

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

PAYNE (LEWIS) FERRY
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On June 2, 1863, the Boise County Commissioners granted a license to Williams, Beach, and Greenwood to keep and run a ferry across the Snake River at or near Salmon Falls. (Boise News, November 10, 1863, p. 2, c. 1.)

In a letter written from Salmon Falls on September 17, 1863, J. A. F., a correspondent with Colonel Reuben F. Maury's Snake Expedition, wrote,

We crossed the river on the 15th instant, and have established a camp on Falls Creek. There is a ferry at this point. The boat is owned by parties residing in Boise, and was brought here from that place some time in July last for the purpose of crossing the emigration, but there being but a small emigration, and no one crossing at this point, the parties abandoned their enterprise, sunk their boat and left. The Salt Lake Express Co., have since raised the boat and it is now used by that Co. For the purpose of crossing their express. This express was formerly carried by way of Fort Hall, but by this route it is one hundred miles nearer from Boise to Salt Lake than by way of the former. There are about two hundred Indians encamped in this vicinity and they are all peaceable disposed. Capt. Crawford's Emigrant Escort crossed Snake River at this point. (Washington Statesman [Walla Walla], October 10, 1863, p. 3, c. 2.)

By 1869, Ed Taylor had reestablished a ferry operation at this point. In 1871, M. E. Payne became a partner with Taylor in the enterprise. They soon replaced the oar propelled scow with a current boat that measured sixty by fourteen feet. Payne soon purchased his partner's interest and contracted with the Overland Stage Company to cross their stages for \$1,000 per year.

A new Ferry. A new ferry is now in prime running order across Snake River, at the mouth of Salmon Creek, on the Kelton Stage Road. The traveling public will find it to their advantage as well as mine to cross at this ferry. Rates of ferriage reduced one half. M. E.

Payne. (Idaho Democrat [Boise], January 7, 1871, p. 3, c. 5.)

On October 11, 1878, the Alturas County Commissioners granted an eight-year renewal of the charter of M. E. Payne to maintain his ferry at the same location and authorized the following toll rates:

Wagon, two horses, mules or oxen, \$1.50

Each additional span or yoke, .75¢

Horse and rider, .75¢

Footman, .25¢

Horse and Carriage, \$1.50

Pack animal, .25¢

Loose animal, .12 1/2¢

Sheep and Hogs, .05¢

(Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman, October 24, 1878, p. 3, c. 2.)

During the Bannock War of 1878, Payne moved to Boise and left Leonard C. Lewis in charge of the ferry. After John Hailey changed his stage line to the Glenns Ferry route in 1879, Business diminished appreciably, but the ferry continued to receive local patronage. When Payne decided to remain in the Boise area, Lewis purchased the business and ran the ferry until his death in 1896. Mrs. Lewis continued to run the ferry until her son Braxton (Bub) was drowned while attempting to swim his horse across the river. She sold the operation to her son-in-law, Sam Johnson. In about 1908, Johnson relinquished the business to a Mr. Dunaway, who ran the ferry mostly for neighbors and sheepmen. During June 1910, the ferry broke loose and sank about three miles down the river.

(Idaho - Ferries, folder, ISHS.)

By Larry R. Jones