

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - CACHE VALLEY

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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: Bear River, blocked by lava in an earlier course that led through Portneuf canyon, was diverted almost 30,000 years ago from a Snake River outlet to a Great Basin sink now known as Salt Lake. That shift sent Bear River through Cache Valley, at that time part of a large lake. Irrigation is required for most Cache Valley farming, but some high surrounding ridges are timbered in places. Elevations in Idaho range from feet below Preston to Oxford Peak at . An outlet from Cache Valley to Marsh Creek and Portneuf Valley provides an important transportation route north from Utah into Idaho. Another series of valleys connected by Bear River gives convenient access to Soda Springs.

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. A Weston canyon rock shelter is an archaeological site significant in this

area.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical Summary: Major historical episodes include

1. Exploration and fur trade, 18 -1860
2. Mormon settlement north of Utah, 1860-1874
3. Rail service and freighting, 1874-1884
4. Anti-Mormonism, 1884-1894
5. Agricultural recovery and dry farming, 1895-1919
6. Transportation improvement and farm depression, 1920-1932
7. New Deal and wartime adjustments, 1933-1945
8. Advanced farm technology, 1946-

North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company trappers led by Donald Mackenzie and Michel Bourdon descended Bear River and discovered Cache Valley by 1822, and in 1824, John Weber's party of mountain men trapping for William H. Ashley had their winter camp in Idaho's part of Cache Valley. Peter Skene Ogden brought a Hudson's Bay Company brigade back through Cache Valley to Ogden's Hole in May, 1825, and in 1826 and 18 , Ashley's trappers had their annual summer rendezvous there. Trapping continued there until after 1840, when French Canadian and métis trappers were settled in a Cache Valley Shoshoni winter camp. All of this activity overexposed a large Cache Valley Shoshoni band to white activity and may have accounted, in part, for friction that led to their disastrous military encounter at Bear River shortly after Mormon settlement expanded in that direction.

John Bidwell's group of California pioneers came from Soda Springs through Cache Valley in 1841 in search of a suitable California Trail route, but their trouble getting across northern Utah led to selection of a Raft River-Granite Pass route instead.

John C. Fremont came through northern Cache Valley and Weston Canyon in 1843 while seeking a more direct Oregon and California road, but Hudspeth's Cutoff, somewhat farther north, was employed in 1849 for that purpose. Meanwhile, Moses Harris--a Cache Valley mountain man in 1847--advised Brigham Young that he would do better to settle there than to go on to Salt Lake. But Mormon occupation of Cache Valley was deferred until 1855 when a church

stock ranch and winter herd ground was established near later Logan. In 1849 Captain Howard Stansbury had recommended Cache Valley as a herd ground for Cantonment Loring stock, but an unusually severe winter wiped out half of a large herd of army mules and cattle--after which Cantonment Loring was replaced by Fort Dalles.) Another still more disastrous winter ruined that enterprise but in 1856, Mormon farmers came to settle Cache Valley, where they had a more dependable water supply. After a year, they had to withdraw on account of exposure to General Albert Sidney Johnston's Utah expedition, but in 1859 they were able to return following a military armistice. Six new communities were established immediately, and on April 14, 1860, Mormon pioneers expanded farther north with another outpost at Franklin. In doing so, they had left Utah and settled in Washington territory--getting into an interesting jurisdiction problem of which they remained happily unaware for more than another decade. Their more immediate difficulty--relations with a band of around four hundred Cache Valley Shoshoni--was solved in an unpleasant manner a little more than two years later, when Colonel Patrick E. Connor and his California Volunteers practically wiped out that entire band on a cold winter morning, January 29, 1863. No other Indian military disaster against an army force matched Connor's Battle of Bear River, fought a few miles northwest of later Preston. A series of Shoshoni land treaties followed, but very few Cache Valley Shoshoni survived to be affected by them.

After more than a decade of expansion, northern Cache Valley emerged with a number of Mormon settlements beyond Franklin. These, like Franklin, were organized as self-sufficient communities with a bishop in charge of economic development as well as religious and social life. Geographically a part of Idaho (instead of Washington) after March 4, 1863, Cache Valley from Franklin north functioned as northern Cache County, Utah, until 1872. Acceptance of a General Land Office boundary survey left Cache Valley's northern communities no recourse except to admit they were part of Oneida County, Idaho. Partly (if not entirely) because of their national party reception that year, they voted solidly Democratic in 1872. Then in 1874, a local Independent Anti-Mormon party emerged and gained political control. By that time, Franklin--which gained Utah Northern rail service that spring--was able to gain ascendancy over Malad in a rivalry for Montana freight traffic. As Oneida County seat, Malad had a strong gentile freighting and stage line element that united in a local anti-Mormon campaign. Mormon expansion north from Cache Valley was blocked for some time by gentile ranchers' resistance. By 1880, Oxford--a northern Cache Valley outpost--gained an anti-Mormon element that brought turmoil into Cache Valley as well as Oneida County generally. Largely insulated from national economic trends during hard times after 1873 (aside from a suspension of Utah Northern construction beyond Franklin),

Cache Valley's Mormon communities continued to grow and to retain their social separatism from a gentile freighters' and railway element that shifted northward in 1878 when Jay Gould took over and extended Utah and Northern Railway facilities on to Blackfoot and, by 1880, to Montana.

By 1880 Oneida County's anti-Mormon organization went into decline. Even in 1882, when Idaho's anti-Mormons finally realized an impressive congressional election victory, Oneida County's Mormon Democrats retained local control. But another legislative loss in 1884 deprived them of any opportunity to defeat a powerful anti-Mormon gubernatorial and legislative campaign to dismiss all Idaho's Saints as a direct political factor. For eight years, no Mormon could vote, hold office, or serve on a jury. Oneida County was divided at that time in such a way as to leave Franklin and Malad in a small, fairly unimportant remnant. Qualified voters and office holders were hard to come by during those years, and a separate system of Mormon academies was instituted when they lost control over their local public schools. Leading Mormon families (a small but influential minority) were troubled at that time by an energetic enforcement of federal anti-polygamy legislation, and their communities gained increased cohesion in developing organized defenses against raids of deputy United States marshals who came out searching for bishops who engaged in plural marriage. All of that trouble had more economic impact than political effect: Mormon institutions included a set of church courts and administrative agencies that largely dispensed with any need for secular government, but their economic cooperatives and other ventures did not flourish so well with their business leaders in exile or in hiding. Finally a few months after Idaho became an anti-Mormon state in 1890, church leaders in Salt Lake worked out a plural marriage compromise. Mormons in Idaho and Utah also arranged to vote for both (rather than just one) national political parties. In return, Idaho's Mormons were relieved of their political disabilities, and Utah became a state in 1896.

5. Historical documentation and literature:
  
6. Historic sites inventory:
  
7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites literature:
  
8. Architectural resources:

## 9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Banida 1969  
Clifton 1968  
Egan Basin 1969  
Franklin 1969  
Henderson Creek 1968  
Malad City East 1968  
Mapleton 1969  
Midnight Mtn. 1969  
Mink Creek 1969  
Oneida Narrows Reservoir 1969  
Oxford 1969  
Paris Peak 1969  
Riverdale 1969  
Swan Lake 1969  
Treasureton 1969  
Weston 1969  
Weston Canyon 1968

## 10. Cultural resource management recommendations: