

The Goodrich Trail

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Following the general route of the gold rush which swept about 1,500 prospectors from Boise Basin to Rocky Bar Basin in the latter part of May 1863, the Goodrich Trail offered some improvements over the terrain covered by the original miners' route. The South Boise gold rush was described by H. O. Rogers in June 1863, as traversing "one continuous line of high mountains, rocky and steep" and penetrating "canyons deep and narrow." Soon, though, some fifteen miles of river canyon in the middle fork of the Boise were eliminated by the Goodrich Trail. Established after the country was better known, the latter crossed from Idaho City over a ridge separating Boise Basin on More's Creek from Barber Flat on the north fork of the Boise. Mounting another ridge between present Barber and Alexander flats, the trail descended to Goodrich's ranch on the middle fork of the Boise. Here the Goodrich brothers kept a hotel, known variously as 24 Mile House or as the Middle Boise Hotel. Traffic over the Goodrich Trail generally spent the night at this halfway point; the trip required two days. Here in the summer of 1864, a weary traveler could obtain "for dinner some mush and milk and a cup of coffee. Charge \$1.50; a drink of brandy, 50¢, and a cigar 50¢." (At this time, the Goodrich ranch had not been established; later, when the ranch came into production, conditions improved.) Next the trail crossed a ridge from the Goodrich ranch at Alexander Flat to Roaring River, and then went over a still higher ridge to the east, separating Rocky Bar Basin from the middle fork. From Idaho City to Rocky Bar, the trail ascended four high ridges in its fifty mile course.

Travelers on the Goodrich Trail really were impressed by the country through which they passed. Rasey Biven, who had traveled widely through the Colorado Rockies and the mountains of Mexico, California, and Hawaii, reported after a trip in August 1864, that the Goodrich Trail "cannot be excelled for wildness of scenery; the beautiful trout streams and the Middle and North Forks of the Boise River, which are all fordable in the summer months, their precipitous sides seemingly impassable to the traveler for either ascent or descent, covered with luxurious undergrowth and trees of magnificent proportions . . . almost perpendicular ascents of ridges, whose sides are bounded by ravines three thousand feet in depth--ridges bearing the name of 'Devil's Back' and similar appellations, suggestive of a certain feeling of insecurity, to be seen and felt in order to be fully appreciated--the narrow trail over which your horse carefully picks his way, seemingly as fully impressed as yourself with the magnificence as well as the toils and dangers of the journey." All of the grandeur of the country he had seen before, he added even "our own

delightful scenery of California . . . charmed me not half so well as the scenery on the South Boise Trail."

By August 1864, a toll franchise was granted for improving the trail and for building bridges across the north fork and the middle fork. The toll system aroused a great deal of resentment, though. Writing from Rocky Bar, July 1, 1865, Rasey Biven complained rather bitterly about the tolls, and was not too flattering in his description of the service to be obtained at the Middle Boise Hotel: "The younger Goodrich was at home with two drunken cooks on hand, a large number of miners, some going to the new discoveries at the Yuba, fourteen miles from this place [Rocky Bar], and to and from South Boise. Breakfasting at six o'clock, without the aid of any cook . . . we started at seven, packed our traps across the Middle Fork on a log and swam the animals. The North Fork is crossed on very good bridge, the owner of which receives toll for both rivers, whereas the Middle Fork you must cross the best you can, at risk of life of man and beast; and yet you are charged toll. Oregon, Washington, and Idaho Territories are famed for their toll-bridges and toll-gates; you travel for hours over hard and dangerous roads, and come to a patch of ground sufficiently level for the erection of a gate and a small cabin, where you pay toll and proceed 100 yards only to find a road similar to the one ridden over; but two or three times in the course of a day you will come to another 'clearing,' another cabin and gate, and by this means you are enabled to remember the level parts of the country."

Apparently fearing loss of business because of opposition to the tolls, the Goodrich brothers arranged to have tolls removed from the route after two years of dissatisfaction with the system. In a newspaper advertisement, June 1, 1866, they reported that "the proprietors of the Middle Boise Ranch inform their numerous friends that they have made such arrangements with Mr. Taylor that the South Boise trail and bridges are hereafter free of tolls. The bridges across both the North and Middle Boise rivers have just been put in excellent repair, and the trail to Rocky Bar is in good condition throughout for animals. The Middle Boise Hotel will be conducted on first-class principles during the season, and all the delicacies of this country, and most other countries, will be offered to their numerous guests. Trout, grouse, squabs, fresh salmon, &c., are among the choice viands upon their bill of fare. The grass upon the ranch is of now the richest variety and tall enough to mow. The journey from Idaho City to South Boise or Yuba is now only a pleasure trip, provided the traveler has a good animal. Our beds are comfortable, and the bar and table furnished with the best always."

Even removal of the tolls did not help for too long a time. In less than a decade, the Goodrich Trail fell into disuse as other routes replaced it. New trails to Idaho City (by the way of

Banner) and to Boise directly down the Middle Fork, carried the traffic through that part of the country. The Goodrich brothers sold their ranch and left the region. But long after they had gone, the old miners' route to Rocky Bar, which crossed the Middle Fork of the Boise at their ranch, was still remembered as the old Goodrich Trail.

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