

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

CULTURAL RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION IN IDAHO

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Idaho has a variety of historic sites and buildings sufficient to match the diversity of the state's history. Most of those analyzed in the State Historical Society's rapidly expanding inventory--which now includes more than 6,000--have been identified by archaeologists. A thousand or more structures of architectural interest are included, and many more will be added. These reflect every period of national architectural history since the Civil War. Mining camps and operations of almost every kind are well represented. Idaho's forest resources have been developed with sawmill sites, logging railroad grades, flumes, splash dams, ranger stations, fire lookouts, and all kinds of structural and archaeological evidence of changing technology left on the land as reminders of the past. Farming and ranching operations throughout the state have undergone dramatic modifications over the years, and surviving examples representative of different agricultural eras must be located and evaluated in order that future generations may gain an adequate understanding of Idaho's major economic pursuit. Industrial structures of many kinds--power plants, flour mills, sugar beet factories, grain elevators, manufacturing establishments, and submarine construction facilities, for that matter--add to the record. Banking, commerce, transportation, education, recreation, and government have contributed to the state's tangible cultural resources. The list goes on and on. Almost any kind of analysis can yield a large number of historic sites and structures illustrative of various aspects of Idaho history.

Several approaches have been used in order to control a

large number of overlapping subjects represented in a typical inventory of state and local historic sites. Two of these have significant national application. In the Historic American Buildings Survey, structures of architectural interest (whether schools, hospitals, homes, stores, banks, churches, or whatever) are surveyed and described in terms of architectural qualities and eras. This kind of analysis appeared in Idaho Yesterdays (Winter, 1972-73), and a limited number of Idaho entries have been prepared for this national record. The Idaho Historic Preservation Council, the Idaho Bicentennial Commission, and the State Historical Society have cooperated in the effort.

Another somewhat related approach comes through the Historic American Engineering Record. Idaho surveying for HAER commenced in the summer of 1976, and eventually this approach promises to have a substantial impact upon historic preservation in Idaho. Industrial structures of many kinds, objects such as old steam engines or stamp mills, and special farm facilities such as silos and windmills contribute to the state's engineering record. A great diversity of subjects of engineering importance, dispersed over the state, gives this kind of site identification more than ordinary utility. A brief summary of the development of surveying and engineering in Idaho suggests some of the ways in which large numbers of varied sites or structures may be considered as part of a broad national engineering record.