

Superintendent's Lodge  
Custer Battlefield National Monument  
Big Horn County  
Montana

HABS No. MON-7

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

SUPERINTENDENT'S LODGE

Custer Battlefield National Monument, Big Horn County, Montana

LOCATION: Adjacent to the site of the Custer Massacre.  
OWNER: The Department of Interior, National Park Service.  
OCCUPANT: Open to the Public.  
USE: Structure used as a Chapel or Meditation Area.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1894 to house a Superintendent who was to oversee the placing of grave markers for General Custer and the men of the United States Seventh Cavalry who perished in the Battle of Big Horn. Custer Battlefield was made a National Cemetery By Order of the Secretary of War in 1879, three years after the Custer Massacre. The 1.2 square miles of the monument is surrounded almost entirely by the Crow Indian Reservation.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: Constructed by the War Department. The Custer Battlefield National Cemetery was transferred from the War Department to the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, in 1940 and the name changed in 1946 to Custer Battlefield National Monument.
2. Date of Erection: 1894.
3. Architect: Unknown.

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4. Builder: The War Department; cost of \$4,500.
5. Original Plans: Original Plans were approved by the Quartermaster General, U.S.A., March, 1894. Revisions were made to the plans by the Office of the Quartermaster, 9th Cavalry, dated January, 1933. The 1933 revisions are on file with the National Park Service, Western Office, Design and Construction, San Francisco, California.
6. Notes on Alterations and Additions:
  - a. Remodeled in 1909, with a metal roof, spoutings, conductors and porch; cost \$278.
  - b. Plans dated January, 1933, prepared by the Office of the Quartermaster, 9th Cavalry, entitled "Proposed Revisions to Superintendent's Lodge at Custer Battlefield National Cemetery" show the following additions made: electric wiring, steam heating system, storm entrance to basement, bathroom plumbing and sewer connections, coal bin and coal chute, laundry room, metal roof, concrete floor in basement, water filter and sterilizer, air compressor and air line.
  - c. In 1935, built-in kitchen cabinets and china closet were added for \$213.
  - d. In 1937, an outside entrance was cut to the present (then in use) office and a large double door, connecting the office and hallway of the living quarters, was replaced by a regular sized door for \$206.
  - e. Building appraised at \$22,000 by Architect Frank E. Mattson, in a report on file at the Custer National Monument, dated February 4, 1952.
  - f. In 1952, a wood window was installed in place of the door leading into the living room office. Tile in office replaced with No. 2 oak.
  - g. Kitchen remodeled into a lounge area, and other minor changes were made in 1962-3.
7. Important Old Views: Early photograph(s) and recent photos

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are in the possession of K. F. Roahen, 127 Lewis Street, Billings, Montana. Mr. Roahen, a retired Department of the Interior employee, is a historian and photographer. An early photograph, copyrighted by Roahen, shows the Superintendent's Lodge standing naked on the elevated grounds. Date of the photograph is unknown but one can assume that it may be 40 to 60 years old by the size of the trees that have now grown about the structure.

B. Historic Events Connected with the Structure:

1. Erected by the War Department in 1894 to house the Superintendent of Custer Battlefield National Cemetery.
2. Custer Battlefield was made a National Cemetery in 1879, just two years after Chief Joseph surrendered to General Miles.
3. A National Cemetery for burials from many of the Indian battles of the Northern Plains was established in a portion of the Monument at the Superintendent's Lodge.
4. Jurisdiction was transferred to the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, in 1940.
5. Public offices moved out of the building to newer quarters on January 14, 1952.
6. The old Superintendent's Lodge at Custer National Monument is considered to be a historic structure by the National Park Service.

C. References:

1. Custer Battlefield National Monument, Montana, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1939, U. S. Government Printing Office.
2. Records on file of the Old Superintendent's Lodge, Custer National Monument office.
3. Conferences with K. F. Roahen, President of the Museum Assn., Custer Battlefield National Monument, Billings, Montana.
4. Conferences with Georgia Carter, member Billings Historical Society, Billings, Montana.

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## II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A square plan structure, two stories in height and having a full basement beneath. Each floor has 900 square feet of area; total volume is 27,225 cubic feet. Frame passageway between kitchen and carriage house is not original.

2. Condition of Structure: Good.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 30'-0" x 30'-0" with a porch across the front of 20'-8" x 6'-8".

2. Foundations: Stone.

3. Wall Construction: Native stone laid in uncoursed ashlar fashion.

4. Chimneys: Brick.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: Present wood 4-paneled front door assumed to be not original. Wood basement door, 2 panel with 2 lights above. Rear wood door, 2 panel with 4 lights above. All doorways have a keyed stone arch.

b. Windows and Shutters: First floor has 4/4 double-hung windows while the second floor has 6/6 double-hung windows. All have a keyed stone arch and stone sills except the one first floor front window that was installed in a doorway opening during alterations. External shutters have been removed. A circular window having five lights is located in each of the gable ends.

6. Roof:

a. Gable roof presently metal covered. Roof of porch is also metal covered.

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b. Framing: 2x6 rafters rest upon a 4" x 10" girder at the mid-point that is supported on the north-south partition by a "stool" of 3" x 4" (see drawings, sheet #7).

c. Ceiling joists are 2" x 6", 16" o.c.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor Plan: Consists of two stories, full basement and unfinished attic. Main east-west and north-south partitions divide the first floor into four rooms. Corner fireplaces, back to back, one opening into the living room and one (now framed in) facing into the dining-room. Second floor also has four-room arrangement.

2. Stairways: Single stair along south wall connects entry hall to second floor hallway. An outside doorway leads directly to the basement. A short flight of stairs connects the kitchen to the basement access.

3. Flooring:

a. First floor has 2" x 8" floor joists at 16" o.c. resting on an 8" x 10" girder running beneath the main load-bearing north-south first floor partition. The girder is supported by 18" brick piers at its mid-points. Oak floor in hall, living room and dining-room not original. Soft wood covered with tile in kitchen.

b. Second floor has soft wood flooring over 2" x 8" joists, 16" o.c.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Exterior walls are furred and plastered. Interior walls and ceilings plastered.

5. Fireplace: Brick, having a wood mantel and plastered above the mantel.

6. Doorways and Doors: Interior doors are wood 4-paneled.

7. Trim: Wood trim with mouldings.

8. Hardware: Original pieces are cast iron; most have been replaced with newer pieces.

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- 9. Lighting: Electric.
- 10. Heating: Originally heated by fireplaces. A steam heating system was installed in 1933.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and Orientation: The Custer Battlefield is in southeastern Montana about 15 miles south of the town of Hardin and approximately 1 mile off U.S. Highway 10. Superintendent's Lodge sits upon a hill overlooking the Little Big Horn River and surrounding valley, and is located at the west end of the National Cemetery. The front of the building faces west-northwest. Access to the Cemetery and Monument originally passed in front of the building.
- 2. Enclosures: A stone fence runs in front of the building. Iron gates give access to the building and to the cemetery.
- 3. Outbuildings: A stone band shell stands in the northwest corner of the enclosure. A frame shed-access connects the Superintendent's Lodge with the carriage houses. A multi-car garage is adjacent to the carriage house. These outbuildings are slated to be demolished under the landscape architect's proposed plans for expansion of the cemetery.
- 4. Walks: Concrete.
- 5. Landscaping: Large evergreens frame an access to the cemetery. Other shrubs and trees that surround the building are not recent.

Prepared by,  
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DATE: *April 1964*