

Granger Stage Station
Old Route 30 North, .15 miles southeast
of Union Pacific Railroad
Granger
Sweetwater County
Wyoming

HABS No. WYO-67

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WYO,
19-GRANG,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

GRANGER STAGE STATION

Location: Old Route 30 North, .15 miles southeast of Union Pacific Railroad, Granger, Sweetwater County, Wyoming.
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: (USGS Granger Quadrangle Map) 12.585600.4604910.

Present Owner: State of Wyoming.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Historic Site.

Statement of Significance: Located at the junction of the Ham's Fork and Black's Fork tributaries of the Green River, the Granger Stage Station is also the junction point of two major mail and migration routes through Wyoming: the Oregon and Overland Trails - the principle routes of the Pony Express and the Overland Stage, respectively. The structure is the successor to an older, no longer extant station on the Oregon Trail known as the Ham's Fork Station, a name sometimes used in reference to Granger. The construction of the new station most probably dates from the inauguration of the Overland Route in 1862.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ca. 1861-62.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a partial chain of title to one acre of land in the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 32, Township 19 North, Range 111 West. Reference is to the Office of the County Clerk, Sweetwater County Courthouse, Green River, Wyoming.

1899 Deed, April 20, 1899, recorded May 19, 1899
S. E. Day et al
to
The Union Pacific R.R.

- 1901 Warranty Deed, November 22, 1901, recorded March 4, 1925
George A. Crofutt and wife
to
James Davison
- 1917 Warranty Deed, April 27, 1917, recorded October 31, 1917
James Davison
to
Mary E. Brandley
- 1930 Decree, June 16, 1930, recorded June 16, 1930
Mary E. Brandley (court decree)
to
Clarence and Roy B. Adams (her grandsons)
- Quit Claim Deed, August 11, 1930, recorded August 21, 1930
Clarence and Roy B. Adams and wives
to
The Historical Landmark Commission (State of Wyoming)

4. Original plan and construction: There is much confusion and disagreement among local historians over this building. It has been officially designated as the station - constructed in 1850 - which served both the Overland and Oregon Trails. There are many who doubt this and question whether, in fact, the building was ever a stage station. The date ascribed to the building varies from 1850 to 1900, and there is considerable uncertainty as to which portion of the extant structure and its adjacent ruins is original. The following is a summary and evaluation of the evidence on the subject.

There are five contiguous components of the station. These are, from east to west: a long, low timber structure with a low-sloped roof; a stone extension of this; the major stone structure, still intact, composed of two sections, north and south of each other, and separated by a stone wall which is as thick as the exterior walls; and a small stone lean-to or ell at the southwest corner of the main structure. The wooden east wing no longer exists and its stone counterpart is in ruins. These, taken together, were probably a stable. Of the ell, only the foundations remain and its original purpose is uncertain.

There is no way to verify which part of the station was constructed first. The eastern-most stone structure is in ruin-

ous condition. Its construction is typical of buildings known to have been stage stations. The main building is more sophisticated in both its construction and the quality of materials used in it.

The main building has an unusually massive interior wall which divides the station roughly in half. This suggests that the building was smaller at one time. The presence of a threshold in the doorway of that wall, unnecessary for an interior door, lends further support to this hypothesis. A chimney once located on this wall appears in the center of the roof in a ca. 1930 photograph. Some time later the chimney was removed and two interior chimneys were installed. The remains of the early chimney can still be seen in the attic. It apparently projected only a few inches north of the wall. In 1935 the interior walls were plastered, and the exterior was coated with cement. The exterior coat was probably the first cover ever applied to the outside walls. The interior plaster was applied over a thinner coating of plaster and horsehair, which may be seen where the new plaster has chipped. The two large rooms formed by the stone dividing wall are further subdivided by wooden partitions of indeterminate date.

The debate over the age and use of the structure revolves largely on the recollections of "old timers" and the opinions of local historians, based on limited archaeological observations and the conflict or concurrence of historical accounts. Mr. Aubrey Haines, of the National Park Service, has summarized some of the arguments in his study of historic sites of the Oregon Trail:

"A number of factors indicate that the structures given to the State are not as old as claimed: a) Neither the site nor the structures agree with Sir Richard Burton's description of 1860 [See Below], b) The structures are aligned with the town streets, which are laid out as a grid oriented according to the railroad tracks (the railroad built through during the summer of 1868), c) An examination of the door and window casings of the intact structure, and the framing of the beams of the ruin, showed only wire nails (manufacture of such nails began in 1892--hand-made square nails would be expected in an 1850 structure, and machine forged square nails after 1865), d) the main building is architecturally incongruous; that is, its cut stone, brick chimneys and gabled roof would hardly be expected in an isolated stage station..."

