

during the fur trading and emigrant eras. This project should fit nicely with the efforts made at Historic Fort Laramie to tell the story of this historic area.



*Proposed site for recreation of Fort John*

Fort John was originally built as a square structure of approximately 130 feet by 122 feet. By the time the Mormons wrote about the fort, between 1847 and 1849, the fort had been enlarged so that it was approximately 167 feet long and 122 feet wide. It was reported to contain 18 rooms inside the stockade, each with one door and one window opening onto the courtyard. The walls were 15 feet high and there were bastions on opposing corners. Over the entrance was a two-story structure that some reports have labeled a blockhouse. Originally named Fort John, it was later called Fort John on the Laramie (as in Laramie River). Eastern shipping clerks became tired of writing the long name, so they shortened it to Fort Laramie.



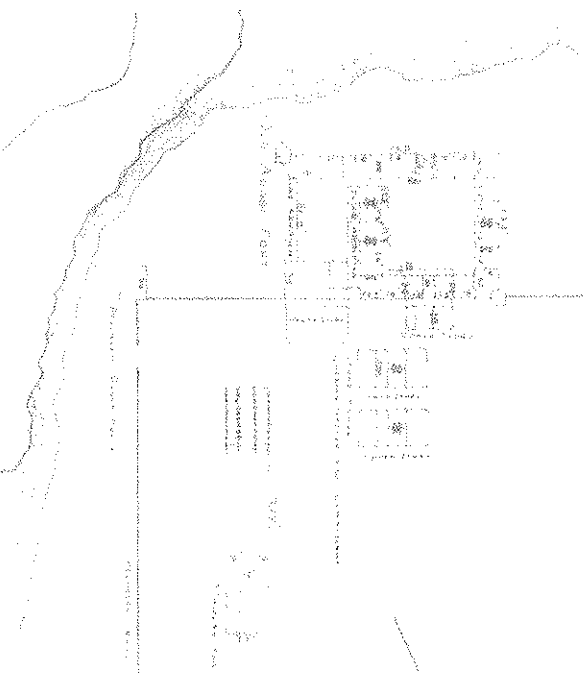
Sketch by Frederick Remington based on a Sketch by Charles Gillespie of Fort John in 1849

It is our suggestion that Fort John be recreated as it appeared in 1847-49, so that interpreters have the opportunity of discussing the fort's significance in the fur trade era, the Oregon Trail era, the Mormon Trail era, and the Gold rush era. As indicated below, the army purchased Fort John in 1849. Historic Fort Laramie has been restored much as it appeared from 1850-1880.

**10. Historic Fort Laramie** – Three miles south of the town of Fort Laramie along Highway 160 is Historic Fort Laramie. Restored by the National Park Service, this was the first garrisoned post in Wyoming and it was a very important outpost on the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails. Today, it has been partially restored much the way it was in 1876 and features the most complete western bookstore west of the

Mississippi River. Across the Laramie River from Historic Fort Laramie is the site of old Fort Platte.

The history of Historic Fort Laramie is fascinating even for those who do not usually enjoy history. In 1834, the first Fort built in this area was officially named Fort William and it was made of cottonwood logs stood on end in a trench about three feet deep. Despite its official name, it is sometimes referred to as "Fort Laramie." This fort was built to trade furs with the Indians. This endeavor was so successful that in 1841, a competing fort (Fort Platte) was built a short distance away.



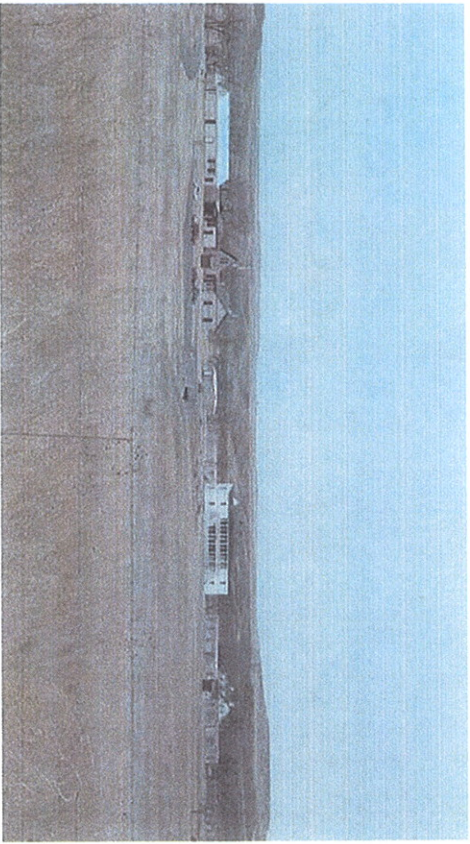
*This portion of a plan for building Fort Laramie shows the layout of old Fort John*

By the time Fort Platte was completed, the cottonwood logs of Fort William had rotted and the fort was in poor shape. These conditions prompted the American Fur Company to abandon Fort William and at a cost of \$10,000.00 build, a new adobe fort named Fort John. It was an imposing structure and put the American Fur Company back on top in attracting fur traders. Sadly, the era of the fur trader was coming to a close. Fur hats were being replaced by silk hats and the price of beaver pelts plummeted.

As the need for furs dwindled, a new trade developed for the fort. In 1841, the Bidwell/Bartleson emigrant train pulled in to Fort John. The fort enjoyed a brisk trade in provisions, repairing equipment, trading stock, and ferrying the emigrants across the river. Throughout the 1840's the emigrant traffic increased and kept the fort in business. Once again, the fort was often called "Fort Laramie."

In 1848, an Indian Agent for the region recommended that a military post be established at Fort John for the protection of the emigrants. In 1849, the United States Army purchased the fort from the American Fur Company for \$4,000.00. Originally, plans to expand the fort called for a board fence or a rubble wall to surround the entire garrison, but a lack of funds prevented it from happening. This army post is the Fort Laramie made famous as a result of the Indian wars and treaties that were signed here. It was an important stop for the emigrants that flooded the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails. The old Fort John continued to dominate the landscape of Fort Laramie until 1860 when it fell into ruins.

Between 1880 and 1890 the need for Fort Laramie waned. The post was still kept in good repair, but the need for this fort was coming to a close. Closure was suggested in 1886 and finally ordered in 1889. The fort was initially sold to three homesteaders and left in their hands.



*Fort Laramie as it appears today*

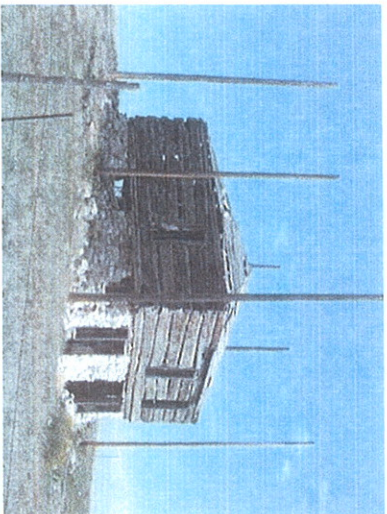
In 1913, historic interest in the fort had grown to the point that a group of citizens erected a monument on the grounds, commemorating the Oregon Trail and the part the fort had played in the massive pioneer migration. In 1927, the state of Wyoming purchased 214 acres of the original fort grounds and presented it to the United States for purposes of establishing a national monument. In 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt declared Fort Laramie a national historical monument and the restoration process began.

When driving to Historic Fort Laramie the visitor crosses another historic structure, the Iron Bridge, the only early permanent bridge in the area. It was constructed in 1875.



*The 1875 Iron Bridge*

North of the town of Fort Laramie is a gravel road along which several historic sites are located. Some of these sites such as Dr. Brownrigg's house and hospital can still be seen. Other sites are only marked by signs or markers. This gravel road ends at



Jay Ern and forms an historic loop back to Lingle along a paved road (as mentioned earlier).

*Dr. Brownrigg's house and hospital*

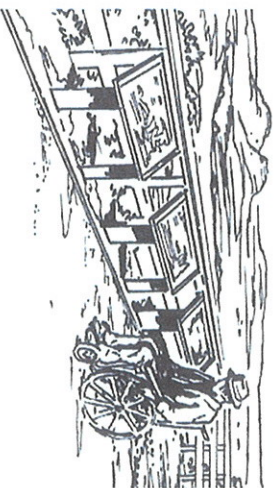


*Guernsey Rest Stop*

**11. Guernsey Rest Stop –**  
Between Fort Laramie and Guernsey is a well-developed rest stop with 20 parking spots. It contains displays and signage, which could be updated to inform travelers about the Oregon Trail Historic Byway. Since this rest stop is roughly half way

through the Byway, information should be given for all features along the Byway.

*Example of signage at the Guernsey Rest Stop.*



**12. Guernsey –** Guernsey is named for Charles A. Guernsey, a prominent rancher, legislator, and entrepreneur. Home to a little over 1000 people, Guernsey serves as a hub for the Burlington Northern Railroad. It is also home to the Wyoming National Guard Camp Guernsey.

Camp Guernsey, established in 1938, is one of the most comprehensive joint training centers in the nation. It *Civilian* encompasses approximately 65,000 acres. This area not only provides for state-of-the-art military, police, and emergency services training, but it also includes over 700 archaeological and historic sites. Permission must be granted before visiting any location located on the camp.

Two miles northwest of Guernsey is the Guernsey State Park and reservoir, which is very beautiful. This park contains a Civilian Conservation Corps Museum and some