

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

FERRY BUTTE FERRY
(Also known as Meeks and Gibson Ferry)
T3S, R34E, Section 29

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Timothy Goodale crossed with a large number of emigrants here on his way to reopening a northern route in 1862. (This emigrant road became known as Goodale's Cutoff.) On January 28, 1864, the Idaho Territorial Legislature granted Jacob Meeks and John P. Gibson a franchise to operate a ferry across the Lewis or Snake rivers at any point within two miles below the mouth of the Blackfoot River for a term of ten years. They were allowed to charge the following toll rates:

Each wagon with 2,000 pounds or under, \$4.00

Each additional one thousand pounds, \$1.00

Mules and cattle, per head, .75¢

(Idaho Session Laws, 1863-64, pp. 652-653.)

Brigadier General Patrick E. Connor in his report on June 3, 1863, noted:

The region immediately about the Snake river at this ferry, which is about ten miles east of old Fort Hall, is a dry, barren sand plain, the road to the ferry being exceedingly heavy and difficult to traverse. . . . The distance from Soda Springs to this ferry, via the Bridger and Fort Hall emigrant road, is upward of seventy miles, pursuing a northwesterly course. . . .

(War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. L., Part I, pp. 227-228.)

Colonel Reuben F. Maury in his report of August 24, 1863, said:

Our present camp is on the Port Neuf River, about four miles from Fort Hall and about eighteen miles below the ferry across Snake River, at the mouth of Blackfoot Creek. . . . I arrived at and crossed Snake River on the 17th, when I met Captain Crawford of the Overland Escort, both reaching the ferry at the same hour. He had left his camp on Ross Fork, where the routes for the north and south sides of Snake River separate, and was undetermined as to which he would take. . . .

(Ibid., p. 220.)

Crawford later decided to take the south route and took seventy to eighty wagons with him. Maury estimated that 250 wagons took the north route and nearly 110, including Crawford's group, followed the south route in 1863. (Ibid.)

Mrs. W. A. Loughary recorded in her diary on July 16, 1864: "Go down the river two miles to the ferry. More traders cabins and Indian wigwams all together. We sold them flour for \$3.00 per hundred and paid for ferryage \$3.00 for each wagon and eight cents per head for all stock including the oxen and horses attached to wagons. Leaving only one yoke to a wagon, the others with the loose stock were swum across in safety." (Manuscript, University of Oregon Library.)

In October 1866, John Gibson reported gross earnings of \$800.00. (IRAL, Microcopy 463.)

The ferry continued its operation for a number of years but eventually lost the majority of its trade to the Blackfoot Ferry and the later bridge at Blackfoot.

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