



**Name of Property:** Fort Union (updated documentation and boundary change)  
**City, State:** Williston, North Dakota  
**Period of Significance:** 1828-1867  
**NHL Criteria:** 1, 6, Exception 6  
**NHL Theme:** I. Peopling Places  
                                 6. Encounters, conflicts, and colonization  
 IV. Shaping the Political Landscape  
                                 4. Political ideas, cultures, and theories  
 V. Developing the American Economy  
                                 6. Exchange and trade  
                                 7. Governmental policies and practices  
 VI. Expanding Science and Technology  
                                 3. Scientific thought and theory

**Previous Recognition:** 1961 National Historic Landmark  
 1966 National Historic Site  
 1982 National Register of Historic Places

**National Historic Context:** 1963 *Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830-1898 (The Fur Trade, Military and Indian Affairs)*

**NHL Significance:**

- Fort Union was one of the largest and most important fur-trading posts on the Upper Missouri River region from 1829 to 1867. The fort played a vital role in commerce, westward expansion of settlement and culture, scientific exploration, frontier transportation, and economic and cultural relations with American Indians.
- Archeological investigations have provided nationally significant information about a dynamic period of economic expansion in the early nineteenth century in the Trans-Mississippian West and Upper Missouri River. Data derived from the site will contribute significantly to a continuing theoretical debate concerning the frontier experience in North America.



- Fort Union 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 also represents the change in Federal policy regarding its relationship with American Indian tribes.

**Integrity:**

- Unexcavated portions of the site are largely undisturbed. Excavations have revealed outstanding preservation of archeological deposits across large areas of the site.
- Natural features of the greater Missouri and Yellowstone River confluence area are essentially unchanged since the 1961 NHL designation. Past agricultural activities have leveled the rolling terrace land to some degree, and there is a loss of native prairie vegetation and the expanses of timber along the floodplain.
- Carefully-planned natural and cultural resource restoration projects undertaken by the NPS have contributed to an improvement in the site's integrity, especially location, setting, feeling, and association. Accurate, partial reconstructions are part of a formal design plan based on available archeological, written, and pictorial records thus meeting NHL Criterion Exception 6. These resources are built on the location of the original structures and serve as the primary interpretive resource for the NPS unit.
- Evidence of the Missouri River's movement within the floodplain is still observable in the riparian area, and the river is still clearly visible from the Fort Union terrace.
- The noncontributing resources associated with NPS administration have been located to reduce their intrusion on the historic scene.

**Owner of Property:** Public—state and Federal.

**Acreage of Property:** Approximately 600 acres.

**Origins of Nomination:** The updated documentation and boundary change was initiated by the National Park Service (NPS) to address the substantial increase in knowledge about the site, its resources, and development since 1961. The 1961 designation included approximately eight acres within which only cellar pits were confirmed to exist; no boundary was described or period of national significance established. The 1982 National Register nomination, which also predated extensive archeological investigations, established a boundary corresponding to the National Historic Site boundary. The appearance of the National Historic Landmark and the National Historic Site changed considerably following a 1985 congressional mandate to reconstruct portions of the fort on the original site. Intensive archeological investigations from 1986 to 1988 informed the subsequent design and reconstruction of two buildings and seven structures. The updated documentation project began in 2001 using NPS funding. Revisions focused on the fur trade context, substantial augmentation of Criterion 6 information, and the identification and assessment of all associated cultural and natural features, including the reconstructions.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:**

- The updated documentation reflects reconsideration of historical themes from multiple cultural perspectives, and recognizes the attribution of cultural value on natural resources.

- The Montana and North Dakota SHPOs support the boundary.

**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

**Landmark Committee Comments:**

**Landmark Committee Recommendation:** Designation. Dr. Mills moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

**Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of )::**

**Public Comments Opposing Designation (received as of 05/27/14):**

Todd Sando, P.E., State Engineer, North Dakota State Water Commission

**Advisory Board Recommendation:**