

Stonebraker Ranch



Historic ranches are ever-present visual reminders of the importance of agriculture to Idaho's history and economy. They stand on the landscape as a testament to Idaho ideals of hard work, productivity, and connection to the land.

Stonebraker Ranch is one of the earliest homesteaded ranches in the Chamberlain Basin and site of the first known landing of an airplane in the area on the ranch's airstrip in the early 1920s. Much of the history and homesteading of this ranch is well documented in Idaho's early settlement history.

In 1957 Idaho Game and Fish Department purchased this homestead, initially allowing backcountry leases for hunting and recreation to continue. Currently, the status of this property is for administrative use only and the airstrip is now designated private.

Our goal is to bring citizens and land owners together in the common goal of preservation while also creating the opportunity for educational, historical experiences at this amazing example of early Idaho backcountry living. The pristine environment and the overall integrity of many of the remaining structures is a huge opportunity and simply demands we preserve, maintain and rehabilitate this property.



"To make it possible for people to detach themselves, at least temporarily, from the strain and turmoil of modern existence, and to revert to simple types of existence in places relatively unmodified can afford unique opportunities for physical, mental and spiritual recreation or regeneration." Rutledge Parker, Dec. 1930

LOCATION

This property - with its unique historical value - sits within the confines of the Frank Church Wilderness. A prime example of the remoteness of homesteads in the backcountry, Stonebraker Ranch offers the opportunity to retain historical artifacts for all Idahoans. To think that someone discovered and then carved out this niche by settling within this hard-to-reach valley - and thrived - gives a person a glimpse of early settler character. The land and buildings - including fences, corrals, paths and the airstrip - are all part of the legacy of Stonebraker Ranch.



DESIGN and SETTING and MATERIALS

The original homestead house, many outbuildings and the big barn are still standing. Some outbuildings have been rehabilitated and repaired, and the main house has had porches added and repairs done. The large barn has fallen into disrepair and at minimum needs stabilization to preserve it. The barn's notable feature is a broad gable roof with four foot wooden shakes which extend very close to the ground. It's simple yet functional design and the evident pride that Mr. Stonebraker had in building this homestead still shows today.



The buildings' historic character emphasizes the sense of time and place associated with them, highlighting their significance.





The impression of times gone by results largely from the durability and ruggedness of the materials used in the buildings. Weathered wood siding, irregularly shaped stones or roughhewn logs on the exterior, dressed beams, posts scarred by years of use, all contribute to the special character of this rare glimpse of early homestead life.



WORKMANSHIP – Past Glimpse



Stonebraker Ranch has a unique history. There is a rustic main cabin and a few little out cabins that are still in occasional use today. An old historic barn still stands, or leans, and it is exciting to wander about observing the antique farm implements and machinery that litter the grounds. Old tools and traps hang on the walls offering a nostalgic view into the past.



A place that allows one to dream of a time gone by, to feel the isolation and wonder.



A place where viewing these artifacts allows our minds to wander as we consider the people who actually lived in this wilderness environment a hundred years ago - how they lived, what they did and how they survived. We think about the long and cold winters with deep snow, the long days of summer with work days devoted to haying, and how self sufficient and hearty these people must have been.

Historical Value

Stonebraker Ranch is unique with its historic value and gentle country setting. There are few places left in the Idaho backcountry with virtually untouched buildings, structures, and objects defining early homestead life. This isolated ranch possesses significance of historical value in its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. To retain historic integrity a property always possesses several - and usually most - of these aspects. The National Register for Historical places uses four initial criteria to define historical sites:

- a. They are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- b. They are associated with the lives of significant persons in the present or past; or
- c. They embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- d. They have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Stonebraker Ranch has all four qualities.

Logistically Attractive

Opportunities for people to visit by way of Chamberlain Basin Airstrip (Payette National Forest, Kassel District) with varied types of aircraft and minimum hiking distance to the historical Stonebraker Ranch allows for safe and established access. The Stonebraker Ranch airstrip supports limited use by the public..

Partnerships

With a commitment to preserve this unique cultural heritage, new partners will work to save our past for the present and future, supporting and promoting historic preservation through education and outreach, advocacy, and preservation tools. Multiple partnerships could provide additional resources and volunteers. These partnerships, between Idaho Fish and Game and the public, will allow for utilization of resources that ordinarily would not be allowed by the IDFG budget. Various partnerships will allow for a structured and stabilized rehabilitation project, with a work plan drawn up by those familiar with the evaluation of historic structures, and carried out by contractors and workmen experienced with the building types and committed to the goal of retaining the historic character of the property. Help in formulating rehabilitation plans and in locating experienced professionals is made possible through several agencies and foundations, including Idaho Heritage Trust and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office. Additional volunteer support and partnerships will be made as the project proceeds..

Once these collaborative relationships are established, further outreach will be made by groups and individuals, bringing additional partnerships with people and organizations passionate about restoring a valuable asset for its many uses.

Potential options for restored use include:

- Education and hands-on frontier experiences
- Wilderness and homestead museum
- Limited special use by groups for lectures, book signings and/or educational awareness of back-country homesteading practices
- Gatherings for celebration of historical events
- Hands -on experience with horse-drawn implements – logging, haying and construction
- Organizations- such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts - to utilize camping facilities and tour historical homesteading buildings and implements
- Retreat facility for appropriate organizations, (spiritual, photographic, journalism, etc.)
- Wildlife viewing and habitat study
- Virtual classroom projects

It is apparent that this property has great potential for current and future generations of Idahoans as well as tourists to our state, providing a place where visitors can gain a greater understanding of early Idaho homesteading life.

The next step is for Idaho Fish and Game to determine their interest in partnering with other interested groups to preserve this historic property. Several options, listed below, could be the start for this process:

- Allowance on the National Register of Historical Places, SHIPO or volunteers
- Architectural evaluation, Idaho Heritage Trust
- Post-era trash cleanup and removal, Treasure Valley Backcountry Horseman Association and Idaho Aviation Association
- Stabilization of structures, Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation
- Develop or restore reliable water source, GEM pumps, Emmet Idaho
- Airstrip maintenance, Idaho Aviation Association
- Timber cleanup and maintenance, volunteers
- Long-term preservation of homestead equipment, volunteers

I am hopeful that we can establish long-term partnerships with Idaho Fish and Game and their resources in a spirit of stewardship for the inspiration and benefit of present and future generations.

Michael W. Schaffer

Potential groups and organizations for information, volunteers, funding and use of professionals required for stabilization, rehabilitation and preservation;

Energy and Natural Resources
Stephen Goodson, 208-334-2100

Paul Shepherd, State Legislator, District 7B 208-631-7893

Idaho Heritage Trust
Katherine Kirk, Director 208-549-1778

Idaho Heritage Trust, Historical Architect
Fred Walters, 208-566-4228

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Alan Sands, 208-334-2648

State Historical Preservation Office
Trish Canaday, 208-488-7462 or 208-334-3861

Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation
Larry Swan, 208-315-3019

Treasure Valley Back Horseman Association
Terry Burgess, 208-631-3596

Idaho Aviation Association
Andrew George, 208-794-4480

Idaho Aviation Foundation
Al Hoyt, 208-867-7370

Recreational Aviation Foundation
Mike Hart, 208-528-7672

National Forest Service – Krassel Ranger District
Anthony Botello, 208-634-0601

National Forest Service – Challis District Jay Sammner 208-879-4113

Richard Holm, Author of Bound for the Backcountry (aviation history in Idaho)
208-315-2567

Respectfully submitted by:
Michael Schaffer
208-347-2741 or 480-785-6245
moonshadow@citlink.net

References:

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register Criteria for Evaluation

Old Photos – Digital library W.A. Stonebraker Collection, University of Idaho

New Photos – S. Schaffer – 2016

Disciples of Flight, Chamberlain Basin Chronicles

Bound for the Backcountry, Richard Holm

Pioneer Days in Idaho County, Volume 2, Sister M Alfreda Elsensohn