

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - SLATE CREEK-FLORENCE-FRENCH CREEK

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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: between Wind River and Slate Creek, Salmon River runs west and then north through a deep canyon after making a sharp bend at Riggins. High forested ridges and mountain basins raise above arid lower slopes. Two of Idaho's highly productive gold camps are located far above Salmon River, along which high bars also had placers that offered winter employment to local miners from other camps. Important as a ranching as well as lumbering area, Salmon River, also provides a major recreational base in this vicinity. Elevations range from 1,560' at Slate Creek to 8,841' at Patrick Butte. This canyon exceeds 6,000 feet in depth. A major highway and a network of Forest Service roads serves this area.

2. Prehistory and significant archaeological sites: after the last great Missoula-Spokane flood, which surged and splashed from Pasco up Snake River past Lewiston into Idaho some 12,000 years ago, people moved back into Snake and Clearwater canyons, where they have been active ever since. Traces of human occupation of higher canyon and prairie country also go back for eight thousand years or so, and lower Clearwater pit houses have been in use for five thousand years or more.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary:

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 Slate Creek-Florence-French Creek study unit includes a number of significant barns, ranches, and cabins built of logs, frame construction, or native stone. The Idaho Historic Sites inventory records ten sites of architectural interest.

All parts of the study area need further survey. Towns and centers that have received no attention include the following:

Florence	Riggins
French Creek	Riggins Hot Springs
Lucile	Slate Creek

National Register sites of architectural significance include the Aitken Barn in T24N, R1E, Section 22.

9. United States Geological Survey Maps.

Black Tip 1963
Burgdorf (15') 1956
Dairy Mountain 1963
Florence 1963
Grave Point 1963
Hanover Mountain 1963
Hershey Point 1963
John Day Mountain 1963
Kelly Mountain 1964
Kessler Creek 1964
Kirkwood Creek 1963
Lucile 1963
McKinzie Creek 1963
Marble Butte 1963
Patrick Butte 1964
Pollock 1964
Riggins 1964
Riggins Hot Springs 1964
Sawyer Ridge 1963
Slate Creek 1963
Victor Peak 1969

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: