

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - NORTH FORK SALMON AND LEMHI VALLEY-BIRCH 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: This long valley, with a variety of drainage patterns, runs about \_\_\_\_\_ miles from Lost Trail Pass to a Lower Birch Creek Snake River plain outlet. Salmon River, which receives North Fork and Lemhi River discharge, flows through part of this valley before turning west to cut through a long deep canyon. Mostly arid valley land below high ridges, some forested and some dry, this area has extensive range land and mineral resources. A long continental divide segment with some notable passes (Lemhi, \_\_\_\_\_, and Bannock, 7,681') border one side, while a still-higher Lemhi range provides a protective western wall. Major peaks include \_\_\_\_\_. North Fork's elevation is 3,620'.

Isolated by northern and western mountain barriers, this valley provides a good transportation route for local purposes, but not for traffic bound for farther destinations. Nez Perce Trail users had access to North Fork, while Shoshoni and Blackfoot bands had a good route westward from Big Hole through this valley.

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. The National Register Birch Creek rock shelters and Jaguar Cave near Viola are major archaeological sites in this area.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Discovered by Lewis and Clark in 1805, this valley was particularly important to their expedition's success. They obtained Indian horses essential to allow them to reach navigable waters farther northwest, and they found a route that allowed them to complete their transcontinental journey. North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company fur hunters followed after 1818, and Lemhi and Bannock Pass became important trappers' routes by 1822. Blackfoot raiders also came that way, often threatening local Shoshoni bands as well as fighting parties of fur hunters. Captain B. L. E. Bonneville had a post there in 1832, and a combined venture of Boston based and Hudson's Bay agents followed. In 1834, British trappers had another temporary post there until Blackfoot hostilities drove them out.

After trapping ended, a large Mormon Salmon River mission

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 North Fork of Salmon River and Lemhi Valley-Birch Creek study unit has a number of mining and ranching sites of interest for their log and frame houses and outbuildings. In the town of Salmon there are buildings of interest dating from the 1870's through the 1940's. They include log, frame, and brick houses in the Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Tudoresque styles; frame, brick, and stone commercial buildings designed in the Greek Revival, Romanesque Revival, Renaissance Revival, Commercial, Neo-classical, and Moderne styles; and brick and stone institutional buildings employing the Gothic Revival, Federal, and Neo-classical styles. Cast iron, pressed galvanized sheet iron, and terra cotta are used for decoration on commercial and institutional buildings. The L-plan wing house type has been recorded in Salmon.

Thirty-two architectural sites have been recorded in the study area, one in Tendoy, four in rural areas, and the remainder in Salmon. The small towns south of Salmon, the mining areas in the mountainous parts of the study unit, and the agricultural areas of the study unit need further survey. Towns and centers that have received no attention include the following:

Baker	Gibbonsville	Nicholia
Blue Dome	Leadore	North Fork
Carmen	Lemhi	

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:

Salmon: Myers, Socrates A., House  
 Episcopal Church of the Redeemer  
 Salmon City Hall and Library  
 (Tourtellotte and Hummel Architecture in  
 Idaho thematic group, site 137)  
 Lemhi County Courthouse  
 I.O.O.F. Hall (1874)  
 I.O.O.F. Hall  
 Shoup Building  
 T21N, R23E, Section 19: Geertson, Lars, House

## 9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Badger Spring Gulch 1966	Lem Peak 1962
Bannock Pass 1965	Lemhi (15') 1956
Big Hole Pass 1966	Lemhi Pass 1965
Bird Creek 1966	Lost Trail Pass 1966
Blue Dome 1969	Morrison Lake (15') 1956
Copper Mountain 1969	Nicholia (15') 1956
Deadman Pass 1965	Patterson (15') 1956
Diamond Peak (15') 1956	Piquett Mountain (15') 1960
Eightmile Canyon 1969	Poison Peak 1962
Gibbonsville 1966	Richard Butte 1969
Gilmore (15') 1957	Salmon (15') 1956
Goat Mountain 1965	Scott Butte 1969
Goldbug Ridge 1962	Scott Peak (15') 1957
Goldstone Mountain (15') 1956	Shewag Lake 1966
Homer Youngs Peak 1966	Snaky Canyon 1969
Jumbo Mountain (Mtn.-Id.) 1966	Tyler Peak 1969
Leadore (15') 1956	Ulysses Mountain (15') 1960
Leesburg (15') 1956	

## 10. Cultural resource management recommendations: