

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - LOWER SALMON-JOSEPH AND DOUMECQ 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: Salmon River winds through a deep canyon that makes a northern arc around Doumecq and Joseph plains. Split by Rice Creek canyon, those plains represent a continuation of adjacent Camas Prairie across Salmon River and a plateau extending past Imnaha and Grande Ronde rivers and across Snake River in Oregon. A number of streams dissect that plateau before entering this stretch of Salmon River.

Only a few roads reach Salmon River below White Bird, and long winding grades are necessary to gain access to Joseph and Doumecq plains. Similar to most other segments of Salmon River, this canyon acts as a formidable barrier to transportation. With arid lower slopes, Salmon River canyon houses a few ranches in steep range land. Higher ridges and some adjacent plateau areas are forested. Salmon River gold placers abound in most high bars, which have been worked for well over a century. Elevations increase from feet at Snake River to at Camp Howard Ridge.

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.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include

1. Exploration and fur trade, 1806-1854
2. Nez Perce reservation, 1855-1863
3. Placers along Salmon River bars and early ranching, 1863-1876
4. Nez Perce War, 1977
5. Settlement of Doumecq and Joseph plains, 1878-
6. Transportation improvement, -1932
7. New Deal and wartime adjustments, 1933-1945
8. Contemporary economy, 1946-

5. Historical documentation and literature:

6. Historic sites inventory:

7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites summary: 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: Developing as a farming area and a transportation route from north to south Idaho during the period 1870 through 1900, the Lower Salmon-Joseph and Doumecq Plains study area contains architectural sites related to those activities. Survey for architectural sites in the study area has been accomplished mostly in Whitebird and its vicinity, where there are frame commercial buildings, churches, and houses of interest. A number of Doumecq and Joseph plains ranch buildings are significant. Only ten sites have been recorded in the survey

area; further survey is needed in all parts of the region. The following communities have received no attention and should be inspected for architectural remains:

Boles Davidson
Canfield Joseph

No sites of architectural significance have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Boles 1963	Keuterville 1967
Cactus Mtn. 1963	McKinzie Creek 1963
Dairy Mtn. 1963	Rattlesnake Ridge 1963
Deadhorse Ridge 1963	Slate Creek 1963
Fenn 1963	Wolf Creek 1963
Frye Point 1968	Wapshilla Creek 1963
Goodwin Meadows 1963	Westlake 1967
Grave Point 1963	White Bird 1963
Hoover Point 1967	White Bird Hill 1963
Joseph 1963	

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: