

Chapter 3

HISTORY AND SPECIAL SITES

Jerome County has a rich heritage. This legacy is evident in a variety of special sites, including: Oregon Trail ruts and the Wilson Butte Cave--a world known archeological site. The enjoyment and protection of these special sites will be through environmentally responsible management. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is an official list of the Nation's historic places generated by the National Park Service. The NRHP can be found at <https://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp>.

Indeed, the County's history has shaped the form and design of its landscape. This component concerns itself with Jerome County's identity and the design features that present an attractive appearance for the County. A brief background on the County's formation and a presentation of the existing condition of special sites, as well as future potentials of various sites, are presented in this chapter.

Special areas of Jerome County include the individual cities of Jerome, Eden, and Hazelton—as well as the Snake River Canyon, the public lands of the BLM, and Interstate-84 interchanges and highway corridors.

Information on the cities of the County are located in the individual city comprehensive- plan documents. The significant landscapes of the Snake River Canyon are reviewed in Chapter 11: Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. The BLM oversees most natural resource management activities and establishes management standards for the federal land in Jerome County. The State of Idaho Department of Lands oversees and manages state land in Jerome County.

BACKGROUND

Jerome County was created by the Idaho Legislature on February 8, 1919--taking parts of Lincoln, Gooding, and Minidoka counties. The area came to life when Milner Dam was built on the Snake River in 1910 and diverted water to the North Side Canal. This gravity system, unmatched in size in national reclamation development, irrigates land in Jerome County and feeds miles of canals and laterals.

The Jerome County Historical Museum was established in 1981 by the Jerome County Historical Society. The Museum and a public "Research Room" are supported monetarily by members and donations only and are located at 212 East First Street next to the Post Office. Jerome County does not have any "historic preservation districts" or corresponding ordinance.

HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES



The North Side Alternate Route of the Old Oregon Trail travels across the southern part of Jerome County. Outstanding, pristine wagon ruts extend for several miles between Devil's Corral and the Jerome Country Club. These trail remnants are unique to this area because the multitudes of iron-clad wagon wheels have, in many places, worn deep grooves in the rock outcroppings crossed by the

trail. The most prominent of these rock ruts are located between Shoshone Falls and Devil's Corral on BLM land, between U.S. Route 93 and Blue Lakes on state land, and west of Blue Lakes to the Jerome Country Club on private property. White Carsonite markers were placed along the trail in 1989 by the BLM and the Oregon-California Trails Association. Unfortunately, many of the Carsonite markers have been destroyed by shooting or theft. A map of the Oregon Trail can be referenced in Appendix B: 3-1.

During World War II, Jerome County became the site of the Minidoka War Relocation Center. Located at Hunt, 9,400 Japanese Americans from the western states were forced to live in the barbed wire camp during the war years. In 1979, the site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places; and for the Idaho Centennial, the site was honored with a memorial plaque.

Jerome County has a number of archeological sites. The best known is Wilson Butte Cave, a lava blister formed by gas expansion within the cooling lava.



The State of Idaho and Jerome Historical Societies have identified historical landmarks that are relevant to the history of Jerome County for education and preserving historical items of interest. The State of Idaho and Jerome Historical Societies are responsible for preserving historical monuments and landmarks even though there are no regulations that require Jerome County to preserve historical sites.

SPECIAL SITES

Snake River Canyon

The Snake River is the southern border of Jerome County for approximately 35 miles--separating Jerome from Cassia and Twin Falls Counties. The Snake River attributes are the formation of a canyon and adjacent farm ground with limited access. Water is diverted from the Snake River at Milner Dam to the man-made canal systems that are the main delivery system for surface water providing irrigation for agriculture and residences. The river also supplies the water source for hydroelectric power. Spring water tributary to the Snake River is the main source of



water for aquaculture operations adjacent to the river. The Snake River is used for

recreation; examples include canyon rock climbing, boating, camping, fishing, and water-type activities along with providing electrical power by the use of dams. Recreational activities are expected to continue growing and developing.

Blue Lakes Overlook Site

Jerome County leases the Blue Lakes Overlook from the State of Idaho. The overlook is located at approximately 950 Golf Course Road. The site looks into the Snake River Canyon and reveals two pristine blue-colored lakes. There is a parking area and walking path to the rim of the Snake River Canyon to view the blue lakes and the Snake River Canyon.

Jerome County Fairgrounds

The Jerome County Fairgrounds, located on the west side of the City of Jerome, offers a large public site that continues to serve the County for many activities beyond the annual County Fair. Held in early August, the fair is a showcase for Jerome County agriculture. Activities include 4-H, crop displays, livestock exhibits, rodeo, carnival, and a parade. The opportunity exists for year-round youth and cultural events as well as space for recreation.

Northside Military Museum

The Northside Military Museum located at 220 North Lincoln in the City of Jerome was founded in January of 2015. The nonprofit organization is made up of leaders in the local veteran community and citizens who wish to honor and commemorate the services of local veterans. They educate the public on the service and sacrifice of the United States military service members from all branches and in every American conflict, while placing a special emphasis on the veterans within the community.

Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum

The Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum (IFARM) is located on a 100-acre site at the I-84 and U.S. Route 93 interchange. Started in 1984, the museum is working to re-create a live working farm and ranch depicting development of the North Side tract and how irrigation breathed life into the desert. Currently, exhibits include a prove-up shack and antique farm machinery including tractors, threshing machines, and a windmill. The facility is operated by the Jerome County Historical Society as a non-profit enterprise. In June, the site hosts Live History Day, an annual event that is a snapshot of pioneer life. Plans are underway to expand its facilities, collections, and exhibits which tell the story of Idaho's agriculture. IFARM's freeway location makes it accessible to a large number of visitors. The museum has state-wide significance and has the potential to become one of Idaho's key visitor attractions bringing economic, educational, and cultural benefits to the County.



Monastery of the Ascension

The Monastery of the Ascension is a community of Benedictine monks that has been in

Southern Idaho since 1965. They serve the Catholic Church and the people of Southern Idaho through various ministries which include parochial work, retreats, teaching and scholarship, ecumenical activities, counseling and spiritual direction, and social service.

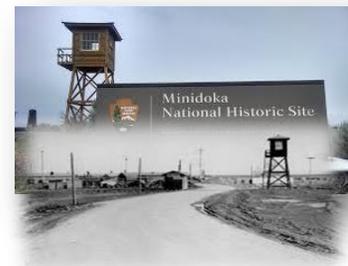
The Ministry Center is the guest/retreat house for Monastery of the Ascension. The community offers periodic retreats for the general public or for special needs as well as special retreats. Their main outreach to the community is to offer their Benedictine hospitality, and welcome other church denominations and groups who wish to use the Center for their retreats and workshops. The Center is a favorite for youth and quilters' retreats for groups throughout Southern Idaho.

North Side Canal & Wilson Lake Reservoir

Two special man-made features of Jerome County are the North Side Canal system and the Wilson Lake Reservoir. The canal was opened in 1909 and is owned and operated by the North Side Canal Company. The primary purpose of the canal is that of distributing water across the entire north side tract for crop irrigation purposes. The North Side Canal water flows through the main canal headworks and the Milner-Gooding Canal headworks at Milner. About one-third of the water flowing in the Milner-Gooding Canal is diverted three and a half miles downstream at the Bypass Canal into the main canal. From the Bypass Canal the irrigation water flows downstream through the County via Wilson Lake Reservoir, and a myriad of canals, ditches, and laterals. All North Side Canal right-of-ways are protected and operated for the specific purpose of conveying irrigation water to company shareholders. American Falls Reservoir District #2 operates the Milner-Gooding Canal which delivers water to its landowners in Jerome, Lincoln, and Gooding Counties.

Minidoka National Historic Site

The historic significance of the Minidoka Relocation Center is well-recognized. Six acres of the site were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, and the camp site was named an Idaho Centennial Site in 1990. By Presidential Proclamation, 72.75 acres at the core of the former camp were designated the Minidoka Internment National Monument on January 17, 2001 and is under the management of the National Park Service (NPS). Since designation, supporters of Minidoka have been engaged in a comprehensive planning process for the development and interpretation of the site, working with interested citizens through a public consultation process. The recently completed General Management Plan envisions a reconstructed barracks complex and interpretation of the camp's history as well as the nearby "Farm in a Day" site. The Minidoka War Relocation Center consisted of 36 blocks of housing. Each block contained 12 barracks, laundry facilities, bathrooms, and a mess hall. Recreation Halls in each block were multi-use facilities that served as both worship and education centers. Five additional tracts of land consisting of approximately 227.57 acres as well as an additional 88.51 acres have been acquired. A map of the Minidoka National Historic Site can be found in Appendix B: 3-2.



Lava Rock Structures

Jerome County possesses a unique collection of masonry structures made of basalt. Lava rock was plentiful in the County, and the indigenous rock was utilized by pioneers to build rock homes and other needed buildings. Most lava rock structures were built between 1908 through 1930 and include houses, schools, barns, bunkhouses, water tanks, well houses, potato cellars, walls, and outbuildings. One of the best is the Jacob B. Van Wagoner Barn located along U.S. Route 93, southeast of Jerome. The three-story rock barn was built in 1912 and is currently utilized as a restaurant and event center.



In 1983, the Idaho State Historical Society did an inventory called Lava Rock Structures in South Central Idaho. This inventory led to forty-seven lava rock structures in Jerome

County being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The inventory of Jerome County Historical Resources is the responsibility of the Jerome Historical Society and can be viewed at the museum housed at the original Southern Idaho Depot at 212 East First Street in Jerome. An inventory may also be found on the National Register maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office.

