

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### ASTORIAN SITES INVESTIGATION BELOW MILNER

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Accurate identification of Astorian sites west of Milner commenced in 1938 during a season of very low water in Snake River. While mining fine gold in its narrow gorge on his ranch, July 24, Clifford Starrey (a local farmer) noticed a deposit of trade guns (muskets), traps, axes, and an early rifle. All were badly rusted and corroded. They were just west (downstream) of a large rock that protruded above a decidedly rough channel.

When H. L. Craig of Twin Falls heard about that fur trade material, he became interested in its obvious importance in defining Astorian expedition locations. After a careful study of Astorian documentary sources, he examined every bit of Snake River's long gorge west of section 25, T10S, R20E. Specifically, he searched for Caldron Linn, which is located downstream from Ramsay Crooks' canoe wreck. His search verified that only one spot could qualify as Caldron Linn. That feature consisted of a narrow slit in a broad exposed relatively flat lava structure in a forty-foot falls.

Because of their significance, assuming that they came from Ramsay Crooks' canoe, Starrey's collection of traps and guns was made an Idaho State Historical Society acquisition, July 11, 1949. Within a decade, Holman J. Swinney, Society director and specialist in analyzing early New York firearms, identified an early rifle among them that would not have been associated with Canadian trade of Astorian times, nor with later fur trade after 1824. Charles Hansen (whose fur trade museum in Chadron, Nebraska, was outstanding) verified, as a specialist in traps and axes, that those materials were compatible with Astorian rather than subsequent Canadian operations. More recently, Ken Swanson has confirmed those findings. These determinations should come as no surprise, because after Astorian misadventures there, trappers avoided any more canoe trips in that area.

Ramsay Crooks' rock and canoe wreck site easily can be identified because of their proximity to Starrey's placer mine in Snake River gravel there. H. L. Craig kept track of that significant indicator during his years of search to investigate Astorian activities in that area, and other local residents have examined those features.

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

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