

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - HAGERMAN VALLEY

Number 352

Revised December 1984

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: Hagerman Valley includes a series of major springs between Thousand Springs and Malad Canyon, along with upper and lower Salmon Falls of Snake River. These springs and Malad River receive Snake River water from almost 200 miles upstream, along with Lost River and intermediate plains discharge. Slightly less than twenty square miles in extent, Hagerman Valley is a protected area with canyon walls 600 feet high, rising to 3,400 feet above a low point of about 2,800 feet. Above and below, Snake River runs through a narrow canyon.
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. Upper and lower Salmon Falls are major aboriginal fishing sites in Hagerman Valley.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:
4. Historical summary:

For thousands of years an important Indian fishing and wintering area, Hagerman Valley provided salmon for Shoshoni and Bannock Indians from the upper Snake country. Salmon could not ascend Snake River above Salmon Falls in Hagerman Valley, so the Indians came a long way to reach that important fishing site. The valley also offered a Shoshoni band protected winter campsites that had been occupied over a long period of time.

Explored by Wilson Price Hunt and Ramsey Crooks in the fall of 1811, the valley became a point of considerable interest for white travelers. Emigrants along the Oregon Trail marveled at Thousand Springs. There they regularly traded for salmon with Indians fishing at Salmon Falls. The Oregon Trail left the valley near Salmon Falls to ascend a long grade to the west in a direct approach to a Snake River crossing not far west of later Glenn's Ferry. In 1852 a ferry above Thousand Springs allowed some of the immigrant traffic to use a northern route that barely missed Hagerman Valley.

With the Idaho gold rush and discovery of Boise Basin placers in the summer of 1862, a party of miners set out to wipe out the Salmon Falls Shoshoni the next spring. And with the gold rush, heavy freight traffic and fast stage lines began to operate over the Oregon Trail. Some used the Glenn's Ferry-Salmon Falls route through upper Hagerman Valley, while others crossed at Payne's Ferry (just above Thousand Springs) to use the road north of the valley. Malad Station, located at the Malad River crossing just above the gorge two miles or so from Hagerman Valley, served the latter route. Camp Reed (originally placed on Rock Creek) was located on Salmon Falls Creek, August 22, 1865 to May 12, 1866, as a military outpost during a time of Indian peril.

In 1870 fine gold was discovered in Snake River bars, and the entire course of the river was prospected thoroughly over the next decade. A few ranchers had settled in Hagerman Valley, and a mining district was organized in the Salmon Falls region in 1878, with additional claims taken up in 1884. Salmon Falls became enough of a mining center that a post office was established there on January 8, 1879. Farming also began to expand in 1879, when John Bell planted an alfalfa crop. In 1880 he brought in grape vines along with some peach and poplar trees that have been prominent in the valley ever since. When the Oregon Short Line Railroad was built (through nearby Shoshone and Bliss) in 1882-1883, farmers began to settle in greater numbers. Before the

railway came, they had to go all the way to Soldier on Camas Prairie to get lumber, but after 1882 they could get supplies--as well as ship crops to market--by rail. That brought great changes to the valley.

With settlement of the valley, Stanley Hagerman started a store in 1891 northwest of Salmon Falls in the middle of the valley. A school was built in 1892, and a hotel followed the next year. Hagerman soon displaced Salmon Falls as the center of commerce and settlement. By 1900 several hundred settlers had come and a Sunday School was started. A decade later, Hagerman had three churches, two banks, three hotels, three general stores, three real estate firms, a hardware store, drug store, meat market, blacksmith shop, harness shop, two livery barns, two restaurants, and a pool hall. An opera house and three additional meeting halls also were available for public use. The Hagerman Valley Sun (later the Herald) was published from 1909 until 1916.

A series of power plants came with the growth of Hagerman. Thousand Springs had been a promising power site ever since A. D. Foote--a mining engineer searching for a source for electricity for the Trade Dollar Mine at Silver City--came by in 1894. No one had devised a way to transmit power that long a distance, but after 1900, settlement around Twin Falls developed a closer market. And over the years, longer transmission lines became feasible. Construction of Hagerman area power plants began in 1908; completion of generating facilities at Lower Salmon Falls and at Thousand Springs in 1910, followed by a Malad River plant a year later, provided for export in addition to local needs. An effort to install a plant at Upper Salmon Falls failed between 1911 and 1913, but succeeded in 1937.

Thousand Springs also provided water at a constant, ideal temperature for large-scale fish culture. A Utah biologist, Jack W. Tingey, began a commercial fish operation there in 1928, discovering exceptionally favorable conditions for a profitable rainbow trout operation. Large state and federal fish hatcheries also have developed there, and the commercial producers have become the largest in the country. Along with irrigated farming, rainbow trout raising (with millions of trout produced annually) has become a major item in the Hagerman area economy.

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.

8. Architectural resources:

Survey of the Hagerman Valley study area is limited to a few isolated areas, and generalizations about the nature of the area's architecture would be premature. One would expect to encounter sites related to the area's development as a mining and agricultural area during the period 1870 through 1910.

Six sites of architectural interest have been recorded in Hagerman and its vicinity. All parts of the study area deserve further survey.

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:

Hagerman: Roberts, Morris, Store

9. United States Geological survey Maps:

Bliss 1949
Hagerman 1949
Thousand Springs 1950
Tuttle 1949
Yahoo Creek

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: