

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### SITE REPORT - BROWNLEE-MINERAL AREA-OLDS FERRY

Number 656

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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 from Old's Ferry to Brownlee Ferry descends through a canyon west of an arid mountainous region with timber at higher elevation. Brownlee reservoir now stores water in that entire stretch. Mostly rangeland, this area has gold and silver resources as well as Forest Service lands. Elevations increase from            feet at Brownlee to 7,589 feet at Sturgill Peak.

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. Mine and emigrant traffic, 1862-1874
  3. Heath mines, 1874-1880
  4. Mining at Mineral City, 1880-1906
  5. Forest Service administration, 1906-1958
  6. Brownlee Dam, 1959-
5. Historical documentation and literature:
  6. Historic sites inventory:
  7. Industrial archaeological and engineering sites summary:
  8. Architectural resources:
  9. United States Geological Survey Maps:
    - Copperfield (15') 1957
    - Mineral (15') 1957
    - Sturgill Peak (15') 1957
  10. Cultural resource management recommendations: