic map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire extent of the Fort Union Trading Post NHS, less some private- and township-owned land in which the NPS holds rights of way easements, to facilitate access to a trail to the Bodmer Overlook.

²⁴⁶ Acreage, land status, and locations are derived from an updated "Tract Register and Acreage Summary for Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site," revised March 18, 2014; on file at Fort Union Trading Post NHS.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mark David Spence
organization: N/A
street & number: 707 Broadalbin St. SW
city or town: Albany state: OR zip code: 97321
e-mail markdavidspence@gmail.com
telephone: (541) 223-3536
date: February 4, 2020

Edited by:

Dena Sanford, Architectural Historian
National Park Service DOI Regions 3, 4, 5
Midwest Regional Office
Omaha, NE 68102
September 13, 2024

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic district and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
- **Photographs** Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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Photo Log

Name of Property:	Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
City or Vicinity:	Williston Vicinity
County:	Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana
Photographer (photo # 1):	Emily Sunblade, National Park Service
Date Photographed:	2015
Photographer (photos #2, 6, 10)	Dena Sanford, National Park Service
Date Photographed:	2012
Photographer (photo #3)	Andy Banta, National Park Service
Date Photographed:	2010
Photographer (photos #4, 5, 8, 9)	Fred MacVaugh, National Park Service
Dates Photographed:	2014-2016
Photographer (photo #7)	Virginia Stauffenberg, National Park Service
Date Photographed	2016

Photo #1: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0001)
Fort Union Trading Post partial reconstruction and terrace, view southwest from Bodmer Overlook.

Photo #2: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0002)
View southeast from Bodmer Overlook toward terrace area and Missouri River. Garden Coulee area to the left.

Photo #3: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0003)
Aerial photograph of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking toward the southeast. When this American Fur Company-built trading post operated (1828-1867), steamboats unloaded their cargo of trade goods at a dock in front of the main gate.

Photo #4: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0004)
Reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, view to the southeast.

Photo #5: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0005)
View northwest toward front (south) gate and southwest bastion. Fur press interpretive exhibit near door.

Photo #6: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0006)
Main (south) gate of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking north from south bank of the Missouri River.

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Photo #7: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0007)
Interior courtyard of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking northeast from southwest bastion to flagstaff, Bourgeois House, and northeast bastion. Indian's and artisan's house in foreground, right.

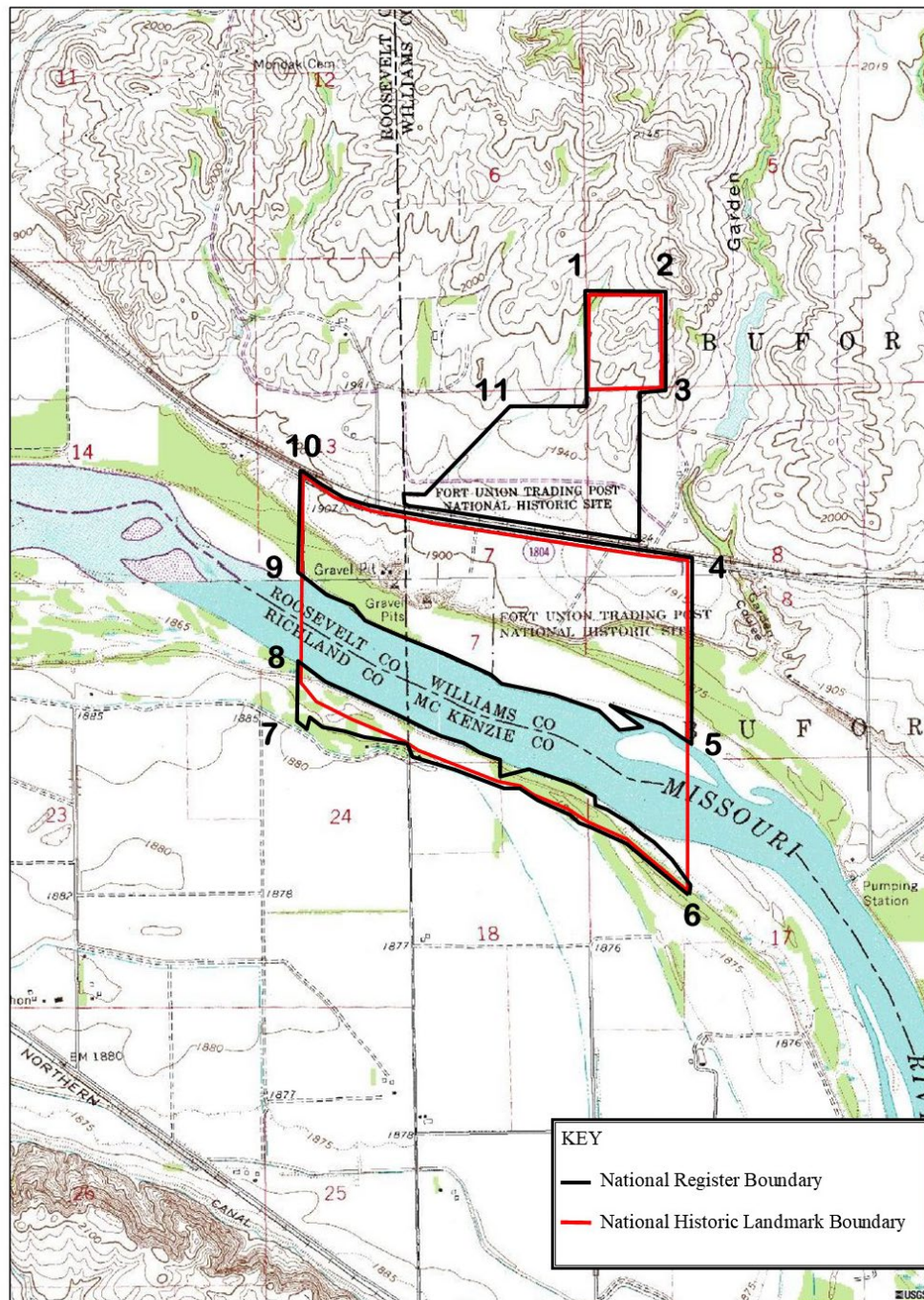
Photo #8: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0008)
View north to front (south) gate and Indian's and artisan's house on the right as seen from inside the post. Boardwalk in immediate foreground.

Photo #9: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_0009)
Interior of the reconstructed Indian's and artisan's house, the trade room. View west.

Photo #10: (ND: Williams County_Fort Union Trading Post NHS HD_00010)
Modern (non-contributing) National Park Service Housing area below upper terrace. View east.

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Name of Property

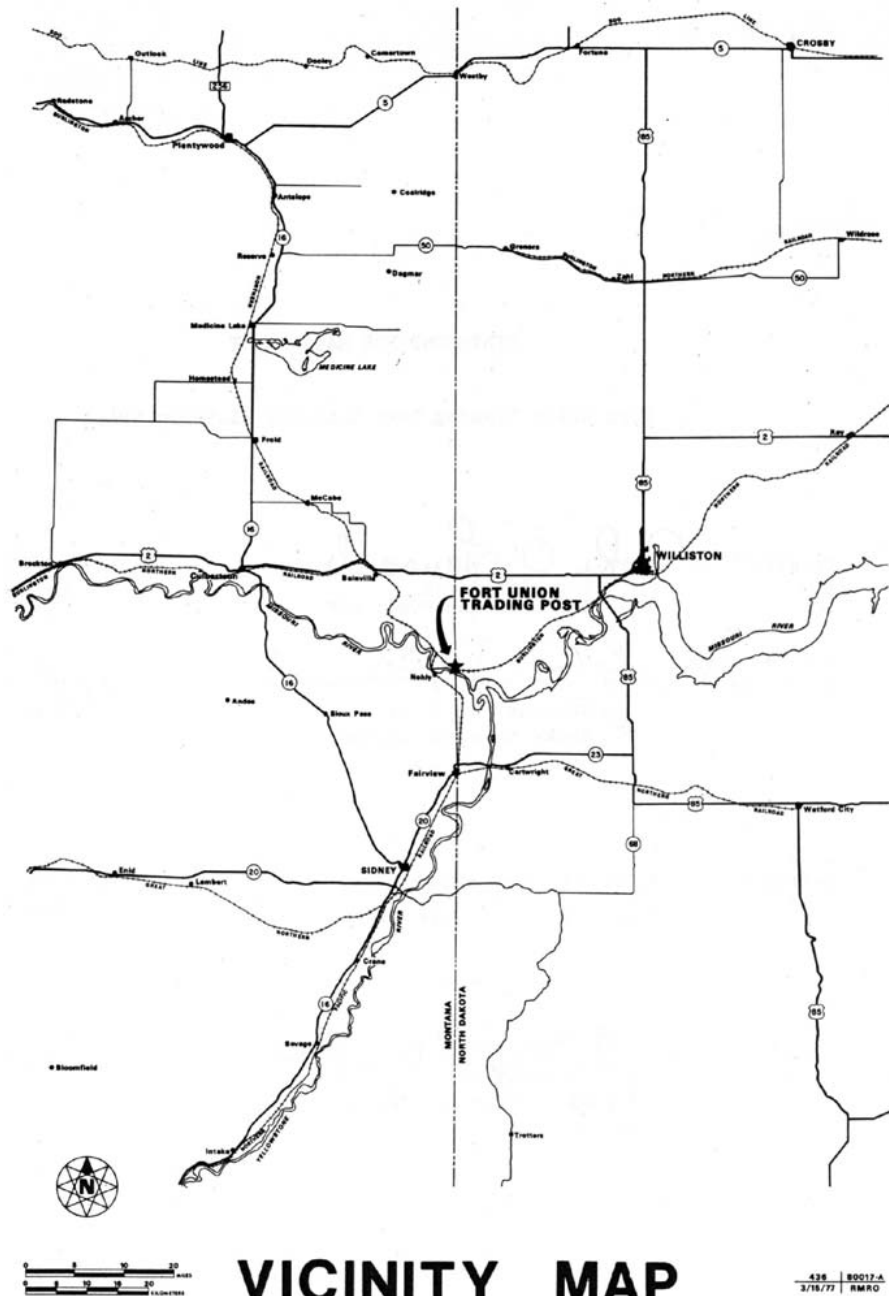
Williams, North Dakota
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Map 1: Black boundary defines the Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District, National Register of Historic Places. Red boundary defines the Fort Union National Historic Landmark. USGS 7.5 minute topographic map July 1, 1989.

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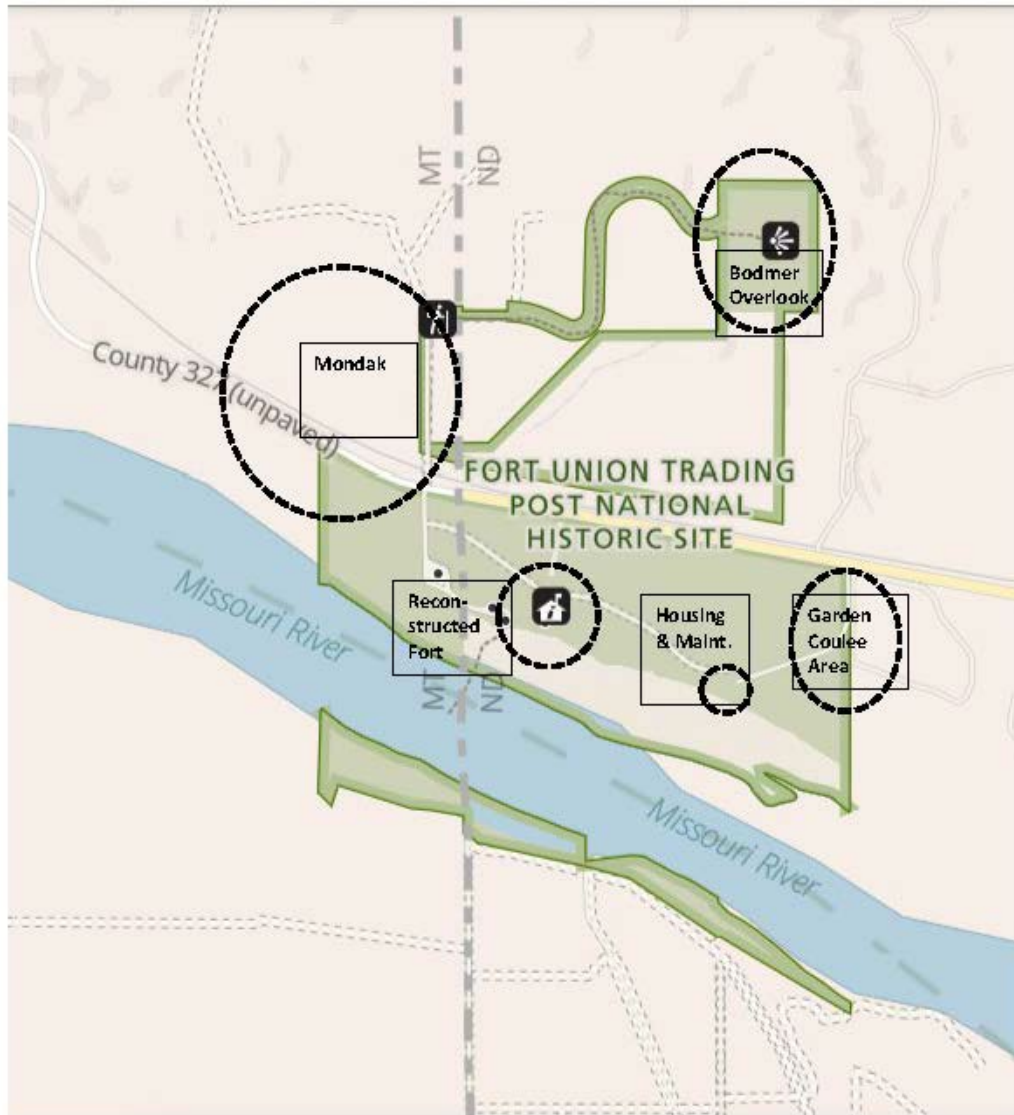


FORT UNION TRADING POST NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
MONTANA / NORTH DAKOTA
INT 2b

Map 2: National Park Service, "Vicinity Map," Drawing No. 436/80017-A, March 15, 1977, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver Colorado.

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Name of Property

Williams, North Dakota
County and State



Map 3: Sketch map, Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District based on park map, <https://www.nps.gov/fous/planyourvisit/maps.htm>.

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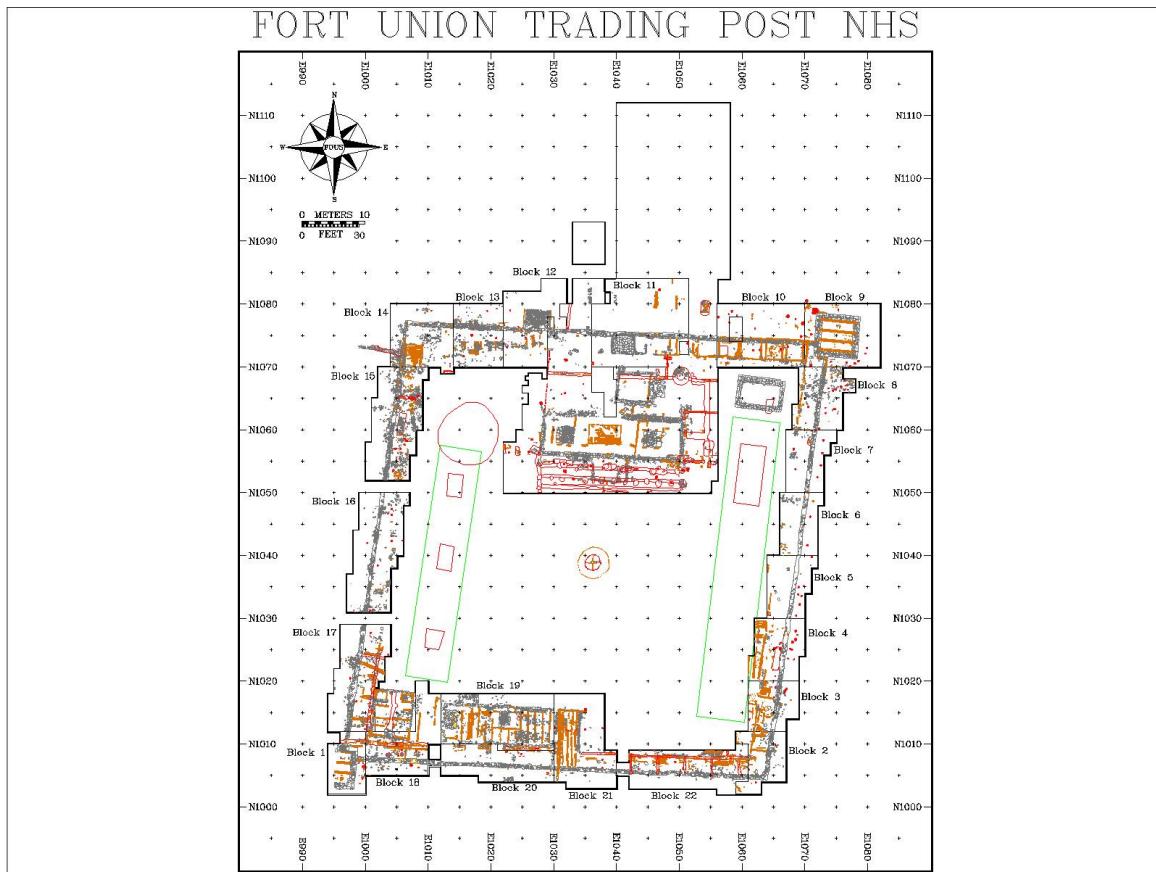


Figure 1: Fort Union site excavated areas with feature details. National Park Service Midwest Archeological Center graphic, Lincoln, NE.

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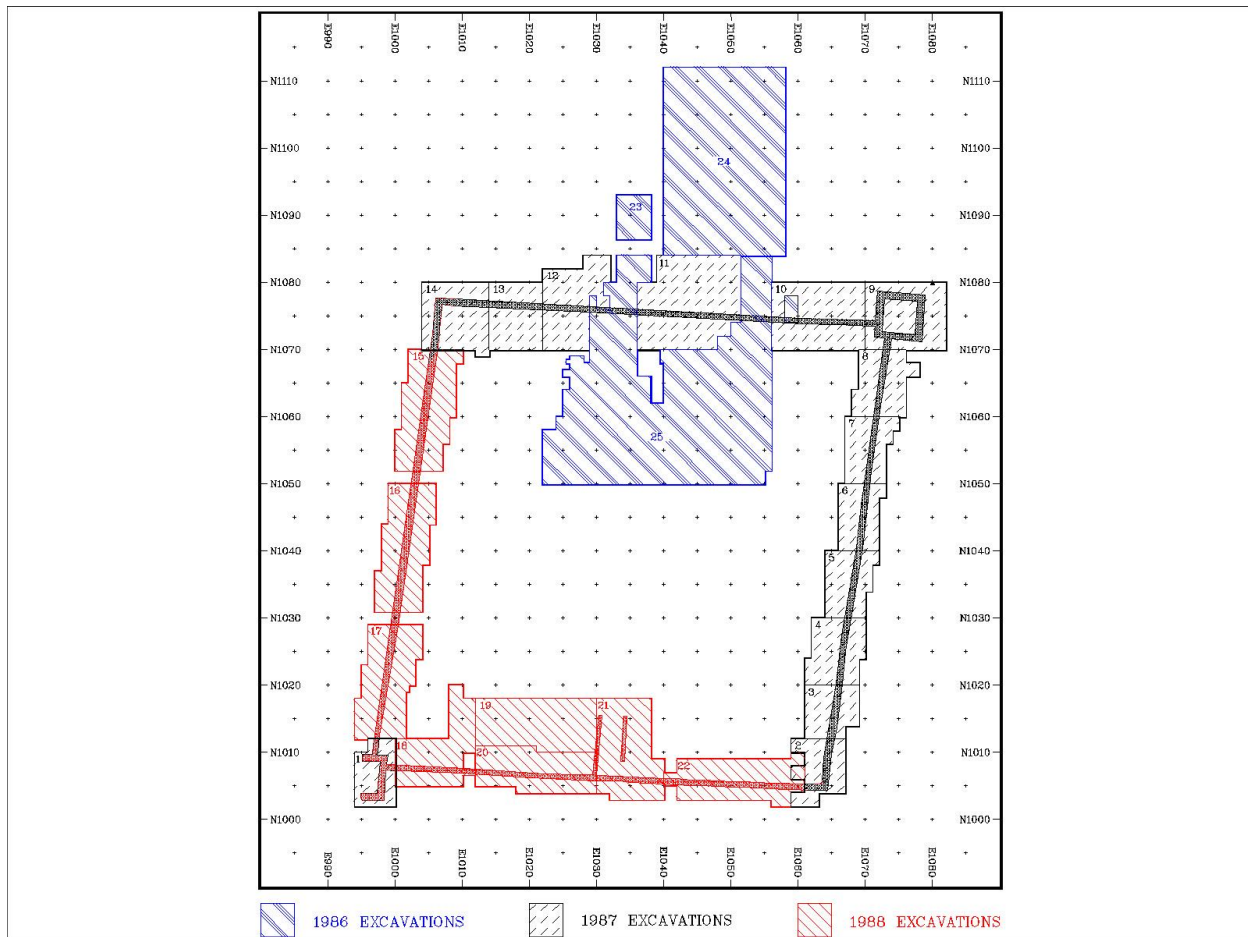


Figure 3: Extent of 1980s archeological excavations. National Park Service Midwest Archeological Center graphic, Lincoln, NE.

