



Big Springs



Cover Photo courtesy of Peggy Hamlen

Open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Mid-June through Mid-September
 Donations Appreciated



12-VI-01

For additional information on Idaho
 Call 1-800-VISITID

Johnny Sack Cabin Big Springs



Island Park, Idaho

Caribou - Targhee National Forest
 Fremont County Parks and Recreation
 Island Park Historical Society

Distance from Big Springs/Johnny Sack Cabin

Ashton, Idaho	37 miles
Cave Falls	62 miles
Harriman State Park	15 miles
Henrys Lake State Park	16 miles
Idaho Falls, Idaho	90 miles
Macks Inn	5 miles
Upper Mesa Falls	32 miles
Warm River Springs	20 miles
Yellowstone National Park, West Entrance	28 miles



Johnny Sack Cabin

In 1929, Johnny Sack leased a small tract of land from the United States Forest Service and began building his log cabin at Big Springs. Little did Johnny know when he first acquired the choice building site, his home would become a landmark one day discussed in the United States Congress.

Due to its unique location and picturesque setting, Johnny's cabin and nearby water-wheel have long been one of the most photographed sites in Island Park. The cabin attracts thousands of visitors each summer interested in the log and stone structure as well as the building's colorful creator.



The cabin is open to the public from mid-June through mid-September, and visitors are invited to visit and see firsthand the unique craftsmanship of one of Island Park's early settlers.

One of Johnny's trademarks is the split bark decoration used in the cabin's furniture and interior. He took great pride in detail work. One ceiling lamp, still hanging in its original location, contains seventy-two individual handcrafted pieces of wood. A double bed was made of ninety-six wood pieces which Johnny nailed and glued together. Today many of the individually crafted pieces of wood furniture Johnny created for his home remain in their original location.

The cabin took approximately three years to complete, as Johnny worked primarily with hand tools — saws, draw

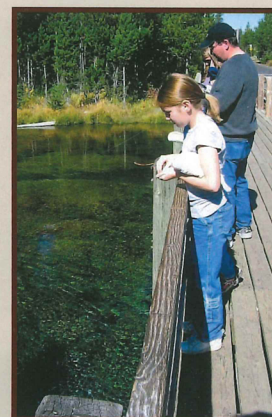
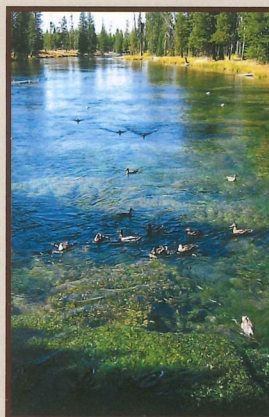
knives, scrapers and planers. Johnny built a small structure and water-wheel at the edge of the springs to harness the power of the springs and create electricity.



The cabin became part of the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and is the property of the USFS. The cabin remains open to visitors through the efforts of the USFS, Fremont County Parks and Recreation, the Island Park Historical Society, and numerous volunteers.

About Big Springs

Producing over 120 million gallons of water each day, Big Springs a Natural National Landmark, is one of the 40 largest natural springs in the world. The springs create the headwaters of the Henrys Fork of the Snake River which travels across Fremont County creating spectacular scenery at Upper and Lower Mesa Falls. With a constant temperature of 52 degrees, the springs is home to rainbow trout, muskrats, ducks, moose and other critters. It is not unusual to see osprey and eagles dive for a meal of fresh fish from the springs.



Johnny Sack The Builder

From his cabin overlooking Big Springs, the headwaters of the Henrys Fork of the Snake River, Johnny welcomed visitors from throughout the world who stopped by to look at his charming cabin and nearby water-wheel. Much like today, visitors were welcomed in and shown about the unique structure.



Born in 1884, Johnny came to the United States with his parents and four brothers and sisters from Germany when he was six years old. The family settled in South Bend, Indiana, and Johnny eventually made his way west to the newly established community of Ashton, Idaho.

Along with his brother Andy, Johnny arrived in Island Park by passenger train during a blizzard in June, 1909. The brothers' ambitious goal was to raise cattle on Henrys Lake Flat. After years of working for various ranchers and serving time in the military, Johnny began making his living building furniture and cabins.

Standing just four foot, eleven inches tall, Johnny leased his cabin site, one of more than 30 cabin sites surrounding Big Springs, for \$4.15 per year. Using craftsmanship that reflected his early training with the Studebaker Wagon Corporation, Johnny created beds, chests, tables and chairs from hundreds of pieces of pine paneled with bark inlay. Even his lamp stands, magazine racks and ceiling fixtures were cleverly wrought from odd-shaped limbs, knots and pine cones.

As Big Springs' lone winter resident, Johnny would rely on cross country skis and snow shoes to travel many miles each week to pick up his mail and visit with friends at Mack's Inn or Pond's Lodge. Claiming "a woman would just put rugs on my varnished floors and draperies over my picture windows," Johnny never married.

After his death in 1957 the cabin became the property of Johnny's two sisters. They later sold the cabin to Elberta and Rudy Kipp, who made it possible for the building to be opened as an interpretive center in 1980.