

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - SOUTH FORK SALMON

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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: Salmon River's south fork runs through a spectacular canyon that reaches a depth of more than 6,000 feet. Upper meadows and basins, along with a few canyon openings, provide isolated ranch locations. Some lower elevations (which range down to less than 2,200 feet at Mackay Bar) are arid, while higher areas are timbered. Mount Eldredge rises to 9,207 feet. South Fork, Johnson Creek, Secesh River, and Lick Creek have roads that offer an extensive transportation network in an otherwise remote area. A paved highway runs to Warm Lake and Pen basin. Forest and mineral resources support major mining and logging operations.

2. Prehistory and significant archaeological sites: A substantial part of this ancient Mountain Shoshoni territory remained a bastion for their traditional activity as long as 1879 or a little later, although Salmon River mountain ranges even more remote from mining activity was preferred. A substantial number of archaeological sites, ranging over at least several thousand years in age, have been identified.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature: Cultural resource surveys for South Fork and Johnson Creek sites

have been confined largely to stream channel areas, so high ridges have remained as territory for future investigation. Enough low-elevation archaeological resources have been surveyed, but not investigated thoroughly, to demonstrate that this area is important for future research. Available reports cover most deep canyons of this area.

4. Historical summary: major historical episodes include

1. Exploration and fur trade, 1830-1862: On September 7, 1830, Alexander Carson set out with a party of six trappers to explore Salmon River's south fork, but most of their horses were stolen at some point along their route, and whether they succeeded in discovering any South Fork streams remains undisclosed. In any event, if they reached their South Fork destination, they reported no streams worth returning to.

At least one band of trappers based out of Saint Louis examined Pen basin and other Upper South Fork streams in their search for beaver in 1831, but they did not find fur resources sufficient to interest them during their travels from Stanley basin to Long Valley and back that summer.

Then in 1832, a small detachment from John Work's Hudson's Bay Company Snake brigade descended Salmon River Canyon, where they passed its South Fork on their way west. After that adventure this entire area remained a Mountain Shoshoni and Nez Perce country until mining commenced in nearby Warren's in 1862.

2. Mining and ranching, 1862-1906: Subsequent to major placer discoveries at Warren's in 1862, extensive prospecting expanded mining activities to nearby South Fork deposits. Miller's Camp on Ruby Meadows had extensive early activity with fifty miners in 1863, and scattered claimants operated at smaller South Fork sites. Ranching flourished in occasional flats near important markets, primarily at Warren's. Access to that large camp, located in a high basin only a few miles from this area, came by way of trails through Burgdorf and other South Fork routes.

A notable hot springs at Burgdorf developed into an important regional resort, primarily after 1870. When, after Idaho became a state in 1890, legislation was adopted to construct a state wagon road to replace difficult mountain trails that connected North Idaho to Boise, a route through Burgdorf was adopted in 1891. That road did not attract much through traffic, but a gold rush to Thunder Mountain brought thousands of eager participants to South

Fork routes to that district. Traffic via Upper South Fork areas around Warm Lake and Pen basin led to extensive interest there.

3. Forest Service administration, 1906-1932: When President Theodore Roosevelt's conservation policies led to expansion of national forest lands, practically all of this area came under Forest Service management. Mining expansion continued with an important Golden Anchor discovery in 1914 on Marshall Mountain, which borders on this region's northern boundary. Efforts to develop gold mining at Stibnite also got underway. Grazing and logging gradually came under Forest Service regulations, but this area's remote mountain location continued to delay economic development.

4. Civilian Conservation Corps era, 1933-1940: Road building, based from a French Creek CCC camp for its northern segment, encouraged automobile and truck penetration to Secesh River places like Burgdorf. Warm Lake also gained accessibility.

Air service from Lewiston reached a landing strip at Mackay Bar in 1933, and other airports soon were served from McCall. CCC roads and activities had a substantial impact from Warm Lake and Pen basin northward, and by 1940, access to Yellow Pine by way of Lick Creek supplemented its Johnson Creek route. Gold and antimony production at Stibnite became possible from 1932 on, and foundations were laid for a major expansion there.

5. Mining, 1940-1952: Although gold mining was suspended nationally in 1942, Stibnite continued to produce antimony and added tungsten in 1944. Air service to Boise enhanced this development. With a total production of \$21,000,000 in tungsten by 1952, Stibnite surpassed all other national sources during that time. An additional \$24,000,000 in antimony came during that era, along with \$4,000,000 in gold, \$3,000,000 in mercury, and \$1,000,000 in silver.

6. Recreational development since 1952: With improved paved roads and campgrounds, Warm Lake and a number of other South Fork resort possibilities, including Burgdorf and Mackay Bar, this area entered a new era. Recent resumption of mining at Stibnite also has been important.

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: Survey of the South Fork Salmon study area is limited to a few isolated areas, and generalizations about the nature of the area's architecture would be premature.

One site of architectural interest has been recorded at Burgdorf.

Most of the study area deserves further architectural survey. The following towns and centers have received no attention and should be inspected for architectural remains:

Knox	Landmark	Stibnite
Yellowpine	Warm Lake	

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:

Burgdorf

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Big Chief Creek 1969
 Blackmare 1973
 Box Lake 1969
 Burgdorf (15') 1956
 Caton Lake 1973
 Chicken Peak 1974

Chilcoot Peak 1972
Chinook Mtn. (15') 1961
Deadwood Reservoir (15') 1953
Edwardsburg 1969
Enos Lake 1969
Fitsum Peak 1973
Fitsum Summit 1973
Gold Fork (15') 1973
Log Mountain 1943
Loon Lake 1969
Paddy Flat 1973
Parks Peak 1969
Pilot Peak 1969
Pony Meadows 1969
Profile Gap 1969
Stibnite 1973
Victor Peak 1969
Warm Lake (15') 1954
Warren (15') 1956
White Rock Peak 1973
Williams Peak 1969
Wolf Fang Peak 1969
Yellow Pine 1973

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: