

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - CHALLIS-CLAYTON AREA

Number 168

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Historic-site reports contain information designed to assist in two preservation functions. One is preservation planning at the local level. The other is the work of federal agencies in carrying out their responsibilities to comply with historic-preservation requirements prescribed by federal statutes and regulations. These reports summarize local archaeological, historical, and geographical contexts; existing surveys of historic sites; architectural, engineering, industrial; and other cultural resources; and available maps and literature concerning each area. Natural geographical, rather than governmental, boundaries have been used to identify seventy-two areas that vary greatly in size. Site reports reflect a broad cultural and geographical disparity characteristic of diverse regional components found in Idaho, but the areas are designed to incorporate cultural elements of immediate local significance that need to be taken into account for preservation planning.

1. Geographical context: Challis and some irrigated farms occupy one of Idaho's driest valleys. Some higher ridges in that vicinity have shaded timbered slopes, although bare rocky formations (mostly volcanic) are more common. Salmon River has cut a deep gorge between Clayton and Challis, and enters a similar canyon below Morgan Creek. Largely open range with some Forest Service lands, this area has a well-developed ranching economy. A number of major mining districts are included.

Highways along Salmon River, with a Warm Springs Creek connection to Mackay and Arco, provide a transportation base. Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and county roads reach more remote segments of this area.

2. Prehistory and significant archaeological sites: people have inhabited southern Idaho for fourteen thousand years or more. Until about eight thousand years ago they were noted primarily as big game hunters. Since then, they specialized more in camas, bitterroot, and other natural crops and seeds, as well as in smaller game. But they continued to hunt large game that remained after earlier elephants, camels, giant sloth, and other ice age creatures left as climatic conditions changed. Snake River plains big game hunters came into the Salmon River

mountains to fish and to hunt mountain sheep and other local game. Evidence of their activity there goes back for eight thousand years or so. A late prehistoric bison jump, which continued in use almost until white settlement began, is located near Salmon not far above Challis.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include:

- a. Exploration and fur trade, 1822-1878
- b. Bay Horse and Clayton mines, 1878-1902
- c. Challis ranches
- d. Forest Service administration, 1906-1919
- e. Ramshorn revival, 1919-1924
- f. Challis
- g. Clayton smelter, 1935-
- h. Thompson Creek molybdenum, 1980-

5. Historical documentation and literature:

6. Historic sites inventory:

7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites summary: Surface evidence of placer mining in this area offers opportunities for study of industrial procedures utilized in historic production. Hydraulic pits, patterns of dredging operations, or tailings that distinguish hill claims from stream claims--or that identify Chinese services--provide information of historic importance. Prospector's pits disclose gravels that were searched unsuccessfully for gold. Ditches, flumes, stream diversions, and similar evidence of water sources also are important.

Lode mining operations left a variety of indications, many of them relatively permanent in nature. Disturbance of surface outcrops includes trenches and exploratory shafts. In other places, tunnels and raises or stopes that reached surface outlets reveal important aspects of mining activity. If accessible, underground workings have still greater importance for industrial archaeology and engineering analysis. Abandoned tools and

equipment, along with items like timbering in tunnels and stopes, add to this record.

8. Architectural resources: The Challis-Clayton area has a number of mining and ranching sites of interest for their log and frame houses and outbuildings. In the towns of Bayhorse, Challis, and Clayton are a number of significant false-fronted frame commercial buildings and stone commercial buildings built of local volcanic tuff. Cast iron and pressed galvanized sheet iron is used for decoration on a few commercial buildings. Houses are log or frame, and the Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival styles are employed. Two industrial sites that are also of architectural interest are the Bayhorse charcoal kilns and the stone Challis Brewery, dating from 1879.

Fifteen architectural sites have been recorded in the study area, one in Bayhorse, two in Clayton, two in rural parts of the area, and the remainder in Challis. Challis architecture dating from settlement through 1930 has been adequately surveyed; all other parts of the study area deserve further survey.

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:

Challis: McKendrick House (Challis Multiple Resource Area [CMRA], site 2)  
 Penwell House (CMRA, site 3)  
 Chivers, Bill, House (CMRA, site 4)  
 Rowles, Donaldson, House (CMRA, site 5)  
 Peck, Bill, House (CMRA, site 6)  
 247 Pleasant Avenue (CMRA, site 7)  
 Wilkinson, Clyde, House (CMRA, site 8)  
 Hosford, Emmett, House (CMRA, site 9)  
 Chivers, Thomas, House (CMRA, site 10)  
 Smith, Henry, House (CMRA, site 12)  
 Chivers, Thomas, Cellar (CMRA, site 11)  
 Board & Batten Commercial Building (CMRA, site 13)  
 False-front Commercial Building (CMRA, site 14)  
 Bux's Place (CMRA, site 15)  
 Challis Cold Storage (CMRA, site 16)  
 Stone Building (CMRA, site 17)  
 Buster Meat Market (CMRA, site 18)  
 Twin Peaks Sports (CMRA, site 19)  
 Stone and Log Building (CMRA, site 20)  
 I.O.O.F. Hall (CMRA, site 21)  
 Custer County Jail (CMRA, site 22)  
 Challis High School (CMRA, site 23)  
 Challis Brewery Historic District  
 Old Challis Historic District (CMRA, site 1)  
 T12N, R18E, Sections 1 and 3: Bayhorse

## 9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Antelope Flat 1963  
Bald Mountain 1963  
Bayhorse 1963  
Bayhorse Lake 1963  
Black Mountain 1963  
Bradbury Flat 1963  
Challis (15') 1956  
Challis Creek Lakes 1963  
Clayton 1963  
Dickey Peak 1967  
Doublespring (15') 1956  
Elevenmile Creek 1963  
Horse Basin 1967  
Little Antelope Flat 1963  
Livingston Creek 1964  
Lone Pine Peak 1963  
Potaman Peak 1963  
Thompson Creek 1964  
Twin Peaks (15') 1956  
Wards Butte 1963  
Ziegler Basin 1963

## 10. Cultural resource management recommendations: