

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

DORSEY'S FERRY
T5S, R3E, Section 9

GRANDVIEW FERRY
T5S, R3E, Section 15

Number 753

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In 1875, the Idaho land surveyors identified the ferry as being in Section 9. The road from the ferry led across Chattin Flat, past the Dorsey ranch, and up Chattin Hill. Dave Dorsey acquired his ranch about this time and built the ferry as a means of reaching the south side of the river. In 1880 a new and more substantial boat was placed at the site of the old Dorsey Ferry.

This crossing was acclaimed by Boise businessmen, for it gave them a more direct route to the railroad and the mining camps of northern Nevada. In addition, a new route was to be opened across the plain to Rattlesnake Station on the Overland Road. This route would accommodate the travel between northern Nevada and the Wood River and Yankee Fork mines. (Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman, January 29, 1880, p. 3, c. 2.)

Even though the article places the ferry at the old Dorsey site, it appears that at this time the ferry was moved upriver to the present day town of Grandview in order to make a better grade for the freighters who were expected to travel the route.

During the latter part of February 1880, Hiram Pixley and John Henry, owners of the ferry, reported that Abraham Robinson of Bruneau Valley had constructed a rodometer and measured the distance between his ranch and Boise. He measured twenty-five and a half miles from his ranch to Henry's ferry and forty-five miles from the ferry to Boise. Henry also noted that considerable freighting had already commenced on the route and looked for it to increase as the season advanced. (Ibid., March 2, 1880, p. 3, c. 1.)

On April 6, 1880, the Ada County Commissioners granted the Henry brothers a one-year license to run a ferry across the Snake River at a point about eight miles below the mouth of the Bruneau River and authorized the following toll rates:

Horse and rider, .75¢
Footman, .50¢
Wagon and single span or yoke, \$1.50
Each additional span or yoke, .75¢
Pack animal, loaded, .50¢

Pack animal, empty, .12 1/2¢
 Loose Animal, .10¢
 Sheep or hogs, .05¢

(Ada County Commissioner's Records, Book A, p. 86.)

On April 8, 1881, the Ada County Commissioners renewed the license of John Henry and authorized him to charge the same toll rates that he had in effect the previous year. (Ibid., p. 133.)

On September 23, 1883, the Idaho Avalanche [Silver City] announced: "We hear that John Henry has sold his ferry on Snake river to Henry Dorsey. The property is valuable and there will probably be more business this year than since it was built." (p. 3, c. 2.)

In November, 1887, Dorsey sold the operation to the Snake River Company. The new owners hired a Mr. Prescott to construct a hotel for the traveling public and those who would be coming to the area when the Bruneau canal, was placed in charge of the ferry and boarding house. (Ibid., p. 3, c. 1.) The Avalanche went on to say, "Grand View is to be the name of the town situated at Dorsey's ferry on Snake river in this county. We suppose it is so named by reason of the view that can be had from that point of old War Eagle mountain and Quicksilver mountain in this county and the Saw Tooth range of mountains in Alturas county, to say nothing of the serpentine Snake flowing near the hotel now being built." (Ibid., p. 3, c. 1.)

The survey notes of the land surveyor in 1893 identifies the Grandview ferry as being in Section 15. (Volume 121, p. 72.)

A Mr. Rowe operated the ferry in later years until it was replaced by a bridge in 1921. (Huntley, p. 110.)

By Larry R. Jones