D-48

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENTS 1995



CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE*SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

ON MICROFILM

PLEASE RETURN TO:
TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER
DENVER SERVICE CENTER
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT: HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENTS

David Louter
National Park Service
Seattle, Washington
1995

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter 2
NATIVE INHABITANTS 5

Chapter 3
THE FUR TRADE 21

Chapter 4
EXPLORATIONS AND SURVEYS 37

Chapter 5
OVERLAND TRAVEL 75

Chapter 6
SETTLEMENT PATTERNS 93

Chapter 7
MINING 115

Chapter 8
RECREATION AND TOURISM 131

Chapter 9
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT 169

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS 203

BIBLIOGRAPHY 227

Cover: Photographing Craters of the Moon National Monument, early 1920s. Photo #199, Robert W. Limbert Collection, Boise State University Library.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments

Documenting a park's history is a rewarding experience. The combination of archival research and field research literally makes a landscape come alive. But it requires the help of others, and I would like to acknowledge them here.

The idea for these context statements came from Stephanie Toothman, Chief of the Cultural Resources Division in the National Park Service's Pacific Northwest Regional Office. Stephanie worked with Tom Green, former Deputy Director of the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), to develop a study that would satisfy both the Park Service's and the SHPO's historic preservation program needs.

I would like to thank members of the staffs from each of these agencies who represented a wide range of cultural resource disciplines. From the Park Service, Laurin Huffman, Paul Chattey, Cathy Gilbert, Marsha Tolon, Fred York, Jim Thomson, and Kent Bush willingly offered their assistance on the subjects of architecture, landscape architecture, anthropology, archaeology, and museum curation. Wayne Hill deserves a special mention for taking the time to tutor me in land records. From the Idaho SHPO and Idaho State Historical Society, Don Watts, Lauren McCroskey, Larry Jones, Robert Yohe, and Elizabeth Jacox provided valuable assistance in my research and insightful comments on earlier versions of this document. Merle Wells, Idaho's venerable historian, was especially helpful in piecing together fur trade history around Craters of the Moon. I also benefited from my discussion with Idaho historian Hugh Lovin about irrigation history.

Without librarians historians would be lost, and I would like to mention as many here as I can who helped me with this project. Richard Fusick, archivist for the Civil Reference Branch of the National Archives, patiently assisted me with National Park Service and United States Geological Survey records. Archivist Joyce Justice of the National Archives Pacific Northwest Region uncovered land records for Craters of the Moon. One of several who assisted me at the Smithsonian Institution Archives, Archivist Susan W. Glenn guided me through the institution's collections. Carol A. Edwards, of the U.S. Geological Survey's Field Records Library in Denver, Colorado, answered my questions about records of geological surveys at Craters of the Moon. And once more, Alan Virta and Mary Carter, of Boise State University Library's Special Collections, graciously aided my research in their collections. Similarly, Park Service librarians Nancy Hori, Mary Ellen Bartholomew, and Richard Aroksaar, of the Pacific Northwest Region's library, were up to their usual level of enthusiasm and expertise in entertaining my never-ending-search for records.

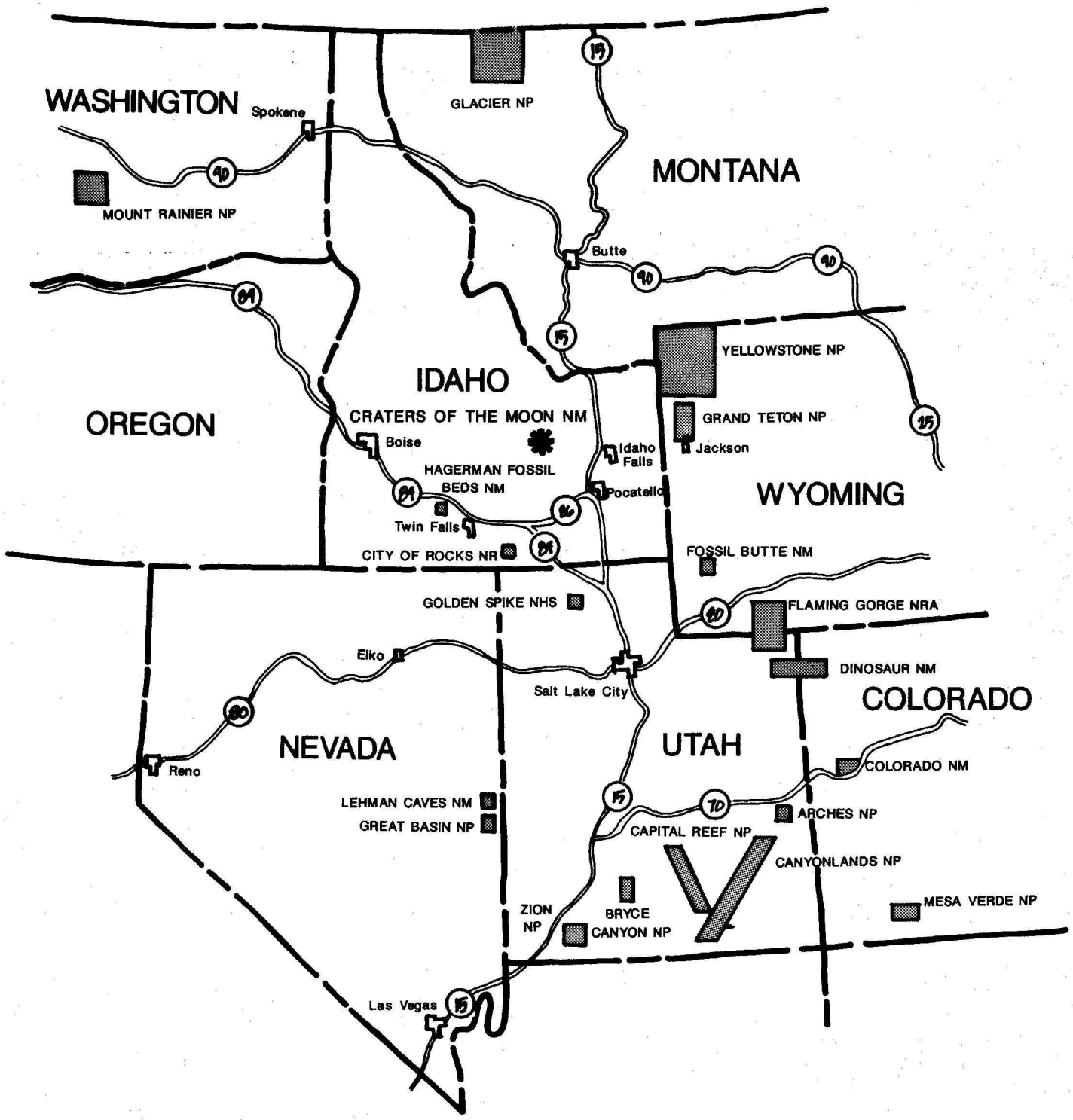
Finally, I would like to thank Gretchen Luxenberg, Regional Historian, for advising me on this project and reviewing drafts--all with her special brand of humor and criticism. Most of all, I would like to acknowledge the staff of Craters of the Moon National Monument who have always welcomed me and expressed a keen interest in

their park and its history. In particular, Superintendent Jonathan Jarvis was highly supportive of the project. David Clark, Chief of Interpretation, has done more than anyone else, perhaps, to promote the monument's history and this kind of study. I am also indebted to Interpreter Lee Taylor-Edmonston for her assistance in retrieving historic photographs and documents from the monument's collections.

INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER 1



Location

Craters of the Moon National Monument

United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service

DSC/Dec'90/131/20011

ON MICROFILM

Chapter 1

Introduction

Craters of the Moon National Monument is located in the cradle of Idaho's Snake River Plain. Beginning 15,000 years ago, molten basalt erupted from fissures in the earth's crust creating this landscape of black and raw lava flows that undulates like a quiet sea. Cinder cones, craters, and myriad volcanic formations line the fissures, or Great Rift, for some sixty miles from north to south, and rise above a surface swirling with frozen eddies and cascading blocks of lava foam. It is a landscape of overwhelming desolation, one in which the collection of administrative buildings, campground, roads, and trails are otherwise dwarfed by the vast expanse of volcanic terrain stretching to the horizon.

With such a small presence on the land, human life would seem to warrant only a short story rather than the eight historic themes that make up this study. While Craters of the Moon has long been a place people avoided, it has a past worth telling. People have interacted with this strange yet beautiful volcanic landscape for several thousand years, according to the archaeological record, and for almost two hundred years, according to the historical record. That interaction was often brief, and unfortunately people did not always leave behind physical evidence of their experience with this charred country. Only a few buildings and scattered remains serve as visible reminders of their encounters. Fortunately, however, some documented their experiences in word and picture, and thus the modern history of Craters of the Moon focuses on those human experiences which, in the end, enrich our appreciation of the monument's natural wonders.

The following themes reflect the monument's history and should instill a deeper understanding of Craters of the Moon: Native Inhabitants, the Fur Trade, Explorations and Surveys, Overland Travel, Settlement Patterns, Mining, Recreation and Tourism, National Park Service Management and Development. Transience and avoidance characterize the monument's history in the nineteenth century and link most of these themes together. The arid country proved useless to fur trappers, prevented farmers from gaining a foothold, and enabled ranchers to make only a marginal living. Explorers and surveyors traversed the heart of this volcanic territory, but their expeditions were temporary forays into an unknown country. Similarly, overland travelers came and went, crossing the northern margin of the monument on their way to distant farms or mines. Eventually, miners stopped long enough in Craters of the Moon to have some marginal success mining silver. But by the early twentieth century, Craters of the Moon came to be viewed in a more favorable light. Geologists studied its formations and proclaimed the region's significance. Ordinary

Americans came to value it as a place for outdoor recreation and scenic tourism, in a time when the nation's last wild places seemed to be vanishing. All of this led to Craters of the Moon's establishment as a national monument in 1924, and its subsequent development from the late 1920s to the early 1940s for the enjoyment of the American public.

This study's purpose is to develop these themes in order to assist managers and interested readers in understanding the monument's history, and to aid in the management of cultural resources, planning, and interpretation. Ordinarily such a study may not have been justified given the small number of historic properties in the monument. For this reason, the study was written with an eye toward assisting Butte County in a future survey of its historic properties, since most of Craters of the Moon lies within the county. In this regard, I attempted to provide an overview of the larger historical setting, the Snake River Plain, before narrating the various themes of the monument's history. In addition, each chapter is followed by property type descriptions for the National Register and should aid in evaluating any existing properties and any new ones discovered in Craters of the Moon in the future. (The connection to the larger geographical area and the National Register determined that this study would be considered the monument's "historic context statements" rather than the more common "historic resource study.") This format could also provide a starting point for developing historic contexts and property type descriptions for the surrounding county. Finally, this multipurpose approach is modeled after Cultural Resource Management in Mammoth Cave National Park.[1] The guiding idea behind the Mammoth Cave study was to combine a historic resource study with a National Register multiple property nomination. In doing so, both the National Park Service and Kentucky's State Historic Preservation Office hoped to streamline the park's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

A final word on these historic themes. Craters of the Moon received its name because its lunar appearance resembled the moon when viewed through a telescope. As I scanned the horizon from the monument, I used the equivalent of a historical telescope to focus on whatever themes seemed to be relevant to the monument. By no means does this method make my document comprehensive. Furthermore, for each of these themes I have included dates which correspond to the historic period for the monument. Some readers may notice that cultural landscape issues are not

[1] Bruce J. Noble, Jr., Cultural Resource Management in Mammoth Cave National Park: A National Park Service--Kentucky Heritage Council Cooperative Project (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1991).

addressed when discussing the significance of the monument's history; that is because a system-wide inventory of potential cultural landscapes, carried out by the National Park Service several years ago, determined that none existed in Craters of the Moon. In addition to cultural landscape questions, some might wonder whether or not the Shoshone and Bannock tribes were consulted for information on the potential for traditional cultural properties in the monument. They were not consulted for this study because consultations with those and other tribes with interests in the national parks of southern Idaho are currently underway as part of the Park Service's applied anthropology program. Some may wonder also about my geographical terms, such as the "Craters country" and the "Craters of the Moon region." These terms refer generally to what is today the national monument and to the region to the east and west of the monument, primarily in Butte County and the Big Lost River basin. I also refer to the Snake River Plain generally to broaden the perspective of the monument's themes. Even with all of these qualifications, generalizations, in some cases, were hard to come by because few detailed historical surveys have been written for the section of Idaho occupied by Craters of the Moon.

Physical Description and Geological Significance

Craters of the Moon National Monument embraces some 54,000 acres of lava country and a small portion of the Pioneer Mountains in southern Idaho. The climate here is semi-arid. Elevation ranges from 7,700 feet to 5,300 feet. The elevation at the monument's headquarters is nearly 6,000 feet. The weather is prone to extremes--hot, dry, and windy summers are followed by cold, dry, and windy winters. Most of the monument's precipitation, seventeen inches a year, falls as snow and drifts across the volcanic landscape. In the clear and rarified air of the high desert, sunlight seems to almost be absorbed by the dark flows and formations, casting all things in shadow. At other times, especially in the morning and evening, light glances off the chaos of twisted, broken, and billowed lava terrain in an array of captivating colors.

Running across the monument's northwestern corner, U.S. Highway 20-26-93 links Craters of the Moon to the population centers of Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, and Pocatello, all of which are some two hours away. The highway also routes tourists between Yellowstone National Park and Sun Valley, two popular destinations and the sources of many monument visitors.

Craters of the Moon occupies land in two counties. Some 13,300 acres lie within Blaine County, and some 40,200 acres lie within Butte County. Butte County, a rural area, contains the small community of Arco, the nearest town to the monument.

Arco, the county seat, is eighteen miles northeast of the monument, offers a full range of services, and is considered the gateway town to Craters of the Moon.

President Calvin Coolidge signed the proclamation establishing the monument on May 2, 1924. According to that proclamation, Craters of the Moon's purpose is to preserve an area of unusual scientific and educational value and interest

> which contains a remarkable fissure eruption together with its associated volcanic cones, craters, rifts, lava flows, caves, natural bridges, and other phenomena characteristic of volcanic action; and...has a weird and scenic landscape peculiar to itself.

Craters of the Moon is considered geologically significant because it preserves some of the world's best, youngest, and most exposed examples of basaltic volcanism in a small geographic area. Lava welled up from fissures along the Great Rift, which was designated a national natural landmark in 1971. Thirteen miles of the Great Rift lie within the monument. The Rift is the source of the Craters of the Moon Lava Field, composed of more than sixty lava flows, twenty-five cinder cones, and eight eruptive vents. The monument's boundaries enclose the northern corner of this vast field. Hardly a lifeless volcanic region, the monument is home to some fifty mammals and 150 bird species. More than three hundred plant species are native to Craters of the Moon. Surface water, however, is scarce and is found in lava depressions scattered throughout the area. Ice and snow, insulated in lava cavities, can be found throughout the year.

NATIVE INHABITANTS



CHAPTER 2

Chapter Two

Native Inhabitants of the Craters of the Moon Region

Overview of the Snake River Plain: Pre-contact Period

The human history of the Snake River Plain borders on the recent past, it seems, for it was only at the turn of the century that large-scale irrigation projects transformed this arid land into a habitable place. That perception, however, is an illusion. Long before these technological advances made the desert bloom, people inhabited the Snake River region. They lived in closer contact with and adapted their needs to the harsh desert environment, more so than those who inhabit the region today. From a historical perspective, the distant human past provides an important introduction to the changing patterns of human activity in this region.

Humans first appeared in southern Idaho 12,000-14,000 years ago. They lived in the Upper Snake and Salmon River country where they hunted large mammals and gathered edible plants. Archaeologists note that the period was culturally diverse, lasting up until about 6,000 B.C., and composed of three distinct groups: Clovis (10,000-9,000 B.C.), Folsom (9,000-8,000 B.C.), and Plano (8,600-5,800 B.C.). These first peoples made their homes in the region during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene. It was a cold and wet period during which they fashioned weapons tipped with large lancelot, or spear-like, points and hunted herds of elephants, bison, horses, camels, elk, deer, and mountain sheep that grazed the fertile grasslands and wetlands of the time. Like the animals they hunted, these early hunters also migrated across the plain. It was a natural travel corridor that allowed them to reach more favorable climates as the Great Basin gradually grew hotter and drier after 8,000 B.C. For this reason, it is believed that large fauna populations and big-game hunters persisted in this region longer than anywhere else in the Great Basin.[1]

By about 5,800 B.C., the Upper Snake and Salmon River country entered the Archaic period, characterized by extreme heat and aridity. Big game populations thinned and began, along with the region's plant life, the long retreat north or to higher elevations. The lower plains turned to desert where flora and fauna were scarce and poor. Early inhabitants still hunted and gathered. Rather than large spear points, they made side notched points, following the Plains and Basin patterns, and used a new weapon system, the atlatl and dart. With these they pursued evolving modern forms of

---

[1] Robert B. Butler, "Prehistory of the Snake and Salmon River Area," in Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 11, Great Basin, ed. Warren L. D'Azevedo (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 127-129.

game, bison and sheep.[2]

Hardly stable, the climate over the last several thousand years became less extreme. In this rather moderate environment, more recent culture groups of the plain, the Northern Fremont and the Shoshonean, emerged in what archaeologists classify as the Late Period, around the sixth century. Archaeologists debate the identity of these culture groups based on artifacts--points, tools, and pottery--excavated from caves, rock shelters, and other occupation sites on the edges of the Snake River Plain. With some certainty, they suggest that by the fifteenth century small groups of Shoshone, a Numic-speaking people, migrated to the Snake River Plain from northern Utah as an extension of their hunting and gathering activities.[3]

Today's Northern Shoshone and Bannock tribes, descendants of the Shoshonean culture group, were the Indians who occupied southern Idaho when the Lewis and Clark expedition ventured into the region in 1805. These Indians, whether considered in groups or "tribes," were hardly discrete political or social unions, and amounted to a loose aggregation of villages or bands bound by language and kinship. The Northern Shoshone dwelled in the drainage of the Upper Columbia River apart from the Western Shoshone, who lived to the south and east in Utah and Nevada, and the Eastern Shoshone who made their homes in Western Wyoming. Each group possessed specific economic and social characteristics based largely on what they used for nourishment and their geographical locale. The Western Shoshone owned few horses and thus had only limited access to buffalo hunting grounds on the plains. Conversely, the Eastern and Northern Shoshone were well mounted and hunted on the plains extensively, and in turn displayed the cultural and social influences of the Plains Indians, which was all but absent among the Western Shoshone. What distinguished the Northern and Eastern groups from each other were their separate locales and salmon fishing, an important part of the Northern Shoshone diet. Sometimes referred to as the Snake River Shoshone, the Northern Shoshone were further subdivided into numerous bands, one notable group being the Lemhi Shoshone. Despite such classifications, the various Shoshone did not recognize these distinctions; they lived in a wide variety of social and political units where cultural boundaries blurred.[4]

---

[2] Robert B. Butler, "Prehistory of the Snake and Salmon River Area," 129-131. Peter J. Mehringer, Jr., "Prehistoric Environments," in Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 11, Great Basin, 49-50.

[3] Butler, 131-133.

[4] Robert F. Murphy and Yolanda Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," in Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 11, Great Basin, 284-285.

The Bannock distinctiveness, on the other hand, was based on language and migration. They were Northern Paiute speakers who had migrated from Oregon to the Snake River region where they lived peacefully among Shoshone speakers. Although not substantially different from their fellow Northern Paiutes, the Bannock took on their own cultural identity after they acquired the horse and began hunting buffalo.[5]

Both the Shoshone and Bannock intermingled, sharing similar social characteristics, and speaking similar yet different branches of the Numic languages that spread throughout the Great Basin. Living in the vast expanse of southern Idaho, the Shoshone and Bannock were highly mobile, seminomadic groups, and for this reason they varied little culturally or linguistically from each other.[6]

Southern Idaho tribes lived in a region where the margin of survival was narrow. The area received at the most fifteen inches of annual precipitation, mostly snow, and some years received no measurable amounts. The Shoshone and Bannock adapted to the semi-arid environment, especially in the prehorse period, by subsisting on birds, small game, nuts, seeds, and various insects. By 1700, the Shoshone and Bannock acquired the horse and depended less on small game and plants, and hunted larger game such as bison, deer, mountain sheep, antelope, and bear.[7]

Whether on foot or on horseback, the Indian groups (or bands) moved constantly in order to exploit the region's edible resources. Their seasonal pattern would find some groups in the spring moving to the mountains on the fringes of the Snake River Plain to hunt large game and to gather camas and other roots in well-watered areas such as Camas Prairie and Smith Prairie in southeastern Idaho. Other groups would travel to the Snake River to fish for salmon, a popular destination being Shoshone Falls. By mid-summer those Indians who had horses would head east to the plains of Wyoming and Montana to hunt bison. The entire year, but in the summer especially, Indian bands would hunt birds. Throughout the spring, summer, and early fall, they would collect berries, and in the late fall they would prepare for winter by caching foods in dry places. During the winter months, they would gather in multiple family groups in villages located in well-watered and well-sheltered areas, live off of their stores, and continue to hunt and gather on a limited basis.[8]

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Deward E. Walker Jr., Indians of Idaho (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1978), 87, 89-90.

[8] Deward E. Walker, Jr., Indians of Idaho, 90.

Compared to most Great Basin Indian groups, the Shoshone and Bannock were rich in food sources, such as salmon and other fish, game animals and birds, and edible plants, many of which were found in the drainages of the Snake and Boise rivers. The horse also played a valuable role, for it allowed the tribes to leave the semi-arid plain for river valleys and mountain ranges where the environment was more favorable. In addition, migratory and subsistence patterns showed how the Shoshone-Bannock culture was influenced by and attuned to the environment. To survive in the semi-arid Snake River Plain country meant living in scattered groups near water resources or at higher elevations; population densities were no more than two people per one hundred square miles. Indian groups had relatively little contact with their neighbors. Nonetheless, they shared a primarily peaceful demeanor and a shaman-centered religion.[9]

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Shoshone and Bannock occupied two main geographic areas. One was the upper Snake River Valley, near what would become Fort Hall. Here horse-owning Indians lived in the rich grassland country where the Blackfoot, Ross Fork, and Portneuf rivers and Bannock Creek entered the Snake. The other was farther west, in the general vicinity of what would become Fort Boise. The Shoshone and Bannock operated an important trading center here during the salmon fishing season on the Snake River. A large intertribal population was also drawn to the country between Camas Prairie and the confluence of the Boise, Payette, Weiser, and Owyhee rivers on the Snake. Other areas of special importance were the magnificent Sawtooth Range, the Lemhi River and Bruneau River valleys. Population estimates for Indians in the region vary greatly and are unreliable for the tribes. Estimates range, for example, from 3,000 to 36,000; the lower figure most likely represents the population for the mid to late nineteenth century. Although population statistics are somewhat dubious, the importance of the Snake River to the survival of the Shoshone and Bannock is not. The river's waters provided fish; its plains produced roots; its upper reaches supported rich grasslands for buffalo and horses, and its bottoms afforded shelter during winter.[10]

By the time the first white explorers, fur traders, and settlers encountered the Indian groups in the early nineteenth century, historian Brigham D. Madsen suggests, the Shoshone and Bannock appeared to be at a cultural apex. Survivors of the smallpox epidemic had gained some of the advantages of white contact--primarily the horse--

---

[9] Walker, 25, 87.

[10] Robert F. Murphy and Yolanda Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," 288-289, 286, and Brigham D. Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1980), 23.

without the destructive aspects of white settlement. They had also adopted more of the Plains tribes's cultural traits in the form of clothing, shelter, food preparation, containers, and political organization. In the case of the latter, the Indian groups formed loosely into bands with trusted leaders. These cultural developments, perhaps, better prepared the Shoshone and Bannock for more extensive cultural changes brought by direct and more destructive contact with whites in the nineteenth century.[11]

Contact Period

Europeans and Anglo Americans influenced the lives of the Northern Shoshone and Bannock in a number of ways, most of them with long-lasting effects. The horse, for example, had worked its way north from the Spanish settlements of the Southwest by 1700, which enabled the Shoshone to expand their range beyond the Basin and the Rockies into Montana and Canada in search of buffalo. Expanding their range brought them into contact and conflict with the fierce Blackfeet who owned firearms that they had acquired through trade, weapons they used to drive the Shoshone back to southern Idaho by the mid-1700s. Virulent diseases, spread through trade and casual contact, severely diminished the population of the Shoshone and Bannock in untold numbers well before whites traveled West.[12]

In other cases, contact was more direct and its effects equally as dramatic, especially in the nineteenth century when explorers, fur traders, and settlers fanned out across the West encountering tribes on a regular basis. Lewis and Clark made the first contact with the Northern Shoshone in the Lemhi Valley in 1805 during their expedition to the Pacific. Shortly afterward, fur traders began to travel through the Shoshone-Bannock domain. Andrew Henry built the first outpost on the Upper Snake River in 1810, and for the next thirty to forty years fur hunters represented by American and British interests exploited the region's fur-bearing animals. During this era, the Shoshone and Bannock maintained amiable relations with the various fur trade interests, but unlike other Indian groups the Shoshone did not become as involved in the fur trade. They allied themselves with fur trappers primarily as a way to protect themselves from marauding Blackfeet. Trade played an important role in this relationship, for along with articles such as beads and blankets, the Shoshone and Bannock obtained guns and

---

[11] Brigham D. Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni, 23.

[12] Murphy and Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," 300-302.

ammunition to fend of Blackfeet incursions. Although transitory in nature, the fur trade also established the important trade centers of Forts Hall and Boise in Shoshone-Bannock country during the 1830s. Operated by the powerful Hudson's Bay Company, these forts perhaps had the greatest cultural influence on the tribes.[13] Direct influence, however, was short-lived. The fur trade declined by the 1840s. Beaver populations had been decimated and the beaver hat was going out of fashion. As a result, most mountain men pulled out of the Snake River country. They left behind the Hudson's Bay Company to manage its posts at Fort Hall and Fort Boise until it, too, withdrew from the region in the 1850s.

The exposure to white culture during the height of the fur trade certainly changed the Shoshone-Bannock way of life in a way that seemed only temporary since the Indian groups retained much of their autonomy. The fur trade, however, was only a prelude to more permanent change through westward settlement. Overland migration to Oregon and California began in the 1840s traversing routes established by fur traders, the main route being the Oregon Trail which followed the Snake River. Beginning in the 1860s, other emigrants traveled north from the Great Salt Lake to the gold districts of western Montana and central Idaho. All of their routes penetrated the homeland of most Northern Shoshone and Bannock, the Portneuf-Snake River area. Estimates of emigrant traffic through the area, according to Madsen, indicate that some 240,000 emigrants and 1.5 million head of livestock (oxen, horses, and cattle, for example) passed through this country leaving it over hunted and overgrazed.[14]

Another form of contact with white settlement came from Mormon missionaries sent by Brigham Young to instruct the Indians of southern Idaho in the "principles of civilization." The missionaries established Fort Lemhi on a tributary of the Salmon River in the mid-1850s, but after a violent clash between the Indians and fort residents over stolen cattle in 1858, the mission was closed.[15]

The Mormon experience introduced a new chapter in Indian-white relations in the Snake River country during the mid-nineteenth century, one marked by violence. It was a time when numerous minor clashes occurred between whites and Indians, the result of increased emigrant travel and settlement. As their grassland and game disappeared, members of the Shoshone and Bannock tribes grew resentful. In an effort to protect

---

[13] Murphy and Murphy, 302, and Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni, 23-25.

[14] Madsen, 27.

[15] David L. Crowder, "Nineteenth-Century Indian-White Conflict in Southern Idaho," Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 14, and Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni, 30-31.

their ancestral rights, they retaliated by attacking and raiding wagon parties. Mormon settlers from northern Utah were especially concerned as they migrated north and settled the Malad, Bear Lake, and Cache valleys. When raids on homesteads, mining camps, and wagon trains became more common, army volunteers were sent to protect the newly settled community of Franklin in the Bear River Valley in 1863. In their zeal, the volunteers slaughtered nearly an entire band of Shoshone in one encounter, the majority of whom were women and children.[16] The severity of the "conflict," it is believed, made the Shoshone and Bannock more willing to negotiate a treaty with the federal government. In 1867, the Fort Hall Reservation was established, and in 1868 the Fort Bridger Treaty brought both Fort Hall Shoshone and Bannock together on the same reserve. Not all of southern Idaho's Shoshone and Bannock lived on the Fort Hall Reservation after 1869, however, and those who did often continued their traditional ways of life by leaving the reservation to pursue their seasonal rounds of hunting and gathering.

Moreover, reservation life did not end the armed conflicts between Indians and whites. During the late 1870s, the so-called Bannock and Sheepeater wars took place. They were not so much wars as attempts by Indians to escape an assortment of indignities, according to historian David L. Crowder. The Bannock War broke out in 1878 in part because of the excitement generated by the flight of the Nez Perce the previous year, and in part because of tensions mounting on the reservation since it was first established. Inadequate supplies, religious disagreements, and restrictions on movement ranked high among the problems with reservation life. Although white settlers objected to Indians leaving the reservation during their annual journey to gather camas bulbs on Camas Prairie, there was no way to stop them since there was nothing to eat on the reservation. In the summer of 1878, the Indians encountered mostly cattlemen grazing their stock on the prairie, which had been open to settlement since 1872. Up to this point there had been no conflict, but the situation had changed. Livestock were destroying an important source of food for frustrated and hungry Indians. Fighting flared up that summer but was quickly extinguished, and the Indians who were involved retreated to the reservation. In 1879, the infamous Sheepeater War followed a similar course. Miners instigated the conflict with a group of Shoshone in the Salmon River country, who at first fought, then fled, and finally surrendered that winter, when

[16] David L. Crowder, "Nineteenth-Century Indian-White Conflict in Southern Idaho," 14; Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni, 34-36; Brigham D. Madsen, The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 177-200.

sixty of them were placed on the Fort Hall Reservation.[17]

By the 1880s, reservation life had begun for the majority of the Shoshone and Bannock in southern Idaho. As with most tribes in the American West, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Shoshone and Bannock experienced the unrealistic and difficult process of acculturation, and saw the federal government reduce the size of their original reservation, leaving them with a fraction of their allotment while opening the remainder of the reservation to white settlers.[18]

Native Inhabitants at Craters of the Moon

A popular assumption about the Craters of the Moon country is that the lava fields and formations of the Great Rift repelled all travelers, early peoples and the historic tribes alike. Archaeological discoveries in the mid-1960s and early 1990s, however, debunked this assumption and suggest that early inhabitants of southern Idaho roamed the vicinity of Craters of the Moon 10,000-12,000 years ago. Natives lived seasonally in the mountain valleys north of the lava flows up until historic times, and in all likelihood these first bands of hunters and gatherers passed back and forth along the perimeter of the Craters country on their seasonal migrations. Whether these first peoples ventured into the lava terrain along the Great Rift remains open to speculation, with evidence of their presence perhaps buried beneath older lava flows.[19]

The first known native groups who occupied and used the biotic communities of the monument belonged to the Shoshonean culture, and may have entered the region as early as 3,500 years ago, but most likely they entered within the last two thousand years, during the Late Archaic Period. These early humans totaled only a few small bands of hunters and gatherers who exploited the area's limited natural resources on a seasonal basis. The greatest activity was centered where the greatest selection of natural resources existed. In the northwestern corner of the monument, the Little Cottonwood drainage furnished an ample supply of water, grassland, trees, and wildlife and thus

---

[17] Madsen, The Northern Shoshoni, 75-88.

[18] Murphy and Murphy, 302-303.

[19] Paul G. Sneed, "An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Craters of the Moon National Monument," Tebiwa: Journal of the Idaho State University Museum 10 (1), 1967: 45-46; James McLaughlin and Dorothy Sammons, "A Systematic Survey for Cultural Resources at Craters of the Moon National Monument," (Reports of Investigation No. 92-4, Northern Intermountain Quaternary Institute, Idaho Museum of Natural History, Idaho State University, 1992): 19.

attracted the most indigenous people, as indicated by the density of campsites and type of artifacts found there by archaeologists in the mid-1960s. South along the Rift, occupation sites thinned out and were used with less frequency, an exception being larger tracts of vegetation such as the Carey Kipuka. Most Indian sites in the center of the lava fields were associated with waterholes, caves, or big-sagebrush plant communities, suggesting the importance of microenvironments for survival.[20]

Native groups reached the interior of this volcanic wilderness most likely moving north or south along the Great Rift. The lava country prevented them from moving freely east to west across its rugged terrain. Shoshone and Bannock parties, for example, traveled through the northern section of the monument between the edge of the lava flows and the base of the mountains on their seasonal journeys to dig camas from Camas Prairie. Native travelers probably began their trips along the Rift then from the north. From here they could have walked south along the Rift zone with relative ease. The pattern of sites suggests this movement as well. Clustered camps in the north give way to sparser and more scattered sites to the south. In the more remote and exposed stretches of the volcanic landscape, native groups erected rock hunting blinds or wind shelters and stone circles, and left behind quarries, lithic scatters, and trails marked by worn paths and rock cairns leading through the maze of broken lava and rolling terrain.[21]

What these structures and sites were used for remains open to question. Did some have religious meaning? Or were they simply the remains of forays into the lava recesses in pursuit of game? And for that matter, were they all created by early natives? This much seems certain: The Craters landscape did not repel Indian people. They favored the microenvironments of the more resource abundant creek valley in the north with its unrestricted terrain. Yet they also wandered the length of the Great Rift, a relatively natural travel route, finding and marking, it appears, trails and water sources, even making structures for shelter or hunting. At the same time their presence was transitory and in geologic time relatively recent; the last eruption subsided about two thousand years ago. In a landscape that appears uniformly barren, arid, and destitute of life, their presence suggests that like much of the Snake River Plain, Craters contained small oases capable of sustaining life in a limited way.

---

[20] Paul G. Sneed, "An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Craters of the Moon National Monument," 45-47; Dorothy Sammons, "Little Prairie Burn Cultural Resources Survey, Craters of the Moon National Monument," (Reports of Investigation, No. 93-3, Department of Anthropology, Idaho State University, 1993): 4.

[21] Ibid.

Much of what we know of Indian peoples in the monument comes to us from sources other than archaeological studies--the observations of untrained explorers and extraordinary figures who visited the area. Their observations about natives tended to be tinged with romance and myth. Explorers from the first two decades of this century marveled at the recency of the volcanic formations, their mysterious origins, and, by association, the mysteriousness of native peoples and their activities in the region. These investigators reported finding an array of Indian materials in the Craters country. During the early 1920s, Robert W. Limbert noted that he followed what he believed to be Indian trails through the rugged terrain, many of which led to water sources and caves. Trails were common, he reported. Near what he called the Ruined Pueblo flow, Limbert described three merging from the north; one that was more visible than the others began about six miles west of Martin, along Little Cottonwood Creek, and ran for eleven miles marked by piles of rocks and sage before it faded, yet traces of it could be found across the lava--occasional flint or obsidian arrowhead-points evidence of its course. Stone piles erected by Indians not only marked the route of trails, but also waterholes and cave entrances; some of these were near Sugar Loaf, Red Top Butte, and Vermillion Canyon. At Trench Mortar Flat, Limbert believed that Indians were the reason many of the tree molds were filled with rocks since one of their well-worn trails ran nearby. He also reported finding at least fourteen "Indian mounds" that were built of rock and sagebrush near the Ruined Pueblo flow. The mounds were four feet wide and four to ten feet high, yet while curious about Indian artifacts, Limbert was unable to excavate them without the proper tools.[22]

Limbert encountered a country with a human past and attributed much of the success of his expeditions to the marked trails and waterholes created by Indian groups. Other explorers reported finding similar evidence of Indian activities. Neighboring ranchers routinely hunted curios in the lava flows before the monument was established. In one instance, a rancher found a nearly intact pottery bowl near Echo Crater, as well as pottery sherds, points, and other artifacts near water sources and natural campsites.[23]

The noted geologist Harold T. Stearns knew of and discovered similar archaeological remains during his investigations of the monument in the 1920s. Hunting

---

[22] Robert W. Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon' in Idaho: An Account of the First Expeditions Through the Remarkable Volcanic Lava Beds of Southern Idaho," National Geographic 45 (March 1924): 304-308, 318, 328.

[23] Harold T. Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho (Caldwell: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1928), 41, and Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," 237-239, Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection.

blinds near the Little Prairie flow, south of the Watchman, along with other artifacts such as scrapers and obsidian arrowheads, led Stearns to conclude that Shoshone Indians visited the area on a regular basis. Yet even as the geologist was examining the area, evidence of Indian life was fading. "Pothunters" frequently dismantled rock monuments and rock circles thought to be used for tipis, such as those near the entrance of Indian Tunnel. Unlike Limbert, Stearns did not accept all sites at face value. He accepted the fact that trails across the loose cinders and hard lava were created by Indians and animals, but he believed that some of the markers identifying landmarks or waterholes were erected by whites instead of Indians. He presumably based his conclusion on the fact that nearby ranchers and settlers told him of their trips and those of others to the interior of the lava country.[24]

Beyond stories deduced from physical evidence lies an oral tradition about the early history of Craters, and like the observations of the above explorers, it was related by whites who were interpreting stories related by Indians. A common theme in this thin body of material was that the creation of the lava landscape, a subject which held a special interest for both whites and Indians. A Shoshone-Bannock myth, recorded by Ella E. Clark, for example, describes the creation of the lava fields of today's monument:

> The Craters of the Moon
>
> Long, long ago, a huge serpent, miles and miles in length, lay where the channel of the Snake River is now. Though the serpent was never known to harm anyone, people were terrified by it.
>
> One spring, after it had lain asleep all winter, it left its bed and went to a large mountain in what is now the Craters of the Moon. There it coiled its immense body around the mountain and sunned itself.
>
> After several days, thunder and lightning passed over the mountain and aroused the wrath of the serpent. A second time flashes of lightning played on the mountain, and this time the lightning struck near by. Angered, the serpent began to tighten its coils. The pressure became so great that the stone began to melt. Fire came from the cracks. Soon liquid rock flowed down the sides of the mountains.
>
> The huge serpent, slow in its movements, could not get away from the fire. So it was killed by the heat, and its body was roasted in the hot rock. At last the fire burned itself out; the rocks cooled off; liquid rock became solid again.

---

[24] Stearns, A Guide to the Craters of the Moon, 41, 43.

> Today if one visits the spot, he will see ashes and charred bones where the mountain used to be. If he will look closely at the solidified rock, he will see the ribs and bones of the huge serpent, charred and lifeless.[25]

The recent origins of the volcanic formations provided a source of great intrigue, especially for whites who associated the mysterious past of the natural landscape with that of the mysterious past of the Indians who lived there. While trying to fix a date to the last eruption, Harold Stearns learned of an 1879 interview with Major Jim, a Bannock Indian scout, who said his great-great-great-great-grandfather "saw fire in the region." From this rather dubious information, Stearns speculated that the last eruption could have occurred as late as the seventeenth century, but was skeptical that what the Indian saw was an actual eruption; it was more likely steam escaping from a vent. Nevertheless, the geologist thought that based on the extent and evidence of Indian activity in the Craters area, it was probable that "ancestors of the modern Indian witnessed eruptions in the area." Linking Indian lives and volcanic action cast the region in a romantic light. But rather than relying solely on native testimony, too imaginative for him, Stearns sought more scientific means to date the most recent eruptions, arriving ironically at the same time period, about four hundred years.[26]

Other Indian associations with the region, while more difficult to verify, sparked interest in and cloaked the Craters country with a mysterious quality. Consolidating many of these accounts is the story of the so-called "Lost Valley of the Lavas." With the expansion of settlement at the turn of the century, communities on the fringe of the Snake River Plain paid closer attention to the once spurned lava country. There was more to the unremitting desert than met the eye. Shoshone-Bannock bands were known to disappear into the volcanic country during the mid-1800s in times of war, only to reappear in good health. The natives offered no information to their white pursuers, who concluded that they must have hidden in the lavas where there was good supply of food and water. The Indians guarded their sanctuary closely. They allowed George Goodhart to see it in the 1860s but did not let him see how he reached what he called a valley rimmed with red cliffs.[27]

---

[25] Ella E. Clark, Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 193-194.

[26] Harold T. Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, 41.

[27] "Complete Story of Lost Valley; Found after 65 years' Study and Hunting," Idaho Republican, January 24, 1927.

Goodhart only knew that the valley took two days to reach and that it lay east of Wood River and southwest of Lost River. Stockmen and cattle companies eager to exploit the imagined resources searched for it in vain in the 1870s and 1880s. One group found a stream flowing on the lava surface in the summer but it later disappeared, along with a reward offered by a cattle company for its location. In the early 1900s another group underwent a similar experience, their visions of creating a giant ranch fading like a mirage.[28]

Exploration parties led by Robert Limbert eventually located what they considered to be the "Lost Valley" in 1926. Leading a mountaineer party from Washington State, Limbert was looking for the secret hiding place of Indians and the hoped for lush valley of stockmen. The "valley" lay south of the monument and according to Limbert was a mile and a half long and a half mile wide. Limbert described it as being just southeast of Big Cinder Butte, with colorful cliff walls, an obsidian quarry and Indian weapons, caves Indians had used for shelter, and a fine supply of fresh water. Limbert and crew also discovered an abundance of new natural wonders, including a blue lava flow and a natural bridge. Even though the valley had been "discovered," ephemeral water supplies dimmed the spirits of ranchers and homesteaders looking for new places to set up their operations and farms. Adventurers like Limbert found, however, other ways to exploit the region by recommending its addition to the existing national monument.[29]

The story of the valley and the efforts to find it provide an interesting account of what drew whites to and what they wanted from the Craters region. It suggests, moreover, that we know less about the native groups who inhabited and frequented the region than we know about how whites related the presence of Indians to that region, and how, in turn, that Indian "past" created an interest in visiting the Craters country. We do know, with some degree of certainty, that the nomadic lifestyles of the early hunters and gatherers and historic tribes were better suited for what the desert country offered. How long the Shoshone-Bannock continued to enter the lava fields is as open to question as when they first began their forays across the area. Restrictions of reservation life and settlement of the plain most likely ended such activities. At least one contemporary account suggests that the volcanic landscape was still part of the Shoshone-Bannock world, for they referred to it as the "TuTimbaba" or the Black Rock Overpass. The name reflected a perspective of the landscape gained from foot and horse travel across the plain toward the lava flows that rise like a dark half dome on the

---

[28] Ibid.

[29] "Crater Expedition Announces Finds," untitled, undated clipping, ca. August 1926, box 4, file 1, Robert W. Limbert Collection, Boise State University Library; "New Attraction Craters Told By Limbert, Arco Advertiser, November 12, 1926.

horizon.[30]

Summary of Context Theme

The human history of the Snake River Plain began, according to archaeological studies, about 12,000-14,000 years ago in the Upper Snake and Salmon River country. But it was not until some ten thousand years later that the first native groups may have entered Craters of the Moon National Monument. Cultural materials found within the monument suggest that these people were affiliated with the Late Archaic period, a period better known than earlier periods in regional prehistory and one that might "represent prehistoric Shoshonean occupation of the Upper Snake and Salmon River country." Native groups from this period were most active in the northwestern corner of the monument where the greatest selection of natural resources was available. Fewer natives ventured south along the Great Rift, it seems, judging from the scattered and less frequently used occupation sites, though large tracts of vegetation such as the Carey Kipuka attracted more use. Travel in the Craters country was seasonal. Indigenous groups favored the microenvironments of the more resource rich creek valley in the north end of the monument, but they also wandered the length of the Rift, a natural travel route. Historic Shoshoneans seemed to have followed a similar pattern, crossing the lava flows in the north on their seasonal migration to gather camas bulbs, for example. Both archaeologists and explorers have observed an array of Indian materials in the monument. For explorers in the first decades of the twentieth century, this Indian past, however speculative, added to the mysteriousness of the lava country; similarly, stories about Indians and the monument, particularly the legend of the "Lost Valley," fascinated explorers and settlers and drew them to the monument. Efforts to find the valley suggest that people found the monument's Indian past, however real or imagined, an important and attractive element of its history.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Archaeological Properties

Archaeological resources associated with the theme of Native Inhabitants of Craters of the Moon National Monument include: occupation sites, short-term encampments, hunting blinds, quarry locations, and catch sites. Artifact types, such as

[30] Interview with Roger J. Contor, September 6, 1990; see also David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 52 and n.62.

projectile points and pottery sherds, may also be associated with this theme. These properties and artifacts will not be evaluated in this study. The foregoing narrative has been included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the park's human history, and it is recommended that a professional archaeologist evaluate these archaeological resources for their National Register eligibility under Criterion D.[31]

Name of Property Type: Traditional Cultural Properties

In addition to archaeological resources, traditional cultural properties may be associated with the theme of Native American use and occupation of Craters of the Moon National Monument. These properties may include a place associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group, such as the Shoshone or Bannock, about its origins, cultural history, or the nature of the world. Properties may also include a place where Native American religious practitioners, from the Shoshone or Bannock tribes, for example, have historically gone, and are known or thought to go today, to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice.[32] These properties, like those listed above, will not be identified or evaluated in this study. They are mentioned here to enhance the potential significance of the Craters of the Moon landscape to native cultures. The National Park Service will learn of and take steps to evaluate and protect traditional cultural properties through its ongoing consultation with the Shoshone and Bannock tribes, provided, of course, they choose to identify them to the agency.

[31] At the time this document was written, there was a multiple-year cultural resource survey underway of the monument which would provide the foundation for such an evaluation. See, for example, the James McLaughlin and Dorothy Sammons, "A Systematic Survey for Cultural Resources at Craters of the Moon National Monument," (Reports of Investigation No. 92-4, Northern Quaternary Institute, Idaho Museum of Natural History, Idaho State University, 1992).

[32] National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), 1.

THE FUR TRADE



CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3

Close Encounters:
The Fur Trade in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1820-1856

Overview of the Fur Trade on the Snake River Plain

The Snake River Plain was the scene of an international rivalry for furs in the early nineteenth century. American, French, and British trappers, agents of far-flung empires, competed with each other for a share of the lucrative fur trade. European men fancied the stove-pipe hats made of slick beaver fur, and thus primarily fashion stimulated trappers to fan out across North America and enter even the remote Snake River country in search of beaver pelts. Although American fur trappers advanced this enterprise across the Rockies and created a wedge for their nation's commercial expansion, they were no match for the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company. By the 1820s, the Hudson's Bay Company controlled the trade in the Snake River country and held the monopoly until beaver numbers declined and silk replaced beaver hats by the mid-1850s. Fur trappers, however, left more than a legacy of decimated beaver populations. These mountain men, as they were otherwise known, were also forerunners of an American imperialism that would eventually conquer the West and its native peoples. Fur trappers also contributed substantially to the geographic knowledge of the West and the Snake River Plain, for they blazed trails across, and provided descriptions and maps of, the region for the first time.[1]

The fur trade followed on the heels of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805, which passed through northern Idaho on its mission to locate a route to the Pacific. The trade received further impetus after David Thompson, geographer of the Montreal-based North West Company, explored similar territory in 1809. But establishing fur trade operations in southern Idaho was no simple task. Lying between the mountains and the Snake River was the Snake River Plain, twenty thousand square miles of lava landscape. Trappers had to contend with its arid environment, severe weather--harsh winters and hot summers--remoteness, and Indians.[2]

Andrew Henry, of the Missouri Fur Company, ventured first into the Snake River

---

[1] John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 78-110; Thelma B. De Jong, "Explorations and Fur Trade in Idaho, 1805-1846," M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1957. This, of course, is not to say that the country was not "known" to Native Americans.

[2] Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1942), 63; Carlos A. Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 25-33.

country. In 1810, he built Fort Henry on the upper Snake River, on Henry's Fork, near what is now Rexburg. It was the first American fur post west of the Rockies, yet an extreme winter dashed Henry's hopes for a fur business, and he abandoned the post the following spring. Epitomizing the environmental adversity associated with travel on the plain was the Pacific Fur Company expedition in 1811. Known also as the overland Astorians, the party crossed southern Idaho on its way to establish a fur post at the mouth of the Columbia River. Led by Wilson Price Hunt, the party suffered greatly through its own bungling and its contact with the hostile surroundings of the Snake River Plain. Game was scarce. Members of the party attempted but failed to navigate down the Snake in boats and instead set out for the Columbia by land. The bedraggled group, which had separated into several parties, eventually reached Fort Astoria where it was reunited in February 1812.[3]

After enduring incredible hardships, members of the Astorian party were more impressed with the barrenness of the Snake River Plain than its potential as good beaver country. Hunt, for one, characterized the region as a "dreary desert of sand and gravel." It was a place to pass through. Within a year, for example, a small group of Astorians led by Robert Stuart marched eastward for St. Louis across the plain, undergoing similar trials as the first group. Stuart thought the country was terribly poor, barely able to sustain the native peoples who lived there. Stuart's contribution, ironically perhaps, was not in his assessment of the plain for beaver but in the route he chose; it eventually became the Oregon Trail.[4]

Nevertheless, at least one Astorian saw the region differently. Donald Mackenzie saw some promise for hunting beaver in the Snake country and for this reason led the first Snake River brigade for the North West Company in 1818. He built a trading fort at the confluence of the Columbia and Walla Walla rivers, and setting out from there to the east, trapped the tributaries of the Snake. The brigade system proved highly successful because it did not rely on seeking trade with Indians. Mackenzie's men trapped their own furs, used horses for transportation and carrying supplies, and lived mostly off the land. Mackenzie also succeeded because he maintained good relations with the Nez Perce and Snake country Indians, and because the brigade system provided safety in large numbers and trapped unexplored and unexploited country. Mackenzie

---

[3] William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and Scientist in the Winning of the American West (1966; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 19, 24; James P. Ronda, Astoria and Empire (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 176-191.

[4] William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, 31-34. Hunt is quoted in Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, 319.

headed the brigades until 1821 when the North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company.[5]

Realizing profits were to be made through the brigade system, the Company established it as a regular part of the trade in the Columbia district. Among Mackenzie's successors were Alexander Ross, Peter Skene Ogden, and John Work. Over the next decade, their expeditions carried out the Hudson's Bay Company's dual purpose in the Snake River country: profit as much as possible from the beaver trade, and deplete the beaver in order to prevent Americans from coming to the region. The Company attempted to do both as quickly as possible, and by the early 1830s had achieved these goals.[6]

Undaunted by the Company's power and presence, opportunistic Americans hunted furs in the Snake River country as well. Though Americans outnumbered Company trappers and possessed a peculiar blend of adventurer and businessman, they could not match the Company's organization, its capital, knowledge of the territory and trade, and its rapport with Indians. Expectant capitalists, for example, such as William H. Ashley and Jedediah Smith, who numbered among the various owners and operators of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, challenged but never threatened the Bay Company's monopoly in the 1820s and 1830s. By 1834, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company succumbed to the pressures of the Hudson's Bay Company and rival American Fur Company and closed its doors.[7]

Independent trappers, represented by Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville and Nathaniel J. Wyeth, were beset by similar difficulties in their attempts to profit from the fur trade. Bonneville entered the fur trade after taking leave from the army in 1831, although some historians believe he was sent under cover to explore the frontier. Leading experienced trappers, Bonneville hunted furs in the Snake River region beginning in the winter of 1832. He left and returned to the plain in 1833, working toward the Columbia River Valley by 1834. Bonneville proved no match for the Hudson's Bay Company and produced little to show for his trapping ventures. Exploration seemed to suit him better; he led the first wagon party through South Pass,

---

[5] De Jong, 3-5; Carlos Schwantes, The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 59; John S. Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 82-83.

[6] De Jong, 4-5; Galbraith, The Hudson's Bay Company, 88-89, 102.

[7] De Jong, 5; Galbraith, 96.

dispatched parties to explore the Great Basin, and reconnoitered the Snake River Plain.[8]

At first Wyeth, a Boston ice dealer, tried to establish a fur-trading enterprise on the lower Columbia in 1832. Failing, he turned to the Rocky Mountain region and the Snake River Plain, hoping there to have some success. He contracted to supply trade goods to the fur rendezvous held on the Green River in 1834, but St. Louis suppliers beat him to the sale, arriving first and stealing his customers. Saddled with a large supply of merchandise, Wyeth salvaged his commercial venture and that year constructed Fort Hall on the Snake River, a trading post north of what is today Pocatello. Yet nothing seemed to go right for Wyeth. Plagued by disaster and the control of the Hudson's Bay Company over the lower Columbia, he was unable to supply Fort Hall successfully. In 1836, he retired from the fur business and offered to sell his fort to the Bay Company, which bought the post in 1837 and assumed charge of it a year later. Around this same time the Bay Company obtained Fort Boise, located at the mouth of the Boise River.[9]

The acquisitions of these fur posts signaled the end of the brigade system. By 1832, the Company considered the Snake country a "fur desert," and the roving expeditions were sent elsewhere. From forts Hall and Boise, the Hudson's Bay Company began operation of a profitable supply business for mountain men and overland travelers for more than a decade. In addition to depleted beaver populations, changing fashion exacted a further toll on the fur trade with the switch from beaver to silk hats. International diplomacy changed the nature of the fur business as well. Great Britain and the United States had agreed to joint occupation of the Oregon country in 1818. But with the Oregon Compromise of 1846, the region was assigned to the United States, leading to the gradual withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company from southern Idaho. With its abandonment of forts Boise and Hall in 1855 and 1856, respectively, the Company's presence vanished from the plain and with it the fur trade.[10]

Throughout the West, the fur trade produced a lasting legacy, not in commerce,

---

[8] Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, 150-151; see also, Carlos Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows, 44-45.

[9] Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, 160-166; Carlos Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows, 32-34; "Fort Hall, 1834-1856," Idaho Yesterdays 12 (Summer 1968): 28-29; "Fort Boise, From Imperial Outpost to Historic Site," Idaho Yesterdays 6 (Spring 1962): 15-16, 33-36.

[10] De Jong, "Explorations and Fur Trade in Idaho, 1805-1846," 5-7; Galbraith, 101-102; "Fort Boise," 37; "Fort Hall," 31.

but in geographical knowledge. Competition for furs drove trappers into the remote and isolated reaches of southern Idaho. Trappers primarily covered the perimeter of the crescent-shaped Snake River Plain, following the Snake and exploring its tributaries in the mountains abutting the plain's borders. In the process, Snake brigade leaders such as Donald Mackenzie blazed some of the first routes across southern Idaho. Mackenzie was known for locating the route from the Boise River through Camas Prairie and the Wood River Valley to Day's Defile and the Big Lost River. From there the route crossed south toward the Snake River (and later Fort Hall), passing Big Southern and Twin buttes, and connecting to routes up or down the Snake. Alexander Ross likewise explored routes through the Salmon River and Sawtooth country for the first time. Similarly, Bonneville produced two valuable maps of his western travels, one of which included the Snake River country. Driven by utilitarian goals, though, fur traders rarely entered the desert region except out of necessity to reach mountain rivers rich in beaver.[11] On the whole, fur hunters ignored the Craters country, describing it with little interest, for it held little value for them, being merely a place to cross and survive.

The Fur Trade near the Craters of the Moon, 1820-1856

The era of fur hunting near Craters of the Moon mirrored the trends in the fur trade for southern Idaho. Trappers generally circumvented this raw lava country, preferring to travel along the fringes of the Snake River Plain. Except in one known instance, trappers never entered the Craters landscape; they only came near it when they crossed the well-traveled brigade route from Camas Prairie to Big Lost River and across the plain to the Snake River. Although preoccupied with their commercial ventures, the majority of trappers recorded similar experiences about the volcanic region, most of which were negative. They followed similar trails, identified and used similar landmarks, underwent similar hardships, and described similar observations about the country. Together these shared experiences compiled the first descriptions of and related some of the first insights about the Craters landscape.

Donald Mackenzie led the first Snake brigade near the Craters country in the winter of 1819-1820. Following an Indian route across Camas Prairie, Mackenzie turned up the Big Wood River, crossed over the headwaters of the Big and Little Lost rivers and camped in the Little Lost River Valley at Day's Defile, a landform apparently named for a member of the party, John Day, who died there during the expedition.

[11] De Jong, 192-194.

Mackenzie's campground, located around Fallert Springs, was southern Idaho's most significant early fur trade site. The camp earned this designation from the Indian conference and peace ceremony Mackenzie held there during a week-long recess in his winter fur hunting campaign. The conference brought together a diverse group of totaling perhaps a thousand inhabitants. It included Boise and Fort Hall Shoshone, Lemhi Shoshone and Tukudikas, and Bannock--who were gathered there at a traditional site--as well as the French Canadian, Iroquois, and Owyhee (Hawaiian) trappers who were members of Mackenzie's Snake brigade. The peace agreement Mackenzie reached with each of these Indian bands aided trapping in the region. It was similar to an agreement he had arrived at earlier with Nez Perce bands farther north, and represented a landmark in North West Company operations in the Snake River country. After breaking winter camp, Mackenzie moved on to explore and trap in the Sawtooth and Salmon River country, but not before Thyery Goddin, another member of his party, discovered and named Goddin's River--today's Big Lost River--in 1820.[12]

Mackenzie does not seem to have left any descriptions of the lava landscape below the Lost River Range, but other brigade leaders following his routes did. Alexander Ross headed the next Hudson's Bay Company trapping party to come near the Craters region in 1824. He retraced Mackenzie's routes and explored new terrain in the Sawtooth Mountains and Salmon River country. He reached Day's Defile in late spring and camped where Mackenzie had four years earlier. Ross found the valley to be "a most dreary looking place," where the grass was brown and poor for horses. He sent members of the brigade to hunt buffalo and to trap the Big Lost River. While doing so they surprised a Blackfeet war party at the mouth of the river and fled with little more

---

[12] Francis Haines, Jr., "The Lost River of John Day," Idaho Yesterdays 2 (Winter 1958-59): 6-10; "Donald Mackenzie's 1819-1820 Campsite," Reference Series 902 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, y1988). Peter Skene Ogden, Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1824-1826 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1950), 87, n.1. Variations of the spelling of Thyery Goddin exist. This spelling seems to be the most common in the original journals of fur trappers. There is also discrepancy about the exact date of discovery of the Big Lost River. Some accounts place it at 1823; see, for example, Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History (Arco: Arco Advertiser, 1926). But this date does not seem accurate given the above references. The river earned its contemporary name about ten years later, it seems, when trappers were unable to locate the river, since it had sunk into the porous lava, hence "Big Lost River." It was at this time, 1830, that the trapper, Henry Goddin, son of Thyery, it seems, was killed by Indians looking for the river. See the above citation from Ogden's journal and Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1827-1829, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1971), 21, n.3.

than the clothes on their backs.[13] It was during his search for these men that Ross entered the Snake River Plain, it seems, for the first time. After finding his men well, Ross was intrigued by the Twin Buttes and Big Southern Butte. He called them the "Trois Tetons" (or three buttes), and upon examination, he described them as "these three little hills standing in a group [that] are very conspicuous in the middle of an open plain, having hot springs at their base but no cold water nearer than the end of Goddin's River."[14]

The next day Ross turned north and never returned to this part of the Snake River Plain. Although he had been possibly twenty miles from the lava flows of the Great Rift, the brigade leader did not mention this country in his journal. Most likely the volcanic terrain offered nothing of value to him since it was devoid of water and beaver, but the three buttes, he suggested, served as important landmarks on an otherwise horizontal and unremitting desert.[15] This attention to the buttes as well as the travails associated with crossing the plain were themes that would repeat themselves throughout the accounts of other brigades and trapping parties.

A good example of this was Peter Skene Ogden, one of the more famous brigade leaders and critics of the plain's environment. Ogden succeeded Ross and led brigades near the Craters country until 1827. In early April 1825, his party emerged from the Lost River mountains and headed onto the upper Snake River Plain. Having crossed through snow and "uneven country," Ogden sighted the three buttes to the southeast of his camp before embarking on a seventy mile, four day trip through the desert. Ogden led his group past Middle Butte, a route which was "said to be less Stony." For two long and fatiguing days, the trappers marched through snow and mud, finding neither grass nor water for the horses and only snow to slake their own thirst. On the third day, the situation only slightly improved when the group found abundant grass for their animals but no water for "man or beast." The next and final day of the journey, the trappers and horses were forced to drink "thick" water, but Ogden, determined not to camp until he reached a good supply, pressed on until they reached the Snake River. On the whole, Ogden was happy to be rid of this "cursed Country," thankful, he wrote, to have "crossed over the plain considered by all the greatest impediment in the route between this and

---

[13] Alexander Ross, The Fur Hunters of the Far West, ed. Kenneth A. Spaulding (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 249.

[14] Alexander Ross, The Fur Hunters of the Far West, 250-251.

[15] Ross, 251, 284-286.

the Flat Head Post."[16]

Ogden also dealt with other "impediments" that were of a commercial rather than environmental character, namely the face-to-face encounters with American trapper Jedediah Smith. Smith's presence in the Snake country between 1824 and 1826 irked Ross and Ogden, who worried that this "sly cunning Yankey" might upset their share of the trade.[17] Commercial motivations, in turn, eventually drew Ogden back to this "cursed Country." Only now, two years later, he was better prepared for the environmental conditions. Having found the Big and Little Lost rivers mostly trapped out, he and his party crossed the desert in November 1827. Learning from past experience, the party aimed for the largest and most western butte, Big Southern, where Ogden knew there was water. Like before, water and grass were scarce, and after a two-day march, the group arrived at the base of Big Southern Butte exhausted. Ogden rested there one day, his horses fatigued from walking the rough ground and long, dry distances. In weather turned cold and with suffering horses, Ogden knew a forced march was necessary and pushed on for the Snake.[18]

His previous encounter with crossing the Snake River Plain had taught Ogden that this approach to traveling across the desert was only a temporary hardship given the alternatives. A brigade under the leadership of John Work discovered this reality in 1830. Work had spent the fall in the mountain drainages north of the plain hunting beaver and in December led his company down the Big Lost River and embarked on the route for the Snake River. His party entered the plain at the Lost River Sinks and camped on a dry branch of the Big Lost River, where the grass was good for horses, and herds of buffalo and antelope roamed within sight. Work continued southeast across the plain toward "Middle Bute" for two days in fog, "bitter cold," and deep snow. This leg and the remainder of the journey Work described as harsh and dangerous. The weather remained frigid and foggy. In places the deep snow covered grass and prevented the pack animals from grazing at all. The trappers warmed themselves with fires of burning

---

[16] Peter Skene Ogden, Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1824-1826 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1950), 30-33, quotation from 33.

[17] Dale L. Morgan, Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), 138-139, 186-187, quotation from 138. Morgan's account draws on Ross's and Ogden's journals to recreate Smith's activities in the region. Consequently, we know that Smith followed the brigade route across the desert between the Snake and Big Lost rivers and over the mountain route to the Big Wood River, for example, but not what he thought about this country.

[18] Peter Skene Ogden, Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1827-1829, 21-27.

"wormwood" and "cedar." But under these severe conditions many horses and mules weakened and died before Work's party, with much relief, reached what is now Ferry Butte, near today's Blackfoot, almost a week later.[19]

For the Snake brigades, the trip across the plain might have been arduous but it was relatively routine. The route, for example, avoided the more difficult lava terrain of the Craters country west of the three buttes. In the fall of 1830, a detachment from the American Fur Company discovered why. In an attempt to find a faster route to beaver streams, the party unwittingly stumbled across the Great Rift and its expanse of young, exposed lava flows. Led by Antoine Robidoux, the group of twenty-two men began their march from near American Falls and headed northwest, looking for a shortcut across the interior of the plain to Wood River. According to J.H. Stevens, the trappers traveled through "a barren desert, destitute of every species of vegetation, except a few scattering cedars, and speckled with huge round masses of black basaltic rock." Shortly after this, they "entered a tract of country entirely covered with a stratum of black rock," which had been fluid at one time, and "had spread over the earth's surface to the extent of forty to fifty miles." Stevens noted that it "was doubtless lava which had been vomited forth from some volcano, the fires of which are now extinct."[20]

Any hopes of crossing this landscape without difficulty faded the farther the party traveled, and it endured two perilous days in the rugged lava country. The trappers confronted numerous chasms where the lava had "cracked and yawned asunder at the time of cooling, to the depth of fifty feet," Stevens stated, "over which we were compelled to leap our horses." At first the group negotiated the craggy terrain without much trouble until "a large chasm too wide to leap" halted their progress. The party was soon overtaken by thirst and heat. There was no water to be found; the lava heated and steamed in the humid day, and parched from living off of jerky, the men found themselves with the most "maddening desire for water." Only a few had brought a water supply, which was soon gone, and that night, lost in a "labyrinth of rocks," they sucked out the few drops of water absorbed in blankets from a passing shower. This "provoked rather than satisfied the wild thirst within us," Stevens recalled. After a fitful night, lost and nearly out of their minds with thirst, the men reached the height of despair when they discovered a "sea of rock, intersected by impassible chasms and caverns" blocking

---

[19] John Work, The Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831: The Field Journal of John Work, ed. Francis P. Haines, Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 32-36, 54-58.

[20] Stevens's story is retold in Warren Angus Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains: A Diary of Wanderings on the Sources of the Rivers Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado, 1830-1835, new rev. ed. (Denver: Old West Publishing Company, 1983), 53-54.

their route. By the end of the second day, the group changed course, headed northeast, and found its way out of the volcanic country and a stream to slake the thirsts of both men and animals, some of whom had been left behind.[21]

Only one member of the group failed to appear. Jean Baptiste Charbonneau had become separated during the search for water and was assumed to have wandered off and perished. Charbonneau, however, stumbled across John Work's camp, and expecting to find hostile Indians rather than another party of white trappers, he quickly and quietly stole away. He then spent almost two weeks struggling through the lava country making his way back to the Snake River.[22]

Although the trappers who crossed the Great Rift lava flows most likely passed far to the south of the present monument, their experience serves as a first encounter with the Craters region. Stevens's account may have been embellished with each telling, but it nonetheless suggests the difficulty with crossing the lava country and why, in at least one case, fur trappers chose a difficult yet passable route already available and familiar to them.

Another American fur trader, Nathaniel Wyeth, did not make the same mistake as the Robidoux party. Instead Wyeth roamed the region covered by the Snake brigades as he tried without success to earn a place in the Snake country fur trade between 1832 and 1834. Wyeth first viewed the region and the three buttes in the summer of 1832. Leaving the Salmon River country behind them, Wyeth and his company descended the Lost River Range along the "little Goddin" (the Little Lost River), sighting the three buttes as they came into view one at a time, some twenty to forty miles to their south in early June. At the time Wyeth's party headed for the Green River, but he returned to the Snake River Plain two years later, shortly after his plans for supplying trade goods to the fur rendezvous on the Green River failed. He constructed Fort Hall on the Snake River as a trading outpost, and when it was completed in early August 1834, he and a company departed to pursue other trade opportunities on the lower Columbia River.

Wyeth chose to travel over the brigade route from Fort Hall to the Lost River country. The party of approximately thirty people and one hundred horses traversed the desert toward Big Southern Butte and traveled "as fast as possible" to reach the ancient volcano in two days. Wyeth reported that along the way the air was clear enough to see the Tetons more than one hundred miles to the east. A typical journey on the plain, it was hot, Wyeth wrote, and "we suffered some for water and found but a small supply" on

---

[21] Warren A. Ferris, Life in the Rocky Mountains, 54-56.

[22] Ferris, 56; "Jean Baptiste Charbonneau," Idaho Yesterdays 5 (Fall 1961): 7-8.

the north side of the butte, adding, as others before him had, that in these conditions there was "a miserable chance for our horses and not a good one for ourselves." A few days later, Wyeth and company reached the Big Lost River, quenched their thirst, threaded through the drainages of the Lost River Mountains, and eventually headed east for Big Wood River.[23]

In his account, Wyeth was somewhat laconic about the severity of the desert passage. John Kirk Townsend, an ornithologist, who was a member of the expedition and a companion of English botanist Thomas Nutall, depicted the crossing as slightly more perilous. Approaching Big Southern Butte, Townsend noted that the party was traveling over "one of the most arid plains we have seen, covered thickly with jagged masses of lava, and twisted wormwood bushes. Both horses and men were jaded to the last degree." The horses suffered from crossing the sharp basalt and nearly impassible terrain, as did the people from a lack of water. With a mind trained in scientific inquiry, Townsend speculated that there were two reasons for their extreme thirst, one being the intense heat on the "open and exposed plains," and the other being aridity, the desiccation affecting all living things here. "The air," he stated, "feels like the harsh breath of a sirocco, the tongue becomes parched and horny, and the mouth, nose, and eyes are incessantly assailed by the fine pulverized lava, which rises from the ground with the least breath of air." Before reaching Big Southern Butte, Townsend described the party as spread out over a mile, in "a lagging and desponding line," the horses' heads hung low, tongues extended, and their riders "drooping and spiritless." Hoping for but finding no water in this lava desert, one delirious man threw himself down to die. He and the others, however, were saved that night when they found a small and soon muddied spring.[24]

Townsend's experience helped him to appreciate the plight of desert travelers. His and other accounts suggest why fur hunters avoided the lava landscape of the Great Rift and opted for the difficult yet passable route on its eastern border. For all of their near contact with the Craters country, few fur hunters described the region, most likely because they concentrated on the search for beaver and rarely looked with interest on any region that was not a beaver preserve or would not aid their quest for efficient commerce.

---

[23] Nathaniel J. Wyeth, The Correspondence of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831-1836 (1899; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973), 199-205, 227-229.

[24] John K. Townsend, Across the Rockies to the Columbia (1839; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 122-124.

One of the first and most lasting images of this landscape was penned by Washington Irving when he wrote about Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville's fur trapping expeditions on the Snake River Plain. Bonneville, the explorer-trapper, encountered the Craters region between 1833 and 1834 as he tried to travel from the Big Lost River to the Big Wood River. Snowbound passes prevented Bonneville from traveling the mountain route and his only hope was to wait for a thaw. He chose not to drop down to the Snake River Plain and proceed along the base of the mountains, according to Irving, because of the treacherous terrain. The "great lower plain" crashed like an ocean into the bases of the mountains, themselves broken into "crests and ridges." Farther out, the plain was "gashed with numerous and dangerous chasms," both wide and deep, and difficult to urge a horse across. Here deep ravines cut swaths that ran for fifty to sixty miles and rivers sunk out of sight, all of which forced travel well around this section. It was a dreary desert with little value, it seemed. "The volcanic plain in question," Irving wrote, "forms an area of about sixty miles in diameter, where nothing meets the eye but a desolate and awful waste; where no grass grows nor water runs, and where nothing is to be seen but lava."[25]

Irving's description, attributed to Bonneville, the romantic army officer, has been suggested as the "first" of what is now Craters of the Moon National Monument. And its seems accurate enough, especially when one considers why people avoided this country. But this by no means made it repulsive in everyone's eye. The plain, as Irving went on to describe, possessed a wilderness quality, a sublime and simple grandeur. This wide sea of lava was rimmed in the distance by mountains, its eastern horizon dominated by the Tetons.[26] In all likelihood, Irving was more romantic than the average fur trapper, for the image of barrenness predominated during the fur trade era. The Craters country was better gone around than through. A landscape of craggy lava wastes, it offered nothing of value to trappers. It was bereft of life-sustaining resources such as water, and without water there was no promise of beaver and no reason for nineteenth-century capitalists to enter the volcanic territory. Only when competition compelled them to seek out the more isolated places of southern Idaho did fur trappers come to the lava region, and in some cases contact the Great Rift itself.

Similar to the fur trade elsewhere in the Snake country, by the mid-1830s activity slowed near Craters of the Moon. Diminished beaver populations sent the Snake

---

[25] Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), 197-198.

[26] Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A., 199.

brigades elsewhere. Unable to realize a profit, entrepreneurs like Wyeth sold out to the Hudson's Bay Company, itself fading before overland emigrants. Fur trappers made up a temporary presence on the plain and the Craters country, yet they formed a permanent record of describing the region and their experiences, establishing travel routes, identifying landmarks, and producing maps for others to follow.

Summary of Context Theme

Between 1818 and 1856, the fur trade was born and ran its course in the Snake River country. American and British interests competed with each other for a share of the trade which had political as well as economic dimensions. For entrepreneurial and expansionist minded Americans, the fur trade posed both the possibility of profits and the addition of new territory to a young nation. For the more powerful British interests, represented by the Hudson's Bay Company, itself an imperial force, the fur trade posed similar yet different possibilities. Wanting more to extract beaver for profits than to expand British territory, the Company efficiently and effectively stripped the Snake country of furs, dominated the trade, and slowed but did not stop American advances. The Hudson's Bay Company, a major force in the history of the nineteenth-century Pacific Northwest, employed the brigade system to carry out trade in the Snake River region. This system proved to be a highly effective and innovative trade practice; it began operation in 1818 under Donald Mackenzie and continued under the leadership of Alexander Ross, Peter Skene Ogden, and John Work until 1832. The brigades blazed travel routes through the Sawtooth and Salmon River mountains north of the plain and across the plain itself. Their experiences crossing this country, especially the desert east of the Craters country, suggested an almost universal aversion to the lava landscape. It possessed no valuable resources for the fur trade, and traversing it endangered human lives, hence better to avoid the region than travel through it.

Similarly, American trappers such as Wyeth and Bonneville found the country to be visually unappealing and physically dangerous. Wyeth, though he erected Fort Hall in 1834, failed to create a successful trade business, and likewise Bonneville showed no ability as a trapper. Though they each had their shortcomings as businessmen, their lack of success can be largely attributed to the domination of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The fur trade peaked in the mid-1830s for both British and American interests with the decline in beaver populations in the region. Changing fashions in hats, from beaver to silk, also contributed to this decline, as did international affairs, such as the Oregon Compromise of 1846. Taking over Fort Hall and Fort Boise, the Hudson's Bay Company maintained a presence in the region until the mid-1850s, when it abandoned

both forts in 1855 and 1856, closing the chapter on the fur trade era.

By association and accident rather than intent, the Craters country came into contact with the fur trade. Mackenzie initiated the first brigade travel near the lava territory in 1819-1820, and successive brigades under the leadership of Ross, Ogden, and Work came within the vicinity of the volcanic region through 1830, yet none penetrated it. That distinction belonged to an American Fur Company party which most likely stumbled across a portion of the Great Rift far to the south of the present monument in 1830. Nevertheless, the group's misadventure suggests why other fur parties avoided the region and instead opted to travel the difficult yet proven route between the Big Lost and Snake rivers. These travels suggest that trappers only came near and into the Craters country when compelled to by market forces. Without a tightening web of competition, it seems unlikely that the American Fur Company party, for example, would have attempted a short cut across the lava flows. The observations of the three buttes--Big Southern and Twin Buttes--also suggests that landforms which served as important travel markers possessed value for the fur trade, another reason why trapping companies avoided and rarely mentioned the relatively flat lava terrain of the Craters country. Moreover, the most poignant description of what is today Craters of the Moon came from Bonneville around 1834; he avoided the region because it was both treacherous to travel and devoid of any valuable resources.

Here, as in the Snake country, the fur trade peaked in the mid-1830s and left a record of visual experiences and physical encounters with the country near Craters of the Moon, a legacy that expanded geographical knowledge of that surrounding territory and generated a sense of why fur trappers shunned the lava flows of the Great Rift. Although the fur trade subsided near Craters of the Moon, avoidance of its rugged terrain continued as travel over brigade routes was taken over by overland migrants in the 1840s.

Associated Property Types

Property types are a group of individual resources sharing similar characteristics. No properties associated with the fur trade are known to exist in Craters of the Moon. Fur traders did not stop in the monument; they traveled its perimeter. Even so, their descriptions of the landscape and accounts of their travel through it provide valuable information about the Craters of the Moon country. These writings are especially important because they enhance our understanding of the region's history and because of their association with famous individuals and important transportation routes.

It is also worth noting the fur trade campsites and natural landmarks of the Snake

River fur trade outside of the monument because they represent the larger historical landscape to which the monument was distantly related. Donald Mackenzie's winter camp of 1819-1820 along the Little Lost River, for example, has been previously listed in the National Register. And it may be possible that other campsites exist near Big Southern Butte and Twin Buttes and the mouth of the Big Lost River, and in the valleys of the Big Lost and Little Lost rivers. Physical landmarks associated with the fur trade, particularly the three buttes, are worth noting as well because they played such an important geographical role in the fur trade, namely in defining the brigade route across the desert between Fort Hall and the Big Lost River.

Registration Requirements:

Registration requirements are required only if there are property types, and since there have not been any identified, there is no reason to state the requirements for listing National Register property types.

Recommendations:

Even though property types associated with the fur trade are not known to exist in Craters of the Moon, the landscape surrounding the monument contains physical elements symbolizing this historic theme. Visible from different points in the monument, the three buttes and the Lost River Range, for example, should be considered important historic vistas.

EXPLORATIONS AND SURVEYS



CHAPTER 4

Chapter Four

Explorations and Surveys in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1879-1937

Overview of the Explorations and Surveys of the Snake River Plain

American explorers discovered the Snake River Plain during the nineteenth century as the nation expanded beyond the Mississippi River. They gathered information about the region, publicized their findings, and aided the country's understanding of this far western land for settlement and exploitation. Their endeavors also revealed the important role played by the federal government in sponsoring western exploration. For it was under the auspices of army and civilian agencies that a host of naturalists, surveyors, cartographers, geologists, and adventurers examined the western territory. In the process, they provided a broad, descriptive, and compelling record of this new land.

The history of the Snake River Plain's exploration, as with all of western exploration, demonstrated ties to national goals and culture, and unfolded through three major periods. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was part of an imperial rivalry and competition for the West. In the middle nineteenth century, it was part of national expansion and western settlement. And in the latter nineteenth century, it was part of the great surveys, an era of intensive scientific reconnaissances and inventories. All told exploration helped to map the frontier, plot transportation routes for roads and rails, and inventory and investigate the region's wealth of natural and human resources. Although the end of the nineteenth century brought a close to the "frontier" in the minds of many Americans, and thus a close to exploration, geologists, among other scientists working for federal agencies, continued the mission in the early 1900s. They surveyed and studied the plain's, as well as the West's, resources and planned the course for their development and management.

The first official exploration of southern Idaho was undertaken by Captain Benjamin L.E. Bonneville in the early 1830s. Ostensibly on a leave of absence from the military to enter the fur trade, Bonneville was carrying out explicit instructions from the War Department to explore the Far West, paying attention to its natural history, native tribes, soils, minerals, geology, geography, topography, and climate. Based on this information, some historians believe that Bonneville engaged in more than the fur business and was actually a "spy" for the cause of national expansion. In 1832 he set out from western Missouri for the Rocky Mountains, his course taking him to the Salmon River Mountains by way of South Pass, making him the first to lead wagons through this famous emigrant route. The following summer, Bonneville attended the annual fur traders' rendezvous held at the Green River in present-day Wyoming, and that winter turned west and crossed the Snake River Plain. Intent on reaching Fort Vancouver at the mouth of the Columbia River, he followed the Astorian's route to Fort Walla Walla

on the Columbia. Turned back there by the Hudson's Bay Company, he retraced his route to the Portneuf River on the southern rim of the plain, where he arrived in early June and continued on to the Bear River Valley. In the fall, he repeated his trip to Fort Walla Walla with the same results, returned to winter in the upper Bear River Valley, made a final hunt the following spring, and then left the Snake River country. In all likelihood, his persistence reflected his so-called "spy" mission, one in which he was to assess the British strength and operations in the Oregon country, contact native tribes, and evaluate the region's resources.[1]

Bonneville produced two maps of his journeys, and for their time, they ranked among the most important. In addition, his descriptions of the Snake River country, recorded in his journals and published by Washington Irving, offered some of the first portraits of the region. The plain, particularly the Craters country, was depicted as a "desolate and awful waste," with little redeeming qualities, save a wild and majestic nature. Rather than dismissing the region altogether, Irving wrote that he and Bonneville looked "forward with impatience for some able geologist to explore this sublime but almost unknown region."[2]

Irving's statement anticipated the contribution of naturalists and scientists to the body of growing knowledge about the Snake River Plain. As a member of Nathaniel J. Wyeth's fur trading expedition, John Kirk Townsend was the first zoologist to cross the lava country in 1834. An ornithologist, Townsend was accompanying British botanist Thomas Nutall across the continent. Townsend's observations offered an important contrast to those of his fellow travelers, for he expressed an interest in the origins and composition of the lava that at times posed a great impediment to his company's progress. While on the way to the Portneuf River in early July, Townsend noted, for example, that the country was mostly arid and poor. "On the wide plain," he observed "large sunken spots, some of them of great extent, surrounded by walls of lava, indicating the existence, at some very ancient date, of active craters." Attempting to date these eruptions at a time before Darwinian evolution theory, the naturalist believed they were "antediluvian," dating from before "the present order of creation." Townsend also reported that high walls of lava and basaltic dykes were exposed on the hillsides, and the

---

[1] William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West (1966; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 148-150, 156.

[2] Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), 199.

"juxtaposition" of these "enormous masses" formed "many large and dark caves."[3]

Beginning in the 1840s, the federal government increased the exploration of the Snake River Plain when it launched its great reconnaissance of the Far West to expedite the national goal of western expansion. Exploration thus embodied the desires of the nation's leaders to acquire new territory, locate suitable railroad routes across the continent, inventory and assess the region's resources for development, and increase American knowledge of the West.[4]

The explorers and scientists who embarked on these investigations did so under the sponsorship of the navy and army. In the Pacific Northwest, the government engaged in exploration from two directions, one by sea from the West Coast and one by land from the east. Since it was landlocked, the Snake River Plain was assessed from the ground by the famed explorer John C. Fremont. A member of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, he surveyed and mapped the emigrant trail to Oregon, which took him across the plain in the early 1840s. He set forth from Independence, Missouri, in the spring of 1843 with a party of forty men. Known popularly as the "Great Pathfinder," Fremont reached the Snake River country in September 1843; he stopped at Fort Hall, and then marched down the Snake and across the plain to the Columbia River and Oregon.[5]

Although he was not the first explorer to traverse the barren wastes of the Great Basin, Fremont was its true discoverer. He named it and recognized that it included parts of what are today southern Idaho, Nevada, and Utah. And as a discoverer and more so as a publicist for expansion, Fremont produced a map and a report of his 1843-1844 trek in order to promote western migration. Charles Preuss, Fremont's cartographer, drew what was considered the "first great map of the West," giving a detailed route of the Oregon Trail, exact distances, river crossings, landmarks, and native tribes. The map accompanied Fremont's report to Congress. Lauded as masterful, monumental, and comprehensive, the report was widely published and distributed, and

---

[3] John K. Townsend, Across the Rockies to the Columbia (1839; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 92.

[4] William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West, 231-232; Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 122.

[5] William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, 149-150, 245-246; Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spense, eds., The Expeditions of John C. Fremont, vol. 1, Travels from 1838-1844 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 517-538.

touted as influencing and informing a broad audience, from westbound emigrants to European naturalists.[6]

As part of its program for westward expansion, following the acquisition of Oregon, Texas, and California, Congress authorized surveys for a Pacific railroad route by the Topographical Corps in 1853. This impressive reconnaissance, conducted by military explorers and civilian scientists, produced not only reports of the best routes but also some of the best scientific examinations of the West's flora, fauna, and geology of the time. The expeditions covered sections of Idaho under the northern survey led by Isaac I. Stevens, the new governor of Washington Territory. Stevens' survey went far north of the Snake River Plain charting routes across Idaho's panhandle. Although Stevens favored a northern route, members of his own survey party and many citizens of Washington Territory disagreed with his views. The route was impractical and expensive because it crossed high mountains; for this reason many residents of the Pacific Northwest favored a more southerly route following the general direction of the emigrant trail from Puget Sound to South Pass. To this end, the legislature of Washington Territory hired civilian engineer Frederick W. Lander to survey the route in 1854. Lander, who had been a member of Stevens' party, reported favorably on the route, and his report was included in the final publication of the Pacific Railroad Reports.[7]

During the 1860s and 1870s, the last efforts to explore the Snake River Plain were undertaken by Clarence King and Ferdinand V. Hayden, the former sponsored by the army, the latter by the Interior Department's United States Geological Survey of the Territories. King's Geological and Geographical Exploration of the 40th parallel (1867-1872) brought him briefly to southern Idaho in 1868 when he journeyed north from Utah to see the Snake River and its awesome canyons for his first time. Having traveled over the emigrant trail and through the dreary scenery of sage and sand, King viewed the spectacular Shoshone Falls and was deeply moved. He described his trip as "a monotony of pale blue sky, olive and gray stretches of desert, frowning walls of jetty lava, deep beryl green of river-stretches, reflecting, here and there, the intense solemnity of the cliffs, and in the centre a dazzling sheet of foam."[8] Although King found no evidence of coal near the river, which had been the reason for his visit, he and his party camped on

---

[6] Goetzmann, 248-249.

[7] Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, 281, 286; see also, Carl Schlicke, "Frederick West Lander: Western Road-Builder," Columbia: The Magazine of Pacific Northwest History 8 (Spring 1994): 29-34.

[8] Goetzmann, 445. Quoted in Thurman Wilkins, Clarence King: A Biography, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 127.

the cliff overlooking the falls to enjoy the sublime scene. So inspired by this sight, the geologist wrote an article about his experience for Bret Harte's Overland Monthly.[9]

Hayden's surveys, sent in advance of and as an aid to settlement of the West, skirted the eastern Snake River Plain over fur trading routes leading from the vicinity of Fort Hall to the Yellowstone country in 1871 and 1872. With exploration of Yellowstone National Park's grandeur as their primary goal, the surveys were important for the Snake River country because they assembled crews of able naturalists, scientists, topographers, artists, and photographers, all of whom recorded their observations of this unique territory and included it in their artistic and scientific legacy of the West.[10]

The surveys also signaled a change in exploration. Military-sponsored exploration closed with King's expedition, and civilian-agency sponsored exploration opened with Hayden's survey. Led by academic scientists, the surveys emphasized less the discovery and more the assessment of the nation's resources. All of this was symbolized best in 1879 with the creation of the U.S. Geological Survey, headed first by Clarence King and later by the renowned geologist-explorer John Wesley Powell.

In the wake of the great western surveys, much of the Snake River Plain still remained an enigma. But this began to change late in the nineteenth century. In 1879, Scottish geologist Sir Archibald Geikie expressed an interest in the plain itself rather than what lay beyond or around it. Famed for his expertise in volcanic action, Geikie viewed the eastern edge of the plain while returning to Utah from an excursion to see the geysers of Yellowstone. He admitted that much of his journey had been over "bare, burning, treeless, and roadless desert." But from a geological perspective coming across the lava formations of the Snake River Plain was "one of the most interesting parts of the whole journey."[11]

Hugging the "margins of a vast plain of basalt," that stretched to the south and west "as far as the eye could reach," Geikie traveled for hours, thinking that the "plain had once been a great lake or sea of molten rock which surged along the base of the hills, entering every valley, and leaving there a solid floor of bare black stone." Overall, the lava flows appeared to be quite recent, as if they "had cooled only a short time ago," an appearance, he added, that was aided by the slow rate of erosion in the arid climate. Of particular interest to Geikie was the origin of the lava flows. It seemed that

---

[9] Thurman Wilkins, Clarence King: A Biography, 217.

[10] Goetzmann, 487, 502-514.

[11] Sir Archibald Geikie, Geological Sketches at Home and Abroad (New York, 1882), 214, 237-238.

volcanoes were the source, but he could find no "visible cones or vents from which these floods of basalt could have proceeded." And thus Geikie concluded that massive fissure eruptions, rather than volcanoes, were the source for the volcanic plain of the Snake country and the Far West. This theory, he believed, also applied to the origin of the basaltic plateaus of Ireland and Scotland, his homeland. Geikie's encounter with the Snake River Plain and other vast lava fields of the West exerted such a powerful influence on him that it lifted the "mist from my geological vision," he wrote.[12]

Adding to the scattered scientific observations of the Snake River Plain, C. Hart Merriam, ornithologist and head of the Biological Survey, passed through the region in the fall of 1890. Merriam's interest was sparked by reports that much of this country had not been explored by naturalists. A member of Hayden's 1872 survey, he was conducting the first extensive biological survey of the mountain ranges north of the plain. He arrived in Blackfoot by train and from there covered country in the Salmon, Lost River, and Sawtooth mountains. Though he spent some time identifying its flora and fauna, Merriam had little to say about the Snake River Plain, except that it extended as far as he could see, level, covered with sage, and "dotted in a few places by lava cones and craters." The naturalist, however, made a special point of visiting Shoshone Falls, much heralded in popular accounts as the rival of Niagara, and found it "not half so grand or imposing" on the whole.[13]

The first and most comprehensive investigation of the Snake River Plain was conducted by Israel C. Russell in 1901. Russell worked for the Geological Survey and had participated in extensive explorations of the deserts and mountains of the West and Alaska in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His reconnaissance of the plain reflected the Survey's mission to study the water supply and irrigation possibilities for those vast sections of the West that required only water to transform them into productive agricultural lands.[14]

---

[12] Geikie, Geological Sketches at Home and Abroad, 237-238, 242-245.

[13] C. Hart Merriam, "Journal of a Trip in Idaho 1890, August 15-October 24," box 4, file 1890, "Idaho," C. Hart Merriam Papers, Library of Congress, 6-83, quotations from 37 and 83, ; see also box 59, subject and clippings files pertaining to Idaho; and C. Hart Merriam, Results of a Biological Reconnaissance of South-central Idaho (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891).

[14] Israel C. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Idaho (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 13; Warren P. Lombard and Martin L. D'Odoge, "Israel Cook Russell," Science 24 (October 5, 1906): 426-431; for more information on Russell's report and activities, see Israel C. Russell to C. Willard Hayes, March 22, 1902, and C. Willard Hayes to C.D. Walcott, May 14, 1902, Record Group 57, Records of the Geological Survey, entry 81, box 36, file 821, National

Both a skilled observer and facile writer, Russell was drawn to the remote and wild recesses of the country such as the Snake River Plain, the "wilder and rougher," in his words, "the better." He spent about two months studying the region between July and September, concentrating most of his efforts in the eastern section of the plain. Initially, Russell's work was to have been a water supply paper, but the plain's geology captivated him so much that it took over the report. At times, though, his report read like a promotional document because Russell was attempting to reduce "false impressions" of what the geologist called the "Snake River lava plains" or the "Snake River Desert." The Snake River Plain, he asserted, was not flat but had varied relief, and despite its desert appearance was vegetated and populated with wildlife.[15]

Writing to dispel common misperceptions about the Snake River Plain, he adopted ocean imagery to describe the landscape. The jagged, "naked lava" was surrounded by a ragged coastline, jutting headlands of mountains, and Big Southern and Twin buttes--ancient volcanoes and uplifts--that "rise as islands through the surrounding basalt."[16] Furthermore, despite the plain's relative flatness mountains boldly rose above it from several hundred to six thousand feet; the mountains themselves ranged from seven thousand to ten thousand feet above sea level. The undulating surface of the plain also ranged in elevation, averaging about three thousand feet in the west and from four to six thousand feet in the east. This latter section, lying between Big Southern Butte and the Lost River country, he called the plain's "broadest and most characteristic portion."

Sounding more like a booster than a geologist, Russell pointed out that there were positive aspects to the region's environment, in spite of the extreme climate of excessive heat and cold, wind and aridity, parched soils and dust-laden winds that "blow with such strength and constancy" so as to try a "person's nerves." Dry heat and cold were easier to withstand than in humid climates; the winds cleaned the country of snow; chinooks thawed deep freezes, and overall, "these climatic conditions," especially the dryness, resulted in a "healthfulness of the land," good for those with lung ailments.[17]

In a similar upbeat tone, Russell spoke of the plain's flora and fauna. Sagebrush

---

Archives.

[15] Quotation from Russell to Hayes, March 22, 1902; Israel C. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Southern Idaho, 13.

[16] Russell, 15-16.

[17] Ibid., 18-19.

grew "abundantly," he stated, and "we might say luxuriantly in the dry soil." Although the silvery-green leaves made the plains somewhat monotonous, sagebrush nevertheless demonstrated that the Snake River Plain appeared to be a desert only in the absence of water. Close examination revealed the flora to be "abundant and varied," for "many lovely plants" blossomed "in early spring, filling the air with fragrance, and in summer and fall the yellow of sunflowers and of the still more plentiful 'rabbit brush'" highlighted the scenery with "broad dashes of brilliant color." Bunch grass also grew abundantly beneath the sage and formed a rolling prairie, supplying good pasture for livestock, especially in the vicinity of the three buttes. The presence of forests further diminished claims that the plain was a desert. A "thrifty growth of junipers" grew on the slopes of the three buttes, the forest extending east of them for 175 square miles. Along with some juniper, Big Southern Butte supported a "vigorous growth in the most favorable places of pine and firs." The most forested area lay on the western edge of the buttes, a few miles southwest of Arco for some fifty miles in an irregular pattern up to fifteen miles wide. It was "an open forest" of mostly pine and fir embracing the "Cinder Buttes" (Craters of the Moon). Finally, where trees grew, rich soil covered older lava flows and supported native grasses, creating a park-like setting, "a beautiful and attractive country."[18]

The presence of wildlife, again found primarily in the vicinity of the three buttes and the Lost River country, still further dispelled the desert image. One could find antelope, mountain sheep and goats, deer, and elk on the plain, as well as bear, coyotes, wolves, lynxes, and foxes, among other species. Where there were seasonal ponds and rivers, ducks and geese, among other waterfowl, congregated, and throughout the plain, grouse and other smaller birds were seen.[19]

Although Russell also portrayed the agricultural and settlement potential of the plain, he emphasized more its wilderness quality and aesthetic beauty. The plain's remoteness and aridity protected much of it from domestic sheep and overgrazing, and thus preserved its wildness. It was a wildness that should not be feared or loathed but appreciated. "To lovers of nature and all who rejoice in scenes of natural wildness unmodified," he wrote, "or what is too frequently essentially the same thing, unmarred by the hand of man, the plains of southern Idaho present exceptional attractions."[20]

---

[18] Ibid., 22-23.

[19] Ibid., 24.

[20] Ibid., 19-20.

The geologist realized that first impressions of the lava landscape, primarily for those accustomed to a more humid and verdant East, would be negative. This was a common reaction during mid-day or mid-winter when the glare of the sun or the gray of the clouds rendered the plain flat and featureless. But for someone who spends weeks or months riding across the plain's "seemingly boundless surfaces," he continued, it is "found to have charms unthought by the casual passer-by." The time to view the plain was at dawn or dusk when the slanting sun beneath a clear sky cast all things in shadow bringing out "details everywhere on its surface."[21]

It was not simply that the landscape had definition but color. "When the sun is high in the cloudless heavens the plains are gray, russet brown, and faded yellow," he penned, "but with the rising of the sun and again near sunset they become not only brilliant and superb in color, but pass through innumerable variations in tone and tint."[22] Days began with cool blues on distant peaks rimmed with the rising sun, and as the sun rose, the colors deepened to violet and purple "of a strength and purity never seen where rain is frequent." All shades of purple bathed the arid lands. At sunset shadows and color reclaimed the landscape creating "a sea of purple on which float the still shimmering mountains." The clarity of the dry air made visual wonders of molten clouds and stars filling the night sky from "horizon to zenith." Cloud banks as well pleased the eye, building thunderheads that surpassed "the ability of even a poet to describe."[23]

After this sweeping and somewhat romantic view, Russell turned his attention to geology. Outlining the geological history of the plain, he determined that southern Idaho was made up of old rocks that formed a rugged, ancient land surface. After successive geological periods of thrusting, faulting, and erosion and flooding by lakes and river systems, the region began the "process of upbuilding" of which lava flows were a major contributor. He examined Big Southern, Middle and East buttes describing them as "mountain-like elevations" that break the monotony of the plain, visible from over a hundred miles away and familiar to many who traveled through the region. Russell identified Middle Butte as "an upraised block of stratified basalt," and Big Southern and East buttes as ancient rhyolitic volcanoes. He ascended Big Southern Butte, the highest of the three at an estimated elevation of about 2,400 feet. True mountaineering skills

---

[21] Ibid., 20.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Russell, 20-21.

were necessary to climb the butte, Russell reported, but the territorial view from its summit was worth the climb, for much of the Snake River Plain's history "may easily be read in the splendid panorama."[24]

As the geologist surveyed the landscape, he theorized that the lava streams, fanning across the plain like withered leaves, flowed from the numerous volcanic cones and craters rather than one source. To his west he spied the "Cinder Buttes, among which a score or more volcanic cones are known to exist." With the exception of Cinder Butte, he counted about twenty craters on the broad plain, he said, and still more lay beyond his field of vision. Russell's was the first known observation of what is today Craters of the Moon by a geologist or other skilled observer. More importantly, the chain of cones and craters he saw influenced his belief that much of the lava covering the Snake River Plain poured "from small and inconspicuous craters, many of which have escaped burial by later eruptions and still exist as elevations."[25]

Based on his observations, Russell disagreed with the fissure eruption hypothesis favored by geologists like Sir Archibald Geikie. The hypothesis, while well founded, did not match his own experience, which led him "to conclude that many local eruptions from distant vents," both in the mountains and the plain, were the sources for the lava flows. While only speculating about the source of the plain's lava, Russell stated that the "Cinder Buttes" with their fresh appearance furnished "the most instructive illustrations of the nature of the eruptions which deluged a large part of southern Idaho." And for this reason, he devoted the majority of his field work and report to this area.[26]
Russell believed that the Cinder Buttes offered a microcosm of the larger Snake River Plain, and it inspired him to return the following summer (1902) to continue his work. His visit, however, turned out to be only a rapid reconnaissance and a supplement to his previous investigation but foreshadowed future studies of the region.[27]

At the time Russell conducted his survey of the Snake River Plain, large-scale irrigation projects were getting underway in the Snake River basin, and the beginnings of farms and towns were emerging on reclaimed desert. By the 1920s about a million acres had been irrigated in southern Idaho when the USGS returned to begin a systematic

---

[24] Ibid., 36.

[25] Ibid., 37-38.

[26] Ibid., 61-108. Quotation from 72.

[27] Israel C. Russell, Notes on the Geology of Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903).

study of the area's ground-water resources to aid in surface-water irrigation, in a sense carrying out the task Russell had undertaken twenty years earlier.

The Survey's Ground Water Division was in charge of the investigation and participated with the Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology. Oscar E. Meinzer, head of the Ground Water Division, arranged the field work and conducted a reconnaissance of the Snake River Plain east of Twin Falls. Employed by the Survey, the geologist Harold T. Stearns, who would become an authority on the Snake River Plain, helped study the surface and subsurface water resources of the Mud Lake basin beginning in April 1921. During the late 1920s, the Survey progressed into more quantitative research. Stearns, for example, collaborated with fellow Survey geologist Lynn Crandall, the Idaho Reclamation Bureau, and the Idaho Bureau Mines and Geology on a ten-year study of the plain's ground water.[28]

On the whole, geologists during the 1920s and 1930s studied the hydrology of the plain, measured stream flows, surveyed natural reservoirs, aided federal water projects, and inventoried surface water, in addition to examining the plain's ground water supply. All of this served the practical purpose of opening up new districts to settlement, aiding landowners who irrigated their crops. Above all it helped make the most of the plain's precious commodity of water. These various of activities were reflected in the career of Harold Stearns who, in addition to the above projects, worked as a mineral examiner for the General Land Office, investigated the Haggerman fossil beds, and conducted the first scientific study of what is today Craters of the Moon National Monument--expanding the territory Russell had surveyed at the turn of the century. During the late 1940s and 1950s, Stearns continued his work on the plain, mapping irrigation and water power projects below Pocatello.[29]

Explorations and Surveys of Craters of the Moon, 1879-1937

Until the turn of the century, Craters of the Moon was a blank space on the map, unsurveyed and uncharted, labeled only as rolling lava plains. Explorers, like fur trappers, steered away from the lava desert. Accounts from Benjamin Bonneville and

---

[28] Mary C. Rabbitt, Minerals, Lands, and Geology for the Common Defense and General Welfare: A History of Public Lands, Federal Science and Mapping Policy, and Development of Mineral Resources in the United States, vol. 3, 1904-1939 (Washington, D.C.: United States Geological Survey, 1986), 225, 289, 294.

[29] Harold T. Stearns, Memoirs of a Geologist: From Poverty Peak to Piggery Gulch (Honolulu: Hawaii Institute of Geophysics, 1983).

John Townsend in the 1830s suggested that a mysterious landscape of volcanic formations awaited intrepid as well as trained explorers capable of understanding what they saw. Investigations of the lava formations of the Great Rift dated to the final three decades of the nineteenth century when ranchers entered in search of water and grass for their herds. But the most significant phase occurred in the first three decades of the twentieth century when early settlers, geologists, surveyors, and other extraordinary figures penetrated the region. Their investigations were the first for the future monument, charting, describing, and surveying its geology, topography, and features, all of which revealed to the public at large the area's significance. Their work would be advanced by a new generation of geologists who descended upon the monument after World War II.

The first Anglo Americans to venture into the lava interior were early settlers of the surrounding region. The once spurned lava country presented a foreign landscape to the growing communities on the eastern fringe of the Snake River Plain. But it also intrigued them. Legends circulated that native tribes secreted to a hidden valley in the lava country during times of war; it was assumed that they were ensconced there with an abundant supply of food and water. George Goodhart reported to have been blindfolded and led to this "Lost Valley" by Indians in the 1860s, allowed only to see that it was rimmed with red cliffs. He recalled that it took two days to reach the valley and that it lay southwest of the Big Lost River and east of the Big Wood River.[30]

Stories of the Lost Valley fired the interest of stockmen and cattle companies eager to exploit the imagined resources. In the 1870s and 1880s, ranchers searched for it in vain, spurred on by the promise of a cattle company's $5,000 reward. Eager to claim the prize, Lost River ranchers John W. Powell and Arthur Ferris explored the lava beds within today's monument as far as its southern border. Powell, an Arco resident, first visited the Craters country in 1879. He returned with Ferris in the early 1880s, and together they found a stream flowing on the lava surface, its location due west of Blackfoot, over thirty miles southwest of Arco and twenty miles east of Carey. But the ephemeral stream disappeared along with their reward. To mark their passage, though, Powell erected a rock cairn at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole, and with Ferris inscribed their names and the date 1885 on the shoulder bone of a cow in Buffalo Cave.[31]

---

[30] "Complete Story of the Lost Valley; Found after 65 years' Study and Hunting," Idaho Republican, January 24, 1927.

[31] "Complete Story of Lost Valley"; Harold T. Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, Bulletin 13 (Boise: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1928), 41.

Powell and Ferris were possibly the first whites to visit this uncharted land. Yet others were also drawn to the region by visions of this lush and abundant valley in the lavas. George Kimpton, a Pocatello pioneer, reported that he visited the Craters country in 1884, making him "one of the first white persons to set foot on this weird formation." There were many "wild berries growing there," he said, "fine food for silver tip bears which were plentiful," in a district that also "abounded with mountain lions, wolves, foxes, there being thousands of hiding places in the lava beds." Kimpton also claimed to have found a "great trail," constructed by early tribes near the "Valley of the Moon." The trail's presence mystified Kimpton, for it was wide enough for a horse, more than eight feet deep and 1,200 feet long.[32]

Contact with the region, the Lost Valley legend notwithstanding, was infrequent in the late nineteenth century. During the era of great trail drives, ranchers herded their livestock through the Pioneer Mountain foothills bordering the northern edge of the lava flows of today's monument. Some may have watered their herds at the waterholes or grazed them on the islands of grass scattered throughout the lava flows. But stockmen like Ferris and Powell were not likely to advertise their discoveries or to share their "free" resources with others. Thus, Craters of the Moon owed its true discovery to an exploration sponsored by the federal government.

As part of his reconnaissance of the Snake River Plain for the USGS in the summer of 1901, Israel Russell explored the northern district of today's national monument. He first saw the chain of volcanic cones and craters from the summit of Big Southern Butte, counting more than twenty of each kind and speculating that more lay out of sight. He also believed that the formations held the answers to the origins of the lava covering much of the Snake River Plain, the lava flowing from numerous "small and inconspicuous craters" rather than a single volcano or fissures. Any study of the volcanic activity of the plain, the geologist stated, began with a visit to these extinct volcanoes; they appeared remarkably fresh, and furnished the "most instructive illustrations of the nature of the eruptions which deluged such a large part of the southern Idaho with lava."[33]

Russell ventured into an unsurveyed region, identified on maps as lava desert. A General Land Office map of the state named only one geographic landmark, a

---

[32] "Pocatello Man Visited Craters in Early Days," no reference, Craters of the Moon Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS).

[33] Israel Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Southern Idaho, 37-38, 72, quotation from 72.

prominent cone labeled "Old crater." Local residents referred to it as Cinder Butte, and because it belonged with "the entire group of volcanoes," Russell named the area "Cinder Buttes." He was most likely seeing Big Cinder Butte, which he said rose six hundred feet above the plain and lay about five miles west of the Pioneer Mountains. The butte formed a centerpiece for volcanic cones that studded the plain in a belt of three to four miles wide and ten to fifteen miles long, that ran southeast from the base of the mountains and advanced out on the broad plain. He described the "buttes" as closely grouped and even crowded at the belt's western end and more widely spaced and even isolated at the eastern end, with some cones lying about five miles to the south of Big Cinder Butte.[34]

Russell never stated how long he investigated the area or recorded where he visited. He stayed possibly up to two weeks and reconnoitered the area from Big Cinder Butte north. Much of his report was devoted to describing the volcanic features, analyzing the composition of the lava, and estimating its age and origins. He noted, for example, that most of the formations were composed of volcanic dust, lapilli, tuff, which were covered and filled with an array of fragments and rough pieces of scoriae, "volcanic bombs, and thin, irregular, cake-like forms of lava," all produced by violent explosions. Approximately twenty craters had survived in a "fair state of preservation," while numerous others were in a state of decay or erosion, fragmented or buried beneath later lava flows. On the older lava flows and cones grass and a forest of pine and fir grew, while their younger counterparts were "entirely bare." Furthermore, these younger formations--smooth and rough lava streams, cones, and craters--presented "many pleasing variations in color, ranging from deep red through brown and purple to lusterless black."[35]

Having inventoried and described the myriad volcanic fragments, craters, and cones, Russell discovered what he called the "parasitic cones" or spatter cones. He described the spatter cones as "a row of seven steep-sided and remarkably regular cones" that were formed by blobs of falling, pasty lava thrown up from vents in the earth's crust. As the blobs fell, they adhered to each other and formed miniature volcanoes. The conical-shaped formations were nearly vertical, their slopes about fifty to sixty degrees at their summits and thirty-four degrees at their bases, and with only one exception ranged from forty to sixty feet high. Most of the cones' openings had been blocked, except for two in the northwestern section. The smaller of these had an ice block ten feet thick at

---

[34] Russell, 72.

[35] Ibid., 73.

the bottom of its shaft in early September, and the larger of these had both ice and water in its bottom. Here, and in other crevices, the geologist used a wooden ladder, fashioned from local materials, to descend into and more closely inspect these lava chimneys. These were, Russell concluded, about the "simplest examples of 'ice wells' that can be imagined."[36]

To Russell the spatter cones were interesting anomalies, since he believed that the lava flows originated in the much larger cinder cones. Thus he spent most of his reconnaissance tracing the lava streams to their sources. In doing so, he determined that six principal and recent lava flows began in the "Cinder Buttes" and spread across the plain for almost three-hundred square miles. In addition to looking for the origins of the lava streams, Russell identified the different surfaces of lava, as pahoehoe, corrugated, and aa, terms previously used to describe the smooth and rough flows in Hawaii. He also speculated that the flows were responsible for creating the series of caves, tunnels, and surface depressions he saw throughout the area.

One of the more important questions he attempted to answer was the age of the flows themselves. At least three of the six main lava streams, which he investigated, he believed were 100 to 150 years old. He determined this based on their black color, which gave them the appearance that they had just surfaced from the earth, and the amount of vegetation growing on them and the surrounding craters. He also decided that one could determine a lava flow's age based on the discoloration of its surface. While doing this, he noted that a weathered flow had lost some of its "bloom of youth," yet it was also covered with a sheen of "desert varnish," a thin film of cobalt blue, interspersed with light blue or gray like the scales of a reptile. For this reason, he named it the "Blue Dragon lava flow."[37]

More than any other section of the plain, the Craters country impressed Russell the most. Its recent origins, he hoped, would unravel the mystery of older eruptions forming the greater part of the Snake River Plain. One trip, then, did not satisfy his interest, and he returned the following summer to continue and supplement his 1901 survey. Unfortunately, he was only able to conduct a hasty reconnaissance, one which

---

[36] Ibid., 80-81. For more discussion on Russell's use of a ladder, see Harold T. Stearns, "Geology of Craters of the Moon," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1930, Technical File C29a, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 58.

[37] Russell, 82-106.

lasted long enough for him to "verify and extend" his previous observations.[38]

The first geologist to survey and call out the importance of what is now Craters of the Moon, Russell hoped that the unique region would receive a more detailed study in the near future. Until the Geological Survey fulfilled that wish twenty years later, the Cinder Buttes country became increasingly the subject of local interest. The Lost Valley legend continued to pique the imaginations of ranchers and opportunists in the early 1900s, but their attempts to establish a giant ranch in the mythical valley faded like a mirage.[39] The interest expressed by nearby communities, especially townspeople from the Arco village and the valleys of the Big and Little Lost rivers, continued to be motivated by mysteries surrounding the unknown. But they also were curious about and intrigued by the strange lava formations and the fantastic shapes of cones, craters, and lava flows.

Exploratory outings of the Craters region began after 1910 when settlement expanded in the Lost River country as a result of an irrigation project under the Carey Act. The first reported trip to the "Devil's Playground" took place in June 1912 when a group of Arco men inspected several of the "scenic wonders of that part of the country." The adventurists marveled at the weird phenomena--deep craters, vents filled with snow and ice, and ash, cinders, and bombs covering the ground. They were led by Era Martin, a rancher living in the vicinity of the lava flows, who reportedly knew "every foot of the crater region." Because of Martin's explorations, the region was referred to as both the Cinder Buttes and the Martin Lavabeds. Members of the same group returned once more that month, not satisfied they had seen enough. On their second trip they headed toward Big Cinder Butte to get a better look at the lava flows; they noted the rough (aa) lava, and the smoother (pahoehoe) streams. These latter flows in particular fascinated them, for they took all manners of "queer shapes," serpentine figures, furrowed fields, or a lava sea. Rather than a place to be spurned, the explorers believed the region offered "food for contemplation," and it was only a thoughtless person whose encounter with "the crags of Mother Earth's struggles" would not inspire meditations on the past, present, and future of the world.[40]

---

[38] Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Idaho, 108; Israel C. Russell, Notes on the Geology of Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 38.

[39] "Complete Story of Lost Valley," Idaho Republican, January 24, 1927.

[40] "The Devil's Playground," Arco Advertiser, June 7, 1912; "The Devil's Playground Revisited," Arco Advertiser, June 21, 1912.

These initial ventures seem to have inspired, or been a part of, other trips to explore the interior of the lava deserts. Explorer-sightseers traveled to the lava flows by horse, wagon, and auto, and then proceeded by foot over the rugged terrain. Some still searched for the Lost Valley, as groups from Pocatello, Blackfoot, and Arco planned and launched treks into the remote region in 1913 with no positive results. Pleasure outings with an exploratory theme also became more commonplace. That same year, for example, at least one party of Arco residents sought out the Craters for a Sunday outing, "viewing the scenes where the Devil and Mother Earth cut up 'high jinks' when she was young and gay and giddy." Era Martin served as guide, and the picnickers spent most of the day among the cinder fields, craters, lava flows and streams, and caves, some even collecting a cartload of specimens in the name of scientific investigation. In addition to taking specimens, visitors to the strange landscape documented their activities and events and scenery with photographs and stories in local papers.[41]

Moreover, the growing popularity of the region owed much to individuals such as Martin who knew the volcanic country well and had a "contagious" interest in it. Martin's experience with the area, for example, stemmed from his search in the lava desert for Indian curious he could sell to eastern markets. In the process of scouring the country for artifacts, he discovered and marked many of its caves and waterholes; one of his better known discoveries was Moss Cave, later named and described by Robert Limbert. Martin would eventually construct a wagon road to Little Prairie Waterhole by 1920 to water his livestock, but his efforts also provided greater access to the lava formations.[42] Others joined Martin in exploration, one of whom was Samuel A. Paisley. A well-known local explorer, Paisley discovered and became fascinated with the lava formations of the Craters country after he moved to the Arco area in 1910. For more than a decade, he led excursions to the area, helped promote it, and along with nearby ranchers and civic groups, built trails to popular sites and erected signs. He would continue these activities after he became the first custodian of the national

---

[41] "Explore Lava Deserts," Arco Advertiser, May 2, 1913; "Ancient Craters," Arco Advertiser June 20, 1913.

[42] "Discover Great Cave Near Arco," Arco Advertiser, June 2, 1916; Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," 237-239, Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection; Harold T. Stearns, "Geology of Craters of the Moon," 5, 78.

monument.[43]

Most of these local explorers left few written accounts, except for one. Although not a trained geologist, Robert W. Limbert was a naturalist and promoter, outdoor photographer and taxidermist, entertainer and explorer all wrapped up in one individual. Drawn to the undiscovered and unknown reaches of Idaho, Limbert explored the Craters region in the early 1920s; it was one of the many remote yet wondrous landscapes he found in the state. He moved to Boise in 1911, and the fantastic stories about the Lost Valley, strange lava beds, and volcanic formations that looked like the "valley of the moon" eventually enticed him to explore the region, especially once he heard that an unusual species of dwarf grizzly bear lived there. The blank space on the map labeled "rolling lava terrain" also attracted him, granting him the chance to bring this remarkable region to the attention of world.[44]

Between about 1918 and 1920, Limbert toured the northern section of the lava district originally covered by I.C. Russell two times. He discovered that this "shunned" area did not meet his expectations of a unattractive, barren, waterless, and lifeless landscape. In all cases, almost the opposite was true, and hoping to find more "peculiar features," he embarked on a third trip covering the entire length of the rift. Accompanied by Walter L. Cole of Boise and an Airedale terrier, Limbert set out from Minidoka in May 1920 and for seventeen days trekked eighty miles north to the town of Martin through hot, arid, treacherous, and unsurveyed volcanic territory. Limbert believed that he and Cole were the first white men to undertake such an expedition, which represented the first and most extensive reconnaissance of the volcanic country.[45] More publicist than trained explorer, Limbert produced no exact maps of his travels and was prone to hyperbole, yet at the same time he produced vivid descriptions and remarkable photographs of what is now Craters of the Moon. Both forms of

---

[43] Arco Advertiser, October 3, 1924; "Death Removes S.A. Paisley, First Park Custodian," Arco Advertiser, August 19, 1932; Addison T. Smith to Horace M. Albright, September 23, 1924, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79 (hereafter RG 79), entry 7, Central Classified Files (hereafter CCF), Craters of the Moon National Monument (hereafter CRMO), box 580, file 0.35, part 1, National Archives (hereafter NA).

[44] Nicholas Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert': Man from the Sawtooths," Idaho Yesterdays 32 (Spring 1988): 2-11; Robert W. Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon': An Account of the First Expeditions Through the Remarkable Volcanic Lava Beds of Southern Idaho," National Geographic Magazine 45 (March 1924): 303-328.

[45] Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" 303; for an earlier version of this story, see Robert W. Limbert, "A Trip to the Moon Right Here in Idaho," Idaho Sunday Statesman, April 10, 1921.

documentation were the earliest of their kind and gave a sense not only of what the strange region looked like, but also what travel through it was like.

During the rugged north-south trek, Limbert and Cole spent three days walking over monotonous and jagged-edged aa lava, which badly cut their dog's feet and slowed their progress. In places, Limbert said, they picked their way across the terrain by following old Indian trails. In lava depressions, they found water pooled from melted snow and ice. Trails, rock cairns built by Indians, and even doves led them to these waterholes, which was serendipitous because most of the time the explorers were lost; the magnetic properties of the volcanic formations often rendered a compass useless. In the best estimation, Limbert entered the present monument near Two Point Butte, from there traveled to Vermillion Chasm and then to Sheep Trail Butte, which he named for the prominent old sheep trails that terraced the cinder cone's sides. Turning northwest, he headed for Echo Crater, so named for its acoustical qualities by Limbert and his companions. At the crater Limbert and Cole established a base camp. Cole, who had injured his foot, rested at the camp while Limbert continued north past Big Cinder Butte and North Crater Flow for about twelve miles to meet and return with Era Martin and Wes Watson.[46]

For the remainder of the trip, these four fanned out across the lava countryside, naming many of the geological features they encountered. Finding a waterhole covered with a layer of drowned hornets, they named it Yellow Jacket Water Hole; cinder beds that were patched with dwarf buckwheat marked what were believed to be bear tracks several hundred years old and earned the name Bear Track Flat; a field of vertical tree molds which resembled the rifling of gun barrels was named Trench Mortar Flat, and a natural bridge upon which an expedition member bumped his head was dubbed the Bridge of Tears. The names of other features such as Amphitheater Cave, Bottomless Pit, and the Ruined Pueblo Flow reflected similar references and experiences by Limbert and company.[47] Most of these names still identify the monument's features.

Throughout his account, Limbert remarked about the life he saw all around him in the so-called "barren" landscape. Trails and rock markers, mounds, and circles were evidence to him of Indian use of the area. The tracks of bears, mountain sheep, bobcats, and coyote also appeared here and there in the cinders, and birds congregated near waterholes, craters, and caves. On the older lava flows and cinder cones, buckbrush,

---

[46] Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" 304-309, 311-312, 315. Wes Watson is not readily identifiable.

[47] Limbert, 311, 318, 322, 326-328.

sage, and other plants and flowers thrived, as did limber pine and juniper.

When completed, the trip proved to be a major feat but not without some danger. Both Cole and the expedition's dog injured their feet walking the sharp and contorted lava beds, and even Limbert was temporarily trapped in a deep hole. But that seemed to be the extent of the expedition's troubles. Certainly the potential for disasters existed. Expedition members carried packs weighing more than fifty-five pounds; they crossed uneven, hard and unstable terrain, climbed steep and sometimes fragile cones and craters, and descended into deep caverns and crevices. Becoming lost always seemed to weigh on the explorers' minds; at least once, one of Limbert's party marked the entrance to several caves with a row of rocks for several hundred yards, it seems, not only to identify the sites but also to find the way out safely. Except for these "markers," Limbert's party left no permanent marks on the landscape.

Limbert's most permanent record of this and other journeys came in the form of his writings and photographs. As he traversed the contorted landscape, he became enamored of its scenic grandeur. Where others had seen only a barren waste, he found solace and beauty. Here, he wrote, "the human voice seems a sacrilege in the amphitheater [sic] of nature such as these huge craters seem to be." He searched for words to describe the scenery of "immense rolls and folds of fantastically formed lava...colored blue, black, and brown...the scores of crater rims and walls that start at your very feet and dot the landscape to the horizon line." Exploring this strange country had taken him to some of "the grandest sights imaginable," from the heights of the great craters to their "deep and somber depths." It was a sublime experience to descend from the scenic feast of surrounding space and sky to crater bottom, and become enveloped in a "red walled funnel," where "one feels little and insignificant, a fly on the wall of the world."[48]

Capturing the essence of the area, he wrote, as many did, of color and light. As he watched the sun of light and moon dance across the cobalt blue lava flows of the Blue Dragon Flow, it changed from a "twisted, wavy sea" to a "glazed surface" with a "silvery sheen." Not simply day and night, but the "changing conditions of light and air" make this a place of color and silence," which was unequaled, with few exceptions, in "variety of formation, color, and scenic effects" in the world.[49]

Limbert published his story in the April 10, 1921, edition of the Idaho Sunday

---

[48] Robert W. Limbert, "Our Next National Park," 2, 7, typescript, box 1, file 18, Robert W. Limbert Papers, Boise State University.

[49] Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" 327; and "Our Next National Park," 1.

Statesman, accompanied by some of the more than two hundred photos he snapped of the region with his Graflex camera. He was convinced that the Craters country was national park or monument caliber and would, with the proper developments, attract thousands of visitors traveling west from Yellowstone. Conducting free lectures around the state, he drummed up support for his idea and continued to explore the volcanic district guiding several more trips with scientists and explorers. As a result his explorations served the dual purpose of gathering knowledge and promoting the region as a national park.

In June 1921, the explorer-promoter led his most famous investigation of the Craters area. The party consisted of ten men, who were "equipped to make an exhaustive study of the lava formations, birds and animal life, and explore the many craters." Among the members were two federal biologists, Luther Goldman of the Biological Survey and W.E. Crouch of the Smithsonian Institution; local residents Samuel Paisley and Era Martin; civic leaders Clarence A. Bottolfsen and Jo G. Martin; and Harry Nims, a reporter for the Jermone North Side News, and Professor Orma J. Smith of the College of Idaho. The trip lasted two weeks. The group drove about twenty-two miles west of Arco skirting the foothills along the Arco-Carey Highway. When they reached a sign marked "Gateway to the Valley of the Moon," they turned south and drove over cinder flats and wound around the base of cinder cones over smooth lava flows. Unable to drive any farther, they stopped at a campground known as the Picnic grounds, most likely near Registration Waterhole, and from there packed in by horse and wagon to Echo Crater, by way of Big Cinder Butte and Trench Mortar Flat. As with his previous expedition, Limbert led members on side trips, covering most of the area within today's monument. While old sites were visited, the expedition also discovered and marked some new features, recording previously uncharted craters, pits, ice caves, and natural bridges. All of this, of course, did not occur without some drama: Limbert reported that he survived a close encounter with a grizzly bear. Once again, Limbert and expedition members recorded their adventures, writing accounts for the local press, shooting some fourteen hundred feet of home movies, and snapping nearly three hundred photographs.[50]

Limbert's maps, however, were only sketches of his expedition routes and the

[50] "Party Coming to Explore Craters Arrive June 8th," Arco Advertiser, Special Edition, June 6, 1921; quotation from "Expedition Ready to Explore Moon Valley," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1921; "'Moon Valley' Gets Many Specimens," Idaho Daily Statesman, clipping, n.d., 1921; "'Moon Valley' Trampers Back Friday Morning," Idaho Daily Statesman, June 25, 1921; Robert W. Limbert, "Close-up of Moon Valley's Monarch," Arco Advertiser, August 26, 1921; Harry Nims, "Exploring the Valley of the Moon," The North Side News, July 21, 1921.

region's volcanic features, giving a sense of the area but nothing retraceable or to scale. But he excelled at reproducing his findings in dramatic photo essays that appeared in a number of local and state newspapers and national magazines. With these Limbert exposed a national audience to Craters of the Moon. His most famous piece appeared in the March 1924 edition of the National Geographic. Originally submitted in 1921, the essay seemed too fantastic and was delayed going to press until Limbert's findings could be verified. From an exploration standpoint, the essay represented a composite of several of Limbert's trips, making it difficult to unravel any order of events. Yet it was also timely, for it helped lead to the establishment of the national monument a few months later. (Limbert also aided the cause by presenting a photo album of the monument to President Calvin Coolidge.)[51]

The establishment of the monument raised the issue of what it should be named. Explorers, such as Limbert and his contemporaries, referred to the Craters country by various names--Cinder Buttes, the "craters," Martin Lavabeds--but most often they called it the Valley of the Moon. Craters of the Moon was chosen in a survey conducted by the Arco Chamber of Commerce in 1922 in order to avoid confusion with an area by that same name in California, and to adopt "something more appropriate and original." The editors of National Geographic followed suit by changing the title of Limbert's 1924 essay to read "Craters of the Moon" rather than "Valley of the Moon." The name stuck. The Park Service decided on the name officially when the monument was established. Although experts from the Smithsonian objected to the new name, Harold Stearns assured the Park Service that the name was appropriate for the volcanic country because its predominant features were craters and resembled those on the moon viewed through a telescope.[52]

From an exploration standpoint, the name still created a sense of mystery that drew people to explore the monument. Stories, for example, continued to surface about

---

[51] Robert W. Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon' in Idaho," Literary Digest 81 (April 12, 1924): 41-44; Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" National Geographic; Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert,'" 7. For a sense of the criticism Limbert faced, see Gilbert Grosvenor to Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, March 8, 1924, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, box 2, file 4, Boise State University.

[52] "Limbert to Talk about Craters," Arco Advertiser, March 17, 1922; Harold T. Stearns, Memorandum Regarding Proposed Name of Proposed "Craters of the Moon National Monument, Butte County, Idaho," in Director of U.S. Geological Survey to A.B. Cammerer, Acting Director, National Park Service, February 2, 1924, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA. In a memorandum to Director Stephen T. Mather, A.B. Cammerer on February 7, 1924, wrote that he favored the name "Craters of the Moon" because it was descriptive and had "good publicity value." See above citation.

the supposed Lost Valley that lay just beyond the boundaries of the recently created monument. There, in the mysterious recess of the volcanic plain, Indian trails and artifacts, cool pools of water in deep crevices, grizzly bears and other wildlife, and an open park thick with tall rye grass and a small lake at its center awaited the intrepid explorer.[53]

And so it was the Lost Valley that drew Robert Limbert back to the region. He led the last of his popular explorations in the early summer of 1926, guiding a fifteen-member party of Washington State mountaineers in search of the valley. The group, composed of men and women from the Seattle Mountaineers and the Mount Stuart Alpine Club, was handpicked from at least one hundred applicants and included a doctor, geologists, writers, as well as alpinists. As if heading into the last frontier, the adventurists outfitted themselves with scientific equipment to explore caves and other features, carried still and motion picture cameras to capture the images of this wild land, and carted along a radio and carrier pigeons to stay in contact with the "outside world."[54] The two-week expedition also planned to find and map uncharted areas of the new monument and a possible road down the Great Rift.

Driving and then packing into the southern reaches of the monument, the group then set out on foot over rough lava and eventually discovered what they believed to be the Lost Valley putting the legend, it seemed, to rest. Limbert's descriptions of its location, however, were nearly as vague as the legend. He stated that it lay southeast of Big Cinder Butte and southwest of Big Southern Butte, and just a "few miles southwest of a low mountain in the desert." It was a mile and a half wide, part of a fissure that ran north to south through the country for a great distance, most likely a section of the Great Rift. The landform exhibited colorful cliff walls, an obsidian quarry and Indian weapons, caves Indians had used for shelter, and a fine supply of fresh water. In addition to the Lost Valley, the expedition discovered, according to its leader, numerous other volcanic phenomena, some of which were new bomb fields, waterholes, fissures, ice caves and ice stalagmites, tree molds, a natural bridge, about 250 spatter cones, and another Blue Dragon flow. What they discovered in the southern end equaled, and perhaps surpassed, the scenic beauties in the northern end, Limbert and party members said. Ultimately Limbert hoped that these new discoveries, contained in some two-

---

[53] Jo G. Martin to E.A. Davidson, June 27, 1927, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 582, file 207, NA.

[54] "Scientific Party Will Explore Cave Regions," Shoshone Journal, May 14, 1926; "Club Will Send Expedition into Craters of Moon," untitled clipping, ca. May 1926, Robert W. Limbert Papers, box 4, file 1.

hundred to three-hundred square miles of lava district, would be added to the existing national monument.[55]

Where Limbert's explorations publicized the spectacular lava district to a wide audience, the explorations of Harold T. Stearns validated the area's geological significance. Stearns, a geologist with the United States Geological Survey, conducted several geological surveys of the Craters region during the same period as Limbert's adventures. But it was by accident more than plan that the Survey returned to the area twenty years after Russell's study. In a sense, it was a fortunate accident for Stearns who became an authority on the region.

In May 1921 Oscar E. Meinzer, head of the Survey's Ground Water Division, visited Russell's Cinder Buttes during his reconnaissance of the Snake River Plain and "discovered" the Great Rift. Excited about what he found but unable to complete his own investigation, Meinzer advised Stearns to visit these "fresh volcanics" soon. Then working as a mineral examiner for the General Land Office in Idaho, Stearns followed Meinzer's advice and made a quick inspection that summer and just as quickly grasped the area's geological uniqueness. "Up to the time of the discovery of the Great Rift, he later wrote, "volcanic phenomena that accompany a fissure eruption were not known to exist in this country." Prepared for a more detailed study of the formations, Stearns returned in August 1923. With the geologist was Fred E. Wright, of the Carnegie Institution, who "had seen similar fissures in Iceland" and "recognized [the Great Rift] immediately as a true fissure eruption."[56]

In January 1924, the National Park Service, responding to proposals for creating a

---

[55] "Crater Expedition Announces Finds," untitled, undated clipping, ca. August 1926, box 4, file 1, Robert W. Limbert Papers; "New Attractions Told by Limbert," Arco Advertiser, November 12, 1926. What Limbert and his party claimed to have found remains open to speculation. Does such a place exist in the lava fields of Craters of the Moon? Did Limbert really find it? Is it myth or reality? We may never know for sure. We do know that there was an interest in a place in the volcanic country known as the Lost Valley. And this much seems for certain: Limbert did find something. Most likely, according to contemporary investigations, he was describing the area near Blacktail Butte, where there are small volcanic vents, isolated water holes, pockets of limber pines or junipers, rock rings and accompanying Indian artifacts. These more recent investigations suggest that Limbert did not find a place where there is a large valley, a running stream, expanse of forest, and a large number of game animals. These descriptions were more the stuff of legend than fact, exaggerations meant to stimulate interest in Craters of the Moon.

[56] Harold T. Stearns, Memoirs of a Geologist, 3, 40; Harold T. Stearns, "Craters of the Moon National Monument," The Geographical Review 14 (July 1924): 362-363, 366.

national monument in this lava district, heard of Stearns's work and requested that he write a report "describing the area, delineating the boundaries, and stating the reasons for its preservation as a national monument."[57] Based on his limited experience with the Craters country, Stearns recommended setting aside an area of thirty-nine square miles for he believed that it would

> preserve for the people of the United States the most recent example of a fissure eruption in this country. It does not duplicate the features of any of the national monuments or parks containing volcanic phenomena. In the existing national monuments there occur only those features that accompany a single volcano.

In addition, a monument would ensure government protection of the area from vandalism, commercial exploitation, and ensure public access and attention to a volcanic area of "curious and educational" interest.[58]

In support of Stearns's recommendation, Meinzer suggested what made the "Craters of the Moon" so special.

> I was greatly impressed with the weirdness of the landscape, the freshness of the lava, the abundance, variety, and spectacular character of the volcanic features, and the great rift along which the volcanic features are largely arranged. I think there is nothing like it in the United States outside of the Island of Hawaii.[59]

Seconding Meinzer, Wright emphasized the educational importance of the proposed monument for studying in a "nutshell" the "problems of volcanism." He also stated that the area would appeal to the untrained visitor.

> [To those] seeking the curious and unusual in nature there is much to attract. The impression made by desolate, forbidding lava fields studded with volcanic cones, great earth cracks, twisted and contorted shapes of lava, volcanic bombs, lava cones and other evidences of earth shaping forces at work is profound and

---

[57] Arno B. Cammerer to Philip S. Smith, January 8, 1924, RG 79, CCF, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA.

[58] Harold T. Stearns, "The Proposed Craters of the Moon National Monument, Butte County, Idaho," January 15, 1924, RG 79, entry 7, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA, 18-19.

[59] O.E. Meinzer to Director, National Park Service, January 17, 1924, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA.

not easily forgotten. I know of no such place in this country where so much can be seen so easily and in so short a time.[60]

Stearns and his fellow geologists thus echoed Russell's earlier observations. They favored the proposed monument because in a relatively small area it contained a collection of so many features associated with a fissure eruption; the features were located in close proximity to each other and to the Idaho Central Highway, providing visitors with easy access. The area might also provide a clue to the more complex story of the Columbia Plateau and the Snake River Plain. The geologists were equally interested in the recency of the lava, for one sensed that an eruption had just been missed. Stearns estimated that the most recent flows were possibly several hundred years old, noting some evidence that neighboring Shoshone or Bannock Indians may have witnessed fissure vents steaming in the aftermath of the last eruption early in the eighteenth century. Geologists were not immune to the landscape's beauty either. "Black and barren as it is," Stearns wrote, "the lava surface yet has a weird and scenic charm."[61]

Stearns' report, combined with the work of Robert Limbert and monument supporters, proved instrumental in the Park Service's proposal to establish Craters of the Moon National Monument, which President Calvin Coolidge signed into existence on May 2, 1924.[62] The thirtieth national monument, Craters of the Moon, however, still lacked an adequate geological survey. Up to this point, Stearns's work had been of a preliminary nature. He confined his 1923 survey, it seems, to the northern section of the monument and centered his attention on the Rift itself. Moreover, the monument was still the great unknown, a blank space on the map, since the General Land Office had never surveyed the region. Stearns had never actually traversed the monument's boundary in the field, yet he believed that he had included all the features "worthy of preservation" in a small, manageable area and had excluded all commercially valuable

---

[60] Fred E. Wright to Director, National Park Service, January 18, 1924, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA.

[61] Stearns, "Craters of the Moon National Monument," 367, for quotation; Wright to Director, January 18, 1924, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, NA; Harold T. Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, 35-39.

[62] David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 18-32.

lands.[63]

The Park Service and General Land Office had begun plans for conducting a boundary survey of the proposed monument in 1923, but the project was delayed until 1925. That year, Max J. Gleissner of the U.S. Geological Survey worked in cooperation with the state of Idaho to produce a topographic map of the new monument. The survey was conducted between August and November and covered seventy-seven square miles. The crew used two triangulation points in the area, one of which was Hades Triangulation Station, a conical cairn about seven feet high, on Fissure Butte. As part of the survey process, Gleissner's team affixed bench marks to the lava formations to determine the direction and amount the terrain sloped to the south and southeast; a temporary benchmark, for example, was placed near Last Chance Cave.[64]

Gleissner created the first topographic map of the monument--complete with names and locations of geological features, probable Indian sites, trails, and wagon and automobile roads--that went on to form the base map for future generations.[65] As suggested by the amount of ground covered by the surveyor, Gleissner also discovered a variety of new resources, he believed, that warranted expanding the monument and undertaking a more thorough geological survey.

Primarily for these reasons Stearns returned to Craters of the Moon in 1926 to complete his earlier geological reconnaissance. He did so with the "express purpose of discovering new features." He also wanted to determine that all known features were within the monument, and in the process eliminate substandard land from the monument and redraw the boundaries to reflect these changes. At the same time, he was aware that the young monument needed better camping sites and a reliable source of water for its growing number of visitors. He factored these needs into his survey, too.[66]

Stearns' exploration lasted approximately one month, beginning in late September. For much of his survey he teamed with Samuel Paisley, custodian and local expert on the monument. The geologist spent the first part of his stay studying and mapping the

---

[63] Stearns, "The Proposed Craters of the Moon National Monument, Butte County, Idaho," 3, 18.

[64] Max J. Gleissner, "A Report on the Craters of the Moon National Monument, Butte County, Idaho," February 25, 1926, RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 582, file 207, NA, 3, 18; see Plate IA for photo and caption of triangulation station.

[65] Max J. Gleissner, "Craters of the Moon National Monument," (map), RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, box 582, file 0.32, NA.

[66] Harold T. Stearns, "Proposed Boundary Changes for the Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho," RG 79, entry 7, CCF, CRMO, file 0.35, part 1, NA, 1-2.

geology of the northern section, starting in the North Crater vicinity and moving south to Great Owl Cavern along the base of the Spatter Cones. Having descended twenty-five feet into the cave using a rope ladder, he explored all of the cave's chambers, and reported seeing interesting formations such as stalactites and stalagmites.[67]

Stearns continued to inspect the monument's network of caves, visiting Surprise, Dewdrop, Needles, Horseshoe, Tom Thumb, and Last Chance caves, all of which Paisley had discovered himself or in the company of others in the early 1920s. Together Stearns and Paisley found and named a huge tunnel Lava River Cave. Stearns was particularly impressed with Indian Tunnel, one of the large caves. He found chipped chert and scrapers scattered in the teepee circles (a common name for the rock rings) at its entrance. Other noteworthy aspects of the cave were its natural light and its two natural bridges.[68]

Stearns then turned his attention to the foothills north of the lava flows. He and Paisley hiked up Little Cottonwood Creek to its source, a series of springs at the head of the drainage. There were two mines on the creek and an abandoned sheep ranch at the canyon's mouth, but Stearns thought it would be entirely feasible to acquire some of the area to supply the monument with water and provide camp sites in the pleasant meadow flanked by hillsides of aspen and Douglas fir. While here he ascended Sunset Cone, discovering two "perfect little craters in the top big crater," and another crater on the east side. The cone afforded him a good view of the North Crater aa flow that poured across the highway as well.[69]

Viewing the expanse of lava country inspired Stearns to name some of its features left unnamed by Robert Limbert. One of these was Silent Cone, an ancient cone which belonged in the same epoch as Grassy and Sunset cones. It earned its name, Stearns wrote, "because it has [stood] here silently and witnessed so many eruptions." At times he was moved to describe the country even more eloquently. Atop Round Knoll on the northeastern edge of the monument, he wrote of the "marvelous view" to be had from here.

> At the foot of the knoll is the moat which is filled by a river of pahoehoe that flowed in the great trench left between the knoll and the aa lava. Stretching

---

[67] Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," 183-191.

[68] Stearns, 195-196.

[69] Ibid., 197-199.

> westward for several miles is a great expanse of pinnacles and scattered pines. Many of the pinnacles resemble human figures. Westward rises the cinder cones of the national monument and behind them the Velvet Hills known as the White Knob Mountains [Pioneer Mountains]. In the canyons [and] on their slopes are nested groves of quaking aspen first turned into rare yellows and goldens. A few of the peaks [are] capped with snow. To the south stretches glistening pahoehoe to the foot of Crescent [Butte] and some of the remnant cones farther south. Northward across another great field of pahoehoe rise the Big Lost Mountains with their dark belt of trees and the upper snow line and the lower desert line. Eastward across the lava waste are yellow grass covered lava domes that lie like so many sleeping camels at the foot of Big Butte...its sides furrowed with age. Farther east is East Butte just able to peep over the camels and to watch the Craters of the Moon.[70]

As he recorded volcanic resources and other phenomena for his geologic map and the monument's new boundaries, Stearns occasionally erected markers to locate particular features. Once coming across a number of exemplary vertical tree molds, for example, he noted that he "built monuments near all of these."[71]

After two weeks Stearns pushed his inspection farther down the rift, finding more craters, waterholes, bombs, and Indian artifacts. The highlight of these southern trips was Echo Crater, which he described as a "great depression caused by the combination of three craters." It was beautiful, he stated, for green lichens covered the red cliffs, and large "green trees grow in the bottom, and it is an ideal campground." It was here that Stearns, Paisley, and two other men established a base camp. They reached the crater by saddle horses and ferried their supplies in by wagon. Stearns reported that they had to build a primitive road into the site and were the first to drive a wagon into the crater, requiring three of them to brace it over difficult stretches.[72]

From here Stearns surveyed the southern extremes of the monument, visiting Little Prairie Flow and its namesake waterhole, where Era Martin had constructed a water trough for his livestock a few years earlier. Stearns also inspected Moss Cave, Bearsden Waterhole, Sheep Trail Butte, Split Butte (named for its appearance and location on an old fissure), Fissure Butte, Two Point Butte, Amphitheater Cave,

---

[70] Ibid., 201, 216-217.

[71] Ibid., 207-208.

[72] Ibid., 219, 223.

Vermillion Chasm, Natural Bridge and Bridge of the Moon--again finding more new sections of lava bombs, craters, spatter cones, and Indian trails and artifacts.

Throughout his exploration, the geologist also kept note of the wildlife he encountered. Whether on Sunset Cone or out in the expanse of lava terrain, he either saw or saw sign of numerous birds, such as Clark's nutcracker, hawks, and eagles; red fox, coyote, and bear; porcupine, chipmunk, squirrels, and pack rats; rabbits and deer. Near Indian Tunnel he found an antelope skull, and in Buffalo Caves he came across a buffalo horn. A memorable encounter occurred in Great Owl Cavern where he saw two large great horned owls; one perched on a ledge, he wrote, and "looked like a great pussy cat glaring into the light out of a dark hole."[73]

In addition to inventorying the geologic and wildlife resources of the monument, Stearns contemplated the age of the fresh-looking lava formations. It was a subject that fascinated many, and several theories existed. One suggested analyzing the amount of soil and vegetation on the lava flows; another suggested estimating the age of trees charred from the heat of lava flows, and still another suggested estimating the age of charcoal in tree molds. He dismissed all of these based on his field experience. A popular account, for example, was Limbert's observation that burned sage on Big Cinder Butte resulted from a recent eruption. Stearns soon proved this wrong, however, when Era Martin informed him that he set brushfires in the area, including on the butte, to increase forage for his livestock. A more reliable method relied on the size and age trees. Thus toward the end of his study, Stearns selected an "age tree," a large limber pine about thirty-five inches in diameter, standing at the edge of Big Crater lava flow. He sawed it down, counted its rings, and estimated that the most recent eruptions could have occurred within the last several hundred years.[74]

In March 1927, he submitted his recommendations for boundary adjustments to the Park Service, which enlarged the monument by about thirty-five square miles. Stearns believed that the new boundaries gave the monument "a more regular and geometric shape," hence making it "much more easily defined and administered." More significantly, the enlargement embraced many of the features Stearns and others had explored, some of which were Amphitheater Cave, the Bridge of Tears, a large section of Vermillion Chasm, and all of the Blue Dragon Lava Flows. Expanded the following

---

[73] Ibid., 183-191.

[74] Stearns, "Field Notes," 235-238. Stearns discussed aging methods elsewhere; see, Stearns, "Geology of Craters of the Moon," 19-22; Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, 33-39.

year, the monument's new boundaries encompassed a larger section of the Great Rift and its representative features as far south as Two Point Butte.[75]

Stearns also used the raw material from his 1926 survey to publish a number of important articles, papers, and popular guides about the geology of Craters of the Moon. In them he revealed his attempts to better understand the area by visiting or studying other volcanic areas in the world--Iceland, Italy, and Hawaii. He concluded that the Great Rift produced numerous eruptions over several epochs as basaltic lavas spewed from its fissures and amassed cinder cones, craters, spatter cones, and other volcanic formations for about fifty miles in length. Within the approximately eighty square miles he had surveyed, Stearns counted nearly ninety volcanic vents and forty lava flows. All of these compared well to those volcanic features and forms in the known lava fields, volcanoes, and fissure eruptions around the world. And some even excelled the finest examples in other volcanic fields; the spatter cone chain, he believed, was one of the most perfect in the world. Craters of the Moon was not only a unique place to study and marvel over, but it was also a place that held the key to the origins of the Snake River Plain and the Columbia Plateau.[76]

Stearns stood out among those who conducted research at Craters of the Moon, but he was also part of a larger trend which saw interested students of science and geologists visiting and studying the monument and surrounding region during the 1920s and 1930s. One important figure was Edward F. Rhodenbaugh. A geology professor from Idaho State College, Rhodenbaugh led class field trips to the Craters beginning in 1923, and he continued to visit the monument on his own throughout the decade, hiking, camping, and studying the various features he encountered and the specimens he collected. Generally positive about the monument and a supporter of its establishment, Rhodenbaugh found it a satisfying place to study, along with the other "bare and open spaces" of his own country. And while he never rivaled Stearns or made significant "discoveries," he frequently contributed articles on the monument and other areas of

---

[75] Stearns, "Proposed Boundary Changes for the Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, 1-3, quotation from 2.

[76] Stearns, "Geology of Craters of the Moon," 2, 31-36; Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, 25.

southern Idaho to the state's leading papers.[77]

In 1935, G. Frederick Shepherd undertook what was perhaps the last exploratory trip of the monument. A seasonal ranger and geology graduate student from the University of Chicago, Shepherd investigated the monument's volcanic terrain throughout the summer season, and when the season ended, he traversed the Great Rift from the monument to Minidoka. On October 6 he cached supplies at two base camps on the Rift, returned to monument headquarters, and set out two days later. He followed the general route taken by Robert Limbert years earlier. Traveling by foot, he spent three days mapping the eruptions associated with Coyote Butte. When he finished mapping, he left his base camp at Sheep Trail Butte and exited the monument, entering unexplored country to the southeast, country even Limbert had not seen. He explored the vicinity of Lone Butte, and though making good time, he ran short of water, and headed east, taking the shortest and easiest route out of the lava flows. Crossing rough lava flows and walking about sixty-five miles of dirt roads without finding water, he finally reached Minidoka in the early morning hours of October 13. A few days later he retraced his route by airplane from Pocatello, photographing the northern end of the monument and Big Southern Butte, but bad weather prevented taking aerial photographs of the middle and southern sections of the monument.[78]

Similar to Limbert, Shepherd thought that the formations and scenic qualities of the monument's southern section equaled and perhaps surpassed those of the northern section. Although he planned to write a thesis on his discoveries of the volcanic formations along the Rift in the monument and the Snake River Plain, he only produced two small articles on the subject. And though the Park Service attempted to retrieve copies of Shepherd's maps and photos, it never seems to have happened. Like Limbert, the success of Shepherd's exploration lay in advertising the significance of the southern reaches of the monument and the Great Rift.[79]

---

[77] C.A. Bottolfsen to Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, May 14, 1923, box 2, file 4; E.F. Rhodenbaugh to Francis A. Thomson, May 9, 1927, box 2, file 5; E.F. Rhodenbaugh to J. Harlan Bretz, April 6, 1929, box 2, file 5; see also "Field Trip Logs," Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers.

[78] "New Scenic Spot Awaits Tourists," Boise Capital News, October 30, 1935.

[79] See correspondence from National Park Service officials to G.F. Shepherd in RG 79, entry 7, box 2125, National Monuments file, part 2, NA. Shepherd's published briefs are: G. Frederick Shepherd, "Volcanic Phenomena in the Craters of the Moon, Idaho, Transactions of the Illinois State Academy of Science 29 (December 1936): 190-191; "Rifting and Volcanic Activity in the Craters of the Moon, Idaho, [abstract], Geological Society of America, Proceedings 48 (June 1936): 105-106.

The General Land Office surveys during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked explorations of a different sort; they attempted to make the Craters of the Moon landscape conform to township and range. Traditionally, surveys opened up the public domain to settlement. The more difficult and worthless terrain was typically left unsurveyed until necessary or, in cases of extreme conditions, never surveyed at all. The Craters country was one of these cases, left unsurveyed because it was believed to be a valueless, lava barrier until its establishment as a national monument and its removal from the public domain.

Portions of the monument were surveyed prior to its establishment and subsequent expansion into the foothills of the Pioneer Mountains in the late 1920s. Likely prompted by new settlement and mining discoveries in the Lava Creek area, the General Land Office completed the first of two cadastral surveys here in late August and early September 1883. Headed by Allen M. Thompson, the survey only included the eastern half of T. 2 N., R. 24 E. because the western half was "mountainous and broken." The surveyed district contained some rich bottomlands in the vicinity of Lava and Champagne creeks, and potentially rich outcroppings for gold and silver mining, as well as the active operations of the Golden Chariot Mine.

Most of the land surveyed within the monument contained broken basalt, poor soil and grass, and little water. One exception was the area drained by Little Cottonwood Creek. Located roughly in sections 22, 26, and 27, it formed a gently rolling valley carpeted with native grasses, bisected by the Blackfoot and Wood River Stage Road (formerly Goodale's Cutoff, the emigrant trail). As they paced off section lines, surveyors marked their grid by erecting stone cairns at quarter and corner section lines. In 1914, the western half of the mountainous township was surveyed, including the headwaters of Little Cottonwood Creek and surrounding hills. Here, too, surveyors raised mounds of stone as section markers, but more often they set in the ground three-foot-long iron posts with brass caps stamped with section coordinates.[80]

The most extensive and formidable survey was undertaken in 1929 covering most of the monument's fifty thousand acres of rolling lava plain. Survey teams led by H.G. Bardsley and Frank D. Maxwell ventured into land ominously characterized on maps as solid lava fields. Between August and October, surveyors charted T. 1 N., and T. 2 N., and T. 1 S., R. 25 E.; T. 1 N., R. 24 E. As with other surveys, they marked quarter

[80] Allen M. Thompson, "Field Notes of the Survey of the Subdivision Lines of Township 2 North, Range 24 East," vol. 52, Bureau of Land Management, Boise, Idaho; Guy H Richardson, "Field Notes of the Survey of Subdivision of Part of Township 2 North, Range 24 East," vol. 305, Bureau of Land Management, Boise, Idaho.

section and section points with iron posts or rock mounds. Because they were creating a grid, the surveyors experienced the landscape wherever it intersected a survey line. In the shorthand of their survey notes, Bardsley and Maxwell remarked that the country was not entirely impenetrable lava, but alternately cinder fields, craggy lava, and hard lava flows, with scattered patches of sage, limber pine, and the occasional waterhole. The country possessed neither agricultural potential nor any visible mineral wealth, and there were no settlers in the entire region. The only sign of human activity was the old wagon road that followed the rift to Little Prairie Waterhole, this area also being one of the few that supported enough grass for grazing in the spring and fall. In all of this undulating lava terrain, cinder cones and craters added relief to an otherwise monotonous plain, and provided a means to find bearings, further assisted in one instance by the survey monument on Fissure Butte, and when that was unavailable, they used trees.[81]

In the spring of 1937 the final survey was completed, embracing what would become the southeast corner after the Carey Kipuka addition nearly thirty years later. What had once been undefined, ostensibly worthless land was now "defined"--gridded by section lines on a map and studded with section-marking posts.

Epilogue: Modern Research

Exploration of the monument was conducted in large part by geologists in the first three decades of the century. Their interests ranged beyond reconnaissance to research itself. That is, they sought to understand how the monument's physical environment was formed. Pioneering geologists like Israel C. Russell and Harold T. Stearns, for example, asked many of the same questions posed by their more recent counterparts. Primarily, all geologists, past and present, have sought to understand the age of the Craters of the Moon lava flows and the history of the monument's eruptions. In this respect, geological research shows a continuity with the monument's historical past. Between the 1960s and 1980s, some of the country's most respected geologists have studied the monument. By using more sophisticated theories and technology than available to their predecessors, contemporary geologists have built on the scaffolding erected by these earlier geologists

[81] H.G. Bardsley and Frank D. Maxwell, "Field Notes of the Survey of the Subdivision of T. 1 N., T. 2 N., and T 1 S., R. 25 E.; T. 1 N., R. 24 E.," vol 351, Bureau of Land Management, Boise, Idaho.

and, in doing so, suggest more accurate conclusions.[82]

Much of this research, covering a ten-year period and conducted primarily by the Geological Survey, was summarized in a 1982 report authored by Mel A. Kuntz and others. That report, "The Great Rift and the Craters of the Moon Lava Field," analyzed existing as well as new data collected in the monument. Radiocarbon dating, for example, enabled geologists to determine the relative age of the lava, and paleomagnetic measurements on the lava flows and photogeologic maps as well as standard geologic maps allowed them to decipher the monument's volcanic history. The study suggested that at least eight eruptive periods produced the lava flows of the Craters of the Moon Lava Field. The eruptive periods began about fifteen thousand years ago and ended about two thousand years, lasting not more than several hundred years at intervals of about one thousand years. The report, though followed by more specific and detailed studies, helped answer some of the questions posed by the first geologists, questions that puzzled the untrained mind of visitors as well. Indeed, by the 1980s, Craters of the Moon had been studied in "more detail than any other lava field in the Snake River Plain."[83]

Summary of Context Theme

Exploration played an important part in understanding the Snake River Plain for the purposes of national expansion, settlement, and resource development in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beginning in the 1830s and lasting through the 1870s, federally sponsored or federally-connected explorations investigated the plain as part of this multifaceted mission and as part of larger investigations of the West. Army officers, naturalists, artists, and geologists formed the ranks of these expeditions. Whether reconnoitering the new territory, plotting overland trail and railroad routes, or cataloguing the West's natural and cultural resources, the surveys created a sweeping view of the region. Most of these explorers steered clear of the forbidding Craters country. Though observers, some trained in geology, recognized the geological

---

[82] For a more detailed and comprehensive look at the research conducted at the monument, see Jennifer A. Blakesley and R. Gerald Wright, A Review of Scientific Research at Craters of the Moon National Monument (Moscow: University of Idaho, College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences, 1988), 3-11.

[83] Mel A. Kuntz, et al., "The Great Rift and the Evolution of the Craters of the Moon Lava Field, Idaho," in Bill Bonnichsen and R.M. Breckenridge, eds., Cenozoic Geology of Idaho (Moscow: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, Bulletin 26, 1982), 423-437, quotation from 425.

significance and unique beauty of the Craters district in the late nineteenth century, it was the work of geologists in the early twentieth century that revealed the area's importance. Surveys by Israel C. Russell and Harold T. Stearns between 1901 and the late 1920s were the most notable. But others continued to study new tracts of this country into the 1930s.

Coinciding with these surveys was a growing awareness of the Craters region by the neighboring populace. Clouded in mystery, the lava territory drew ranchers, settlers, and local outdoors people to investigate the region for themselves. Robert W. Limbert epitomized their activities. Throughout the 1920s, his explorations, and his writings, photographs, and publicity of those explorations brought the region to the attention of the state and nation, all of which culminated in the establishment of Craters of the Moon National Monument.

The General Land Office surveys of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also made the country more identifiable; the grid of township and range brought the Craters country out of its mysterious beginnings. It had been mapped. But it was not fully understood from a geological perspective, and between the 1960s and the 1980s geologists continued to study the monument to better understand the age of its lava flows (and myriad formations) and the history of its eruptions.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Structures and Resources Related to Explorations and Surveys

Description:

Craters of the Moon's explorers and surveyors left little in the way of physical structures that can be easily grouped and identified as a typical property type. Properties or features associated with their activities include cairns, wooden ladders, campsites, wagon roads, trails, and survey markers.

Explorers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries traveled through the monument, named geological features, and mapped their locations. They also mapped the routes they traveled, to some extent, and documented their trips in word and picture. They further documented their passage by erecting stone markers, the existence of which has never been well documented. Examples of these would be the rock cairn Powell and Ferris erected at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole and the bone they inscribed their names on in 1885 in Buffalo Cave. (A photograph of the cairn exists, and the bone seems to be in the monument's museum collection. Apparently Stearns found it and Powell--or Ferris--retraced the inscription.) Other examples not easily confirmed would be the

cairns explorers like Era Martin and Robert Limbert and geologists like Harold Stearns built to identify the way to specific features or as reference points for finding their way out of a maze of lava flows. Limited historical documentation keeps us from knowing the physical character of these cairns. We can only surmise that they were conical in shape and several feet high to be visible above the relatively flat terrain. There is more historical evidence, however, to document the use of wooden ladders by geologists to descend into lava tunnels and other caverns. Israel Russell, for example, was known to have used a wooden ladder during his survey of the monument at the turn of the century.

For both explorers and geologists like Limbert and Stearns, campsites were important. The most important, or most mentioned, of these was Echo Crater. Reached by a primitive wagon road or trail, the crater offered good shelter, a pleasant setting, and adequate water supply. The campsite was an important staging area for investigations of the southern reaches of the monument. Other campsites were mentioned less but required similar natural features such as water and shelter to be attractive. Two places were Devil's Orchard and Registration Waterhole. As in the case of Echo Crater, a short wagon road or rough trail was sometimes built to reach a campsite. The Echo Crater road was permanent enough to appear on General Land Office survey maps from 1929.

Surveyors, though not the high-profile characters that explorers and geologists were, left some of the most permanent physical structures: survey markers. Most of these were three-foot iron posts with brass caps stamped with section coordinates and date of survey. Where iron posts could not be pounded into the hard lava, rock mounds of approximately two to three feet were built. All of these grid the monument's vast lava territory; every section has four quarter section markers and four section markers (at each corner). Topographical surveyors also erected similar markers. Max Gleissner's team, which conducted the first topographical survey of the monument, placed bench marks on lava formations, although the only one noted in Gleissner's report was a temporary marker near Last Chance Cave. Another feature associated with this survey was the Hades Triangulation Station, a conical-shaped cairn of rocks stacked about seven feet high, located on Fissure Butte. Gleissner's team used it for triangulation. It is uncertain who built it or if it is intact today, but Fissure Butte is inside the monument and a photo of the cairn was included in Gleissner's report.

Significance:

These properities are significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with explorations and scientific surveys, a theme important in the monument's history as well as in the broader patterns of American history. Some properties may also be significant under Criterion B for their association with important figures in the history of southern Idaho.

Registration Requirements:

At Craters of the Moon, properties eligible under this category may qualify for listing in the National Register if they date between 1879 and 1937. Dates, however, may vary with new information. Properties must be historically significant. They must be associated with exploration or surveys of the monument, or those important individuals involved in these activities. These properties must also retain a significant measure of integrity for registration. A historically significant property may sustain some alteration and remain eligible as long as it retains its historic character.

No properties have been inventoried. Therefore, no requirements for integrity have been listed beyond the seven aspects of integrity recognized by the National Register used for evaluating a property's historic character. These are location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

Recommendations:

The only known and potentially eligible properties are the survey markers and a wooden ladder recently discovered in one of the monument's spatter cones. A representative example of survey markers could be the marker located at the first headquarters site on the saddle between Paisley and North Crater cones. Fissure Butte should be investigated to see if a rock triangulation station is located on its summit. The wooden ladder should be formally evaluated for its association with monument exploration.

OVERLAND TRAVEL



CHAPTER 5

Chapter Five

Overland Travel in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1852-1904

Overview of Overland Travel on the Snake River Plain

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, a mass migration transformed the American West, forever changing a region composed mostly of Indians and Hispanics living in small villages and tribal communities. Neither uniform nor steady, migration brought diverse groups of people to the West, such as Anglo Americans, European immigrants, black Americans, Mexican immigrants, and Chinese, all of whom formed migration streams flowing north, east and west. For all of this diversity, however, Anglo Americans dominated western migration, a fact which only slightly simplifies a complex process, especially when it comes to generalizing about who migrants were, why they migrated, and where they migrated.[1]

Broadly speaking, most settlers were native-born, white farmers from middle-class backgrounds. They could not only afford to migrate and establish new farms, but they also had a family history of migrating. Not all migrants were farmers, a good many headed west during the California Gold Rush of 1849 and subsequent mineral rushes, which washed over sections of the Far West like flash floods. These migrants wanted to accumulate property--in the form of precious metals--rather than create a new home. Similarly, migration patterns tended to correlate with larger cycles of the American economy. Periods of rapid growth led to large increases in western settlement and the expansion of farming, while periods of depression led to declines in migration and the number of new farms. Still other Americans, such as the Mormons, migrated for reasons of religious freedom. A final and constant migration pattern or trait, one which applied to all emigrant groups, was mobility. Americans of all backgrounds were a restless lot, frequently on the move. These characteristics in turn influenced where people migrated, for they did not spread out evenly across the trans-Missouri West. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, emigrants in search of farms flowed in streams from east to west flooding the agricultural lands bordering the Pacific Coast in Oregon and California and near the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Gold Rush migrants, on the other hand, headed to the mountains of California, and over the next several decades spread out through the mountains of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and South Dakota. Around the 1880s, land-hungry emigrants began inundating the Great Plains, taking up farms for the first time in what had once been considered the "Great American Desert." But even with this change of course, emigrants left vast portions of the Great Basin, an

---

[1] Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 183.

inhospitable desert, unsettled. Instead, with the advent of irrigation projects around the turn of the century, they favored the inland empire north of the Great Basin--eastern Oregon and Washington and southern Idaho.[2]

One of the most significant chapters in western migration was the overland migration to Oregon and California, the longest journey of its kind ventured by American settlers. The Oregon Trail (with its various alternates and cutoffs to California) extended for some four hundred miles across southern Idaho, and served as the primary route for emigrants traveling through this region. The trail took migrants along the rim of the Snake River and across the Snake River Plain, one of the most difficult stretches of the route. The route itself had been explored and traveled by fur traders, explorers, and missionaries beginning around 1810, preparing the way for the first Midwestern farmers and settlers heading west in 1840. New possibilities awaited them at their destinations in the fertile valleys of Oregon or the mineral-rich mountains of California. Thus, they avoided lingering for long on the plain, finding little enticement in the heat, sage and sand to change their plans.[3]

Emigration started slowly. The long route from Missouri offered few amenities at first. Among the earliest and most important to appear on the Snake River Plain were the fur trade posts of Fort Hall and Fort Boise. Built between 1834 and 1836, they were converted into emigrant supply centers once the beaver trade declined. Trail improvements encouraged travel as well. By 1843, travelers were able to drive wagons west of Fort Hall, and by 1860 more than 53,000 people had crossed the trail to Oregon and more than 200,000 to California. During the 1860s, the flow of emigrants slowed for a short time, then surged between 1862 and 1866, for a total of some 125,000 emigrants--constituting the longest unbroken migration wave over the Oregon-California Trail. With the end of the Civil War and the arrival of the transcontinental railroad on the plains, overland travel steadily declined.[4]

---

[2] Richard White, It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own", 183-192. See also, John D. Unruh, Jr., The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860 (1979; reprint, Urbana: Univeristy of Illinois Press, 1982).

[3] John D. Unruh, Jr., The Plains Across; Carlos A. Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 39-43.

[4] Unruh, Jr., The Plains Across, 85; Daniel J. Hutchison and Larry R. Jones, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, Adventures in the Past--Idaho Cultural Resource Series, Number 1 (Boise: Bureau of Land Management and Idaho State Historical Society, 1993), 1-3; Merrill J. Mattes, Platte River Road Narratives (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 4-5.

During these later waves, emigrants rushed to find gold in western Montana and southern Idaho. The interest in Idaho mines was coupled with a fear of Indian conflicts, which led to the use of alternate routes across the Snake River Plain, an important one being Goodale's Cutoff. Although most overlanders viewed the remote lava landscape of the plain as a sterile and hostile environment, some settled in the new mining communities, such as the Boise Basin, in the 1860s. Over the next two decades, the emigrant road and its branches in southern Idaho were used for stock driving, freight and stage lines to mines and remote communities, as well as emigrant travel. By 1880, rail service replaced most of these routes, yet some still provided access to outlying mining and farming areas until the turn of the century.[5]

Overland Travel near Craters of the Moon, 1852-1904

Emigrant travelers passed within the lava landscape of what is today Craters of the Moon National Monument in the latter half of the nineteenth century over a popular branch of the Oregon Trail known as Goodale's Cutoff. The cutoff departed the Oregon Trail at Fort Hall, turned north and crossed the Snake River Plain past Big Southern Butte to Big Lost River, and then turned west for Camas Prairie, skirting the flanks of the Pioneer Mountains and the northern edge of the lava flows within Craters of the Moon. From Camas Prairie, the cutoff approached the Boise Basin from the north and rejoined the Oregon Trail at Ditto Creek. It represented a well established travel route. Northern Shoshone and other tribal groups crossed above the lava beds on their seasonal migration to Camas Prairie. Fur traders later exploited the route; Donald McKenzie explored the section across Camas Prairie for the North West Company in 1820, and the Hudson's Bay Company's Snake brigades blazed the trail across the basalt desert between the Big Lost and the Snake rivers in the 1820s and 1830s. Fur traders, mountain men, and explorers crossed this general route as they traveled through the region. Some emigrants used the cutoff in the early 1850s, but it saw its heaviest travel in the 1860s, when gold discoveries and Indian conflicts spurred migrants to seek alternate routes from the main Oregon Trail. During the latter part of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth centuries, Goodale's Cutoff functioned as a livestock trail, served freight and stage lines to the mines and farming communities in the Lost River and Wood River regions, and continued to be used as an emigrant route

[5] Irving R. Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff: A Major Trail Segment During and After the Fourth Migration Wave," Overland Journal 8 (1990): 9; Daniel J. Hutchison and Larry R. Jones, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, 4.

in the remote recesses of the upper Snake River Plain.[6]

As early as 1852, emigrant wagons crossed the eastern section of Goodale's Cutoff, traversing the region between Fort Hall and Camas Prairie. A manuscript map prepared in the Willamette Valley, May 4, 1853, identified this segment of Goodale's route as a "new road traveled by wagon first July 20th, 1852." Though the route was scarcely used, a decade later emigrants crossing the route found a trunk abandoned by travelers in 1853 and noticed names carved on rocks and trees in 1854.[7]

Emigrants who traveled the route were probably responding to the salesmanship of John J. Jeffrey. Jeffrey promoted this new cutoff between 1852 and 1854, hoping to profit from his ferry across the Snake near the mouth of the Blackfoot River. For a time the route even bore his name, but the venture failed. Most likely, the entrepreneur convinced few emigrants to travel this route because the cutoff passed through such an uninviting landscape. The volcanic desert offered emigrant parties limited amounts of water and grass and an abundance of sharp-edged lava. Typically, parties arrived on the Snake River Plain in July and August, the hottest and driest time of year, and having traveled almost thirteen hundred miles, emigrants were not easily persuaded to take the unfamiliar route.[8]

Those who chose this route commented about the difficulties of driving wagons and livestock through a desert of sage, sand, and lava beds. The volcanic country seemed to have few redeeming qualities. Emigrants found some solace in Big Southern and Twin buttes on the otherwise level plain, for they marked the route and possible locations of springs. But that was perhaps their sole source of comfort. As emigrants neared the Big Lost River, the landscape grew more volcanic and more austere. Reaching the river was usually a blessing since by this point some emigrants had traveled about forty miles without water. Yet as Harvey H. Jones noted in late July 1854, the experience was tempered by the fact that the country "has been all torn to pieces by

---

[6] "Goodale's Cutoff," Reference Series 51 (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, revised 1988); Irving R. Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff," 12-14.

[7] "Goodale's Cutoff," Reference Series 51; Nellie Slater, "Travels on the Plains in 1862," typescript, Idaho State Historical Society, Boise, 13. One trail scholar notes that a small emigrant company used the Camas Prairie Route (or eastern section) in 1852, and that in 1854 two small traveling companies made the same crossing. See Irving R. Merrill, ed., Bound for Idaho: The 1864 Trail Journal of Julius Merrill (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1988), 20.

[8] Fred W. Dykes, Jeffrey's Cutoff: Idaho's Forgotten Oregon Trail Route (Pocatello: Pocatello Copy Cat, 1989), 2, 4-5; Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows, 42.

volcanoes."[9] Turning west the trail grew dry and dusty once more, and for twenty-five miles led through a "very barren country" of sagebrush and volcanic landforms. For several days wagon parties traveled near the "vast sight of volcanic eruption." The distance between the lava beds and the base of the mountains narrowed before they camped at Champagne Creek, "a handsome valley," and proceeded to wind around the edge of the Craters of the Moon lava flows.[10]

Winfield Scott Ebey captured the experience in August 1854. As his party approached the lava fields, he described a territorial view, behind him lay the graceful curve of the Big Lost River, to the north the white-tipped Salmon River Mountains, to the west more mountains, and to the south "a wide plain" with the "Three Buttes" on its eastern fringe. On August 7 his group moved on from Champagne Creek, closed in on the base of the mountains and "at the same time came to and passed around the point of a vast field of lava," at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Creek. Here he encountered, as if by surprise, a "volcanic river which had been melted by some former eruption and cast out onto the plain some ten to fifteen feet deep, leaving a narrow strip of clear ground next to the mountain" where the road was located. Ebey's wagon train passed around the tongues of black lava within today's monument and camped a few miles west on Big Cottonwood Creek. As his company continued on, Ebey noted that "volcanic country" seemed infinite, his wagon party traveled for miles against the mountain range with "the same field of volcanic rock stretching away, in a dark rugged mass, as far as the eye can reach."[11]

The wagon parties of the early 1850s passed the Craters of the Moon country, having crossed one of the more difficult stretches of the Snake River Plain. Although the volcanic formations seem not to have offended or to have greatly impeded their travel, they spent as little time in the area as possible. Nor was their passage entirely easy or without risk, for while on their way to and through the lava fields, wagons broke down, and both draft animals and people died.

Without some incentive, it seems, few emigrants traveled the route after the mid-

---

[9] Harvey H. Jones, "Journal of Harvey H. Jones Written by him While Crossing the Country from Whig, Grant County, Wisconsin to Seattle, Washington State," Idaho State Historical Society, Boise. Quotation from 3.

[10] Winfield Scott Ebey, "A Journal of [a] Trip over the Plains," vol. 1, April to August, 1854, Winfield Scott Ebey Papers, University of Washington, Seattle, 230-231. Quotations from Harvey H. Jones, "Journal of Harvey H. Jones," 3-4.

[11] Winfield Scott Ebey, "A Journal of [a] Trip over the Plains," 234-237.

1850s. Far to the west of the Craters country, Granville O. Haller led an expedition across Camas Prairie to retaliate against Boise Indians for their participation in the Ward Massacre of 1854. Although Haller's force headed north to the upper Salmon, Nathan Olney, a special agent, continued traveling east over the cutoff leading a small detachment to Fort Hall to meet with the Indians there. Lightly traveled as this northerly route must have been until after 1860, G.K. Warren named the eastern section "Jeffers Road" on his 1857 great map of the West. And widely used for its time, Alonzo Leland's 1863 map of Idaho's mining country duplicated Warren's identification of Jeffers Road and labeled Goodale's route across Camas Prairie merely as the "New Emigrant Road."[12]

Impetus to travel over this northern route appeared in 1862. That year emigrants learned of the Salmon River gold rush and the Shoshone's mounting animosity toward emigrants along the Snake. Looking for a shorter, more direct, and safer route to the new mines, emigrants prevailed upon Tim Goodale to lead them over the route from Fort Hall. Goodale, an experienced trapper, trader, and guide of the Far West, knew the Snake country and nearly all of its Indian and fur trade trails of the mountain and valley country of the northern plain. In 1862 he guided an emigrant party over the Jeffers Road/Camas Prairie route. Grateful for his help, some emigrants, a number of whom became prominent Idaho residents, renamed the route for their guide, and the name Goodale's Cutoff stuck.[13]

Goodale's party departed Fort Hall on July 22, 1862 and traversed the plain north past Big Southern Butte to Big Lost River. Before setting out, Goodale had collected a large force to avoid troubles brewing with Northern Shoshone, angered over white settlers invading their homeland. The company, numbering 820 emigrants, 338 wagons, and about 1,400 head of livestock, cleared an unmistakable swath in the desert of ruts, dung, and discarded belongings. The party was so large in fact that it took "three hours," Oliver B. Slater recalled, "to get in camp or to get out."[14] As further insurance against

---

[12] "Goodale's Cutoff," Reference Series 51; Jones and Hutchison, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, 130. Note that these documents and the National Register nomination for Goodale's Cutoff reference an 1859 G.K Warren map. This may be a later edition than the one noted in William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West (1966; reprint, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 314.

[13] Irving Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff," 11; "Goodale's Cutoff," Reference Series 51; Jones and Hutchison, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, 130.

[14] Merrill, 11; Oliver B. Slater, "Reminiscences of O.B. Slater," Idaho State Historical Society, 4.

Indian conflict, Goodale most likely brought along Jennie, his Shoshone wife, as a sign of his peaceful intentions while leading emigrants through tribal lands.[15]

Well-armed, the wagon train reached the Big Lost River after several hot, dry days crossing sage, sand, and basalt. As with the parties of the 1850s, the river was a welcome sight as was the plentiful bunch grass for the livestock. When the party neared Arco, it turned west over a "dim and rocky" road winding near the foot of the mountains. On July 28, Goodale stopped for the day at Champagne Creek on the outskirts of Craters of the Moon. While there he gathered up more wagons as protection against the Northern Shoshone, enraged that he was heading through Camas Prairie, a traditional and important source of camas bulbs. Having increased to almost 1,100 emigrants, 795 men and 300 women and children, the wagon train then proceeded through the lava flows of today's monument, making it the largest company to have ever crossed any portion of the overland trail. Because of its size and Goodale's leadership, the company safely reached the Boise vicinity unscathed on August 9. The same could not be said, however, for a group of emigrants who fought with Indians at what became known as Massacre Rocks, on the main route of the Oregon Trail, that same day.[16]

Similar to previous wagon trains, the members of Goodale's party were beset by some hardship. In addition to the ordeal of navigating the desert terrain and repairing broken wagons, emigrants also dealt with the death of family members and traveling companions, the toll of long months on the trail. At least two men died from illness between the Big Lost River and the lava fields of Craters of the Moon. One man, the father of Nellie and Oscar Slater, was buried near the Big Lost River. The other man, known only as "Cole" or "Colls," was in his early twenties when he passed away, and was probably buried on Lava Creek. According to less verifiable accounts, a young girl, nine years of age, died near Martin. Her grave lies beneath a grove of aspen alongside a small stream.[17] But overall, Oscar Slater remembered, there were "not many deaths

---

[15] Irving R. Merrill, ed., Bound for Idaho, 15.

[16] Merrill, 11, makes the judgement that this was the largest party based on work by Merrill J. Mattes, Platte River Road Narratives, 33, detailing the average size of an emigrant company and the number that traveled together at any one time; Nellie Slater, "Travels on the Plains in 1862," 13; Jones and Hutchison, 130.

[17] Nellie Slater, 3-4. Information on the grave site of the young girl is sketchy at best. In an oral interview by Fred W. Dykes with Les Broadie, June 8, 1991, Broadie states that the girl's last name was Slater. Her first name possibly was Nellie. Broadie, who owns the old Martin ranch and townsite, was told this story by Matie D. Martin. The name, however, does not seem to be correct, since Nellie Slater lived to write a diary of her account. Nellie Slater's father died on the trip, but she does not mention any other

from sickness during the trip."[18]

Emigrants chose Goodale's Cutoff because it offered a shorter and safer route from Fort Hall to Boise. The popularity of the route increased after improvements were made to its western section and after the gold rush to the Boise Basin commenced in late 1862. During the mid-1860s the majority of emigrants leaving Fort Hall opted for Goodale's route. Rough estimates suggest, for example, that of the twenty thousand emigrants who left Fort Hall in 1863 and the possibly forty thousand who left there in 1864, 70 percent took the cutoff.[19] Though they traveled through the lava landscape of the Craters region by choice, most perceived it as a place to avoid--a place along the way to somewhere else. Exposed to the seemingly desolate lava fields, emigrants endured the harshness and bleakness of the volcanic country and pressed on.

By the time emigrant parties reached Craters of the Moon, they had spent days worried about water and grass in the heat of summer, and edgy about hostile Indians--only to come within sight of an alien landscape, "mountains all torn up and...a very rough desert of a looking place."[20] The entire scene around the Lost River sinks--molten rocks, sand, and parched sage--"could only remind one of the black valley of death," wrote Mrs. W.A. Loughary, an emigrant traveling in July 1864. The transition from "one solitary desert" to "a vast bed of lava," Charles Teeter noted about the same time, was unsettling. In places over this expansive lava country, "old craters are to be found so dark and gloomy...even at midday, that it almost makes one shudder to gaze down into them."[21]

The approach to today's monument brought emigrants into closer contact with the lava flows and increased their apprehensions. The twenty-five mile road of rocks and crushed lava turned in a southwesterly direction as it neared Champagne and Lava creeks, common campsites just outside the boundaries of the present monument. The

---

family members dying. Death was common to travel, whether the identification of the person is known.

[18] Oscar B. Slater, "Reminiscences of O.B. Slater," 5.

[19] Merrill, ed., Bound for Idaho, 12; see also, Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff," 9. The figures, as suggested in Merrill's work, seem to be based on the number of emigrants on the overland trail.

[20] Nellie Slater, "Travels on the Plains in 1862," 4.

[21] Mrs. W.A. Loughary, "A Brief Journal of The Travels and Incidents of an Emigrant Ox Train across the Plains...," Woolverton Family Manuscript, Idaho State Historical Society, 21; Charles Nelson Teeter, "Four Years of My Life, or, My Adventures in the Far West," typescript, Charles Nelson Teeter Papers, Idaho State Historical Society, 106.

road led through a "place of barrenness," where horses lacerated their feet and wagons threatened to break, like those whose parts littered the trail. For some the passage through the monument's lava terrain, approximately two miles, proved to be the most difficult of the trip to this point. Emigrants walked to lighten their loads and to prevent their axles from breaking over the uneven and often steep ground.[22] As the road narrowed, it wound its "crooked way" within a barrier of black rock along the edge of the hills, offering no other options for crossing. In places, one emigrant recalled, the hills and lava came so close together "as scarcely to admit the passage of a wagon." Another emigrant likened it to following "a rough beach." At any moment driving over the exposed lava flows which had washed up against the steep hills, he said, "we would expect to see our wagons smashed."[23]

The traffic of thousands of wagons left a well-defined road of wheel ruts, scored deeply in places, across the plain. Natural features marked the migration as well. Big Southern and Twin buttes in particular served as important landmarks for guiding wagons parties across the desert between the Snake and Big Lost rivers. Occasionally, it seems, overlanders erected landmarks of their own, building rock cairns to define the route across the flat plain. Campsites, though important, tended to be more ephemeral since emigrants moved as swiftly as possibly through the region. Never staying more than a day or two in one camp, emigrants no doubt rested in campsites used by previous parties, identified perhaps by the impact wagons and livestock made on the land, as well as the presence of water and forage, two premiums in the desert country. Consider the following excerpts from emigrant journals:

> **Traversing the desert between the Snake and Big Lost rivers:**
> **Mrs. W.A. Loughary, July 17, 1864.** We move on where soon we came to a parched sandy waste where not a sign of animal or vegetable life is seen, only rocks and sand. Our eyes soon began to pain where [there] was nothing to rest upon but bleaching sand....We had been directed to go to a certain butte [Big Southern] which became visible in the afternoon--at its base was a large spring....On and on we slowly went but the butte seemed to get but little nearer--yet we must reach it or suffer. At twilight we got to the butte and [set out] to

[22] Mrs. W.A. Loughary, "A Brief Journal of the Travels and Incidents of an Emigrant Ox Train across the Plains," 21.

[23] Charles Teeter, "Four Years of My Life," 107; Irving R. Merrill, Bound for Idaho, 100.

find the spring with thick darkness coming on....[24]

Julius C. Merrill, August 30, 1864. This cone-shaped, bald-topped butte seemed to be placed here for some purpose...the precious fluid [water]...trickling clear and cool down some of its ravines....[However] It sinks almost as soon as out of the shade....There being no water for our stock, we resolved to push on to Lost River, the next watering place, fifteen miles distant.[25]

Approaching Craters of the Moon:

Nellie Slater, July 27, 1862: Came two miles to edge of a small desert; tis twenty-five miles across. Traveled all day, till five o'clock in the evening before we got across. At the edge we found a small stream and camped [probably Champagne or Lava creek].[26]

Traveling Through Craters of the Moon:

Nellie Slater, July 29, 1862: Started this morning, traveled through rocks from one to five feet high and had to make our road through as best we could.[27]

Julius C. Merrill, September 1, 1864. Started early that we might reach water soon as possible. Reached water at half past ten A.M. Water came from springs up in the foot hills and formed a small stream [possibly Champagne or Lava creek]. Feed would have been plenty but for the carelessness of some who had set fire to it and burnt over a large amount of territory. Our stock much needed rest, but as wood was scarce we decided to drive on to a better place....We now travel along the edge of the valley and to avoid the rocks the road passes over some of the foothills. As far as the eye can reach, there is nothing but this black volcanic rock.[28]

Julius C. Merrill, September 2, 1864. Splendid feed last night but no water.

---

[24] Loughary, 20.

[25] Merrill, 97.

[26] Nellie Slater, 3-4.

[27] Slater, 4.

[28] Merrill, 99.

> Springs one mile in advance and feed all burnt off near them. Road very rough. In going over one hill which was very steep we came near upsetting the wagon and were obliged to unload the larger part of it. Road all rocks in several places. Some so large as to scarcely pass under the wagon....[At one point] Had we gone a foot to the right or to the left the wagon would have rolled over.[29]

> **Mrs. W.A Loughary, July 20, 1864.** This proved to be far the hardest part of our travel, and yet we must go on or perish by the road side. Every man, woman and child must walk in order to lessen the weight of our axle trees to prevent breaking. We finally reach water, grass, rest and sleep [possibly Big Cottonwood Creek].[30]

Although their contact with the country was brief, emigrants in general expressed some trepidation that the volcanic terrain would impede their progress, and regarded their encounter with the region in primarily negative terms. On September 4, 1864, Julius Caesar Merrill summed up this perspective best when he wrote what it was like putting lava fields behind him:

> It was a relief to see the distance widening between us and those volcanic strata. It was a desolate, dismal scenery. Up or down the valley as far as the eye could reach or across to the mountains in the dim distance the same unvarying mass of black rock. Not a shrub, bird, nor insect seemed to live near it. Great must have been the relief of the volcano, powerful the emetic, that poured forth such a mass of black vomit.[31]

Not all views of the lava country were entirely negative. Later in 1864, for instance, George Forman, a miner, headed for the Boise Basin mines over Goodale's Cutoff, picking up the well-traveled "Main Oregon Road" from Fort Hall near Big Lost River. Crossing the desert from the east, Forman observed that the three buttes rose from the level plain "like Pyramids." He and his fellow miners then traveled the "very tortuous" road as they approached the monument's lava flows. But more so than others, Forman seemed interested in the lava formations themselves, describing how the once molten surface showed "the ripples of wind as fresh as if made yesterday." It was a

---

[29] Ibid., 99-100.

[30] Loughary, 21.

[31] Merrill, ed., Bound for Idaho, 101.

veritable ocean of lava flowing into the mountains. Waves that curled ten feet high, he thought, were produced by an immense storm of "molten Lava or Iron Ore," and were strewn randomly in all directions. There were "large masses of Rock or honeycombed ore" which were hollow-sounding in places and piled with cinders. Having visited other sections of the Snake River Plain, he believed the plain to be the "largest crater or Lava Bed in the world."[32]

Forman, who referred to the route as the "main Oregon Road coming from Fort Hall and now well traveled," numbered among the many emigrants and miners who made Goodale's Cutoff a popular route in subsequent years. Various modifications by Utah interests and the Idaho territorial government, among others, transformed the trail into a more accessible road. Emigrants from the mid-1860s on took advantage of a new ferry crossing on the Snake River, a way station at Big Southern Butte, and a toll road near the south Boise mines. Emigration tapered off following the Civil War and the completion of the transcontinental railroad. But the cutoff continued to be heavily used until the turn of the century. It served soldiers in the 1860s and 1870s when Indian conflicts erupted in southern Idaho. And beginning in the late 1870s and early 1880s, stage lines started to operate along the cutoff. After the Utah Northern Railroad reached Blackfoot in 1878, Alexander Toponce started a stage line on Goodale's route from Blackfoot to Salmon and the Custer mines the following year, passing through the old townsite of Arco. He expanded his line to the serve the Wood River mines in 1880; the line ran over Goodale's road from Blackfoot to Wood River, connecting again through the old Arco junction. Toponce sold his line in 1881, after the mail contract for the route was awarded to Gilmer and Salisbury, and various owners continued to operate the line for the next twenty years.[33]

After ferrying travelers to and from the mining districts of southcentral Idaho, and points east and west, the cutoff evolved into a freight route, supplying newly established towns and mines in the region in the 1880s. During this time it also served as the northern trail for herding livestock across the Snake River Plain to distant markets. Some of the Snake River Plain's earliest sightseers traversed the stage line as well. As Carrie Strahorn described, the experience of crossing the route from Blackfoot to the Arco stage stop was marked by forty miles without water and "insufferable" dust. Adding

---

[32] William E. Davis, "George Forman: The Great Pedestrian," Idaho Yesterdays 10 (Spring 1966): 4-5.

[33] Davis, "George Forman," 5; Fred W. Dykes, Jeffrey's Cutoff, 4, 10; Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History (Arco: Arco Advertiser, 1926), 6; Larry R. Jones, "Staging to the South Boise Mines," Idaho Yesterdays 29 (Summer 1985): 19-25; Hutchison and Jones, eds., 135.

to the discomfort the junction offered only the most primitive accommodations. Traversing the stretch of road through the lava beds of the Craters country exceeded all other sections of road in "roughness and ruts." However uncomfortable for some, Goodale's Cutoff was an important means of access to the upper reaches of the Snake River Plain not serviced by the railroad, in particular for farm families settling in the region.[34]

The experience of traversing the region near Craters of the Moon changed slightly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Emigrants still faced environmental extremes, but now could rest at way stations, buy water and food from early settlers in the Lost River country, and travel through a landscape dotted with homesteads and herds of sheep, cattle, and horses.[35] The arrival of the Oregon Short Line in Arco in 1901 ended the operation of the stage line from Blackfoot to Salmon and altered trail travel altogether. The new line, though, merely restricted rather than eliminated use of the trail to the more remote districts between the Lost River and Wood River country.

The lava fields of Craters of the Moon remained the most imposing section of this outlying country. Settlers looking for fertile land generally continued to treat it as a place to avoid even at the turn of the century, moving on to places more lush and well watered. In September 1904, for example, one of the later wagon parties crossing Goodale's Cutoff camped at Martin before entering today's monument the next day. One member, Annie Foster, noted it was a "beautiful morning to travel" as her party prepared to depart from Martin. Reaching "Cotton Wood Creek," most likely Big Cottonwood, Foster wrote that we "have come over the crookedest road this morning any one ever traveled since the Flood. We have come along a mountain all day. On the other side was a big lavy [lava] bed. All the valley was lavy rock so black it looked like where a straw stack had been burned." After observing the black, honeycombed lava, the grassy hills, and red and sandy appearing soil, she concluded that this section of the trail was "not a very pretty place," for it lay hundreds of miles from nowhere, was hemmed in by lava and mountains on either side, and had no good supply of water.[36]

This was the latest known journal entry of a family traversing Goodale's Cutoff,

---

[34] Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff," 14-15; Byron D. Lusk, "Golden Cattle Kingdoms of Idaho," M.S. Thesis, Utah State University, 1978, 87; Carrie A. Strahorn, Fifteen Thousand Miles by Stage (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 151-152, 450-451.

[35] Emily Fletcher Towell, "Covered Wagon Diary," 1881, typescript, Idaho State Historical Society, 13.

[36] Annie Biggers Elliot Foster, Annie Jane's Journal, [1904], ed. Marilyn R. Harbord (Chico: Glen E. Biggers, 1974), 34.

though in 1910 the last reported wagon passed through Boise over the route. Eventually the cutoff evolved into an automobile road and finally into section of a modern highway by the 1920s. It was this transformation and the automobile age that replaced wagon travel.[37]

Summary of Context Theme

Overland migration to Oregon and California constituted one of the most important events in the settlement of the American West. It was the longest journey of its kind undertaken by American settlers, and the Oregon Trail served as its primary route across southern Idaho, which also was considered one of the most inhospitable sections of the trail. Between 1840 and 1860, overlanders passing through the region for Oregon and California reached an apogee of a quarter of a million people. Slowing for a short time, the flow of migrants surged during the Civil War years, when some 125,000 emigrants crossed the trail by 1866, forming the longest unbroken migration wave over the Oregon-California Trail. After the Civil War ended and the transcontinental railroad crossed the continent, overland trail travel declined.

Although the majority of emigrants traveled the main trail along the Snake River during the antebellum migration, some overlanders opted for alternate routes, a main route being Goodale's Cutoff, which traversed the lava fields on the northern edge of today's Craters of the Moon National Monument. Some emigrants experimented with this route between 1852 and 1854, but travel along it afterwards was light and except for some military use, it was hardly used until emigrants of the Civil War era moved westward. They looked for shorter and faster routes to reach the newly discovered gold fields in western Montana and southern Idaho, as well as routes that would avoid Indian conflicts erupting with greater frequency along the main overland route. Drawn to the Boise Basin gold rush in 1862, a wagon party, led by Tim Goodale, crossed the route and passed through Craters with some eleven hundred emigrants, making it the largest company to have ever crossed any portion of the overland trail.

Overland travel likely continued throughout the 1860s but tapered off afterwards as a result of railroad construction. Still during the 1860s and 1870s, soldiers used the route to control Indian groups, and in 1878 Alexander Toponce established a stage line along Goodale's route, which accessed the mining boom towns of the upper Snake River

---

[37] Merrill, "Tim Goodale and His Cutoff," 15; Idaho's Highway History, 1863-1975 (Boise: Idaho Department of Transportation, 1985), 43, 69.

country in the 1880s. During this time as well, ranchers herded livestock across the trail to reach eastern markets. Improvements to the route made it more attractive for travelers, yet the country it crossed won few admirers. After railroad service arrived in Arco in 1901, travel on the trail was restricted to the remote sections of the country near Craters of the Moon. Whether traveling in the early 1850s or early 1900s, when the last known settlers crossed the trail near the monument, attitudes about the Craters landscape remain fairly consistent. The arid, lava country elicited mostly negative responses from observers and enticed few, if any, to settle near it. In the minds of emigrants as well as in actual experience, the Craters of the Moon country appeared alien, impeded travel, and posed a threat to human life. Yet by all accounts, overland travel was the first known contact Anglo Americans had with today's monument, however brief or difficult.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Resources Related to Overland Travel

Description:

Properties associated with overland travel include trails, vistas, campsites, and cairns. The most notable property associated with overland travel is a trail, and can be identified by at least two distinct physical elements: trail remnants (or the trail corridor) and environmental setting. The only known historic trail in Craters of the Moon is Goodale's Cutoff, an important alternate route of the Oregon Trail, which crossed approximately two miles of today's national monument. The trail is located in Township 2 North, Range 24 East, Sections 26, 27, and 34. It is approximately two miles in length and its width encompasses a strip of 660 feet centered on the old road. Continuous trail remnants, or ruts, score the ground; they are now used as an unimproved road. The remnants run in a tortuous, southwesterly direction through the monument. They enter near the northern midpoint of Section 26, wind through Section 27, and drop down to Section 34, departing through its western midpoint. Though not the "original" tread, these trail remnants preserve the trail's route through the monument.

Since the monument preserves the landscape within its boundaries, little has changed about the trail's immediate environmental setting. Coincidentally, its larger environmental setting has changed little as well. The views today from the monument are the same as those from the middle nineteenth century, with the exception of some distant ranches or farms. These vistas encompass the vast sea of lava and take in the famous trail landmark of Big Southern Butte. Thus, historic vistas form an important

element of the trail's environmental setting within and outside of the monument.

Other properties or features associated with overland travel are related to trails and include campsites and cairns, none of which seems to exist inside the monument. Emigrants travel over Goodale's Cutoff did not mention camping near the lava flows in the Little Cottonwood Creek drainage, which is within the boundaries of today's monument. They pushed through here as quickly as possible, and tended to camp at Lava Creek, Champagne Creek on the approach to the monument and Big Cottonwood Creek or streams within the general vicinity. These could be any number of unnamed springs or small streams draining the mountains--where a notch in the mountains provided grass, wood, and water for a wagon party. Emigrants also did not mention constructing cairns within the monument. The landscape dictated the route of travel through the present monument--a narrow path between the lava flows and the base of the mountains--making the chances that emigrants built cairns remote. More likely, they built cairns out on the plain itself. As recorded by the Bureau of Land Management, a cairn would probably be about three to four feet high and constructed of large lava rocks.[38]

Some other resources associated with overland travel, though mentioned only a few times in emigrant journals, are even less likely to be found in Craters of the Moon than campsites or cairns, for they are far more ephemeral. These include debris and garbage cast aside during travel, such as discarded belongings and wagon parts. They also include graffiti and graves. Emigrants in the 1860s, for example, noted finding a chest lodged in the lava flows and names carved in trees from the early 1850s, and they also mentioned burying friends, loved ones, and traveling companions near the monument (perhaps between the Big Lost River and Craters of the Moon). Details about these properties are sketchy; any description of them would be purely speculative.

Significance:

These properties are significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with westward expansion, settlement, and the Oregon Trail, important themes in the monument's history and the broader patterns of American history. Goodale's Cutoff is significant under National Register Criterion A. The approximately two-mile segment in Craters of the Moon National Monument was listed in the National Register on May 1, 1974.

---

[38] Hutchison and Jones, 135, show a photograph of a rock cairn on the plain.

Registration Requirements:

The property eligible for listing under this category, Goodale's Cutoff, is already listed in the National Register. In order for other properties or features to be eligible, they must be associated with Goodale's Cutoff and date from at least 1852 to 1904. It must be possible to document their association with the trail, and they must have integrity. The National Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity: location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. Some of these are more relevant than others for a historic trail, such as the original location of the trail's route and tread, its environmental setting, and its feeling and association with the historic period, activity, and place, most of which is conveyed through the environmental setting and vistas.

Recommendations:

A new or updated National Register nomination should be written. It should incorporate the new historical studies and documentary materials that have come to light since the first nomination was drafted. It should also state the importance of the unaltered environmental setting of the trail segment. Both of these aspects are taken up by a recent study. In 1993, the Bureau of Land Management and the Idaho State Historical Society published Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho. Goodale's Cutoff is given significant treatment within the larger context of emigrant trails in Idaho. Besides documenting the route, this study emphasizes the importance of the trail's environmental setting. Viewed from Craters of the Moon, the historic vista is still intact; it is something that will possibly outlast the physical remnants of the trail and buttress any argument for the historical significance of Goodale's Cutoff. Evaluating Big Southern Butte as a historic landmark should also be undertaken, considering the role it played in overland travel--not just for emigrants, but for fur trappers, explorers, and settlers. It is already a National Natural Landmark. The trail segment within Craters of the Moon could serve as a vista point.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS



CHAPTER 6

Chapter Six

Settlement Patterns in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1879-1933

Overview of Settlement Patterns on the Snake River Plain

The Snake River Plain was known to Euro-American fur trappers, explorers, and missionaries since the first decades of the nineteenth century, yet it attracted little interest from American settlers. Repelled by the plain's inhospitable and desiccated environment, Oregon-bound emigrants of the mid-nineteenth century viewed the region more as a barrier to cross and survive than settle. They not only feared its waterless and treeless wastes but its Indians as well. Many, perhaps, shared the observations of Wilson Price Hunt who characterized the plain as a "dreary desert of sand and gravel." Washington Irving, in his widely read and influential account of Hunt's expedition, offered a more powerful criticism when he stated: "It is a land where no man permanently resides; a vast, uninhabited solitude with precipitous cliffs and yawning ravines, looking like the ruins of the world; vast tracts that must ever defy cultivation and interpose dreary and thirsty wilds between the habitations of man." Similarly, a traveler in 1839 reported that no land west of Fort Hall would grow "grains or vegetables."[1] Thus settlement in the Snake River country required enticements to offset its negative image. These enticements came in the form of new lands open for settlement, mineral wealth, transportation improvements, and the construction of large-scale irrigation projects for agriculture.

The first community in southern Idaho emerged on the plain's eastern margin when Mormon colonists settled Franklin in 1860. The Franklin settlers were the first of many communities, composed mostly of Mormons, who left behind the crowded settlements of northern Utah for the fertile valleys of the Bear Lake region and the irrigable fringes of the Snake River Plain during the 1860s. The trend continued in the late 1870s and 1880s when large numbers of Mormons settled the upper Snake River Valley, as far north as Rexburg. They were drawn to the region by new prospects for agriculture, expanded railway service, and religious incentives.[2]

---

[1] All quotations from Hugh T. Lovin, "Sage, Jacks, and Snake Plain Pioneers," Idaho Yesterdays 22 (Winter 1979): 13. See also Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1942), 319.

[2] Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, 187; Leonard J. Arrington, "Irrigation in the Snake River Valley: An Historical Overview," Idaho Yesterdays 30 (Spring/Summer 1986): 4; Davis Bitton, "Peopling the Upper Snake: The Second Wave of Mormon Settlement in Idaho," Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 47-52; Davis Bitton, "Blackfoot: The Making of a Community, 1878-1910," Idaho Yesterdays 19 (Spring 1975): 2-15.

Mining, however, stimulated the greatest interest in Idaho settlement during this period. After 1860 gold and silver strikes throughout the region, especially those of the Boise Basin in 1862, drew many emigrants. Some settled in the new mining communities of the Boise Basin, taking advantage of supplying the mines with agricultural products and other merchandise. Similarly when the Wood River mines boomed in the 1880s, ranching and farming interests settled in the Wood River Valley, while other more modest ranching and farming enclaves appeared in the Little Wood River and Lost River valleys in response to mineral strikes in the region.[3]

Communities--whether in Boise, Wood River, or the upper Snake River country--became more stable by supplying mining centers, (although federal homestead legislation and the placement of Indians on reservations by the late 1870s and 1880s also provided powerful incentives to settlement). Because the mining communities served as local markets and the plain as open range, cattle raising thrived during the 1860s and 1880s. Stockmen had driven cattle toward the Boise mines in the 1860s from the Oregon country, and by the 1870s they expanded their operations across the ranges of southern Idaho from Oregon, Washington, California, Texas, and Nevada. Large numbers of cattle were not only driven into Idaho but also through Idaho to railheads in Wyoming and Utah for transportation to eastern markets. Later sheep and horses occupied the ranges of the plain and these, too, were herded across southern Idaho for markets beyond the territory. Hard winters, overcrowded ranges, a lack of adequate markets, and a persistent depression in the 1870s and 1880s seriously harmed the cattle industry. Although this turn of events opened up more rangeland for sheepmen, eventually both cattle and sheep "empires" diminished as settlement increased and federal regulations closed the open range at the turn of the century.[4]

Transportation developments in the later nineteenth century played an important part in settling the plain as well. In 1884 the final tracks were laid for the Oregon Short Line across southern Idaho following and thus replacing the overland trail. Afterwards, spur lines spread to the upper Snake River Valley, the Lost River country, and Wood River. Beyond the rails, stage and freight lines serviced the more remote sections of the

---

[3] Rodman W. Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 139-140; Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, 194-195.

[4] Carlos A. Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 99-102; J. Orin Oliphant, On the Cattle Ranges of the Oregon Country (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 70, 73-75, 106-111, 168-169.

plain where many hardy souls hoped to strike it rich or try their luck at homesteading.[5]

Adapting the arid plain for agriculture, however, contributed the greatest attraction to settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. State and federal irrigation projects under the Carey Act and Newlands Act between the mid-1890s and World War I reclaimed much of the desert land for farming throughout the Snake River Valley and the northern valleys of the plain. All of this aroused greater interest in and settlement of this one-time spurned desert country; the "tarnished reputation and continued negativism about the Snake River Plain," according to historian Hugh T. Lovin, deterred settlement no longer. During this period, Lovin writes, "thousands scurried" to the plain to claim land on "several dozen reclamation tracts" as promoters "preached that 'honest fortunes' were 'going to waste' on the long-maligned Idaho deserts." Between 1900 and 1920, these newcomers nearly quadrupled the state's population to more than 400,000.[6]

Settlement Patterns near Craters of the Moon: Carey and Arco

The communities that developed closest to and exerted the greatest influence on the Craters country were located in the valleys of Little Wood and Big and Little Lost rivers. They followed a similar settlement pattern as the rest of the plain, eventually bringing a permanent rather than transient population nearer to the lava flows between the 1870s and 1920s.

In the 1870s emigrants, miners, stockmen, and others of the West's mobile population passed back and forth along Goodale's Cutoff without much thought to staying in the region surrounding the Craters country. That changed late in the decade, however, when cattlemen showed an interest in the lush meadows of the Little Wood River Valley and the open range of the Big Lost River Valley. They encountered the valleys as they trailed their herds across the northern rim of the plain. The trail followed the route of Goodale's Cutoff, east through Camas Prairie, Wood River, and "across the rough terrain" of the valleys of the Little Wood and Lost rivers "to Eagle Rock (Idaho

---

[5] Carlos A. Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho, 83-84; see also Davis Bitton, "Peopling the Upper Snake," 48.

[6] Hugh T. Lovin, "Sage, Jacks, and Snake Plain Pioneers," Idaho Yesterdays 22 (Winter 1979): 14, for quotations and population statistics. Information on irrigation in Idaho has been drawn from a number of sources. See the above citation, for example, as well as Hugh T. Lovin, "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain," Idaho Yesterdays 35 (Spring 1991): 3-18.

Falls)."[7]

The first cattle were driven into the Little Wood River Valley in 1879. The following year the booming mines of the Big Wood River country added further incentive to raise livestock here, and the mining market drew many of the valley's first residents who established the ranching and agricultural settlement of Carey that year. Many of the community's early residents were Mormons who migrated from Utah looking for unclaimed, fertile lands. Moving as families, they often followed the advice of relatives who had already relocated and urged them to join them in this "paradise."[8]

Settlement grew in the 1880s. In 1881, the Blackfoot to Wood River stage line was established and the road ran through the valley bringing heavy freight and emigrant traffic to the Wood River mines, since the nearest supply center was Blackfoot. Although traffic tapered off when the Oregon Short Line reached the mines from the south in 1883, stock raising and farming matured. Eventually the open range closed as settlement increased and farms took over the rich valley land, and livestock raising, primarily sheep, retreated to the foothills. By 1900 the Carey area was well known for its sheep raising and hay production. It was also dependent on small-scale irrigation for its farming. Without irrigation projects, droughts and floods, caused by overgrazed and deforested watersheds, threatened the valley's farms. Helping to alleviate these problems was the construction, with federal assistance, of the Fish Creek Reservoir in 1923. This and the later construction of the Little Wood River Reservoir in the 1950s not only protected but expanded the valley's agricultural production.[9]

In the Lost River country northeast of the lava flows, settlement occurred about the same time and under similar conditions. Fur traders and emigrants passed through the valleys of the Big and Little Lost rivers but none stayed. Then cattlemen, following the open range and the opening of mines in central Idaho, established small cattle operations on the Big Lost River in the early 1870s. These did not amount to anything permanent until the late 1870s and early 1880s when modest ranches and small farms,

---

[7] Byron D. Lusk, "Golden Cattle Kingdoms of Idaho," M.S. Thesis, Utah State University, 87.

[8] Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, 195; Elizabeth C. Adamson, History of Carey, Idaho (n.p., 1971), 8-9.

[9] Elizabeth C. Adamson, History of Carey, Idaho, 36-40; George A. McLeod, History of Alturas and Blaine Counties, 1857-1949, 3rd ed. (Hailey: Hailey Times, 1950), 21, 28-29.

scattered along the Big Lost River and tributary streams, appeared.[10]

Little is known of these early residents. They occupied a strip of territory in the Big Lost River Valley about seventy-three miles long; it extended from north of Mackey in Custer County south toward Big Southern Butte, and from the mouth of Antelope Creek to the Big Lost River. Most likely these early permanent settlers filed homesteads under the Desert Land Act of 1877; the legislation allowed a family to file on 640 acres in the more marginal lands provided it made irrigation improvements. Many of these new settlers raised livestock and grew hay. A small, resident livestock business prospered in the Lost River country for a time, while other ranching entrepreneurs trailed great herds through the region over the old emigrant road. It was not uncommon, a long-time resident recalled, to see droves of "five or six hundred head of horses and cattle," and on one occasion, "20,000 head of sheep...[being] trailed past...from Oregon to Nebraska." The livestock business benefited greatly from the mining discoveries in the Lava Creek district in the mid-1880s, as did settlement in general. Late in the decade, however, severe winters and dry summers killed off most of the herds, and from then on farming received the most emphasis, though small stock raisers continued to summer their herds in the foothills and winter them on the sage-covered plain.[11]

The first and most important community to develop in the region was Arco. Located several miles south of the present town of Arco, the original Arco was established in 1879 as a stage stop for the Blackfoot to Wood River and Salmon River stage lines. In the early 1880s, Arco was moved to a site about four miles southeast of today's town. The reason for the relocation was that the Oregon Short Line had reached Wood River from Shoshone, reducing the importance of original Arco's role as a supply junction for the Wood River mines. At this new location, "Old Arco," as it was later known, was better able to serve as a stage station for the Big Lost River Valley and as a supply center for the mines, mining towns, and early settlers of the Big Lost River basin. Consisting of a stage station, livery stable, post office, and saloon, Old Arco formed an

---

[10] Byron D. Lusk, "Golden Cattle Kingdoms of Idaho," 41, 46; Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History (Arco: Arco Advertiser, 1926), 2-4.

[11] F. Ross Peterson, Idaho: A Bicentennial History (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976), 129; Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History, 3-4; Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho, 195. References to early settlement can be found in James D. Martin, "With the Lost River Pioneers," Lost River Valley Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society (hereafter ISHS), 9. See also Works Progress Administration, The Idaho Encyclopedia, Vardis Fisher, ed. (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1938), 246-248.

important hub of the Lost River country when emigrants flocked to the new mines and boom towns in the Lava Creek district and upper Big Lost River Valley in the mid-1880s.[12]

Many who settled in the region came during these mining strikes and resided in the nearly instant mining towns such as Cliff City, Houston, Alder City, Carbonate, White Knob, and Bonanza. Era and Martin, some twenty miles west of Arco, were especially popular with the discovery of the Horn Silver Mine in 1884. A typical mining town, Era grew up around the Horn Silver Mine and supported a population of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand at its peak, and "the usual lines of business houses," including saloons, laundries, dance halls, general stores, a mining equipment store, and other services, housed in tents and cabins.[13] Era functioned also as a stage stop on the Blackfoot to Wood River stage line.

A sense of what life was like for miners and prospectors can be found in the memoirs of James D. Martin, an early settler in the Lost River country. Martin recalled that he and other fortune seekers headed for what they thought was the "new Eldorado" of Lost River. Actually, the mines of the region were just the latest in a series of Eldorados appearing throughout the West with each new discovery of a precious metal. After word reached miners like Martin in Wood River, they took the road "around the lavas" to reach the new mines. Like so much of western mining activity, they soon faced disappointments. Throughout the mid-1880s, these "mining stiffs" rambled around the Pioneer and Lost River mountains doing everything, it seemed, except mining. They filed homesteads with no intention of farming, worked their land only to show the minimal required improvements, and spent the majority of their time scrounging for work and prospecting in what time remained. By the end of the century, the region's mines declined in value because of their low-grade ore and the failure of the nation's silver market. Era and other mining towns like it turned into ghost towns almost as instantly as they were established. And the hopeful miners like Martin abandoned their hard and uncertain life, and either left the area or, as in Martin's case, joined the settlers

---

[12] Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History, 6; "Pioneer of '79 Tells of Historical Events of Valley," Arco Advertiser, November 4, 1921.

[13] Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History, 7; George A. McLeod, A History of Alturas and Blaine Counties, 38; Michael Ostrogorsky, "Historical Overview for the Craters of the Moon National Monument of Idaho," typescript, 1983, Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection, 8.

in the valleys of the Big and Little rivers.[14]

Despite these setbacks, during the late 1890s and early 1900s the Lost River country was home to small-scale ranching and farming, which continued to find some outlet in the supply of mining operations that had weathered the earlier booms or had arisen since then. Most of the arable and irrigable lands along the rivers were claimed, and an informal network of ditches and canals led from their banks to cultivated fields. From a distance Arco could be identified as a place where "clumps of bushes and a few houses tell of the presence of water." Beyond it still other "clumps of bushes and here and there a field of alfalfa, a rectangular patch of green on the vast gray expanse" revealed the Big Lost River as it flowed through the plain and past the scattered settlements located along its course.[15]

But the area remained largely inaccessible and thus isolated from larger markets such as the growing cities on the upper Snake River, even though stages carried potential settlers, mail, freight, and supplies between Blackfoot and the Arco vicinity. That changed in September 1901 with the arrival of a branch of the Oregon Short Line Railroad; the rails spanned the sixty miles of desert from Blackfoot to Arco in order to tap the mining districts of central Idaho. (The line eventually terminated at Mackey.) In addition, the railroad determined the third and present site of the community, breathed new life into farming, sped of the production of the mines, and seemed to point to a "rapid and permanent development" for the Lost River country.[16]

However beneficial the coming of the railroad appeared, irrigation played the most significant role in advancing settlement in the Lost River country. Federal homestead legislation failed, for the most part, to tempt farmers onto desert lands such as those surrounding Arco. The majority of settlers had claimed the best tracts along the Big and Little Lost rivers. In a country of little rain, settlement along these rivers was imperative, and even the rivers were not a sure source of water, for they disappeared into the porous lava fields of the Snake River Plain. It was impossible to attract settlers without water and virtually impossible for a settler to gain title to 640 acres of land

---

[14] James D. Martin, "With the Lost River Pioneers," 2, 9; Michael Ostrogorsky, "Historical Overview for the Craters of the Moon National Monument of Idaho," 8.

[15] Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History, 3; C. Hart Merriam, "Journal of a Trip in Idaho 1890, August 15-October 24," box 4, file 1890, "Idaho," C. Hart Merriam Collection, Library of Congress, 38; Israel C. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Idaho (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 36, for quotation.

[16] Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History, 14.

under the Desert Land Act; this was simply too much land for a homesteader or his family to bring under irrigation within three years, as the law stipulated. Although revised to allow for filing on fewer acres, the law still fell short of reality but did influence the passage of the Carey Act in 1894.[17]

The Carey Act authorized western states to acquire a million acres of undeveloped and arid federal land from within their boundaries, provided that this land be reclaimed and made agriculturally productive. The state sold the segregated lands as homesteads to settlers in parcels as small as forty acres, as long as at least forty acres were irrigated within five years; afterwards the settler could claim ownership of the land. Under the act, the state was to arrange with the private sector for the reclamation work and was to ultimately plan, fund, and supervise the projects. To attract private capital for building the expensive irrigation works, subsequent amendments were made which permitted the state to place a lien against the land in order to protect private capital, and allowed corporations and private entrepreneurs ten years to complete the irrigation project once construction had commenced. The construction company sold water rights to the settler, and the state sold him the land for fifty cents an acre, with one half down and the other half paid when the final proof was made. Upon completion of the irrigation system, the construction company, under its contract with the state, turned over operation of the system to the settlers.[18]

Among the western states, Idaho was unique in its use of the Carey Act. While other states accepted land grants under the act, only a few more than minimally improved them for irrigation, whereas Idaho, in the "so-called 'Magic Valley' of the Snake River," reclaimed more desert land under the act "than in all other western states combined."[19] In fact the Twin Falls project, completed in 1905, was a national showcase. With almost a quarter of a million acres irrigated by 1908, it was labeled as "one of the miracles of modern American life."[20]

---

[17] William D. Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project: A Historical Study of Reclamation and Regional Development, 1890-1930," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1974, 39-40.

[18] William D. Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project: A Historical Study of Reclamation and Regional Development, 1890-1930," 39-40.

[19] Ibid., preface.

[20] Hugh T. Lovin, "The Carey Act in Idaho, 1895-1925: An Experiment in Free Enterprise Reclamation," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 78 (October 1987): 125. It should be noted that other irrigation projects on the Snake River contributed to the permanent settlement of the region. These were the Minidoka Project, completed 1907, and the American Falls Project, completed 1927. But these projects were undertaken with

The Carey Act was especially important, although on a much smaller scale, to the settlement of the Lost River country. Promoters claimed that construction of an irrigation system would save vast "quantities of water from the Big and Little Lost rivers, which meandered into the 'deserts' of central Idaho where they 'wasted' into the aquifer that underlay the Snake River basin." With this line of argument, irrigation entrepreneurs proclaimed they would "transform into irrigated farms the better part of all flatland" situated around the Lost rivers.[21]

Settlers in the area welcomed the opportunity for large-scale irrigation, it seems, for prior water claims by stock raisers so overtaxed the Big and Little Lost rivers that they created a permanent water shortage. Moreover, cooperative efforts produced shoddy diversion dams that could only fill those canals close to the rivers. In 1906 the Big Lost River Land and Irrigation Company made an attractive offer; it proposed to segregate 80,000 acres, divided into the Era Flat, Arco, and Powell tracts, and soon afterward began construction of canals, laterals, and a dam above Mackay. Although a great future seemed in the making, the company was unable to meet its construction plans, and misled settlers about land openings in order to sell more water rights, eventually going defunct in the spring of 1909.[22]

The Big Lost River Irrigation Company took over the project, and in September of 1909 a land drawing was held. Literally hundreds if not thousands of people from across the country filed on all of the segregated lands. Predictions of another grand city such as Twin Falls appeared; however, those soon disappeared. The Big Lost River Irrigation Company went bankrupt after several years. Controversy swirled over the poor construction of the dam above Mackay, and legal and financial disputes over the completion of the project lasted until 1916 when the Utah Construction Company contracted with the state to finish the project. Having surveyed the project, the company realized that promoters had underestimated the amount of water needed to irrigate the

---

the assistance of the National Reclamation Act (1902) and relied on federal assistance provided by the U.S. Reclamation Service (Bureau of Reclamation); see Leonard J. Arrington, "Irrigation in the Snake River Valley: An Historical Overview," Idaho Yesterdays 30 (Spring/Summer, 1986): 6-7.

[21] Hugh T. Lovin, "The Carey Act in Idaho, 1895-1925," 123, 125.

[22] Hugh T. Lovin, "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain," 3; "Lost River Valley From 1879-1923," Arco Advertiser, June 1, 1923; Mikel H. Williams, The History of Development and Current Status of the Carey Act in Idaho (Boise: Idaho Department of Reclamation, 1970), 18.

segregated lands and reduced the size of the project to about 20,000 acres.[23]

This new approach provided for the completion of the Arco and Era Flat tracts and eliminated the Powell tract altogether, even though canals, headgates, and other irrigation related construction was completed. After a long wait, the Big Lost River project, a shadow of its former self, was operating by the early 1920s, having been stimulated by expanded agricultural production during World War I.[24]

The project affected hundreds of settlers in the Lost River valleys. Many new arrivals found themselves waiting on claims of cleared sagebrush hoping that eventually "everything would work out satisfactorily," the local press reported, "but a trail of wrecked homes and blasted hopes was the result." To make matters worse, early settlers competed with irrigation project settlers for a diminishing supply of water during the droughts of the 1920s. In the early 1930s the issue escalated to the point where angry individuals attempted to destroy Mackay dam with explosives. The issue was finally resolved in 1936 when settlers took over the project and some of the project farms were taken out of production.[25]

By all rights the Big Lost River project was a failure because it fell so short of its original projections and because some of its promoters duped settlers into paying for water contracts before delivering water to their land.[26] Nevertheless, the project influenced the development of a permanent community in Arco and the vast Big Lost River basin. Incorporated in 1909, Arco village reported a population of about 320 in 1910. That population, when added to the population of the surrounding countryside, nearly doubled. A population of six hundred people may not have been that impressive, but it was quite significant when one considers that it was almost six times higher than a decade earlier. After Butte County was created in 1917, Arco became the county seat for a burgeoning agricultural area and a center for commerce and supplies for the smaller communities in the Lost River country. For a time dry land farming replaced irrigated farming as the new impetus for settlement during World War I. However

---

[23] Mikel H. Williams, The History of Development and Current Status of the Carey Act in Idaho, 18-20; "Another Twin Falls," Arco Advertiser, August 20, 1909; "100 Acres a Minute," Arco Advertiser, September 17, 1909; "Big Lost River Valley From 1879-1923," Arco Advertiser, June 1, 1923.

[24] Williams, 20; Thelma Shortridge, "The Mackay Dam Controversy," typescript, August 1, 1959, Dams--Idaho Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society, 2.

[25] "Lost River Valley From 1879-1923"; Thelma Shortridge, "The Mackay Dam Controversy," 3-4, 13; Williams, 20.

[26] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 94.

growth was slow. While the Arco area expanded to about 830 residents in 1930, Butte County on the whole declined in population, most likely reflecting the farm failures, drought, and economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s. A more certain future seemed plausible when the Atomic Energy Commission took over thousands of acres of unreclaimed desert (some of which were abandoned irrigation projects) for the Nuclear Reactor Testing Station in 1949. An economic and population boom followed, much of it, however, being felt in the larger cities of Blackfoot and Idaho Falls rather than Arco, which never came close to becoming "a new town of 10,000."[27]

Settlement Patterns for Craters of the Moon, 1879-1933

Lying roughly between the Little Wood River Valley and Lost River country, Craters of the Moon seemed untouched by settlement occurring elsewhere. Most potential settlers who traveled near the lava landscape of today's Craters of the Moon bypassed it in search of more fertile agricultural or mineral lands during the nineteenth century. Once ranching, mining, and farming pursuits attracted opportunistic settlers to the Lost River country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a larger population grew closer to the shunned lava wastes. A more permanent population, however, did not transform the volcanic country into a homesteader's paradise. Mostly arid and barren, the lava territory represented the least desirable lands and experienced only fragments of the forces influencing settlement in the greater region. It was not that Craters was unknown; it was just left alone until the more promising lands around it were exploited. It is in this way that the unlikely category of "settlement" sheds light on the history of what is now Craters of the Moon.

The first signs of settlement appeared in this country during the 1870s and 1880s with the livestock business. Great herds of cattle, sheep, and horses passed through the Lost River country over the northern livestock trail of the Snake River Plain. Approximately two miles of the trail crossed the old emigrant trail within today's national monument. It was fairly common to see five to six hundred head of cattle and horses, and even more sheep, on drives from western Idaho to eastern markets. In fact,

---

[27] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, vol. 2, Population (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 414; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, vol. 3, Population (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, ca. 1921), 235, 580. Clarence A. Bottolfsen, "A Salute to Arco--The New Atomic City of the Great Northwest," ca. 1949, Butte County Vertical File, ISHS. For a related article on the history of the testing station, see Jack M. Holl, "The National Reactor Testing Station: The Atomic Energy Commission in Idaho, 1949-1962," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 85 (January 1994): 15-24.

it was not uncommon for trail herds of cattle to average about two thousand head.[28]

Despite thousands of livestock trailing through the bottomlands of Little Cottonwood Creek, it seems that herders, like the overland migrants, favored other sites to water and graze their animals. One such place was Champagne Creek lying at the base of the mountains several miles northeast of the lava flows. It was here that O.E. Forsling remembered stopping with a band of nearly seven thousand sheep in 1896. Forsling counted himself lucky to have trailed the sheep over "fine feed all day" and to have found "plenty of water here," for the next supply was the Big Lost River, about twenty-five miles away--"a long drag." His experience was perhaps something of an anomaly in the 1890s. Both sales and hard winters had exhausted the supply of the Idaho herds after the mid-1880s. Dwindling markets and overcrowded ranges also sent the livestock industry into a downward spiral. When Idaho herds recovered, however, railroads had become better established and "settlers had fenced off much of the route, thus the long drives disappeared as a method of reaching a market."[29]

Though it seemed to possess no valuable resources, the lava country was nevertheless intriguing to resident ranchers and other early settlers of the Big and Little Lost rivers. They wondered what might be there. Shortly after they established themselves in the Lost River region, for example, stockmen turned their attention to the unexplored and unexploited volcanic district. Tales of a hidden valley of lush grass and abundant water known only to Indian tribes drew them there, as did a cattle company's substantial reward for its discovery. Many searched in vain. Eager to claim the prize, Lost River ranchers John W. Powell and Arthur Ferris explored the interior of today's monument as far as its southern border. Powell first visited the vicinity in 1879 and returned with Ferris in the early 1880s. Together they searched for enough water and grass to support a sizable cattle herd. After finding a stream flowing on the lava surface, they thought they had solved the mystery. But the stream was ephemeral, and they abandoned any further attempts to support livestock in the lava beds, their presence marked by a rock cairn at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole and their names and the date 1885 inscribed on a cow's shoulder bone in Buffalo Cave.[30]

---

[28] Lusk, "Golden Cattle Kingdoms of Idaho," 87-88.

[29] O.E. Forsling, "Sheep to Cheyenne," Idaho Yesterdays 8 (Summer 1964): 28, first quotation; Lusk, 89, second quotation. See also, J. Orin Oliphant, On the Cattle Ranges of the Oregon Country, 107-111.

[30] "Complete Story of Lost Valley; Found after 65 years' Study and Hunting," Idaho Republican, January 24, 1927; Harold T. Stearns, A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho, Bulletin 13 (Boise: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1928), 41. The rock cairn at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole is

More than stories of a "Lost Valley" inspired people to seek out the Craters region. Mining strikes in the mid-1880s produced the first notable population near it. Several miles north of the expanse of black and craggy basalt, the Lava Creek mining district attracted a steady stream of people to the boom towns of Era and Martin. Most who came to the area during this period were hopeful miners, and traveled over the section of emigrant-road-turned-stage-road within the today's monument. But like earlier migrants, they too passed back and forth over the road with other destinations in mind and no thought of staying. Those who did stay were among the first and most influential settlers in this region, members of the Martin family. Frank Martin, for example, discovered the Horn Silver Mine, and along with his brother, Samuel, he had lived in the area since the early 1880s, homesteading, raising livestock, and mining.

It was Frank Martin's nephew, Era Martin, who exploited the lava interior for his homesteading operations in the first decades of the 1900s. Martin, and others it seems, collected firewood for their winter fuel within the monument boundaries prior to and in the first year after its establishment. Martin apparently hauled away dead limber pine from the shaded and sheltered northern slopes of cinder cones so that he would not have to cut the timber on or near his own land, or buy coal from Arco. Wood collecting, however, did not stop with downed trees but resulted in the felling of many live, "beautiful trees," some along the old road corridor near Sunset and Grassy cones.[31]

As an extension of his ranching business, Era Martin also "built" a wagon road across the lava flows to Little Prairie Waterhole about 1920. Martin had discovered the water in a series of fissures a few years earlier, and during the exceptionally dry summers of 1919 and 1920 he found plenty of water here, constructed a cement water trough, and grazed his cattle herds on Little Prairie's "grassy swales free from rough lava." According to some accounts, Martin watered between 70 and 120 head of stock at the waterhole for at least two years. But as older residents pointed out, the water in the lava fields was not likely to last, and after installing a water pump, Martin pumped the well dry eleven

---

apparently still extant, but its authenticity needs to be verified. The cow bone inscription was apparently added to the monument's museum collection.

[31] Harold T. Stearns to A.E. Demaray, Acting Director, National Park Service, October 23, 1926; Samuel A. Paisley, Custodian, Craters of the Moon National Monument, to A.E. Demaray, November 6, 1926, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, entry 7, box 580, file 0.35, part 2, National Archives.

days later.[32] For this reason, he apparently abandoned the operation, but the exact date is not known.

It is difficult to say whether Martin was the only rancher who exploited the scattered water and tracts of grass of Little Prairie. According to one observer, sheep were also grazed extensively in the vicinity of Little Prairie Waterhole, which possessed all the elements of "an old sheep camp with its well, tanks, troughs," and pump, causing one to conclude that "this region of wonders was 'discovered' quite a long time ago." At the waterhole, a large "magnificent specimen of limber pine," branches spread out "like a great oak," served as a landmark for the camp for miles, as did Echo Crater about mile to the west. (It is unknown whether this tree still stands.) Whether Martin created this camp is unknown, but it was entirely possible that sheepherders pastured their flocks here for years unbeknownst to others. Domestic sheep, for example, may actually have worn the trails on Sheep Trail Butte rather than wild mountain sheep, for which the butte was named.[33]

To ranchers like Martin the resources of the lava fields were free for the taking, part of the unsurveyed and unclaimed public domain. More appealing land was to be found in the drainage of Little Cottonwood Creek abutting the northern edge of the lava flows. Native grasses, wild plants, and sagebrush carpeted the flatland and slopes of the canyon and cones; Douglas fir and quaking aspen grew in the steeper, north-facing slopes, and dense brush and tall grass lined the stream. Most of this land had been surveyed and claimed by 1920. At least twelve people filed on approximately two thousand acres between 1903 and 1919 covering sections 16, 22, 25, 26, 27, and 35. Their claims embraced the slopes and flatland on the either side of the creek, the mouth of the canyon, Sunset Cone, and the old emigrant road.

Settlers claimed most of the land in this foothill country of the Pioneer Mountains under the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and Stock-raising Homestead Act of 1916. Both laws intended to break up the monopolies that grazing interests held on western land and reflected the federal government's belief that by doing so it would expedite settling the West with a large population. Through these homestead laws, the federal government encouraged the cultivation of grazing lands or the establishment of grazing

---

[32] "A Trip to the Valley of the Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 17, 1921; "Moon Valley Needs Signs," June 14, 1923, newspaper clipping, no title, box 4, file 18, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, Boise State University, for quotation; Stearns to Demaray, October 23, 1926; Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection, 227, 238.

[33] "Moon Valley Needs Signs," for quotations; Edward F. Rhodenbaugh to National Geographic Magazine, March 1, 1924, box 2, file 4, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers.

businesses by homesteaders themselves. The 1909 act, for example, let prospective settlers claim 320 acres provided that they cultivated a quarter of it, and that none of it was irrigable, timbered, or rich in minerals. In Idaho the law allowed the entrant to live up to twenty miles from his claim as long as half of it was tilled. Revising this legislation somewhat, the 1916 law doubled the amount of land that could be filed on and allowed those lands to be within a relatively compact form and suitable primarily for grazing.[34]

Although the record of these homestead entrants is incomplete, testimony to their experience may lie in the fact that only two of the twelve claims went to patent. The others failed to show final proof within the allotted three to five years and relinquished their claims, had them cancelled, or sold their interests to speculators. Since the majority of homesteaders registered claims about 1916, they were most likely responding to the more flexible homestead legislation enacted that year. They may well have sought opportunities here as a result of the delays and failures of the Big Lost River irrigation project.

The reason why so few found success here seems to have been because they underestimated the environmental conditions of this foothill country. Claims ranged in elevation from 5,800 to 7,500 feet of mostly timberless ridges surrounding a meadow, a seasonal stream, a few scattered springs, and flows of bare, broken basalt. Snow often arrived early and remained on the ground until late in the spring, shortening the growing season, limiting travel, and isolating prospective residents.

Early in the 1890s one family experienced this, it seems, when attempting to settle on Big Cottonwood Creek, the drainage lying about two miles west of Little Cottonwood and today's monument. Emigrating from Illinois, the family heard of "a pretty, unclaimed meadow" in the mountains west of Blackfoot near a "wild, volcanic lava wilderness." Having passed through the "fire-blackened wasteland" of the Craters landscape, they selected a site in the meadow below the foothills, built a log cabin, started a garden, and raised livestock. Unexpectedly, bands of Shoshone camped in this meadow on their seasonal migration, though by now they were confined to a reservation. Intimidating but not hostile, the Indians were the least of the family's worries. Winter came and at 6,000 feet the tranquil meadow transformed into a frigid and desolate place. Once plentiful wildlife migrated to better habitat. It was difficult to care for animals, stay warm, find food, and thaw ice for water. The closest supply point and neighbor was the Martin ranch, several miles away over a wagon road rough in the summer and nearly impassable in the winter. Abandoning the cabin and meadow, as a result, the family

[34] Roy M. Robbins, Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970, 2nd rev. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 362-363, 387.

traveled west to the more hospitable Wood River Valley.[35]

One can only imagine that prospective settlers experienced something comparable within the monument's similar terrain. For example, Mary F. Downer, a widow from Idaho Falls, filed a claim for 320 acres in sections 25 and 26 under the enlarged homestead law on September 2, 1919. Her land covered the northeast slope and base of Sunset Cone, a hundred acres of which she planned to cultivate for dryland farming. The nearest running water was Little Cottonwood Creek, two and a half miles northwest, and the nearest well was nine miles northeast. Without a ready supply of water, living on the land seemed unlikely. Farming also seemed unlikely, for it depended on rain and soil moisture in arid climate, her claim averaging an elevation of six thousand feet. The General Land Office cancelled her claim late in 1929; apparently after ten years she had not been able to make the required improvements, though available records do not indicate whether she ever broke ground for planting.[36]

Oscar B. Morris of Martin could have attested to the environmental conditions Downing encountered. On July 14, 1919, he filed a stock-raising homestead claim on eighty acres in the northeast corner of Section 22, which encompassed the steep ridge of about seven thousand feet overlooking Little Cottonwood canyon and was part of a much larger claim to the north of today's monument. This vacant land, as Morris stated, had been used by the "general public" for grazing. He estimated that his entire claim could sustain about one hundred head of stock during the spring, summer, and fall. Grazing, he believed, was all this rolling and hilly country was good for; it was too steep and too high for raising crops, especially since too much snow fell in the winter and stayed too long for working the land in the spring. Thus its "most profitable use" was for grazing because it produced a "good growth of grass." Just how profitable stock raising was remains unknown. For technical reasons Morris's claim was terminated in the fall of 1924.[37]

Like Morris, Earl R. Quincy of Martin entered a stock-raising homestead claim on 160 acres in sections 25 and 26 on November 15, 1919. Relatively flat and rolling land

---

[35] Ree E. Montgomery, June 7, 1993, personal communication.

[36] Homestead Entry, Mary F. Downer, September 2, 1919, Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49, Idaho State Land Office, Boise, Mixed Land Case Files, Idaho, ca. 1908-1966, box 324, file 038586, National Archives--Pacific Northwest Region (hereafter cited as RG 49, Mixed Land Case Files, Idaho, NA-PNR).

[37] Homestead Entry, Oscar B. Morris, July 14, 1919, RG 49, Mixed Land Cases, Idaho, ca. 1906-1966, box 1040, file 022129, NA-PNR.

at the base of the foothills, his claim was also part of much larger holdings in bordering sections. The only water, a spring in Section 23, was outside the present monument's boundaries, and Quincy planned to water his stock there and graze about forty head of cattle on his entire claim from spring to fall. Situated at an elevation of 5,800 feet, the land, he noted, was unfit for cultivation, had been previously used for grazing, and was overgrazed. To keep range stock out and to replenish the native grass, he planned to fence his entire claim. Evidently he never made these improvements and relinquished his claim about three years later.[38]

From these failed entries, one might conclude the obvious. Farming and stock-raising were difficult pursuits in these environmental conditions and likely to fail. Those who succeeded in patenting their claims did so, it seems, because their lands flanked Little Cottonwood Creek. This was true for Thomas H. Williams of Martin. On September 9, 1903, Williams filed on 160 acres in sections 22 and 27 embracing the steep slopes of the creek and the creek bottom near the mouth of the canyon. The land went to patent on May 17, 1909. Available records do not indicate the extent of Williams's improvements, but some sense of his operations might be extrapolated from the observations of the neighboring Martin ranch, located a few miles northeast on Lava Creek. In 1904, Annie Foster, a later emigrant traveling Goodale's Cutoff, described the ranch operations has something of an oasis in the sagebrush range that spanned from horizon to horizon. They "have about twenty acres fenced in," she wrote, "and a stack of wild hay. The grass looks green. Lots of fat cattle and horses in this twenty acres." But existing records do show that Williams sold his land to Edward B. and John B. Arthur, otherwise known as the Arthur Brothers, from Carey, Idaho, on September 17, 1909.[39]

Another method of patenting claims was through land speculation. The Arthur Brothers, for example, while apparently using their recently purchased land for grazing, purchased more. Between 1916 and 1919, they acquired the patents to nearly two hundred acres in sections 26, 27, and 28. All but forty acres adjoined their original purchase, raising their total land holdings to about 360 acres. In order to settle unpaid debts, the Arthur Brothers lost 240 of these acres which were in turn acquired by the Kilpatrick Brothers Company, a livestock company from Nebraska, on November 23, 1926. The lands obtained by the Kilpatrick Brothers comprised the original Williams

---

[38] Homestead Entry, Earl R. Quincy, November 15, 1919, RG 49, Mixed Land Cases, Idaho, ca. 1906-1966, box 1054, file 025683, NA-PNR.

[39] Homestead Entry, Thomas H. Williams, September 9, 1903, RG 49, Tract Book for Township 2 North, Range 24 East, entry 01188, original on file, NA-PNR. Annie Biggers Elliot Foster, Annie Jane's Journal, 1904, Marilyn R. Harbord, ed. (Chico: Glen E. Biggers, 1974), 34.

claim of 160 acres along Little Cottonwood Creek, one adjoining parcel of meadow and a separate parcel of a hillside in Section 26.[40]

The monument's boundaries were expanded in 1928 to include the Little Cottonwood Creek watershed. At that time, the Kilpatrick Brothers and Arthur Brothers were the sole owners of some 360 acres. Grazing was prohibited under National Park Service management, and through both land exchanges and direct purchase, the Park Service eliminated all of these private inholdings by 1933, save a small parcel included in a later addition.[41]

Physical remains of homesteading, either in the form of farming or livestock raising, do not appear to exist in the northern foothills and flatland of the Little Cottonwood Creek drainage, though as late as 1926 the geologist Harold Stearns mentioned seeing a "a ranch at the mouth of the canyon that has been abandoned fully 15 years from the looks of the sage brush. A sheep corral has been built on the land and is now used in the spring of the year." Sheep grazing, as Stearns observed, occurred in the area on a seasonal basis; most livestock owners drove their bands, sometimes numbering several thousand, through here on their migration between winter and summer range.[42]

Although sheep and other livestock browsed on the wild plants and grasses in the foothill country on a regular basis into the 1930s, the only lasting physical imprint associated with settlement ironically appeared in the more barren and craggy lava flows to the south. Older, vegetated flows, mostly kipukas, were exploited by livestock interests in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1960s the remnants of a sheepherder's camp (in the form of rock monuments and a stray horseshoe or two) and sheep trails were found in the Carey Kipuka. Generally, these materials suggested

---

[40] The information summarized in this paragraph is drawn from Homestead Entries, John B. Arthur and Edward B. Arthur, October, 8, 1917, May 29, 1918, January 28, 1919, May 15, 1919, RG 49, Tract Book for Township 2 North, Range 24 East, Hailey entries 021006, 023084, 023085, 023831, original on file, NA-PSR. These also can be found on microfiche in the Bureau of Land Management's Boise office. Information on the Kilpatrick Brothers is drawn from a Warranty Deed, September 8, 1932, file L 54, history files, Craters of the Moon National Monument.

[41] This parcel was 37.26 acres in Section 28, which was added to the monument after the 1928 expansion. It was thought to contain a spring and was added to increase the monument's water supply. See David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 36-39.

[42] Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection, 198.

that other remains might be discovered elsewhere. And though it has not been used for decades, the concrete water trough at Little Prairie Waterhole, perhaps the one surviving feature of this era, symbolizes this period.[43]

Summary of Context Theme

Settlement patterns on the Snake River Plain involved the gradual shift in image of the plain from negative to positive, from an inhospitable, barren desert to a place capable of supporting permanent, agricultural communities. Beginning in 1860 Mormon settlers began this process when they established settlements in southeastern Idaho. In the 1870s and 1880s, they expanded their presence farther north in the upper Snake River Valley. Overcrowding in Utah, new lands for the taking in Idaho, new railway service up the valley, and religious incentives were the motivations for Mormons. A broader and more encompassing force appeared with the advent of mining in southern Idaho in 1862 when gold was discovered in the Boise Basin and lead-silver in the Wood River region in 1880. Typical "boom" communities rose up near the mines, but so did a more permanent population composed of ranching and farming enclaves. Similar communities grew up in the Little Wood River Valley and the Big and Little Lost River valleys in the late 1870s and 1880s in response to mining. Settlement also owed a debt to cattlemen and sheepmen who trailed their herds across the Snake River Plain around this time, some of them establishing small operations in vicinity of mines. The completion of the Oregon Short Line in 1884 across the plain further aided settlement and communication with the more remote sections of the plain. But the most important element contributing to settlement was irrigation. Beginning with the Carey Act in 1894, irrigation projects transformed the desert, in places, into a garden and led to the dramatic increase in the state's population by the 1920s.

Within the Craters country some fragments of these settlement patterns appeared and assist in better understanding this aspect of its history. Stock raisers trailed herds through the Little Cottonwood Creek drainage in the 1870s and 1880s, and ranchers from the Lost River country were among the first known to venture into the lava fields in 1879 and the 1880s in search of water and grass for livestock. The ranchers' interest stemmed from the hope that this rather mysterious landscape possessed some hidden riches. Except for these brief encounters, settlers ignored the lava fields for the rest of the nineteenth century, it seems. Between 1903 and 1919, at least twelve homestead

[43] Interview with Roger J. Contor, September 6, 1990.

claims were filed in the northern section of the monument, those lands in and surrounding the Little Cottonwood Creek canyon. Evidently severe environmental conditions caused most of these claims to end in failure by the 1920s; the remaining were converted to Park Service ownership by 1933. Virtually no physical evidence of these endeavors remains. In the monument's vast lava fields, perhaps an unlikely country to find elements of settlement of any kind, homesteaders collected firewood, and a nearby rancher constructed a wagon road out to Little Prairie Waterhole where he built a cement water trough for his livestock between 1920 and 1925.

As a historic theme, settlement encompasses the interrelated themes of commercial development, in the form of mining and ranching, and agricultural development, in the form of irrigated farming. To understand the threads of these historical themes at Craters of the Moon it is necessary to weave them into a larger historical tapestry. Considered separately the activities of ranchers, miners, and homesteaders make little sense at Craters of the Moon. But viewed in a broader scope, they suggest that this remote lava landscape was related to the early settlement of the upper Snake River Plain. As each of the forces that brought people to the region occurred, some of their influence could be seen in the lava country.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Resources Related to Settlement

Description:

Typically a settlement property type, such as a farm or ranch, consists of a house, outbuildings, and other small-scale features. But this is not the case at Craters of the Moon. Here a settlement property type consists mostly of features. These could include the remains of farming or ranching operations, such as fences, livestock trails, water troughs, wagon roads, or cairns.

Ranching and farming at their best were marginal endeavors in the Craters of the Moon country. At least a dozen people filed homestead claims on land in the northern foothills of the monument during the first two decades of this century. Some of them raised livestock here and may have attempted to farm, but little is known about their daily lives. And they left behind only the smallest amount of physical evidence to mark their presence on the land. One historical account, for example, describes an abandoned "ranch" at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon in the mid-1920s, but by then it was already melting into the landscape. On this same land, someone had erected a sheep corral more recently, but neither the ranch nor the corral seem to have survived beyond

the 1920s, a period when most of the homestead claims in the area had expired or been revoked. The only visible resource related to ranching or farming is the section of Goodale's Cutoff that runs through the monument, which stockmen used to drive livestock across the northern fringe of the lava flows in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (It is described fully in the chapter on overland travel.)

In the southern section of the monument, there is more tangible evidence of ranching operations. The concrete water trough at Little Prairie Waterhole survives as the only known feature associated with ranching here around 1920. There may be other features nearby, such as at Echo Crater where a recent archaeological survey uncovered mostly old cans, porcelain pieces, and similar material. Other features associated with the settlement property type are the wagon road Era Martin built to Little Prairie Lava Flow and the cairn at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole.

Significance:

These properties at Craters of the Moon are associated with settlement, an important theme in the monument's history as well as in American history under National Register Criterion A.

Registration Requirements:

At Craters of the Moon, properties associated with settlement may qualify for listing in the National Register if they date between 1879 and 1933, or dates of a similar period should new information come to light. A property associated with settlement should be historically significant. It should be associated with some aspect of exploration, settlement, agriculture or commerce in today's monument and/or the surrounding region. For the property to be registered it must also retain a significant measure of integrity, although it may sustain some alteration and remain eligible as long as it retains historic character.

The National Register recognizes seven aspects of integrity to evaluate a property's historic character. These are location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

Recommendations:

The cairn at Vermillion Chasm Waterhole and the wagon road built by Era Martin should be surveyed to see if they still exist and have enough integrity to be

considered eligible for the National Register.

MINING



CHAPTER 7

Chapter Seven

Mining in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1882-1928

Overview of Mining in Southern Idaho and the Snake River Plain

Mining exerted considerable influence on Idaho's development as a state. Especially in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, gold and silver discoveries, as well as those of lead and copper, generated excitement and interest in southern Idaho. Mining attracted a frontier population willing to take financial and physical risks for the opportunity to gain untold wealth. Despite difficulties locating, extracting, processing, and transporting valuable minerals, Idaho's miners rushed from one promising discovery to another. "Even when judged by Western standards," the historian Rodman W. Paul wrote, "Idaho's gold rush people were extraordinarily unstable." And in the words of noted western historian Hugh H. Bancroft, "The miners of Idaho were like quicksilver. A mass of them dropped in any locality, broke up into individual globules, and ran off after any atom of gold in their vicinity. They stayed nowhere longer than the gold attracted them." In their wake they helped establish communities of small farming and ranching enterprises that supplied the mining districts. In this way the mining economy drew settlement to the area and led to Idaho's statehood in 1890. Without the mining economy, southern Idaho's agricultural settlement would have grown slowly; the arid country offered little appeal to farmers and ranchers, most likely delaying settlement until railroad service became available on a broad scale by the turn of the century.[1]

In the 1860s gold and silver mining in southern Idaho, as throughout much of the West, produced "years of intense excitement and eager anticipation." Rarely did such anticipation materialize in the Southwest, but for many places in the Northwest "flush times ruled" for most of the decade. Along with Montana, Idaho offered prospectors the closest reality of discovering a new California. It was a place with an abundance of placers, gold deposited in sandbars, gravel banks, or stream beds, which was easily mined with simple equipment. It was also a place with promising gold and silver lodes, or contained in veins, which was not as easily mined, for it required large sums of capital, expensive equipment, and labor.[2]

---

[1] Merle W. Wells, Gold Camps and Silver Cities: Nineteenth-Century Mining in Central and Southern Idaho, 2nd ed. (Boise: Idaho State Historical Society, 1983), 1, 158-159; quotations from Rodman W. Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 138. See also Rodman W. Paul, The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900 (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988), 24-91.

[2] Rodman W. Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 136, 138, and 6. Quotations from 136.

Gold and silver finds, both small and large, set off a series of rushes to southern Idaho mining districts from 1862 until 1869, when mining declined. Mining excitement created a pattern of successive boom towns in Idaho as it did all over the West. According to Idaho historian Merle W. Wells, "prospecting led to discovery and stampede, and finally to the formation of a new mining district, if there really was anything in the area to develop." In southern Idaho, this pattern varied according to placer and lode strikes and was seen in a "dozen or more early mining areas" in the region.[3]

Up until the early 1860s thousands of men raced to promising new gold and silver strikes all over the West, including Colorado and British Columbia in 1858 and Nevada in 1859. Gold was found in northern Idaho in Nez Perce country in 1860, giving rise to camps like Orofino, only to be hastily abandoned when news of gold in the Salmon River region broke. Florence, the new center for activity, struggled into existence during the hard winter of 1861-1862. But with the discovery of gold in the Boise Basin in summer and fall of 1862, miners deserted Florence as well and headed for "the new mecca" in southwestern Idaho.[4]

Although gold was found in Montana that same year, the great placers of the Boise Basin "turned out to be the most important." Compared to other districts in the Pacific Northwest, the new mines eclipsed anything that had been found. A major gold rush to the Boise Basin commenced in the fall of 1862 and proceeded unabated to 1864. Considered to be easily the most densely populated and most productive placer and quartz mining section of Idaho, the Boise Basin supported a population of about 16,000 in 1864 during the temperate months, and it was estimated that between 1863 and 1866, the mines probably produced about $17 million. More than miners resided in the basin and contributed to the economy. Emigrants headed for the Pacific coast, either on the main Oregon Trail or the more direct route of Goodale's Cutoff, were attracted to Boise valley, settled there, and seized the opportunity to provide the mining camps with farm products and other supplies.[5]

In the mid-1860s interest shifted from Boise to new mines in the South Boise and Owyhee districts, and some less successful rushes over the Snake River Plain. By 1865 and 1866, Montana captured the imagination of gold and silver seekers and its promise

---

[3] Merle W. Wells, Gold Camps and Silver Cities, 1; Rodman W. Paul, The Great Plains and Far West in Transition, 46-47.

[4] Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 138.

[5] Wells, 1, for quotation; Paul, 139-140.

lured many away from the Boise area. Any surplus population drifted away from the Boise Basin when new discoveries were made in northeastern Nevada by 1868. Yet unlike its predecessor districts, the Boise mines outlasted their initial discovery and produced continuously even after other districts captured most of the attention.[6]

The future of southern Idaho's mining economy existed primarily with lode mining after 1869; most of the placer areas, except for places such as the Boise Basin, had been depleted. But in order for the more expensive lode mining to be successful, it required capital and awaited, among other things, improved technology and transportation to extract, process, and transport the ore to market. Throughout the West and southern Idaho, the 1870s were discouraging times for mining, particularly with the depression of 1873. But a new mining boom of significant size emerged late that decade and the 1880s. This later boom concentrated on silver more than gold, and base metals such as lead and copper. Recovering base metals led to the development of smelting facilities, their accompanying service industries, and the close affiliation with new technological advancements, new railroads, and a new capacity for attracting large investments of capital.[7]

By the early 1880s lead-silver recovery in Idaho outdistanced gold mining; the major lead-silver operations lay in the northern panhandle in the Coeur d'Alene country, whereas, on a smaller scale, southern Idaho's lead-silver empire lay in the Wood River country. Initial mineral discoveries on Wood River date to the Boise Basin gold rush years of the 1860s. Nothing came of these finds immediately. Indian conflicts during the 1870s delayed any development, but these were resolved with the end of the Bannock War of 1878. By then profitable smelting methods had been proven in other western mining districts, and construction of the Oregon Short Line was making its way across southern Idaho, close to Wood River. With these changes, mining interests revised their opinion of the valley and returned to prospect.

Prospectors located and filed claims for lead-silver mines in 1879, and by the spring of 1880 a rush to Wood River was underway. That summer still other mines were discovered, transforming the region into southern Idaho's leading mining center for at least a decade. By the end of 1899, the Wood River mines had produced more than $14 million in silver and about $5 million in lead. Most of this money had been accrued during the 1880s, the same years that gave rise to the communities and mining centers of Bellevue, Hailey, Ketchum, Bullion, Broadford, Muldoon, Vienna, Galena, and Sawtooth

[6] Wells, 1.

[7] Wells, 112; Paul, 136.

City, among others. As in the Boise Basin, Wood River mining influenced the establishment of ranching and farming settlements in the Wood River and Little Wood River valleys. In 1883 a branch of the Oregon Short Line reached Hailey and further aided both mining operations and settlement. No matter these improvements, mining booms eventually busted. Declining lead and silver prices in the early 1890s, combined with the panic of 1893 and more cost-efficient smelting operations in Salt Lake City, Denver, or Omaha, effectively shut down the Wood River mines.[8] Though mining itself did not fade away, the rushes and small-time operations did, giving way to more industrial and corporate-based enterprises.

Mining in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1882-1928

Mining activities near what is now Craters of the Moon were tied to the lead-silver boom of the 1880s occurring throughout southern Idaho. Early in the decade, the Wood River rush, for example, spawned interest in the lead-silver lodes of the more remote Lava Creek district. An important yet short-lived silver producer in Idaho, the district thrived during the mid-1880s with the discovery of the Horn Silver Mine and the development of mining centers such as Era and Martin. The rectangular-shaped district encompassed the drainages of Lava Creek, Champagne Creek, and Antelope Creek, for a total of about 108 square miles. (The area included townships two and three north, ranges twenty-four and twenty-five east, and the eastern halves of townships two and three north, range twenty-three east.) Its eastern boundary lay about sixteen miles west of Arco, most of the district falling within the boundaries of Butte County and small portion within Blaine County. Although most of the mining district covered the high mountains north and northwest of today's monument, its southeastern corner embraced the foothills of the Pioneer Mountains and Little Cottonwood Creek.[9]

Initial mining excitement developed when prospectors discovered the first copper lodes in upper Big Lost River Valley in 1879 near the present town of Mackay in the Copper Basin. More promising strikes were made by 1884. News spread of these discoveries and the development of the Big Copper mine (later known as the White Knob mine) causing a rush to the Lost River area. Towns like Cliff City, Carbonate,

---

[8] Wells, 112-113; Clark C. Spence, "The Boom of the Wood River Mines," Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 3, 12; Merrill D. Beal, A History of Southeastern Idaho (Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1942), 194-195.

[9] Wells, 122; Alfred L. Anderson, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho, Bulletin 32 (Moscow: University of Idaho, 1929), 1, 4.

Alder City, and Houston sprang up, it seemed, in the wink of an eye. Among the hopeful prospectors and miners were some from the Wood River mines. Faced with limited prospects around Ketchum and Hailey, they headed for the "New Eldorado." Some, like James D. Martin, traveled over Goodale's Cutoff, now the Blackfoot-Wood River stage and freight road, going "around the lavas" to reach the new mining centers.[10] Traveling the route was nothing new, for miners heading to the Boise Basin in the 1860s covered the same ground.

In the midst of this mining excitement, James B. Hood made lead-silver discoveries in the Lava Creek area, west of the Big Lost River, in 1879. He had problems convincing possible investors about the value of his find for several years. But in the wake of the Wood River rush, he experienced less trouble. Another selling point for his potential mining camp was its access from the Blackfoot-Wood River road along Goodale's Cutoff. In this way he was not only connected to the smaller agricultural communities such as Arco and Carey, but the larger communities with railway connections such as Blackfoot and Hailey. Hailey also had a smelter.[11]

Hood worked his claims for at least two years, preparing eight lead-silver veins for mining, most of his outcrops testing from about one hundred to two hundred ounces of silver per ton of ore. By 1882 mining was progressing slowly on Champagne Creek, as was the development of two camps, Era and Martin. Hood sent two loads of ore to Hailey for testing by the middle of 1884, which produced about five and six hundred ounces of silver a ton.[12]

The real boom began in June 1884, however, when Frank Martin discovered the Horn Silver Mine near Era. Martin's mine proved to be a rich find. He and his brother, Samuel, hauled and shipped ore to Salt Lake City where it yielded just over eight hundred ounces of silver a ton. With that news the rush to the Lava Creek district commenced and Era boomed. By the hundreds miners, prospectors, and others descended upon the district in the mid-1880s. The townsite for Era, named for Frank Martin's nephew, was located along Champagne Creek and was established in the spring of 1885, as was a post office later that year. A post office for Martin had been

---

[10] Clarence A. Bottolfsen, Little Bits of Lost River History (Arco: Arco Advertiser, 1926), 7; James D. Martin, "With the Lost River Pioneers," typescript, Lost River Valley Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society, 2.

[11] Wells, Gold Camps and Silver Cities, 122; see also, the Wood River Times, April 4, 1887, which cites Hood as being the "pioneer discoverer" by as early as 1881.

[12] Wells, 122.

established in 1882, and about the same time that Era was developing, a townsite was laid out for Martin, located on Lava Creek near the Martin family ranch four miles to the east. A townsite company planned, surveyed, and platted 250 lots.[13]

Martin's find attracted eastern capital as well, and in August 1885 he sold his mine for $62,500, generating, it seems, more excitement over what mining prospects the region contained. The new company expanded operations, and other prospectors, seeking their fortunes, soon reported new discoveries. Among these mines were the Last Chance, Reliance, Policy, and St. Louis on Champagne Creek, the Hub on Lava Creek, as well as additional discoveries on Antelope Creek. "In a very short time," James Martin recalled, the country was flush with fortune seekers; "there were prospectors camping all around the mountains at the heads of Dry Fork of Antelope [Creek], Fish Creek, Lava Creek, and Champagne Creek." Prospectors literally cluttered the hills. And people "from everywhere were staking out lots and preparing to build in the prospective metropolis of Era."[14]

Growing with the mining flurry and operations, Era proved to be a good barometer of the Lava Creek mining boom. After the Horn Silver Mine went into operation, the town supported a transient population of anywhere from several hundred to several thousand at its peak. For the 1886 territorial election, the mining town mustered more than 180 votes. By at least 1887, Era could boast six saloons, a hardware store, a drug store, three general stores, two livery stables, a mining equipment store, a barber shop, an opera house, a blacksmith shop, at least one brothel, and private dwellings--all occupying log cabins, wood-frame buildings, shanties, or tents.[15]

But as with most booms, Era's soon busted. The main producing mine was the

---

[13] Ibid. Daniel J. Hutchison and Larry R. Jones, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, Adventures in the Past--Idaho Cultural Resource Series, Number 1 (Boise: Bureau of Land Management and Idaho State Historical Society, 1993), 145.

[14] Wells, 122; Martin, "With the Lost River Pioneers," 11; see also Wood River Times, May 5, 1886. It should be noted that the Wood River Times is a good source, and perhaps the only primary source, for the development of Martin, Era, and the Lava Creek district. Much of the information summarized in the above citations, namely Merle Wells' work, has been drawn from the Times. Neither time nor the scope of this project allowed for combing the paper for the history of the district, since it was adequately addressed by Wells.

[15] Alfred L. Anderson, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho, 30. Information on the structures and the types of businesses that occupied them is drawn from several sources. See, for example, Wells, 122; clipping in Era Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society; and Wood River Times, September 1, 1885.

Horn Silver, and as it went, it seemed, so too did the district. After the new owners made improvements, adding a twenty-stamp mill and a recovery plant, the mine turned out about $250,000 in the 1886-1887 season. But in general the mining venture failed because the operators could not perfect the milling process. Within a year the mines declined rapidly. Other discoveries of ore in the district met with similar results. Era's slightly used stamp mill stood silent; Nicholia, the closest smelter, shut down, and a price collapse in 1888 exacerbated mining problems. One group of mine owners attempted to use Era's twenty-stamp mill for a galena mine in the summer of 1889 but failed to make the recovery process work and shut down later that year.

In order for mining to be profitable in Era and the Lava Creek district, processing had to be done locally; it was too expensive to ship ore to distant cities like Denver and Salt Lake City. A brief resurgence in milling at Era in July 1893 confronted this problem, and the unhappy coincidences of dropping silver prices and the panic of 1893, all but ending the visions of any new Eldorado. Mining operations at Era and throughout the district, it seemed, faced repeated obstacles in the form of location, market value, and recovery problems. Although between 1897 and 1928 there were brief revivals, nothing major ever developed. The district probably realized a total of $400,000.[16]

As for Era, a few people lingered until the turn of the century. Its post office closed in 1894 and mail delivery was transferred to Martin. Like so many towns of its kind, Era faded from sight. Eventually, its stores, houses, and other structures along with the bricks from the mill were moved to the new townsite of Arco after 1901. Martin, while never the going concern that Era was, lasted longer--if only in name. Much of the town was the Martin ranch and continued to serve as a stage stop, local supply center, and post office, which was discontinued in 1940.[17]

Mines and Mining Claims within Craters of the Moon, 1887-1928

The Lava Creek district's southeast corner encompassed Little Cottonwood Creek in today's Craters of the Moon National Monument (T. 2 N., R. 24 E.) and drainages within its immediate vicinity. Mines and mining prospects, such as the Hub, Paymaster, Silver Bell, Edna, Golden Chariot, and Silver Tip, for example, were scattered throughout the drainages of Lava and Big Cottonwood creeks; they contained a variety

[16] Wells, 123; Daniel J. Hutchison and Larry R. Jones, eds., Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, 145.

[17] Ethel M. Ackerman, "Big Lost River and Old Arco," Snake River Echoes v. 5, n. 4 (1976): 77.

of ores, including silver, silver-lead, zinc, and copper. The deposits ranged in elevations from 6,000 to 9,300 feet, some of which were easily accessible from local roads, while others located on high mountain slopes were more difficult to reach. Just as the mines ranged in elevation, they ranged in time of discovery. Some mines like the Golden Chariot and the Hub were discovered in the 1880s and 1890s. But others like the Edna and Silver Bell were discovered during the first decades of the 1900s, when mining underwent brief revivals in this district.[18]

The first mining activity to appear in this area was associated with the silver boom of the mid-1880s and was located on the ridge separating the headwaters of Little Cottonwood Creek and the South Fork of Lava Creek (the northern part of Section 16 which was eliminated from the monument in the 1930s). Most of the mining activity here surrounded the operations of the Hub Mine, on the South Fork of Lava Creek. It went into production in the mid-1880s, soon after Frank Martin discovered the Horn Silver Mine. The claim lay mostly outside of monument's boundaries (sections 8, 9, 17), but a portion of it lay in Section 16 on a slope above Lava Creek, at an elevation of over 6,000 feet. During the first two years of its development, the mine produced at least $90,000, mostly in silver and some in gold. But like most mining in the Lava Creek district, its production soon went dormant with only occasional revivals. In addition to the Hub, about fourteen other mining claims, dotting the area above Little Cottonwood Creek and the South Fork of Lava Creek, were filed between 1887 and 1921.[19] The record is not complete about what became of these claims and their related mining activities, but it seems that they never developed on the same level as the Hub or Horn Silver mines.

South of these claims, in the southern half of Section 16, there was more obscure evidence of prospecting and mine exploration. On the flanks of the ridge, piles of stones "suggestive of claim corners" were noted in the early 1930s but no valid claims were found. Similarly, in Section 21, below the ridge on Little Cottonwood Creek and within the present-day monument, some markers for old mining locations were discovered. Yet from the appearance of the few remaining corner stakes, prospectors had abandoned the claims years earlier. No county records existed for these claims.[20]

---

[18] Anderson, 56, 60, 62-63, 65.

[19] Anderson, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho, 56; Carl Lausen, General Land Office, to Director, National Park Service, May 23, 1934, [report on mining claims], file L, Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives, Craters of the Moon National Monument.

[20] Carl Lausen to Director, National Park Service, May 23, 1934.

In the midst of these scattered prospecting and exploration resource was Little Cottonwood Creek. It witnessed the only known hard rock mine development and mineral extraction within the present monument. The Martin Mine was located on the creek's eastern branch, at an elevation of about 6,300 feet in the narrow, V-shaped valley. Surrounded by the steep slopes of the Pioneer Mountains, with their mix of quaking aspen and Douglas fir, the mine was reached by a steep, one-and-a-half mile dirt road along the creek. The property was made up of a group of nine lode claims, commonly referred to as either the Creek Group of lode claims or the Creek lode mining claims; they comprised approximately 160 acres, although records on these matters were not always clear. The Creek, Frank White, South Side, and Spring claims were located in 1921; the Midway in 1922; Spring No. 2 in 1926; and the Black Hawk, Big Timber, and Lincoln in 1929. Mattie D. Martin and Otto B. Fleischer of Arco were the original owners, though ownership changed hands over the years.[21]

The owners of the mine reportedly began working their claims about 1922, producing most of their ore in 1925 and 1926, accumulating as of 1928 some thirty tons. Silver and gold were the most abundant minerals of the lode; silver, for example, averaged more than one hundred ounces a ton, and gold anywhere from a quarter to three-quarters of an ounce per ton. Despite these promising values, the mine only yielded a small amount of ore because the lode lay in the creek channel, which flooded the tunnel and required continuous pumping. Fumes from the pump's exhaust also filled the tunnel causing hazardous working conditions and limiting work to three hours a day. Further complicating production, the ore body was unlike other deposits in the district; it did not follow a single vein or fissure but, like an slanted pipe, lay at the intersection of numerous fissures.[22]

Only a little more is known of the actual mining operations. While hiking up Little Cottonwood Creek in late September 1926, the geologist Harold T. Stearns noted an upper and lower mine, the latter flooded with creek water, but nothing more. Even though little production seems to have taken place, the mine owners improved their property. Between the 1920s and 1934, this site consisted of seven structures in two

---

[21] For acreage see Memorandum, Conrad L. Wirth, Chief of Lands, to Regional Director, Region Four, October 3, 1944, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Accession 76A1102, Federal Record Center# 131597, box 4, file L 14, Federal Record Center, Pacific Northwest Region. Anderson, Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho, 59; Clausen to Director, May 23, 1934; Quin A. Blackburn, "Mineral Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument," October 11, 1960, technical files, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 3.

[22] Anderson, 59.

groups, all of which were reported to be on the Creek mining claim. One group of buildings contained a hoist house, measuring sixteen by eighteen feet, an engine room, measuring sixteen by eighteen feet, a blacksmith shop, its dimensions unknown; the other group of buildings contained a mess house, measuring twelve by sixteen feet, a bunkhouse, measuring twelve by fourteen feet; and a storage shed and a cellar, their dimensions unknown as well. All the structures were wood frame, except for the bunk house which was constructed out of logs. The mining works themselves consisted of an 85-foot shaft, about 515 feet of tunnel (its average diameter about 4 feet), and general mining wastes such as tailings piles.[23]

Except for some minor ore removal in the 1920s and apparently in the mid-1950s, the Martin property was all but abandoned as a working mine shortly after discovery. Similar to other mining operations in the Lava Creek district, it is believed that the ore from the Martin Mine was not valuable enough to offset removal, milling, transportation, and smelting costs.[24]

In 1960 some of the mining works showed obvious signs of disrepair. The collar of the mine shaft had caved in and almost half of the buildings had disappeared. Of these it is difficult to know which were original because their descriptions differed from those described in the mid-1930s. A mine inspection report documented four buildings on the claim. One, a log cabin measuring about fourteen by twenty feet, had mortar chinking, a plank floor, and was in fair condition. A second log cabin, evidently in deteriorated condition, measured some twelve by fifteen feet. Connected to this cabin by a covered walkway was a wood-frame cabin with a shed roof, approximately twelve by fifteen feet, also in deteriorated condition. The last structure, located near the opening of the tunnel, was a small, wood-frame shed, sided and roofed with corrugated, galvanized steel sheets, its dimensions about eight by ten feet.[25]

In the early 1960s the National Park Service, with the assistance of the Bureau of Land Management, invalidated all but one of the nine claims making up the Martin Mine site. This final claim was the Creek mining claim, approximately twenty acres, upon which some or all of the mining works and related structures were located. Through its natural history association, Craters of the Moon purchased this remaining

---

[23] Harold T. Stearns, "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon," Craters of the Moon Museum Collection, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 198; Anderson, 59; A.T. Bicknell, [Inspection Report of Creek Mining Claim], February 25, 1935, history files, Craters of the Moon National Monument.

[24] Quin A. Blackburn, "Mineral Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument," 20-21.

[25] Ibid.

claim in 1967. After the claims had been declared invalid, monument officials notified the owners (or estate since the last owner died before negotiations were finished) that they could remove the buildings and clean up all debris by the end of June 1967. Officials evidently extended the same invitation after assuming ownership of the Creek claim. The owners removed one building in the 1960s, but the rest remained. Early in the 1980s, the Park Service tore down the remaining structures and filled in the mine shaft and tunnel. At that time, all that remained were several piles of mine tailings along the creek bed, mining and road scars on the hillside above the creek, and structural fragments where buildings and some mine works once stood.[26] In October 1994, rehabilitation erased these last vestiges of mining.[27]

Summary of Context Theme

Mining played an important role in the development of Idaho. The last four decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth century saw a flurry of activity surrounding various rushes. The resulting economic development led to the creation of the Gem state and contributed to the establishment of small communities, which supplied the mines with agricultural products and other goods. At the turn of the century the great booms faded but settlement of Idaho was well underway.

Near Craters of the Moon mining followed a similar pattern. The discovery of the Wood River mines in 1880 heightened interest in more remote regions such as the Lost River country and led to the development of the Lava Creek Mining District in the mid-1880s. Mining interests used the route of Goodale's Cutoff (Blackfoot-Wood River stage road) to reach the new mines, ship their ore, and bring in supplies for the camps. Boom towns like Era and Martin grew and benefited directly from the mining activity, as did the more permanent town of Arco which profited from its location along the freight and stage routes to the mines. Mining peaked in the district by the 1890s, and, though

---

[26] David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 44-45, 188-189, especially notes 281 and 282. For permission to remove the buildings in the 1960s, see Roger J. Contor to Wesley R. Brown, December 10, 1964, RG 79, Acc. 761062, FRC# 131598, box 5, file L 14, Federal Record Center, Pacific Northwest Region.

[27] For information on the "naturalization" of the Martin Mine and compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, see Charles H. Odegaard to John Hill, April 15, 1995, and Robert M. Yohe II to Jim Thompson, September 28, 1994, file H 4217, Central Classified Files, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Regional Office, Seattle, Washington.

subject to brief revivals, was abandoned by the late 1920s.

Mining touched the monument as well. Prospectors combed the area in search of valuable minerals. For a time, part of a silver mine lay within monument lands, and at least one working mine, the Martin Mine, was developed within Craters of the Moon's present boundaries. Even though mining in the monument was not that extensive, it was connected to mining in the region. For example, the monument embraces a section of the overland trail miners and prospectors traveled over to reach the mines; it contains claim markers and, until recently, the remains of an unsuccessful hard rock mine. All of these vestiges of mining suggest the monument's association with the surrounding Lava Creek Mining District as well as mining in southern Idaho during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Associated Property Types

Name of Property Types: Hard Rock Mining Sites--Prospecting/Mine Exploration and Mine Development and Exploitation

Description:

Resources associated with mineral extraction are complex and for evaluation purposes can be organized according to three basic functions. These are, according to National Register Bulletin 42, "extraction of the ore from the earth; beneficiation, which upgrades the ore's value; and refining, which enhances the value of the ore/metal even further until it achieves a nearly pure state." At Craters of the Moon mining activity falls under the first function, extraction. Property types associated with extraction, in turn, fit into two general categories reflecting the evolution of a mine and/or mining activity. These are (1) prospecting and mine exploration and (2) mine development and exploitation.[28]

The historical resources that one could expect to find associated with prospecting and mine exploration sites at Craters of the Moon are hand-dug prospect pits, drill holes, and possibly power-shovel trenches and bulldozer cuts. Based on the speculative nature of the mining industry isolated holes--adits or shafts--may also qualify as separate property types.

[28] The property types outlined here have been adapted from Bruce J. Noble, Jr. and Robert Spude, National Register Bulletin 42: Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering Historic Mining Properties (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1992), 9-10, 19-21. All quotations here and below are from this citation.

The properties that one could expect to find for mine development and exploitation at Craters of the Moon are "the physical remains of hoisting works such as headframes and hoist engines; open pits or shafts or adits; ventilation systems such as air shafts or blowers; power systems such as steam boilers or electric generator houses; drainage systems such as Cornish pumps; water delivery systems; transportation systems such as...ore cart runways; and maintenance and administrative facilities such as blacksmith shops...offices and worker's housing." Other properties types include tailings, stone claim markers, and corner stakes.

The above descriptions of resources associated with historic mining generally relate to the scattered evidence of mining activity in Craters of the Moon National Monument when it was part of the Lava Creek Mining District. Specifically, most of these resources related to the former Martin Mine site.

Significance:

The resources associated with mining activity in Craters of the Moon may qualify for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement. The mining properties are associated with historic mining which contributed to the settlement of the Lost River country and, as part of the larger arena of silver mining in southern Idaho, settlement of the region. (There are numerous possible themes such as commerce, economics, and engineering but the mines of the Lava Creek district do not appear to have had the same impact as those in the larger Wood River region.) Mining properties within the monument should also be evaluated under Criterion D--for what information they might yield about prehistory or history.

Silver mining and the extraction of other valuable minerals occurred in the Lava Creek Mining District between the mid-1880s and the late 1920s. The most important mines in this district peaked by the 1890s, but some mining continued into the 1920s as part of intermittent revivals on a much smaller scale. A corner of Craters of the Moon National Monument belonged to the Lava Creek district and witnessed mining activity during this period. Although sections of the monument which contained mining operations and most of the structures associated with them inside today's monument have been eliminated, evidence of mineral prospecting and extraction may still be found within the monument's boundaries.

Registration Requirements:

At Craters of the Moon, mining properties that may qualify for listing in the National Register must date between the mid-1880s and the late 1920s. To be listed in the National Register a mining property must have not only have historical significance but also have integrity. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. Mining properties require a slightly different perspective when being evaluated for integrity because by their very nature they are often in a deteriorated condition. Abandonment, vandalism, and harsh environmental conditions, for example, contribute to this physical state. Therefore, a single mining property component may lack integrity until it is considered as one of many properties conveying a collective image, that of a historically significant mining operation. "In essence, the whole of this property will be greater than the sum of its parts."

The following aspects of integrity require consideration when evaluating hard rock mining properties at Craters of the Moon:

Location:

Hard rock mine properties at Craters of the Moon should have integrity of location. That is, a mine or piece of mining equipment should be in its original location. A mine or other extraction sites did not move, but the equipment used for extraction often did. If mining equipment has been moved, it could retain integrity if it were relocated to a mine older than fifty years. Equipment less than fifty years old would not necessarily detract from a historic mine's significance, but it would not contribute to the property's significance either. Moreover, mining machinery would no longer possess integrity if it was removed from the mine property for display in museum or to serve some other interpretive function divorced from its the historic mining activity.

Setting:

The setting of historic mining properties at Craters of the Moon is tied closely to their location, for it is the appearance created by an array of abandoned machinery, unsightly tailings piles lining stream beds, and dilapidated buildings and structures littering the landscape that represents the setting of bygone industrial activity. These vestiges of mining operations are important aspects of setting "that can actually contribute to the integrity of a mining property." Modern intrusions, however, would

detract from the setting.

Design:

Mines evolve through time and the likelihood of finding one that is in an unaltered state in Craters of the Moon, or anyplace else for that matter in the Lava Creek district, would be rare. Evaluating the integrity of a mine's design then should take into consideration a property's evolution through time and not just its conformity with original design plans or established mine engineering practices. It should also be noted that the underground works of a mine were also designed as part of the mine system and may be considered when establishing integrity--but only if they are safe to inspect. Although considering these above factors is important, the cumulative loss of features could ultimately detract from a mine's design integrity. Evaluation of design integrity would have to weigh these variables.

Materials and Workmanship:

For mining properties within Craters of the Moon to retain integrity of materials, there should be evidence that previous repair or restoration efforts have used materials sympathetic to those used originally. Most mine structures were made of unpainted and untreated wood, for example. Similarly, mining properties should retain evidence of original workmanship, as much as possible. This is especially true, for example, in the preservation of features such as square-set timbers in an underground system.

Feeling and Association:

The mining properties in Craters of the Moon should evoke strong feelings of abandonment and isolation, for these are the most common feelings associated with the boom and bust cycle of historic mining activity. When the bottom fell out of the mining industry or when a particular ore deposit was exhausted, for example, mine owners simply walked away from their operations, deserting machinery and structures. Any evaluation of a mining site, then, should determine whether modern development has diminished the integrity of this feeling of isolation and abandonment. Similarly, integrity of association will exist for a historic mining operation if its assortment of mine structures, equipment, and other visible features "remain to convey a strong sense of connectedness" between a mining property and "a contemporary observer's ability to

discern the historical activity which occurred at the location."

Recommendations:

Craters of the Moon may benefit from a thorough investigation and evaluation of its historic mining properties using a more holistic outlook as outlined in National Register Bulletin 42. Specialists might find more about mining in the monument and its relationship to mining in the Lava Creek district. This, however, is unlikely. Based on existing evidence, the Martin Mine site was the only known hard rock mine property in the monument. Although associated with the Lava Creek district, it appears to have been a site notable only for mineral extraction, not refining, beneficiation, or engineering design. At one time it possessed many of the structures associated with mineral extraction, but the deterioration and removal of the mining complex, as well as the collapse and filling of mining works, diminished the integrity of the site, to the point where it no longer exhibited integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Two archaeological surveys, one from 1966 and the other from 1992, identified no significant cultural resources in the area, and a more complete archaeological inspection of the mine site from the summer of 1994 concluded that it was not eligible for the National Register. The State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the Park Service's conclusion that the site lacked historical and archaeological significance in September 1994, and the site was rehabilitated the following month.

This action does not necessarily rule out the existence of any other mining properties. Other physical evidence of historic mining activity, such as test holes, rock cairns marking abandoned mining claims, and corner stakes, could exist in the monument and benefit from field investigations as well. These properties may have historical significance if they can be shown to be vestiges of larger mining operations. This may occur, for example, if a historical archaeologist discovers evidence which associates these properties with an adjacent camp or mining machinery, or if they can be shown to be associated with an early settler of the area, a prominent miner who is not associated with any other properties, or with prehistoric or aboriginal mining.

RECREATION AND TOURISM



CHAPTER 8

Chapter Eight

Recreation and Tourism in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1924-1942

Overview of Recreation and Tourism on the Snake River Plain

In the nineteenth century few tourists envisioned the Snake River Plain as a vacation paradise. The monotonous desert landscape compelled travelers to view it more as a place to cross and survive, rather than as a place to appreciate for its scenery. Often by chance pleasing natural features or panoramas presented themselves, much to the relief of overland travelers. One exceptional natural wonder, flowing deep in the basalt canyons of the Snake River, was Shoshone Falls. Its beauty mesmerized a handful of explorers and sightseeing adventurers in the 1860s and 1870s. They likened it to Niagara Falls, symbol of the young nation's sublime natural grandeur, and though published accounts of Shoshone Falls reached an eastern audience, only a small number of intrepid tourists found their way to this distant part of the country. Like the plain itself, Shoshone Falls was difficult to reach, and the predominately genteel tourists of the time favored the lavish hotels and fancy resorts of the Southwest and California. Just as important, these tourists traveled to their exclusive destinations on the newly finished transcontinental railroad, a trip conducted in both comfort and style.[1]

Thus, the completion of the Oregon Short Line across southern Idaho by 1884 exerted a considerable influence on tourists' perceptions of the Snake River Plain. The railroad conquered distance and time and improved the comforts of travel. With improved transportation facilities came expanded vacation opportunities and destinations on the once-reviled plain. Railroad publicists, the state immigration agency, and local boosters, looking to sell the territory's wonders to the nation, extolled the plain's scenic beauties in the late nineteenth century. Guide books and other literature lured tourists here primarily to see Shoshone Falls, the "Niagara of the West," but the publications also lauded the region's healthful environment, from its dry climate to its curative hot springs. Along with hot springs, guest ranches and resort hotels were common enterprises within reach of main and branch lines around the turn of the century. All of these benefited from the Union Pacific's promotion of scenic excursions, tourist developments, and the

---

[1] Peter G. Boag, "Overlanders and the Snake River Region: A Case Study of Popular Landscape Perception in the Early West," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 84 (October 1993): 122-129; Carolyn Rhodes-Jones, "An Evolving View of the Landscape: Trappers, Tourists, and the Great Shoshone Falls," Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 19-27. For a general overview of tourism in the West, see Earl Pomeroy, In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).

sale of its vast land holdings to prospective settlers.[2]

How they arrived--and more so what scenic splendors they sought out--told much about tourists in the Snake River country. In the boundless volcanic plain, the falling water of Shoshone Falls captured the most interest of nineteenth-century sightseers; hot springs, such as those found at Hailey, were also a popular destination. An interest in sublime scenery and healing waters reflected national trends in tourism. Disenchantment with continued urban-industrial growth and a concern for physical health around the turn of the century spurred many Americans to seek relief and spiritual comfort in the great outdoors. Whether bird watching, soaking in spas, or climbing mountains, tourists favored familiar sights--picturesque peaks, lakes, and rivers--to endless tracts of desert. City dwellers from the burgeoning population of Spokane, Washington, for example vacationed in northern Idaho. They retreated from the confines of their urban environment and the hot summers of the Palouse country to the cool and quiet forests, rugged mountains, glacial valleys, and beautiful lakes of the nearby Coeur d'Alene country. Southern Idaho, though to a lesser degree, was no exception.[3]

Around the turn of the century, for example, Idahoans proposed setting aside Shoshone Falls as a national park in order to save it from the destructive processes of water-power projects. They also wanted to preserve the falls for its intrinsic qualities and its tourist potential. Though the movement failed, it reflected a change in perceptions about the value of the Snake River Plain. Of particular significance was that many of the natural wonder's numerous visitors hailed from Idaho. By 1890, the young state's population had increased by 171 percent over the previous decade, from 32,000 to 84,000; it had almost doubled to 161,000 by 1900, and leaped to 430,000 in 1920. Many residents lived in cities, a trend common in a nation now more urban than rural. Beset by big-city problems, Idahoans expressed an appetite for the outdoors and an affinity for

---

[2] Robert G. Athearn, "The Oregon Short Line," Idaho Yesterdays 13 (Winter 1969-70): 7; Carlos A. Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 146-147, 170-172.

[3] Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows, 167; Rhodes-Jones, "An Evolving View of the Landscape," 22-23. Hans Huth, Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957; Earl Pomeroy, In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America; Peter J. Schmitt, Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). Nancy F. Renk, "Off to the Lakes: Vacationing in Northern Idaho during the Railroad Era, 1885-1915," Idaho Yesterdays 34 (Summer 1990): 2-15.

rural virtues.[4]

Improved roads contributed significantly to these changes. The Good Roads movement flourished across the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Politically active reformers rallied for federal assistance to improve farm-to-market routes and postal delivery to rural areas--roads that would eventually lead urban dwellers from town to country. Overall, the highway movement reflected the beliefs of Progressive-minded Americans that better roads would improve rural life, stem the tide of rural migration to cities, and expand commercial opportunities for both rural and urban citizens. By doing so, good roads advocates helped form a national road building program run by the federal government, which, to this end, passed highway legislation in 1916 and 1921 to construct the nation's first road system.[5]

Changing views of nature, and the popular cry for better roads, were also aided by the dawn of the automobile age. Between 1910 and 1920, automobile ownership skyrocketed throughout the country from less than half a million owners to a staggering figure of more than 8 million. The popularity of the automobile, as both a personal plaything and a practical agent of transportation, was linked not only to improved roads but also to affordable prices, symbolized by the Model-T Ford. Prior to the Model-T, automobiles were toys for the rich, but Henry Ford's design changed that, creating a durable, mass produced, and cheaply priced automobile within range of every American. Free to travel where and when as they pleased over better roads, urban Americans, who worked less and recreated more by the 1920s, escaped the city for the country in their cars.[6]

Idaho's urban residents displayed similar traits. Although Idahoans were slow to adopt the automobile in the early 1900s, they outpaced the national average for automobile ownership by 1920, primarily because of the state's flurry of road

---

[4] Rhodes-Jones, "An Evolving View of the Landscape," 25; Thomas R. Cox, The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 7. For an overview of changing views of western scenery in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Anne Farrar Hyde, An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920 (New York: New York University Press, 1990).

[5] Peter J. Hugill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929," Geographical Review 72 (July 1982): 330-336, 342, 344-349.

[6] Frederick L. Paxson, "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935," American Historical Review 51 (1946): 236-253; Peirce F. Lewis, "America Between the Wars: The Engineering of a New Geography," in Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves, eds., North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987): 411-412.

construction throughout the decade. With the state's network of roads in place, even the previously inaccessible recesses of the Snake River Plain were within reach of Idahoans as well as other motoring Americans.[7] Free to see the plain on their own terms, from the safety of their motorized buggies, scenic tourists were more inclined to find the once-maligned region less threatening and more appealing.

It was in this atmosphere, when wild and dangerous nature was seemingly transformed into nature tamed by roads and cars, that state promoters hoped to capitalize on some of the excitement surrounding auto tourism. In the years after World War I, national parks formed a popular destination for sightseeing motorists. Many traveled to the parks over the Park-to-Park Highway, a formal route that covered six thousand miles and eleven western states, connecting the West's premier nature preserves. Scenic boosters were also anxious to join the "See America First" campaign--a patriotic movement to market American scenery as superior to Europe's natural marvels in the years surrounding World War I. To do so, Idaho promoters adopted the slogan "See America First: Begin with Idaho." Even though the "See Idaho First" literature extolled the state's scenic mountain wonders, "beautiful bodies of water," roaring streams, and therapeutic hot springs as unparalleled by anything in Europe, it suggested that the volcanic country was unique as well.[8]

In this regard, few boosters could match the ebullience of Boise's Robert W. Limbert. Believing that tourism was the future of the state's economy, Limbert, a man of many callings--taxidermist, explorer, and photographer, to mention a few--publicized Idaho's diverse geography mostly through photographic essays. He helped sell Idaho to the nation beginning with an exhibit at the 1915 World's Fair in San Francisco. Soon after he turned his attention to unknown places in Idaho like Craters of the Moon. He explored and advertised its wonders to the country in illustrated articles which appeared in such widely circulated journals as National Geographic. His promotion greatly aided

---

[7] Schwantes, In Mountain Shadows, 193-194.

[8] Robert Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 3-4; "Forging the Park Chain," Outing 74 (August 1919): 63; Stephen T. Mather, "What I Am Trying to Do With the National Parks," The World's Work 48 (May 1924): 42. Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 93-94. One of the first uses of the "Begin with Idaho" phrase appears in The State of Idaho Official Report of the Bureau of Immigration, Labor, and Statistics, 1912 (Boise: the Bureau, 1912), which accompany scenic photos; see overleaf to article by James C. Lewis, "Pleasure and Health Resorts," 161-163, in above citation. Robert W. Limbert, mentioned below, also used the phrase in his Idaho display at the World's Fair in 1915. That the Snake River Plain was becoming a tourist attraction is mentioned in Schwantes, In Mountains Shadows, 147, though he states that much of the attention was focused on Shoshone Falls.

in lifting the veil of obscurity from the lava country and made it a place of national renown. The ultimate statement of his efforts was the monument's establishment in 1924. Moreover, his promotional endeavors bolstered the efforts of those in the Lost River country who hoped to save the young state's spectacular volcanic country as well as cash in on its potential for scenic tourism.[9]

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Limbert and others continued to tout the Snake River Plain's superlative natural scenery and stressed the region's image as a "last frontier" to an urban nation. Yet the opening of Sun Valley in the late 1930s somewhat altered this image of the frontier in Idaho with a more modern image, that of a destination ski resort. Sun Valley, while located in the Sawtooth Mountains, provided an important tourist draw to the Snake River region, particularly for tourists traveling between Yellowstone National Park and the mountains of central Idaho. Moreover, Sun Valley was the brainchild of Union Pacific Railroad mogul W. Averill Harriman. During the early years of the Depression, Harriman launched the development of the resort to boost his railroad's lagging passenger profits and to rival the best Europe could offer. Compared to other western sites, the slopes overlooking the old mining town of Ketchum were considered ideal--for their spectacular views, dry powder snow, and year round access from the Union Pacific's primary line at Shoshone. Built on a four-thousand acre ranch, Sun Valley opened in 1937 and soon became a world-class resort, primarily for the rich, yet it also influenced the development of other ski areas in the state, and contributed to the growth of tourism as one of the state's leading industries and largest employers.[10]

Scenic tourism had hardly reached its apex in the late 1930s. Recreational opportunities were still underdeveloped despite the establishment of Craters of the Moon, the opening of specialty areas like Sun Valley, and the creation of picnic sites and campgrounds in the state's expanse of national forests. As a recreational study concluded in 1939, many of these sites were far from population centers. More importantly, the study lamented the fact that the state's highway system traversed broad valleys and desert spaces, preventing the scenic tourist or traveler from seeing the state's true natural beauty--its mountains and forests. Only in these areas would they know the solemnity of nature's gifts, "the solitude and restfulness that always accompany the

---

[9] Nicholas Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert': Man From the Sawtooths," Idaho Yesterdays 32 (Spring 1988): 2-10; David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 18-32.

[10] Information on Limbert's activities can be seen in the discussion below regarding his activities at Craters of the Moon. For a brief account of Sun Valley, see Schwantes, 210-211.

beauties of nature."[11] Evidently, not all were convinced of the Craters country's scenic value.

Recreation and Tourism in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1924-1942

Scenic tourism in the Craters of the Moon country was a twentieth-century phenomenon, for during most of the nineteenth century, the region seemed to epitomize the Snake River Plain at its worst. A foreign and forbidding landscape, the sagebrush and lava desert presented a harsh environment that fur traders and overland travelers avoided throughout 1800s. When they did come into contact with the region it was less by choice than by necessity. In the 1820s and 1830s, fur brigades traversed the desert between the Big Lost and Snake rivers, well to the east of Craters, only to make trade more efficient. Similarly, in the 1850s and 1860s, emigrants chose Goodale's Cutoff because it offered a shorter and safer route to their destinations. Even though the trail crossed through the Lost River country and the northern edge of the lava flows within today's monument, overlanders shared the opinion that the country was scenically worthless. And some, if not all, felt endangered by the perilous terrain and the arid climate. Here, then, was a visually monotonous and alien desert landscape better to cross and survive than to ponder its natural wonders. Few would have disagreed with Julius Caesar Merrill in 1864. Having passed through the volcanic desert, he was glad to put the "desolate, dismal scenery" behind him, to be rid of such a sterile, "unvarying mass of black rock," or in even more negative terms, "black vomit."[12]

The trend continued in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Miners, ranchers, and settlers routinely passed through the Craters region on their way to someplace else, and in the process, overlooked or ignored the lava landscape's aesthetic qualities. In general, travelers were not impressed with the scenery of the Craters country because it seemed to be such an uninviting place which caused great physical hardships. Speaking for many potential tourists in the early 1880s, Carrie Strahorn described the stage trip from Blackfoot to old Arco, or "Lost River Junction," as forty miles

---

[11] Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners, A Preliminary Report on the Parks, Parkways and Recreational Areas of Idaho (January 1939), 96-97, quotation from 81.

[12] Julius C. Merrill, Bound for Idaho: The 1864 Trail Journal of Julius Merrill, ed. Irving R. Merrill (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1988), 101.

> through a sage-brush desert with not a drop of water the entire distance except what was hauled by teams from Snake River. The dust was insufferable enveloping the stage in such clouds of ashy earth that we could not see the wheels of the coach and it spread over us like waves of the sea.

To make matters worse the Lost River Junction provided only primitive accommodations for stage passengers, though conditions steadily improved, over the several years as she and her husband, Union Pacific promoter Robert Strahorn, traveled through southern Idaho.[13]

What seemed to remain a constant were the poor traveling conditions and their negative influence on aesthetic perceptions. Just as experienced by early emigrants, the rough desert road damaged stage coaches and slowed travel. One particular spring seemed more difficult than other times of the year to Carrie Strahorn. Passing west through the lava beds of the Craters country, she recalled that her party had to contend with the "expected rocky roads." She knew from experience that the lava region was "without parallel for roughness and ruts," and the day traversing this stretch of road stood out starkly in her mind. "I cannot begin to portray the trials of that day on the lava beds," she wrote. "Thousands of acres of black rock, as hard as iron, rose in waves, jagged points, and minarets from a few inches to twenty-five feet."[14]

Strahorn's experience illustrates what shaped travelers' negative opinions of the volcanic territory of Craters of the Moon prior to the twentieth century. In the first place, physical discomforts--heat, dust, and rough roads--exerted considerable influence. Parched, worn, and tired, Strahorn was in no frame of mind to see this country as anything but a lava waste. In the second place, without familiar picturesque scenery, Strahorn overlooked this country's unique charm and instead emphasized its dreary monotony. This became apparent, for example, when she sought out one of the plain's more famous natural wonders, Shoshone Falls. As her stage approached the falls, Strahorn described how "the scenery was so wild and enchanting, with vast amphitheatres and curiously shaped lava rocks," so fascinating in fact "that the most critical people would forget the roughness and lose themselves in admiration of nature's freaks."[15]

Finally, as Strahorn's words reveal, nineteenth-century Americans considered awe-

---

[13] Carrie A. Strahorn, Fifteen Thousand Miles by Stage (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 151-152, quotation from 151.

[14] Strahorn, Fifteen Thousand Miles, 450-451.

[15] Strahorn, 440-441.

inspiring natural features, such as Shoshone Falls and its surrounding canyon, as "freaks" or "curiosities" worthy of seeing and preserving. As national park historian Alfred Runte argues, Americans derived a sense of cultural heritage from natural wonders that were monumental in scale--like California's ancient sequoias, the Southwest's time-worn canyons, and Yellowstone's geysers. Natural splendors of this caliber provided the young nation with a rich past. Moreover, these wonders rivaled and even eclipsed Europe's most renowned landscapes and cultural masterpieces. They not only drew scenic tourists to the West, they also encouraged the development of the national park idea and thus the creation of national parks, beginning with the Yellowstone country in 1872.[16]

However remote the Snake River's great cataracts were, sightseers willingly braved overland hardships to reach them in the 1880s and 1890s, but were not willing, it seems, to undertake the same trials to reach the Craters country. Despite this, the region was described, on occasion, in language similar to that used to extol the nation's wondrous works of nature. A few observations from this period suggest how views of the Craters landscape evolved from a repulsive region to a natural wonder of the world.

In the mid-1860s, for example, George Forman, a miner heading for the Boise Basin, passed through the lava landscape of the present monument. Surveying the formations, he expressed genuine interest in the fresh appearance of the rippled surface, the "large masses of Rock" and "honeycombed ore," which in places was hollow-sounding under foot and in others piled with cinders. Having seen other sections of the Snake River Plain as well, Forman ascribed an Old World quality to the region, noting that the three buttes rose on the horizon "like Pyramids," and suggested that the plain was unique, perhaps the "largest crater or Lava Bed in the world."[17] In the late 1870s, the noted Scottish geologist Sir Archibald Geikie, who briefly encountered the plain's eastern margin, suggested that the plain's "floods of basalt" were essential to understanding the origin of the basaltic plateaus of Ireland and Scotland.[18] In a similar sense, E.W. Jones wrote of the plain as one of the wonders of Idaho, if not the world, in the late 1880s. Jones emphasized the "varied character" of the lava landscape. The Snake River Plain, he noted, was a land of contrasts, unmatched throughout the world. The "second largest lava field," it spanned some 150,000 square miles, only exceeded by India's Deccan

---

[16] Pomeroy, In Search of the Golden West, 46-57, 88-92; Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience, 33-64.

[17] William E. Davis, "George Forman: The Great Pedestrian," Idaho Yesterdays 10 (Spring 1966): 4-5.

[18] Sir Archibald Geikie, Geological Sketches at Home and Abroad (New York, 1882), 214, 237-238, 242-245.

region. Nevertheless, he wrote that India's field could not equal in "interest our own, with its vast canyons of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, its intricate and impassable" sections, "its vast streams of basalt, black and frozen in the channels down which their floods advanced." Nor could India's lava plain compete with the Snake River Plain's magnificent surrounding mountains, the streams draining into it, the timber scattered across it, the wildlife populating it, and the wild grasses and sagebrush that clothed this "blackness and desolation...with verdure."[19] Jones presumably included the Craters country, a "line of extinct volcanoes," with his observations of the plain's exceptional character and international ranking.[20]

Despite their contributions to revising the negative image of the lava territory, Jones' and Geikie's writings seemed to have generated little interest in both the plain and the area of today's monument for sightseeing. In the late 1880s, tourist promoters may have included the "great lava bed of Idaho" in their guide books, but they did so only because tourists would have to cross the plain to reach the real western marvel, Shoshone Falls.[21]

More substantial evidence of the lava country as a natural curiosity came in 1901 when geologist Israel C. Russell studied the region. Russell's wide-ranging inventory covered the plain's geology, water, vegetation, and wildlife as well as its agricultural and settlement potential. Yet he also described the region as a natural and visual wonder. Downplaying the arid and wind-swept desert image, he emphasized instead the "healthfulness of the land" and its wilderness quality. Its wildness should be appreciated, not feared or loathed. "To lovers of nature," he wrote, "and all who rejoice in scenes of natural wildness unmodified, or what is too frequently essentially the same thing, unmarred by the hand of man, the plains of southern Idaho present exceptional attractions." Russell's experience in the region taught him that cursory observations of the plain would not impress a traveler, especially one unaccustomed to desert environments. This was especially true when the mid-day sun or winter clouds rendered the country flat and featureless. The plain's true beauty only became known to someone who spent weeks or months riding across its "seemingly boundless surfaces," he noted. That is when he will find this landscape "to have charms unthought by the casual passer-

---

[19] E.W. Jones, "Some Wonders of Idaho," Historical Society of Southern California Publications 1 (1888): 23-29, quotations from 28-29, 26.

[20] Jones, "Some Wonders of Idaho," 27.

[21] Quoted in Rhodes-Jones, "An Evolving View of the Landscape," 24.

by."[22]

An important element in revealing the plain's beauty was light. As Russell pointed out, the time to view the plain was at dawn or dusk when the slanting sun beneath a clear sky cast all things in shadow, bringing out "details everywhere on its surface." Not only did light expose definition but color and shadow as well:

> When the sun is high in the cloudless heavens the plains are gray, russet brown, and faded yellow, but with the rising of the sun and again near sunset they become not only brilliant and superb in color, but pass through innumerable variations in tone and tint.

Cool blues covered distant peaks rimmed with the rising sun, and as the sun rose, the colors deepened to violet and purple "of a strength and purity never seen where rain is frequent." All shades of purple bathed the arid lands. At sunset, shadows deepened and color reclaimed the landscape creating "a sea of purple on which float the still shimmering mountains." The plain's clear air turned clouds molten and magnified stars in the night sky. Such visual wonders surpassed "the ability of even a poet to describe."[23]

Though he surveyed the entire plain, he concentrated his efforts in its eastern half, discovering in the process "a score or more of volcanic cones" he called "Cinder Buttes," today's Craters of the Moon National Monument. Russell, believing these remarkably fresh craters and lava flows held the key to the geological history of the plain, conducted an intensive reconnaissance of the area from Big Cinder Butte north. It is likely, too, that Russell's experience in what is now the monument, a veritable microcosm of the entire plain, shaped his opinions about the region's aesthetic values. For here the numerous textured craters, cones, and lava streams presented "many pleasing variations in color, ranging from deep red through brown and purple to lusterless black." Particularly impressive was what he called the Blue Dragon Flow. A sheen of "desert varnish" coated the lava flow with a film of cobalt blue; its flecks of light blue or gray, like scales of a reptile, shimmered in the sunlight, creating an indelible

---

[22] Israel C. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Southern Idaho (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 13-28, quotations from 19 and 20.

[23] Israel C. Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Southern Idaho, 19-20, quotations from both pages.

image in his mind.[24]

By the turn of the century, it seemed at least to some observers that the Craters country was not as visually repellent as was commonly believed, especially to those trained in geology. Even so the region remained isolated and difficult to reach in the early 1900s. But eventually it was "discovered" by local communities as a place for outdoor recreation and sightseeing. This discovery depended on changing attitudes of ordinary people toward the volcanic landscape, aided, for example, by experts like Russell whose work educated the general public about an obscure district in the West. In a sense, geologists, and other scientists, gave tourists and others ways to understand the unfamiliar landscape. They provided lay people a new vocabulary of geological terms and a sense of what natural forces produced the scene before them.

That discovery also depended on a growing population. Up until the turn of the century the Lost River area, as with much of the Snake River Plain, was lightly populated. But by the first decade of the twentieth century, the region's population swelled with the advent of irrigation projects in the Big Lost River Valley and along the Snake River. And these new residents, living in Idaho's isolated towns and villages like Arco, expressed a greater interest in the lava district's scenic qualities and tourist potential for their own enjoyment and economic returns.

Perhaps the most powerful influence in this changing perception was reclamation. Irrigation projects in the early twentieth century transformed "lava dust" into "gardens" and seemed to make the landscape less threatening. Once "smiling fields of grain, divided by rows of poplars" appeared, villages sprang up, and "white cabins" looked out "from laden orchards." In this way, the plain's "drear desolation" was modified, at least in the eyes of railroad publicists, irrigation promoters, and local boosters. In addition, irrigation "miracles" promised to make settlers rich, for example, who farmed the new tracts near Twin Falls, Blackfoot, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls. Farming and its potential wealth tended to create a sense of opportunity for settlers, and opportunity weakened critical thinking about the lava landscape.[25]

Moreover, as agricultural production reduced the amount of wild lands, it seemed

---

[24] Russell, Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains in Southern Idaho, 72-106, quotations from 72, 73, 106.

[25] Henry F. Cope, "Making Gardens Out of Lava Dust," World Today 10 (June 1906): 622; Hugh T. Lovin, "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain," Idaho Yesterdays 35 (Spring 1991): 10. For booster literature, see also John S. Mills, "A Gateway to the Future," Sunset Magazine 25 (July 1910): 119-120; "Twin Falls and Triple Opportunity," Sunset Magazine 25 (September 1910): 353-356; "The Secret Success in Blackfoot," Sunset Magazine 25 (November 1910): 589-590.

to instill a sense of appreciation for what remained. As the historian Roderick Nash has pointed out, anxiety over the close of the frontier underlay the conservation movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar forces were at work in southern Idaho and affected the Craters country as well. The legend of the "lost valley," for example, demonstrates how the lava territory took on a mysterious image, one more attractive than repulsive, as more lands were reclaimed on the Snake River Plain at the turn of the century. The volcanic landscape emerged as an island wilderness in a sea of settlement. The fable of the mythical valley, it would seem, helped foster a more enticing image of the region.[26]

The image of the Craters country evolved from a lava wasteland to a lava wonderland largely through the efforts of Arco residents and other settlers in the Big Lost River basin, who, after the promise of rapid agricultural growth ran aground, turned to tourism as a source of income. In the early 1900s, Arco was nothing more than a dusty village of about one hundred residents. That radically changed in 1909 when settlement was opened for the Big Lost River Project. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of people rushed to Arco to file on land being opened under the Carey Act. Incorporated that year, Arco boasted a population of more than three hundred in 1910, and six hundred including the surrounding communities. Unfortunately, the irrigation project failed to live up to its promotion. Mismanaged from the beginning, the project never delivered enough water for all of the lands opened to settlement. Those whose lands were eventually irrigated experienced some brief benefits from the World War I agricultural boom. In 1917, Arco became the county seat for the newly created Butte County and seemed to be on the verge of economic stability as the commercial and supply center for the surrounding Lost River country.[27]

But Arco's growth never seemed to realize its full potential, much of its fate resting with the troubled irrigation project. With unbridled optimism, Arco boosters had predicted another Twin Falls in the making and named Arco the "Coming City of the Big

---

[26] Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); "Complete Story of the Lost Valley," Idaho Republican, January 24, 1927.

[27] Mikel H. Williams, The History of Development and Current Status of the Carey Act in Idaho (Boise: Idaho Reclamation Service, 1970), 18-20; "100 Acres a Minute," Arco Advertiser, September 17, 1909; "Arco is Incorporated," Arco Advertiser, November 26, 1909; "Big Lost River Valley From 1879-1923," Arco Advertiser, June 1, 1923; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, vol. 2, Population (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 414; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, vol. 3, Population (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, ca. 1921), 235, 580.

Lost River Valley." Yet between about 1910 and 1920, many settlers were forced to abandon the desert lands they had cleared of sage in anticipation of water that never arrived. Consequently, boosters looked around for other ways to promote faster growth and a stronger economic base for the burgeoning community. An important part of this public spirit was the formation of a commercial club and its promotion of the region's outdoor opportunities.[28]

Advertising the Lost River country's natural features began with the railroad. In the summer of 1910, the Oregon Short Line experimented with Sunday excursions from Blackfoot to Arco. Responding to the desire of urban residents who wanted a respite from city life, railway officials offered special trips to the Big Lost River Valley for fishing and sightseeing. The "reputation of Lost river is spreading," the Arco Advertiser reported, and "as a pleasure resort it is becoming famous."[29]

Although Union Pacific officials were most likely promoting settlement in the valley to support their line, Arco boosters had good reason to be positive about scenic tourism. The first lengthy debates to market American scenery emerged around this time. The "See America First" campaign spread across the nation in the years leading up to World War I as a way to convince scenic sightseers and patriotic Americans to spend their money in America rather than Europe. Switzerland's alpine scenery could not compare with America's western wonders, the argument went. Catching the fever, Idaho boosters added the state's name to the slogan, and Arco commercial leaders promoted the Lost River country as one of the West's scenic treasures. The scenery here "beats the best that famous land [Switzerland] can offer," the editor of the Arco Advertiser wrote in 1912. National parks were the nation's premier scenic wonderlands, the editor suggested, and nearby Yellowstone was so vast it could contain thousands of Europe's "little parks." Yellowstone, just like the Lost River country, was untainted by civilization, and "just as left by the forces of nature and nature's God."[30]

More than the railroad, the automobile was responsible for bringing sightseers to the Lost River country in these developing years of the tourist business. Almost at the same time community leaders realized scenic tourism could be profitable, they joined the Good Roads movement and campaigned to improve roads to Arco so the growing

---

[28] "Another Twin Falls," Arco Advertiser, August 20, 1909; "Arco the Coming City of the Big Lost River Valley," Arco Advertiser, May 26, 1911; "Big Lost River Valley From 1879-1923," Arco Advertiser, June 1, 1923.

[29] "Excursion to Arco," Arco Advertiser, June 24, 1910.

[30] Runte, National Parks, 93-94; "America First the New Slogan," Arco Advertiser, September 13, 1912.

numbers of auto tourists, primarily from other states, could pass through the region. The automobile, though, was also important to the local scenery seeker. As more residents of Arco and outlying rural areas purchased new and more affordable cars, it was anticipated that "these machines will give a long needed impetus to sightseeing, a much neglected opportunity for great and interesting research among the scenic wonders of this region," the local press reported.[31]

Arco's civic leaders rallied for new highways to connect their town to interstate auto travel, and were particularly inspired by the thought of attracting motorists en route to the World's Fair in San Francisco in 1915. Meanwhile, a new highway was being proposed to link the Yellowstone Highway with Arco and continue west through the lava country to Hailey. Still more stimulus occurred that year when Yellowstone National Park opened its gates to cars. Arco boosters hoped to syphon some of the park's tourist traffic from the proposed highway as well as the Lincoln Highway, which led to the park. They also hoped to attract motorists heading for other scenic spots west of town such as the Sawtooth Mountains. Boosters soon were publishing information about the great camping and fishing opportunities for eastern tourists traveling through the Big Lost River Valley. The Big Lost River, they advertised, offered the "best fishing in this section of Idaho." The river was just a half mile from town, which itself "affords every convenience for the benefit of the tourist and fishing parties."[32]

It was in this climate of tourist promotion that the Craters country emerged as a central feature of the Lost River region's natural wonders. Shortly after settlement surged in the area, Arco residents expressed a curiosity for and a growing appreciation of the volcanic district's strange and fantastic formations. In some of the earliest reported outings, a group of adventuresome sightseers visited the "Devil's Playground" twice in June 1912. These adventurists, as had others before them, marveled at the weird phenomena--the numerous craters, serpentine lava flows, snow and ice-filled crags, among other sights. More importantly, they emphasized that the lava country's uniqueness gave it tourist potential. Echoing the patriotic tone of the "See America First" campaign and displaying an affinity for nature's oddities, they declared that "globe

---

[31] "Better Roads," Arco Advertiser, May 6, 1910; "New Road Being Opened," Arco Advertiser, August 12, 1910; "New Automobiles," Arco Advertiser, March 14, 1913, for quotation.

[32] "State Highway Engineers Surveying East and West Roads Towards Arco," Arco Advertiser, September 24, 1914; "A Scenic Detour from the Lincoln Highway," Arco Advertiser, June 11, 1915; "Autos to be Admitted to Park," Arco Advertiser, May 7, 1915; "Fishing is 'Bully' on Big Lost River!!!" Arco Advertiser, April 9, 1915; "Information for Tourists and Campers in the Sawtooth Park," Arco Advertiser, August 20, 1915. Quotation from "Fishing is 'Bully.'"

trotters have always been desirous to see places where, when nature was young, the earth's internal forces played havoc with her surface and left it in weird and fantastic shape." For centuries tourists have

> gone to Europe, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific to see the results of volcanic activity. How many know that one of the greatest vents the world has ever known lies but a few miles away from here, that one may drive to the spot, make careful inspection for hours, and return before the day closes?[33]

These closing comments suggested the importance of automobiles and the volcanic country's proximity to Arco, some twenty miles away. Where nineteenth-century travelers bound to wagons saw this as a hazardous lava waste, twentieth-century travelers, in the comfort of their cars, saw this more as a visual wonderland than a wasteland--mostly because they could come and go as they pleased. Thus promoters of the lava region considered the "queer shapes" and "roughness" of "these wonderful fields" to be "food for contemplation" rather than worthless desert. Only a truly thoughtless person would not be inspired by this landscape to meditate "upon the past, present, and possible future of this mundane sphere and its inhabitants."[34]

After these initial visits, boosters predicted that the Craters country could become one of the greatest tourist sites in the United States, and if properly exploited, "rank as one of the greatest regions on earth for sightseeing." Why, stated the Arco Advertiser, visit the "craters of Vesuvius and Mt. Etna and there see but a part of what could be seen, and seen easily southwest of Arco."[35] Soon the lava region was appearing as an important feature of the town's promotional stories. As part of Arco's campaign to lure motorists, particularly those heading for the 1915 World's Fair and Yellowstone, boosters advised tourists that taking the route through their town would bring them not only to a land of abundant fishing streams and big game, but also to the "craters, one of the most scenic spots in the west." Seeing these volcanic wonders alone was worth choosing the route.[36]

Despite these adulations, at first it seemed that the volcanic country only attracted

---

[33] "The Devil's Playground," Arco Advertiser, June 7, 1912.

[34] "The Devil's Playground Re-Visited," Arco Advertiser, June 21, 1912.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "A Scenic Detour From the Lincoln Highway," Arco Advertiser, June 11, 1915.

a local audience. On one particular trip, a party of Arcoites picnicked at the "ancient craters" in the summer of 1913 for the sole purpose of "viewing the scenes where the Devil and Mother Earth cut up 'high jinks' when she was young and gay and giddy." Especially interesting were the "strange and freakish" shapes of lava bombs which party members collected for souvenirs.[37] But a short time later, the Arco Advertiser could report that "hundreds of people" from throughout the state were seeking out the Craters country. To boosters the reasons were obvious. "One look at these craters with their great mouths yawning" presented a picture unequaled in beauty no matter how many miles one traveled. More than unusual scenery, they proclaimed in the spirit of Progressivism, the lava landscape and the Lost River valleys offered an antidote to urban ills. Here the "tired city man" could "forget his labors and spend a few weeks" where "the exhilarating air and the beautiful scenery is second to none."[38] Over the next several years each new discovery in or exploration of the vast volcanic territory aroused Arco's booster spirit and encouraged pronouncements of the area as "one of the greatest drawing cards for tourists to this state."[39]

Even so scenic tourism seemed to lag behind predictions, judging from the continued calls for better advertisement of the lava wonders. An important step in increasing tourism came in 1919 with the location of the Idaho Central Highway through the Lost River country. For nearly a decade Arco residents had awaited this decision. The east-west highway would connect Dubois (and the Yellowstone Park or Lincoln Highway) with Arco, Carey, Hailey, and Mountain Home. It seemed certain now that Arco, known for its camping in nearby canyons, its "fine fishing and beautiful scenery," would "receive its share of tourists." More importantly, the highway would pass within "two miles of the extinct craters in the weird lava region near Martin." Publicizing "these wonderful craters and recent lava flows" and improving the road into them for easier auto access were vital tasks. The Arco Advertiser conveyed the significance of this when it stated that "Nature has placed there scenes no other part of the state can duplicate," and thus given Arco a calling card worth promoting. Already near the edge of the lava

---

[37] "Ancient Craters," Arco Advertiser, June 27, 1913. The sightseers also claimed to have been infused with enthusiasm for the area through their guide. Era Martin, a neighboring rancher and early explorer of Craters country, had an interest in the volcanic area's "curiosities" that was "contagious." In fact it was for him that some referred to the area as the Martin Lavabeds.

[38] "Lost River Valleys--The Butte County Country," Arco Advertiser, December 11, 1914. See also "Fishing is 'Bully' on Big Lost River!!!" Arco Advertiser, April 9, 1915.

[39] See, for example, "Discover A Great Cave Near Arco," Arco Advertiser, June 2, 1916.

flows, the auto tourist could find shade, wood, and water for camping, and for just a few hundred dollars, the newspaper noted, the area could become "a favorite resort for the tourist as well as for our homefolks."[40]

By 1920, promotion of the Craters country was being propelled by the advent of better roads and auto tourism, and the desire by community leaders to reap the benefits of the growing popularity of outdoor recreation. In spite of this, Arco boosters could only point to limited results. Community leaders, however, became more committed to promoting the Craters region after a three-day, three-hundred mile driving tour of the Sawtooth Mountains in the fall of 1920. In a time when drives of more than fifty miles out of town made local papers, words failed to describe the region's natural beauties. Mile upon mile of lakes, forests, and mountains seen from the seat of a car not only inspired members of the group spiritually but also economically. Late in the season, tourists still crowded the hotel where the Arco party stayed. The adventurists concluded that central Idaho abounded in scenery and was a great playground, particularly since the Sawtooths were destined to become a national park. Such an abundance of magnificent natural resources could now be seen in a relatively short time and should not go wasted.[41]

The Craters country, of course, formed part of that abundant scenery, but despite promotional efforts, boosters still had to revise the region's desert image if they were to attract a wider audience. In 1920, Clarence A. Bottolfsen, editor of the Arco Advertiser and future two-time governor, made this clear in a speech before a statewide newspapermen's conference. While describing the Lost River region as a "scenic interest" to promote tourism, he implied the importance of overcoming the negative image of the desert. He downplayed, for example, the notion of the district as an awful waste, and instead emphasized it as a land of peculiar geological formations and phenomena found few if any other places. Where once seemingly endless space had made the desert intimidating and threatening, it was now, in Bottolfsen's words, a "land of magnificent distances." Buttes rose abruptly on the horizon and formed unique landmarks, and mountains, such as the Sawtooths, rimmed the plain and appeared sharply cut and distinct miles away. Nothing obstructed one's vision on the plain. The "spectacle of so much country spread before the eye," he said, was not intimidating but was "an inspiring sight." Here one could experience "peculiar inspirations" as if on the

[40] "Central Highway Passes Thru Arco," Arco Advertiser, January 31, 1919.

[41] "Sawtooth Mountains Scenic Wonderland," Arco Advertiser, September 10, 1920.

ocean watching the sun rise or set with all its glowing colors.[42]

With this positive view of the desert, he identified the "crater region" as the main attraction of the Lost River country, for it was "one of the greatest wonderlands in Idaho," and one of the most geologically interesting in North America or even the world. At the Craters motorists could experience the sublimity of the volcanic landscape; its dormant and recently cooled appearance complemented Yellowstone's "eruptive" geysers, boiling mud, and hot springs. Moreover, one of Craters' "chief natural advantages" for sightseeing was that motorist could easily see it from the main highway, and view this volcanic wonderland whether visiting Yellowstone, the Sawtooths, or points elsewhere.[43]

Promotional efforts such as Bottolfsen's saw some returns in 1921. Rupert and Minidoka boosters threw their support behind road projects to connect their towns to Arco and the Craters country hoping to divert Yellowstone traffic. In addition, the Oregon Short Line agreed to advertise a trip to the "Valley of the Moon" as one of the many auto tours available to tourists who wanted to see Idaho's scenic wonderlands that lay beyond its rails. Perhaps most significant was the growing popularity of Craters for motorists. One report boasted that the drive to the lava country was only a "four-hour spin" from Hailey, especially once the Idaho Central had been finished. Decent roads and autos made it a simple task to "unlock the secrets" of the "forbidding craters." Already used by Arco picnickers, the volcanic wonderland was becoming an "easy and interesting little excursion" for those who lived farther away. All the "daring automobile tourist" needed to do was head for Martin, the Idaho Statesman reported, follow a sign posted there to the "Valley of the Moon," drive over a short entrance road, and join "numerous parties" of auto tourists already exploring the sites.[44]

What a few years earlier had been an isolated and shunned lava waste had become an attractive landscape for scenic tourism by the early 1920s, thanks largely to improved highways, automobiles, and changing values regarding the nation's wild lands. Influential as well was a growing awareness by Americans that the strange beauty and scenic wonders of places like the Craters country possessed both aesthetic and economic values. No one realized this more and was more responsible for promoting the Craters

---

[42] "The Lost River Valley As a Scenic Interest," Arco Advertiser, December 17, 1920.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "Other Towns Are Boosting Craters," Arco Advertiser, December 24, 1920; "Rupert Citizens Want Crater Road," Arco Advertiser, May 27, 1921; "Oregon Short Line to Feature 'Moon Valley' in Folder," Arco Advertiser, September 2, 1921; "Auto Brings Valley of the Moon Within Easy Reach of Tourists," Idaho Statesman, July 17, 1921.

country as a tourist attraction than Robert W. Limbert. Naturalist and explorer, photographer and writer, artist and entertainer, as well as a taxidermist by trade, Limbert brought the lava wonderland to the attention of the nation, a campaign which culminated in the establishment of the region as Craters of the Moon National Monument in 1924.[45]

Robert Limbert devoted his life to promoting Idaho's wondrous landscapes. In an era when the population of the nation's cities was expanding, he envisioned Idaho, and places like the Craters country, as "a vacation refuge for America's urban masses." Similar to Charles F. Lummis, who romanticized and publicized the Southwest, Limbert portrayed Idaho's wild lands as the last frontier. He brought this romantic vision to his visual and literary publications on Idaho's outdoors--its wildlife, its mountains, its geology, and its Indian history--which appeared throughout the United States. Limbert also modeled his interest in geology and exploration after his hero, John Wesley Powell, the geologist who had explored much of the West in the mid-nineteenth century. Like Powell, Limbert looked for the undiscovered and unknown reaches of Idaho. He searched for places "where other fellows haven't been." Though he loved the outdoors, Limbert's primary motive was economic. While displaying his exhibits of Idaho at the 1915 World's Fair, for example, he realized the economic potential of tourism. He fielded questions from fairgoers about the state's opportunity for outdoor adventure, hunting, and fishing, and most likely it dawned on him that city dwellers hungered for the country life, for some relief from the complexity of their urban-industrial lives. And so acting as a self-appointed tourist bureau with his various depictions of Idaho's varied geography as an "ideal tourist attraction," Limbert in turn promoted his own business interests. He brought the full force of his skills to bear on promoting Craters of the Moon.[46]

After moving to Boise in 1911, Limbert began hearing fantastic stories about the mysterious lava country in central Idaho. Drawn to the Craters country by tales of the mythical "lost valley," strange lava beds, and especially grizzly bears, he decided to explore this unsurveyed lava territory. A blank space on the map, labeled as "rolling lava terrain," the "Valley of the Moon" whetted Limbert's interest, for here was an exotic place likely to lure tourists to Idaho. He undertook his first two trips into the lava

---

[45] Nicholas Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert': The Man From the Sawtooths," Idaho Yesterdays 32 (Spring 1988): 6-7; David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 18-32.

[46] Nicholas Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert': The Man from the Sawtooths," 2-4.

country about 1918 and covered the area originally explored by Israel Russell nearly a decade earlier. Following these initial forays, Limbert set out on a longer exploration that covered the length of the Great Rift, an eighty-mile trek which lasted seventeen days. He launched his odyssey through the lava wilds in May 1920. He traveled north from Minidoka, accompanied by Walter L. Cole of Boise and an Airedale terrier, and for more than two weeks crossed the hot, arid, and treacherous volcanic terrain. Limbert believed that he and Cole were the first white men to undertake such an expedition, although others had penetrated parts of the lava country prior to his adventure.[47]

Limbert excelled perhaps less as an explorer than as a publicist. He produced no exact maps of the lava country, though he gave colorful names to prominent features. But, more important for tourism, he photographed the landscape. These remarkable photographs accompanied vivid descriptions of the lava district and accounts of this as well as subsequent expeditions in the area. Like others from the Lost River country, Limbert's experience traversing the contorted landscape helped him to "appreciate its scenic value." His expectations of an unattractive, barren, and lifeless region were proven wrong by his exposure to a land of solace and beauty, a land where there were, he said, "more odd and fantastic shapes and formations than one would believe existed in the whole world."[48]

Describing the region's unique beauty to an audience in search of inspirational scenery and restorative encounters with nature, Limbert wrote of the lava territory as "a place of color and silence." Some of the "grandest sights imaginable" were the "immense rolls and folds of fantastically formed lava...colored blue, black, and brown," and the myriad craters that "start at your very feet and dot the landscape to the horizon line," he noted. Descending into a huge crater dwarfed the human figure and enveloped one in "a red walled funnel." The remarkable Blue Dragon Flow, above all, seemed to contain the very essence of this country. As the light of sun and moon danced across the cobalt blue lava, the flow changed from a "twisted, wavy sea" to a "glazed surface" with a "silvery sheen." Here, he decided, was a place that was, with few exceptions, unequaled in

[47] Limbert recounts his explorations in several places, the best source is Robert W. Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" National Geographic 45 (March 1924): 303-328.

[48] Clarence A. Bottolfsen, "A Tribute to the Late Robert Limbert," file H 14, Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives, Craters of the Moon National Monument; "A Trip to the Moon Right Here in Idaho," Idaho Sunday Statesman, April 21, 1921.

"variety of formation, color, and scenic effects" in the world.[49]

Limbert shared with local boosters their appreciation of the Craters country, but he surpassed their ability to broadcast news of these wonders to a wide audience, emphasize the district's tourist appeal, and draw national attention to it. He did this not only by writing of the landscape in glowing terms and producing impressive photos but also by proposing that this region be preserved as a national park. Writing of his third exploration in the April 10, 1921, edition of the Idaho Sunday Statesman, Limbert stated that "no more fitting tribute to the volcanic forces which built the great Snake River Valley could be paid than to make this region into a national park." True to the promoter that he was, he asserted that the area would attract thousands of visitors, provided that adequate highways were built to persuade Yellowstone tourists to visit the lava country.[50]

The park proposal echoed earlier descriptions of the volcanic region as a nationally significant resource. "Idaho should and will awake to the possibilities of this region as a scenic attraction," Limbert wrote, "for nothing of a like nature of its size exists in America." For this reason he spearheaded a campaign to convert the lava district into a national park by conducting free lectures and meeting with civic groups around southern Idaho. He also attracted national attention by guiding several more explorations of the region with scientists and reporters. In June 1921 the explorer-promoter conducted what would be his most important exploration. His party consisted of ten scientists and civic leaders who were "equipped to make an exhaustive study of the lava formations, bird and animal life, and explore the many craters." The trip lasted two weeks, during which Limbert snapped more than 270 photos, recorded an estimated 1,400 feet of motion-picture film, produced sketch maps of the lava country's features, and discovered previously unknown ice caves, what he thought were bottomless pits, and craters.[51]

Upon his return Limbert announced that the scenery and natural wonders of the "Moon Valley" were "unexcelled by either Yellowstone National Park or the Garden of

---

[49] Robert W. Limbert, "Our Next National Park," typescript, 1-2, 7, box 1, file 18, Robert W. Limbert Papers, Boise State University; Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" 327.

[50] "A Trip to the Moon," Idaho Sunday Statesman, April 10, 1921.

[51] "A Trip to the Moon"; "Would Create a National Park in South Idaho," Idaho Daily Statesman, April 1, 1921; "Expedition Ready to Explore Moon Valley," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1921; "'Moon Valley' Gets Many Specimens," Idaho Daily Statesman, n.d., 1921; "'Moon Valley' Trampers Back Friday Morning," Idaho Daily Statesman, June 25, 1921.

the Gods."[52] To ensure this message reached as many sympathetic people as possible, he published a series of exceptional photo essays in a variety of newspapers and journals throughout the state and the nation. His most influential piece, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'" appeared in the March 1924 National Geographic. The essay was illustrated with twenty-three photos and a map detailing the route of his 1921 expedition, but the article actually represented a composite of his many trips. Limbert had submitted the article in the fall of 1921, but the National Geographic Society delayed its publication in order to confirm his observations--as if to suggest that such a remarkable place could not exist. Sunset Magazine, Outdoor Life, and Literary Digest also carried his stories of the Craters country.[53]

Limbert's publicity galvanized the existing appreciation that Arco residents had for the lava country and won new supporters at the same time. In the spring of 1921, for example, the Idaho Sunday Statesman reported that eastern scientists, Idaho commercial clubs, and women's organizations had expressed interest in the region's establishment as a national park. With the creation of a park and improved access into its interior, the paper noted, "this spot in Idaho may become as great a mecca for tourists as Yellowstone Park." In the wake of Limbert's 1921 expedition some 150 lodges and commercial clubs around the state were backing the park movement, some of whom petitioned Congress to create the "Valley of the Moon National Monument." Park advocates expressed concern for the area's protection and worried that without federal preservation the lava country would be despoiled by private and commercial interests. Nevertheless, preservation seemed more important for boosting the tourist economy of tributary towns near the proposed park.[54]

Arco was especially motivated by Limbert's promotion. In the summer of 1921, for example, more than two hundred people from the Arco vicinity turned out to celebrate Limbert's most recent exploration; they picnicked, gave speeches, and listened to music played by the Arco high school band. They also explored the wonderland, some

---

[52] "Valley of the Moon, Idaho, Declared a Wonderland," Salt Lake Tribune, July 8, 1921.

[53] Robert W. Limbert, "Among the 'Craters of the Moon,'"; Casner, "'Two-Gun Limbert,'" 7. See also, Gilbert Grosvenor to Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, March 8, 1924, box 2, file 4, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, Boise State University.

[54] "A Trip to the Moon," Idaho Sunday Statesman, April 10, 1921; "A Trip to the Valley of the Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 17, 1921; Pilgrim Brotherhood of the First Congregational Church of Boise to Addison T. Smith, June 15, 1921, and Community Council of Boise to Warren G. Harding, June 24, 1921, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, entry 7, Central Classified Files, Craters of the Moon National Monument, box 580, file 0.35, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

for the first time, and it was such a "huge success" that the participants planned others.[55] By 1922, local promoters had built a rough road into the lava country's interior, marked waterholes, and distributed to visitors free maps drawn by Limbert. By this time as well the Arco Chamber of Commerce recognized the opportunity at hand. Clarence Bottolfsen, who used the Arco Advertiser to drum up local and regional interest in protecting the volcanic district, publicized the chamber's plans to join with other communities to attract tourists to the Craters country. The chamber vowed to "do everything in its power to bring the attraction to the attention of those who would enjoy a trip to the 'Craters of the Moon in Idaho.'" The plan included a promotional blitz--distributing circulars, maps, and films to towns and communities along the Idaho Central Highway--and a scheme to improve highways to the lava wonderland and the primitive road within it. Finally, a mother-daughter team announced plans to build a hotel and run a campground within today's monument. Ultimately Arco's leaders believed that their town--as the "gateway" to the proposed park--would benefit from a tourist season, if only people would "wake up and do something before...the season arrives and finds us all 'asleep at the switch."[56]

Promoters could boast that more than a thousand visitors had passed through the lava country and signed a petition for its protection as a park by 1923. Attesting to the region's growing appeal, many of those who visited were tourists from across the country. Likewise, a coalition of Idaho's civic leaders backed the park proposal that year by forming the Craters of the Moon National Park Association. With the assistance of Representative Addison T. Smith, the National Park Service, and the United States Geological Survey, who verified the scientific importance of the lava region, Craters of the Moon National Monument was established on May 2, 1924.[57]

Although all of these people and agencies played an important role in the monument's creation, it was particularly significant that the monument was established two months after Robert Limbert's article on Craters of the Moon appeared in National Geographic. Limbert had exposed a historically and geographically isolated region to the public at large as an unknown scenic wonder. Through Limbert's work, Craters of the Moon not only appeared on the coffee tables of ordinary Americans, it also appeared before congressmen, agency officials, and a president who set it aside as a monument.

---

[55] "Community Picnic a Successful Event," Arco Advertiser, June 17, 1921.

[56] "Limbert to Talk about Craters," Arco Advertiser, March 17, 1922; Hotel at Craters Soon," Arco Advertiser, May 19, 1922.

[57] Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 26-31.

(Limbert sent President Coolidge a photo scrapbook of the proposed area.) In addition to its scientific and educational importance, Craters of the Moon was now "officially" recognized as a lava wonderland, a label which forecast a lucrative tourist business for this remote area of Idaho, "one of the scenic districts in the west."[58]

The Tourist Experience at Craters of the Moon

For all of its promotion as a scenic wonder, Craters of the Moon had seen only informal tourist development by the 1920s. No grand hotels adorned its landscape. Only a crude road penetrated its interior. Claims of boosters aside, getting to and through the lava wonderland proved to be something of an adventure. In the years prior to the monument's establishment, adventuresome sightseers drove wagons and automobiles to the "Valley of the Moon" for picnics and group tours of the volcanic country. The primitive auto trail, which had been carved through the lava, traversed but a small section of the rugged landscape, and most tourists covered the country on foot, relying on local explorers to lead them through the wonders. By the early 1920s, the road had been slightly improved, and more importantly, increased publicity attracted more tourists, thanks largely to Robert Limbert's expeditions and promotional literature.[59]

In 1924, the year the National Park Service began its management of the monument, motorists could turn into Craters of the Moon from the Idaho Central Highway and find a rough road leading through the lava formations, but few other amenities. To encourage tourism and to enhance the tourist's experience at the new monument, the National Park Service relied on the informal guide services that were already a common practice. In May 1925, the bureau took steps to formalize this service. At that time, Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather appointed Samuel Paisley as the monument's first custodian, and granted him the right to operate an exclusive guide service to augment his meager salary. Paisley offered walking tours, which reflected the limited development of a road and trail system in the monument. It was around this same time that the agency turned down a proposal to run auto stages in

---

[58] "Craters Proclaimed National Monument," Arco Advertiser, May 9, 1924.

[59] For more coverage of these topics, see Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 19-32 and 245-283. A typical newspaper article describing a trip to the monument, see "A Trip to the Valley of the Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 7, 1921.

Craters of the Moon because of the poor road conditions.[60]

In addition to Paisley's official services, Robert Limbert continued his own guided trips. In the summer of 1926, for instance, Limbert led a group of Seattle mountaineers to the "lost valley," the mythical Indian sanctuary in the lava wilderness. Though significant for being Limbert's last publicized trip, the mountaineers' expedition attested to the monument's appeal to urban dwellers interested in "roughing it" during the 1920s. Craters of the Moon beckoned to these modern adventurers. As a typical newspaper account stated, the "Black desert has a weird call." Though difficult to fathom, the call seemed to be "uttered by the grandeur of tremendous desolation. The call that savage Indians responded to, ages ago." This was the same call that "modern men surrender to, when they gird themselves for strenuous effort, draw on their high-topped, steel bound boots and surge forth into the unknown, seeking the paths their ancient brothers trod ages past and gone."[61]

Pressured by local commercial clubs, political leaders, and the Union Pacific Railroad to provide more services for tourists, the Park Service awarded Limbert a permit to operate a saddle and pack horse concession in January 1927. Limbert and several associates organized Craters of the Moon Tours. They acquired horses, printed brochures, and planned to operate from a ranch near Martin. For all of these preparations, no record of the business' operation exists at this time. Auto tourists may have been satisfied to see what they could of the monument from atop their machines than the backs of horses. Located several miles outside the monument, the business also may have had trouble attracting customers. Finally, it is possible that Limbert abandoned his Craters of the Moon concession in order to devote more time to developing auto tours from the Sawtooths to Craters and to Yellowstone, and to promoting tourism in the Sawtooth Mountains, particularly his hotel in the Redfish Lake area.[62]

Motorists who enjoyed nature by the road could also rely on travel logs and guide books to aid them in their visit to Craters of the Moon in the 1920s. Pulvers road log of the "Idaho Central Forest Highway," for example, illustrated the route to Craters of the

---

[60] Arno B. Cammerer to E.L. Thompson, June 23, 1924, RG 79, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, NA.

[61] "Craters Beckon Explorers into Unknown Realms," Idaho Statesman, May 31, 1928.

[62] "U.P. Officials Visit Craters," Arco Advertiser, July 9, 1926; "Pack Train Concession in Craters Given to Limbert," Arco Advertiser, May 6, 1927; "Limbert Organizes Craters Moon Tours," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1927; Robert Limbert to Acting Director, National Park Service, March 27, 1927, RG 79, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, NA.

Moon, "Idaho's Newest Playground," for motorists en route to or from Yellowstone National Park. It was only natural, according to the brochure, that tourists drive the Idaho Central because it was the "direct route" through Idaho to Yellowstone, the bonus for the tourist being Craters of the Moon, "one of the most phenomenal attractions in North America" located on the highway. With descriptions and map of the lava wonders, the log suggested that seeing Craters by car was not just worth the drive but part of the driving experience.[63]

Motoring tourists could also find information in Robert Limbert's Unknown Places in Idaho. Written for the Union Pacific Railroad in 1927, the guide was aimed at an audience "seeking a land of adventure and romance," a land where "new discoveries and features of unusual interest can be found and explored at every turn of the trail." Featuring several pages on the "remarkable region" of Craters of the Moon, the guide described ways to reach the monument from railroad connections at Shoshone, Hailey, and Arco, and recommended an extended trip of several days within the monument to see the "fantastic formations and other incomparable sights." Limbert's tours, best conducted by saddle horse, included such features as Indian Tunnel, Natural Bridge, Echo Crater, Blue Dragon Flow, the Spatter Cones, the myriad lava flows, caves (some filled with ice), waterholes, Indian mounds, Vermillion Canyon, and petrified bear tracks. Accompanying the text of these real, and in some cases imagined, features was an illustrated map which showed the monument's road system, campground, headquarters, and principal features. In 1928, Harold T. Stearns' Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument appeared replacing Limbert's work. Stearns' book was the first official and for a long time the definitive handbook describing the monument's geology, natural history, and human history.[64]

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, more than seven thousand tourists were visiting Craters of the Moon a year. Although Limbert recommended a stay of three to five days in the monument, most visitors followed, it seems, the advice of the Pulvers travel log and made Craters an interesting side trip on their driving tours of other scenic wonders. Most tourists saw the monument from the front seat of an automobile, and, for a time, many received these brochures and other travel information from the Craters of the Moon Travel Association. The association formed in 1929 and was composed of

---

[63] Pulvers Official Automobile Map: Idaho Central Forest Highway (Seattle: Edw. W. Pulver Map Company, ca. 1924).

[64] Robert W. Limbert, Unknown Places in Idaho (Chicago: Pool Brothers, Inc., 1927), 3, 8-11, 22. A copy of this guide can be found in box 1, file 37, Robert W. Limbert Collection, Boise State University.

businessmen from towns along the Idaho Central Highway, namely Arco, Carey, Hailey, Fairfield and Mountain Home. The group was devoted to promoting travel to the monument for those driving to and from Yellowstone National Park and the Pacific Coast. The association erected signs directing the way to Craters of the Moon. The association also built roadside information booths along the approaches to the monument, and printed descriptive road maps which it distributed from these booths and other points along the way. In cooperation with the Idaho Chamber of Commerce, the travel association stationed a representative at the chamber's office in West Yellowstone to promote travel to Craters of the Moon. A large sign advertised the monument, and the representative encouraged interested tourists to take the route west through the Craters country. Monument officials reported that the association's efforts were noticeably successful. However, the travel association determined it was too expensive to post someone in West Yellowstone and discontinued the service in 1932, which also seems to have been the end of the group's formal existence.[65]

What auto tourists experienced, however, remains mostly to our imaginations. Some sense of what auto travel to the monument was like can be extrapolated from the field trip logs of Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, a geology professor at Idaho State College. Rhodenbaugh led class field trips to Craters of the Moon throughout the 1920s--a time when just getting to Craters was an accomplishment in itself. On one trip in early June 1925, he set out with his students from Pocatello and drove nearly 150 miles to the monument by way of Idaho Falls. Most of the trip was over rough dirt roads that traversed the sagebrush desert. In places the surface turned "sandy and soft," and at times to nothing more than wagon tracks. When Rhodenbaugh met up with the Blackfoot to Arco road, he was elated. But as he pulled into Arco, the skies opened and rain fell, muddying roads and adding to the task of changing flat tires caused by the poor driving surfaces. Heading west from Arco, the professor encountered "terrible mud," and more flats slowed his progress as the rain continued to fall. Near dusk, he came across a cinder-surfaced section of highway near the Martin townsite, which eased travel considerably. But finding no place to camp there, he drove another seven miles to the monument's headquarters, excited to have arrived safely, twelve hours later. Rhodenbaugh's group spent a full day in the monument, inspecting its features while it

[65] "Custodian's Monthly Reports, Craters of the Moon National Monument," June 1, 1929; August 1, 1929; August 1, 1930; August 1, 1932, history files, Craters of the Moon National Monument. For an example of the type of literature most likely given out by the travel association, see "The Craters of the Moon National Monument: A Region of Weird Attractions," ca. 1925-1927, pamphlet on file, Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection. The road signs were about two feet square with an arrow passing through a crescent moon with the word "Craters" written above it in yellow letters.

rained and hailed. The geologist and crew set up makeshift windbreaks from canvas to shelter them from the weather, and sat by their campfires to ward off the cold as they repaired tires for their return trip.[66]

Contending with poor road conditions and inclement weather typified Rhodenbaugh's driving experience, mostly because he traveled to the monument in late spring.[67] Even when the roads were dry, motorists faced tough driving conditions. During the hot summer months, dust boiled up through the floorboards of Model-Ts nearly blinding drivers as they approached the monument over a tortuous, unsurfaced highway that hugged the edges of the lava flows.

The trip, however, rewarded motorists with views of this lava landscape. First impressions had a lasting effect. The "thrill of seeing the black, rough cinders and a jagged horizon line of torn and jumbled rock towers belongs to that first trip," Rhodenbaugh recalled. "One's first impression is that of bareness, desolation, waste," wrote Norah D. Stearns, who accompanied her husband on his geological explorations of the monument in the 1920s. Driving to Craters of the Moon from Arco "along the dusty roads," she recorded in an early brochure, one is suddenly aware of this strange landscape. "Smooth cones of black cinders and dark yawning crater-bowls sparsely covered with vegetation are intermingled with masses of bare rock." "When driving into this spell-bound fragment of the universe," she playfully warned, "let the driver keep his eyes on the road. Too much scenery brought me woe." So overwhelmed with the sights in this "unique bit of chaos tucked away in a little corner of Idaho" that she veered off the road and sank into the deep, soft cinders.[68]

Norah Stearns' writings give provide a sense of what early tourists may have experienced when they visited the monument. After leaving the highway, drivers negotiated the rugged road past North Crater Flow and stopped at Cinderhurst Camp on the saddle below Paisley Cone. There they found a registration booth, custodian's cabin,

---

[66] Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, "Field Trip Logs," 1925-1928, box 7, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, Boise State University.

[67] Ibid. Several years later, for example, he took the wrong cutoff and nursed his ailing auto across an "old rough trail" west of Blackfoot. Finally arriving at Arco, he hurried toward the monument trying, futilely, to outrun a rain storm. At the monument, Rhodenbaugh and his companions set up camp and awoke the next morning to snow. After touring more of the volcanic formations, they drove back toward Blackfoot fighting heavy snow and slick dirt roads all the way, in what the geologist described tersely as "a hard trip."

[68] Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, "Craters of the Moon National Monument," typescript, ca. 1924, box 4, file 3, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, Boise State University; Norah D. Stearns, "Exploring The Craters of the Moon, Idaho," Geographical Society of Philadelphia, Bulletin 26 (October 1928): 279-280.

outhouses, some limber pines for shade and maybe a picnic, and the cool waters of Registration Waterhole, a rarity in the arid lava country. From here, they could press on to see the volcanic wonders, or, if they desired, set up camp.[69]

Camping formed an important tourist activity and had an allure all its own in the monument. Photographs from Harold Stearns' explorations, for example, showed a "picturesque camp" on the slopes of Inferno Cone--a canvas tent pitched in front of a Model-T like a Bedouin in the desert. It was an experience that left a distinct impression on the camper. Norah Stearns noted that after camping in the lava country for a time she was struck with the "stillness and lifelessness...of this strange place." "I always seemed to be gazing out of the door or window in a troubled, puzzled way," she said. "Something was strange! Perhaps this area is indeed an 'unfinished corner of the universe where the chaos of the primeval world still exists.'"[70]

With a similar fascination for the uniqueness of this country, she described hiking through the lava formations as an activity for the curious and suggested it as a way to better understand this mysterious country. Most tourists saw the monument on foot at some point, picking their way through aa and pahoehoe flows where an "hour's trip afoot over either lava seems like a long day's hike. You always find yourself picking out the smoother pahoehoe or the loose cinders of the cones for a path." The whole encounter very often "chewed up" heavy leather boots. Like others, Stearns was fascinated with the numerous lava formations--from ice caves to deep craters--and the myriad colors shimmering in the desert sun. She summarized eloquently the impression an extended stay in the monument made. As she viewed the snow-clad Sawtooth Range and Pioneer Mountains to the north and infinite lava fields to the south, she said, these mountains "give one a sense of security as belonging to one's own world, yet the lavas black and barren as they are, have a weird charm. The mountains seem to be a symphony, the lavas a rhapsody!"[71]

Driving through the monument was also an option for the tourist. The monument's loop drive--a dirt road improved over the years--wound around rugged aa and over smooth pahoehoe flows at the base of cinder cones for up to seven miles; it connected features such as Big Craters, the Spatter Cones, caves, and Devil's Orchard--a popular picnic spot, it seems, from the early 1920s. The intrepid motorist could extend

---

[69] Most of these impressions are drawn from several oral interviews with early monument visitors. See, for example, Ed Techick Interview, January 21, 1986, history files, Craters of the Moon National Monument.

[70] Norah D. Stearns, "Exploring The Craters of the Moon, Idaho," 279-280.

[71] Stearns, 280, 282.

his trip by driving over the rough wagon road south from Inferno Cone to Echo Crater, a favorite base camp of explorers and geologists which offered access to the southern reaches of the monument.

In the late 1920s, the National Park Service realized that tourists needed some facilities to make their trips to the monument more enjoyable. Just getting to the monument, as described by Edward Rhodenbaugh, was difficult enough, and once in the remote and parched landscape of Craters of the Moon, visitors could expect little protection from the lava country's harsh environment. Few would have argued, it seems, with Rhodenbaugh's comment that a cabin of some kind was needed at Craters in the future. For this reason, the Park Service contracted with Jo G. Martin and John R. Wright of Arco to build Crater Inn and sell "gasoline and oil, lunch goods, cold drinks, and the usual line of accommodations furnished to tourists and sight-seers." The log inn, three log guest cabins, and a log gas station were completed in the fall of 1927, adding to the comforts of the motoring public. Together the log buildings composed a rustic scene familiar to national parks. Especially evocative was the lodge itself; its lava-stone chimney leaked smoke in the chilled, high desert air, and a set of mule deer antlers hung from its eaves.[72]

Crater Inn symbolized the belief of monument supporters and Park Service officials that comforts would both enhance the tourist experience and attract still more tourists to the monument. In this way, Crater Inn played an important role in tourism during the late 1920s and early 1930s. One of its most important functions was supplying water to thirsty visitors. Having hauled the water from Martin, the concession owners provided the service for four years after the monument's waterholes suddenly dried up in the summer of 1927. Located near the monument's entrance, Crater Inn became the center for tourists, especially during these "dry years." Visitors congregated at the inn for refreshments, food, and relaxation after their drive to or tour of the volcanic wonderland. Advertising the opening of Crater Inn, Martin proudly announced that "Comforts Come to Craters of the Moon." A new experience awaited the monument tourist. "Cabins and a lunch service," he said, "free the visit to the lava formations from inconvenience and hardship." The structures, he stated, reflected a common form and made use of materials from the surrounding environment. "All the buildings are of logs and of that type of construction which the early pioneers found suited to the Idaho climate. The roofs are covered deeply with the black cinders of the region," he added, "resulting in a remarkable coolness in the summer." Visitors could find a "hospitable retreat" in the

[72] Stephen T. Mather to Samuel A. Paisley, October 28, 1926, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, part 2, NA. See also Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 288-292, for a brief history of the concession.

large hall, with open fire place, and rest before or after seeing the sights. Once inside, tourists could buy groceries, lunch goods, and cool refreshments stored in the natural refrigeration of the "underground passages" of the cinder beds.[73] For the guests who desired overnight accommodations, the small guest cabins were furnished with bed springs, mattresses, bedding, and wood stoves, but no running water or indoor toilets--all for the price of $1 to $1.50 per person a night.[74]

Further attesting to the importance of Crater Inn, the Park Service designed and relocated the monument's headquarters and campground across from the concession in 1927 so the new water system could serve everyone. Bureau officials also hoped that this new configuration would aid the monument's small staff in attending to the public's needs.[75]

Once the water arrived (1931), the concession owners anticipated that improvements such as toilets and bathing facilities would turn the operation into a "first rate establishment." An upgraded concession would raise the level of the monument's importance to the general public, they believed. As Martin declared, the "popularity of the place will catch up with its real merit as one of the most interesting scenic phenomena in the world. People will not come in large numbers or stay very long where they are uncomfortable or subjected to hardship. We hope to relieve that at Craters of the Moon and profit accordingly," he concluded.[76]

Park Service officials shared these beliefs as exemplified by the campground and headquarters relocation, as well as the piping of water to the site. Another step in this direction was the construction of a log comfort station in the campground in 1934, and with it the monument's first flush toilets and showers--amenities that would "add greatly to the comfort of the public," noted Albert T. Bicknell, the monument's custodian.[77] Funded by the Public Works Administration and built by local contractors, the comfort

---

[73] "Log Structures for Concession [at] Craters [of the] Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1927; "Comforts Come to Craters of the Moon," Idaho Statesman, ca. October 1927, news clipping, Craters of the Moon Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society.

[74] Custodian, R.B. Moore to Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, April 21, 1930, box 2, file 5, Rhodenbaugh Papers.

[75] Louter, 288-292.

[76] Jo G. Martin to Horace M. Albright, July 12, 1929, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, pt. 5, NA.

[77] Albert T. Bicknell, "Final Report on Comfort Station," June 17, 1935, Central Classified Files, file D, Craters of the Moon Archives, Craters of the Moon National Monument.

station was part of the New Deal work projects to improve the monument for tourists in the 1930s. Road and trail improvements were also part of these projects. Park crews created a single entrance, widened, straightened, and graded the highway crossing the monument as well as the loop drive leading through it. With better road conditions and access to volcanic features, auto tourists no longer had to worry about sinking into soft cinders that sucked cars in like quicksand and were free to enjoy the scenery. The Park Service also toyed with the idea of extending the road system along the Great Rift to expose motoring sightseers to more of the monument's wonders, but various administrative and preservation concerns scuttled the plan. The monument's "informal" trail system also benefited from the programs. Without good trails tourists were likely to get "lost in the maze of lava flows" and miss seeing some of the monument's more spectacular features. Thus construction crews built and surfaced new and existing trails to popular features near the roadside so tourists could examine the sites with greater safety and ease.[78]

On the eve of World War II more than twenty thousand tourists were visiting the monument. They stopped at Crater Inn, picnicked and camped, drove the loop road, and hiked to the lava wonders. Most of them, however, experienced the volcanic landscape in a short period of time, but one event was sure to draw a large crowd for a good part of at least one day a year. Opening Day celebrations attracted hundreds and sometimes thousands to the monument every year. A celebration of the monument's establishment, the annual fete had its origins in the outings and picnics Arco residents held as early as 1912. The celebration was thrown in the late spring, held in the headquarters area, and featured speeches by local community leaders and officials from Idaho and the Park Service. Other attractions included food, music from the Arco band, tours of the monument, and the Sheriff's Posse Dash--a parade of mounted riders down Sunset Ridge and across nearby cinder fields.

For a time it seemed that winter sports would provide a substantial tourist draw to the monument. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, downhill skiing and other winter sports activities grew in popularity at the monument. Local residents discovered that the snow-covered cinder cones provided ideal conditions for skiing, and in 1941 the Arco Civic Club asked the National Park Service for permission to build a winter sports facility on the northeastern slope of Sunset Cone. The club felt that the cone's proximity to the highway and the eastern boundary, as well as its lack of scenic qualities compared to the monument's main features, would not interfere with the area's mission. In fact,

[78] Louter, 260-261, 252-257.

the resort supporters believed, a ski area would increase the monument's popularity. At first they hoped the Park Service would build the facility for them, but when the agency refused, they offered to install their own ski lift and lodge. Although the ski resort's promoters just wanted to find "a place to get out for recreation," the Park Service denied the group a permit by stating that no developments should impair the monument's scenic values. In this respect, there could be no visible impact to the monument's resources. After each season, all structures would have to be removed, making it virtually impossible to run the operation.[79] (A ski area was eventually built on Blizzard Mountain north of the monument. Never a profitable operation, it seems, it has run sporadically since its construction.)

No matter the popularity of the Opening Day celebration and the potential of winter sports, tourism never seemed to realize its full potential at Craters of the Moon, at least in the sense of the grand hotels. Craters of the Moon, a broiling desert of lava, was thought of less as a place to retreat to than as a place to pass through. The history of Crater Inn showed this reality all too well. The modern automobile and highway may have contributed to opening up this out of the way region, but they also contributed to the monument's wayside appeal. Crater Inn may have offered shelter from this shadeless environment, but most tourists could marvel at the monument's features in a few hours and still have time to reach the hotels, cafes, and other services Arco and other gateway towns offered just a short drive away. Realizing little revenue from meals and lodging, Crater Inn's original as well as succeeding owners were unable to modernize; sometimes they could not even pay their permit fee. By 1940, the operators added more guest cabins, it seems in a final hope that things would turn around. But the overall condition of the structures was primitive, unsightly, and rundown. Hardly the "dignified accommodations" Crater Inn's first owners envisioned for the monument, Crater Inn was in 1950, according to Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston, "an eyesore, and substandard in every way." Although more than 100,000 tourists visited the monument by the mid-1950s, the concession offered little incentive for them to stay longer than the time it took to see the sights.[80]

Considered more a relic of the past than an asset to the future, Crater Inn closed its doors in the late 1950s. The Park Service decided to leave tourist amenities, such as

---

[79] Louter, 200-201. See also, "Craters Offer Ideal Site for Sports," Arco Advertiser, January 21, 1938.

[80] Louter, 291-292. Quotation from Memorandum, Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston to Regional Director, Region Four, October 5, 1950, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Central Classified Files, Craters of the Moon National Monument, file 600-01, National Archives--Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.

lodging and meals, to gateway towns like Arco and eliminated the service during the Mission 66 redevelopment program. In 1958, the last of Crater Inn's structures were auctioned off and removed from the monument, ending an era of catering to the comforts of auto tourists.[81]

Summary of Context Theme

Tourism at Craters of the Moon was more about changing perceptions of the volcanic landscape than the construction of tourist developments. For most of the nineteenth century, tourists viewed the Snake River Plain and places like Craters of the Moon as volcanic wastelands. Drawn to natural wonders like Shoshone Falls, tourists favored familiar scenic landscapes--falling waters, tranquil lakes, picturesque peaks--to unremitting desert. By the turn of the century, tourists were changing their opinions of the plain and the Craters country for the better, due to the coalescence of several historical forces: disenchantment with an urban-industrial society, an increased interest in outdoor recreation, the advent of the automobile, and improved highways.

Driving automobiles over better roads enabled scenic tourists to experience places like Craters of the Moon on their own terms, making them more likely to find the region less threatening and more appealing. They would also find the monument more appealing in contrast to the nation's crowded cities and vanishing wild lands, a realization tourist promoters also made. In the years surrounding World War I, this trend was symbolized best by the "See America First" campaign and Idaho's own version--"See America First: Begin with Idaho." Perhaps most representative of this was Robert W. Limbert, who helped sell Idaho's diverse and spectacular scenery to Idaho and the nation between 1915 and the early 1930s. Craters of the Moon received the benefits of his promotion, which led to its establishment as a national monument in 1924. Moreover, Limbert's promotions added to those of boosters from Arco and the Big Lost River basin who pinned their hopes of economic growth to scenic tourism--Craters of the Moon being a central attraction.

Craters of the Moon's establishment officially sanctioned the lava country as a tourist attraction, something worked for by local boosters for years. But the transformation was slow. The monument was largely undeveloped. Tourists relied on guide services to visit the strange landscape, and for the most part relied on travel literature and their own sense of motoring adventure during their visits. The National

[81] Louter, 291-292.

Park Service rectified this situation in the latter 1920s and 1930s by developing better roads, trails, campgrounds, and bathroom facilities. But the most significant effort was undertaken through private enterprise with the construction of Crater Inn. Although never a successful business, the rustic lodge, guest cabins, and gas station epitomized early tourism in national parks. It was the only enterprise of its kind in the monument, operating between 1927 and 1958.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Structures Related to Recreation and Tourism

Description:

Properties associated with recreation and tourism at Craters of the Moon represent both private and federal efforts to enhance the visitor's experience at the monument between the early 1920s and the early 1940s. During these years, private interests built Crater Inn and its related buildings, which consisted of a lodge, gas station, and seven cabins, and all of which were built using log materials. And the National Park Service constructed a log campground comfort station. All of these structures, both privately and federally owned, exhibited a distinct architectural style known as Rustic or National Park Service (NPS) Rustic. NPS Rustic evolved from the romantic and rustic styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fostered by the National Park Service's early commitment to the principles of landscape design that supported both the integration and subordination of park buildings and other structural improvements to their natural setting.

All of the monument's "rustic" buildings associated with tourism were located in the second headquarters site in the vicinity of today's campground at the base of Sunset Ridge. They were originally constructed using logs with hewn ends for the walls, concrete foundations, lava-stone chimneys, casement windows, and gable roofs. In addition, most were originally built with either cinder, wood shingle, or split-log roof materials, although these have changed in the surviving structures. Although a variety of shapes and sizes, these single-story structures had simple floor plans.

Today, the only building that still stands is the comfort station. Concrete footings and concrete/asphalt pads identify where Crater Inn's guest cabins stood. These remnants, though not a property type, give a sense of the spatial arrangements and setting of the former headquarters compound. The location of the campground, in which the comfort station still stands, also gives a sense of the original organization for these structures; the campground itself was part of the improvements for tourists visiting the

monument. (See Chapter 9 for more complete property descriptions for Rustic Architecture.)

Significance:

These properties are significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with recreation and tourism, an important theme in the monument's history. They are also significant under National Register Criterion C for their association with the Rustic style of architecture.

Registration Requirements:

At Craters of the Moon, properties associated with recreation and tourism may qualify for listing in the National Register if they date between 1924 and 1942. (These dates may vary according to new information shedding light on tourist developments, especially since the period of tourist activity begins earlier.) The property must be historically significant, that is, be associated with prominent commercial activities related to tourism and recreation, the owners or operators of these businesses, or the National Park Service. Integrity is also an important requirement for registration. A historically significant property may sustain some alteration and remain eligible as long as it retains its historic character.

The following aspects of integrity require consideration when evaluating these properties:

Location and Setting:

A property's location should remain intact. Without this, the property would be rendered ineligible. Directly related to location is the setting of the property. The setting is generally defined by the physical features that make up the property's environment, either natural or manmade. Setting conveys the character of the place in which the property functioned historically, and how it related to the surrounding features and open space. Some changes to the setting may occur and the property may still be considered eligible. This may include the removal of some structures associated with tourism and the addition of other structures central to the monument's current operation. Whatever the case may be, it is important that the setting be intact as much as possible.

Design, Workmanship, and Materials:

Properties associated with tourism at Craters of the Moon should possess most of their original design, workmanship, and materials. In general, to remain eligible, the structure must retain the majority of its original foundation, wall material, and roof configuration. Any additions or exterior alterations must be compatible with original design, workmanship, and materials in terms of type and quality, in this case with the Rustic style.

Feeling and Association:

Integrity of feeling and association exist if the property retains integrity of setting, location, design, workmanship, and materials.

Properties Potentially Eligible for the National Register:

The following list identifies properties that could be proposed for nomination to the National Register in association with the context titled Recreation and Tourism in the Craters of the Moon Region, 1924-1942.

1. Log Comfort Station

Recommendations:

Craters of the Moon has few historic properties that are extant. The comfort station is one of these. A Determination of Eligibility (DOE) should be drafted for the comfort station, not simply because it is one of the "last" remaining structures from an earlier era, but because it represents two historic themes at the monument, Tourism and National Park Service Management and Development (see appropriate context statement). A DOE would assess the integrity of the property, and help determine the appropriate management of the property.

MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT



CHAPTER 9

Chapter Nine

National Park Service Management and Development, 1924-1942

Overview of National Parks in Idaho

In the middle nineteenth century, thoughtful Americans embraced the West's monumental scenery as proof of their nation's greatness. The region's ancient trees, time-worn canyons, and magnificent peaks surpassed Europe's cultural antiquities, renowned landscapes, and architectural masterpieces, and in turn provided Americans the cultural artifacts and identity they desired but their young nation seemed to lack. "The agelessness of monumental scenery instead of the past accomplishments of Western Civilization," as historian Alfred Runte suggests, "was to become the visible symbol of continuity and stability in the new nation." Thus, out of a belief that the most renowned wonderlands should be set aside as symbols of national pride, and later as areas for public recreation, the national park idea was born.[1]

By the turn of the century, preservationists could point with pride to their accomplishments, for large tracts of the western landscape were protected as national parks. Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, and Mount Rainier had all been created before 1900. Over the next twenty years they were joined by other acclaimed national treasures such as Crater Lake, Mesa Verde, Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Grand Canyon. None of these parks, however, lay within Idaho. The state's eastern boundary embraced a slim section of Yellowstone, but more by chance than design. To this day Idaho is the only western state without a national park, though it was the first state in the Pacific Northwest to establish a state park.[2]

Idahoans did not find themselves in this position for a lack of trying. As early as 1898, concerned citizens proposed setting aside Shoshone Falls as a national park in order to protect it from being submerged beneath a reservoir. The proposal, however, failed before the more influential waterpower and irrigation interests. This materialistic intent was one of the overriding arguments park opponents employed during the early period of park building throughout the country (the years after Yellowstone's creation in 1872 and the creation of the National Park Service in 1916). Nevertheless, mounting urban pressures by the first of the twentieth century led larger numbers of Idahoans and other citizens of the Pacific Northwest to seek relief in the outdoors. And the more

---

[1] Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience, 2nd rev. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 11-32. Quotation from 12.

[2] Department of the Interior, Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 176-177; Thomas R. Cox, The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 5.

people spent time in the outdoors, the more they realized the dangers to its natural beauty. Irrigation projects, truck logging, and the birth of the automobile age, all seemed to threaten Idaho's scenery and stimulated calls for its protection.[3]

In 1908, Senator Weldon Heyburn proposed setting aside Lake Chatcolet as a national park. A popular vacation spot, the lake was located in the Coeur d'Alene country of Idaho's panhandle, but according to historian Thomas R. Cox, Heyburn's proposal was never clear about what kind of "national" park he had in mind. In fairness to Heyburn, there was no general understanding of park standards or the purpose of parks at the time; some thought of parks as preserves of nature's monuments, and others thought of them as places for outdoor recreation. Judging from the panhandle's popularity as a vacation place, it appears that the senator envisioned something similar to the latter--a genteel summer retreat and beach resort common at the turn of the century. Thus, his park proposal had less to do with preserving natural curiosities and more to do with local boosterism and an interest in national park tourism for the local economy. Perhaps because Congress saw Heyburn's proposal as just "another national-park proposition," it refused to create a national park. But all was not lost. In 1911, the the proposed area became Heyburn State Park, Idaho's first.[4]

The creation of Heyburn State Park in no way constituted a park movement in the Gem State, Cox asserts. Idaho officials showed little concern for creating state parks or improving those that came under their jurisdiction over the next several decades. At least two general reasons, more common to the Rocky Mountain states than those of the Pacific Northwest, were responsible for this lack of interest. First, many in Idaho distrusted any infringements on states' rights. Heyburn himself was the most identifiable exponent of this view; he especially disliked the Unites States Forest Service, its leader Gifford Pinchot, and "all kinds of conservation and conservationists." More than national forests, parks wrongly excluded public lands from development. Second, at the time no dedicated, dynamic, or authoritative leader stepped forward as an advocate for parks. The closest Idaho came was Heyburn who died in 1912.[5]

---

[3] H. Duane Hampton, "Opposition to National Parks," Journal of Forest History 25 (January 1981): 37; Thomas R. Cox, The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest, 9.

[4] Thomas R. Cox, "Weldon Heyburn, Lake Chatcolet, and the Evolving Concept of Public Parks," Idaho Yesterdays 24 (Summer 1980): 11; Cox, The Park Builders, 104-107.

[5] Cox, The Park Builders, 106-107. Cox includes one other reason and that is that most premier scenic and recreational lands were owned by the federal government, and state park proponents looked to federal authorities rather than state officials for assistance.

A lack of interest and leadership, as well as strong political challenges from resource users, characterized efforts to create a national park in Idaho. The most notable example was the attempt to create a Sawtooth national park. The first proposal appeared in 1911 when Idaho clubwomen advanced the idea. Boise's Jean Conly Smith led the movement, which soon won the endorsement of women's clubs across Idaho, the "See Idaho First" association, and such well-known park proponents as Enos Mills. Mills described the Sawtooths as mountains of "Alpine grandeur and wild magnificence." According to Mills, the Sawtooths met all the requirements for a national park, for they contained towering peaks, sparkling lakes with forested shorelines, thundering waterfalls, beautiful streams, and upland meadows. For her part, Smith believed that establishing a Sawtooth national park was important because Idaho was the only western state without one. Its scenic beauty far surpassed that of other western states, and the creation of a park would go far to bring Idaho the recognition it deserved. To this end, she claimed that except for glaciers Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains compared well to the Alps and would certainly attract tourists after some development. By describing the Sawtooths in this way, Smith and other park supporters emphasized the range's spectacular features, and at the same time declared the region economically worthless. Their arguments, typical of park proposals which attested to an area's beauty and lack of material value, eventually gained ground. Bills were introduced into Congress, and supported by Representative Addison T. Smith and Senator William E. Borah, but nothing ever came of them.[6]

Although no full-length study of the Sawtooth campaign has been written, it seems likely that the state's resource users exerted enough influence to derail the movement. One outspoken critic was Thomas C. Stanford, a sheepman from Carey, who fought the proposal for at least two decades. As he stated in the early 1920s:

> The creation of such a National Park would not add one speck to the beauty of nature's work, but it would not only deprive the freedom loving people of the right of having some liberties in the mountains, that we do not enjoy in the Yellowstone Park, but it would close the gates tight against hundreds of thousands

[6] Jean Conly Smith, "What is There of National Interest in the Proposed Sawtooth National Park?"; Smith, "In God's Own Country: The Proposed Sawtooth National Park in Idaho," ca. 1911, Jean Conly Smith Papers, Idaho State Historical Society. Ralph E. Woods, "The Proposed Sawtooth National Park," New West Magazine 7 (May 1916): 7-11; Enos Mills, "Proposed Sawtooth National Park," New West Magazine 7 (October 1916): 18-22.

> of livestock and prove a ruinous liability, instead of an asset to Idaho.[7]

The influence of resource users like Stanford seemed to carry some weight, at least in the case of Addison T. Smith. Stanford corresponded with Smith throughout the representative's long career and remained vigilant in his opposition to creating a park in the Sawtooths. Eventually, it seems, Smith changed his earlier position on the park bill and saw the issue from Stanford's perspective. He represented agricultural communities in arid southern Idaho, and in 1920 introduced legislation for an irrigation project that would have flooded the southwestern corner of Yellowstone National Park.[8] Smith's actions most likely were the product of political expedience. He enjoyed the wealth of scenery his state offered, and years later told Stanford how he resolved the park question in his mind:

> As you know, I am opposed to creating a national park in Idaho, believing that if we have good roads to these natural and scenic sections, which are generally in the national forests, there would be no advantage to the people to have their jurisdiction placed under the National Park bureau.[9]

The Sawtooth park proposal also suffered when it lost its most visible leader. Jean Conly Smith moved from Boise in 1913 and soon afterward the movement languished in the face of opposition from resource users. After the National Park Service was established in 1916, however, her work was revitalized and seemed on the verge of success in the hands of the agency's dynamic new director, Stephen T. Mather. Mather created park standards to evaluate the worth of the numerous park proposals inundating his bureau, including those for the Sawtooths. As Mather's biographer said, he wanted national parks to be "large enough, primitive enough, and/or unique enough to be national in interest." The Sawtooths' alpine wilderness clearly met these new standards, but Mather abandoned the Sawtooth park proposition because it was too

---

[7] Thomas C. Stanford to Addison T. Smith, November 17, 1922, box 1, file 7, Thomas C. Stanford Papers, Boise State University.

[8] Stanford to Smith, November 17, 1922; Robert Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 212.

[9] Addison T. Smith to Thomas C. Stanford, September 28, 1932, box 2, file 7, Thomas C. Stanford Papers.

volatile an issue and would require "too much [political] battling."[10]

If establishing a national park in Idaho required doing "battle," the same could not be said for a national monument. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge set aside Craters of the Moon National Monument, a boundless, blackened sea of lava containing some of the world's best examples of basaltic volcanism, covering some 54,000 acres. Compared to Idaho's hapless park movement, Craters of the Moon's creation seems to be a consolation prize. The second cousins of national parks, monuments were often of a singular importance, protecting specific natural or cultural sites of scientific or historical value within a small area. They hardly compared to the magnificent nature reserves of Yellowstone or Glacier, and thus they could promise only a fraction of the tourist revenues and prestige of parks. From a legislative perspective, their creation was simple. By virtue of the Antiquities Act, the president could create a monument by the stroke of his pen, whereas the creation of a national park required an act of Congress. This meant that there were more monuments than parks, which seemed to dilute their significance.[11]

The monument's creation, however, should not be viewed as a simple case of settling for second best. Its creation resulted from changing perceptions about the value of the lava country. That change was largely a twentieth-century phenomenon. The volcanic territory presented a foreign and forbidding landscape to nineteenth-century observers. The Craters country failed to conform to their image of natural beauty, as the Sawtooths did, and it presented a real threat to their very existence. At the turn of the century, this volcanic landscape overcame its negative perception for reasons connected to the national park movement: anxiety over the loss of the frontier and the appreciation an urban-industrial society expressed for what wild lands remained. The work of able geologists also aided in this transformation. They praised Craters of the Moon's scientific importance, and their studies of the region gave ordinary Americans the ability

[10] Josephine Conly Smith Vaughn to Senator Frank Church, June 5, 1960, Jean Conly Smith Papers; Robert Shankland, Steve Mather of the National Parks, 184-185.

[11] Department of the Interior, Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1924 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924), 15-16. Hal K. Rothman in "Second-Class Sites: National Monuments and the Growth of the National Park System," Environmental Review 10 (Spring 1986): 44-56 and Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) suggests the subordinate position national monuments played in the early park system.

to appreciate this chaos of lava.[12]

By the early 1920s, Craters of the Moon was no longer a place to cross and survive; it was a place to be pondered and prized. Boosters hailed its scenic importance. And automobiles ushered in the age of auto tourism, and remote districts like the Craters country became scenic districts, magnets for tourists criss-crossing the West. In the end, the establishment of Craters of the Moon succeeded where attempts to create national parks had failed. Its resources were never seen as valuable and so their removal from the public domain did not infringe on individual rights. In addition to being economically worthless, Craters of the Moon benefited from wide public support, notably the nearby community of Arco, and the dynamic leadership of Robert W. Limbert. The monument's establishment cast a positive rather than negative image; it ran relatively free of opposition, and even won the support of political officials like Addison Smith. Viewed in this light, the language of the monument's proclamation seems all the more significant. It stated that Craters of the Moon's general purpose was to preserve an area of unusual scientific and educational value and general interest. The area "contains a remarkable fissure eruption" along with its associated volcanic flows and formations and "has a weird and scenic landscape peculiar to itself." Preserving the weird and the beautiful, Craters of the Moon may not have showcased Idaho's "true" scenic wonders, but it nevertheless accorded the state a national distinction.[13]

National Park Service Management and Development at Craters of the Moon National Monument, 1924-1942

On May 2, 1924 Calvin Coolidge signed a proclamation creating Craters of the Moon National Monument, the thirtieth national monument in the park system and the first national park site in Idaho. The executive decree launched the monument's management by the National Park Service. For almost forty years, the agency developed the monument based on its dual mission to enhance the visitor experience and preserve its resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Much of this development reflected the agency's belief, at least in its founding years, that to gain public support for

---

[12] For a more complete treatment of this change of perception and its influence on Craters of the Moon, see the discussion in the chapter on tourism and recreation. General sources are Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience and Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[13] Ibid. For further discussion of the monument's establishment, see David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 13-32.

its mission, it needed to encourage tourism. In doing so, the Park Service welcomed automobiles, and developed roads, campgrounds, and hotels. This approach enabled more Americans to enjoy their nation's natural treasures, and visitation soared. The agency's leaders, however, never intended to grid the parks with roads and mar the landscape with subdivisions. Rather, they sought to make the most spectacular sites accessible to tourists and to concentrate other developments in a central location, thereby leaving the majority of park lands as wilderness. To preserve the beauty of the natural environment and at the same time introduce man-made structures, the Park Service followed a landscape design philosophy known as NPS Rustic. At its heart, the Rustic style harmonized functional architecture and other man-made features with natural environments in a visually pleasing and non-intrusive manner. Shaped in the Park Service's first years of existence, the design philosophy of National Park Service (NPS) Rustic was carried out faithfully in the nation's parks until the early 1940s.[14]

In the decades after World War II, the Park Service's design philosophy changed. During the war, many national park facilities fell into disrepair as a result of low wartime appropriations, and the "modernizing" program created to rectify these problems, known as Mission 66, further altered the "rustic" look of parks throughout the system. Initiated to offset the damaging effects of park overcrowding and to shore up park physical plants in the mid-1950s, Mission 66 ran a ten-year course during which more than a billion dollars was spent upgrading all park areas, some for the first time, primarily in the repair and construction of thousands of miles of roads, campgrounds, employee housing, and sanitation systems. Among the program's innovations was the visitor center, a structure incorporating interpretive facilities and administrative offices, and in some instances concession services and auditoriums.[15]

At Craters of the Moon, the Park Service developed the facilities necessary for visitor use and the monument's administration between 1924 and the late 1950s. Undergoing three phases of development during these years, the monument reflected

---

[14] Ronald A. Foresta, America's National Parks and Their Keepers (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 29-30; Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 170-173. To suggest the magnitude of the National Park Service's mission, consider the following. In 1917 national parks received about 487,000 visitors, and in 1983 about 240 million; see National Parks for a New Generation (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1985), 69. For NPS Rustic, see Gretchen A. Luxenberg and Cathy A. Gilbert, The Rustic Landscape of Rim Village, 1927-1941 (Seattle: National Park Service, 1990), 17-23; and Linda F. McClelland, Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916-1942 (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993), 73-114.

[15] Ronald A. Foresta, America's National Parks and Their Keepers, 52-54.

general trends in the agency's landscape design philosophy. Most of the work concentrated on the construction of three headquarters sites and therefore constituted three historic eras. The first phase, 1924-1927, saw only limited improvements as the monument struggled through its first years of management; the second phase, 1927 to World War II, saw a more formal development of the monument in the rustic idiom with structures--for both tourists and management--and an expanded physical plant; and the third phase, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, saw a complete renovation with the Mission 66 program, which created the "new" look of today's monument.

The National Park Service's guiding philosophy for the development of the monument during its first years of existence was espoused by Assistant Director Horace M. Albright, who believed that "Craters of the Moon Monument will become a very great tourist attraction." For this reason the agency set out, as it did throughout the park system, to encourage tourism by developing roads, campgrounds, and lodgings, as well as to aid in management by developing administrative facilities for monument personnel. Overall, Albright and his colleagues envisioned Craters of the Moon as a "wayside" for travelers to Yellowstone National Park. Providing "sanitary conveniences" for those tourists would in turn, according to their reasoning, increase the isolated young monument's popularity. Only a small staff and minor improvements were required for this service and for the monument's protection. At best, though, improvements were slow in coming, and years passed before the monument was allocated funds to meet its minimum needs, a plight common to monuments--the "second-class sites"--of the young national park system. Agency leaders placed what limited funds Congress allocated into programs to improve national parks, the system's premier sites, earmarking what was left for the monuments.[16]

Much of the early development fell on the shoulders of Craters of the Moon's first custodian, Samuel A. Paisley. Hired in 1925, Paisley did not inherit any structures, it seems, only a primitive road and common-use trails. (Some scattered references note a deteriorated cabin of sorts near Devil's Orchard, possibly a registration booth erected by boosters prior to the monument's establishment, as well as the "famous bear trap" placed near the entrance.) That year Paisley selected the first headquarters site, known

---

[16] Horace M. Albright to Stephen T. Mather, February 12, 1925, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, entry 7, Craters of the Moon National Monument, box 580, file 0.35, part 1, National Archives. For a more complete story of the monument's development, see David Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History (Seattle: National Park Service, 1992), 245-283. For a discussion of national monuments as subordinate to parks, see Hal K. Rothman, "Second-Class Sites," and Rothman, Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments.

as Cinderhurst Camp, in the saddle between Paisley and North Crater cones. He chose this location because it was near the monument road (or auto trail) and Registration Waterhole, one of the few sources of water in the monument that was convenient and plentiful for early visitors who "roughed it" in the parched desert environment.

Lacking a construction budget, he erected, mostly at his own expense, a tiny wood-frame cabin near the crest of the saddle, at the foot of some aa lava. The cabin functioned as office, residence, registration booth, and interpretive center. In front of the structure, for example, the custodian later erected a wood case filled with lava specimens that served as the monument's first museum display. By 1927, Paisley constructed a small, wood-frame registration booth near the cabin and across the way two wood-frame pit toilets sheltered by limber pines. Nestled in "a hillside cove," the site supported a scattering of limber pine for shade and enough level ground for ten to fifteen auto campsites. Perhaps the site's most distinguishing feature was its wooden flagpole, official symbol of government management and point of reference in the undulating topography of the volcanic landscape. The headquarters was also identified, to a lesser degree, by a General Land Office survey marker from 1917, a two-foot pipe just west of the flagpole, imprinted with the site's elevation of 5,900 feet and its township and range (T. 2 N., R. 24 E.). The headquarters area was also memorable for its vista. As visiting Landscape Architect E.A. Davidson commented, the headquarters camp offered "a fine view of the north extremity of the lava flows....Looking over this dark lava 'sea' many will be struck with an unforgettable sense of utter desolation, waste, and space. Indeed this feeling, and sense of relative human insignificance, is perhaps the keynote of character of the Monument."[17]

To see the monument more closely required a road and trail system. Unlike buildings, there were some improvements in this area when the monument was established. By the early 1920s Arco and Hailey residents, among others, had improved the state highway traversing the northern margin of the lava fields and in 1922 developed two entrances, or the "craters cutoffs." The east, or Arco, entrance looped around the eastern base of Sunset Ridge, and the west, or Hailey, entrance crossed the North Crater Lava Flow near the present campground. Both joined approximately where today's

[17] "Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument," October 1, 1925 and July 1, 1927, Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives, Craters of the Moon National Monument. Identification of the headquarters by its flagpole and survey marker can be found in Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, "Field Trip Logs," box 7, June 4-8, 1923, Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers, Boise State University. E.A. Davidson, "Craters of the Moon National Monument," July 3, 1927, RG 79, CRMO, box 582, file 207, NA.

entrance road meets the loop drive.[18]

The construction of the cutoffs demonstrated the importance local residents placed on good roads to attract auto tourists to the Craters country. For similar reasons boosters established the loop drive. "Sunday Rock Pickers," as they were known from neighboring communities, constructed a road beginning near Martin and extending south into the monument through the eastern entrance. From there the rough road--or "trail"--led south; winding along the edge of the lava flows and hugging the base of cinder cones, it crossed the North Crater Flow to the first headquarters, around Paisley Cone and on to Devil's Orchard. There it branched, one section heading toward the Caves Area and the other to Big Craters.[19] Conforming to natural features, the curvilinear road followed, more by accident than design, the Park Service's philosophy of harmonizing roads with park landscapes.

For this reason, it seems, the Park Service would change little in the road's design in the 1920s and subsequent years. In his 1925 inspection report of the monument, Albright proposed spending up to $50,000 on road improvements over five years, but only a few hundred dollars were budgeted for road work during these years. Even so, Paisley continued to work on his own. He improved the monument entrance and constructed "fairly good roads...to the extinct craters" and, it seems, advanced the route of the loop drive around the southern side of Inferno Cone from Big Craters to Devil's Orchard by 1926.[20]

During these first years of management, the Park Service also toyed with the idea of extending the monument's road system down the Great Rift to expose auto tourists to as many of the monument's wonders as possible, and to attract more Yellowstone-bound tourists. In his 1925 report, for instance, Albright proposed building a road to the southern end of the monument to connect with a highway that was to run north from Minidoka. Minidoka, along with other communities such as Rupert and Kimama, had been lobbying for the highway for several years. Their wishes seemed on the verge of reality in 1926 when the Bureau of Public Roads recommended the extension of the monument road as far south as Sheep Trail Butte, but limited appropriations shelved the

---

[18] See, for example, "'Crater' Road Completed," clipping, no title, August 1922, Craters of the Moon Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society, and Louter, Craters of the Moon National Monument, 250-251.

[19] Louter, Craters of the Moon, 251.

[20] Arno B. Cammerer to Addison T. Smith, April 13, 1925, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, pt. 2, NA; "Custodian's Annual Report for 1926, Craters of the Moon National Monument," CRMO Archives.

project for the time being.[21]

Trail construction followed an even more informal pattern in these initial stages of management, especially since driving was such a main component of the tourist's experience. Prior to the monument's establishment, Paisley and other local explorers marked popular features and located the way to them by cairns and signs, for which the physical evidence seems to have all but vanished. As custodian, Paisley continued this practice by constructing paths out to caves, such as Indian Tunnel, Beauty and Surprise, as well as to waterholes. Tourists, however, still found it difficult to locate these features in the maze of lava flows.[22]

In the late 1920s the Park Service formalized comprehensive planning for the national parks with master plans which were tailored to meet the needs of each one. The effects of these planning efforts were readily seen in the monument's development for both visitor use and management. Early in the summer of 1927, Civil Engineer Bert H. Burrell and Landscape Architect E.A. Davidson visited Craters of the Moon and drafted its first development plan. Their work stressed the importance of softening the monument's image as a hostile environment and accommodating tourists in this beautiful yet harsh landscape. As Burrell stated:

> It must be considered that the entire area of the monument is to a large extent forbidding to the average tourist in the present state of development. To hold the interest of the average tourist we must not alone present the natural phenomena or beauty, but must cater to his comfort; none but those of purely scientific mind will endure the discomfort of the present campgrounds without conveniences usually furnished the motoring public such as suitable camping places, toilet facilities and adequate water.

The engineer proposed four major construction projects to address these concerns. First and foremost was the need to acquire a permanent and sufficient water supply; second was the need to provide the requisite "sanitary" facilities for camping; third was the need to assure proper administrative control through development of a single entrance,

---

[21] Albright to Mather, February 12, 1925; "Custodians Monthly Report," July 8, 1926, CRMO Archives; Bureau of Public Roads, "Preliminary Investigation Report on Craters of the Moon National Monument: Echo Crater Road," Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, Central Classified Files, Craters of the Moon National Monument, file 600, National Archives, Pacific Sierra Region.

[22] Louter, 261.

funneling visitors through a central area, complete with a checking station and residence for a custodian; and fourth was the need to improve roads and trails to improve visitor access and safety.[23]

Burrell's report established the main tenet of the monument's future development pattern--centralization--the confinement of all development to one area. This was especially practical for the construction of the monument's water system, for it was more convenient and economical to have the system service one location and to cluster administrative facilities and visitor services in one area rather than spread them throughout the monument. Although never fully articulated, the concept of centralization reflected the concept of the village espoused by early Park Service planners. Key to the village concept was that it concentrated visitor services in one location and provided for the functional needs of the visitor, including accommodations, supply stores, campgrounds, and the basic utilities of lights and water. There was nothing haphazard about a village's design, however, for all structures and architectural styles, for instance, would be carefully sited and thoughtfully chosen "in order to enhance...the 'picturesqueness' of the site."[24]

In their plan, for example, Burrell and Davidson selected the site in the vicinity of the monument's present campground, at the edge of the North Crater Flow, for here the small compound would support the custodian's quarters and office, a large campground, comfort stations, and a concession.[25] Besides its importance for the new water system or fulfilling a village concept, the site also offered one of the more ideal spots for camping. The camp at Cinderhurst was too small, Davidson believed. He considered establishing a campground at Devil's Orchard but soon rejected this idea because it was too close to one of the monument's features--crater wall fragments--and too far from known waterholes. Another site, on the northeast base of Grassy Cone, was rejected by Burrell. Chosen by the geologist Harold T. Stearns the year before in his study to expand the monument, the site, in Burrell's opinion, was a poor choice. It was too close to the highway, too far from the monument's main features and headquarters, and too small an area for development, despite its shade trees and proximity to Little Cottonwood Creek. Burrell and Davidson agreed that a campsite at the edge of the

---

[23] Bert H. Burrell to Stephen T. Mather, July 21, 1927, RG 79, CRMO, box 580?, 0.35, pt. 3, NA.

[24] Gretchen A. Luxenberg and Cathy A. Gilbert, The Rustic Landscape of Rim Village, 1927-1941, 18.

[25] Burrell to Mather, July 21, 1927; Davidson, "Craters of the Moon National Monument." Burrell and Davidson drafted separate reports but together they make up a whole for the purposes of development history.

North Crater Flow was suitable, for it would "comfortably care" for up to two hundred camps. Here, according to Davidson, was a relatively perfect camping spot, given the monument's exposed volcanic environment. "Natural cinder strips or 'roads' connect various, almost 'private' walls," he wrote, and limber pine, clustered throughout the area, further added to the experience by providing shade in the summer's oven-like heat and ubiquitous sun.[26]

Although agency officials approved of the development plan--its provisions for a new headquarters compound, improved roads and trails--the Park Service never allocated the needed funding, despite pressure from monument boosters who wanted "this strange land of the past" developed on "a large scale" for "tourist America." Attempts by congressional representatives to pass legislation for appropriations to cover improvements also produced no action. Nevertheless, nature forced the agency's hand. In late July 1927, the waterhole levels dropped drastically and threatened the monument's existence. When he learned of the situation, for instance, Albright worried that the monument might have to close permanently to camping and possibly to the public altogether. For this reason the Park Service set out immediately to construct the proposed water system by tapping the springs above Little Cottonwood Creek. As part of that plan, the monument's new custodian, Robert Moore, relocated the headquarters to the location proposed by Burrell and Davidson, near the present-day campground entrance. By October 1927, Moore had moved all of the structures from the Cinderhurst Camp to the new location, which faced the monument's new concession, Crater Inn, with its guest cabins and gas station. These structures sat on either side of the recently built entrance road. According to the monument's development plan, Moore had constructed it just west of Sunset Ridge while simultaneously abandoning the two entrance system.[27]

A main component of the headquarters compound was the concession. Catering to tourist comforts, especially the motoring public, formed a central belief in the Park Service mission under its first director, Stephen T. Mather. Luxuries such as running water, rest rooms, and overnight accommodations, Mather thought, would attract more visitors, enhance their experience, and raise the stature of the monument as well as the Park Service in the mind of the general public.[28] While not on the scale of the great park hotels, Crater Inn played a major part in meeting this goal at Craters of the Moon.

---

[26] Burrell to Mather, July 21, 1927; Davidson, "Craters of the Moon"; Louter, Craters of the Moon, 267.

[27] Louter, 77-81. For a sense of the public's development fever, see "Idaho, Urge Opening of This Wonder," Boise Capital News, October 3, 1929.

[28] Foresta, America's National Parks and Their Keepers, 29-30.

Mather's approval of the concession came in October 1926, and in May 1927, the Park Service signed the first five-year permit for Crater Inn, allowing its owners, Jo G. Martin and John R. Wright of Arco, to sell "gasoline, and oil, lunch goods, cold drinks, and the usual line of accommodations furnished to tourists and sight-seers." Martin, an attorney, and Wright, his half-brother and a farmer, seemed to be excellent choices to run the operation. Martin, who was educated at the Chicago Art Institute, was deeply interested in preserving natural features, and displayed "taste and ability in designs for his store and cabins," according to E.A. Davidson. In addition, Martin had "spent all his life in the Craters country," and his familiarity with it would aid the custodian in developing the monument.[29]

Although the Park Service's chief landscape architect approved of Martin's designs for a log store, cabins, and gas station late in 1926, the agency believed that their location was "very important," and in keeping with its design philosophy withheld permission to begin construction until a landscape architect could make a field visit to select a site and discuss any design modifications.[30]

Davidson provided this service when he and Burrell visited the monument in 1927. The landscape architect chose the bench of land at the base of Sunset Ridge, across from and near the entrance of the proposed campground. Here the operators would have enough space for the store, gas station, and up to thirty-five cabins within the "crescent shaped...hill." Positioned here the concession met the practical concerns of the planners because the visitor accommodations would be near the monument's headquarters; it also met the underlying design interests of the village concept by concentrating visitor services--campground and lodge--in one place. At the time of its approval, however, Crater Inn did not have the full range of services required by the public. Noticeably missing was water. Despite its proximity to the proposed campground and headquarters, the location lacked a water source. In order to protect the monument's limited water supply at the time, the Park Service had proposed this "dry"

---

[29] Stephen T. Mather to Samuel A. Paisley, October 28, 1926, RG 79, CRMO, [box 580], file 0.35, pt. 2, NA; Davidson, "Craters of the Moon National Monument." The influence of Union Pacific officials seems particularly relevant to the approval of Crater Inn, since Mather's consent came shortly after President Carl R. Gray visited the monument and later said he would talk to Mather about getting conveniences in general, in which "refreshments" were included. See Arco Advertiser, July 9, 1926.

[30] Memorandum, A.E. Demaray to Moskey, December 1, 1926, RG 79, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, pt. 2, NA. The Park Service's design philosophy was set down by Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane who stated in a 1918 policy directive that in order to preserve natural scenery no new structures of importance could be erected unless approved by a landscape engineer (or landscape architect). See Luxenberg and Gilbert, 19, for the directive's influence on the NPS Rustic style, planning, and landscape architecture.

site to the concession owners, and in return promised to connect their operation to the new water system when it was installed. Until then Crater Inn's owners hauled water from Martin several miles away.[31]

In May 1927, Martin and Wright began construction of the store, gas station, and three guest cabins (although they planned to build four) and completed the five log structures by October. Even though the Park Service was willing to allow the owners to cut trees in the monument for the construction of their buildings, Martin and Wright purchased logs from an outside source. When finished Crater Inn faced the campground and headquarters buildings. Behind and to one side of Crater Inn stood the row of guest cabins, aligned side-to-side, and just off to its other side stood the gas station. A short distance from the complex were two privies screened by trees. The main lodge measured approximately twenty by fifty feet, including a covered porch of about eighteen feet long. The guest cabins and gas station buildings each measured about ten by twelve feet.[32]

With its walls of Douglas fir logs, chimney of lava stone leaking smoke, and mule deer antlers hanging from its eaves, Crater Inn composed a familiar rustic image in a strange and unfamiliar environment. It was an image, whether intentional or not, that conformed with the Rustic style associated with architecture in the national parks. Advertising the opening of Crater Inn, Martin proudly announced that "Comforts Come to Craters of the Moon." A new tourist experience awaited at the monument. "Cabins and a lunch service," he said, "free the visit to the lava formations from inconvenience and hardship." The structures, he stated, reflected a common form and made use of materials from the surrounding environment. "All the buildings are of logs and of that type of construction which the early pioneers found suited to the Idaho climate. The roofs are covered deeply with the black cinders of the region," he added, "resulting in a remarkable coolness in the summer." Visitors could find a "hospitable retreat" in the large hall, with open fire place, and rest before or after seeing the sights. Once inside, tourists could buy groceries, lunch goods, and cool refreshments stored in the natural

---

[31] Davidson, "Craters of the Moon"; Louter, 290.

[32] "Custodian's Monthly Report," October 1, 1927, CRMO Archives; Demaray to Moskey, December 1, 1926. Dimensions for Crater Inn vary. See, for example, the original sketch of Crater Inn's floor plan can be in RG 79, CRMO, box 580, file 0.35, NA, and "Log Structures for Concessions [at] Craters of the Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1927.

refrigeration of the "underground passages" of the cinder beds.[33] For the guests who desired overnight accommodations, the small guest cabins were furnished with bed springs, mattresses, bedding, and wood stoves, but no running water or indoor toilets--all for the price of $1 to $1.50 per person a night.[34]

One of the most important services the business provided when it opened was water, because just as Crater Inn was completed, the monument's water supply nearly vanished. For the next four years, the concession supplied both visitors and the monument's managers. As part of their earlier agreement with the Park Service, Wright and Martin agreed not to charge for this service in return for a hook up to the proposed water system. In the minds of the concession's owners, water was the only factor holding back the full development of the concession. The owners expected that once the water system was completed they would be able to modify the inn and cabins with running water, flush toilets, and bathing facilities, "without which it is impossible to have a first rate establishment." Water and the improvements it would bring were important to the growth and stability of the concession, and were essential to conveying the significance of Craters of the Moon to the public. With these improvements, Martin declared, the "popularity of the place will catch up with its real merit as one of the most interesting scenic phenomena in the world. People will not come in large numbers or stay very long where they are uncomfortable or subjected to hardship. We hope to relieve that at Craters of the Moon and profit accordingly," he concluded.[35]

Although at "a standstill" until the water arrived, the concession owners constructed one more guest cabin in the meantime and got their wish when the water system was finished in 1931. Martin's ambitions, however, were proven wrong. The business would struggle with debt for several decades, unable to provide the modifications the owners desired and, in turn, provide the monument with the "dignified accommodations" it deserved.[36]

Across the road from Crater Inn, monument managers dealt with their own poor

---

[33] "Log Structures for Concession [at] Craters [of the] Moon," Arco Advertiser, June 10, 1927; "Comforts Come to Craters of the Moon," Idaho Statesman, ca. October 1927, clipping, Craters of the Moon Vertical File, Idaho State Historical Society.

[34] Custodian, R.B. Moore to Edward F. Rhodenbaugh, April 21, 1930, box 2, file 5, Rhodenbaugh Papers.

[35] Jo G. Martin to Horace M. Albright, July 12, 1929, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, pt. 5, NA.

[36] Louter, 290-292; Martin to Albright, July 12, 1929, for quotation.

facilities, since the Park Service had made few improvements beyond the immediate necessities. In October 1929, Custodian Robert Moore complained of the primitive working and living conditions at the monument. He wondered why the agency had not taken better care of what was to be "one of the most Scenic Wonders of the U.S." His only answer was more low appropriations, exacerbated by the country's, and thus the agency's, economic decline with the Great Depression. Consequently, Moore had to make the best of Paisley's one room, tar-papered shack which served as living quarters and office. Small and cramped, "this shack is a great conductor of heat and cold," he said, where "the dust blows in when the wind blows, and some of it blows out too."[37]

Moore retired before the Park Service could correct this problem. But as part of the package to attract his replacement, Director Horace Albright agreed to fund construction of a new residence. The person he had selected for the job, Burton C. Lacombe, would not accept the position otherwise. Albright's decision was swayed by his desire to fill the custodian position with Lacombe, an experienced ranger and friend, and most likely by the observations of Joe Joffe, Yellowstone National Park's assistant superintendent, who stated that the "most disgusting feature of the monument is the Government layout." More importantly, Lacombe's wife expressed profound disappointment in the monument's living quarters and refused to live in the existing structure, adding further impetus to build a new one. This latter reason illustrated a new era in management at Craters of the Moon, one in which families would accompany staff to the isolated area, and thus increase the need for adequate quarters and tolerable living conditions.[38]

Lacombe, who had previously worked in Yellowstone, planned to build a log cottage of "modern architectural design" similar to "the type of buildings usually constructed in national parks." Though plans for the cottage are missing, it can be assumed by the above statements that its design followed the principles of the Rustic style. Completed in early November 1931, the single-story, four-room "beautiful cabin" was constructed from "native dry logs," had a stone chimney, sat on a concrete foundation, and was located near the campground entrance, across the way from Crater Inn. Approximately twenty-three by thirty-one feet, the cottage also had a screened-in rear porch and many modern conveniences. The custodian's cabin resembled similar structures in other national and state parks of the period only on a smaller scale. For

---

[37] Robert B. Moore to Director, National Park Service, October 5, 1929, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, pt. 5, NA.

[38] Joe Joffe to Horace Albright, May 12, 1931, RG 79, CRMO, file 0.35, pt. 9, NA.

one thing, its location in the headquarters complex aided in effective supervision of the monument, a trait followed in other small parks. And for another, structures of this kind typically could reflect, at least on the exterior, the "pioneer homesteads of the locality." For the Lacombes, however, none of this seemed to matter. To them the new residence was a welcome sight because until it was finished they had been living out of a tent in the campground.[39]

The custodian's residence (later called the superintendent's residence) represented one of the park structures proposed in the 1927 development plan intended to aid in the monument's management, and numbered among those that appeared over time in the gradual evolution of Craters of the Moon's headquarters area in the early 1930s. The first of these, it seems, was a log warehouse, or equipment shed, although it does not appear in the original plan. The warehouse was one of many national park structures designed by the Park Service's Landscape Division, headed by Chief Landscape Architect Thomas C. Vint in the San Francisco Field Office. This particular warehouse was the work of Assistant Landscape Architect Kenneth C. McCarter. True to Rustic design principles, McCarter selected the location for the structure "off the track beaten by park patrons," where it stands today along the former east entrance road. The construction of the warehouse was undertaken by contractors from Arco who followed the specifications for a Rustic style log building outlined by the Landscape Division. Completed in November 1932, the single-story structure measured twenty-four by thirty-six feet, sat on a concrete foundation, was three bays wide, had exterior walls of peeled lodgepole pine, a gable roof, and saddle notched corners.[40]

The next structure to be built, a comfort station, appeared in the 1927 development plan, as well as more recent master plans from the early 1930s, and contributed significantly to the "comfort of the public." That the comfort station should be accorded its proper respect can be seen in the general belief among park planners that "toilets are the most necessary among structures in natural parks, and that if only safe water and proper toilets have been provided in these areas, the essentials of

---

[39] "Cottage for Craters," May 29, 1931, Arco Advertiser; "Cottage at Craters Finished Last Week," November 13, 1931, Arco Advertiser. National Park Service design guidelines that provide some context for this structure can be found in Albert H. Good, Park and Recreation Structures, first published in 1935 (Boulder: Graybooks, 1990), 73.

[40] The building history can be found in "Log Equipment Shed," file D 34, CRMO Archives. For an analysis of park building designs for warehouses, see Albert H. Good, Park and Recreation Structures, 89; the warehouse closely resembles the style employed in the construction of a garage in Scenic State Park, Minnesota; see Good, 94-95.

development have been accomplished."[41] It seems no small wonder then that the timing of the comfort station's construction was tied to the presence of the newly finished water system; its construction was also tied to emergency relief funds released to the Park Service through the New Deal. Local contractors, paid through Public Works Administration funds, built the structure.

Located in the monument's campground, where it could best serve the needs of the public, the single-story log building was erected on a concrete foundation, measured ten by twenty feet, had a split-log gable roof, notched corners, and four-angled logs supporting its southern side. Originally plans called for constructing a wood-encased water tank on south-facing side of the roof. Water from the tank was to flow through and be heated by solar panels on an extension of roof's southern edge, supported the aforementioned four-angled logs. For reasons that are currently unknown, the comfort station was built without the tank and solar panels, but it retained the log braces. The comfort station, like the warehouse, reflected the Rustic style prevalent throughout the park system, and was a typical example of log toilet structures for both sexes, with entrances on either end and a partition wall separating the sections.[42] When it was completed in September 1934, Custodian Albert T. Bicknell suggested that the comfort station was something to be proud of for its craftsmanship and its function. The "contractors," he reported, "did some very fine log work on this building, and we are receiving some very fine comments on this project from the public."[43]

The warehouse and comfort station were several important improvements undertaken during the New Deal. Although the master plans of the period contemplated constructing more buildings, funding limitations deferred construction of new structures, such as an administration building, residence, and checking station, until a later date.

In addition to structures, the Park Service improved the monument's road system during the early 1930s. Under Custodian Lacombe's direction, for instance, work crews widened and eliminated dangerous curves and cracks along the loop drive in 1931, making travel over the loop route a "distinct pleasure." During construction of the water system, a dirt road was carved out along Little Cottonwood Creek. Major improvements

---

[41] Good, 129, describes the importance of park comfort stations.

[42] Good, 140-141, illustrates typical examples of "back-to-back" comfort station plans. Although its split-log roof seems unique, the comfort station resembles most the comfort station from Vogel State Park, Georgia.

[43] Albert T. Bicknell, "Final Report on Comfort Station," June 17, 1935, file D, CRMO Archives. See Comfort Station, Craters of the Moon National Monument, drawings 131/3001, 131/3001A.

to the road system arrived with the New Deal programs. In 1934, a Public Works Administration project widened and upgraded four sections of the monument's road system. The first section worked on was the segment of state highway crossing the monument, where workers widened the road and eliminated blind curves so two cars could pass safely. The second project involved formally obliterating the two entrance system. (Evidently earlier work had not succeeded.) Both junctions were difficult to see from the highway and covered with sagebrush, causing tourists to miss the monument altogether. Workers closed the west entrance and redeveloped the east entrance, since it offered a shorter and safer route into the monument. The final two sections of the monument were likewise widened, straightened, graded, and cinder-surfaced for better driving conditions. These included the two-mile stretch from the headquarters to Devil's Orchard junction and the length of road leading from the junction to Big Craters.[44]

In the mid-1930s, southern road extension reemerged in Park Service plans, specifically a road to Echo Crater, but agency officials considered it more prudent to expend funds from emergency relief projects on the development of the existing road system. Still, at the behest of Custodian Bicknell, the Bureau of Public Roads conducted another survey of a road to Echo Crater. Park Service highway engineers and landscape architects agreed on a route along the Great Rift that would begin at the southern end of Inferno Cone, run south to Broken Top and Buffalo Caves and advance to the northeast of Big Cinder Butte along or near the old wagon road to Trench Mortar Flat. It would then leave the wagon road and cross a saddle east of Coyote Butte and drop down east of Echo Crater, ending in a loop road constructed between this point and Little Prairie Waterhole.

Although Associate Director A.E. Demaray approved the Echo Crater Road plan in 1936, controversy arose over the location of the road near Broken Top. From a geologic standpoint, a high route would enhance views of the Great Rift and not injure some valuable lava formations below Broken Top. From a visual perspective, the high route would scar the slope of Broken Top, but also provide visitors with an excellent panorama of the lava country in the process. Typical of Park Service road development of the time, planners attempted to harmonize the road with the surrounding landscape rather than allow the road to intrude on that landscape. Eventually this policy seems to have been used to resolve the controversy when the agency chose a route below Broken Top, against the recommendations of Regional Geologist J. Volney Lewis, since this route would conceal better the road scar from the traveling public. By at least 1940 a

[44] "Report on Road Widening," July 24, 1935, file D, CRMO Archives.

"minor cinder road" had been built across the lava fields to the cone where a parking lot had also been constructed. And by July of that year, Custodian Guy McCarty, eager to open up new areas of the monument to visitors, reported that he had improved the old wagon road along the Great Rift so that it was "possible to drive to Trench Mortar Flat and the Tree Molds." In the early 1940s, dreams of extending the road farther, however, ended when Regional Director O.A. Tomlinson vetoed any proposals because they would only add to the monument's administrative costs without offering much new scenery to motorists.[45]

Not all attention was focused on the southern end of the monument during the 1930s and early 1940s. In 1938 two public interest groups, the Eastern Idaho Association of Civic Clubs and Southern Idaho Inc., spearheaded a good roads movement to promote tourism in eastern and southern Idaho. Part of their campaign included improving the state highway passing through the monument's northwest corner. After some prodding, the Park Service supported the project, which involved ceding approximately a ninety-four-acre strip of highway corridor to the state. With that accomplished in 1941, the state received federal highway funds to undertake the improvements and by August 1942 the realignment and resurfacing of four miles of the highway across the monument had been completed. Overall, the project straightened the highway, eliminated the connection to the former east entrance, and made the road head more east than north. The new road entered the monument from the east slightly south of its former location and reduced the mileage to Arco.[46]

Where trails were concerned, their development improved in the late 1920s. And though their construction continued to reflect an informal pattern, it exhibited the agency's desire to reduce hardships associated with seeing the monument's spectacular features. It was during this time, for example, when Custodian Robert Moore constructed a trail from the Caves Area parking lot to Dew Drop Cave and Indian Tunnel, filling cracks with cinders and removing rocks, in order "to make a good practicable trail for persons unused to difficult ground." Moore also built a new trail from Snow Cone to Great Owl Cavern to open up more features to tourists. The trail skirted the slopes of the Spatter Cones south to Big Sink Waterhole before ending at the cavern. He brushed the trail, erected signs, and built four-foot monuments, presumably

---

[45] Louter, Craters of the Moon, 254-256. For McCarthy quote, see "Custodian's Monthly Report," July 3, 1940, CRMO Archives.

[46] Memorandum, Custodian Guy E. McCarthy to Regional Director, Region Four, August 29, 1942, RG 79, CRMO, box 269, file 630, NA-PSR.

out of rock, to mark a mile of trail from the waterhole to the cavern. (Whether these signs or cairns are still extant is unknown.) All of this, Moore believed, eliminated "a number of rambling and confusing trails," making the hike across the rough terrain more attractive, and in turn increasing visitation to this section of the monument.[47]

For all of these efforts, however, the Park Service considered the monument's trail system inadequate. Without proper trails, according to Yellowstone Superintendent Roger Toll, "visitors cannot find the points of interest and are likely to get lost in the maze of lava flows." Toll's recommendations eventually led to action with the arrival of New Deal emergency relief funding. Custodian Albert Bicknell selected the Caves Area as a place that required the most attention. Only a few tourists ventured across this formidable landscape, in some cases unable to find the caverns in the sea of pahoehoe, despite the earlier attempts to construct trails here. In December 1933, a Civil Works Administration project funded a more complete development of the Caves Area trail system. Laborers, hired from relief rolls in Butte County, carved out a new surfaced trail from the hard lava that connected Indian Tunnel with Dew Drop, Boy Scout, Beauty and Surprise caves. They also extended a rough trail to Natural Bridge and Last Chance Cave. Bicknell called the new trails "a great asset." His spirits were especially buoyed when he noticed elderly visitors and children walking with ease to the caves. He found it very "encouraging" to get people out "to these points of interest." For similar reasons, the Park Service constructed a trail to Great Owl Cavern in 1934 with Public Works Administration funds. Apparently the trail followed the route established by Custodian Moore along the spatter cone chain, and provided access to the cavern for those visitors willing to venture across the rugged terrain. But, according to Custodian Guy McCarty in 1940, the trail was too primitive. Its roughness prevented many visitors from seeing the cavern. Any "ladies," he wrote, "wishing to make the trip have to pass over lava and cinders which are extremely hard on their shoes," which meant that most women and "lots of men" refused "to make the hike."[48]

On the eve of Word War II, the monument's second headquarters complex and physical plant had reached the apex of their development, thanks mostly to funding from New Deal emergency relief programs. Although never explicitly spelled out in the monument's master plans of the time, the design and siting of the buildings reflected the

---

[47] "Custodian's Monthly Report," June 1 and July 1, 1928.

[48] Albert T. Bicknell, "Report on Trail Construction," ca. 1934, file D 30, CRMO Archives; McCarty's observation is recorded in Assistant Regional Director B.F. Manbey, "Comments and Notes...Special Inspectional Trip of Craters of the Moon National Monument," June 12, 1940, history files, CRMO Archives.

village concept and the Rustic style. The log structures--for both concession and administration--were grouped closely together on either side of the entrance road where all of the visitor's needs could be met for services such as gas, food, and lodging. Visitors could also find bathrooms, showers, drinking water, and a campground at their disposal. Likewise, the buildings housed monument managers, provided for administrative operations, and created space for storage. In the sparsely treed and seemingly barren raw lava landscape, the "rustic" buildings evoked an image common to national parks, and they also evoked a rugged image that seemed to fit well with the "pioneer" history of the surrounding region and the volcanic landscape.

Despite all of this, the buildings and other physical improvements fell short of basic needs, particularly from the standpoint of administrative structures. Funding dried up as the New Deal programs wound down and World War II escalated. The war, with its drastically restricted appropriations for all parks, sent the monument into a holding pattern for almost two decades, which led to the steady decline of its infrastructure. A sense of this problem can be seen in the following observations. Surveying the scene in the late 1930s, Landscape Architect E.A. Davidson thought that even then the monument's facilities were "hardly...adequate for present usage." In 1950, Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston echoed Davidson's views when he exclaimed that the monument's "installations are substandard and obsolete," emphasizing the consistent neglect of administrative facilities in the development program. Up until this time, the only significant additions to the monument's headquarters structures were a temporary frame cabin for the permanent ranger's quarters and several more guest cabins for Crater Inn. Although Park Service officials planned for new developments throughout the war years and after, they followed through with little action, plagued by continued low appropriations for park developments. Nevertheless, those plans laid the foundation for future improvements implemented through the Mission 66 program in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[49] And for this reason, they are worth reviewing in some detail.

In the master plans of the 1940s and 1950s, agency officials contemplated relocating the headquarters compound yet a third time. The most penetrating analysis of the administrative developments was Regional Director O.A. Tomlinson's 1943 report in which he provided the essential "why" to future design. Writing during the war years, a time of low appropriations and low visitation, the regional director believed that in the

[49] Louter, 268-270. See also Memorandum, E.A. Davidson to Mark H. Astrup, October 3, 1938, RG 79, CCF, CRMO, file 600, NA-PSR, and Memorandum, Aubrey F. Houston to Regional Director, January 27, 1950, RG 79, CCF, CRMO, file 306-06, NA-PSR.

future the current headquarters should be relocated about a half mile northwest to a site higher in elevation and at the junction of the state highway and entrance road. Reflecting the original development plan from 1927, Tomlinson stated that this would provide a more central design in the form of a "drive through." In this way the monument's small staff would be able to check visitors, collect fees, issue permits, control traffic, and provide information in an efficient manner. The highway site was also appealing because it could expand the monument's interpretive program; the slightly higher elevation offered a near-panoramic view of the lava flows, a good vista with which to introduce visitors to the monument.[50]

Tomlinson's suggestions appeared in the preliminary master plan of 1943. The plan called for a new headquarters complex, with one building for monument offices and museum, and two five-room residences at the base of the highway. The custodian's residence, or cottage, would be converted to staff housing, thereby requiring only minor additions for housing and storage. The plan also suggested a change in building materials, ones that would be more sympathetic to the monument's environment as well as more practical. That is, agency officials wanted to eliminate logs and replace them with lava rock. All future buildings, then, would use lava rather than logs in their construction since lava, it was believed, had a more natural effect and insulating qualities.[51]

Much of this change in thinking stemmed from the opinions of Custodian Guy E. McCarty and Associate Regional Director B.F. Manbey. McCarty made this recommendation when analyzing the condition of Crater Inn and its associated structures. The log buildings, he said, were "not very pleasing to the eye," it seems, because they were rundown. They were also unappealing because they stood out from the lava landscape, for "there is hardly a tree in the whole area, particularly in the vicinity of these cabins," he stated, rendering log construction "entirely inappropriate." Furthermore, prevailing winds from the southwest whipped up road dust and cinders in front of Crater Inn, which found its way into the buildings through cracks in the logs as well as open doors and windows. And no matter how much cleaning the owners did, the store and cabins were "dust traps." Future development, then, should relocate the concession; otherwise the "majority of visitors will have...their vacations spoiled for the time spent in these buildings." All of this "will keep the Craters of the Moon in a very unfavorable light with the public." New construction, whether for the concession or

---

[50] Louter, 269-270; O.A. Tomlinson to Staff, July 21, 1943, RG 79, CCF CRMO, file 600, NA-PSR.

[51] B.F. Manbey, "Notes and Comments."

monument buildings, should make use of "lava rock masonry, of which there is a great quantity available" in the monument, a resource that was less expensive to acquire than logs hauled from more than two hundred miles away. Manbey seconded the custodian's recommendation and suggested that future monument structures be modeled after those at Lava Beds National Monument. The lava structures there seemed appropriate and to "blend in with the natural surroundings."[52]

Plans for the new headquarters lay dormant during the postwar years. By the early 1950s a crisis seemed at hand. Superintendent Houston announced that the monument's "substandard and obsolete" facilities were rapidly deteriorating. Ranger recruits turned down positions at the monument, refusing to live in such poor structures. Compounding these problems were recent improvements to the state highway system, postwar travel increases, and a regional population boom, all of which expanded monument visitation and added stress to its already limited facilities and physical plant.[53]

The monument's 1950 master plan renewed Tomlinson's proposal from the early 1940s. In it Houston recommended adding a concession wing to the proposed headquarters structure in order to eliminate Crater Inn's unsightly buildings and "improve the appearance of the Government area as well." Agency planners responded to Houston's appeal and agreed that the proposed headquarters should be located at the junction of the state highway and the monument entrance, yet the location of the residential and utility areas posed problems. The small land space at the base of the highway might crowd the buildings, in addition to being susceptible to snow drifts and high development costs. Planners considered two alternative sites for the residential and utility areas as a way to relieve potential overcrowding. The first alternative site was at the base of Sunset Cone, above the highway, and the second near the former east entrance, above the highway as well, near today's group campground. Houston recommended the original location because it was more practical compared to the other two sites. Confining the headquarters to one location would reduce construction and management costs, even though it was limited in space. The final master plan selected this site and recommended moving the entrance road to the west, dividing the proposed headquarters complex with the residential and utility areas to the east and the

[52] Ibid.

[53] Houston to Regional Director, January 27, 1950.

administration building to the west.[54]

Despite approval of the plan, funding did not appear because of severe reductions in Park Service budgets for construction and maintenance in the early 1950s. As a result, buildings continued to deteriorate and, in some cases, fall down. At one point, Houston reported that it was cheaper to build new structures than to repair the old ones. And in order to ameliorate the situation, he acquired several temporary buildings (shacks and frame tents) and remodeled them for employee housing, shop buildings, and a new office, all of which were added to the existing headquarters compound. Nevertheless, these structures were temporary and not fit for year-round use; the elevation at the headquarters was about six thousand feet and winters were extreme. Meanwhile, proposals for new residences, administration building, and other facilities were put off until "later years."[55]

Similarly some limited road and trail improvements were undertaken during postwar years. In the summer of 1955, the monument straightened, widened, and regraded the one-mile spur road to Broken Top (also identified as the Great Owl parking area). This work was part of lingering plans to extend the road to Echo Crater, which remained a possibility since during the 1949 Coyote Butte fire a fire road was bulldozed to the crater along the Great Rift. But still it was only a possibility, one never fulfilled.[56]

For the most part, the monument's trail system was fully developed by this time, as documented in the master plans of the early 1950s. In the northern section of the monument, the system included trails to the Caves Area, Big Craters and Spatter Cones, Great Owl Cavern, the Tree Molds, and North Crater. In the southern end, three informal, or undeveloped, trails paralleled either side of the Great Rift. They started at the end of the Broken Top Road and separated into two routes at the Watchman. The Old Indian Trail extended south to Vermillion Chasm; the Natural Bridge Trail branched southwest of Fissure Butte, and the Split Butte Trail ran as far south as Sheep Trail Butte. Plans did call for constructing trails from Indian Tunnel to Last Chance

---

[54] Memorandum, Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston to Regional Director, Region Four, May 22, 1950, RG 79 CCF, CRMO, file 201, NA-PSR. See also master plan drawing 2008A, maintenance fiche-files, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Regional Office.

[55] Memorandum, Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston to Regional Director, April 19, 1951; Houston to Regional Director, February 20, 1952; Houston to Regional Director, November 20, 1952; file 204, RG 79, CCF, CRMO, file 600, NA-PSR. See also Louter, 272.

[56] Louter, 257-258.

Cave, and from Echo Crater to Amphitheater Cave. By the mid-1950s, most of the trails along the loop drive were paved, including a new trail to the Devil's Sewer site (in the North Crater Flow).[57]

Epilogue: Mission 66 and the New Look

By the late 1950s the monument's structures formed a collection of log buildings from the late 1920s and early 1930s, and wood-frame cabins, converted tent cabins, and a ramshackle collection of outbuildings built in the 1940s and 1950s. The road system, while following a well-established route, was still unpaved; wind eroded the cinder surface causing high maintenance costs, and road hazards annoyed the motoring public. Similarly, the trail system was fairly well developed, yet some improvements in surfacing and routing were necessary to both protect resources and enhance the visitor experience. The monument's built environment, especially its headquarters area, hardly lived up to the standards championed by the Rustic style, and exemplified more a "hold-the-fort" mentality on the part of agency officials besieged by floods of visitors and related management issues. During the dark days of World War II, Craters of the Moon's visitation hovered near two thousand. Once wartime restrictions were lifted on travel, the monument's visitation rocketed to fifty thousand in 1950, doubled in 1955, and literally swamped the area's physical plant and small staff in the process. The shock waves from the new travel boom rumbled through all of the nation's parks as the new "industrial tourist" arrived in his bermuda shorts and asked "Where's the john? How long's it take to see this place? Where's the Coke machine?"[58]

To cope with this new reality, the National Park Service launched the Mission 66 redevelopment program in the late 1950s to expand staffing and improve ailing park infrastructures. At Craters of the Moon, the program was estimated to cost around $1 million dollars, and the monument was one of the first park units in Region Four to receive its benefits. Most of the construction occurred between 1956 and 1961, but the major work was accomplished between 1956 and 1958. Following earlier master plans, the program created a third headquarters site at the base of the highway. It renovated and surfaced the monument's road system, improved the campground, and constructed a new comfort station (in the campground), utilities, and water and sewage system. This

[57] Ibid., 263.

[58] For visitation statistics, see Louter, 389. Edward Abbey, Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 52.

comprehensive approach to developing the monument's buildings and physical plant was perhaps the most significant program in its history. Attesting both to its significance and the velocity with which it occurred at the monument, Ranger Robert Zink, who helped plan for the program, commented that "Mission 66 has broken over our heads almost with a vengeance."[59]

Beginning in the summer of 1956, work commenced on the monument's redevelopment. Renovation of the road system began first; the only significant design change from previous master plans was the relocation of the entrance road slightly west of the new headquarters compound, in this way unifying rather than dividing the site. The following summer the campground was expanded and its road paved. Likewise, the loop drive was graded, paved, and, in some sections, revised. Nine parking areas, for example, were created at scenic views and volcanic formations. By 1958 construction of the road system was finished. Only minor improvements were made to the trail system.[60]

The most significant change, however, took place with the construction of the third administration site between 1957 and 1958. Unlike the roads and trails, the new headquarters buildings created an entirely new look for the monument. Deeming the assortment of log, wood-frame, and "temporary" structures (office, housing, sign shop and storage) unfit, it seems, for future management, the Park Service removed all but two of the former administration structures, the comfort station and warehouse, by July 1958.

Included in this removal were Crater Inn and its associated structures. The concession had struggled to stay out of the red for most of its existence; its various owners had been unable to improve the facilities, for example, by adding running water and toilets in its guest cabins, nor had they been able to maintain the appearance of the structures. Most of the monument's managers thought of the lodge, cabins, and gas station as an eyesore, which reduced rather than enhanced the image of the monument. Furthermore, as part of the Mission 66 planning process, agency officials recognized that the monument should be considered a day-use site, a roadside attraction more than a destination, because visitors generally stayed in the monument only a few hours. Given the concession's poor appearance and business history as well as the nature of the monument's visitation, the Park Service decided to eliminate concession services at

---

[59] Because Mission 66 did not occur in the monument's "historic" development period, it is not fully recounted here, and is presented primarily from the perspective of developments. For a fuller treatment of the subject, see, for instance, Louter, 92-94, 272-276. Robert C. Zink to Aubrey F. Houston, August 25, 1956, file H, CRMO Archives.

[60] Louter, 258, 263.

Craters of the Moon and did not renew the operation's license. Crater Inn's buildings were sold at public auction, the last of which left the monument in November 1958.[61]

All of the former building sites were "naturalized," and only the occasional concrete footing appears through the cinders to remind one of the existence of the concession and other structures. (One can still see concrete or asphalt pads at the base of Sunset Ridge marking the general site of Crater Inn's guest cabins, for example, and concrete foundation corners of the custodian's/superintendent's residence at the edge of the campground.) Today only the log comfort station in the campground and log warehouse in the boneyard survive as reminders of this early era in the monument's history.[62]

By 1958 an entirely "new" monument emerged with the completion of the current headquarters complex, which included the visitor center, utility and maintenance building, and five residences. The new headquarters area also consisted of new sewage and secondary water systems, as well as landscaping similar to a city park--lawns, trees, and shrubs (both native and non-native), a drinking fountain, and picnic area. Park Service planners hoped that the trees and shrubbery would add privacy to an otherwise open residential area, one which was adjacent to the state highway, visitor center, and campground. And, just as it showed concern for the comfort of its employees, the Park Service also upgraded its forty-eight unit campground for the comforts of the motoring public, who no longer had a concession for their convenience. Workers graded and paved the campground road, clear and leveled camping spaces, installed twenty-five fireplaces and thirty picnic tables, created a small picnic area, and constructed a new comfort station--all by September 1959.

Surveying the new headquarters and commenting on his new surroundings in the late 1950s, Superintendent Everett Bright registered the significance of the program. "This is quite a change," he wrote, "from the 10' x 14' one room tent covered frame shack which served as office and headquarters for the past twenty-five years." The spacious new administration facility, compared to the rather spontaneous development of the past headquarters area, seemed more cohesive, modernistic, and well-designed.[63]

---

[61] Louter, 290-292. For an example of the decision to eliminate concessions, see Memorandum, Regional Director O.A. Tomlinson to Superintendent Aubrey F. Houston, February 9, 1950, RG 79, CCF, CRMO, file 201, NA-PSR.

[62] Louter, 274.

[63] "Custodian's Monthly Report," February 28, 1958.

Reciting the rationale of past proposals, agency officials believed that the new "layout" was a success because it offered a "much better relationship to the natural features" than in the past. The "gem stone" masonry blocks used in the construction of the monument buildings, although not lava, blended well with the lava terrain, whereas the former log and wood-frame structures had contrasted with the sparsely vegetated, volcanic landscape. Finally, agency managers believed, the new site conformed to the compact design theme outlined in the monument's first development plan, and was therefore an important accomplishment, enabling a small staff to integrate operations and achieve overall management efficiency. In a somewhat desolate area, this close-knit development made it possible to group facilities together and "gain architectural unity in the development."[64]

Summary of Context Theme

Between 1924 and the late 1950s, the National Park Service developed Craters of the Moon National Monument to enhance the visitor experience and aid in the monument's administration. The development reflected many of the trends in Park Service history and design during these general phases. The first of these lasted several years, from 1924 to 1927, and represented the establishment of the monument's first headquarters compound, Cinderhurst Camp. This headquarters area was unplanned and represented the work, primarily, of the first custodian, Samuel A. Paisley. Nevertheless, the small number of structures, campground, and water source served well both the monument's management and its visitors during a period when visitation was relatively low and the Park Service was only in the initial stages of planning Craters of the Moon's development. A large part of that development philosophy originated at this time, since the agency envisioned the monument as a wayside for Yellowstone-bound travelers.

The wayside image influenced subsequent development of the monument between 1927 and World War II. In 1927, the Park Service created the first development plan for the monument, recommending a new location near the present campground, as a way to centralize its administration by combining monument administration buildings, a concession, and campground in one area. The 1927 plan also established that development should soften the monument's harsh appearance by catering to tourist comforts largely through the development of a concession, an adequate water supply, toilets, and more camp sites. Though not specifically stated, the structures and other

[64] "Mission 66 Master Plan for Craters of the Moon National Monument," vol. I, chapter 3, 2, history files, CRMO Archives.

man-made features in the monument resembled those log structures constructed in other national parks in the NPS Rustic style, and reflected the tenets of naturalistic design by the use of the village concept. The built environment evolved in the late 1920s and 1930s, benefiting greatly from New Deal emergency relief programs. By World War II, the monument's "rustic" image--its pioneer look and rugged appearance--seemed to harmonize well with the natural environment.

Reduced appropriations during the wars years and after disabled development efforts at the monument. Haphazard development and deteriorated structures characterized the scene until Mission 66. Between 1956 and 1961, the Park Service "renewed" the monument's development, eliminating most of the old structures, relocating the headquarters to a third site, and constructing new buildings--composed of more "modern" materials--and facilities for serving the public and managing the monument.

Associated Property Types
Name of Property Type: Rustic Architecture

Description:

Between 1924 and 1942, the National Park Service developed buildings and other structures at Craters of the Moon to enhance the visitor experience and assist in the monument's administration. Most of these developments represented a distinct architectural style known as Rustic or National Park Service (NPS) Rustic. NPS Rustic evolved from the romantic and rustic styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fostered by the National Park Service's early commitment to the principles of landscape design that supported both the integration and subordination of park buildings and other structural improvements to their natural setting. All of the monument's "rustic" buildings were located in the second headquarters site and maintenance area in the vicinity of today's campground at the base of Sunset Ridge. They were originally constructed with log walls and rough-cut ends, concrete foundations, lava-stone chimneys, casement windows, and gable roofs. In addition, most were originally built with either cinder, wood shingle, or split-log roof materials, although these have changed in the surviving structures. Although a variety of shapes and sizes, they were single story with simple floor plans. They included Crater Inn (store/lodge, guest cabins, and gas station), the custodian's/superintendent's residence, warehouse, and comfort station. The only extant buildings are the warehouse and comfort station. Concrete footings and concrete/asphalt pads identify where the custodian's/superintendent's residence and

Crater Inn's guest cabins formerly stood.

Significance:

Representative of the Rustic style, these buildings are significant under National Register Criterion C. They are also associated with important themes and events in the history of the park under Criterion A--recreation and tourism (see context statement for CRMO Recreation and Tourism) and the federal government's administration of the area.

Registration Requirements:

Structures eligible for listing under this category are historically significant and must retain architectural and structural integrity--but may sustain some alteration--and must date between 1924 and 1942. Dates may vary according to new information or circumstances. When considering alterations to the architectural and structural integrity of these structures, it must be possible to document that they were built in this era for the purpose of the monument's visitors and administration. It must also be shown that those alterations do not detract from the historic character of the structures. Although the historic context statement covers the period up to the late 1950s and early 1960s, no properties less that fifty years old will be considered eligible.

The following aspects of integrity require consideration when evaluating Rustic architecture at Craters of the Moon:

Location and Setting:

The original location of Rustic structures at Craters of the Moon should remain intact. Without the integrity of location, the properties would be rendered ineligible. The setting of Rustic structures should remain intact, but some alteration can occur without rendering the properties ineligible.

Design, Workmanship, and Materials:

Rustic structures considered historically significant at Craters of the Moon should possess most of their original design, workmanship, and materials. In general, to retain eligibility, Rustic architecture properties must still have the majority of the wall

materials, original foundation, and roof configuration (and possibly decorative woodwork and door handles) intact. Any additions and exterior alterations must be compatible with the structure's original design, workmanship, and materials in regard to quality and type.

Feeling and Association:

To possess feeling and association, Rustic architecture properties must retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and materials.

Potentially Eligible National Register Properties:

The following list identifies properties that may be eligible for the National Register in association with the context titled National Park Service Management and Development, 1924-1942. However, nominations are not included in this package.

1. Log Warehouse
2. Log Campground Comfort Station

Recommendations:

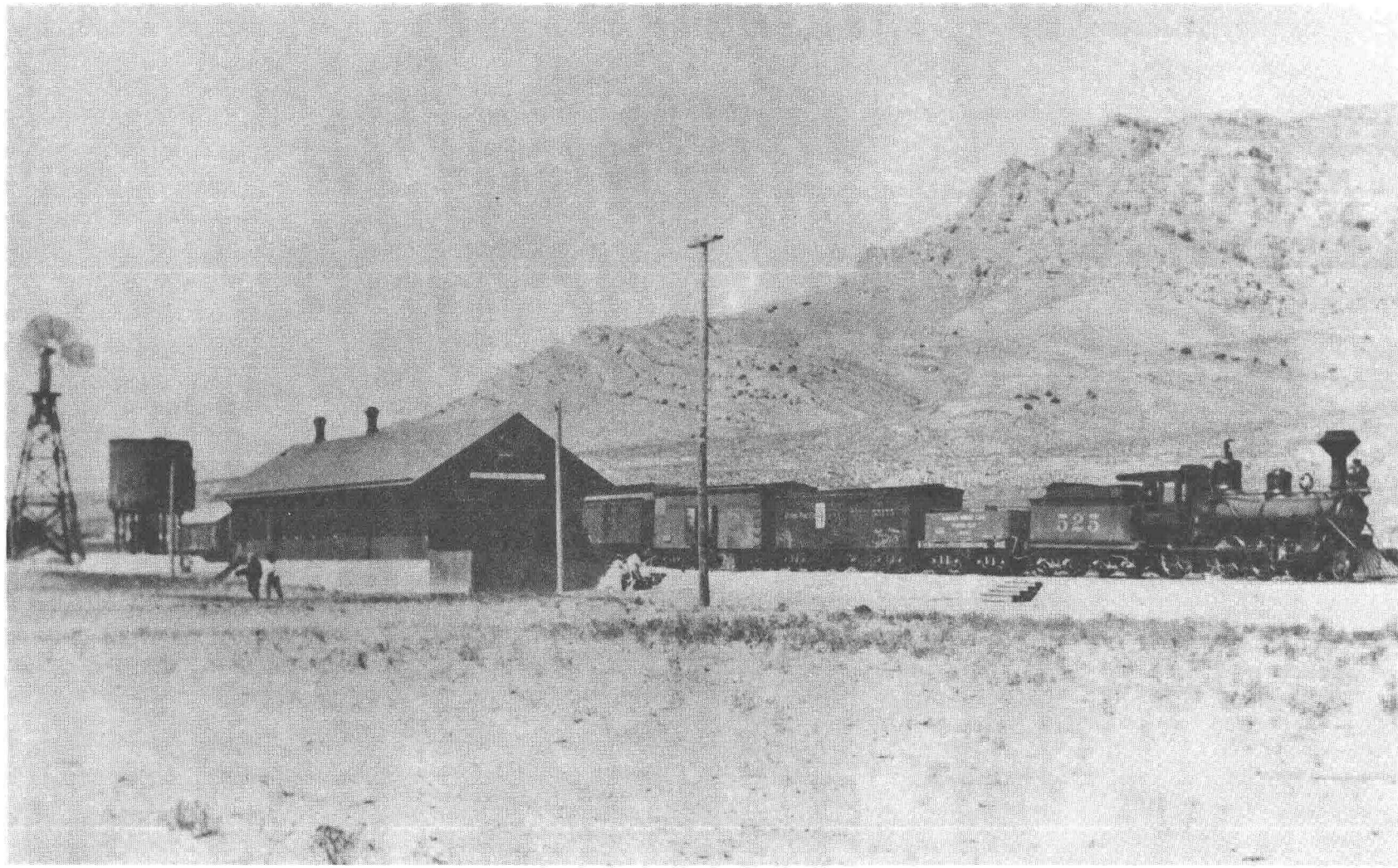
Both structures should have Determinations of Eligibility written and their integrity assessed.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS





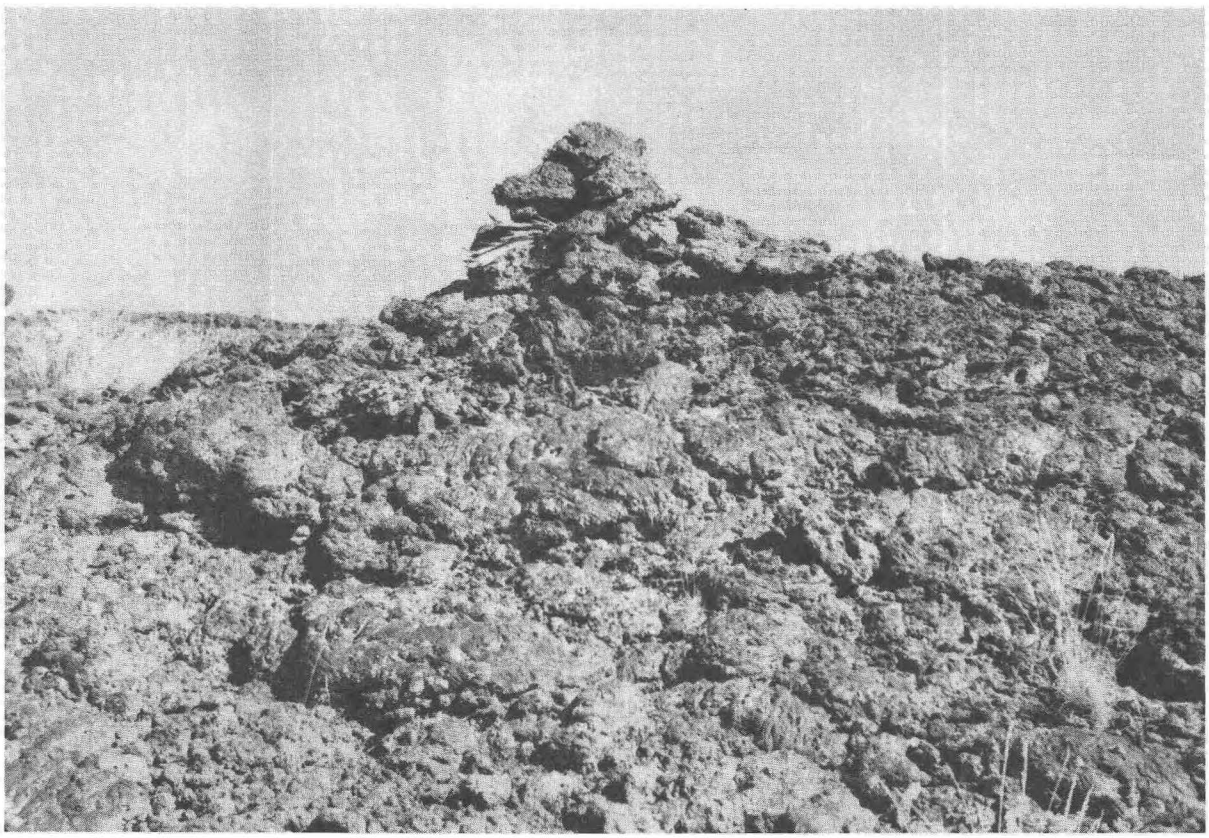
Transporting supplies by freight team was an important stage in the settlement of Arco and the Big Lost River country. Freight trains were also an important link in the region's economy, connecting mines with distant markets. Idaho State Historical Society, photo #75-17.1/A. (Ca. 1914-1918)



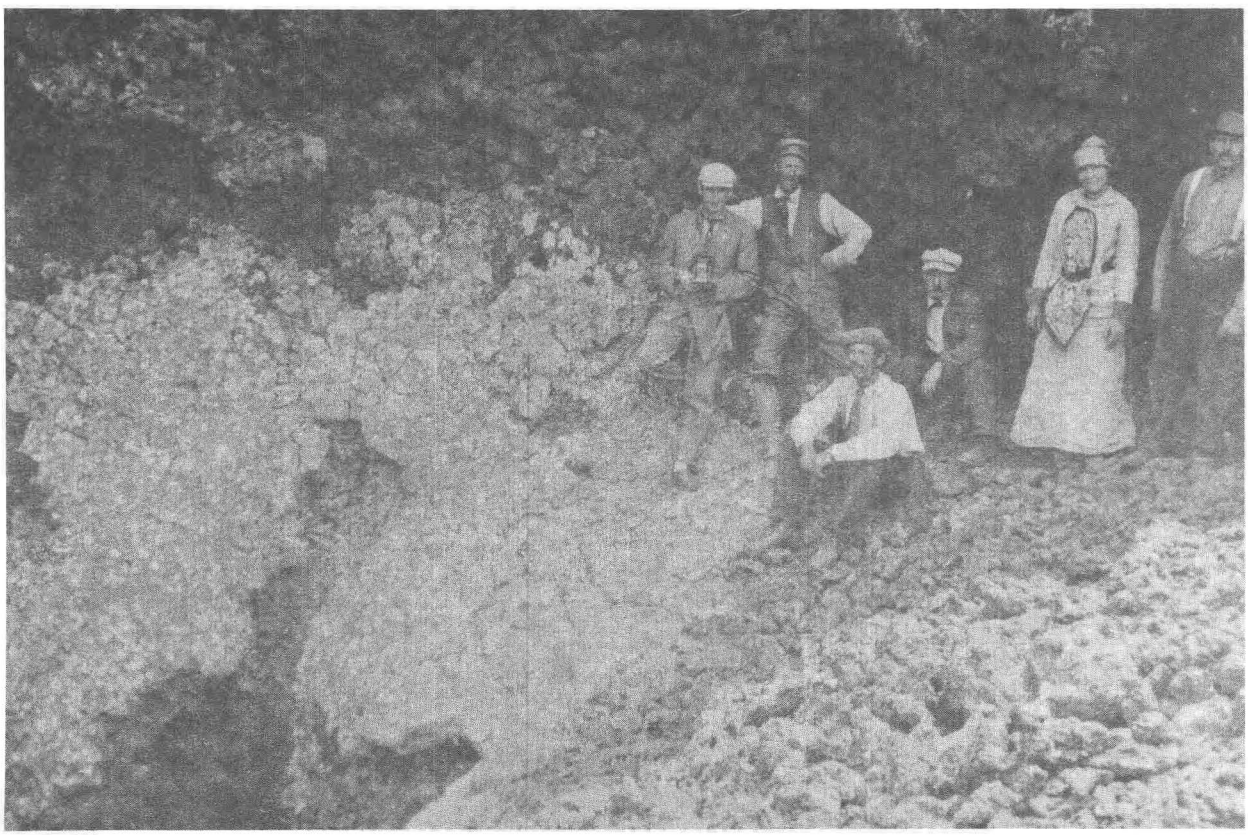
The Oregon Shortline Railroad reached Arco in 1901 and contributed greatly to the settlement of the region near Craters of the Moon. Idaho State Historical Society, photo #66-15.16. (Ca. 1902.)



One of the biggest episodes in the settlement of the Big Lost River area was the opening of the Big Lost River Irrigation Project in 1909. Idaho State Historical Society, photo #73-2.5/A. (1909)



In the late nineteenth century, a handful of explorers ventured into the Craters of the Moon country. This cairn near Vermillion Chasm is one of the few known markers of this activity and is thought to have been erected in the mid-1880s by ranchers J.W. Powell and Arthur Ferris. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #733.



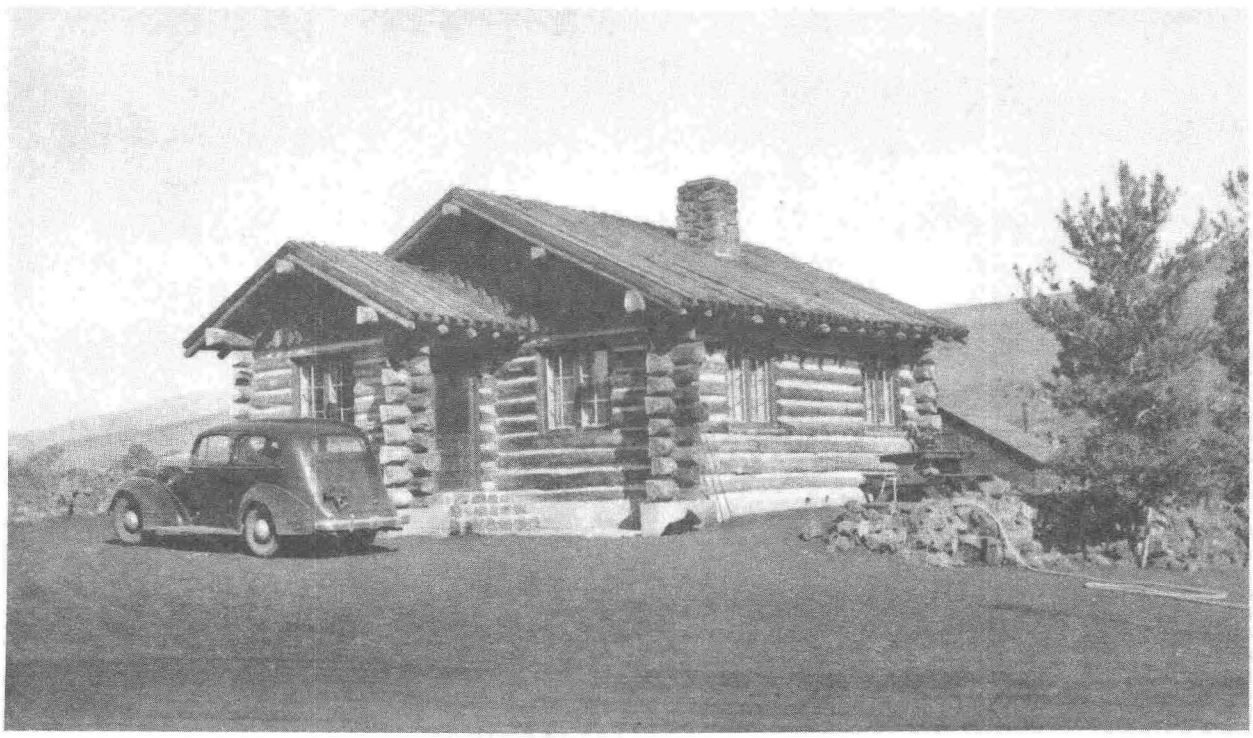
Early tourists at Craters of the Moon came for the scenery and to experience the strange landscape. Craters of the Moon National Monument, catalog #1183.



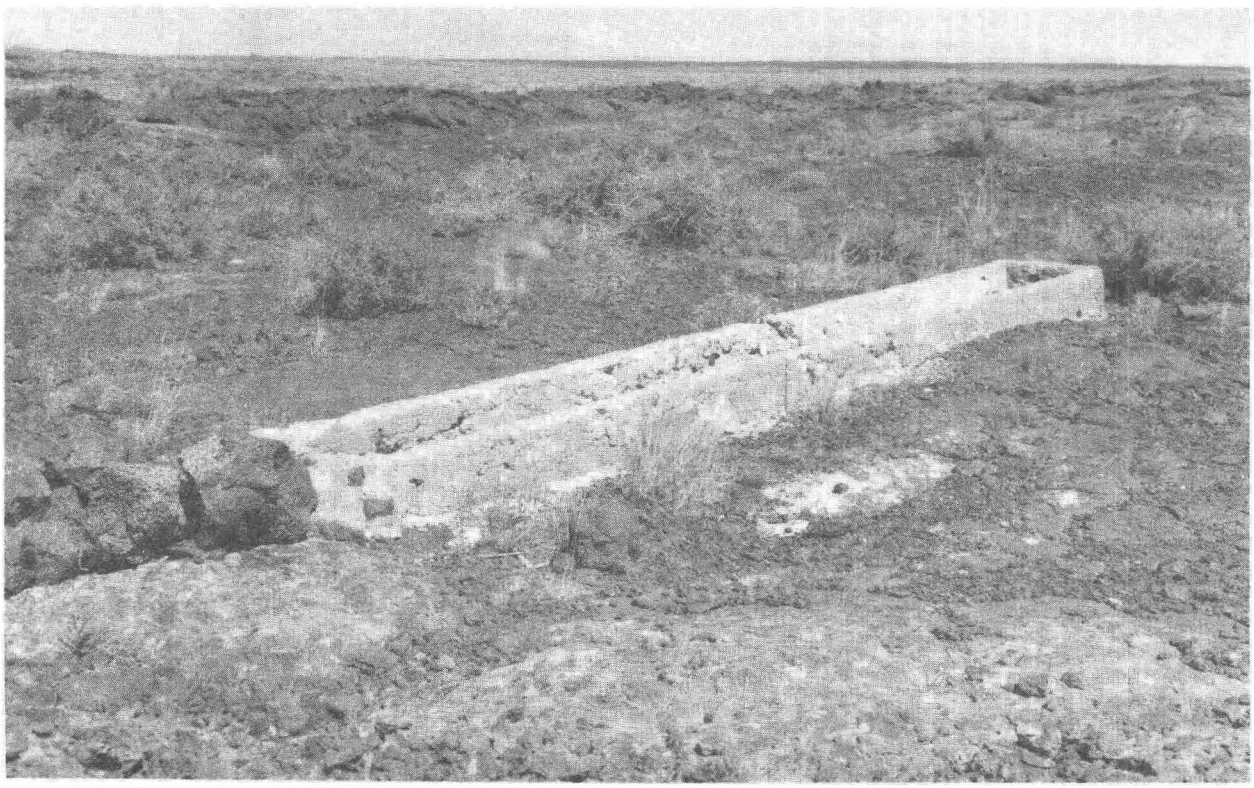
This large crowd awaits the return of Robert Limbert's expedition into Craters of the Moon in the early 1920s. The fete included music from the local band, a picnic, and speeches. National Geographic.



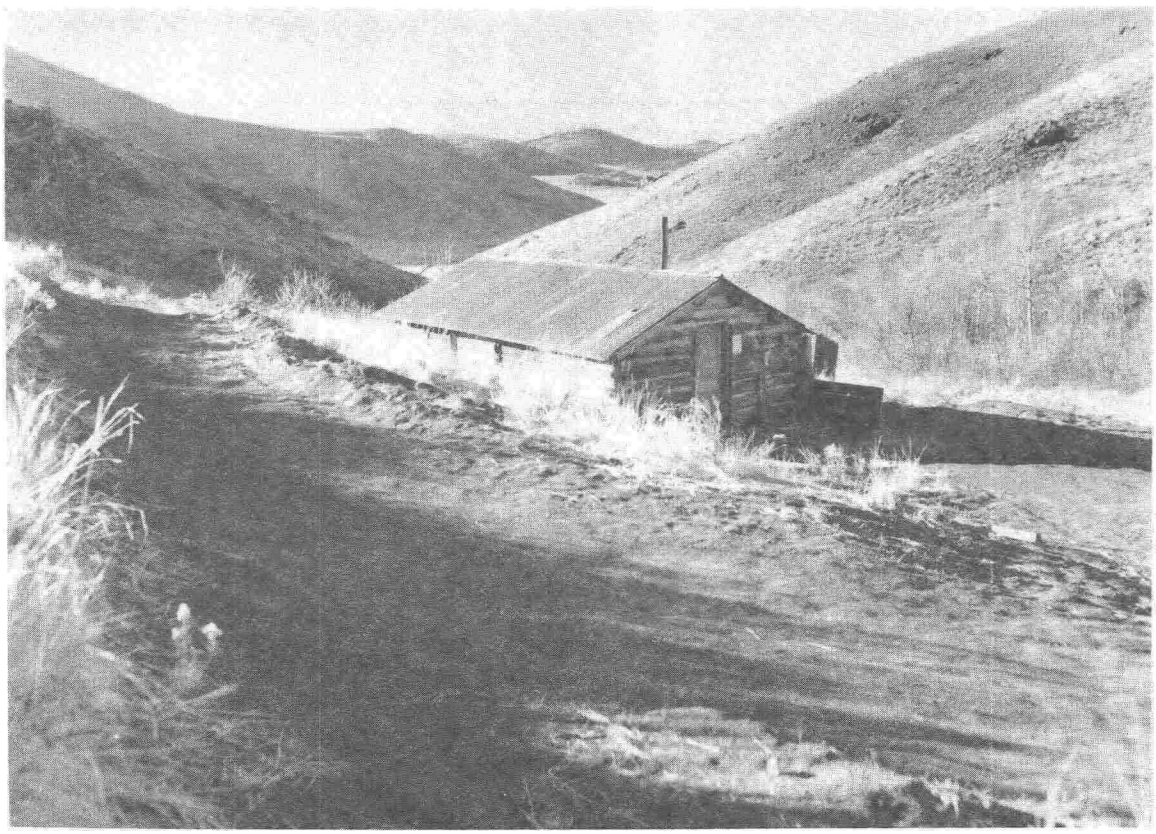
In the early 1920s, exploring Craters of the Moon took Robert Limbert and his companions into a volcanic wilderness full of strange and beautiful scenery and possible danger. National Geographic.



The Custodian's Residence shortly after it was built in the early 1930s reflects the Rustic style of park architecture. Craters of the Moon National Monument, catalog #2193.



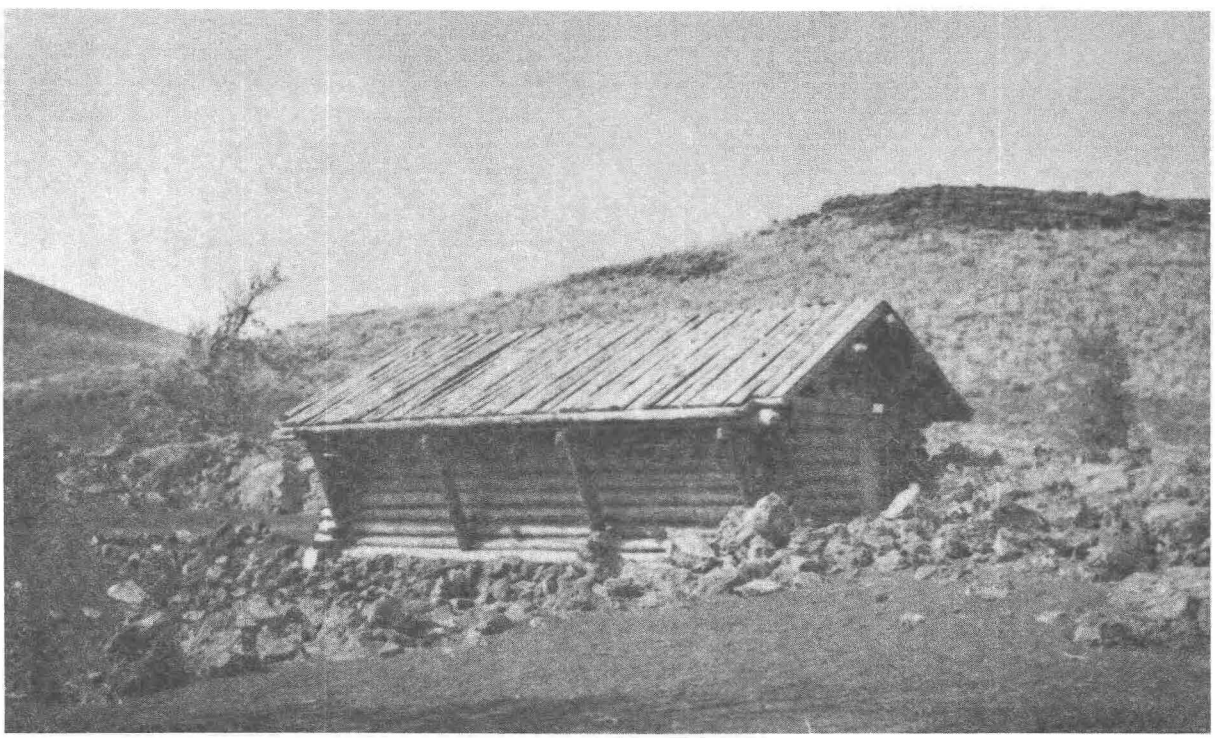
Constructed around 1920, the cement sheep trough at Little Prairie Waterhole represents the only known structure associated with ranching in Craters of the Moon. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #1424.



