

Please include relevant maps showing the route of the proposed byway. These maps should be one or more of the following: USGS quad maps, county road maps, BLM or Forest Service maps. For short routes of a few miles, the USGS quad maps may be appropriate, whereas long routes can be best illustrated on county, BLM or Forest Service maps. **See Page 7-a**

Is the use of the proposed Byway or Backway subject to seasonal limitations?

Yes No

If yes, please describe:

Should the use of proposed Byway or Backway be subject to vehicle type, size or weight restrictions?

Yes No

If yes, please describe:

Is it feasible to construct a turnout near each end of the proposed Scenic Byway or Backway? Yes No If so, identify the location(s).

The first historical marker encountered when entering the eastern edge of Wyoming along Highway 26 is an Oregon Trail marker indicating this to be the site of where the Oregon Trail entered Wyoming. This site needs to be enlarged to accommodate more parking and to give an overview of the entire Byway. This would list all the points of interest for the traveler from east to west along the Byway. It should also indicate where the visitor should go in Torrington, Lingle, Fort Laramie, and Guernsey to get more information. On the other end of the Byway at Dwyer Junction, it is proposed that interpretive signage be built at the rest stop at Dwyer Junction to include a Byway display detailing all the attractions along the Byway from west to east.

Please describe how the proposed Byway meets each of the six nominating criteria listed and described on the following pages. If you add pages to supplement the information on Page 2, label as Page 2(a), 2(b), etc. The nominated roadway must possess exceptional and/or distinctive scenic characteristics or cultural resource values.

Discuss those features which are part of the proposed route. (Note: A proposed route does not need to have all of the above features, but please include information about

all that do apply.) Be specific. For example, if the route has scenic features, describe what they are and why they may be exceptional or distinctive. If there are historic or prehistoric sites and/or districts along the route, briefly describe each site/district and its historic or prehistoric significance. Also include an annotated map which identifies the locations of the distinctive or exceptional features which are located along the proposed route. Photographs keyed to the map should be included to support the discussion of features. See Appendices F and G for additional information.

The nominated roadway must be functionally classified as an arterial or collector and meet basic design and safety standards to be eligible for designation as a Wyoming Scenic Byway, or must be functionally classified as a minor rural collector or local road to be eligible for designation as a Wyoming Scenic Backway.

Scenic Characteristics

- **Guernsey State Park – A beautiful water recreation area with camping and hiking facilities.**
- **Rawhide Wildlife Habitat Management Area – A wildlife area along the Platte River where visitors can walk along a path and view wildlife.**
- **Historic Fort Laramie – The National Park Service partially restored this frontier Army outpost that served to protect the pioneers as they traveled through this area.**

Cultural/Historic Characteristics

- **The Oregon Trail came through this area leaving marks on the landscape such as Register Rock and the wagon ruts.**
- **The Mormon Trail also came through this area.**
- **The Texas Trail brought cattle up through this area.**
- **The Cheyenne/Deadwood Stage road traversed this area.**
- **The Pony Express Route was located in this area.**
- **Five major frontier forts were located in this area (Ft. William, Ft. Bernard, Ft. John, Ft. Platte, Ft. Laramie).**
- **Fort Laramie played a major role in interaction/wars and treaties with the Indians.**
- **Some of the finest examples of CCC construction (CCC museum) and conservation projects are located at Guernsey State Park.**

(As indicated on Page i, WYDOT will determine the functional classification and prepare the safety analysis for each proposed byway and backway. However, please respond to the following paragraph.)

Describe the general roadway conditions, and identify the location of any problem locations such as sharp curves or narrow bridges. Identify any anticipated road improvement projects which would affect the condition or status of the proposed byway or backway.

The nominated roadway must be a public road as defined by Wyoming Statutes.

The proposed Byway is maintained year-round.

Road conditions are very good with no limitations.

There are no problem locations.

Some side excursions from the Byway are gravel (or partially graveled) roads and will be marked as such for the traveler.

Briefly discuss below the accessibility of the route. Is it a public road under the jurisdiction and maintenance of a public entity and open to the public? Is it open year round? (Note: proposed byways do not necessarily need to be open year round.) How accessible is the route to services such as food, fuel, lodging and sanitary facilities?

The Byway is totally accessible.

It is a public road under the jurisdiction and maintenance of a public entity and is open to the public.

The road is open year-round.

The route has adequate accessibility to services such as food, fuel, lodging, and sanitary facilities in each of the communities (Fortington, Lingie, Fort Laramie, Guernsey). At Dwyer Junction, there is a very nice rest stop available for all travelers.

The nominated roadway must have strong local support and proponents must demonstrate coordination with relevant agencies.

Identify the individual(s) or organization(s) preparing the nomination. Show evidence that local counties, communities, agencies, landowners (including federal and state) and private citizens have been involved in the nomination process. Coordination with these entities as well as local historical societies, municipal and county road departments (as appropriate), and the appropriate engineering district of the Wyoming Transportation Department is essential. A signed statement of support and/or disapproval of the nomination from each of the counties, communities, and relevant agencies is required; however, it is strongly recommended as a suitable method of demonstrating support and coordination from affected parties. If a Byway Marketing Association has been formed, indicate the membership and include minutes of meetings. A proposal must have substantial local support to be recommended for approval by the Advisory Committee.

The nominated roadway must be accompanied by a conceptual management plan, as specified in the nomination process.

A committee has been formed and called the Highway 26 Scenic Byway, Backway Committee. There are 27 members on this committee with representatives from all of the communities along the Byway, both Platte and Goshen counties, the Goshen County Chamber of Commerce, the Platte County Chamber of Commerce, the Platte County Historical Society, the Guernsey State Park, the Western History Center, the Wyoming Department of Transportation, the Fort Laramie National Historic Site, and the Homesteader Museum. (Also see Appendix A on page 10)

A conceptual management plan is a preliminary, abbreviated version of the corridor management plan which must later be developed by the sponsoring organization once the nominated route has been designated (see Appendix E). It must therefore address, in summary form, all the elements which are required to be part of the full corridor management plan. For the conceptual management plan, these include a summary of the following:

- An identification and evaluation of significant resources present along the nominated route (do not repeat information on Page 4)
- A plan for the development, interpretation, and protection of the outstanding characteristics of the route with special emphasis on the protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources
- The formation of a Byway Marketing Association
- A marketing plan
- An implementation plan which addresses the byway/backway organization and management, funding and financing, and implementation.

Discuss how the nominating organization proposes to promote and market the route on the local and regional level. Include promotional activities, placement of historical markers (if applicable), and proposed improvements or development along the route. Include sketches or design plans if available.

Please see sections X, XI, and XII on pages 7-a and 7-f.

Describe the availability of financial resources with which to upgrade, develop, sign, promote and otherwise make the scenic road and its corridor available for its intended uses. If no funding is presently available, indicate how the organization plans to locate funding sources.

Members of the Highway 26 Scenic Byway, Backway Committee understand the need to apply for funding from the National Scenic Highway Fund, the State Department of Transportation, and other sources as appropriate. The cities and counties also recognize the need to fund certain aspects of the project.

Describe future public use and development along the route and include evidence of a commitment to preserve, enhance and protect the scenic and historic qualities of the proposed byway.

Tourist dollars are important to the towns, cities, and counties along the Byway. This is indicated by the enthusiasm that the local leaders in Fort Laramie have shown for recreating Fort John. Since many of the attractions can be reached from two or more towns, there is a consensus, that, what benefits one town will also benefit other towns along the Byway.

Other than the recommendations included in this Byway Nomination. No other enhancements are planned for Highway 26 at this time. It is suggested; however, that a bicycle path along the Byway could be built to provide another activity for visitors to this area.

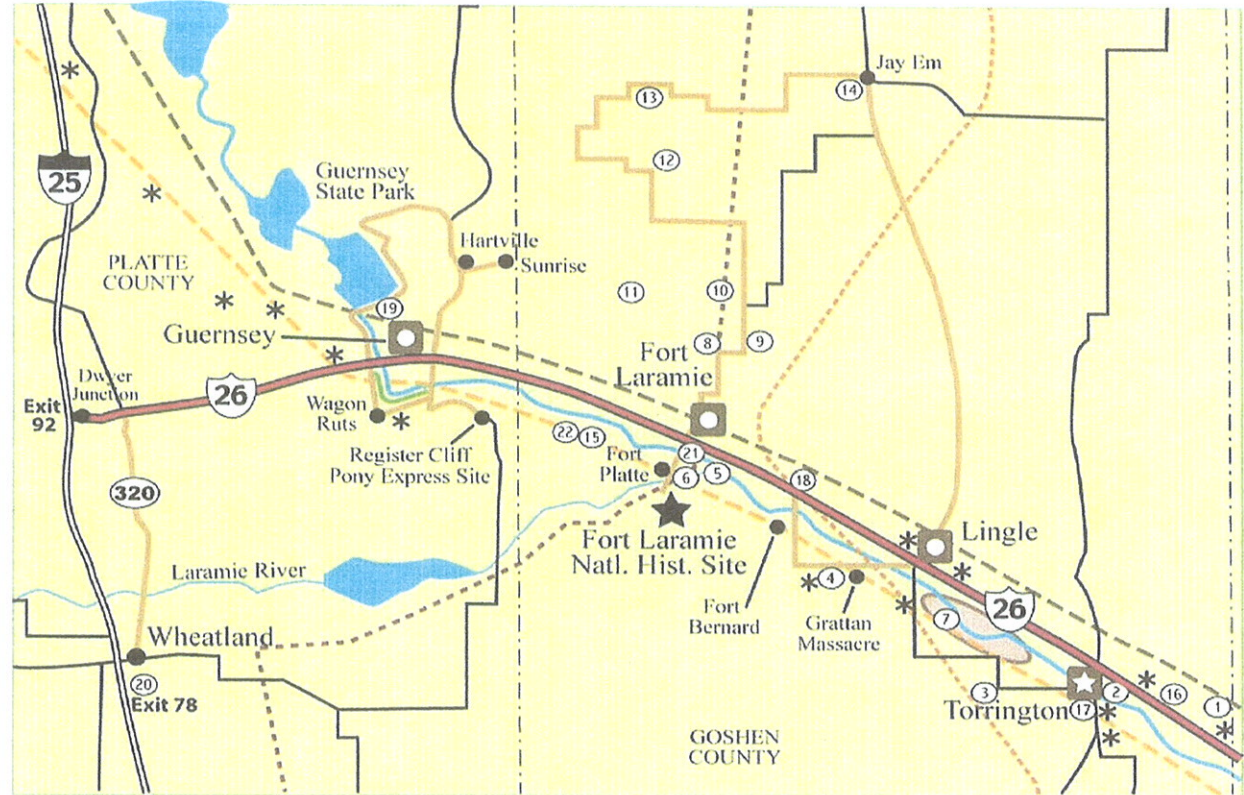
If you add pages to supplement the information on Page 7, label as 7(a), 7(b), etc. Roads that form a loop or are part of a network of scenic roads are preferred. A dead-end road may be included in the system if it has strong attractions at its terminus.

Oregon Trail Historic Byway

- Legend**
- Highway 26 Scenic Byway
 - Possible Side Excursions
 - Oregon & California Trail
 - Pony Express Route
 - Mormon Trail
 - Texas Trail
 - Cheyenne/Deadwood Sig Road
 - Oregon Trail Markers *
 - Lucindy Rollins Pedestrian Bicycle Trail

- Numbered Sites:**
1. Lower PF Ranch
Red Cloud Agency
 2. Cold Springs (Emigrant camp site
1850-60 & Pony Express Station)
 3. Ash Point (1850's) Rock Ranch
 4. Upper PF Ranch (Ranch house
of 1880's)
 5. Five-Mile Site (Location of
Gratiot trading post)
 6. 1875 Iron Bridge (Only early
permanent bridge in area)
 7. Rawhide Wildlife Habitat
Management Area
 8. Fisher Site
 9. 10 Mile Stage Stop
 10. Hageman Narrows
 11. Hell Gap Site
 12. Gov't Farm Stage Station (Site
1850's gov't hay farm & stage
station of 1870's-'80's)
 13. Browning, Dr. House & Hospital
 14. Jay Em Bison Kill Site
 15. Mary Homsley Grave
 16. Stuart Campsite
 17. Homesteaders Museum
 18. Western History Center
 19. CCC Museum
 20. Platte Co. Chamber of Commerce
suggested western Byway portal
 21. Proposed Fort John replication
 22. Bellam Wagon Ruts

Prepared by
Leasure & Associated
Bountiful, Utah



7-a

Oregon Trail Historic Byway

VISION STATEMENT

The proposed Oregon Trail Historic Byway features one of the major overland transportation routes into the western United States. The Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails all came through this area. The Texas Trail, the Cheyenne/Deadwood Stage Road, the railroad, and the Pony Express route converge in this area in part because of Historic Fort Laramie. The historic significance of these major transportation routes is evident by the cities and towns established along these thoroughfares.

The Oregon Trail Historic Byway tells a story about the people who lived in this area as well as those who merely traveled through on their way to other locations. This is a story of America and how it evolved to be the most mobile and diverse culture on earth. In the 1800's, millions came to and through this area of Wyoming in search of virgin land and a new future. To realize their dream, these people had to travel into the frontier and carve out a living from a wild and unforgiving land. This infusion of new people from Europe, Asia, and the eastern United States to the raw and rugged lands in the west is one of the most monumental invasions of settlers in human history.

The Byway is important in that it gives the traveler of today the opportunity to see and understand what it was like for those who traveled these roads long ago. Much of the country in this area is very similar to what it was 150 years ago. Add to this the fact that Fort Laramie was one of the major Army outposts of that era and allowed the emigrants to travel in relative safety. In attempting to provide protection to the emigrants, the soldiers of the fort eventually came in conflict with the Native people of this area. How they responded and what they did deserves serious contemplation. We cannot understand or appreciate who we are and what we have become if we do not appreciate the lives of those who have gone before and made our country into what it is today.

By bringing various communities, groups, and associations together to work on the development of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway, the project will focus the efforts of all groups in order to accomplish meaningful economic development in the southeast region of the State of Wyoming. The current demand for historic cultural attractions is significant.

A visit to the features along the Oregon Trail Historic Byway and an understanding of this land and the reasons why all of the travel routes passed through this one location will make travel on any modern highway or byway more meaningful and appreciated.

I THE CORRIDOR

The Scenic Byway, through the North Platte Valley in southeastern Wyoming, interprets one of the most historic sites in the United States, relative to the westward movement of the American population. The route of the Byway begins on Highway 26 at the Wyoming/Nebraska border and extends through Torrington, Lingle, Fort Laramie, and Guernsey. It then extends along Route 26 to Dwyer Junction where it ends at the intersection of Route 26 and Interstate 25. The length of the corridor is 57 miles. (See the attached map on 7a).

II INTRINSIC QUALITIES

Scenic – The proposed area of the Byway is one of the most fertile areas in Wyoming. Most of the Byway follows the Platte River which provides habitat for all species of local plants and wildlife. By taking a short historic loop from the Byway at Guernsey, the traveler can visit Guernsey State Park and enjoy this beautiful recreation area. Further along the loop are Hartville and Sunrise, two old mining towns. All the towns along the Byway feature quaint old buildings and interesting shops.

Much of the valley remains as the pioneers saw it as they traveled along the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails. The scenery is unique and striking. However, many early travelers underestimated the agricultural value of the valley. As the result of hard-working pioneers and resolute succeeding generations, the valley is now well appointed with attractive farms and ranches which date back to the “Old West” tradition of Wyoming. An observant traveler, moving at a reasonable pace, can readily see why the people, who came to this valley and planted themselves in it, fell in love with it.

Natural - The North Platte Valley is basically a grassland area. As indicated above, most of the geology of the area has been in a relatively undisturbed state for thousands of years. As we drive by in our modern vehicles, we see essentially the same landscape that greeted Native Americans who came up to the valley in the summer to hunt, and the same vistas, flora and fauna that were viewed by the pioneers on their way to Utah or the west coast. The beauty of the Laramie Valley is very much a natural beauty.

Historic – North Platte Valley has a vast and exciting historic legacy. Because of its location along so many emigrant trails, it is truly one of the great “Crossroads of the West.” These trails included numerous Indian trails, pioneer trails, the Pony Express, the Railroad, the Texas Trail, the Cheyenne/Deadwood Stage Road, and the current Highway System. The historic significance of these developments is unparalleled. Prior to the pioneers were the mountain men, and prior to the mountain men, for hundreds of years, were the Native Americans. Historically the various tribes in the area looked for food, the mountain men came here and searched for beaver, the emigrants passed through looking for a new life in Oregon, the 49ers traveled through this area dreaming of fortunes of gold, the traders who established Fort Bernard, Fort William, Fort Platte, Fort Laramie, and Fort John accommodated the fur trade and later the emigrants. Then came the soldiers and the Pony Express rider trying to link the nation with a speedy mail system. There was the cowboy bringing great herds of cattle to a growing population, the Mormons looking for relief from persecution, the miners, the farmers and ranchers looking for a place to make their own, and the engineers building roads and railroads to accommodate a new mobile society; all were here, and all left their own distinct tracks. There are more stories than you could tell in a lifetime.

Cultural – The culture of this area begins with the Native Americans. Then there is the history of the mountain men – it is short, but it represents a critical turning point in the history of the United States. Their activity starts when white men are relatively unknown in the great American West and closes with the realization that it is possible for the white culture to inhabit and utilize this vast resource. Mountain men opened the door for western expansion, and the story of that expansion is the essence of the story of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway.

Archeology – One of the truly unique features of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway is the opportunity offered by the Western History Center in Lingle for anyone to participate in an actual archeological dig. Reservations must be made so that proper accommodations can be furnished, but anyone is welcome to participate.

Recreational - The outdoor recreation resources of Oregon Trail Historic Byway are varied and well developed. Summer activities include swimming, hiking and biking on established trails, camping, wildlife observation and photography, fishing, hunting and bird watching. There are activities for visitors of all ages. Helpful support services such as maps and guidebooks are available from the local communities.

III MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING INTRINSIC QUALITIES

The Oregon Trail Historic Byway is basically a rural environment that contains no major population center, but rather just small towns. Public officials and the public itself are highly protective of the visual integrity and attractiveness of the intrinsic qualities outlined above. They, the intrinsic qualities, are protected by very high standards to abate any degradation. The major cultural event of the year is the County Fair and it is utterly charming with its small-town flair.

IV AGENCY, GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Highway 26 Scenic Byway, Backway Committee has volunteered to direct the efforts necessary to prepare a Corridor Management Plan for the Oregon Trail Historic Byway. Once the Byway has been designated by the State of Wyoming as a State Scenic Byway and the Corridor Management Plan has been written, the Highway 26 Scenic Byway, Backway Committee coalition will be expanded and formalized into a Byway Coordinating Committee. This committee will then direct the implementation of the Corridor Management Plan and schedule the necessary agency, group and individual responsibilities. The committee will likewise review how well those responsibilities are being met as the Byway progresses. The Byway Marketing Association will be a subcommittee of this group.

V DEVELOPMENT

The Corridor Management Plan will specify how existing development might be enhanced and new development might be accommodated while still preserving the intrinsic qualities of the corridor. Byway-related development might include highway pullouts at interpretive sites and visitor information centers at both ends of the Byway corridor. A theme will be conceived and implemented to insure that these enhancements are design consistent and appropriate. Preliminary concepts for enhancements to Byway interpretive facilities are included below in the section entitled "Oregon Trail Historic Byway."

VI PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Byway planning and implementation process is an open process. Federal, State, and local authorities have been invited to participate. Each community along the Byway corridor has a voice. Business owners, landowners and individual concerned citizens are welcome. Many have already been contacted and have contributed to the preliminary efforts. Provisions for ongoing participation will be incorporated into the Corridor Management Plan. Please note the attached letters of commitment and support that are evidence of existing participation.

VII HIGHWAY SAFETY

The general roadway conditions are very good. The road has an excellent safety record. There are no problem locations. There are no road improvement projects which would affect the condition or status of the proposed Oregon Trail Historic Byway.

VIII COMMERCE

All Byway facilities will be located so as not to interfere with the conduct of commerce in the North Platte Valley. Again, this is a very rural location. Traffic on the highway is light. Nevertheless, no Byway activity will impede normal commerce or endanger Byway visitors.

IX INTRUSIONS ON THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The probability of intrusions on the experience of Byway visitors is minimal. However, Byway improvements will be designed to be both site friendly and also protective of the visitor's experience.

X OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Outdoor advertising along the Byway corridor will comply with all existing local, State, and Federal laws on the control of outdoor advertising.

XI SIGNAGE PLAN

Interpretive and directional signage will be specified in the Corridor Management Plan. Comprehensive signs will be located at both of the Visitor Centers. Each interpretive site will be identified by location and approach signs. The Oregon Trail Historic Byway logo will be highlighted on these signs. Appropriate Wyoming and Federal logos will also be used.

XII MARKETING

The Oregon Trail Historic Byway will be positioned for marketing in the Western Adventure segment of the cultural tourism market, which is rapidly expanding. The primary thrust of the Byway story is the settlement of the West. Indications are that the traveling public is eager to experience entertaining, educational, history-related venues. Of course, the major source of visitors to the Byway will be traveling on Interstate Highway 25 (I-25) or entering Wyoming on Highway 26 from Nebraska. Highway 26 in Nebraska has been designated a Nebraska State Byway and entitled the Western Trails Historic and Scenic Byway. Additional visitors could access the Oregon Trail Historic Byway coming south from Lusk along Highway 85 or north along 85 from the Cheyenne area. Marketing efforts will focus on increasing awareness of the Byway on the part of these motorists. Inclusion of the Byway in appropriate State of Wyoming tourism materials (i.e. the Wyoming Cultural Guide and business listings in the Official Travelers Journal) is also essential. In addition, a greater effort should be mounted to gain greater attention of tour bus operators.

Since an ever-increasing number of travelers plan their trips based on information available on the Internet, it is very important that the Oregon Trail Historic Byway establish and maintain its own web site. When established, the web site must be linked to other sites, particularly those that feature highway travel and Scenic Byways such as Wildernet.com and wyomingtourism.org. Finally, it is essential that very high quality material be provided to the National Scenic Byways Program for inclusion on their web site, which includes information on all of the State designated Scenic Byways.

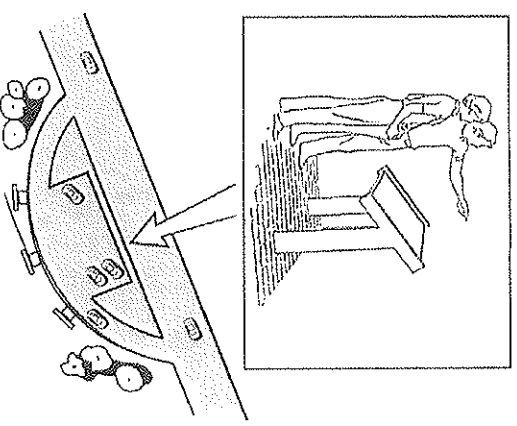
XIII HIGHWAY DESIGN STANDARDS

There are no modifications to the existing roadway contemplated at this time. Pullouts and other access to interpretive facilities will be designed in accordance with applicable State and Federal highway standards.

Oregon Trail Historic Byway

The western portal of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway will be located at the Rest Stop at Dwyer Junction. The eastern portal of the Byway will be located at the first Oregon Trail marker along Highway 26 when entering Wyoming from Nebraska. The following description of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway begins at the Oregon Trail marker and goes from east to west

1. Oregon Trail marker – This marker indicates the location of where the Oregon Trail entered Wyoming. This turnout needs to be improved to provide more parking and to give an overview of the Oregon Trail Historic Byway. It is proposed that a large map be constructed at this pullout along with information concerning the various attractions along the Byway. Information should also be provided as to where visitors can obtain more detailed brochures or information for various stops along the Byway.



In addition a full and clear description of the PF Ranch/Red Cloud Agency should be given. These important historical sites of the 1880's are currently on private land and part of another structure.

Example of proposed turnout

2. Stuart Campsite Sign – Approximately 4.4 miles east of Torrington on the north side of Highway 26 is a sign indicating the location where Robert Stuart and his company built a cabin and spent the winter of 1812. Stuart had been sent by John Jacob Astor, the man who ran a major fur trading post on the Columbia River, to find a land route to St. Louis. Stuart and his men are credited with blazing what was to become the Oregon Trail and discovering the famous South Pass through the Rockies. The South pass was critical in allowing the wagons a passable route over the Continental Divide.

3. Torrington – The first town along the Oregon Trail Historic Byway, Torrington was the first station in Wyoming on the Bridgeport and Guernsey branch of the C.B. & Q. railroad. It is located on the north bank of the North Platte River. The first post office was established in 1889 by W.G. Curtis about one mile west of the present town site. Curtis gave the town its name after the town of Torrington, Connecticut, where he and his family formerly lived. He served as postmaster for several years and then John Cameron took over the job and moved the post office to his residence.


In May of 1900, the Guernsey branch of the Burlington railroad was built adjacent to the site of the post office and a station was built. At this time, there was no business district in Torrington and people drove to Gering to do their shopping. Soon people were

coming to Torrington to settle and take advantage of the rich soil. With the increase of people came businesses, and Torrington began to grow.

Torrington quickly became known as a railroad shipping point for cattle. Cattle by the thousands were loaded aboard trains for shipment to the nation's markets. The old stockyard and cattle auction arena can still be seen and visited. The importance of the railroad to the local economy was tremendous. Torrington owes a large part of its prosperity to this access to eastern (and western) markets provided by the railroad.

To really understand how this town grew, one must understand its "founder" W.G. Curtis. He served as the Laramie County Commissioner in Torrington as well as two terms as Mayor. He helped establish a land office with very accurate maps so that people wishing to settle in Torrington (or the surrounding area) could file for their land purchases at Torrington rather than travel to Cheyenne for their filings and final proof hearings. Curtis also participated in the construction of several irrigation ditches, which made the land even more valuable and fertile. He even served one term in the Wyoming State Legislature.

Walking Tour of Historic Torrington, Wyoming




1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.




1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.




1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



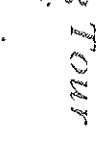
1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.




1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



Map of Torrington



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.




1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.



1881 Main Street - The building shown here was the first brick building in Torrington. It was built by W.G. Curtis and is now a museum.

When visiting Torrington, make certain to take the walking tour of the town