

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - LEESBURG-PANTHER CREEK

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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: Panther Creek drains a major mineral area enclosed practically entirely by Forest Service land. Mines also have been exploited on Moose and Pine creeks farther north.

Forest Service roads provide access to much of this area, including Yellow Jacket and Silver creeks farther west. Fairly high mountain ridges are cut by deep canyons that offer a substantial barrier to transportation. Elevations vary from at Salmon River to near Mount McGuire.

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. Snake River plains big game hunters came into the Salmon River mountains to fish and to hunt mountain sheep and other local game. Evidence of their activity there goes back for eight thousand years or so. Salmon River archaeological sites not far above and below Panther Creek document early occupation of that area.

3. Cultural resource surveys and archaeological literature:

4. Historical summary: Major historical episodes include

1. Exploration and fur trade, 1824-1866
2. Leesburg placers, 1866-1892
3. Blackbird mine, 1892-1906
4. Forest Service administration, 1906-1949
5. Cobalt production, 1949-1959
6. Contemporary events, 1960-

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: Survey of the Leesburg-Panther Creek study area is limited to a few isolated areas, and generalizations about the nature of the area's architecture would be premature. One would expect to encounter sites related to the area's development as a mining area and Forest Service land during the period 1866 through 1910.

9. United States Geological Survey Maps:

Antelope Flat 1963

Bald Mountain 1963
Bayhorse 1963
Bayhorse Lake 1963
Black Mountain 1963
Bradbury Flat 1963
Challis (15') 1956
Challis Creek Lakes 1963
Clayton 1963
Dickey Peak 1967
Doublespring (15') 1956
Elevenmile Creek 1963
Horse Basin 1967
Little Antelope Flat 1963
Livingston Creek 1964
Lone Pine Peak 1963
Potaman Peak 1963
Thompson Creek 1964
Twin Peaks (15') 1956
Wards Butte 1963
Ziegler Basin 1963

10. Cultural resource management recommendations: