
PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION:

Idaho’s Wallowa-Whitman National Forest envelops 2.3 million acres of land with stunning diversity. From its base of 975’ of elevation in the Snake River-carved Hell’s Canyon, the site of our project, to the highest point of elevation at 9,845 feet in the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, this area is one for the adventurous. Tucked away in the Hell’s Canyon NRA lies one of our country’s more unique historical landmarks, the Kirkwood Historical Ranch.

A very brief site history: The site got its name from the Dr. Jay Kirkwood and his family, who squatted at the nearby sandbar and constructed two cabins out of wood scavenged from Chinese mines. They lived there from 1880-1885. The site was subsequently occupied by a series of owners and ranchers, and in the early 1900s, the site’s larger building was built. In 1953 a
ranch hand, Dick Sterling, built what is today called the Sterling Cabin. Len Jordan, who occupied the site with his family in the 1930’s, later became Governor of Idaho and a U.S. Senator. The family’s matriarch, Grace Jordan, wrote a book titled *Home Below Hell’s Canyon* where she shares her pioneer experience of raising a family beyond civilization during the Great Depression. The book’s description follows:

“During the depression days of the early 1930s the Jordan family—Len Jordan (later governor of Idaho and a United States senator), his wife Grace, and their three small children—moved to an Idaho sheep ranch in the Snake River gorge just below Hell’s Canyon, the deepest scratch on the face of North America.”

From the US Forest Service, you can read a fascinating, brief historical overview of the ranch.

The Sterling Cabin is today a museum that serves as an educational resource to provide visitors with a glimpse into the past.

**SCOPE OF WORK:** In order to complete the structural preservation work the Kirkwood Museum needed, volunteers worked closely with field staff to learn new skills and techniques, including:

- Stabilizing logs through jacking and cribbing
- Replacing severely deteriorated logs
- Re-facing logs affected by decay and weathering

HistoriCorps is a service learning partner of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture committed to the preservation and stewardship of significant resources on public lands.