The account of Sir Richard Burton referred to in the text, was made in 1850 and reads as follows:

"...reached Ham's Fork...and there we found a station. The pleasant little stream called by the Indians Turugempa, the Blackfoot Water. The station was kept by an Irishman and Scotsman--"Dawvid Lewis": It was a disgrace: the squalor and filth were worse almost than the two--Cold Springs and Rock Creek--which had called our horrors, and which had always seemed to be the ne plus ultra of Western discomfort. The shanty was made of dry stone piled up against a dwarf cliff to save backwall, and ignored doors and windows."

This description, upon which Haines offers his first contention, is sufficient to show that the present station was not there in 1860, obviously not in 1850. The logical answer to this is offered by Western historian Paul Henderson of Nebraska. The old dugout station was replaced in 1862 by a new one with the establishment of the new overland route by Ben Holladay. The name of the stop is known to have been changed officially at that time from "Ham's Fork" to "Granger," (it appears thus on 1862 time-tables). Some historians find this inexplicable, but it would account for an attempt to avoid confusion of the two stations which may have functioned simultaneously for a time. Burton's account of squalor at the station far exceeds that of any other stop on the stage line, and it would be reasonable to assume that with increased traffic and upgrading of facilities by Holladay in the early 60s, a change was in order. There is really no conflict with that historical account and the validity of the site's claim. The remains of the building thought to be the 1850 station on the Oregon Trail have been found about four miles from Granger.

The second contention disappears when one realizes that the alignment of the building and the grid are hardly precise. Furthermore, it would have been logical to align the station with the stage road, which is roughly parallel to the railroad along most of its route, but not at that point.

The problem of the wire nails is a bit more damning to the case of the site, but the areas in which they appeared are superficial and do not occur at major structural points. The window and roof would be expected to deteriorate to such an extent that they would have been modified, altered or replaced altogether long before this writing, as is the case with the Point of Rocks Station, a documentable stage station. The

station was last used as a residence, moreover, which would account for these minimal amenities.

Architectural incongruity is once more no valid argument, since it can be readily observed that the site has undergone much addition. The plastering of the walls makes it difficult to locate any seams in the rock which would indicate the addition of the gable. The stone does not appear to have been that carefully quarried in the single existing photograph, which was made before the walls were covered. Even so, the Point of Rocks station has very carefully dressed quoins, and the remainder of the masonry, while of field stone, is most precisely laid up.

None of the above refutations proves that the building was actually the stage station. There are several less concrete pieces of evidence to indicate that this was the case, however. When the station was given to the state in 1932, there were several people present at the dedication ceremonies of sufficient age and pioneer status to have very sound recollections of the buildings as a stage stop. Chief among them is the noted pioneer of western photography, William Henry Jackson. In his autobiographical account of travel through Wyoming, Jackson speaks of spending three weeks at the station hauling hay while waiting for transportation to Salt Lake City. When the State of Wyoming was presented with the property, Jackson donated a bronze dedicatory plaque in commemoration of his experiences there, and it is unlikely that he would have taken such action if he knew the building to be the wrong one.

Even so, the evidence is inconclusive on both sides. It was hoped that examination of the notes of the land survey made in 1874 would shed some light on the subject. Reference was found in these notes to a "station house," and a plotting of its location placed it in an entirely different section. Further examination of the notes seemed to indicate that "station house" referred to the railroad station. This was more consistent with the plotted location. The notes themselves correspond precisely with neither geographical features, nor the present section boundaries as they appear on modern maps. This source therefore proved to be inconclusive as well.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Granger Stage Station was the successor to the earlier Ham's Fork Station. It is located at the junction of two of the most

important freight and migration trails of the period, the Oregon and Overland Trails. The Oregon, which meets the Overland just north of Granger Station, predates the Overland by several years. The Oregon Trail was the route of the early transcontinental mails, passenger stages and the Pony Express, as well as wagon trains. The original station known as the Ham's Fork Station, was a single dugout built into a low slope about 1850. It served as a relay stop on the Pony Express, a venture initiated by the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company (C.O.C.&P.P.) in 1860-61 to improve the status of the troubled stage company.

Since 1860, the C.O.C.&P.P. had followed the central overland route which crossed the Rockies at South Pass City, Wyoming. The discovery of gold at Clear Creek, Colorado, in 1860, and the establishment of the Colorado Territory on February 28, 1861, gave rise to an increased demand for a stage line through Denver, to proceed west directly to Clear Creek and Salt Lake City. The C.O.C.&P.P. Company was in a difficult financial position at the time and could not afford to finance the more southerly route over the more favored Cherokee Trail which had been scouted for the Company by the famous mountain man, Jim Bridger. A mortgage loan was secured from Ben Holladay for a term of three years. Holladay called the loan due after two weeks, ostensibly because of his lack of confidence in the C.O.C.&P.P. On March 21, 1862, the Company went to public auction in Atchison and was purchased by Holladay for \$100,000. There is little doubt that the manipulations which resulted in this bargain price were contrived by Holladay. Despite efforts made by members of the old C.O.C.&P.P. to have the sale declared illegal and despite favorable court judgments against the sale, the Company remained in Holladay's hands until he sold it in 1866.

The C.O.C.&P.P. had been compelled, by lack of funds, to continue operations through South Pass. Holladay maintained this route until it was virtually closed by Indian depredations. As United States mail collected at the stations and fell prey to theft and destruction (by parties claimed to have been Indians, but accused of being employees of the stage company). Holladay moved his operations to the Cherokee Trail route in July of 1862. At this time the Company's name was changed to the Overland Stage Company since it no longer went to California (that mail being delivered by ship since the time of the Indian depredations).

The new route broke south from the old central route at Julesburg, Colorado, and re-entered Wyoming at Virginia Dale, following a

southerly course there until it rejoined the old route at Granger, from which point it went on to Salt Lake City. The change in route involved the construction of new relay stations every ten or twelve miles, and "home" stations every fifty miles. The Granger Station was probably a "home" station with stables, and facilities for resting and eating.

Ham's Fork Station, and later Granger Station were used as garrisons at various points in their histories. Troops were stationed in the area under General Albert Sidney Johnston during the Mormon Uprisings of the 1850s. On December 2, 1862, Colonel Connors placed troops at Granger station and at Fort Bridger Station following the disappearance of nearly one hundred horses between the two stations.

During the sixties, the Overland Stage, Holladay and his employees attained almost legendary status throughout the country for their ruthless determination to put the stages and mail through. This remorseless dedication came directly from the inspiration of Holladay himself. Holladay's favorite division chief, Jack Slade, became the most famous and notorious figure in the entire operation. Corruption among minor officials along the route was rapidly cleaned up by Slade's cold-blooded tactics which he directed against anyone who gave him offense. His reputation as a killer became such that he was eventually dismissed from the Company and ended his life on the gallows of a vigilante committee.

Mark Twain made a journey in August of 1861, before the route had been changed. His description of a typical stage station, found in Roughing It (page 23), is nonetheless quite adequate for the stations built in 1862:

"The station buildings were long, low huts, made of sun dried, multi-colored bricks, laid up without mortar ('adobes' the Spaniards call these bricks, and the Americans shorten it to 'dobies'). The roofs, which had no slant to them worth speaking of, were thatched and then sodded or covered with a thick layer of earth, and from this sprung a pretty rank growth of weeds and grass. It was the first time we had seen a man's yard on top of his house. The buildings consisted of barns, stable room for twelve or fifteen horses, and a hut for eating-room for the passengers. This latter had bunks in it for the station-keeper and a hostler or two. You could rest your elbows on its eaves, and you had to bend in order to get in at the door. In place of a window there was a square hole about large enough for a man to crawl through,

but this had no glass in it. There was no flooring, but the ground was packed hard. There was no stove, but the fireplace served all needful purposes. There were no shelves, no cupboards, no closets. In a corner stood an open sack of flour, and nestling against its base were a couple of black and venerable tin coffee pots, a tin teapot, a little bag of salt, and a side of bacon."

