



Rockies Snapshot: Historic Preservation

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Historic Preservation: Benefits and Challenges

Residents of the Rockies are shaped by the distinctive character of the region, a subtle force often recognized more by tourists than “native” inhabitants. Our region’s history and landscape form a foundation for our individual and collective identity as Westerners. Historic places, more than just relics of bygone eras, provide a link to the past in ways that cultivate our unique sense of place. Railway depots evoke visions of perpetual movement and the idea of Manifest Destiny that, for better or worse, was instrumental in the opening of the West. Historic cemeteries and famous battlefields often put our own struggles and trials into a larger context, reminding us that we exist in a narrative much larger than our immediate memory. Archaeological sites, petroglyphs, and Native American settlements reveal a complex and colorful cultural history. Civic halls, gymnasiums, churches, and schoolhouses remind us of the importance of community, especially as social forces push us toward alienation and materialism. Historic mining towns tell the cautionary tale of boom and bust. These images not only color the cultural and social tapestry that enriches our lives, but also provide insight into understanding our current condition.

The benefits of historic preservation extend beyond the inherent value of maintaining our cultural links to the past. Environmentalists and city planners are taking an interest in the corollary effects of preserving historic sites. For example, many historic districts in city centers already exemplify “walkable”

and “livable” design concepts coveted by the new urbanism and smart growth movements that are gaining appeal in city planning.¹ Many environmentalists see historic preservation as an energy- and material-saving pursuit—restoring existing buildings rather than tearing them down and building new ones.² Communities are also looking to historic preservation as not just a cost-saving mechanism, but a revenue-generating one as well. Rehabilitating deteriorating buildings encourages job growth and can stimulate cultural tourism. A recent study showed that historic preservation in Colorado since 1981 has created nearly 29,000 jobs and generated \$2 billion in direct and indirect economic impacts.³ Interest in historic preservation now extends beyond a small circle of aficionados to include economists, city planners, and environmentalists.

There are many challenges to preserving historic places across the country. For one, historic preservation and protection cannot be a passive endeavor - it is not enough to simply avoid tearing down historic sites. Unless we take proactive preservation steps, the mere passage of time is enough to gradually erase them from our landscapes. Other threats to historic places are human-made. Often communities and private land owners are unaware of the historic significance of certain sites and therefore either unwittingly let them crumble or destroy them in favor of modern development. Increasing land values may compel an otherwise sympathetic site owner to sell to developers. Urban sprawl is also cited as a threat to historic preservation, as it discourages vibrant urban cores which often include historic buildings.

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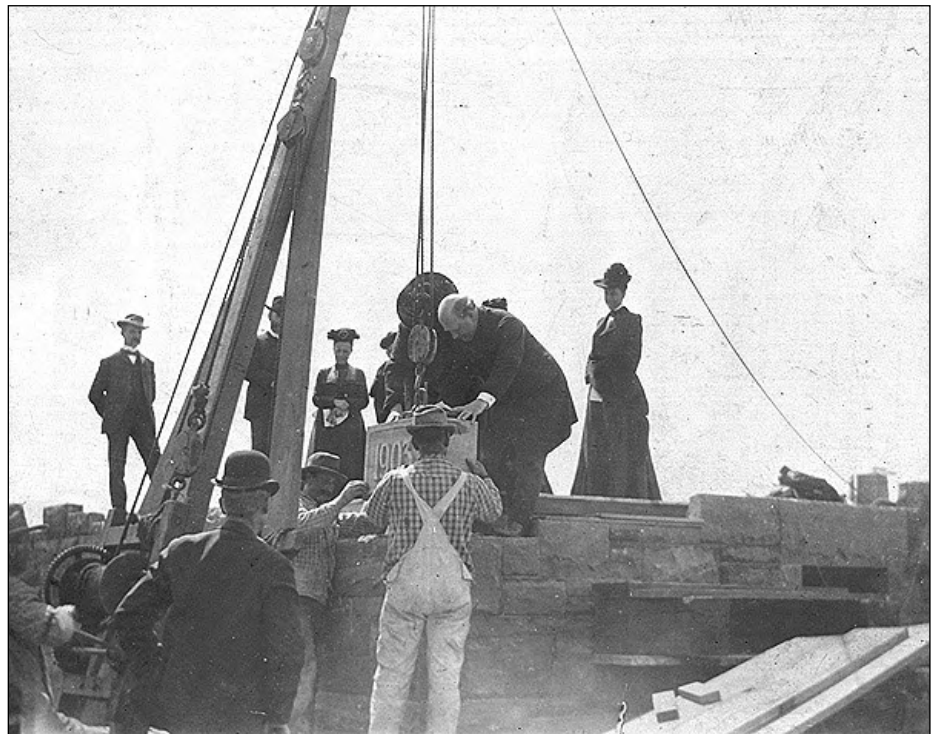
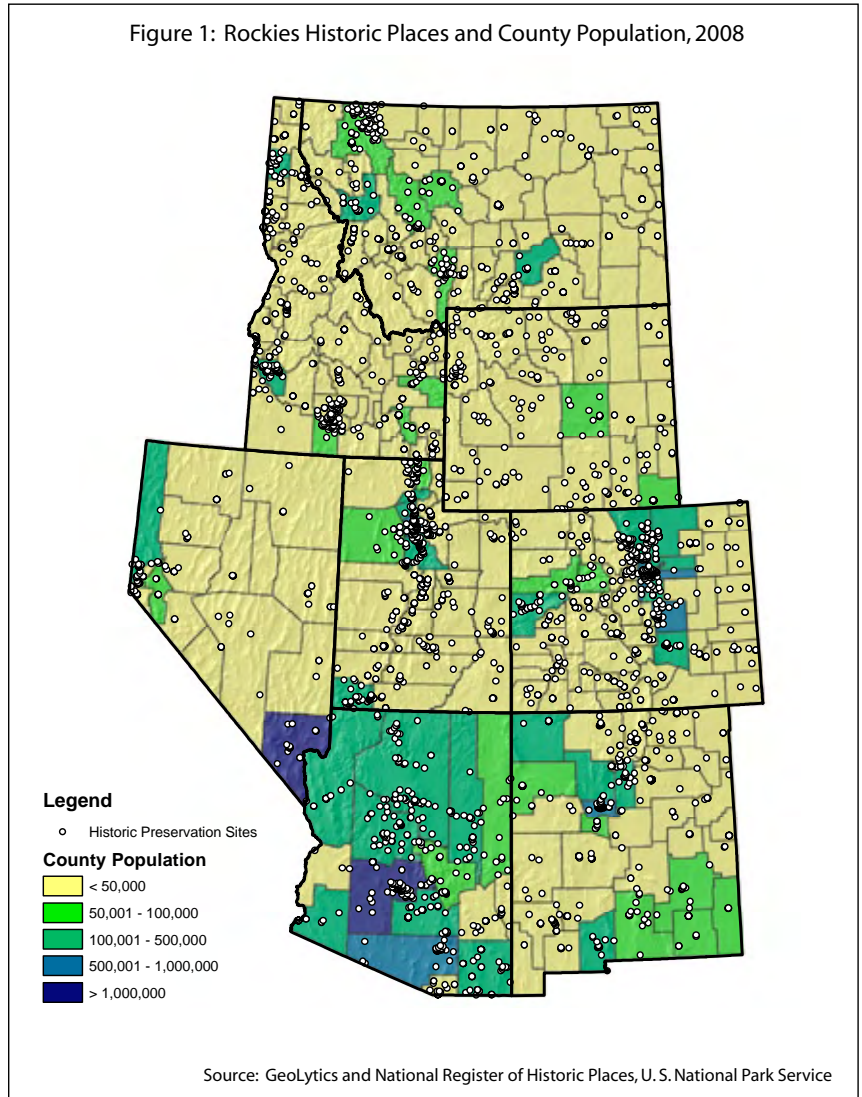
Sprawl can devalue a community's sense of place and subsequently diminish a historic site's intrinsic worth. Figure 1 identifies designated historic places within Rockies counties, ranked by population; larger urban areas often have more resources with which to protect their history, but also more urgent development pressures. These challenges highlight the need for proactive city development plans and thoughtful and informed citizens to recognize the economic, social, and educational value of historic preservation.

