

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - SNAKE RIVER (BLISS TO GUFFEY) AND WESTERN SNAKE PLAINS

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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: Snake River flows through a series of canyons, interrupted by occasional small valleys, for miles below Hagerman valley. North of this river segment, a relatively flat, arid plain with some irrigated farms (largely around Mountain Home) extends to Bennett Mountain and a series of ridges that run along an old fault line northwest toward Boise. Old lake bed clay soils are exposed in some of this country, which also has lava flows and scattered small lava buttes. Except for grades out of Snake River's canyon, this area offers no serious problems for transportation. Elevation varies from to at Guffey bridge. Snake River provides a number of power sites in this stretch.

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, 1811-1840
  2. Oregon Trail and Kelton Road, 1841-1882
  3. Rail transportation, 1883-1899
  4. Swan Falls power, 1900-1912
  5. Transportation improvement and reclamation, 1913-1932
  6. New Deal and wartime adjustments, 1933-1945
  7. Mountain Home airbase and titan missile sites, 1945-1962
  8. Contemporary life, 1962-
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:
  - Bennett Mtn. (15') 1958
  - Big Foot Butte 1947
  - Bliss 1949
  - Bruneau 1947
  - Castle Butte 1947
  - Christmas Mtn. 1971
  - Cinder Cone Butte 1956
  - C J Strike Dam
  - Crater Rings 1956
  - Crater Rings SE 1956

Crater Rings SW 1956  
 Dorsey Butte 1947  
 Glenns Ferry 1947  
 Grand View 1947  
 Grindstone Butte 1948  
 Hagerman 1949  
 Hammett 1947  
 Indian Butte 1949  
 Indian Cover 1947  
 Indian Creek Reservoir 1971  
 Jackass Butte 1947  
 King Hill (15') 1958  
 Kuna 1971  
 Little Joe Butte 1948  
 Mayfield (15') 1960  
 Mora 1971  
 Mountain Home (15') 1956  
 Mountain Home North 1956  
 Mountain Home South 1956  
 Orchard 1971  
 Owyhee 1971  
 Pasadena Valley 1947  
 Pot Hole Canyon 1948  
 Reverse 1956  
 Sand Dunes 1947  
 Ticeska 1948  
 Twentymile Butte 1947  
 Wild Horse Butte 1947

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: