

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### NATIONAL REACTOR TESTING STATION

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In its contribution to world history, a group of more than fifty reactor sites near Arco forms Idaho's most prominent location. There a structure, where commercially practical nuclear power was developed initially, December 20, 1951, has become a museum of recent energy history in a registered National Historic Landmark dedicated by President Lydon B. Johnson. In an adjacent reactor site, an actual power plant commenced operation, July 17, 1955. Designed to serve nuclear submarines, this facility demonstrated that a small set of uranium rods--small enough to fit into a two pound coffee can--could generate as much electricity as would come from 1,600,000 gallons of oil that would fill a train load of 160 cars, more than a mile long. Transferred into a submarine, that plant propelled it on a 60,000 mile voyage in 1957, using as much uranium as would fill a soft ball. Many other kinds of test reactors followed in a desert area considerably more than half as large as Rhode Island. A few experiments, including two enormous aeroplane motors that are parked next to that initial power site, produced negative results. But Idaho's largest industrial enterprise provides an interesting attraction for travelers over U.S. 20 and U.S. 26 west of Idaho Falls and Blackfoot.

**(This information has not been edited.)**

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