

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - UPPER SNAKE PLAIN

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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: Ranging in elevation from about 4,000 feet near Shoshone to over 6,400 feet on upper Camas Creek, this relatively flat plain--except for spectacular buttes, one of them in height--is formed from layers of lava, in which older flows are covered by wind blown soils and recent flows still are exposed. Old stream channels covered with lava run underground, and a number of streams (Big and Little Lost River, Birch Creek, and several lesser drainages) simply sink into these lava flows. Old channels of Snake River also are buried by lava flows that redirected that stream into a southern arc by blocking its earlier, more direct westward course. These lava formations absorb a large underground reservoir of Snake River, Lost River, and other water (including surface water for that large area which has no other drainage) that gradually moves along buried channels toward Thousand Springs and similar Snake River canyon outlets above Hagerman. This extensive ground water supply was an important attraction in providing a suitable desert location for Idaho's National Reactor Testing Station (A National Historic Landmark) as well as a source for irrigation pumping in areas which cannot be served by gravity canals. Except for that kind of farming, this extensive area above regular project canals is almost entirely desert land.

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. Wilson Butte cave, a 14,000-year old National Register location near Eden, and Owl Cave west of Idaho Falls, which housed Folsom era elephant hunters, are significant archaeological sites in this area.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include:

1. Exploration and fur trade, 1810-1852
2. Emigrant traffic, 1852-1878
3. Stock ranges, stage, and freight lines, 1878-1902
4. Additional railway and highway routes, 1902-1924
5. Craters of the Moon National Monument, 1925-1948
6. National Reactor Testing Station, 1949-

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:

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Antelope Butte 1969  
Antelope Lake 1972

Antelope Valley 1972  
Arco Hills 1972  
Arco Hills SE 1972  
Arco South 1972  
Atomic City 1973  
Bear Den Butte 1972  
Bear Park East 1972  
Bear Park SW 1972  
Bear Park West 1972  
Bear Trap Cave 1972  
Big Fill Reservoir 1973  
Big Grassy Ridge 1972  
Big Grassy Ridge SE 1972  
Big Lost River Sinks 1969  
Big Southern Butte  
Black Knoll 1965  
Black Ridge Crater  
Blizzard Mt. South 1972  
Bottle Neck Lake 1972  
Brigham Point 1972  
Butte City 1972  
Butterfly Butte 1964  
Camas 1965  
Carey  
Cedar Butte SE 1964  
Circular Butte 1969  
Circular Butte NW 1969  
Circular Butte SW 1964  
Circular Butte 3 NE 1973  
Circular Butte 3 NW 1973  
Circular Butte 3 SE 1973  
Circular Butte 3 SW  
Coffee Point 1973  
Coffee Point NE 1973  
Coffee Point SW 1973  
Community Lake 1972  
Copper Mtn. 1969  
Deer Parks 1964  
Dietrich Butte 1971  
Dubois NE 1964  
Dubois NW 1964  
Dubois SE 1964  
Edie Ranch (15') 1957  
Fingers Butte 1972  
Fish Creek Reservoir 1947  
Fissure Butte 1972  
Gardner Lake 1972  
Grouse (15') 1960  
Halfway Lake  
Hamer 1964

Howe Peak 1972  
Idmon 1972  
Infernor Cone 1972  
Kettle Butte NE 1964  
Kettle Butte NW 1976  
Kettle Butte SW 1976  
Kilgore 1972  
Kimama 1972  
Kimama Butte 1972  
Laidlaw Butte 1972  
Laidlaw Lake 1972  
Lake Walcott (15') 1972  
Larkspur Park 1972  
Lava Lake Reservoir 1973  
Lidy Hot Springs 1969  
Little Butte 1973  
Little Butte NE 1973  
Little Butte NW 1973  
Little Butte SW 1973  
Little Lost River Sinks 1969  
Little Park 1972  
Lone Butte 1964  
Lookout Point 1972  
Market Lake 1964  
Max 1972  
Menan Buttes 1951  
Middle Butte 1973  
Minidoka 1972  
Montview 1969  
Morgan's Pasture NE 1976  
Morgan's Pasture NW 1976  
Mosby Butte 1972  
Mosby Well 1972  
Mud Lake NW 1964  
Mud Lake SE 1964  
Mule Butte 1972  
Nichols Reservoir 1972  
Norland 1972  
North Laidlaw Butte 1972  
Owqizza 1971  
Paddleford Flat  
Pagari  
Pagari Well  
Parker 1948  
Paul Reservoir (15') 1957  
Pillar Butte NE  
Pillar Butte SE  
Pine Butte 1972  
Plano 1976  
Pratt Butte 1972

Quaking Aspen Butte 1972  
 Rattlesnake Butte 1972  
 Ray's Lake 1964  
 Richard Butte 1969  
 Richfield  
 Roberts 1949  
 Rock Butte 1973  
 Sage Junction NE 1964  
 Schodde Well 1972  
 Scott Butte 1969  
 Scott Peak (15') 1957  
 Scoville 1973  
 Senter 1972  
 Service Berry Butte 1972  
 Shaky Canyon 1969  
 Shale Butte 1972  
 Shamrock Gulch 1969  
 Snowshoe Butte 1972  
 Spencer South 1972  
 Split Rock 1972  
 Split Top 1972  
 Springfield NW 1955  
 Sunset Lake 1972  
 Taber 1973  
 Taber NE 1973  
 Terreton 1964  
 Tikura  
 The Watchman 1973  
 Tyler Peak 1969  
 Wagon Butte  
 Yale (15') 1959

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: