

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - CAMAS PRAIRIE-COTTONWOOD BUTTE

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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: This relatively level plateau, cut by Lawyer's Canyon and a few other gorges, contains extensive farmland with wind blown soils and some border timberland. Tolo Lake, located near one edge, and a few buttes lend variety to Camas Prairie's topography. Sufficient moisture is available to support natural farming. Elevations of Grangeville ( ), Craigmont ( ), Nez Perce ( ), and Cottonwood ( ) do not vary greatly. Cottonwood butte rises to feet.

2. Prehistory and significant archaeological sites: After the last great Missoula-Spokane flood, which surged and splashed from Pasco up Snake River past Lewiston into Idaho some 12,000 years ago, people moved back into Snake and Clearwater canyons, where they have been active ever since. Traces of human occupation of higher canyon and prairie country also go back for eight thousand years or so, and lower Clearwater pit houses have been in use for five thousand years or more. Camas Prairie had a desirable summer climate and camas fields that attracted early people and historic Indians who succeeded them.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include

1. Exploration and fur trade, 1806-1860
2. Gold rush traffic and early farming, 1861-1876
3. Nez Perce War, 1877
4. Expansion of Grangeville, 1878-1894
5. Nez Perce reservation opening, 1895-1919
6. Transportation improvement and farm depression, 1920-1932
7. New Deal and wartime adjustments, 1922-1945
8. Advance farm technology, 1946

5. Historical documentation and literature:

6. Historic sites inventory:

7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites summary:

8. Architectural resources: Architectural sites in the Camas Prairie-Cottonwood Butte study area are associated with the area's development from 1860 through 1910 into a supply center for the central Idaho mountains and a rich farming and agricultural processing region. Commercial buildings are brick, stone, or frame, designed in the Romanesque and Renaissance Revival styles. There is occasional use of terra cotta ornamentation. Houses, churches, and schools are often frame, drawing on the Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, and Colonial Revival styles. St. Gertrude's Convent of 1924, a brick and stone Romanesque Revival style building, represents the work of architect Engelbert Gier.

The study area has numerous rural sites that preserve frame farmhouses and large barns with hay doors, hay hoods, and cupolas.

Forty-seven sites of architectural interest have been recorded in the Camas Prairie-Cottonwood Butte study area, divided evenly among eight towns and the countryside. All of these deserve further study. Communities that need inspection for architectural remains include the following:

Denver	Keuterville	Morrow	Westlake
Forest	Lookout	Reubens	Winona
Gifford	Melrose	Slickpoo	
Greencreek	Mohler	Summit	

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:

Grangeville: Grangeville Savings and Trust  
T31N, R1W, Section 12: St. Gertrude's Convent and Chapel

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Cottonwood 1967	Moughmer Point 1963
Cottonwood NE 1967	Nez Perce 1967
Craigmont 1967	Nez Perce SE 1967
Culdesac (15') 1958	Orofino East 1967
Fenn 1963	Orofino West 1967
Fletcher 1967	Orofino West 1967
Frye Point 1968	Peck 1967
Goodwin Meadows 1963	Sixmile Creek 1967
Grangeville East 1963	Waha 1968
Grangeville West 1963	Westlake 1967
Hoover Point 1967	White Bird 1963
Kamiah 1967	White Bird Hill 1963
Keuterville 1967	Winchester East 1967
Mohler 1967	Winchester West 1967

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: