The 1904 Pilot Butte Canal is located in Deschutes County, Oregon in the Upper Deschutes River Basin near the center of the state, east of the Cascade Mountain Range. Here the ponderosa pine forest transitions into the high desert, characterized by arid land, volcanic soils, junipers, sagebrush, and bittersbrush. The irrigation canal begins in Bend, the largest city in the region, population 78,280 today. The canal flows generally north from the intake gate at the 1912 North Dam on the Deschutes River. The elevation at the diversion point is 3,561’ and the canal drops about 631’ in elevation, allowing the water to flow entirely by gravity. The canal conveys water through a 225-miles-long distribution system of successively narrower and shallower laterals and ditches on its way to those who hold water rights, serving about 20,711 acres by 1922. The Pilot Butte Canal diverts river water at a rate of 400 cubic feet per second. Excepting the 4.5 miles that are now piped, the roughly trapezoidal-shaped open canal is made of native soil and irregularly shaped and sized rock. A distinctive characteristic of the canal is its wide variability in appearance throughout its 22-mile length. The canal ranges in width from 81’ to 4’ and in depth from 10’ to 6” depending on the amount of water carried, the terrain, amount of basalt rock flows encountered, and slope. As water is delivered, the canal becomes smaller. The canal was built in an area that had a population of 81 people when it was constructed, but now runs through urban, commercial, industrial, and residential subdivisions in Bend and Redmond (population 26,590), as well as some rural areas between the cities and at the end of the system. The nominated segment is nearly unaltered, was the most challenging to construct, and begins 2.4 miles from the river intake. It is mostly outside the Bend city limits in rolling, rocky terrain. The canal crosses from the southwest quarter through the northeast quarter of Township 17 South, Range 12 East, Section 15 W. M. The historic district measures 7,435 feet long and encompasses 50 feet on either side of the canal centerline to create a 100-foot corridor that includes all of the contributing resources. The elevation in the district drops a total of 37 feet. It contains the widest and deepest portions of the entire canal and displays the most variability in dimensions, ranging in width from 20 to 81 feet and in depth from 3 to 10 feet. The primary purpose of the canal in the historic district is to convey the canal’s full volume of water from the urban area to more arable land. Much of the historic setting, including native ponderosa pine, juniper trees and bittersbrush, remains undisturbed. The district has a character-defining rocky, uneven bed, and highly irregular slopes, angles, cuts, and embankments. The nominated section is interpretable, including its history and the narrative of the people who built it. Tool marks and the construction techniques used are evident. Solid basalt rock flows had to be blasted apart and moved. The water rushes around several rocky 90-degree turns, large rocks, and vegetated islands left in the bed. It looks and sounds like a natural watercourse. The district includes the contributing canal, a non-contributing historic, but altered, bridge; a non-historic flow-measuring weir; and three non-historic gates. Structures and landscaping within the district boundaries that are not related to the operation of the Canal and not noted as contributing features in this document are non-contributing resources. (See Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 10.)
The Pilot Butte Canal Historic District (Cooley Road — Yeoman Road Segment) is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Agriculture. It is directly associated with the founding of the largest cities in Central Oregon, Bend and Redmond. It is also directly associated with the settlement of hundreds of farms on over twenty thousand acres in what is now Deschutes County. Constructing the Pilot Butte Canal as a commercial enterprise under the Carey Act brought significant private capital and experience in town building and irrigation development to the high desert. The funds were used to build a system of canals to irrigate and encourage settlement and development of the areas east of the Cascade Mountains. The financial profit from the construction of the system was shared equally by the investors in the irrigation company with corporate goals to attract farmers, sell the irrigated land, expand the agricultural sector, and plat and develop the two cities, one at each end of the canal. The project transformed the high desert. Investment capital flowed from the irrigation company as the canal system was built, bringing value to the lands, and further to companies and settlers purchasing services, land, and products and services were bought and sold. The region experienced new economic opportunities and growth.

In addition, development of these cities and agricultural lands brought further investment into the area, leading to ongoing economic expansion, which brought the local area into the greater economy of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The nominated section was the critical section of the canal construction on which the future of the irrigation company, the settlement of the region, and the agricultural potential of the area rested. The project transformed the high desert. A combination of corporate goals and principles of settlement and agricultural development, stimulated by the significant amount of capital, enabled the company to provide farmers with cheap credit, spreading the wealth throughout the community and providing a significant labor pool for developing the area.

The Pilot Butte Canal Historic District (Cooley Road — Yeoman Road Segment) is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Agriculture. It is directly associated with the founding of the largest cities in Central Oregon, Bend and Redmond. It is also directly associated with the settlement of hundreds of farms on over twenty thousand acres in what is now Deschutes County. Constructing the Pilot Butte Canal as a commercial enterprise under the Carey Act brought significant private capital and experience in town building and irrigation development to the high desert. The funds were used to build a system of canals to irrigate and encourage settlement and development of the areas east of the Cascade Mountains. The financial profit from the construction of the system was shared equally by the investors in the irrigation company with corporate goals to attract farmers, sell the irrigated land, expand the agricultural sector, and plat and develop the two cities, one at each end of the canal. The project transformed the high desert. Investment capital flowed from the irrigation company as the canal system was built, bringing value to the lands, and further to companies and settlers purchasing services, land, and products and services were bought and sold. The region experienced new economic opportunities and growth.

In addition, development of these cities and agricultural lands brought further investment into the area, leading to ongoing economic expansion, which brought the local area into the greater economy of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The nominated section was the critical section of the canal construction on which the future of the irrigation company, the settlement of the region, and the agricultural potential of the area rested. The project transformed the high desert. A combination of corporate goals and principles of settlement and agricultural development, stimulated by the significant amount of capital, enabled the company to provide farmers with cheap credit, spreading the wealth throughout the community and providing a significant labor pool for developing the area.

The Pilot Butte Canal Historic District (Cooley Road — Yeoman Road Segment) is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Agriculture. It is directly associated with the founding of the largest cities in Central Oregon, Bend and Redmond. It is also directly associated with the settlement of hundreds of farms on over twenty thousand acres in what is now Deschutes County. Constructing the Pilot Butte Canal as a commercial enterprise under the Carey Act brought significant private capital and experience in town building and irrigation development to the high desert. The funds were used to build a system of canals to irrigate and encourage settlement and development of the areas east of the Cascade Mountains. The financial profit from the construction of the system was shared equally by the investors in the irrigation company with corporate goals to attract farmers, sell the irrigated land, expand the agricultural sector, and plat and develop the two cities, one at each end of the canal. The project transformed the high desert. Investment capital flowed from the irrigation company as the canal system was built, bringing value to the lands, and further to companies and settlers purchasing services, land, and products and services were bought and sold. The region experienced new economic opportunities and growth.

In addition, development of these cities and agricultural lands brought further investment into the area, leading to ongoing economic expansion, which brought the local area into the greater economy of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The nominated section was the critical section of the canal construction on which the future of the irrigation company, the settlement of the region, and the agricultural potential of the area rested. The project transformed the high desert. A combination of corporate goals and principles of settlement and agricultural development, stimulated by the significant amount of capital, enabled the company to provide farmers with cheap credit, spreading the wealth throughout the community and providing a significant labor pool for developing the area.

The Pilot Butte Canal Historic District (Cooley Road — Yeoman Road Segment) is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion A in the areas of Exploration and Settlement and Agriculture. It is directly associated with the founding of the largest cities in Central Oregon, Bend and Redmond. It is also directly associated with the settlement of hundreds of farms on over twenty thousand acres in what is now Deschutes County. Constructing the Pilot Butte Canal as a commercial enterprise under the Carey Act brought significant private capital and experience in town building and irrigation development to the high desert. The funds were used to build a system of canals to irrigate and encourage settlement and development of the areas east of the Cascade Mountains. The financial profit from the construction of the system was shared equally by the investors in the irrigation company with corporate goals to attract farmers, sell the irrigated land, expand the agricultural sector, and plat and develop the two cities, one at each end of the canal. The project transformed the high desert. Investment capital flowed from the irrigation company as the canal system was built, bringing value to the lands, and further to companies and settlers purchasing services, land, and products and services were bought and sold. The region experienced new economic opportunities and growth.

In addition, development of these cities and agricultural lands brought further investment into the area, leading to ongoing economic expansion, which brought the local area into the greater economy of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The nominated section was the critical section of the canal construction on which the future of the irrigation company, the settlement of the region, and the agricultural potential of the area rested. The project transformed the high desert. A combination of corporate goals and principles of settlement and agricultural development, stimulated by the significant amount of capital, enabled the company to provide farmers with cheap credit, spreading the wealth throughout the community and providing a significant labor pool for developing the area.