FHR-8-250 (10/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY-NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Pompeys Pillar

AND/OR COMMON
Pompeys Pillar/Pompy's Tower

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
about 2 miles east of Nibbe, Montana — __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Nibbe, Montana — xx VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2nd

STATE Montana — CODE 30 — COUNTY Yellowstone — CODE 111

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	xx OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	x PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	xx PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
xx SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	xx YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Stella Foote

STREET & NUMBER
1207 Hillhayen Way

CITY, TOWN
Billings, — __ VICINITY OF — STATE Montana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Yellowstone County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Billings — STATE Montana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
none known

DATE — __FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN — STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	__ORIGINAL SITE
XXGOOD	__RUINS	XXALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Pompeys Pillar is located on the south bank of the Yellowstone River, in Yellowstone County, Montana, about one mile north of U.S. 10, one mile east of Nibbe in south central Montana. As viewed from the west and south, the vertical stone face of the pillar juts abruptly above the level floor of the valley, which measures more than a mile across at this point. From its top both the Beartooth and Big Horn Mountains can be seen. Contrary to most written descriptions, the overall height of the pillar, including a thick cap of earth, is probably not more than 120 feet above its base.

The northeast side of the rock gradually slopes downward to ground level. Diameter of the long axis running east and west is about 350 feet. A strip of land, 300 feet wide, separates the pillar from the river bank. The elevation of the adjacent valley floor is about 2800 feet above sea level.

Pompeys Pillar is composed of thick beds of fine-grained sandstone separated by narrower layers of sandstone breccia. The material probably corresponds to the Parkman sandstone formation laid down as marine sediment during the upper Cretaceous period more than 60 million years ago. At one time in the far distant geological past the pillar obviously was part of the same formation now exposed in the bluff only a few hundred yards north across the river. The action of the river probably eroded through a protruding headland and effectively isolated the tip which is seen today as the pillar.

Evidence of Indian occupation was obvious both to Clark and later travelers who reported the presence of pictographs inscribed on the rock. Although the Indian carvings are barely noticeable today, and in only one place, a number of traditional stories about the pillar still circulate in the Crow tribe. The Crow were the principal occupants of the area during the 1800's, with occasional visits by Gros Ventres, Blackfeet, and Assiniboine, and later the Sioux.

Stuart W. Conner, a Billings archeologist, studied and copied the petroglyphs recently (ca. 1970). They are located just southeast of the Clark signature and can only be faintly distinguished as red markings on the rock as the area is also covered with hundreds of more recent carved signatures. One pictograph is the figure of an animal with an arrow in its back, and there is also a series of stick figures, apparently scratched into the rock through a coating of red stain (believed to be Shoshone, A.D. 1200-1800).

Clark's signature is on the face of an overhanging wall of rock, just below the top and on the east end and riverside of the pillar, about seven feet above a short path running along the base of the wall. The signature can be plainly seen through the glass-fronted bronze case, and all around it, for at

least 15 feet, are hundreds of initials, names and dates carved into the flat stone area. Most of the older inscriptions date around the turn of the century, although one 1875 date is still prominent.

The Northern Pacific Railway Company acquired a 400 foot right-of-way through this area in 1882, located about a half mile south of Pompeys Pillar, which would be plainly seen from passing trains. The railroad seemed to take a protective interest in the landmark and had a heavy iron grate made and sunk firmly into the rock to protect Clark's signature. Although this grate provided partial protection against vandals, the eroding action of the wind and weather continued to dim the signature.

In 1926, at the instigation of the local DAR group, the railroad authorized the Billings Marble and Granite Works to cut the letter deeper into the stone. There is a possibility that the inscription may have been cut more deeply by a member of the Josephine crew in 1875 also. In 1928 the Billings chapter of the DAR erected a bronze plaque commemorating Lewis and Clark, in 1938 the Masons placed another plaque honoring both explorers as Masons, and in 1968 a plaque commemorating the efforts of Don Foote in the preservation of Pompeys Pillar, was placed there. All three of these bronze plaques are affixed to the face of the cliff within a few feet and east of the Clark inscriptions, and on the same flat surface as other carvings and the petroglyphs. The national historic landmark plaque is mounted on a large rock at the base of the pillar.

Pompeys Pillar and 105 surrounding acres were purchased in 1956 by the Foote family of Billings, who presently own it, and extensive plans were made to develop the site as a privately operated historical area then called "Pompeys Pillar Monument Park." Trails up the north side of the pillar were graded, steps and railings were installed to assist the climber. Interpretive markers were erected and a road was built from the highway to the river bank and then around the base of the pillar itself. The Clark signature was encased in a bronze casement sunk into the rock, with inch-thick shatterproof glass protecting the carving.

The Footes planned a rather large-scale development of the site including a Western frontier town and possibly a museum to house the family's extensive collection of western Americana. They moved three old buildings to the area including a turn-of-the century country store from Nibbe, Montana, a log structure from the Billings suburb of Lockwood, and a homesteader's cabin from Livingston. These buildings, plus a fourth structure intended for a livery stable and now used for a ticket booth, and a mobile home used by

the owners, are all located in a wooded area just east of the pillar. They are non-historic and do not contribute to the national significance of the site. Plans for the frontier town have been curtailed, but the area has been improved for recreational use and paths have been cleared through the cottonwood trees which line the river bank. An unpaved parking area has been made just northeast of the pillar, and picnicking facilities have been installed.

A number of miscellaneous objects associated with western history, though not necessarily with Pompeys Pillar, are displayed around the base of the rock formation, including a number of old wagons which line the road south of the pillar, a display of petrified wood, a case of Indian relics and a dugout canoe built by a local group. Since the original purchase of 105 acres, the Foote family has purchased approximately 80 more acres of adjacent property, which is used for farming and cattle raising, managed by a tenant whose house and farm buildings are located to the south, nearer route 312.