"By the door of the station keeper's den, outside, was a tin wash-basin, on the ground. Near it was a pail of water and a piece of yellow bar-soap, and from the eaves hung a hoary blue woolen shirt, significantly-but this latter was the station-keeper's private towel, and only two persons in all the party might venture to use it - the stage-driver and the conductor. The latter would not, from a sense of decency; the former would not, because he did not choose to encourage the advances of a station-keeper. We had towels-in the valise; they might as well have been in Sodom and Gomorrah. We (and the conductor) used our handkerchiefs, and the driver his pantaloons and sleeves. By the door, inside, was fastened a small, old-fashioned looking-glass frame, with two little fragments of the original mirror lodged down in one corner of it."

Holladay's quest for success and wealth led him into dealings with corruptible officials of the federal government, most notably in the securing of coveted mail contracts which were to be offered by bid. Holladay's fares and charges were often exorbitant, especially after he began to acquire a monopoly in the business by forcing out smaller competitors. At one time the fare from Atchison, Kansas, to Placerville, California, was as high as \$600.

Holladay sold out to Wells Fargo on November 1, 1866. With that purchase, Wells Fargo owned nearly all the major stage lines in the west. That the lucrative United States mail contracts, the foundation of the stagecoach business, would disappear from the operation when the trans-continental railroad was completed, Wells Fargo officials certainly foresaw this, but they anticipated a lag of at least ten years before the completion of the track. When the last spike was driven in the rails at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869, the stage business was effectively killed. However, the facilities of the stagecoach companies, which Wells Fargo had vastly improved in 1866 with the purchase of many new concord coaches and excellent stock, continued to be the major source of passenger traffic to the west through the 1870s.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

There is only one known photograph of the site of significant age. This shows the eastern wooden wing, its stone portion intact, and the main building before the application of the stucco. The photograph was published in 1931 in the Biennial Reports of the Wyoming State Landmarks Commission, now defunct (see bibliography of published sources).

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and sources:

_____, Volume 44 of the Field Notes of the original Federal Land Survey of Southwestern Wyoming, 1874. p. 409, Township 19 N, Range 111 W, Section 32 and surrounding sections. Available at the Bureau of Land Records, Department of the Interior, Federal Building, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Haines, Aubrey L., Historic Resources Study, Historic Sites along the Oregon Trail; Denver Service Center Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Denver, Colorado. p. 251, "South Bend Station" at Granger.

Henderson, Paul, A one-page typewritten report on the condition of the Stage Station, of recent but indeterminate date, available in the research files of the Wyoming Recreation Commission, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Telephone Interview, Wednesday, July 31, 1974, Cheyenne, Wyoming, with Mr. Paul Henderson, Western Historian, Bridgeport, Nebraska.

Personal Interview with Mr. Russell Tanner, acting Mayor of Granger, Wednesday, July 10, 1974, at the site of the Granger Stage Station, Granger, Wyoming.

b. Secondary and published sources:

_____, Annals of Wyoming, The Official Publication of the Wyoming State Historical Society, "Overland Stage Trail-Trek No. 3," vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 235-249.

Jackson, William Henry, The Pioneer Photographer, Rocky Mountain Adventures with a Camera, 1929, World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.

Larson, T. A., History of Wyoming, 1965, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Moody, Ralph, Stagecoach West, 1967, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York.

Reynolds, Adrian, "Stage Station Falling Down," The Green River Star, Wednesday, August 8, 1973.

Root, Frank A., The Overland Stage to California, 1901, W. Y. Morgan, Topeka, Kansas.

_____, State of Wyoming, The Historical Landmark Commission of Wyoming, Biennial Reports, 1928 to 1954, Second and Third Reports, 1929-1930 and 1931-1932.

Twain, Mark (Clemmens, Samuel), Roughing It, 1922, Gabriel Wells, New York (two volumes).

3. Likely sources not yet investigated:
 - a. Claims of Ben Holladay on compensation for Indian depositions made to the U. S. Congress.
 - b. Mail contracts for stage lines.

Prepared by John Hnedak
Historian
National Park Service
Summer 1974

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is one of several small stage stations that were built as stops along the Overland Trail during the mid-nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair; the east ell is deteriorating.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately 49'-0" (1 bay) x 50'-6" (3 bays), one and a half stories rectangular with ell.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color:
 - a. Ell: Native stone.
 - b. Main building: Light tan with grey stucco on the stone. Stucco is cracking.
4. Structural system, framing:
 - a. Ell: Load bearing stone walls, log beams and posts, frame interior partitions.
 - b. Main building: Load bearing stone walls with frame interior partitions and small log rafters.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The center partition of the main building has a bulkhead which extends up to the rafters. The remains of the original chimney are an integral part of the bulkhead. A small framed opening in the bulkhead leads to the attic.
6. Chimneys: There are two interior brick chimneys each approximately one quarter distance from the gable ends. Chimneys extend to below the ceiling on the interior.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors:
 - i. Ell: Wooden frame doorways with log beam lintels. No doors exist.
 - ii. Main building: Deeply recessed wooden frames with wooden paneled doors. Doorways are boarded up on the exterior.
 - b. Windows and shutters:
 - i. Ell: Wooden frames, no windows.

- ii. Main building: Deeply recessed wooden frames with heavy wooden trim. Two-over-two light double-hung sash windows with no glass. A one-light sash window, without glass, is located in the north gable end. All window openings are boarded on the exterior.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

- i. Ell: Roof is missing, except for a small portion which has boards and a sand covering; this was probably a gable roof.
- ii. Main building: Gable roof with wooden shingles on wooden strips; roof sags at gable ends.

- b. Cornice, eaves: The main building has wooden fascia and boxed eaves.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Ell: Main entrance is on the north facade of the structure. To the left of the entry is one large room. On the east wall of this room, near the floor, is a niche in the stone with a ledge which was probably a water stand. To the right of the entry are two smaller rooms. In the north room there is a door which leads into the main building.
- b. Main building: This building is on a northeast-southwest axis and is composed of a northeast and southwest room separated by a central stone wall. These rooms have been divided by wooden partitions. Thus the northeast and southwest rooms each have two rooms. Stove flues have been installed in each partition and the ceilings have been dropped, creating a loft above. The interior southwest room has a doorway on the east wall leading outside. Doorway in the center stone wall leads into the north room which has been similarly divided by a wooden partition into two smaller north and south rooms.

2. Flooring:
 - a. Ell: Dirt floor.
 - b. Main building: 6" wide wooden plank flooring.
 3. Wall and ceiling finish:
 - a. Ell: Unfinished rubble stone.
 - b. Main building: All interior stone walls have been plastered twice. The original horsehair plaster is visible where the second coat of plaster has crumbled. The wooden interior partitions have horizontal boards and beaded wooden paneling. Ceilings are beaded wooden panels and planks. The original ceiling above the dropped ceiling in the two north rooms is plaster on wooden lath.
 4. Doorways and doors: The main building has wooden framed doorway; no interior doors exist. There is evidence of strap hinges at the door jambs for doors. There is a wooden threshold at the doorway in the center stone partition.
 5. Special decorative features, trim, cabinet work: There is a crown molding at the ceiling in the main building's south rooms. All baseboards are wooden.
 6. Mechanical equipment: Heating in the main building was by wood or coal stoves. No plumbing or electrical systems exist nor is there any evidence that they ever did.
- D. Site and Surroundings:
1. General setting: The stage station faces northeast on a paved road (old Route 30 North) in the town of Granger. The site is predominantly flat grassland and is fenced with a wire fence. A granite marker to the west of the station commemorates the Oregon and Overland Trails.
 2. Outbuildings: There is a well on the north side of the site near the entrance, flush with the ground and covered over with logs. It still contains water. At the west side of the building is a stone foundation which indicates a possible lean-to or addition.

Prepared by John P. White
Project Supervisor
National Park Service
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the State of Wyoming through the Wyoming Recreation Commission and was financed with funds provided by the Wyoming State Legislature. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Professor, Texas Tech University), John D. Hnedak, Project Historian (Cornell University). Student Assistant Architects who prepared the measured drawings for the project were Thomas L. Amis, Jr. (University of Texas, Austin), Stephen O. Fildes (Texas Tech University), John T. Reddick (Yale University), and Paul S. Wheeler (University of Idaho). Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer. This report was edited for HABS in 1977 by Candace Reed.