

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

SITE REPORT - SODA SPRINGS AREA

Number 654

December 1981

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: Located at Bear River's northern bend, this area is Idaho's northernmost Great Basin segment. An early transportation hub, Soda Springs has open valley connections with Bear Lake and Wyoming, with Blackfoot River north to Montana, with Portneuf valley used by Oregon Trail emigrants to Fort Hall, with Hudspeth's cutoff west to California, and down Bear River to Cache Valley and Salt Lake. A series of old ridges, unrelated to modern drainage, rises above these valleys, which largely are used for ranching and dry farming. A limited amount of Forest Service land is included in this area. Important phosphate resources are mined and processed in and near Soda Springs. Elevations vary from _____ at Soda Springs to _____.

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, 1812-1840
 2. Emigrant traffic, 1841-1862
 3. Camp Connor and Morrisite settlement, 1863-1870
 4. Mormon settlement, 1870-1880
 5. Railroad construction and anti-Mormonism, 1881-1892
 6. Stockraising
 7. Caribou National Forest
 8. Phosphate mining
 9. Transportation improvement
 10. Phosphate expansion, 1946-
5. Historical documentation and literature:
6. Historic sites inventory:
7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites summary:
8. Architectural resources: Survey of the Soda Springs study area is limited to a few isolated areas, and generalization about the nature of the area's architecture would be premature. Sites related to the area's development as resort and agricultural area during the period after 1863 include a structure at Hooper Spring, a variety of commercial and residential structures in Soda Springs, scattered ranch buildings, and some Forest Service properties.
Six sites of architectural interest have been recorded in Soda Springs. All parts of the study area deserve further survey. The following towns have received no attention and should be inspected for architectural remains:
Conda
Henry

National Register sites of architectural significance include the following:
Soda Springs: Hopkins, William, House
9. United States Geological Survey Maps:
 - China Hat
 - Fossil Canyon 1970
 - Johnson Creek 1949
 - Soda Springs (15') 1948
 - The Dip
10. Cultural resource management recommendations:
Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428