Much of the data from special NPS study by Andrew M. Loveless, 1965.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	XXARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
XX1800-1899	__COMMERCE	XXEXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES July 25, 1806 **BUILDER/ARCHITECT**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Pompeys Pillar is an isolated block of light-yellow sandstone that abruptly rises more than 100 feet above the level plain and south bank of the Yellowstone River, near Nibbe, Montana. On its upper east surface is carved "Wm Clark July 25, 1806", probably the only extant physical evidence of the entire Lewis and Clark expedition.

The pillar's primary historic significance is its association with the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806. However, it was evidently used by the Indians as a signal tower, and the walls bear Indian petroglyphs, which were noted by Clark in his journal. Also noted by Clark was the location of the rock tower near the intersection of the 46th parallel and the 108th meredian, which made the pillar a natural landmark for many later expeditions and surveys.

It was while on a side trip during the expedition's return east in 1806, following the Yellowstone River easterly, that explorer William Clark's party, which included Sacajawea and her child, noticed the prominent rock formation, which from that direction does resemble a tower. Clark recorded that he climbed the tower, carved his name and date on its surface, and named the rock formation for Sacajawea's infant son.

On their return from the Pacific, William Clark and Meriwether Lewis had divided the expedition, at Travellers Rest to explore various routes, and Clark and his men set out for the caches on Beaverhead. From there they proceeded down the river to Three Forks, and at that point the party again subdivided. Clark and his group crossed over Bozeman Pass to the Yellowstone and descended that stream.

Clark described the visit to the sandstone tower as follows:

> ...at 4PM arrived at the remarkable rock situated in an extensive bottom on the Stard. Side of the river and 250 paces from it. thick rock I ascended and from it's top had a most extensive view in every direction. This rock which I shall call Pompy's Tower is 200 feet high and 400 paces in secumpherance and only axcessible on one Side which is from the N.E. the other parts of it being a perpendicular clift of lightish coloured gritty rock...The natives have ingraved on the face

of this rock the figures of animals &c. near which I marked my name and the day of the month & year....

After reviewing the countryside and noting the "emence" herds of buffalo and elk nearby, Clark took the last look he would ever have of the Rockies and returned to the canoes. Continuing downriver, the party rejoined Meriwether Lewis, and the expedition reached St. Louis September 23, 1806.

Most later expeditions and surveys through southern Montana either passed by or terminated at Pompeys Pillar. In 1860, members of an exploration party climbed to its summit in order to observe scientifically a solar eclipse. The survey for the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad was completed near the pillar in 1873 and here George A. Custer, an officer in the accompanying military escort, arrived at the point farthest west he would ever reach.

A mining party under James Stuart in Spring 1863 noticed not only Clark's inscription, but the names of two of his men as well. A number of these early reports described the large numbers of wildlife, particularly buffalo also noted by Clark near the site. On June 3, 1875 an exploratory expedition along the Yellowstone river with several Smithsonian professors and a military escort reached Pompeys Pillar on board the Josephine, and the captain carved the name of the ship and the date on the pillar and flew the Stars and Stripes from the top of the rock tower. The next year a force of about 450 men under Colonel John Gibbon camped near the site and inscribed their names in the rock, and several noted Clark's signature in their journals.

No writer has ever seriously challenged the authenticity of the Clark signature; and on the basis of the known records and present condition of the carving, it appears most probable that the inscription is Clark's. It would be most unlikely that an early nineteenth century visitor could perpetrate such a hoax.

The name "Pomp" was the nickname Clark gave to Sacajawea's infant son, Baptiste Charboneau, according to a 1806 letter of Clark's. Nicholas Biddle, one of the later editors of the Lewis and Clark journals has been accused of substituting the name of a Roman column for Clark's simple name "Pompy's Tower".

Reuben G. Thwaites, The Original Journals of Lewis and Clark (New York, 1905).

James Stuart, "The Yellowstone Expedition of 1863," Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana (Helena, 1902).

Joseph M. Hanson, The Conquest of the Missouri (New York, 1946).

Lt. James H. Bradley, The March of the Montana Column (Norman, 1961).

Andrew M. Loveless, "Report on the Historical Investigation of Pompeys Pillar, Yellowstone County, Montana," National Park Service report: February 1965.

Robert G. Ferris, editor, Lewis and Clark: Historic Places Associated with Their Transcontinental Exploration, (1804-1806) (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1975).

This boundary is marked by the contour line 2890 on the USGS 7.5 minute map, Nibbe, Montana, where the butte rises from the nearly level surrounding terrace. This boundary is marked by a dirt road on the southeast and extends to the dirt road on the west at one spot. The boundary does not include the roads. No more area is included because there have been certain developments (discussed earlier) in the tree grove around the pillar. These tourist trade improvements, while they do not detract from Pompeys Pillar, are not associated with the significance of the National Landmark, and therefore have been excluded from the Landmark boundaries.

11 1

Andrew M. Loveless 1965.

Ray H. Mattison 1958

Ann M. Johnson 1982

Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
P.O.Box 25287
Denver, Co. 80225

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

see continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 6 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	12	732040	5097720	B	12	731928	5097640
C	12	731928	5097720	D	12	731920	5097760

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see continuation sheet

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins, Landmark Review Project — DATE 6/15/76

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER — TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN — STATE

Washington — D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ____ STATE ____ LOCAL ____

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE — DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 9/27/83

[redacted]

ATTEST: — DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER