

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Oregon	
COUNTY: Malheur	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER MAY 19 1972	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Pelota Fronton

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Bassett Street (U.S. Highway 95)

CITY OR TOWN:
Jordan Valley

STATE: Oregon 97910 CODE: 41 COUNTY: Malheur CODE: 045

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

Yes:
 Restricted
 Unrestricted
 No

Re-establishment as a hand ball court and historical feature is planned.

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. John Elorriaga

STREET AND NUMBER:
4841 S. W. 60th Place

CITY OR TOWN:
Portland

STATE: Oregon 97221 CODE: 41

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Malheur County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Vale

STATE: Oregon 97918 CODE: 41

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings

DATE OF SURVEY: 1970 Federal State County Local

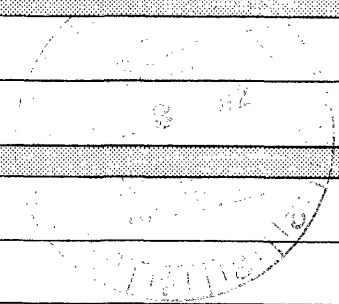
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Parks and Recreation Section

STREET AND NUMBER:
State Highway Building

CITY OR TOWN:
Salem

STATE: Oregon 97310 CODE: 41

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Oregon

COUNTY: Malheur

ENTRY NUMBER: MAY 19 1972

DATE: MAY 19 1972

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jordan Valley Pelota Court, or fronton, is a two-walled masonry structure with a cement floor. Interior walls are stuccoed. The native sandstone is bound with an earthen mortar. The front, or west wall is approximately 30 feet long, and 30 to 35 feet high. The side, or south wall is approximately 120 feet long and 30 to 35 feet high toward the west end. The courses of masonry diminish gradually toward the east end of the side wall, creating a stepped effect. A screen 10 feet high extends above the coping. Stone buttresses support the outer faces of the walls. The walls are approximately 18 inches thick.

The Pelota Court is located near the intersection of Main Street and Bassett (U.S. 95) in Jordan Valley on the eastern border of the state, where sandstone was the common building material of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Jordan Valley is approximately 90 miles south of Ontario, the nearest town of any size in Oregon) Vegetation in the semi-arid locale includes native grasses, sagebrush, willows and cottonwoods. Properties immediately north, east and southeast of the Pelota Court are not heavily improved, but contain some single-story stone and frame structures. Property to the south includes the former Jordan Valley Hotel, a native stone construction which now serves as a tavern and warehouse. Together, the former hotel and the Pelota Court form an impressive axis of masonry at the main intersection of the town.

The following are excerpts from a typescript submitted with the Statewide Inventory nomination form in 1970 by Miss Sarah Baker,

Cement is not used for most professional jai alai courts in Florida, Central and South America and Spain because it sometimes cracks when balls are smashed against it. The front wall in the professional court in Miami is constructed of granite 12 inches thick. A hard wall is most important for professional courts in which players may use the cesta, a wicker racket, to hit the ball at speeds up to 150 miles per hour. The cesta was never used in the Jordan Valley court, however, and cement was durable enough to bear the force of balls hit against the wall with the hand or with a wooden paddle.

Very high balls were kept inside the court by a wire cage which stretches about ten feet above the front and side walls. Balls which strayed to the right side of the court were stopped by the Marquina boarding house, torn down in 1950.

A strip of tin, now remaining only in sections, once extended along the front wall three feet above the court floor to indicate the point above which all balls must strike the wall. Two dark vertical marks on the side wall indicate the distance from the front wall which the player must stand to return the ball to the front or side walls. The first mark is 20 feet from the front wall (for hand ball) and the second mark is 30 feet from the front wall (for pala, or paddle ball).



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1915-1917

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Cultural Immigrations</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	<u>Sports</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From the 1890s through the First World War, Basques of Spanish stock emigrated in great numbers from their native Pyrenees to Southeastern Oregon and adjacent areas of Idaho and Nevada, bringing with them their traditional games, customs and festive occasions. The ball court was begun in the spring of 1915, at the peak of Basque immigration to the area. Though last used on a regular basis in 1935, the Pelota Fronton has become the singular landmark of the Basque culture in the region.

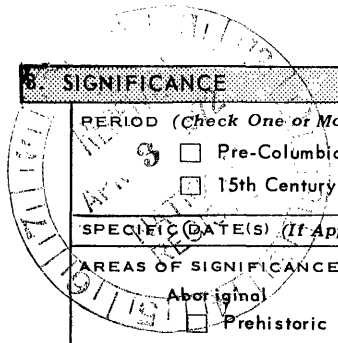
The Basque is no longer an isolated type in Oregon, though Jordan Valley is considered by local residents to be one of the least acculturated areas of Basque settlement in the country. It is estimated that of the population of the Jordan Creek Valley, numbering some 360, about fifty percent is Basque, or of Basque descent. Certain social traditions have persisted to the present day, and the language is still spoken here and there. Reportedly, there are those who yet have the skills of the peculiar hand ball of the Basques, and it is felt that if given the proper impetus, the sport could be stirred to renaissance.

The following are excerpts from a typescript submitted with the Statewide Inventory nomination form in 1970 by Miss Sarah Baker.

Construction of the court was begun in the spring of 1915 by young Basque immigrants who had learned the trade of masonry in the Basque country. They carted stones from a quarry east of Jordan Valley, hewed them by hand, and mortared them into a stone wall about 35 feet high. Games were played every afternoon and evening. The early Basques scheduled games in evenings to determine champions among Jordan Valley players, although apparently no competitive games were organized with Basques from towns in Idaho which also had pelota courts. Distance and the lack of a highway until the 1930s were no doubt deterrents to such games. Spectators who came to the Jordan Valley games stood along the right side of the court. In the 1930s the court was used more sporadically since the older generation was becoming too old to play and the younger generation chose to play American games such as baseball. Occasionally a group of old timers would play, but after the Second World War, the court stood idle, although movies were sometimes shown against a "screen" whitewashed inside the front wall.

The pelota game played in Jordan Valley was traditionally called blaid, but because no other form was played, the Jordan Valley games were simply referred to as pelota. The game could be played with two players or with teams, two or three players on a side. The server stood in the forecourt and slammed the ball against the front wall so that it hit above the strip of tin three feet above the ground line and bounced back to the player of the (con't)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cressman, L. S., and Yturri, Anthony, "The Basques in Oregon," The Commonwealth Review, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1938), 367-380.

Davis, Eleanor, "The Basques in Malheur County," The Commonwealth Review, Vol. 9, No. 2 (April 1927), 51-55.

Harkness, Ione B., "Basque Settlement in Oregon," The Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 1933), 273-275.

Baker, Sarah, seven-page typescript accompanying Statewide Inventory nomination form, November 3, 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	42	58	23
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	117	03	03
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

HR
NO
UTM

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: parcel = 38' 4" X 125'

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Elisabeth Walton, Park Historian

ORGANIZATION: Parks and Recreation Section DATE: March 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: Oregon State Highway Building

CITY OR TOWN: Salem STATE: Oregon CODE: 41

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Raymond Salzman

Title Administrator of Highways

Date March 23, 1972

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert A. Yancy
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 5/19/72

ATTEST:

John Bradford
Keeper of The National Register

Date May 12, 1972

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Oregon	
COUNTY	
Malheur	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 19 1972

(Number all entries)

PELOTA FRONTON

2. Location

The Pelota Court is located on tax lot 2900 in Block A of Block 5 of the Pioneer Addition in Jordan Valley, in the SE 1/4 SE 1/4 Sec. 2, T. 30 S., R. 46 E., of the Willamette Meridian, in Malheur County, Oregon.

8. Significance

(excerpts from typescript by Miss Sarah Baker, continued)

opposing team who stood behind a vertical marker on the left-hand wall (the pass line). This player then returned the ball to the front wall directly or by bouncing it off the left-hand wall. If the ball hit out of bounds (below the tin strip, or beyond 90 feet), or if a player failed to return a ball, the opposite side gained the serve and a point in the same play. (In this respect, pelota differed from handball in which a side first won the serve and played for a point in the next rally) The game continued to 30 or any score previously agreed upon by the players. Although the court is a simple L-shaped shell, this much of the game can be understood from the remaining physical structure.

Aside from the court, the only equipment necessary was the ball. Good players frequently made their own balls. Starting from a core of hard rubber, the balls were wrapped with twine and covered with wet goatskin. When the skin dried, the ball was smooth and hard. Because the ball caused sore and swollen hands, players in the Basque country sometimes wore gloves to prevent injury. This practice did not carry over to the Jordan Valley pelota game.

Although the game was most frequently played with the hand (mano), the players also used a paddle or bat (pala) to hit the ball. Pala was played in the Basque country, and the inspiration for Jordan Valley Basques to use the bat seems to have come from the Old World, rather than an adaptation from American games such as tennis or baseball. Use of the bat did not alter the rules of the game. In the Basque country the bat was generally made of chestnut; in the western United States, it was usually of maple. The bat was about 18 inches long, 6 inches wide and one and a half inches thick at the hitting surface. It weighed about one and a half pounds.

Size of the courts varied according to the type of game played in them. While courts of various sizes may have been feasible for the professional games in the cities, in small towns, such as Jordan Valley, a single court was adapted for all games.