THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS IN WYOMING

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PURPOSE

To determine the affect the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) has on archaeological methods in Wyoming
National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

- Passed in 1966 to protect and preserve the cultural resources of the United States

- Two sections of the NHPA have a direct impact on archaeology in Wyoming:
  - Section 110
  - Section 106
DATA COLLECTION

- Archival research
  - Books
  - Journals
  - Reports

- Examine materials gathered to determine methods used

- Examine material covering 120 years of archaeology in Wyoming
METHODS

• ANALYSIS

• Separate data into four time periods:
  • 1875-1930 (curiosity)
  • 1930-1950 (antiquarianism and collection)
  • 1950-1975 (reservoir, river basin, and research projects)
  • 1975-2000 (contract archaeology in compliance with Section 106)

• Compare archaeological field methods before and after the passage of the NHPA
IMPORTANCE

- All archaeological research depends upon the methods employed to collect the data.

- Legislation affecting archaeological field methods has a direct impact on data collected and related research.

- It is important to examine archaeological methods used both before and after the passage of the NHPA to:
  - Learn what impact the NHPA has on archaeology in Wyoming.
  - Determine if changes in regulations or methodology need to occur to protect the integrity of archaeological research.
HYPOTHESES

- Over 50% of the land in the State of Wyoming is Federal land
- I hypothesize that the NHPA impacts archaeological research in Wyoming in three ways:
  - First, increased archaeological activity conducted by contract archaeologists
HYPOTHESES

- I hypothesize that the NHPA impacts archaeological research in Wyoming in three ways:
  - Second, surveys conducted by or on behalf of Federal Land Management agencies have mapped and located many sites
HYPOTHESES

I hypothesize that the NHPA impacts archaeological research in Wyoming in three ways:

- Third, standardized reporting required by Federal agencies
- This standardization has often resulted in stifling innovative thinking about the resource
Wyoming has a rich archaeological history.

Petroglyphs at Dinwoody, first noted by a U.S. Calvary man in 1875 (Reservation Property).

Petroglyphs photographed at Medicine Creek Lodge site in 1896 (Bighorn County).
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1875-1930)

- The collection period of the turn of the 20th century

- Anthropologists recognized that cultures were disappearing

- Institutions including the University of Wyoming and the Smithsonian Institution endeavored to collect information and items pertaining to Western cultures
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1930-1950)

- Government and University projects in the 1930’s
- University of Denver/University of Wyoming
  - Denver/Wyoming Archaeological Survey
- Works Progress Administration
  - Wyoming Archaeological Survey

- Dinwoody Cave Sowers Survey (Reservation Property)
- Great Turtle-Castle Gardens Renaud Survey (Fremont County)
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1950-1975)

- The public works projects in the 1940’s thru early 1960’s
  - Reservoir Projects

Mummy Cave
(Park County)
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1950-1975)

- Research Projects in the 1950’s and 1960’s

Pictograph Cave (Montana), research done by the University of Wyoming

Hell Gap site by Harvard University in the 1960’s (Platte County)
Early 1970’s saw the first surveys and related Section 106 projects in Wyoming after the passage of the NHPA

- Powder River Basin Project
- Boysen Reservoir Project
- Coal Mine Projects
- Oil and Gas Projects
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1975-1990)

- Research Projects in 1970’s

Wardell Buffalo Trap (Sublette County)

Medicine Lodge Creek (Bighorn County)
WYOMING ARCHAEOLOGY (1975-1990)

- Work conducted by archaeological contractors during the 1980’s and 1990’s

Split Rock Ranch Site (Fremont County)

Trappers Point Pronghorn site (Sublette County)
QUESTIONABLE METHODS?

- SURVEY/EXCAVATION
  - Description of methods used vague and incomplete.

- COLLECTION
  - Provenience not fully established
  - Limited description of artifact type variation

- REPORTING
  - Standardized reporting mandated by government agencies
  - Reports read the same for multiple sites
RESULTS

- IMPACT OF THE NHPA ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS
  - Large volume of archaeological data being retrieved
  - Increase in the number of cultural and historic sites being identified
  - Standardization of reporting has led to standardization of methods
  - Budget and time restraints placed on CRM managers limit quality of data being retrieved.
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QUESTIONS?