

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

WEISER FERRY T11N, R5W, Section 32

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In December 1882, Thomas Mahan and Thomas Ranahan published a notice of their intentions to construct a ferry across the Snake River near the point at which the range line between townships 5 and 6 north leave the river. (Weiser City Leader, December 30, 1882, p. 4, c. 3.) The boat was constructed at some point upstream and floated down to Weiser. "Mr. Thomas Ranahan has arrived with his ferry-boat, which he will operate in Snake river at this point." (Ibid., April 28, 1883, p. 3, c. 1.)

The maiden voyage of the ferryboat, Norman, occurred on May 20, 1883. The Leader remarked that it was owned by Thomas Ranahan and would open up the Malheur country trade to Weiser. The initial one-way trip took five minutes. (Ibid., May 26, 1883, p. 3, c. 2.)

Ranahan announced his toll rates the following month in the Leader. "Weiser Ferry, located one and a half miles west of Weiser City on Snake River:

Wagon and one span of horses, \$1.00
Each additional span, .50¢
Freight wagon, \$1.00
Buggy and horse, \$1.00
Horse and rider, .75¢
Pack animal, loaded, .50¢
Pack animal, empty, .25¢
Loose animals, .12 1/2¢
Footman, .50¢
Sheep or hogs, .05¢

This is a new boat, and is said to be one of the largest and best on Snake River." (Ibid., June 2, 1883, p. 2, c. 3.)

In an attempt to encourage trade between Silver City and Weiser, Ranahan ran an advertisement in the Silver City newspaper.

Weiser Ferry. The road along the South bank of Snake river to the Weiser ferry, near the mouth of the Weiser, is the shortest, best watered and with more grass than any other road traveled from Silver City and that section of the country. The ferryboat will always

be found in the very best condition and ready to cross the traveling public. (Owyhee Avalanche, September 29, 1883, p. 3., c. 5.)

After running the ferry for a couple of years, Ranahan sold the enterprise to F. W. Strobel, who oversaw the business until his death in September 1889. (Weiser City Leader, September 20, 1889, p. 1, c. 2.)

In 1890, an ice flow carried the boat downstream to the Bay Horse Rapids and E. M. Hill and John Mulloy purchased the errant ferryboat for \$200. They in turn removed the boat to Hill's ranch, one and a half miles south of the Peck ferry, and operated it as a private ferry. (Weiser City Leader, February 14, 1890, p. 1, c. 3.)

By April 1891, M. C. Clayborn had installed a new ferry at Weiser and announced, "If you want to go to Baker City, Huntington or Vale, or, if you want to cross the Snake river with sheep, horses or cattle, going either east or west, go to the Weiser ferry. I have a first class boat and the best of accommodations. Rates are cheap." (Ibid., April 24, 1891, p. 2, c. 2.)

The ferry remained in operation under various individuals until the completion of a bridge near the site in November 1904.

A man named Tuttle was the last operator of the ferry. (Weiser Signal, July 4, 1903, p. 1, p. 5.)

By Larry R. Jones