

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

OVERLAND STAGE COMPANY OPERATIONS AT CITY OF ROCKS

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As part of his fabulous western stage coach empire that extended from Atchison, Kansas (northwest of Kansas City) to Salt Lake, with branch lines to Boise and to Virginia City, Montana, Ben Holladay profited from postal contracts that reached even further west. He sublet his mail service operations to other lines that reached as far west from Salt Lake as Placerville, California, and as far northwest from Boise as Walla Walla and eventually The Dalles. All of this was supported by government contracts of July 1, 1864.

In Idaho, Holladay's Overland Stage Company mail contract ran via Fort Hall to Boise and beyond, with connecting service from Fort Hall to Virginia City. But his actual Concord Coaches¹ traveled from Salt Lake to Virginia City, with connecting Concord Coaches from Fort Hall to Boise, on a line overloaded with passengers between Boise and Virginia City.² But until deep winter snow shut down his direct route that speeded up Boise-Salt Lake mail delivery and passenger traffic, he used a shortcut of 90 miles from Rock Creek Station to Bear River Station (near Garland, Utah) 86 miles north of Salt Lake. That arrangement utilized an important stage station near City of Rocks. By November, however, snowbanks shut down that part of Holladay's service.³ Finally in May 1865, his direct Boise-Salt Lake route was restored when snowdrifts ceased to make that option impossible, so his City of Rocks Station again benefitted from three and one-half day service between Boise and Salt Lake.⁴ Because Union Pacific Railway construction was shortening his route across Nebraska, Holladay sold his entire operation,

November 1, 1866, at a large profit to an unsuspecting Wells Fargo Company, effective December 10. But his City of Rocks Station continued to serve stage line travelers through September, 1883--a total of nineteen years.

ENDNOTES

¹*Daily Mountaineer* (The Dalles), March 7, 1866, p. 3, c. 3.

²*Boise News* (Idaho City), June 24, 1864, p. 2, c. 2; *Montana Post* (Virginia City), September 10, 1864, p. 2, c. 5; *Washington Statesman* (Walla Walla), August 12, 1864, p. 3, c. 3; October 7, 1864, p. 3, c. 3. Connecting service reached Walla Walla, August 8, 1864.

³*Washington Statesman*, December 9, 1864, p. 3, c. 1.

⁴*Idaho Statesman* (Boise), May 30, 1865, p. 2, c. 2.

(This information has not been edited.)

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