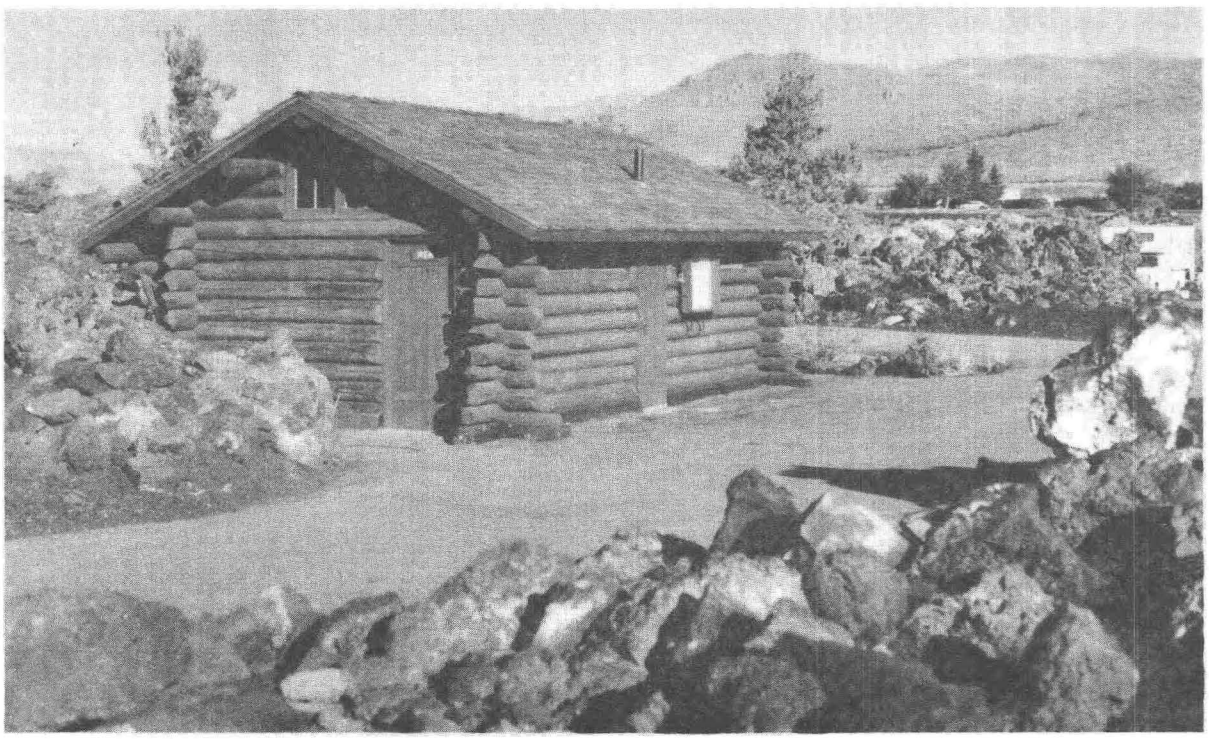
One of several cabins and outbuildings making up the Martin Mine site which was developed in the 1920s. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #272. (1959)



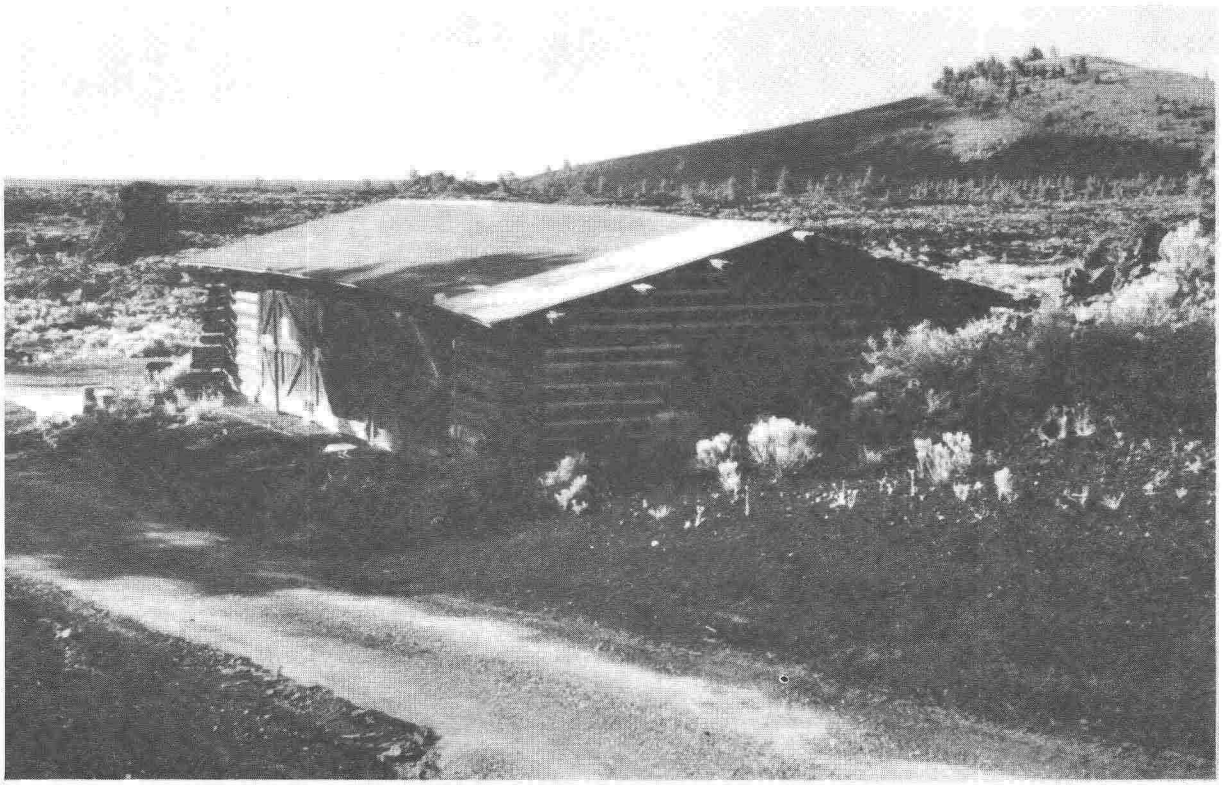
In the 1920s and 1930s, Robert Limbert was one of Idaho's most recognizable promoters and one of Craters of the Moon's most devoted supporters. Craters of the Moon National Monument, collection #807b.



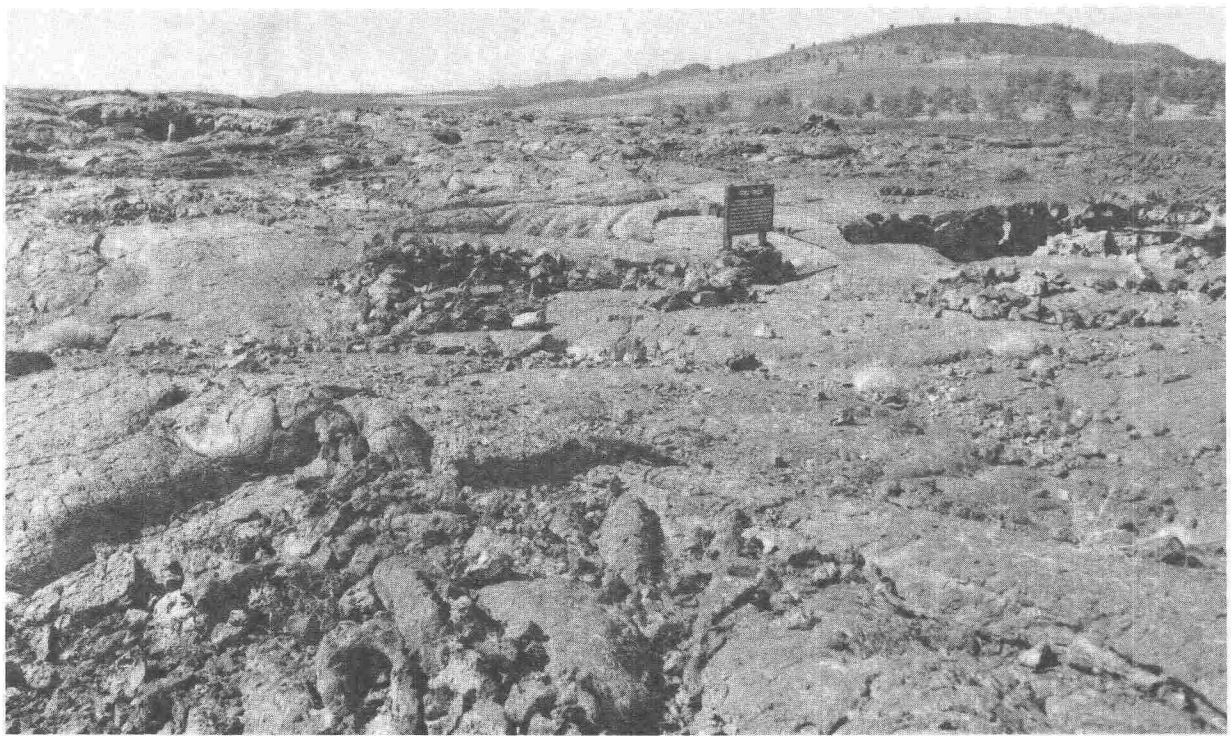
The log comfort station in the campground was one of the first conveniences built for monument tourists, ca. 1934. Craters of the Moon National Monument, uncataloged.



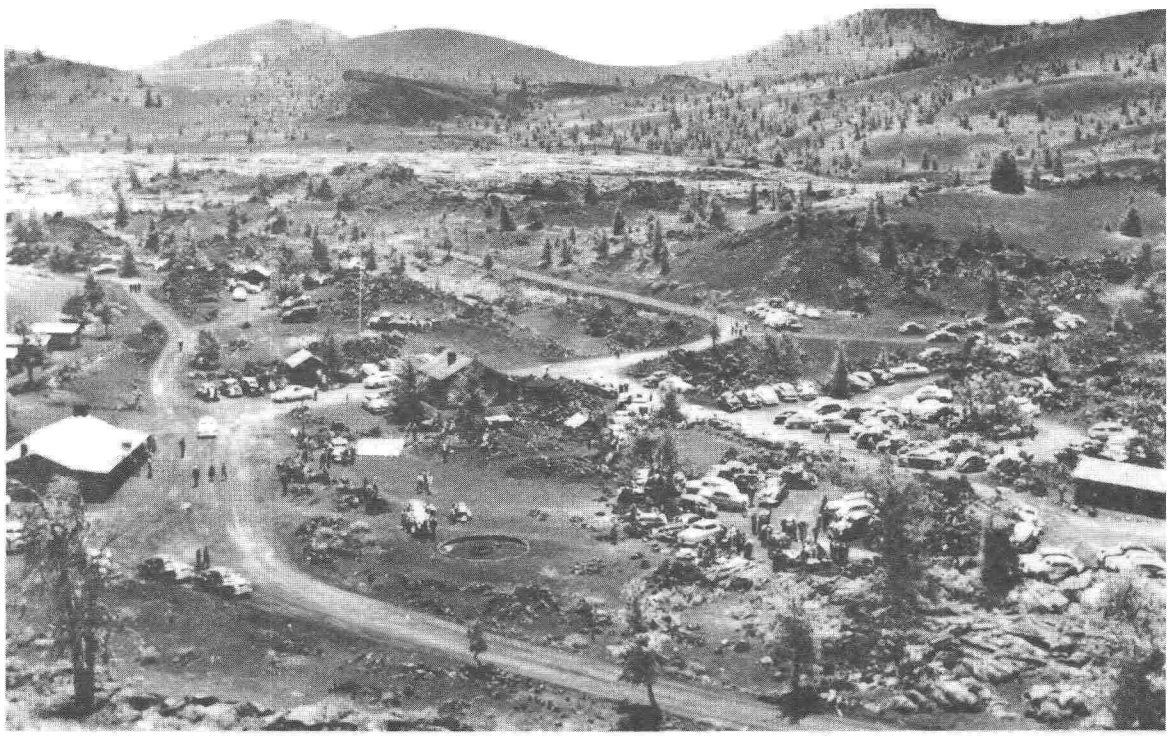
By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the comfort station was one of the monument's two surviving log structures. Photo by author, 1993.



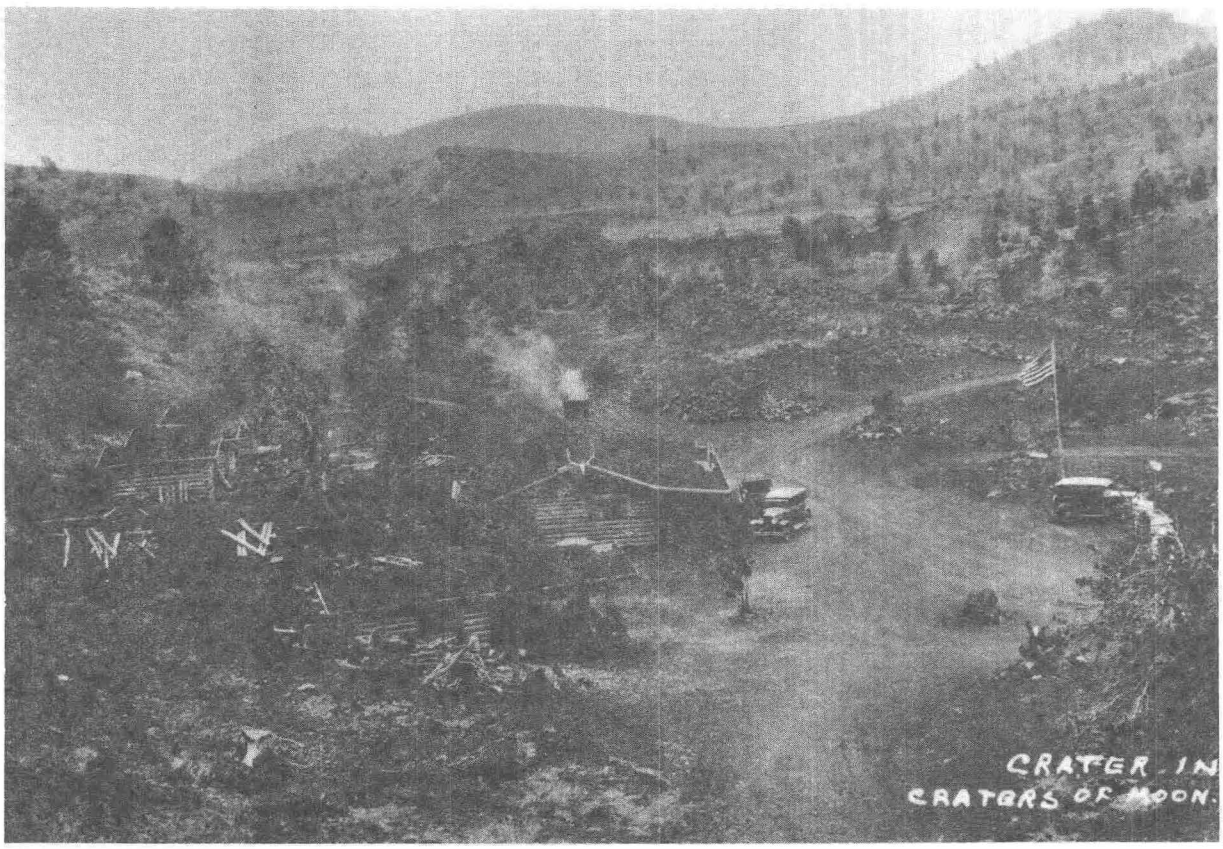
Out of view of most tourists, this warehouse was one of several log buildings at Craters of the Moon in the 1930s, and is one of two still standing. Photo by author, 1993.



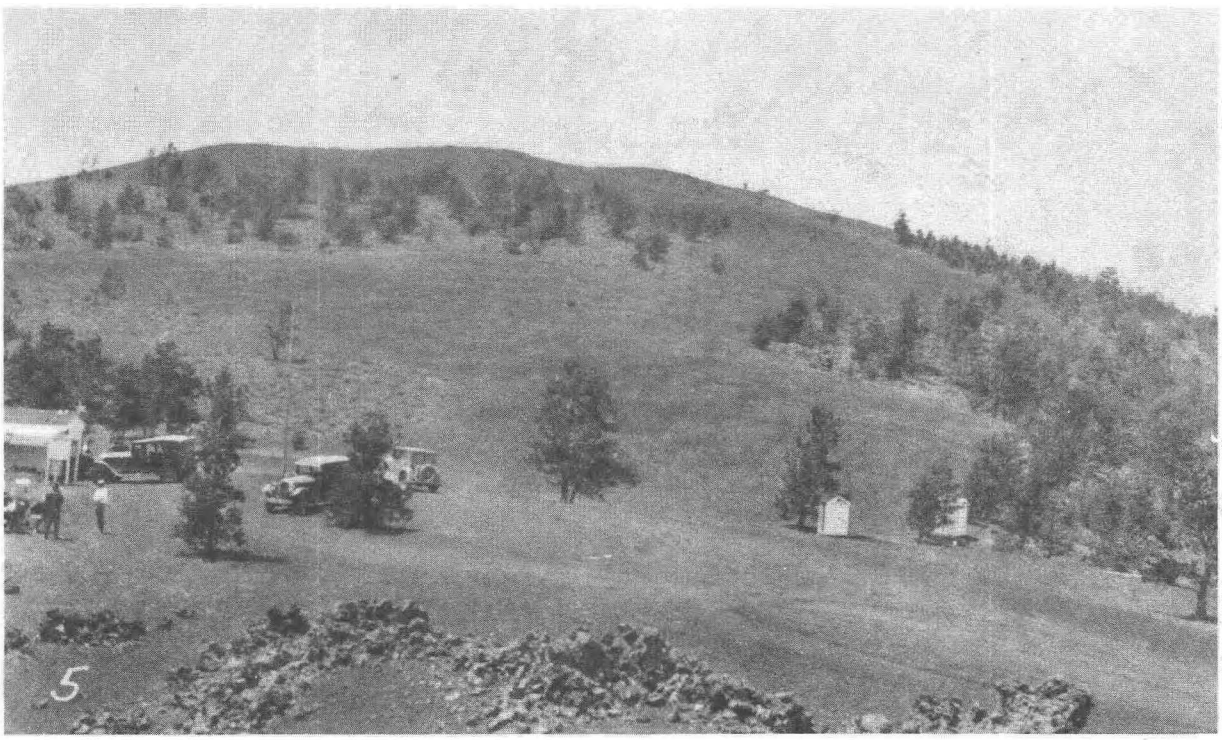
Rock rings and other archaeological artifacts speak to a distant human past. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #299. (1957)



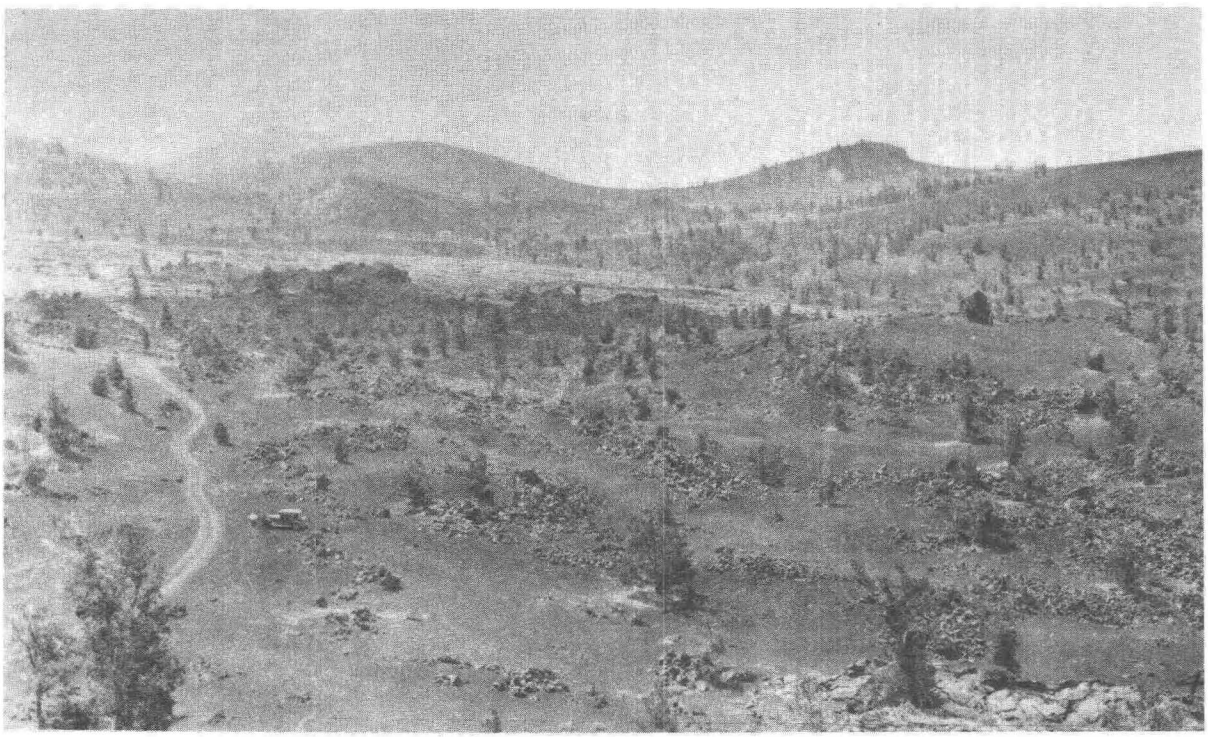
Opening Day, ca. 1950, reveals the monument's built environment and its popularity. From left to right are Crater Inn, superintendent's cabin, and comfort station. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #132.



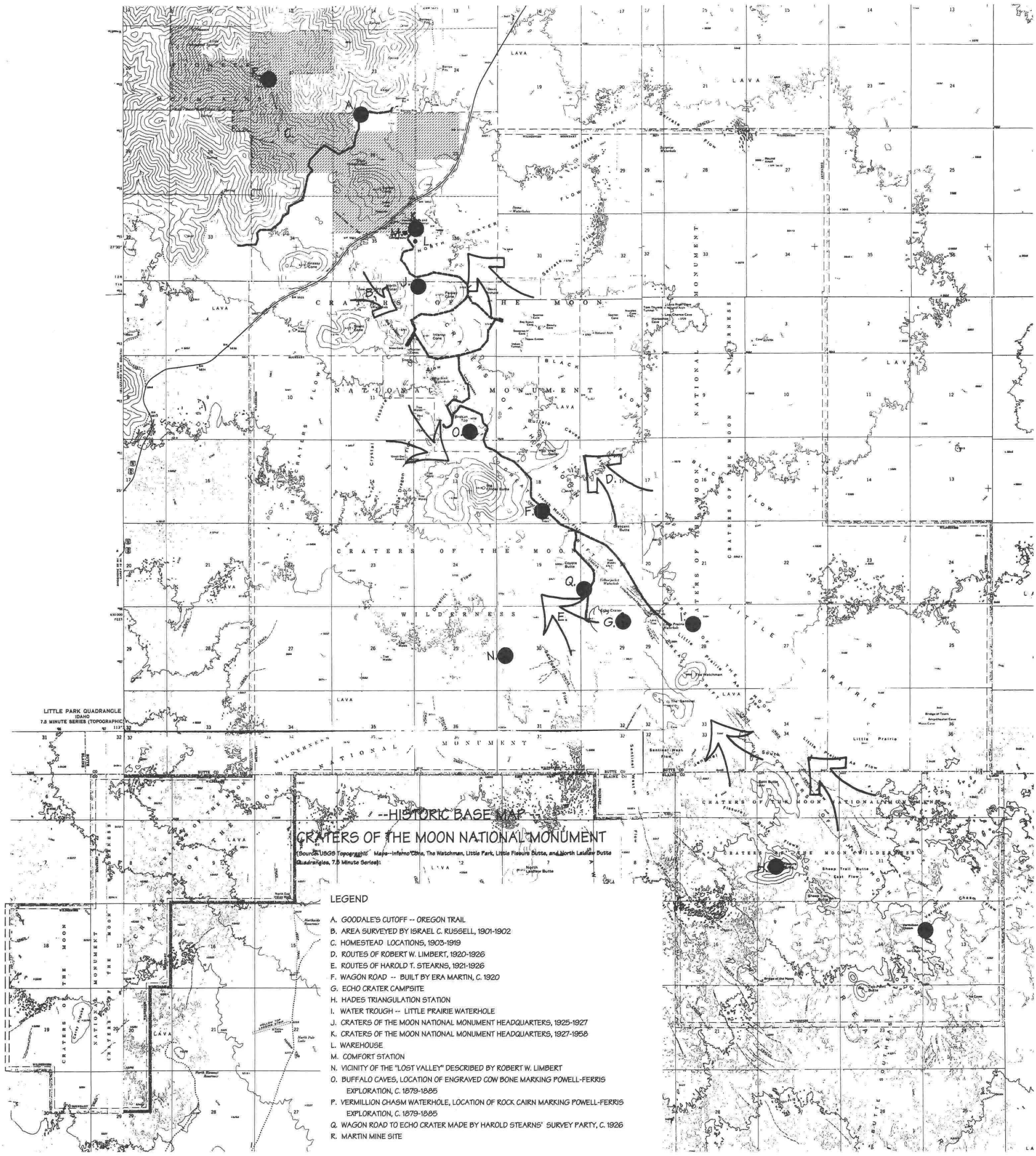
Crater Inn, three guest cabins, and gas station as they appeared in the late 1920s and early 1930s. On the right edge of the photo are the Park Service structures as they appeared during this period. Craters of the Moon National Monument, negative #309.



The first headquarters of Craters of the Moon was located on the saddle below Paisley Cone between 1925 and 1927. Craters of the Moon National Monument, collection #1211.



In 1927, the Park Service relocated the monument's headquarters to this site. The monument's concession, buildings, and campground were located near the automobile and the road. The first headquarters buildings can be seen in the distance near the center of the photo. Craters of the Moon National Monument, collection #902.



LITTLE PARK QUADRANGLE
IDAHO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

--HISTORIC BASE MAP

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

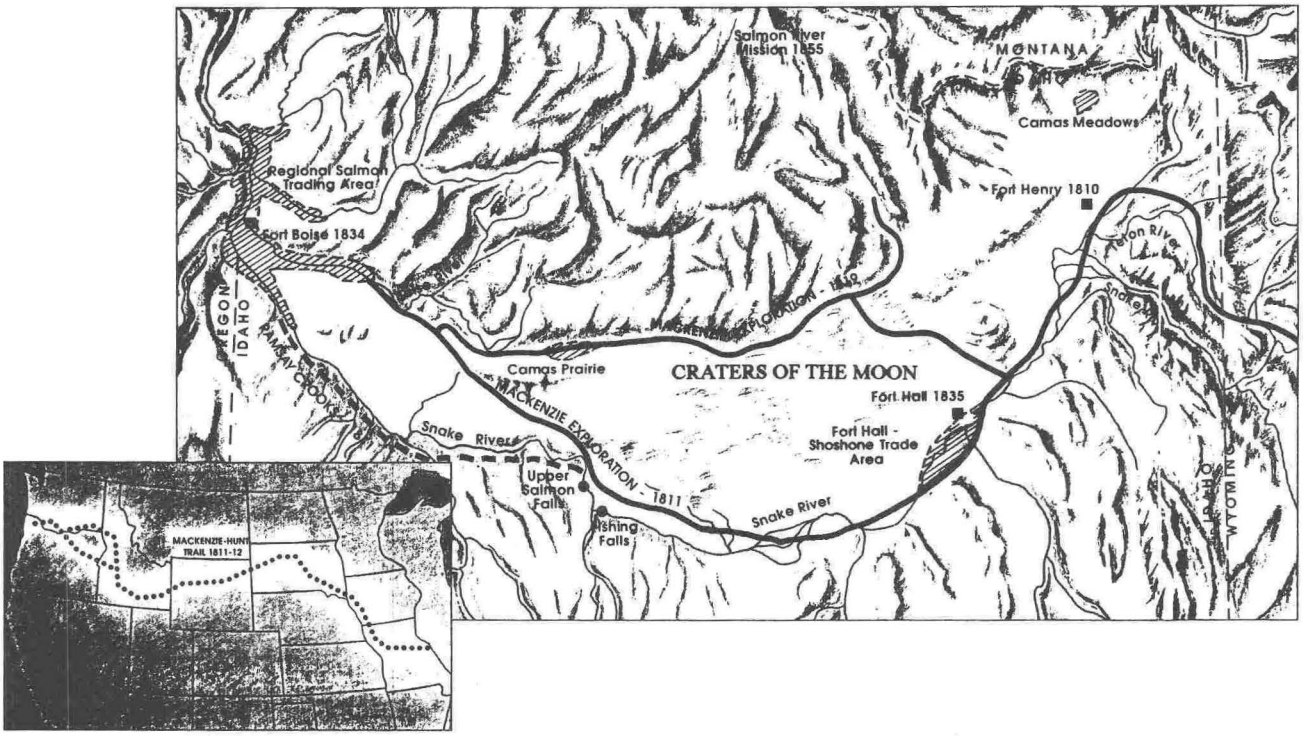
(Source: USGS Topographic Maps--Inferno Cone, The Watchman, Little Park, Little Fissure Butte, and North Laidlaw Butte Quadrangles, 7.5 Minute Series).

LEGEND

A. GOODALE'S CUTOFF -- OREGON TRAIL
B. AREA SURVEYED BY ISRAEL C. RUSSELL, 1901-1902
C. HOMESTEAD LOCATIONS, 1903-1919
D. ROUTES OF ROBERT W. LIMBERT, 1920-1926
E. ROUTES OF HAROLD T. STEARNS, 1921-1926
F. WAGON ROAD -- BUILT BY ERA MARTIN, C. 1920
G. ECHO CRATER CAMPSITE
H. HADES TRIANGULATION STATION
I. WATER TROUGH -- LITTLE PRAIRIE WATERHOLE
J. CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT HEADQUARTERS, 1925-1927
K. CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT HEADQUARTERS, 1927-1958
L. WAREHOUSE
M. COMFORT STATION
N. VICINITY OF THE "LOST VALLEY" DESCRIBED BY ROBERT W. LIMBERT
O. BUFFALO CAVES, LOCATION OF ENGRAVED COW BONE MARKING POWELL-FERRIS EXPLORATION, C. 1879-1885
P. VERMILLION CHASM WATERHOLE, LOCATION OF ROCK CAIRN MARKING POWELL-FERRIS EXPLORATION, C. 1879-1885
Q. WAGON ROAD TO ECHO CRATER MADE BY HAROLD STEARNS' SURVEY PARTY, C. 1926
R. MARTIN MINE SITE

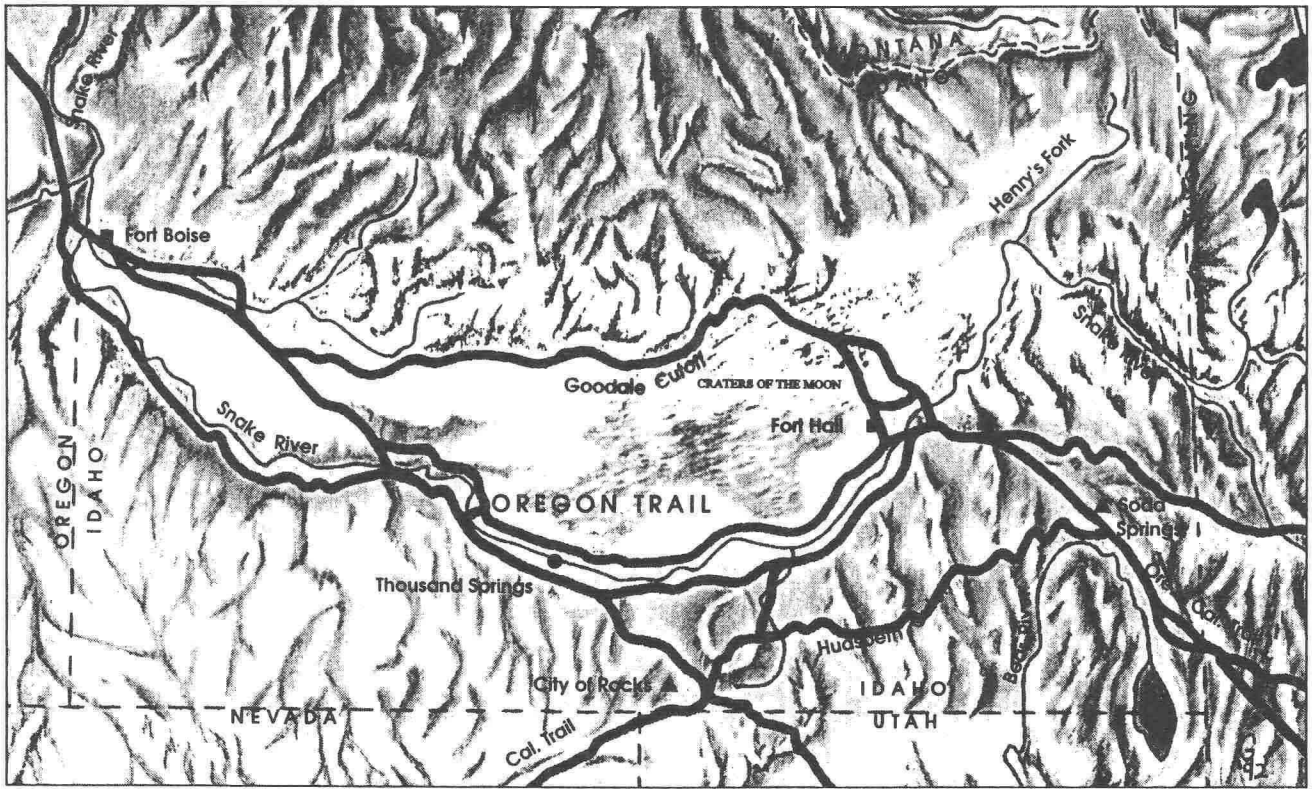
HISTORIC BASE MAP

FUR TRADE AND EXPLORATION

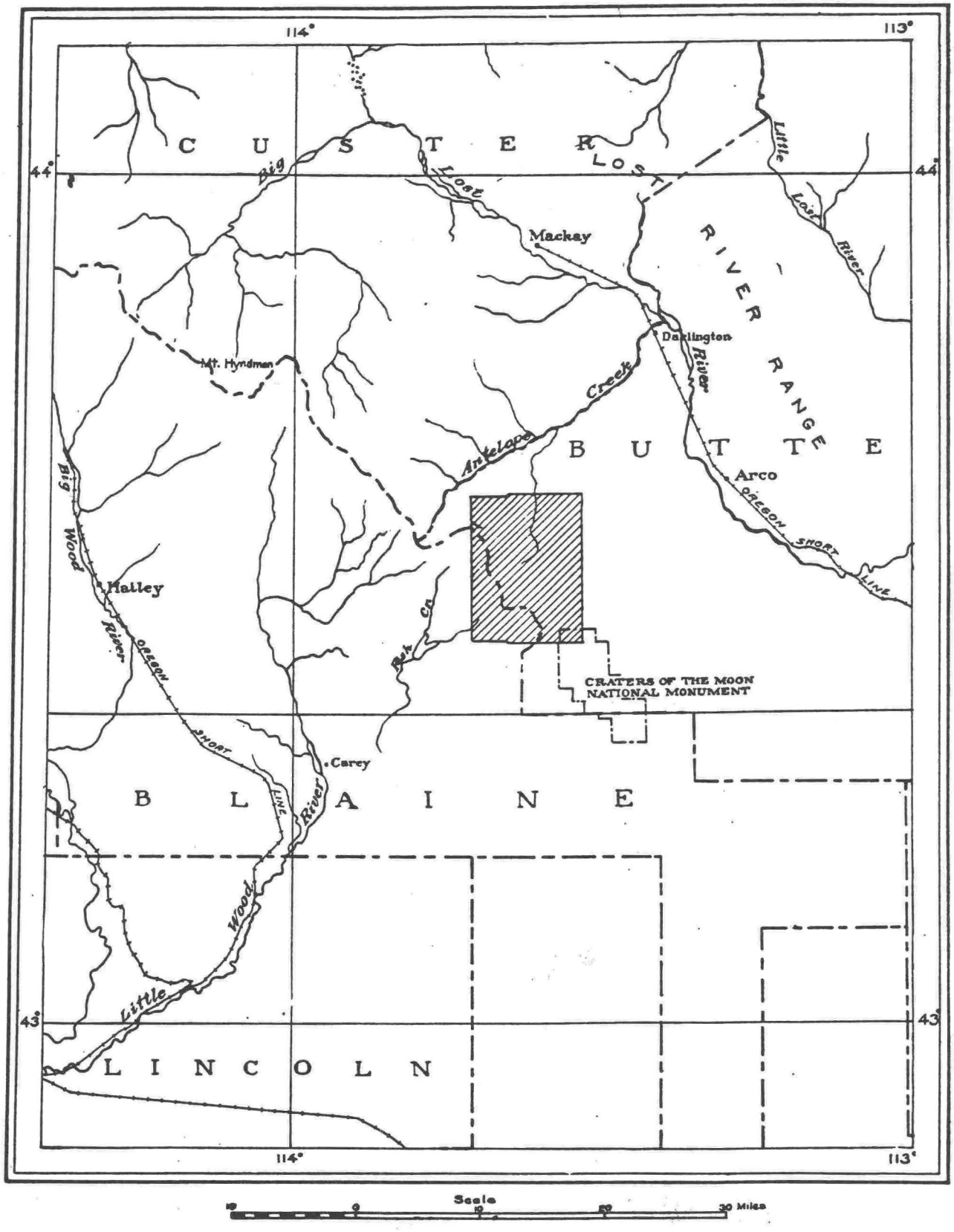


This map shows the general routes of exploration in the Snake River country during the first half of the nineteenth century. While most of this exploration took place in connection with the fur trade, many of these routes would be used later by settlers heading west. Areas important for Native American groups are shown as well. Note the isolated position of Craters of the Moon. *Adapted from a map in* <u>*Snake: The Plain and Its People*</u>, *124-125.*

OVERLAND MIGRATION



Showing the various branches of the Overland Trail across the Snake River Plain, this map depicts the route of Goodale's Cutoff which brought emigrants into contact with the volcanic environment of Craters of the Moon in the 1850s and 1860s. *Adapted from a map in Snake: The Plain and Its People, 136.*

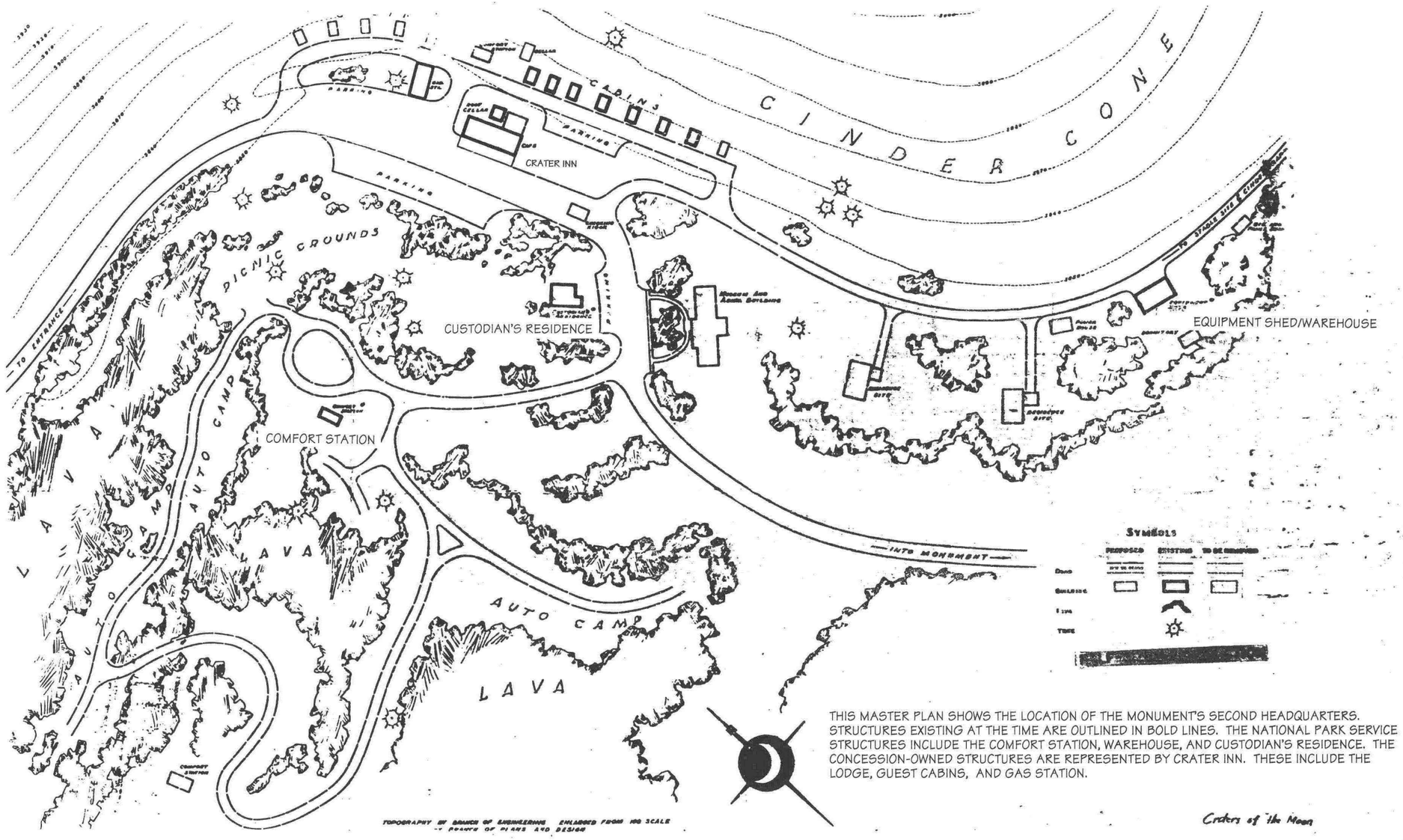


Mining brought the first economic boom and wave of settlers to the region surrounding Craters of the Moon. The shaded area on this map shows the location of the Lava Creek Mining District which thrived in the mid-1880s. *Adapted from Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho, figure 1.*

--HEADQUARTERS--

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

1934 MASTER PLAN



TOPOGRAPHY BY BRANCH OF ENGINEERING, ENLARGED FROM 400 SCALE BY BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

THIS MASTER PLAN SHOWS THE LOCATION OF THE MONUMENT'S SECOND HEADQUARTERS. STRUCTURES EXISTING AT THE TIME ARE OUTLINED IN BOLD LINES. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STRUCTURES INCLUDE THE COMFORT STATION, WAREHOUSE, AND CUSTODIAN'S RESIDENCE. THE CONCESSION-OWNED STRUCTURES ARE REPRESENTED BY CRATER INN. THESE INCLUDE THE LODGE, GUEST CABINS, AND GAS STATION.

Craters of the Moon

NM

(Source: Adapted from the 1934 Craters of the Moon National Monument Master Plan, Drawing #4942B)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Government Documents--Unpublished

Bureau of Land Management--Idaho State Office, Boise, Idaho.
Tract Books.
Cadastral Survey Field Notes.

Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho.
Administrative Files.
Museum Collection.
Monument Archives.

Federal Records Center--Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle, Washington
Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

National Archives--Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle, Washington.
Record Group 49, Records of the Bureau of Land Management.

National Archives--Pacific Sierra Region, San Bruno, California.
Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

National Archives--Washington, D.C.
Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.
Record Group 57, Records of the Geological Survey.

Manuscript Collections

Boise State University Library, Special Collections, Boise, Idaho.
Robert W. Limbert Papers.
Edward F. Rhodenbaugh Papers.
Thomas C. Stanford Papers.

Idaho State Historical Society Library, Boise, Idaho.
Frederick T. Dubois Papers.
M. Augusta Fletcher Papers.
Harvey Jones Manuscript.
Nellie Slater Manuscript.
O.B. Slater Manuscript.
Jean Conley Smith Papers.
William Taylor Papers.
Charles Nelson Teeters Papers.
Emily Fletcher Towell Manuscript.
Woolverton Family Manuscript.

Idaho State Archives, Boise, Idaho.
Idaho Reclamation Records.

Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division.
C. Hart Merriam Papers.

University of Washington, Manuscripts Division.
Winfield Scott Ebey Papers.

Special Collections

Idaho State Historical Society Library, Boise, Idaho.
Idaho Tourism and Travel Collection.

Unpublished Documents

Idaho State Historical Society Library, Boise, Idaho.
Bottolfsen, Clarence A. "A Salute to Arco--The New Atomic City of the Great Northwest." Ca. 1949. Butte County Vertical File.
Martin, James, D. "With the Lost River Pioneers." Ca. 1942. Lost River Valley Vertical File.
Shortdridge, Thelma. "The Mackay Dam Controversy." August 1, 1959. Dams--Idaho Vertical File.

Books and Reports

Adamson, Elizabeth C. History of Carey, Idaho. Self-published. 1971.

Anderson, Alfred L. Geology and Ore Deposits of the Lava Creek District, Idaho. Moscow: University of Idaho, Bulletin 32, 1929.

Beal, Merrill D. A History of Southeastern Idaho. Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1942.

Beal, Merrill D. and Merle W. Wells. History of Idaho. 3 vols. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1959.

Blakesley, Jennifer A. and R. Gerald Wright. A Review of Scientific Research at

Craters of the Moon National Monument. Moscow: University of Idaho College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Bulletin 50, February 1988.

Bottolfsen, Clarence A. Little Bits of Lost River History. Arco: Arco Advertiser, 1926.

Clark, Ella E. Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.

Cox, Thomas R. The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988.

D'Azevedo, Warren L., ed. Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 11, Great Basin. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986.

Department of the Interior. Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1924. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924.

Dykes, Fred W. Jeffrey's Cutoff: Idaho's Forgotten Oregon Trail Route. Pocatello: Pocatello Copy Cat, 1989.

Ferris, Warren Angus. Life in the Rocky Mountains: A Diary of Wanderings on the Sources of the Rivers Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado, 1830-1835. New rev. ed. Denver: Old West Publishing Company, 1983.

Foresta, Ronald A. America's National Parks and Their Keepers. Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, Inc., 1984.

Foster, Annie Jane Biggers Elliott. Annie Jane's Journal. Marilyn R. Harbord, ed. Chico: Glen E. Biggers, 1974.

Galbraith, John S. The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Geikie, Archibald Sir. Geological Sketches at Home and Abroad. New York: Macmillan and Co., 1882.

Goetzmann, William H. Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and Scientist in the Winning of the American West. 1966. Reprint. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978.

Good, Albert H. Park and Recreation Structures. 1935. Reprint. Boulder: Graybooks, 1990.

Hutchison, Daniel J. and Larry R. Jones, eds. Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho. Adventures in the Past--Idaho Cultural Resource Series, Number 1. Boise: Bureau of Land Management and Idaho State Historical Society Press, 1993.

Huth, Hans. Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Hyde, Anne Farrar. An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920. New York: New York University Press, 1990.

Idaho's Highway History, 1863-1975. Boise: Idaho Department of Transportation, 1985.

Irving, Washington. The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898.

Jackson, Donald, and Mary Lee Spense, eds. The Expeditions of John C. Fremont. Vol. 1, Travels from 1838-1844. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970.

Limerick, Patricia. Desert Passages: Encounters with the American Deserts. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985.

Louter, David. Craters of the Moon National Monument: An Administrative History. Seattle: National Park Service, 1992.

Luxenberg, Gretchen A. and Cathy A. Gilbert. The Rustic Landscape of Rim Village, 1927-1941. Seattle: National Park Service, 1990.

Madsen, Brigham. The Bannock of Idaho. Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1958.

___. The Northern Shoshoni. Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1980.

___. The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985.

Mattes, Merrill J. Platte River Road Narratives. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

McClelland, Linda F. Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916-1942. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993.

McLeod, George A. History of Alturas and Blaine Counties, 1857-1949. 3rd ed. Hailey: Hailey Times, 1950.

Merriam, C. Hart. Results of a Biological Reconnaissance of South-central Idaho. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891.

Merrill, Irving R., ed. Bound for Idaho: The 1864 Trail Journal of Julius Merrill. Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1988.

Morgon, Dale L. Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the American West. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953.

Nash, Roderick. Wilderness and the American Mind. 3rd ed. New Haven: Yale University press, 1982.

National Park Service. National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

National Parks for a New Generation. Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1985.

Noble, Bruce J. and Robert Spude. National Register Bulletin 42: Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering Historic Mining Properties. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

Ogden, Peter Skene. Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1824-1826. London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1950.

___. Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals, 1827-1829. Edited by Glyndwr Williams. London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1971.

Oliphant, J. Orin. On the Cattle Ranges of the Oregon Country. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968.

Paul, Rodman W. The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900. New

York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

___. Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

Peterson, F. Ross. Idaho: A Bicentennial History. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976.

Pomeroy, Earl S. In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.

A Preliminary Report on the Parks, Parkways and Recreational Areas of Idaho. Boise: Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners, January 1939.

Rabbitt, Mary C. Mineral, Lands, and Geology for the Common Defense and General Welfare: A History of Public Lands, Federal Science and Mapping Policy, and Development of Mineral Resources in the United States. 3 vols. Washington, D.C.: United States Geological Survey, 1979-1986.

Robbins, Roy M. Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970. 2nd rev. ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976.

Ronda, James P. Astoria and Empire. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Ross, Alexander. The Fur Hunters of the Far West. Edited by Kenneth A. Spaulding. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956.

Rothman, Hal. Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Runte, Alfred. National Parks: The American Experience. 2nd rev. ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Russell, Israel C. Geology and Water Resources of the Snake River Plains of Idaho. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902.

___. Notes on Geology of Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903.

Schmitt, Peter J. Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in America. New York:

Oxford University Press, 1969.

Schwantes, Carlos A. In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

___. The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History. Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 1989.

Shallat, Todd, ed. Snake: The Plain and Its People. Boise: Boise State University Press, 1994.

Shankland, Robert. Steve Mather of the National Parks. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954.

State of Idaho. The State of Idaho Official Report of the Bureau of Immigration, Labor, and Statistics, 1912. Boise: The Bureau, 1912.

Stearns, Harold T. A Guide to Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho. Boise: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, Bulletin 13, 1928.

___. Geology of Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho. Caldwell: Caxton Printers, 1977.

___. Memoirs of a Geologist: From Poverty Peak to Piggery Gulch. Honolulu: Hawaii Institute of Geophysics, 1983.

Strahorn, Carrie A. Fifteen Thousand Miles by Stage. New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1911.

Strahorn, Robert E. Resources and Attractions of Idaho Territory. 1881. Reprint. Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1990.

Townsend, John K. Across the Rockies to the Columbia. 1839. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920. Vol. 3, Population. Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, ca. 1921.

___. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. Vol.2, Population. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913.

Unruh, John D., Jr. The Plains Across: The Overland Migrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860. 1979. Reprint. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

Walker, Deward E., Jr. Indians of Idaho. Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1978.

___. Myths of Idaho Indians. Moscow: University Press of Idaho, 1980.

Wells, Merle W. Gold Camps and Silver Cities: Nineteenth-Century Mining in Central and Southern Idaho. 2nd ed. Moscow: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, 1983.

White, Richard. "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A History of the American West. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

Wilkens, Thurman. Clarence King: A Biography. Rev. ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988.

Williams, Mikel H. The History of Development and Current Status of the Carey Act in Idaho. Boise: Idaho Department of Reclamation, 1970.

Work, John. The Snake Country Expedition of 1830-1831: John Work's Field Journal. Edited by Francis P. Haines, Jr. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

Works Progress Administration. The Idaho Encyclopedia. Edited by Vardis Fisher. Caldwell: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1938.

Wyeth, Nathaniel J. The Correspondence of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth's Expedition to the Oregon Country, 1831-1836. 1899. Reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1973.

Articles

Arrington, Leonard J. "Irrigation in the Snake River Valley: An Historical Overview." Idaho Yesterdays 30 (Spring/Summer 1986): 3-11.

Athearn, Robert G. "The Oregon Short Line." Idaho Yesterdays 13 (Winter 1969-1970): 2-18.

Bitton, Davis. "Blackfoot: The Making of a Community, 1878-1910." Idaho Yesterdays 19 (Spring 1975): 2-15.

___. "Peopling the Upper Snake: The Second Wave of Mormon Settlement in Idaho." Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 47-52.

Boag, Peter G. "Overlanders and the Snake River Region: A Case Study of Popular Landscape Perception in the Early West." Pacific Northwest Quarterly 84 (October 1993): 122-129.

Butler, Robert B. "Prehistory of the Snake and Salmon River Area." In Handbook of North American Indians, edited by Warren L. D'Azevedo, vol. 11, Great Basin, 127-131. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986.

Casner, Nicholas. "'Two-Gun Limbert': Man from the Sawtooths." Idaho Yesterdays 32 (Spring 1988): 2-11.

Cope, Henry F. "Making Gardens out of Lava Dust." World Today 10 (June 1906): 621-628.

Cox, Thomas R. "Weldon Heyburn, Lake Chatcolet, and the Evolving Concept of Public Parks." Idaho Yesterdays 24 (Summer 1980): 2-15.

Crowder, David L. "Nineteenth-Century Indian-White Conflict in Southern Idaho. Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 13-18.

Davis, William E. "George Forman: The Great Pedestrian." Idaho Yesterdays 10 (Spring 1966): 2-11.

Forsling, O.E. "Sheep to Cheyenne." Idaho Yesterdays 8 (Summer 1964): 26-32.

"Forging the Park Chain." Outing 74 (August 1919): 63.

"Fort Boise: From Imperial Outpost to Historic Site." Idaho Yesterdays 6 (Spring 1962): 14-16, 33-39.

"Fort Hall, 1834-1856." Idaho Yesterdays 12 (Summer 1968): 28-31.

Haines, Francis, Jr. "The Lost River of John Day." Idaho Yesterdays 2 (Winter 1958-1959): 6-10.

Hampton, H. Duane. "Opposition to National Parks." Journal of Forest History 25 (January 1981): 36-45.

Holl, Jack M. "The National Reactor Testing Station: The Atomic Energy Commission in Idaho, 1949-1962." Pacific Northwest Quarterly 85 (January 1994): 15-24.

Hugill, Peter J. "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States, 1880-1929." Geographical Review 72 (July 1982): 330-349.

"Jean Baptiste Charbonneau." Idaho Yesterdays 5 (Fall 1961): 7-8.

Jones, E.W. "Some Wonders of Idaho." Historical Society of Southern California Publications 1 (1888): 23-29.

Jones, Larry R. "Staging to the South Boise Mines." Idaho Yesterdays 29 (Summer 1985): 19-25.

Kuntz, Mel A., et al. "The Great Rift and the Evolution of the Craters of the Moon Lava Field, Idaho." In Cenozoic Geology of Idaho, edited by Bill Bonnichsen and R.M. Breckenridge, 423-437. Moscow: Idaho Bureau of Mines and Geology, Bulletin 26, 1982.

Lewis, Peirce F. "America Between the Wars: The Engineering of a New Geography." In North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent, edited by Robert D. Mitchell and Paul A. Groves. Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987.

Limbert, Robert W. "Among the 'Craters of the Moon': An Account of the First Expeditions Through the Remarkable Volcanic Lava Beds of Southern Idaho." National Geographic Magazine 45 (March 1924): 303-328.

___. "Among the 'Craters of the Moon' in Idaho." Literary Digest 81 (April 12, 1924): 40-42, 44.

Lombard, Warren P. and Martin L. D'Odoge. "Israel Cook Russell." Science 24 (October 5, 1906): 426-431.

Lovin, Hugh T. "The Carey Act in Idaho, 1895-1925: An Experiment in Free Enterprise Reclamation." Pacific Northwest Quarterly 78 (October 1987): 122-

133.

___. "Sage, Jacks, and Snake River Plain Pioneers." Idaho Yesterdays 22 (Winter 1979): 13-15, 18-24.

___. "Water, Arid Land, and Visions of Advancement on the Snake River Plain." Idaho Yesterdays 35 (Spring 1991): 3-18.

Mather, Stephen T. "What I Am Trying to Do With the National Parks." The World's Work 48 (May 1924): 41-43.

Merrill, Irving R. "Tim Goodale and his Cutoff: A Major Trail Segment During and After the Fourth Emigration Wave." Overland Journal 8 (1990): 9-16.

Mills, Enos. "Proposed Sawtooth National Park." New West Magazine 7 (October 1916): 18-22.

Mills, John S. "A Gateway to the Future." Sunset Magazine 25 (July 1910): 119-120.

___. "The Secret Success of Blackfoot." Sunset Magazine 25 (November 1910): 589-590.

___. "Twin Falls and Triple Opportunity." Sunset Magazine 25 (September 1910): 353-356.

Paxson, Frederick L. "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935." American Historical Review 51 (1946): 236-253.

Renck, Nancy F. "Off to the Lakes: Vacationing in North Idaho during the Railroad Era, 1885-1917." Idaho Yesterdays 34 (Summer 1990): 2-15.

Rhodes-Jones, Carolyn. "An Evolving View of the Landscape: Trappers, Tourists, and the Great Shoshone Falls." Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 19-27.

Rothman, Hal. "Second-Class Sites: National Monuments and the Growth of the National Park System." Environmental Review 10 (Spring 1986): 44-56.

Russell, Israel C. "The Recent Volcanoes of Southwestern Idaho and Southeastern Oregon." Scientific American Supplement 57 (April 16, 1904): 23652-23655, 23668-23670.

Schlicke, Carl. "Frederick West Lander: Western Road-Builder." Columbia: The Magazine of Pacific Northwest History 8 (Spring 1994): 29-34.

Shepherd, G. Frederick. "Rifting and Volcanic Activity in the Craters of the Moon, Idaho." [Abstract] Geological Society of America, Proceedings 48 (June 1936): 105-106.

___. "Volcanic Phenomena in the Craters of the Moon, Idaho." Transactions of the Illinois State Academy of Science 29 (December 1936): 190-191.

Sneed, Paul G. "An Archaeological Reconnaissance of Craters of the Moon National Monument." Tebiwa: Journal of the Idaho State University Museum 10 (1), 1967: 37-52.

Spence, Clark C. "The Boom of the Wood River Mines." Idaho Yesterdays 23 (Summer 1979): 4-12.

Stearns, Harold T. "Craters of the Moon National Monument." The Geographical Review 14 (July 1924): 362-372.

___. "The 'Craters of the Moon' in Idaho." Geographical Journal 71 (January 1928): 43-49.

Stearns, Norah. "Exploring the Craters of the Moon, Idaho." Geographical Society of Philadelphia, Bulletin 26 (October 1928): 279-290.

Woods, Ralph E. "The Proposed Sawtooth National Park." New West Magazine 7 (May 1916): 7-11.

Dissertations, Theses and Unpublished Reports

Bicknell, Albert T. ["Inspection Report of Creek Mining Claim."] February 25, 1935. History Files. Craters of the Moon National Monument.

Blackburn, Quin A. "Mineral Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." October 11, 1960. Technical Files. Craters of the Moon National Monument.

De Jong, Thelma B. "Explorations and Fur Trade in Idaho, 1805-1846." M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1957.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." October 1, 1925.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." July 8, 1926.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." July 1, 1927.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." October 1, 1927.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." June 1, 1928.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." July 1, 1928.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." June 1, 1929.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." August 1, 1929.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." August 1, 1930.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." August 1, 1932.

"Custodian's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." July 3, 1940.

Gertsch, William Darrell. "The Upper Snake River Project: A Historical Study of Reclamation and Regional Development, 1890-1930." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1974.

Lusk, Byron D. "Golden Cattle Kingdoms of Idaho." M.S. Thesis, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1978.

Manbey, B.F. "Comments and Notes...Special Inspectional Trip of Craters of the Moon National Monument." June 12, 1940. History Files. Craters of the Moon National Monument.

McLaughlin, James and Dorothy Sammons. "A Systematic Survey for Cultural Resources at Craters of the Moon National Monument." Reports of Investigation No.92-4, Northern Intermountain Quaternary Institute, Idaho Museum of Natural History, Idaho State University, 1992.

"Mission 66 Master Plan for Craters of the Moon National Monument." 1956. History Files. Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives.

Ostrogorsky, Michael. "Historical Overview for the Craters of the Moon National Monument of Idaho." 1983. Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives.

Sammons, Dorothy. "Little Prairie Burn Cultural Resources Survey, Craters of the Moon National Monument." Reports of Investigation, No.93-3, Department of Anthropology, Idaho State University, 1993.

Stearns, Harold T. "Field Notes--1926 Survey of Craters of the Moon." Cat. #806, Acc. #119, Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection.

___. "Geology of Craters of the Moon." Ca. 1930. Technical File C29a. Craters of the Moon National Monument.

"Superintendent's Monthly Report, Craters of the Moon National Monument." February 28, 1958.

Zink, Robert C. "Short History: Craters of the Moon National Monument." 1955. Craters of the Moon National Monument Archives.

Newspapers

Arco Advertiser.

Boise Capital News.

Idaho Republican. (Blackfoot)

Idaho Statesman.

North Side News. (Jerome)

Salt Lake Tribune.

Pamphlets

"The Craters of the Moon National Monument: A Region of Weird Attractions." Ca. 1925-1927. Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection.

Limbert, Robert W. Unknown Places in Idaho. Chicago: Poole Brothers, Inc., 1927.

Maps

Pulvers Official Automobile Map: Idaho Central Forest Highway. Seattle: Edw. W. Pulver Map Company, ca. 1924.

Interviews

Roger Contor Interview, September 6, 1990.

Ed Techick Interview, January 21, 1986. History Files. Craters of the Moon National Monument.

Les Broadie Interview, June 8, 1991. Interviewed by Fred W. Dykes. Craters of the Moon National Monument Museum Collection.

Personal Communications

Ree E. Montgomery, June 7, 1993.