

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

HISTORIC SITES RELATED TO HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY EXPLORATION OF ALEXANDER ROSS AND PETER SKENE OGDEN

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After two British and Canadian fur trade companies (North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company) were consolidated in 1821, Donald Mackenzie's annual Snake country expeditions expanded their beaver hunting territory to more remote Idaho mountain areas. In 1824, Alexander Ross explored several important features that had escaped earlier notice. Then Ogden assumed responsibility for Hudson's Bay Company operations, which had to compete with a host of mountain men based in Saint Louis. To protect exceedingly valuable beaver resources in British Columbia from other trappers, Ogden went to great effort to trap out Idaho's Snake country. To accomplish that, he had to explore some less promising streams that earlier fur hunters had avoided.

Unlike their predecessors, Ross and Ogden kept extensive journals of their trips. (These accounts document much of Donald Mackenzie's Michel Bourdon's, and Finnan MacDonald's exploration as well.) Because their exploration reached more remote areas, undisturbed places of historic interest have survived more often.

Sites of more than ordinary significance include locations that determined routes of later emigrant roads as well as access to spectacular scenic and wilderness areas. Granite Pass, for example, controlled California Trail access between South Pass in Wyoming and Humboldt sink in Nevada. Other sites of more local interest relate to features of much broader recreational importance. Discoveries by these early fur hunters have had an impact upon later Idaho and regional development ever since then.

(Granite Pass; Governor's Punch Bowl)

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