

Torrington Armory  
(Wyoming Army National Guard Armory)  
.8 mile west of intersection of US 85 and US 26  
~~Vicinity of Torrington Vicinity~~  
Goshen County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-120

HABS  
WYO  
8-TORR.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

~~PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS OF CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS~~

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HABS  
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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY  
TORRINGTON ARMORY (WYOMING ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**Location:** NW/SW/SW/NE Section 9, T24N-R61W  
.8 mile west of intersection of US 85 and US 26  
Vicinity of Torrington  
Goshen County, Wyoming

**USGS Quad:** Torrington, Wyoming 7.5'

**UTMS:** 13/566380 mE 4657550 mN

**Dates of  
Construction:** 1932-1939

**Present Owner:** State of Wyoming, Wyoming Army National Guard

**Present Use:** Wyoming Army National Guard Armory

**Significance:** The Torrington Armory and its use by Troop E are an integral part of the history of the Wyoming Army National Guard and the role it played in national defense, civil disturbances, and emergency relief from natural disasters. The armory is representative of standardized military architecture conceived for National Guard armories throughout the nation during the 1920s-1930s. It also represents a modification of this standard design to accommodate an indoor riding hall and stable facilities for Troop E, a cavalry unit.

**Project  
Statement:** The Wyoming Army National Guard plans to build a new facility on this property. The old armory and the hay storage building will be demolished. The approved mitigation plan for this National Register eligible site consists of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) recordation.

**Historian:** Robert Rosenberg  
Rosenberg Historical Consultants  
739 Crow Creek Road  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

September 1995

## II. HISTORY

### A. HISTORY OF THE WYOMING ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

The roots of the Wyoming National Guard can be traced back as far as Territorial days, when the governor authorized the creation of three militia districts to deal with Sioux Indian raids in the South Pass Mining District. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, several volunteer units were formed around the Territory, based on the system of discipline and field exercise used by the regular army. When Wyoming gained statehood in 1890, the constitution provided for a state militia, with the governor as commander-in-chief. By 1895, the state militia was organized into one regiment of twelve companies. The first federal mobilization of these guard units occurred in 1898, when the Spanish-American War broke out. <sup>1</sup>

The organizational structure of Wyoming's National Guard underwent continual changes. In 1907, the National Guard received official status as a permanent member of the military establishment of the United States; organization, equipment, and discipline became consistent with that of the regular army. In 1920, the Guard was reorganized as the First Wyoming Cavalry, and soon after redesignated as the 115th Cavalry. <sup>2</sup>

### B. HISTORY OF TROOP E AND THE TORRINGTON ARMORY

Troop E, 1st Cavalry at Torrington, was organized and federally recognized on November 19, 1920, by Colonel T.J. McCoy, the Adjutant General for Wyoming. The first guard meeting was held in the basement of the Trail Hotel. Dr. H.M. Jones, a Spanish-American War veteran, and Dr. T.C. Fitzgerald of the Medical Corps were instrumental in the organization of the unit. The first officers of the troop were elected by ballot at this meeting: Captain Dwight H. Butts, First Lieutenant A.O. Bloedorn, and Second Lieutenant G.D. Anderson. Gordon Doty was the First Sergeant, and other non-commissioned officers included J.L. Sawyer, Percy Dwinell, Frank Yoder, E.M. Smalley and A.O. Farrell. <sup>3</sup>

Troop E consisted of sixty-five men who were organized into a headquarters section with specialties such as first sergeant, stable sergeant, horseshoer, and cooks. There were two rifle platoons composed of sixteen men and a machine gun platoon consisting of two six-man squads. <sup>4</sup>

Troop E was soon tested in the field when it was called upon to control striking coal miners near Sheridan in April 1922. The force also included the Headquarters Troop of Douglas and totaled eighty-one men. They were transported by train to Douglas, because the transporting trucks furnished by the State Highway Department were without headlights and included many civilian drivers unsympathetic to the movement. Captain A.O. Bloedorn was forced to buy \$30 worth of food from a country store to feed the troops the second night out, when the officer responsible for feeding the men became lost in the foothills. Troop E also suffered from the effects of a severe thunderstorm and spent many arduous hours pulling the trucks out of the mud that made the roads nearly impassable. Since no immediate crisis required their participation, the troops spent a month on Clear Creek engaged in target practice and hiking in the foothills. The men then returned to Douglas, where they went into camp with troops from Riverton, Lander, Cody, Lovell, and Wheatland before returning to Torrington. The unit was redesignated as Troop E, 115th Cavalry, on May 1, 1922. <sup>5</sup>

As of 1920, the Wyoming Army National Guard owned only two armories, located at Newcastle and Lander. The remainder of the units had to rent or lease buildings for storage and care of federal property and for drills. Indeed, the greatest need of the Guard during the 1920s and early 1930s was for adequate armories for each unit. The Adjutant General decried the lack of armories in his Biennial Report for 1923-1924, stating that the majority of the states had already supplied all of their units with armories. He pointed out the value of a Guard unit to the community in which it was located. Due to the financial aid received from the federal government, a substantial amount of money was injected into the local economy. This financial aid became even more important as the nation sank into the Great Depression. <sup>6</sup>

Armories were built at Wheatland and Lovell in 1923 and 1924. Both were supplied by the U.S. Steel Corporation and were portable buildings (60' x 140') constructed of steel and sheet iron at a cost of \$9300 each. A total of \$7500 was appropriated by the Wyoming legislature for the building of the Riverton Armory in 1925-1926. However, the community had to raise an additional \$1800 to cover the cost of construction. <sup>7</sup> Casper received an armory that was dedicated in the spring of 1930. This facility cost \$44,188. At the same time, Cheyenne received a warehouse for its Guard unit at a cost of \$7788. <sup>8</sup>

Adjutant General Rhodolph L. Esmay stated in his Biennial Report for 1929-1930 that the State of Wyoming should

discontinue its policy of constructing armories on the elaborate scale of those in Sheridan and Casper and instead adopt a standard unit plan for future construction. He believed that such an armory could be built at a cost of \$30,000 to \$32,000 and could be constructed in units as time and funds permitted. <sup>9</sup>

Plans were approved for the construction of the Torrington Armory in early September 1931. It was to be located on a parcel of land purchased by the State of Wyoming from the Lincoln Land Company of Nebraska on September 28, 1931. R.L. Esmay, Adjutant General of the Wyoming National Guard, received bids for construction in late October and awarded the contract to Cannon, Wyeth, Clark and Webster of Douglas, Wyoming, at a cost estimated between \$23,000 and \$30,000. <sup>10</sup> The proposed armory received a glowing description in a local newspaper:

The Torrington Armory will perhaps be the most attractive yet constructed in the state of Wyoming, as it is to include several ornamental improvements not embodied in previous structures of this kind. Among these additional touches will be terra cotta window sills, and terra cotta regimental insignias, in colors, a foot and a half in diameter. <sup>11</sup>

The terra cotta regimental insignias referred to in the above article were either never included or have been removed. There are two geometric designs on the facade that are over 7' square, but they do not depict any regimental insignia related to Troop E and are purely decorative in nature. <sup>12</sup>

On 4/28/32, the newspaper reported that Troop E had moved into the new armory:

Last Saturday the new armory was turned over to Sgt. Dan Nolan, caretaker, who will have quarters in the new building. Horses will be moved to their new enclosed quarters soon. With every modern convenience, heating plant, recreation room, spacious main hall and rifle range in basement, the new armory is said to be one of the finest buildings of its kind in Wyoming, according to Lt. Jack Oliver, Commanding Officer of Troop E. <sup>13</sup>

The first armory dance was held in May with 800 people attending. A formal opening and dedication was held July 4, 1932, with Governor A.M. Clark in attendance. <sup>14</sup>

Construction on the riding hall for the Torrington Armory did not begin until 1935. Both the Douglas and Torrington armories were built at about the same time using the same plans, and the riding halls were omitted during initial construction. However, both were constructed so that when funds became available for the riding halls, the overall cost would be less than building separate riding halls. Both riding halls were completed by 1939. <sup>15</sup> Apparently this work was carried out by the Works Progress Administration, one of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs to stimulate work during the Depression; hence the WPA plaque on the east elevation of the building. <sup>16</sup> However, no documentation has been found detailing the exact role of the WPA in the construction of the riding hall.

During the 1930s, the Torrington Armory was the site for the annual celebration of President Roosevelt's nationwide birthday ball, with the proceeds donated to combat infantile paralysis. An annual military ball was held at the Armory, which was often attended by many civilian and military dignitaries, including the governor and first lady of Wyoming. The Torrington Fire Department also held an annual ball at the Armory, and due to its proximity to the county fairgrounds, dances associated with the fair were held there. <sup>17</sup>

Troop E served the community in many other ways. In 1930, the unit furnished tents and cots for a summer camp for the Torrington Boy Scout troop. It was also engaged in helping law enforcement officials track down and arrest two local men who had stolen government property and were apprehended in the vicinity of Laramie Peak. The Torrington Armory, along with all of the other armories in Wyoming, provided shelter, blankets, and aid to families of the unemployed during the Great Depression. <sup>18</sup>

Adjutant General Esmay also noted the assistance of Troop E during a local emergency in Torrington:

Following an explosion in the business section of Torrington, Troop E, 115th Cavalry assembled and furnished police for the area, thus assisting the Fire Department and preventing theft of property. <sup>19</sup>

Commanders of Troop E during the 1930s included First Lieutenant John Oliver, Captain Phil L. Rouse, First Lieutenant Alvin B. Yoder, and Captain Charles M. Myrick. At the onset of World War II, Troop E consisted of five officers and 122 enlisted men; Captain Jess L. Gerlach was the Troop Commander. <sup>20</sup>

As of 1940, there was a total of twelve armories in Wyoming, but only Torrington, Douglas, Sheridan, and Casper were equipped with riding halls. <sup>21</sup> The Torrington Armory was also among the five largest and most substantial brick armory buildings constructed in Wyoming during the late 1920s and early 1930s (the others being Casper, Douglas, Lusk, and Sheridan).

Troop E was mobilized in March 1941 and entrained for Fort Lewis, Washington, with about 120 men. During the first three years of World War II, Troop E did various shore patrol and guard duties on vital installations along the West Coast. In 1943, the unit returned to Fort Lewis and became Tank Company F. Although Troop E never served overseas, it did furnish cadre for many other units involved in foreign duty. In 1943, Tank Company F moved to Camp Locket, California, and served on border patrol duty. Later they moved to Camp Polk, Louisiana, and later to Fort Knox, Kentucky, from where they were discharged in September 1945. <sup>22</sup>

Wyoming had always been considered an excellent area for cavalry, due to the fact that most of the recruits were experienced riders; indeed, as of 1938, all but two Wyoming units were cavalry. However, by the end of the 1930s, motorcycles, cars, and trucks began to displace horses in the Wyoming National Guard. In April 1939, the Wyoming National Guard became the first in the country to receive an armored car squadron. <sup>23</sup> In the summer of 1942, Wyoming guardsmen were relieved of their horses. However, nearly 50,000 other U.S. cavalrymen were also relieved of their horses during World War II, as most of the cavalry units became mechanized. Thus, it appears that the Torrington Armory riding hall was in use only about three years. The riding hall and stables were converted to motor storage and shop facilities with alterations completed by 1948. Similar alterations were carried out at all of the Wyoming armories with cavalry facilities during the same time period at a total cost of \$16,000.00. <sup>24</sup>

Other former company commanders of Troop E include Captain Harry Palmer, Captain Robert Latta, and Captain

Charles M. Myrick, who took Troop E to World War II. Sergeant Major Clifford Gomez joined Troop E in 1931. In 1935 he was hired as a full-time caretaker; his duties included caring for about thirty head of horses and acting as supply sergeant. He was promoted to the first sergeant in 1937 and was assigned to training battalions for the duration of the war. After the war he helped reorganize the guard unit in Torrington, now known as the 960 Light Maintenance Company. In 1970, he was elevated to State Command Sergeant Major. <sup>25</sup>

Troop E underwent several reorganizations throughout the 1900s. It was consolidated with and designated as the 960th Ordnance Medium Maintenance Company on October 10, 1946. It was reorganized and redesignated as the 960th Ordnance Company on September 15, 1952; the 960th Light Maintenance Direct Support Company on December 18, 1967; the 960th Maintenance Company Light Direct Support (LTDS) on January 1, 1972; the 960th Maintenance Company Forward Direct Support (FDS) on August 1, 1975; the 960th Service Company Collection and Classification (C&C) on February 1, 1982; and finally the 960th Maintenance Company Heavy Equipment Intermediate (HEMCO) on September 30, 1989. <sup>26</sup>

A newspaper article published in 1961 sums up the colorful history of the Wyoming National Guard:

The passage of time fails to distort or dim records of gallant service which are recorded in historical chronicles. The future alone can determine in what manner the units of the Wyoming Army National Guard will again distinguish themselves. There remains one certainty, and that is: the Wyoming Army National Guard stands ready and willing to serve in any way its state and nation (require) and this service will be rendered in the most efficient manner possible. <sup>27</sup>

### III. CURRENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE TORRINGTON ARMORY

The Torrington Armory is located on the western perimeter of the town of Torrington on the northeast side of US Route 26. It is on a level terrace on the north side of the North Platte River in an area of mixed residential, industrial, and commercial development.

The Torrington Armory complex consists of a one and-one-half story brick building, and a one-story brick outbuilding (the Hay Storage Building) on a fenced 4.99-acre land parcel.

The outbuilding is located adjacent to the northwest corner of the armory. There is a paved parking lot on the south side of the armory where the main entrance is located. There is additional parking for military vehicles and an open storage area located behind or north of the armory.

The Torrington Armory is a one and one-half story brick building (135' E-W x 190' N-S) resting on a concrete foundation. The central core of the building has a gambrel roof covered with asphalt shingles. The roof has a wooden deck and is supported with a system of wooden trusses. The south portion of this roof, which is over the drill hall, is more rounded and does not conform to the overall roof configuration. It also has a clerestory area with multi-paned banks of lights on the east and west. The gambrel roof portion has four evenly spaced shed-roofed dormers on the east and west sides. Each dormer has three 9-light windows and is covered with wood shingles painted a dark green. There are shed-roofed brick wings built onto the east and west sides of the core portion of the armory. These wings differ slightly in height and window configuration. The east wing has numerous evenly spaced one over one-light or six over one-light double-hung window units with wood sash and frames. The west wing has similar sized six over one-light double-hung windows in the front or south portion, but the remainder of the windows are narrow two-light horizontal sliding units set high in the wall. This is the area where the horse stables for the cavalry unit were once located, probably accounting for the differences in the east and west wing exterior details. Also, the west wing has a tar and gravel covered roof while the east wing is covered with asphalt shingles. There is an overhead garage door set in the west side of the west wing. The east side of the east wing has two entrances with raised concrete stoops, metal railings, and wood panel doors. There is a metal plaque set in the brick wall above the more central entrance bearing the following inscription: "Built by Works Progress Administration, 1935-1939." (Although the armory was completed in 1932, the riding hall was not begun until 1935; it was finally completed in 1939.)

The south side or facade of the armory has a brick falsefront with a stepped parapet that hides from view the rooflines and overall proportions of the central core of the building and the shed-roofed wings. The light brown bricks are contrasted by dark-brown bricks used for decorative accents along the parapet border, the cornice, the pilasters, and the window and door lintels of the building. There is also a large square geometrical design set in the second story at either end of the falsefront. A recessed rectangular-

shaped white stucco signboard is centered above the main entrance bearing the name "WYO. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD" in black letters. There are three rectangular-shaped window bays below the signboard that have been sealed over. The main entrance has a hipped-roofed open porch with a raised concrete stoop and steps. The porch roof is supported with square wooden columns. The ceiling of the porch is covered with narrow wood paneling. There are twin aluminum and glass doors in the main entrance that have replaced the original two-leaf wood panel doors. There are also secondary entrances in the east and west additions. The above ground portion of the foundation is painted white, visible on all elevations. The front portion of the building has a basement, and there are two-light above grade windows visible in this area.

The north side or rear of the building is covered with wood shingles painted a dark green. The gambrel roofed portion has a large garage door centered in this side that has replaced the original wood door. The west wing has a wooden sliding garage door unit that appears to be original. This side is covered with pressed metal siding in the shape of bricks and painted a dark green. The pressed metal siding covers a brick wall. Pressed metal siding was also used in the space created between the shed roof of the west wing and the high gambrel roof on the core of the building. The north side of the east wing has one door with aluminum storm covering.

Most of the interior of the building has been modified from the original plans. The indoor riding court (150' x 75') has been paved over and converted to a garage/workshop area. The floor of the riding court is lower than the remainder of the armory, so that one descends by stairs to the court floor. In the east wing, the bleachers have been removed, and the former bleacher area (77'6" x 15') has been converted to a supply room. There was also an indoor target range (77'6" x 15') east of the bleacher area that has been removed. This space now contains ping pong and pool tables and is used as a "rec" room. There is a full kitchen at the northeast corner of the armory in the east wing. This area (40'6" x 30') was once used for wagon storage. In the south portion of the east wing, the former captain's quarters, lockers, and classroom have been converted to a large front office and four smaller offices. The south portion of the west wing (about 49' x 30') formerly contained the caretaker's quarters. It currently consists of four offices, a bathroom, and a supply room. North of this is an open area (100'6" x 30') that was formerly used as the stables. The stables have been removed, but it is still possible to discern the former location of each stall

due to vertical timbers set in the walls at 10-foot intervals. This area is now used as storage and can be accessed via a garage door in the west elevation. At the extreme north end, there are two additional storage areas (each 31' x 10') accessed by a garage door in the north side of the west wing. The drill hall (75' x 40') is the only portion of the interior of the armory that has not been substantially altered. It is finished in high grade pine wainscoting with a wood floor. There are windows in the north wall of the drill hall that provide a view of the former riding hall. The window frames and trim are also finished in pine. The main entrance to the armory opens into the drill hall area. There is a basement area (75' x 40') below the drill hall that contains lockers and storage, and a basement under a portion of the east wing that contains the furnace and coal room (30'5-1/2" x 23'5-1/2"). The basement areas have concrete floors.

#### IV. ENDNOTES

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7. Davis, Walter F. Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of Wyoming, 1925-1926, p. 4.
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9. Ibid., p. 15.

10. The Torrington Telegram, Torrington, Wyoming, 10/29/31;  
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12. Sgt. Brockhill, Torrington Armory, Telephonic Communi-  
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22. Wyoming Army National Guard, Public Information Officer  
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23. WPA Writers' Program, Historical and Pictorial Review,  
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