

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - OWYHEE MOUNTAINS AND RIVER

Number 622

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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: Owyhee River lands, with a mountain range 8,400 feet high for a northern border, include all of Idaho's southwestern corner. An arid land with deep canyons and a light juniper forest on Juniper mountain, this large territory lacks highway, aside from a route to Duck Valley. Mineral resources are important around Silver City and Delamar, while some production has been realized at Flint and at South Mountain. Range lands support scattered ranches, many of them quite isolated. Elevations vary from at to at .
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.
3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:
4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include
  1. Exploration and fur trade, 1818-1862

2. Owyhee mines, 1863-1875
  3. Stockraising,
  4. Mine development, 1884-1912
  5. Transportation improvement, 1913-1932
  6. New Deal and wartime adjustments, 1933-1945
  7. BLM administration, 1946-1964
  8. Wilderness area controversy, 1964-
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: Sites of importance in the study of architecture in the Owyhee Mountains and river study unit include ranches, mining sites, stage stations, and military camps. Examples of log construction, lava rock buildings, and wood and willow fences survive. The Idaho Historic Sites survey records two sites of architectural interest in the area, Silver City and the remains of Camp Three Forks. The entire study area deserves further survey; sites that need inspections for architectural remains include Riddle and Triangle. The following sites of architectural significance are listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

Silver City  
Camp Lyon  
Delamar

T8S R3W: Camp Three Forks

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Battle Creek Lake 1972	Juniper Basin SE 1971
Bedstead Ridge 1973	Little Blue Table 1972
Big Springs Ranch 1972	Lost Valley 1972
Bruce Flat 1973	Mountain View Lake 1971
Buckhorn	Nichol Flat 1972
Bull Basin Camp 1973	Parsnip Peak Ore-Id 1969
Bull Camp Butte 1973	Piute Basin East 1973
Castro Table 1973	Piute Basin West 1973
Cliffs 1973	Pleasant Valley 1973
Clover Mtn. 1972	Red Basin 1973
Coyote Hole 1973	Riddle 1971
Crab Spring Butte 1973	Ross Lake 1971
Dickshooter Reservoir 1973	Shoofly Springs 1972
Dickshooter Ridge 1973	Slack Mountain 1973
Fairylawn 1973	Smith Creek 1973
Flint Creek (15') 1965	Snow Creek 1972
Flying H Ranch 1971	Spring Creek Basin 1973
Four Corners 1973	Star Valley 1973
Frying Pan Basin 1972	Sugarloaf 1972
Grassy Ridge 1973	Three Forks 1971
Hurry Up Creek 1973	Triangle (15') 1965
Indian Meadows 1973	Turner Table 1972
Jarvis Pasture 1973	Wagon Box Basin 1973
Jordan Valley Ore-Id 1969	Wickahoney Point 1972
Juniper Basin 1971	Wickiup Creek 1973

10. Cultural resource management recommendations:

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