Historic and cultural sites located on public lands, specifically on National Forest Service (NFS) lands, present their own unique challenges. Figure 2 shows the pattern of federal lands overlain by designated historic places. The National Trust for Historic Preservation estimates that of the 325,000 cultural resources identified on NFS land, only 1,936 have been officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁴ One problem is assessment: 80 percent of the land the NFS manages has not been surveyed for historic and cultural sites.⁵ Another issue is funding—0.4 percent of the agency's budget, which is consistently stretched thin by wildfire mitigation costs, is devoted to heritage resource programs.⁶ Historic sites located on federal property are threatened by myriad competing demands on the land, including motorized recreation, timber harvesting, grazing, and mineral extraction.

The National Register of Historic Places

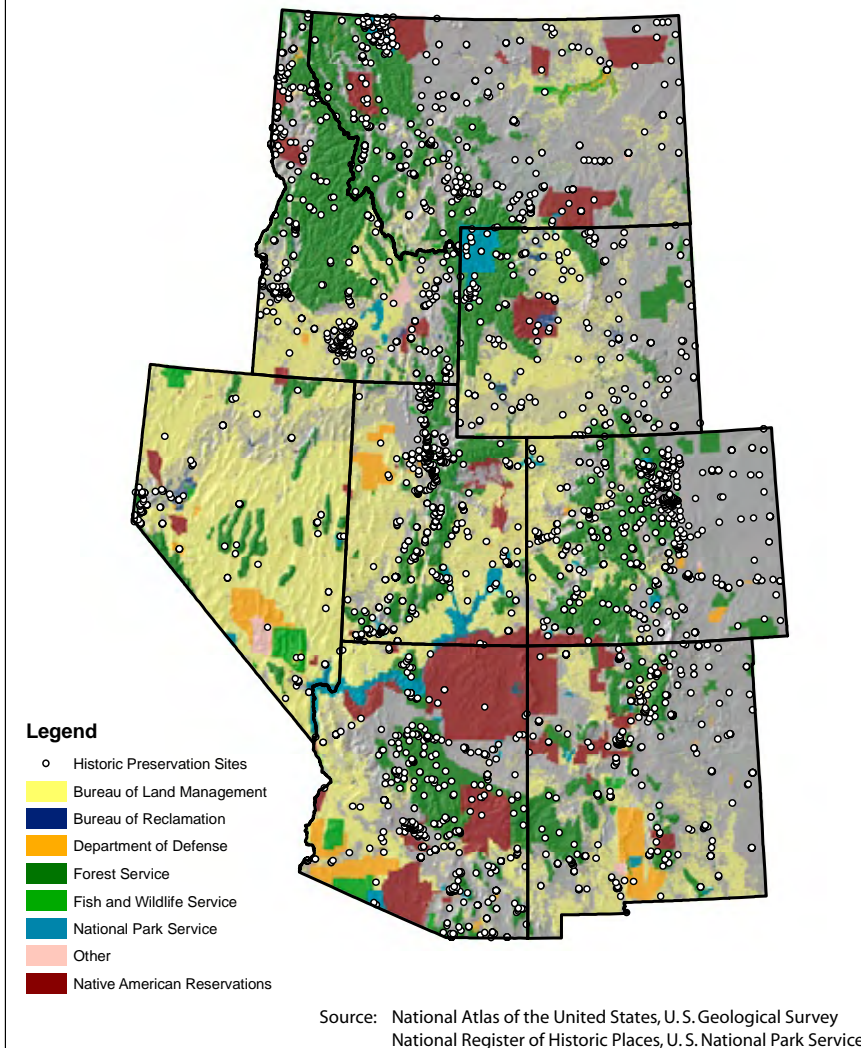
Recognizing the value of historic places, the U.S. Congress passed the Historic Preservation Act in 1966, creating the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. The NRHP is maintained by the NPS in the Department of the Interior and contained more than 80,000 individually listed sites as of 2007. Inclusion on the NRHP does not guarantee protection of the site, but does require federal agencies to consider the impact of federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects on historic and cultural sites that are listed on or eligible for listing.

Figure 1: Rockies Historic Places and County Population, 2008



Colorado College, President Slocum lays the cornerstone for Palmer Hall, 1902

Figure 2: Rockies Historic Places and Federal Land Ownership



characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

- *Information Potential*: the site is likely to yield information important to history.

What the Data Show

The NRHP tracks not only where historic sites are located, but also key information about each site, such as the owner, current function, historical function, and nominator. The following data provide an overview of historic sites in the Rockies region:

- There are approximately 5,800 sites in the Rockies, just over 7 percent of the total number of sites listed nationwide

- 89 percent of Rockies historic sites listed on the NRHP are still functioning in some capacity

- 71 percent of Rockies sites listed on the register are privately owned, 15 percent are locally owned, 5 percent are state owned, and 9 percent are federally owned.

- Of the Rockies sites listed on the NRHP, 3,276 were nominated for their relevance to an event in history, 162 relate to a historical figure, 2,438 are listed for their design or structural characteristics, and 16 are listed for their information potential.

- The Rockies counties with the largest numbers of sites are listed in Table 1.

In addition, owners of income-producing properties listed on the NRHP are eligible to receive tax credits for expenses incurred for substantial rehabilitation of their property. They can also be eligible to compete for state and federal grant money such as *Save America's Treasures* and *Preserve America* grants.

Anyone, including individual property owners, historical societies, and local governments, may prepare a site nomination for the NRHP. Nominations for sites located on federal lands are ultimately approved by the relevant federal agency, nominations for sites located on tribal lands are approved by a Tribal Historical Preservation Officers, and all others are approved by the State Historical Preservation Officer. To be listed, a site must have integrity and meet one of four possible criteria demonstrating historical significance:

- *Event*: the site is associated with a key event in history
- *Person*: the site relates to a significant historical figure
- *Design/Construction*: the site embodies distinctive

TABLE 1: TOP 11 HISTORIC COUNTIES

COUNTY AND STATE	NUMBER OF SITES ON THE NRHP
Salt Lake UT	291
Maricopa AZ	254
Denver CO	237
Utah UT	156
Ada ID	132
Flathead MT	124
Bernalillo NM	124
Beaver UT	110
Summit UT	102
Coconino AZ	91
Pinal AZ	91
Data Source: National Register of Historic Places	

An example of the richness and diversity of historic preservation already accomplished in the Rockies is shown in Figure 3 which identifies preservation to date of historic schools and colleges.

The NRHP, though a rich data set, is an incomplete representation of where historic sites are located. Often, NRHP listings reflect the willingness of owners to nominate their property because they want related tax credits, grants, or recognition. Historic sites that do not provide these incentives for an individual owner can be overlooked. We will not obtain a comprehensive picture of historic sites in the West, or in the rest of the nation, until states pursue cultural resource surveys, which can be driven by public demand for further protection and preservation of historic sites. Until then, organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and thousands of local historical societies and preservation groups will continue to work to raise awareness about threatened historic places. The economic and cultural value of historic preservation benefits not only a few connoisseurs, but all Westerners who appreciate our region for its vitality and unique character.

¹ "Historic Preservation is smart growth" remarks by Donovan Rypkeema, March 3, 1999. <http://hmtturnerfoundation.org/html/artsmartgrow.html>. Accessed 2/5/09.

² Rypkema, Donovan. "Sustainability and Historic Preservation" March 2007. <http://www.preservation.org/rypkema.htm>. Accessed 2/10/09.

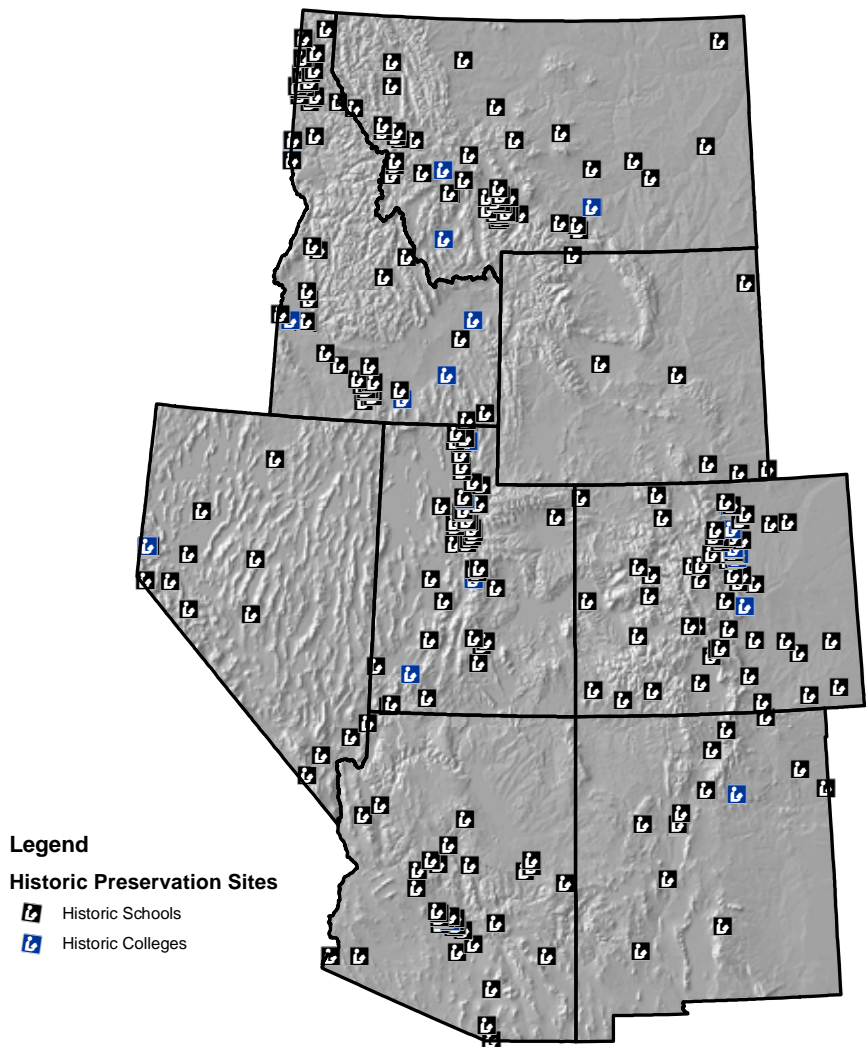
³ "The Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Colorado 2005 Update" pg 3

⁴ Jarvis, T. Destry. "Cultural Resources of the National Forest System: An Assessment and Needs Analysis" Outdoor Recreation & Park Services, LLC, and The National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2008. pg 64.

⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 67

⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 10

Figure 3: Historic Educational Sites in the Rockies



Source: National Register of Historic Places, U.S. National Park Service



Ada Theater, "The Egyptian Theater," Boise, ID, Duane Garrett, 1973

SITES LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, BY ROCKIES COUNTY, 2008

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Arizona	Apache	13	18.4	1.2
	Cochise	51	39.7	8.2
	Coconino	91	72.9	4.9
	Gila	33	64.6	6.9
	Graham	30	92.0	6.4
	Greenlee	9	123.0	4.9
	La Paz	2	9.3	0.4
	Maricopa	254	6.7	27.5
	Mohave	61	31.4	4.5
	Navajo	38	34.5	3.8
	Pima	75	7.9	8.1
	Pinal	91	38.8	16.9
	Santa Cruz	41	97.3	32.9
	Yavapai	60	29.8	7.4
	Yuma	43	22.1	7.8
Colorado	Adams	9	2.3	7.6
	Alamosa	12	78.9	16.6
	Arapahoe	16	3.0	20.0
	Archuleta	1	8.2	0.7
	Baca	2	50.1	0.8
	Bent	3	53.6	1.9
	Boulder	64	24.2	86.3
	Chaffee	17	99.2	16.7
	Cheyenne	2	100.8	1.1
	Clear Creek	16	181.9	40.5
	Conejos	8	94.0	6.3
	Costilla	4	109.2	3.2
	Crowley	1	18.0	1.2
	Custer	7	173.4	9.5
	Delta	11	35.7	9.6
	Denver	237	41.4	152.4
	Dolores	3	173.2	2.8
	Douglas	16	5.9	19.2
	Eagle	7	14.3	4.2
	Elbert	1	4.3	0.5
	El Paso	65	11.4	30.5
	Fremont	20	42.1	13.1

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Colorado	Garfield	14	27.8	4.7
	Gilpin	3	61.0	19.9
	Grand	10	72.6	5.4
	Gunnison	15	102.5	4.6
	Hinsdale	2	227.5	1.8
	Huerfano	6	78.8	3.8
	Jackson	2	144.1	1.2
	Jefferson	40	7.6	51.8
	Kiowa	1	70.0	0.6
	Kit Carson	7	93.1	3.2
	Lake	4	50.8	10.5
	La Plata	6	12.7	3.5
	Larimer	64	23.2	24.3
	Las Animas	14	92.1	2.9
	Lincoln	1	18.0	0.4
	Logan	9	42.8	4.9
	Mesa	26	19.4	7.7
	Mineral	2	194.4	2.3
	Moffat	10	73.4	2.1
	Montezuma	8	31.1	3.9
	Montrose	14	36.4	6.2
	Morgan	13	44.9	10.0
	Otero	13	66.2	10.2
	Ouray	3	68.0	5.6
	Park	9	51.2	4.1
	Phillips	3	63.7	4.4
	Pitkin	32	219.8	32.8
	Prowers	10	70.8	6.1
	Pueblo	53	34.4	22.1
	Rio Blanco	4	64.2	1.2
	Rio Grande	10	77.9	10.9
	Routt	15	68.5	6.3
	Saguache	2	25.1	0.6
	San Juan	2	333.3	5.2
	San Miguel	3	42.6	2.3
	Sedgwick	2	85.4	3.6
	Summit	4	15.8	6.4

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Colorado	Teller	6	27.5	10.7
	Washington	3	67.4	1.2
	Weld	28	11.8	7.0
	Yuma	3	30.4	1.3
Idaho	Ada	132	38.4	126.1
	Adams	6	177.2	4.4
	Bannock	20	26.5	17.4
	Bear Lake	87	1366.4	83.1
	Benewah	4	45.3	5.1
	Bingham	11	25.1	5.2
	Blaine	13	59.8	4.9
	Boise	2	26.3	1.0
	Bonner	14	34.0	7.3
	Bonneville	22	23.3	11.6
	Boundary	7	64.7	5.5
	Butte	2	73.3	0.9
	Camas	0	0.0	0.0
	Canyon	33	18.8	54.4
	Caribou	6	82.8	3.3
	Cassia	3	14.2	1.2
	Clark	2	229.4	1.1
	Clearwater	3	36.1	1.2
	Custer	29	709.6	5.9
	Elmore	18	63.0	5.8
	Franklin	8	63.4	12.0
	Fremont	11	87.8	5.8
	Gem	10	61.4	17.8
	Gooding	12	83.5	16.3
	Idaho	22	140.0	2.6
	Jefferson	5	22.9	4.5
	Jerome	62	311.5	103.9
	Kootenai	36	27.4	27.3
	Latah	38	107.1	35.1
	Lemhi	11	139.8	2.4
	Lewis	3	80.5	6.3
	Lincoln	41	938.4	34.2
	Madison	3	9.1	6.4