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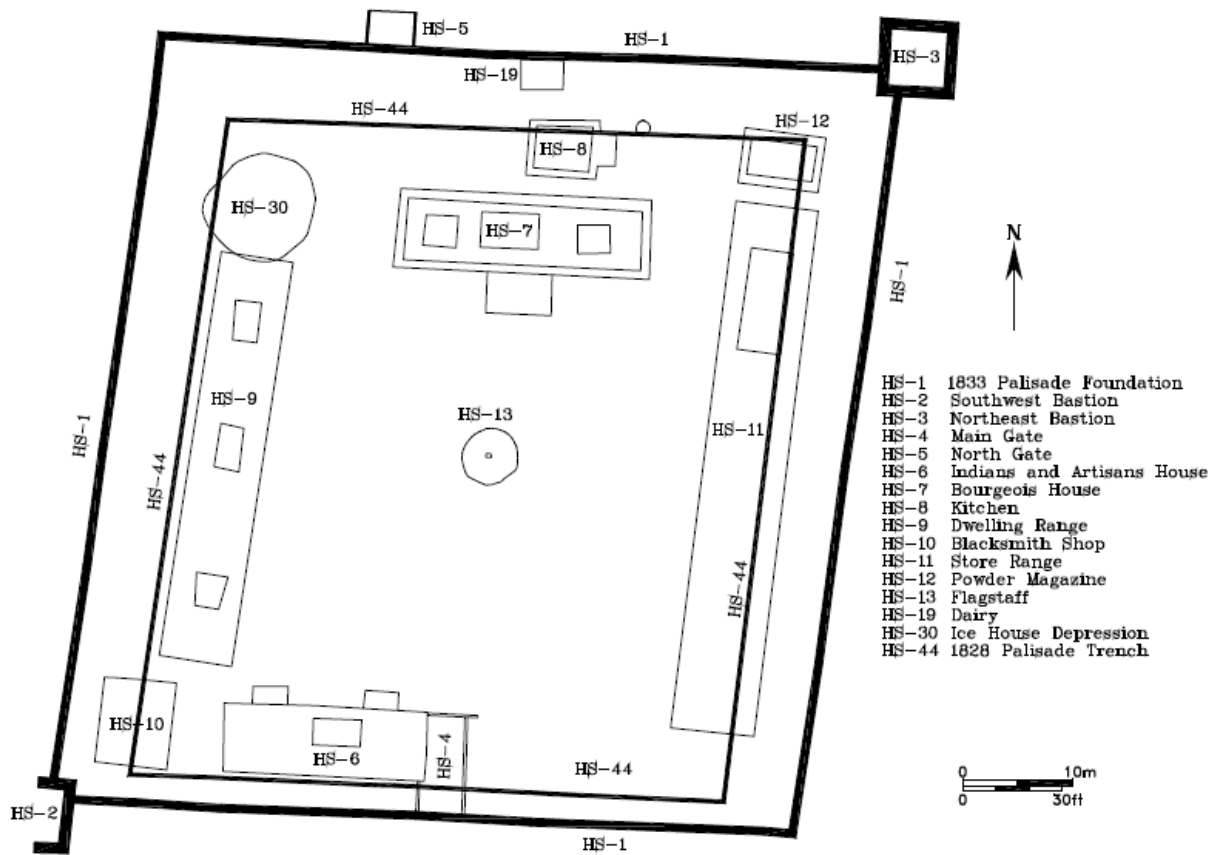


Figure 4: Location of Fort Union Trading Post primary archeological resources. National Park Service Midwest Archeological Center graphic, Lincoln, NE.

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Figure 5: *Fort Union on the Missouri*, from the book *Maximilian, Prince of Wied's, Travels in the Interior of North America* (London: Ackermann & Co., 1841). Etching after Karl Bodmer, artist, sketches prepared in 1833. Yale University Art Gallery, Mable Grady Garvan Collection.
<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/43658>.

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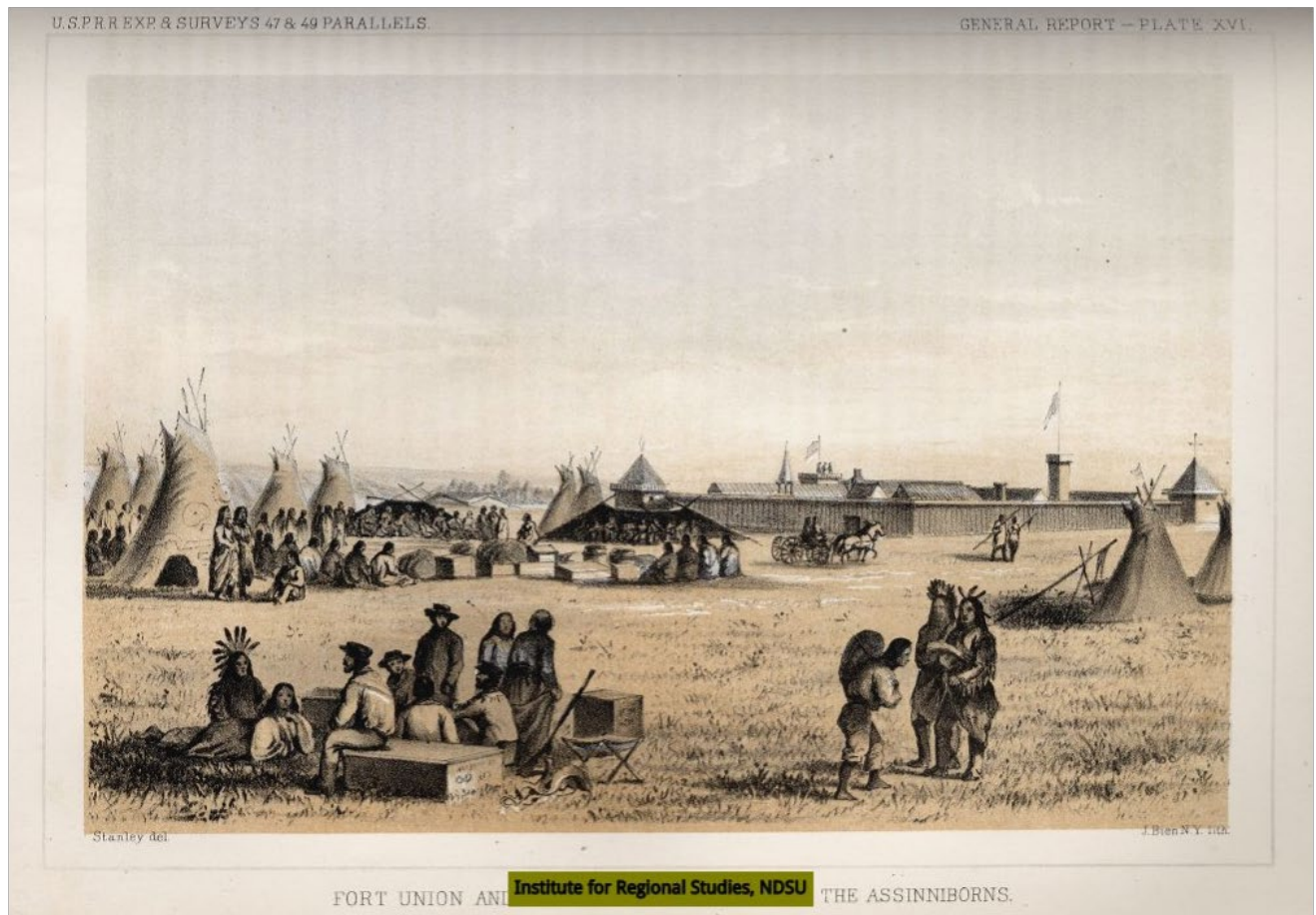


Figure 6: *Fort Union and distribution of goods to the Assiniboinnes*, (New York: Julius Bien, 1859). Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (Folio F593.U58Vol.12). Lithograph after John Stanley Mix, artist, who accompanied Isaac I. Steven's 1853 expedition. Digital Horizons, <https://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/collection/dakota-lith/id/79/rec/20>

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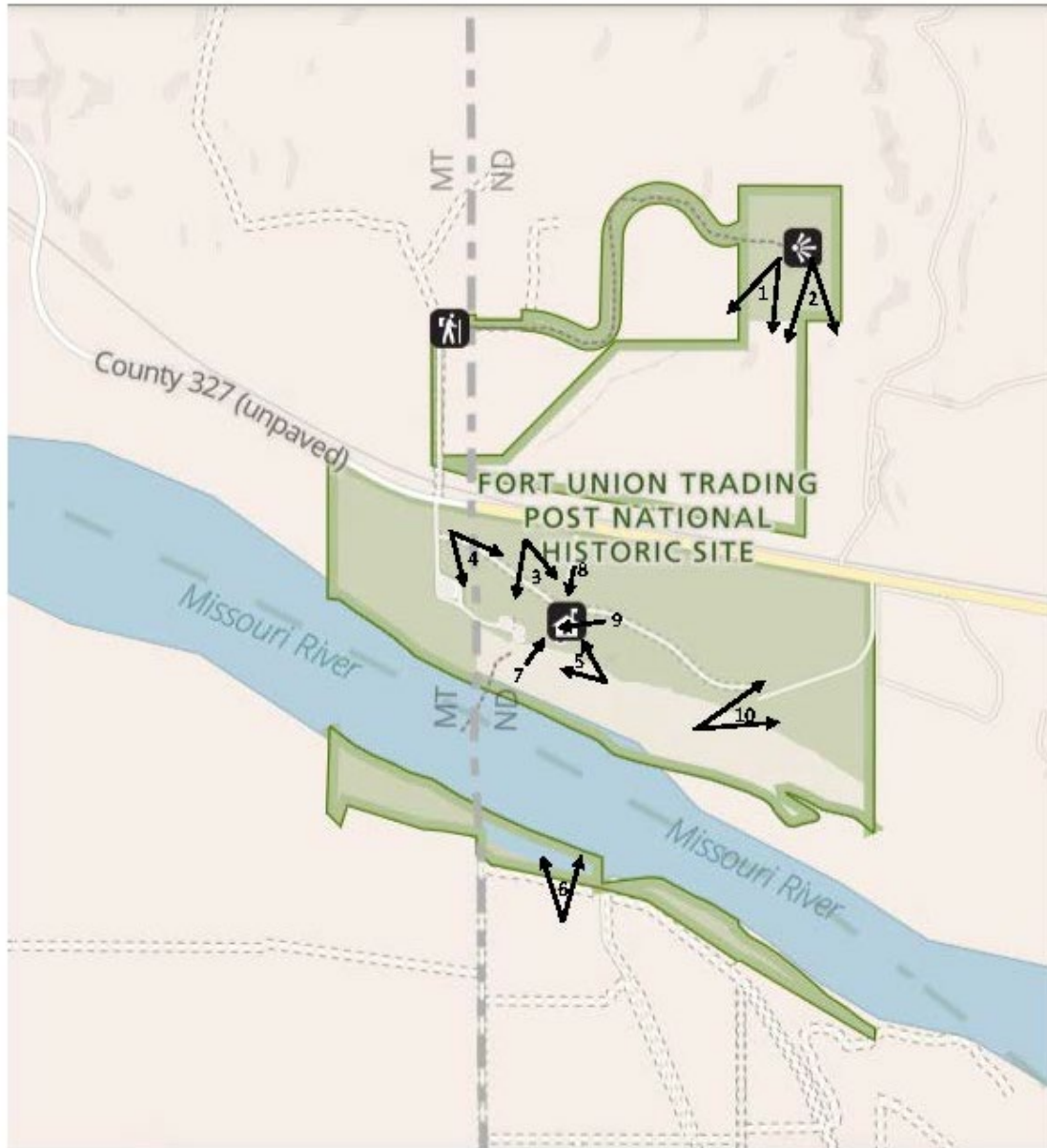


Figure 7: "Indian Congress," Fort Union Celebration, July 18, 1925. State Historical Society of North Dakota, William E. (Bill) Shemorry Photograph Collection (1-75A-19-4). Digital Horizons, <https://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/collection/shemorry/id/226/rec/6>

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
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Key to Photographs



Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Name of Property

Williams, North Dakota
County and State

Photographs:



Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Williston Vicinity
Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Emily Sunblade, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2015

Fort Union Trading Post partial reconstruction and terrace, view southwest from Bodmer
Overlook.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
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Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Dena Sanford, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2012

View southeast from Bodmer Overlook toward terrace area and Missouri River. Garden Coulee area to the left.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
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Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Andy Banta, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2010

Aerial photograph of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking toward the southeast. When this American Fur Company-built trading post operated (1828-1867), steamboats unloaded their cargo of trade goods at a dock in front of the main gate.

Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Williston Vicinity
Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Fred MacVaugh
Date Photographed: 2015

Reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, view to the southeast.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Williston Vicinity
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Photographer: Fred MacVaugh, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2014

View northwest toward front (south) gate and southwest bastion. Fur press interpretive exhibit near door.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District

Williston Vicinity

Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Dena Sanford, National Park Service

Date Photographed: 2012

Main (south) gate of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking north from south bank of the Missouri River.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
Williston Vicinity
Williams and McKenzie Counties, North Dakota; Richland and Roosevelt Counties, Montana

Photographer: Victoria Stauffenberg, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2016

Interior courtyard of reconstructed Fort Union Trading Post, looking northeast from southwest bastion to flagstaff, Bourgeois House, and northeast bastion. Indian's and artisan's house in foreground, right.

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Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site Historic District
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Photographer: Fred MacVaugh, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2016

View north to front (south) gate and Indian's and artisan's house on the right as seen from inside the post. Boardwalk in immediate foreground.

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Photographer: Fred MacVaugh, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2016

Interior of the reconstructed Indian's and artisan's house, the trade room. View west.

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Photographer: Dena Sanford, National Park Service
Date Photographed: 2012

Modern (non-contributing) National Park Service Housing area below upper terrace. View east.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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