

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument - Historic District East

other names/site number Reno-Benteen Defense Site; Reno-Benteen Battlefield, Historic District 2

2. Location

street & number N/A

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

city or town near Crow Agency

state MT code 24 county Bighorn code _____ zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

x national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0		buildings
2 ¹		sites
16 ²	12 ³	structures
		objects
18	12	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

15⁴

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Defense – Battle Site

Recreation and Culture – Monument / Marker

Current Functions

Recreation and Culture – Monument / Marker

Recreation and Culture – Outdoor Recreation

Landscape – Park – National Park

¹ The two historic sites cover the entire district area, the first being the battle site and the second being the archeological site. These property types are outlined in the Little Bighorn Battlefield NM MPDF.

² The 1 contributing resources include the 1 stone warrior cairn, 3 restored entrenchments, 4 restored rifle pits, the Reno-Benteen Monument, the route and location of the Battlefield Tour Road and parking area (not the road itself), and 6 white marble markers to 7th Cavalry troopers.

³ The non-contributing resources include the Battlefield Tour Road and parking area (1),

⁴ The previously listed resources have been included in the count as the prior documentation (1987) failed to count, describe and accurately assess the condition of the contributing resources within the district. Under the 1987 documentation, it appears that all 15 resources would have been listed. The battle site as a landscape was not assessed.

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

Materials

foundation: _____

walls: Earthen (fortifications)

roof: _____

other: Granite (memorial / warrior markers)

Marble (Seventh Cavalry markers)

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Historic District East is 162-acre site approximately 5 miles southeast of Historic District West. From June 25th-26th, 1876, men of Companies A, G and M under Maj. Marcus Reno, Companies D, H, and K under Capt. Frederick Benteen, and Company B under Capt. Thomas M. McDougall defended the hilltop against massive combined Indian attacks from the surrounding hills and coulees. Today it is an interpretive area managed by the National Park Service. The only road access is the Battlefield Tour Road that winds southward through the hills and coulees to an entrance along the northwestern boundary of the district. The district boundaries conform with those of Park Service management and are lined with a barbed wire fence. The district sits atop bluffs east of the Little Bighorn River overlooking the Little Bighorn Valley and Bighorn Mountains to the west. It is comprised mostly of upland grasslands with some shrub vegetation dominating along the ravines that descend to the river. Near the geographical center of the polygonal district is the road terminus and parking area. From the parking lot, a concrete interpretive trail known as the Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail takes visitors around the key points of the district.

Narrative Description

Prior to the battle in 1876, this landscape likely consisted of a typical upland short-grass prairie. Either lightning or human-produced, occasional fires would have periodically burned the landscape, affecting the vegetation. Changes in climate may have increased the tree and shrub growth at the expense of the grasses. The appearance at the time of the battle reflected wet conditions during the late-nineteenth century that inclined the area towards a sagebrush-grassland mixture. During the battle, soldiers made some slight changes in topography through entrenchments, but did not significantly alter the vegetation or terrain. The majority of developments within the district took place in the twentieth century involving the construction of a memorial, a road to the area, and a parking area and trail for visitors.

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Battle Site - Lakota and Cheyenne Besiege Reno and Benteen

These resources fall under the American Indian Wars – Battle Site property type of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument MPDF. The battle site includes the comprehensive landscape of the historic district including the hilltops, ravines, and vegetation within the historic district’s boundaries. The district centers on the location where Reno’s command fought on top of the bluffs overlooking the Little Bighorn Valley to the south and west. Entrenching along hillocks surrounding a saucer-shaped depression, Reno’s men generally took positions on ridge tops anchored by what are now called Reno and Benteen Hills. The Lakota and Cheyenne besiegers took positions on the surrounding hilltops and ridges, most of which lie outside the historic district boundary. Historic District East includes portions of Sharpshooter Ridge in its northwest corner as well as the upper portions of several ravines up which Lakota and Cheyenne warriors maneuvered against Reno’s command. Toward the southwest corner of the district, the upper portion of Water Carrier’s Ravine is also included, where on the afternoon of the 26th several men of Reno’s command attempted to retrieve water from the river for the beleaguered troops.

Archeological Site – Lakota and Cheyenne Besiege Reno and Benteen

The battle site’s archeological resources are varied and extremely valuable illustrations of the actions that took place on June 25th and 26th of 1876. While the archeological record of this phase of the battle is not confined to this district’s boundaries, those nominated are located within the management boundaries of the National Park Service. This district’s archeological resources include a wide range of battle-related artifacts: bullets, casings, and an array of equipment left at the site or used to entrench the cavalry troopers. Several archeological surveys of the area, most notably in 1958 under Robert T. Bray and following a grassfire in 1983, have uncovered the majority of these resources. The majority of resources are casings from rounds fired by Seventh Cavalry troopers or bullets representing incoming fire from Lakota and Cheyenne positions on Sharpshooter’s Ridge, Wooden Leg Hill, and the various ravines and coulees on the approaches to the defense site.

Earthen Fortifications (Restored)

When the troopers under combined command of Maj. Reno and Capt. Benteen realized their situation, they dug field entrenchments along the hillocks and ridgelines to provide a degree of cover from the incoming fire. These field entrenchments were hastily-dug with whatever equipment the troopers had on hand. Following the battle, the entrenchments lay open to the weather, with the exception of one that was filled in and contained the bodies of two cavalry troopers killed in the action. In 1958, a team under NPS archeologists Robert T. Bray surveyed and excavated the Reno-Benteen area including supposed entrenchments, a barricade, the supposed location of the field hospital, and several rifle pits. As a part of the project, Bray’s workers restored three sets of field entrenchments and four rifle pits to what they believed existed during the time of the battle. One entrenchment was atop Benteen Hill nearest the river and two were atop Reno Hill, approximately 100 meters to

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the north. During the excavation and restoration, Bray's team discovered the bodies of four cavalymen who were removed and buried in Custer National Cemetery.⁵

While weathering and vegetation growth has altered the restorations since 1958, their dimensions are generally the same. The three earthen entrenchments vary in length, up to 30' long, and are on average 6 feet wide at the top and 2 feet deep. The rifle pits are smaller averaging approximately 5' long, 3' wide and 2' deep. Thick grass now covers them. The Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail passes all of these closely, providing visitors an easy view of the positions from which Reno's and Benteen's men fought.

Reno-Benteen Memorial

The Reno-Benteen Memorial is a grey granite slab standing atop two layers of granite blocks at its base. It falls under the War Department – Monuments and Markers property type. The marker rises approximately ten feet above grade. The plinth is approximately 1' high, 6' wide and 4' thick. A second base layer steps in to 1' high, 4' wide and 2' thick. The slab is roughly 3' wide at its base, tapering slightly to 2.5' at its crest. It is 8' from base to top and 1.5' thick. There is a roughly-rectangular polygon on the marker's face with the following inscription:

*THIS AREA WAS
OCCUPIED BY TR-
OOPS A, B, D, G, H,
K, AND M, 7TH U.S.
CAVALRY, AND THE
PACK TRAIN WHEN
THEY WERE BESIE-
GED BY THE SIOUX
INDIANS JUNE 25TH
AND 25TH 1876.*

In 1926, Congress authorized the construction of the Reno-Benteen Memorial, and in 1929, the War Department constructed it approximately thirty meters to the southeast of its present location. Presumably in 1930 (along with the fencing of the Last Stand Hill markers), the cemetery superintendent placed an iron fence around the memorial to prevent relic-hunters from chipping off pieces of it as they had the 1881 Seventh Cavalry Memorial. During the 1965 re-construction of the parking lot, park staff moved the memorial to its present location. They also constructed a series of sidewalks around the parking area and the monument and added an interpretive sign, several benches, and a concrete patio to the southeast of the memorial.

Seventh Cavalry Markers

These resources fall under the War Department Era Monuments and Markers Property Type, specifically the Seventh Cavalry Markers Sub-Type. Six markers lie within the boundaries of the district. At stops 8 and 17

⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Report of Archaeological Investigations at the Reno-Benteen Site, Custer Battlefield National Monument, June 2 – July 1 1958*, by Robert T. Bray, Midwest Archaeological Center, Omaha, Nebraska, 1958, 28.

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along the interpretive trail, two markers appear to represent locations where Seventh Cavalry troopers fell. Stop 8 represents one of the few markers with a named fallen trooper (Pvt. Julian Jones), likely indicating that the marker was placed after 1890 when the War Department situated the first, un-named markers. One marker indicates the approximate location of the Field Hospital. At stop 1, three markers represent Crow Indian Scouts killed in the valley fight. The markers are inexact in number and location as Reno's and Benteen's companies lost a total of 53 killed (6 of these are represented outside the district boundaries). It is also not clear when the War Department placed these markers, although it seems likely that it established them after the War Department's acquisition of the area in 1930. The markers are generally in good condition having been restored and reset periodically by both the War Department and the National Park Service.

Warrior Cairns

There is one cairn in the district which falls under the Native American Monuments and Markers Property Type, specifically the Stone Cairns Subtype. Its location and description is classified as sensitive.⁶

Battlefield Tour Road Route and Parking Area Location

While the road and parking area are non-contributing, their route and location contribute to the history of the site as a memorial to the Seventh Cavalry during the period of significance. The route and location of the road and parking area (respectively) have not altered significantly since the road's construction in 1930 and its reconstruction in 1941. Running southeast from Historic District West, the road enters the district through a cattle guard, then continues southeast, skirting the bluff's edge to the southwest, turning slightly to the south and ending at a small asphalt parking lot adjacent to the memorial. During initial construction, the road extended southeast out of the present historic district into the valley. It provided public access from the valley highway (now Interstate 70). The parking lot was a simple dirt expanse with stakes and rope marking its edges.

Non-contributing features

Battlefield Tour Road and associated features

In 1930, the national cemetery completed the first full-length version of the Battlefield Tour Road as a rough-cut dirt road to the Reno-Benteen memorial. It did not improve it to a full-service road until 1941.⁷ While the route has not changed significantly since 1941, the materials have, rendering the road non-contributing. Sometime in the early 1950s, Superintendent Edward Luce closed the road from the valley, limiting access to the area to travel from the national cemetery.⁸

⁶ E-mail correspondence from Park Ranger Jerry Jasmer, October 21, 2011.

⁷ Jerome A. Greene, *Stricken Field: The Little Bighorn since 1876* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 68-69.

⁸ Edward S. Luce, undated notes on manuscript for Charles Kuhlman's *Legend Into History* (1952), Box 1, Folder 1-33 "Edward S. Luce, Supt Custer Cemetery." Collection 81 - Charles Kuhlman Papers, Montana Historical Society; Luce's notes indicate he closed the road due to grazing problems and lack of maintenance funds. It is unclear on what date Luce closed the road, however, as Kuhlman published his book in 1952, Luce likely reviewed the manuscript within a few years preceding its publication. In an aerial photograph dated in 1954, the overgrown remnants of the abandoned road are clearly visible.

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The Battlefield Tour Road's materials have changed several times; it is now constructed of black top asphalt with packed-earth embankments. The road varies in width between 18.5 and 20 feet. It ends in a parking lot that directs traffic in a counter-clockwise fashion, turning to the right around a parking loop. At the southwestern edge of the parking area is the trailhead for the Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail and the Reno-Benteen monument. During the initial construction of the parking area in 1965, park contractors moved the monument to this location from a point farther to the southeast. At the center of the loop is a concrete island with seven diagonal parking spaces on each side and small grassy areas at either end. Along the outside of most of the parking lot is a pink-beige sidewalk providing access to the Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail. Along the southeastern edge of the area, the roadway widens significantly to provide parking for larger vehicles such as buses and RVs.⁹

From the 1930s to the 1960s, there was a small dirt parking area bounded with stakes and rope at the Reno-Benteen Monument. Staff constructed expanded parking facilities under Mission 66 in 1965 for visitors traveling to this portion of the battlefield. The Monument resurfaced and re-leveled the parking area in 1976, although much of the design and layout remained identical.

Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail

The Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail travels across the top of several ridgelines in the southern half of the historic district. The Park Service built the trail in 1957 under Mission 66. The route winds around the historic June 25-27, 1876 defense location of Seventh Cavalry troops under Maj. Marcus Reno and Capt. Frederick Benteen. Frequent wood and metal Park Service signs warn visitors to remain on the trail to avoid trampling the trenches and other archaeological features. The Park Service first employed a dirt path, and in the late-1980s, upgraded to beige-pink concrete approximately 6 feet wide and 8 feet at interpretive turn-outs. Along the trail, there are fifteen interpretive stops representing eighteen topics or themes. Each turn-out is marked by either a metal pole with a slanted face at the top displaying the number, or, for signs with multiple site numbers, a metal pole with flattened rectangle attached. At many turnouts along the trail, decorative cut stones spanning the length of the turnout reinforce the edge of the turnout (see photo for sites 15 and 16 below). At the trailhead are a concrete interpretive marker and a leaflet and coin box next to the Reno-Benteen monument. At stop 1 on the trail stand three small interpretive panels with graphics and texts anchored to narrow, square metal posts. A 2012 Determination of Eligibility determined all Mission 66 resources at the Monument, including this trail, ineligible due to loss of integrity.

Warrior Markers

As of the date of this nomination, nine markers warrior markers placed between 2001 and 2008 lie within Historic District East. These markers fall under the Native American Monuments and Markers Property Type, specifically the Warrior Markers Subtype. Several are located along the Reno-Benteen Entrenchment Trail, signifying the individual bravery of the identified warrior. The nine fallen warriors identified by markers are: Long Road (Sans Arc Lakota), Dog's Backbone (Minniconjou Lakota), Little Whirlwind (Northern Cheyenne), Breech Cloth (Minniconjou Lakota), Elk Stands on Top (Sans Arc Lakota), Swift Bear (Hunkpapa Lakota), Hawk Man (Hunkpapa Lakota), Two Bear (Sans Arc Lakota), White Eagle (Minniconjou Lakota).

⁹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Reconstruction of Parking Lot," Drawing 80006, April 1, 1976, and "Parking Area and Trails," Drawing 3018B, Custer Battlefield National Monument, April 1, 1964, NPS-TIC; Greene, 88.

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While these markers are historically and culturally significant, they fall outside the district's period of significance and are not considered exceptionally significant at this time (to meet Criteria Consideration G). They are therefore non-contributing but may be re-assessed in the future.¹⁰

¹⁰ John A. Doerner, Chief Historian, "LIBI Warrior Marker Inventory," no date, Folder H-14 "Area and Service History 3 of 3," Administrative Files, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

A – Ethnic Heritage / Native American; Military

B – Military

D – Archeology / Historic

Period of Significance

1876 – 1946

Significant Dates

1876 – Battle of the Little Bighorn

1929 – Reno-Benteen Memorial constructed.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Crazy Horse; Sitting Bull; Marcus A. Reno

Cultural Affiliation

See Statement of Significance

Architect/Builder

Period of Significance

The period of significance (1876-1958) begins with the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 and extends through the site's War Department management and the first six years of its stewardship under the National Park Service. The period ends in 1946 with the redesignation of the property from a national cemetery to a national monument.

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Criteria Considerations

Historic District East includes resources that are required to meet Criteria Consideration F which states that properties primarily commemorative in nature are only eligible if “design, age, tradition or symbolic value has invested it with its own historic significance.” However, resources within Historic District East are exempt from Criteria Consideration F because although many are primarily commemorative structures, they are within an historic district that does not derive its primary significance from commemoration. The district’s primary significance comes from its association with the Battle of the Little Bighorn from June 25th – 26th, 1876.¹¹

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Historic District East is primarily significant under Criterion A in the Military area for its association with the Battle of Little Bighorn fought on this site from June 25th to 27th, 1876. The district includes archeological resources, the battlefield landscape, commemorative structures, and restored entrenchments related to the battle. After a failed attack on a Lakota, Cheyenne and Arapaho camp, seven companies of the Seventh U.S. Cavalry under the command of Maj. Marcus Reno entrenched and defended against combined American Indian forces. Fighting in frequently close quarters left casualties on both sides. Following the battle, veterans and their descendants frequented the battlefield. Their efforts resulted in the placement of many memorials to their fallen comrades including rock cairns and white marble markers. Those memorials are significant as they illustrate the importance of the Battle of Little Bighorn in popular culture among both Euro-Americans and American Indians.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Battle Site – Lakota and Cheyenne Besiege Reno and Benteen

This battle site provides the primary historic significance for Historic District East. Fearing that the Seventh Cavalry had been sighted and the Indian village might disperse, Custer split his regiment into three battalions. Custer ordered Companies H, D and K under Capt. Frederick Benteen to the west to reconnoiter the bluffs south of the present-day Reno Creek. He sent Companies A, G and M under Maj. Marcus Reno into the valley. Custer retained Companies C, E, F, I and L under his command and proceeded north along the bluff tops on the east bank of the Little Bighorn River. After Reno lost sight of Custer’s command, he attacked the southern end of the camp, catching the majority of inhabitants off-guard. After a brief period of chaos, Lakota warriors under Crazy Horse and Gall organized a defense. Viewing a massive number of warriors to his front, Reno dismounted to a skirmish line. Gall and Crazy Horse’s men eventually overran Reno’s men and routed them to the bluff tops overlooking the river on its east bank.

As Reno’s men re-grouped atop the bluffs, Capt. Benteen and his three companies arrived with McDougall and the pack train. Facing this concentration, several warrior groups fired on the position and slackened only with the deployment of Company D as skirmishers under Capt. Thomas B. Weir. As everyone inquired of Custer’s location, a small search effort to the north under Capt. Weir pushed forward but pressure

¹¹ For information on Criteria Considerations, see *National Register Bulletin 15 – Applying National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

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from the village warriors compelled them to retreat back to the bluff-tops. With the retreat in danger of being overrun, Lt. Edward S. Godfrey deployed his Company K as dismounted skirmishers near the northern boundary of the present-day Monument. Godfrey's men fell back while maintaining fire, allowing the rest of the command to retire to the bluff-tops. Reno arranged his men around a shallow depression amidst several hillocks, who, dismounted, took whatever cover available. Oglala Lakota Black Elk recalled that Reno's men "had their pack mules and horses on the inside and they had saddles and other things in front of them to hide themselves from bullets." Reno placed Godfrey's Company M to the northwest, Company K on the northeast and east, Company D on the east along an open area near the horse and mule picket, Company A on the southeast, Company H along a ridge to the south and southwest, and Company B on the west. Dr. Porter established a field hospital in the saucer depression, providing a modicum of cover for the wounded. For three hours, the two sides fired at one another, the cavalry troopers hiding behind natural cover or saddles and packs while Lakota and Cheyenne warriors pressed up the ravines and took positions on surrounding hillocks and hilltops. Possibly indicating Sharpshooter Ridge (near the northwest boundary of the district), Black Elk recalled that "the hill we were on was higher and we could see them plain." The warrior positions atop Sharpshooter Ridge opened a devastating fire on the troopers. Private Charles Windolph recalled that "it was impossible to shield the men and stock from the Indians firing from a hilltop off to the east. Animal after animal was killed, and men were hit." Around nine o'clock the firing ceased as darkness made fighting more difficult.¹²

As the warriors participated in a ceremony within their encampment, the troopers of Maj. Reno's command took time to entrench with whatever tools they had. Pvt. Windolph related that the troopers made any cover possible with "mess kits, our steel knives and forks and with our fingers. We would not have to face the daylight without at least some little protection." Makeshift barricades using materials from the pack train, shallow trenches, and rifle pits provided a degree of protection to the men. Maj. Reno deployed Companies D, G and K along the northeast corner of the ridge-tops and put B and M companies on the west overlooking the Little Bighorn River. Initially not entrenching, H Company under Capt. Benteen took positions on a ridgeline extending to the south near Water Carrier's Ravine and the present-day Long Road warrior marker. Company A took the southwestern corner where the hillocks surrounding the saucer dropped away and established a barricade with boxes, wagons, and dead horses and mules to provide some degree of cover.¹³

On the morning of the 26th the Indians began a siege of Maj. Reno's troopers that lasted until the night. Lakota and Cheyenne warriors maintained a persistent fire on the cavalrymen throughout the day, although no successful group attacks occurred. Black Elk recollected that Lakota and Cheyenne warriors "scattered all around the soldiers, with our horses under the hill; but it was harder to hit the soldiers now, because they had been digging in the night." Several individual warriors such as Long Road of the Sans Arc Lakota rushed Reno's position as personal displays of bravery, often losing their lives in the process. While Sitting Bull took

¹² Black Elk quotation from Nicholas Black Elk, ed., *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, 21st Century ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 89; Windolph quotation from Charles Windolph, *I Fought with Custer: The Story of Sergeant Windolph, Last Survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, 3rd ed., Frazier and Robert Hunt, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 99-101; Robert M. Utley, *Little Bighorn Battlefield: A History and Guide to the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, Handbook 132 (Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications, National Park Service, 1994), 69-70; Douglas D. Scott, Richard A. Fox, Jr., Melissa A. Connor and Dick Harmon, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 131-132.

¹³ Accounts vary as to whether this ceremony was a victory celebration or a mourning ceremony for the many Lakota and Cheyenne killed in the day's fighting; Windolph quotation from Windolph, 103; Utley, *Little Bighorn Battlefield*, 70-71; Douglas Douglas D. Scott, *Uncovering History: The Legacy of Archeological Investigations at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana*, Technical Report No. 124 (Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, 2010), 70-71; Scott, et. al., *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, 132-33.

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part in these actions, it does not appear any overall strategy was in place other than to surround and eventually destroy the troopers. During the day, Capt. Benteen supervised scattered efforts to obtain water for the men, including a charge to clear Water-Carrier's Ravine. Pvt. Windolph volunteered as one of four sharpshooters who both drew fire and provided suppressive fire for others climbing down to the river to get water. Windolph and the three other troopers "stood exposed on that ridge for more than twenty minutes," and "kept up a steady fire into the bushes where the Indians were hiding." Reno's men made periodic charges to push Lakota and Cheyenne groupings farther back but return fire generally compelled the troopers to remain in their entrenchments. Private Windolph complained of "sharpshooters on the knob of a hill south of us and maybe a thousand yards away" who took aim with effect on Company H's positions. Windolph further noted the disparity in weaponry, observing that while the Lakota and Cheyenne warriors peppered the cavalry troopers, the Springfield carbines with which the Seventh was equipped "simply wouldn't carry that far." Around noon that day, Benteen obtained tools with which his men entrenched as well. Fire eventually slackened in the afternoon.¹⁴

By the late afternoon of the 26th, the Indians had heard of Terry and Gibbon's approach from the north and made ready to move southward. They set the prairie afire and around 7 p.m. moved southwest towards the Bighorn Mountains. Through the smoke, Pvt. Windolph "caught glimpses of thousands of Indians on foot and horseback, with their pony herds and travois, dogs and pack animals, and all the trappings of a great camp, slowly moving southward. It was like some Biblical exodus; the Israelites moving into Egypt; a mighty tribe on the march." Reno's troops moved to a position closer to the river to provide much-needed water for the surviving horses, mules and troopers.¹⁵

Archeological Site – Lakota and Cheyenne Besiege Reno and Benteen

The archeological resources of the battlefield fall under the American Indian Wars - Archeological Site Property Type of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument MPDF. Their significance rests on the points listed in that document and the resources' ability to augment the historical narrative described above under the Battle Site significance.

Reno-Benteen Memorial

Following the battle, attention mostly centered on the Last Stand area farther to the north. By the time of the Fiftieth Anniversary proceedings in 1926, concern over commemoration of the Reno-Benteen portion of the battle began building. As a result of the anniversary events and the prominence of this area during the celebrations, several persons and organizations pressured Congress to authorize both a memorial and the acquisition of the Reno-Benteen area. After three years of failure, in 1929, Congress authorized funds not to exceed \$2,500 for the erection of a suitable memorial and historic tablet at the entrenchment area.

Little Big Horn battle veterans' objections over Maj. Reno's controversial role delayed the process of placing a monument. Congress solved this issue by omitting Reno's name (or any names for that matter) from the monument's text. The War Department awarded the contract to Livingston Marble and Granite Works of

¹⁴ Windolph quotations from Windolph, 103-05; Scott, et. all, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, 132-33; Robert M. Utley, *Sitting Bull: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 159-161.

¹⁵ Windolph quotation from Windolph, 106; Utley, *Little Bighorn Battlefield*, 71-72.

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Livingston, Montana. The company erected the stone structure approximately thirty meters to the southeast of its current location.¹⁶

With visitation rising constantly and relic hunters a growing concern, the War Department constructed an iron fence around the memorial to restrain vandals. Although for some time a parking lot existed at the location, a major redesign of the parking area under the National Park Service's Mission 66 program required the stones' relocation northwest to its current location. Through the 1970s, additional construction established a concrete walkway and platform around the monument on which visitors could gather before continuing down the interpretive trail established in 1958. By the early 1960s, concerns about vandalism had declined. Subsequently, park staff removed the iron fence in 1963. Since that point, there have been no significant changes to the monument itself. It stands as a commemorative marker to the men of the Seventh Cavalry who fought at this site from the 25th to the 27th of June, 1876.

Seventh Cavalry Markers

The six markers to Seventh Cavalry troopers in this district fall under the War Department Era Monuments and Markers Property type, specifically the Seventh Cavalry Markers subtype. However, where the history of the markers in Historic District West is relatively clear, these six markers cannot be described with a significant degree of confidence. Available documents do not record their placement nor do archeological investigations verify with certitude of marker placement. This portion of the battlefield remained effectively ignored and untended, subject to Crow land-owners and white lessees who grazed cattle and sheep across the area. Due to lack of War Department ownership or stewardship of the site until 1930, it seems likely that Custer National Cemetery staff placed the markers at or after that point. Only five of the markers denote fallen troopers. Three commemorate U.S. Indian Scouts, one commemorates an unknown trooper, one (uncharacteristically of the National Cemetery – General Type) commemorates Pvt. Julian Jones, and one marks the presumed location of the field hospital.

Earthen Fortifications – Restored

The earthen fortifications at Little Bighorn Battlefield are significant under Criterion A. They are reflections of National Park Service attempts to provide a landscape illustrative of battlefield conditions during the Indian siege against Seventh Cavalry troops on June 25th-26th, 1876. The War Department ignored this area of the battlefield until the 1920s. Cattle, horses and sheep roamed the area, trampling the entrenchments as they grazed. It was not until 1954 that NPS Superintendent Edward S. Luce completed a fence bounding the historic district.

After the area's transfer to the National Park Service in 1940, emphasis shifted towards historical interpretation as the agency modernized under various programs such as Mission 66. In 1958, NPS archeologist Robert T. Bray led a team onto the battle site to assess its archeological resources. They not only uncovered an array of battle-related artifacts but discovered four sets of human remains which they moved to the national cemetery. Archeological crews restored rifle pits and entrenchments discovered through historical accounts and excavation.

Warrior Cairns

¹⁶ The preceding two paragraphs adapted from the 1987 MRA document: "Custer Battlefield Partial Inventory: Reno-Benteen Battlefield."

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There is one cairn in the district. Its significance is detailed in the Little Bighorn Battlefield NM MPDF.

Battlefield Tour Road route and Parking Area Location

The route and location of the road and parking lot are significant as examples of War Department development at Custer National Cemetery during the period of significance. This is detailed in the Little Bighorn Battlefield NM MPDF.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Archives

Administrative Files, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.
Little Bighorn College Archives, Crow Agency, Montana.
National Park Service, Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

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Record Group 79, National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, Kansas City, MO.
White Swan Memorial Library, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Books

- Black Elk, Nicholas, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, 21st Century ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Greene, Jerome A., *Stricken Field: The Little Bighorn Since 1876*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
- Rickey, Don, Jr., *History of Custer Battlefield*, Fort Collins: Old Army Press, 2005 (orig. 1967).
- Scott, Douglas D., *Uncovering History: The Legacy of Archeological Investigations at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana*, Technical Report No. 124, Lincoln: Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, 2010.
- Scott, Douglas D., Richard A. Fox, Jr., Melissa A. Connor and Dick Harmon, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- Utley, Robert M., *Little Bighorn Battlefield: A History and Guide to the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, Handbook 132, Washington, D.C.: Division of Publications, National Park Service, 1994.
- Robert M. Utley, *Sitting Bull: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993.
- Windolph, Charles, *I Fought with Custer: The Story of Sergeant Windolph, Last Survivor of the Battle of the Little Bighorn*, 3rd ed., Frazier and Robert Hunt, eds., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Reports and Bulletins

- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Report of Archaeological Investigations at the Reno-Bentzen Site, Custer Battlefield National Monument, June 2 – July 1 1958*, by Robert T. Bray, Midwest Archeological Center, Omaha, Nebraska, 1958.
- ., National Park Service, *Draft Vegetation Classification and Mapping Project Report, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument*, P. Rice, W. Gustafson, E. W. Schweiger, D. Manier, D. Shorrock, C. Lea and B. Frakes, Natural Resource Technical Report NPS/XXXX/NRTR—20XX/XXX, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2011.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

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recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 162
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	13 North	313880	5044200	6	13 North	314610	5043360
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	13 North	314270	5044200	7	13 North	314600	5042960
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	13 North	314280	5043800	8	13 North	314220	5042980
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
4	13 North	314630	5043780	9	13 North	314250	5043390
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
5	13 North	314640	5043370	10	13 North	313840	5043390
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The Reno-Benteen site is delineated by an irregular shaped area whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A 13 313880 5044200, B 13 314270 5044200, C 13 314280 5043800, D 13 314630 5043780, E 13 314640 5043370, F 13 314610 5043360, G 13 314600 5042960, H 13 314220 5042980, I 13 314250 5043390, and J 13 313840 5043390. The boundary follows the National Monument boundary.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries delineated above correspond to the management boundaries of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. The War Department first acquired this reservation in 1930 amidst growing interest in this phase of the battle. Since that time, no changes in the administrative boundary of this reservation have been made. While there are sites of interest and archeological resources that lay outside the current boundary, modifications of the historic district boundary would require the consent and approval of both the Crow Nation and the private landholders that would fall within the new boundary. Such consent has not been sought nor given.

11. Form Prepared By

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument -
Historic District East
Name of Property

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name/title Jim Bertolini – Author/Researcher; Janet Ore – Principal Investigator
organization Public Lands History Center – Colorado State University date _____
street & number Aylesworth C104 telephone 970-491-6130
city or town Fort Collins state CO zip code 80523
e-mail Ajimbert1210@gmail.com

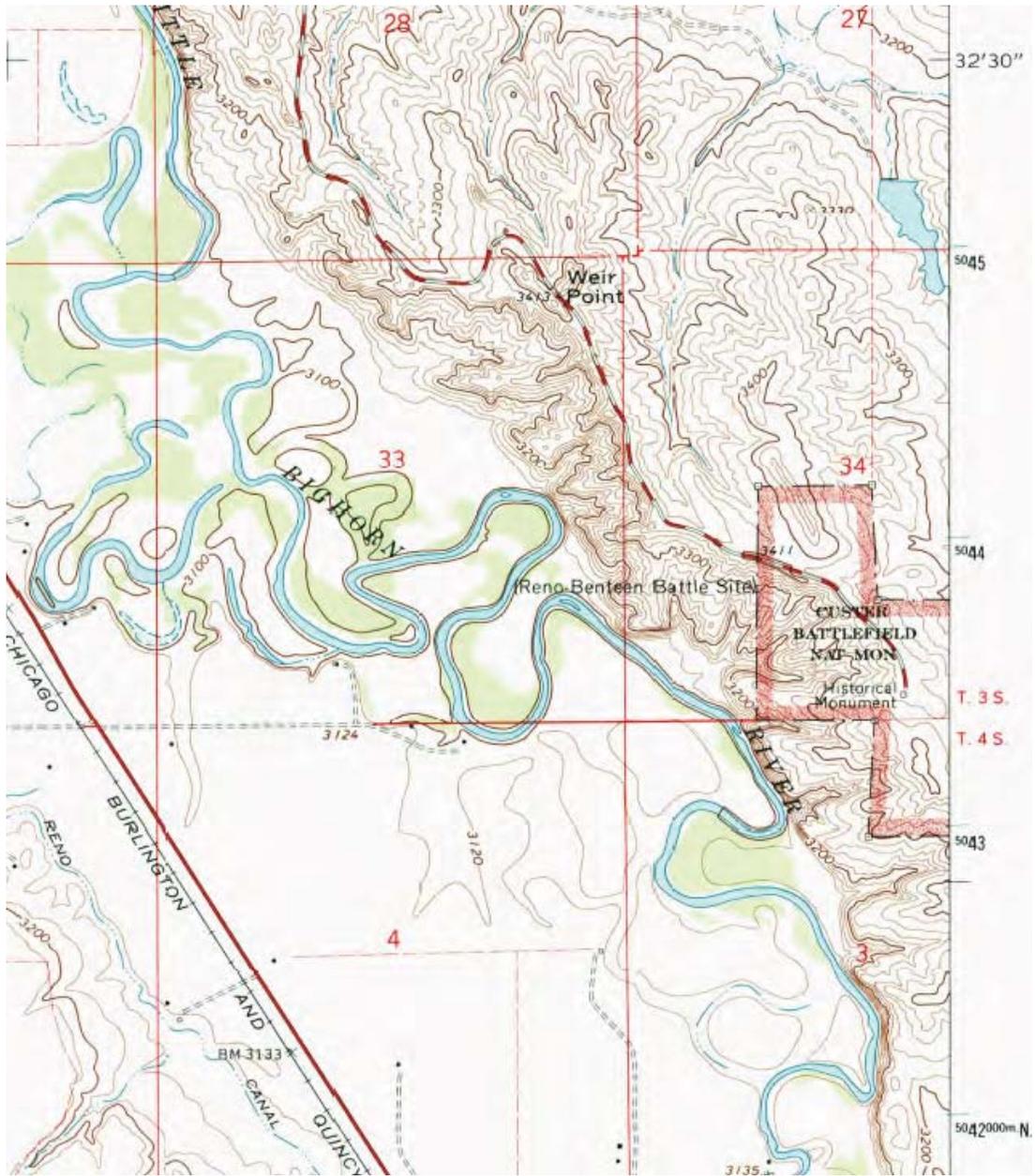
Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

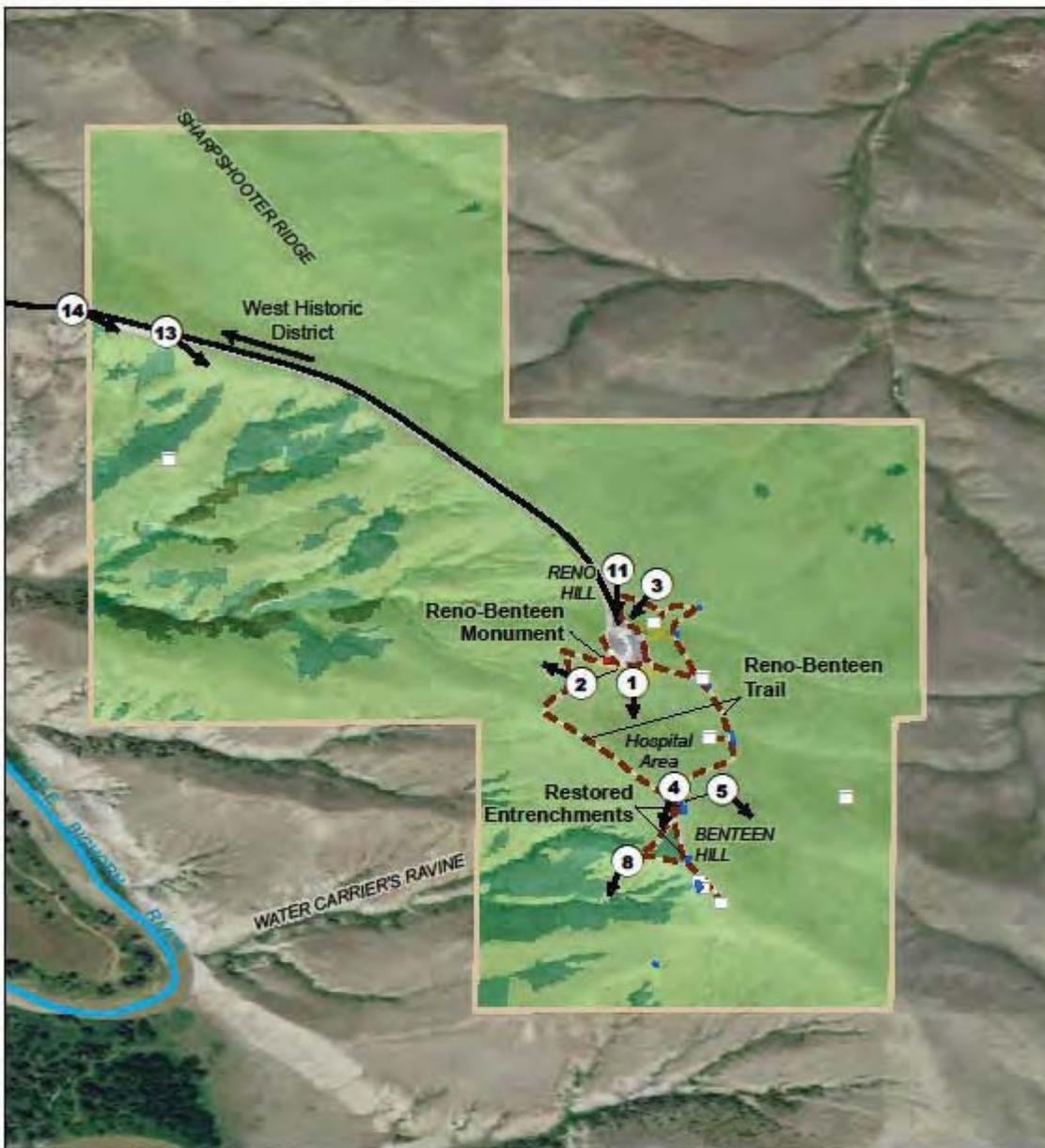
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East Historic District
 Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

Date: 4/12/2012
 Produced by: National Park Service
 Intermountain Region
 Geographic Resources Program
 Data Source: ESRI On-line Services,
 NPS Park Data

Legend

□ Marble Markers	Vegetation Map
■ Entrenchments	■ Grassland
■ Reno-Benteen Monument	■ Forb
■ Reno-Benteen Trail	■ Shrub
■ Little Bighorn River	■ Woodland
■ Park Boundary	■ Developed
○ # → Photo Location & Viewing Direction	□ Road

0 0.05 0.1 Miles

Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: **Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Historic District East.**

City or Vicinity: **near Crow Agency**

County: **Bighorn** State: **MT**

Photographer: **Jim Bertolini (unless otherwise stated). Photographs 1-20**



1. Reno-Benteen Defense Site from Parking Lot, looking south, 8-24-2011.

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2. Reno-Benteen Monument and Trailhead, looking northwest, 8-24-2011.

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3. Reno-Benteen interpretive marker #18 from main trail, looking west to parking lot, 6-15-2011.

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4. Reno-Benteen Trail, interpretive marker #4 and restored entrenchments, 6-15-2011.

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5. Reno-Benteen Trail, interpretive marker #5 with restored entrenchments, viewed from site 4, 6-15-2011.

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6. Restored entrenchments, ca. 1958, photographer unknown, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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7. Restored entrenchments, ca. 1958, photographer unknown, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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8. Reno-Benteen Trail, interpretive marker #6, overlooking Water Carrier's Ravine looking west into the valley, 6-15-2011.

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9. Reno-Benteen Field Hospital Area, looking northwest towards parking lot, 6-15-2011.

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10. Reno-Benteen interpretive trail looking south towards Benteen Hill, 6-15-2011.

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11. Reno-Benteen parking lot, looking south toward Benteen Hill, 6-15-2011.

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12. Reno-Benteen parking lot from marker #17 looking south, ca. 1957-63, photographer unknown, Photo #381-31, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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13. Reno-Benteen monument and parking lot, looking east from Tour Road approach, 1-21-2010.

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14. Reno-Benteen entrance sign with monument in background, ca. 1940-47, photographer unknown, Photo #381-481, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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15. Reno-Benteen Battlefield Marker, ca. 1957-63, photographer unknown, Photo #381-534, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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16. Reno-Benteen Interpretive Marker 14 and restored rifle pit (right), ca 1957-63, photographer unknown, Photo #381-836, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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17. Reno-Benteen site before construction of trail, ca. 1956-57, photographer unknown, Photo #381-628, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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18. Reno-Benteen site following grassfire, ca. 1958, photographer unknown, Photo #381-873, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM Archives.

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19. Reno Hill looking west, June 25, 1886, D.F. Barry, Photo 424, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name National Park Service - Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
street & number Superintendent, Little Bighorn Battlefield NM,
P. O. Box 39 telephone _____
city or town Crow Agency state MT zip code 59022

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.