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Idaho	Minidoka	1	5.2	1.3
	Nez Perce	24	62.9	28.2
	Oneida	6	144.2	5.0
	Owyhee	7	64.4	0.9
	Payette	13	59.9	31.8
	Power	9	117.9	6.3
	Shoshone	17	135.4	6.5
	Teton	3	39.3	6.7
	Twin Falls	30	42.9	15.6
	Valley	19	225.6	5.1
	Washington	28	276.4	19.1
	Beaverhead	8	93.4	1.4
Montana	Big Horn	28	213.6	5.6
	Blaine	5	77.7	1.2
	Broadwater	4	86.1	3.2
	Carbon	47	488.9	22.9
	Carter	0	0.0	0.0
	Cascade	24	30.4	8.9
	Chouteau	14	254.5	3.5
	Custer	10	87.5	2.6
	Daniels	2	116.7	1.4
	Dawson	10	119.0	4.2
	Deer Lodge	26	285.2	35.1
	Fallon	2	71.7	1.2
	Fergus	28	248.2	6.5
	Flathead	124	147.5	23.7
	Gallatin	80	100.3	30.3
	Garfield	0	0.0	0.0
	Glacier	11	79.8	3.6
	Golden Valley	4	337.3	3.4
	Granite	8	287.0	4.6
	Hill	5	30.7	1.7
	Jefferson	4	35.5	2.4
	Judith Basin	0	0.0	0.0
	Lake	5	17.4	3.0
	Lewis and Clark	40	67.8	11.5
	Liberty	2	99.6	1.4
	Lincoln	4	20.7	1.1

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Montana	McCone	1	59.0	0.4
	Madison	8	111.4	2.2
	Meagher	4	199.9	1.7
	Mineral	10	257.6	8.2
	Missoula	62	62.9	23.8
	Musselshell	2	44.2	1.1
	Park	17	109.5	6.1
	Petroleum	0	0.0	0.0
	Phillips	4	99.2	0.8
	Pondera	2	33.4	1.2
	Powder River	0	0.0	0.0
	Powell	9	135.9	3.9
	Prairie	1	91.2	0.6
	Ravalli	75	186.0	31.3
	Richland	2	22.5	1.0
	Roosevelt	1	9.1	0.4
	Rosebud	16	175.3	3.2
	Sanders	19	163.6	6.8
	Sheridan	5	143.9	2.9
	Silver Bow	11	33.9	15.3
	Stillwater	8	98.0	4.4
	Sweet Grass	5	132.1	2.7
	Teton	1	16.4	0.4
	Toole	3	61.4	1.5
	Treasure	2	275.1	2.0
	Valley	11	154.3	2.2
	Wheatland	0	0.0	0.0
	Wibaux	2	214.4	2.2
	Yellowstone	18	13.3	6.8
Nevada	Churchill	9	37.3	1.8
	Clark	25	1.4	3.1
	Douglas	18	38.4	24.5
	Elko	5	11.3	0.3
	Esmeralda	0	0.0	0.0
	Eureka	0	0.0	0.0
	Humboldt	9	51.8	0.9
	Lander	11	216.3	2.0
	Lincoln	4	94.7	0.4
	Lyon	8	16.4	4.0

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Nevada	Mineral	3	58.9	0.8
	Nye	8	19.6	0.4
	Pershing	5	81.4	0.8
	Storey	8	194.1	30.4
	Washoe	67	17.1	10.2
	White Pine	12	144.2	1.4
	Carson City	38	67.8	241.6
	Bernalillo	124	19.9	106.2
	Catron	5	149.3	0.7
New Mexico	Chaves	14	21.8	2.3
	Cibola	1	3.6	0.2
	Colfax	18	135.2	4.8
	Curry	10	21.6	7.1
	De Baca	4	210.5	1.7
	Dona Ana	17	8.6	4.4
	Eddy	17	32.6	4.0
	Grant	30	105.1	7.5
	Guadalupe	4	81.7	1.3
	Harding	2	246.9	0.9
	Hidalgo	2	40.0	0.6
	Lea	4	6.9	0.9
	Lincoln	6	27.8	1.2
	Los Alamos	4	21.2	37.1
	Luna	5	18.5	1.7
	McKinley	18	25.0	3.3
	Mora	8	157.5	4.1
	Otero	15	23.1	2.3
	Quay	7	76.7	2.4
	Rio Arriba	26	61.6	4.4
	Roosevelt	4	21.2	1.6
	Sandoval	4	3.6	1.1
	San Juan	16	12.6	2.9
	San Miguel	87	286.3	18.4
	Santa Fe	41	28.4	21.5
	Sierra	12	94.3	2.8
	Socorro	33	181.5	5.0
	Taos	31	87.9	14.0
	Torrance	5	29.7	1.5
	Union	6	162.6	1.6
	Valencia	11	16.1	10.3

Data Source: National Register of Historic Places

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Utah	Beaver	110	1793.0	42.8
	Box Elder	35	76.1	5.2
	Cache	70	69.8	59.4
	Carbon	14	71.2	9.4
	Daggett	1	99.5	1.4
	Davis	47	16.9	73.7
	Duchesne	2	13.0	0.6
	Emery	15	137.8	3.4
	Garfield	19	442.8	3.6
	Grand	17	191.7	4.6
	Iron	14	36.9	4.3
	Juab	18	187.6	5.3
	Kane	11	170.9	2.7
	Millard	17	137.5	2.5
	Morgan	3	37.7	4.9
	Piute	2	138.5	2.6
	Rich	2	91.4	1.9
Data Source: National Register of Historic Places				

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Utah	Salt Lake	291	30.0	361.8
	San Juan	13	89.9	1.6
	Sanpete	70	288.6	43.6
	Sevier	21	103.6	10.9
	Summit	102	279.1	54.2
	Tooele	18	33.2	2.5
	Uintah	12	43.5	2.7
	Utah	156	37.1	72.8
	Wasatch	36	184.1	29.9
	Washington	77	62.5	31.8
	Wayne	16	637.2	6.5
	Weber	56	25.8	84.9
Wyoming	Albany	21	67.5	4.9
	Big Horn	9	77.0	2.9
	Campbell	0	0.0	0.0
	Carbon	22	147.5	2.8
	Converse	10	79.4	2.4
Data Source: National Register of Historic Places				

	COUNTY	NUMBER OF SITES	SITES PER 1,000 COUNTY RESIDENTS	SITES PER 1,000 SQ. MILES
Wyoming	Crook	7	116.6	2.4
	Fremont	11	30.4	1.2
	Goshen	4	32.6	1.8
	Hot Springs	6	134.2	3.0
	Johnson	11	141.7	2.7
	Laramie	38	44.0	14.2
	Lincoln	7	43.0	1.7
	Natrona	22	31.5	4.1
	Niobrara	6	262.0	2.3
	Park	22	82.2	3.2
	Platte	4	46.5	1.9
	Sheridan	14	51.8	5.5
	Sublette	7	98.5	1.4
	Sweetwater	18	47.2	1.7
	Teton	37	192.3	8.8
	Uinta	8	41.0	3.8
	Washakie	2	25.2	0.9
	Weston	3	46.0	1.2
Data Source: National Register of Historic Places				

