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HENDERSON FERRY T2N, R4W, Section 2

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The Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman on April 10, 1873, announced the intentions of "French" John Carrey to start a new Snake River ferry and lay out a new road to the railroad.

New ferry and Road to Winnemucca. John Carrey has located a new road from this city to the Stage Ranch in Jordan Valley on the Winnemucca road, and proposes to direct the travel and freight that way. Leaving this ranch, in Jordan Valley, he comes to Camp Lyon and then to Succor Creek, or about halfway between Keeney's and McCarty's ferry, and from there direct to Middleton. This route is very level, and avoids the Owyhee mountains, and is thirty miles nearer, and is as good as a savings of seventy miles over the old road. John Carrey is an old teamster and he says this is better than any other route to the railroad, and freight can be hauled cheaper than from Kenton. It has the advantage of feed and water in abundance and little or no sage brush or alkali. This road and ferry will be opened by the first of July. . . .

During the next month, the Statesman noted Carrey's progress, "Several teams, loaded with lumber, passed through town Saturday, on their way to the proposed site of Carrey's Ferry, on Snake river. The building of the ferry boat and making of the new road will be energetically pushed forward." (Ibid., May 20, 1873, p. 3, c. 1.)

The Idaho City paper also made note of Carrey's new enterprise: Mr. John Carrey, more familiarly known among old-timers as "French John," paid our city a visit during the past week. He is the owner of the new road from Winnemucca to Snake river, and informs us that the road is now completed, the work being finished about two weeks ago, and is now in good order. . . . The ferry across Snake river will be ready in about ten days, when the new route will be open for the traveling public, and teamsters freighting to and from the Railroad. He informs us that by this route the distance from Winnemucca to Snake river is only about 210 miles, and from the river to Middleton 15 miles, thus making it the shortest route for California freights. . . .

On July 7, 1873, the Ada County Commissioners granted Carrey an eight-year franchise to run a ferry across the Snake river at a point

about five miles down the river from Squaw creek. He was authorized to charge the following tolls:

Wagon and two horses or two oxen, \$1.50
 Each additional span, .75¢
 Horse and rider, .75¢
 Footman, .50¢
 Horse and carriage, \$2.00
 Pack animals, .50¢
 Loose animals, .12 1/2¢
 Sheep and hogs, .10¢

(Ada County Commissioners' Records, 1868, 1877, pp. 462-464. See also Idaho World, August 28, 1873, p. 2, c. 4; September 4, 1873, p. 3, c. 2.) By the middle of August the ferry was completed and teams were passing over the route and ferry. (Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman, August 21, 1873, p. 3, c. 2; August 30, 1873, p. 2, c. 4; Idaho World, August 28, 1873, p. 3, c. 1.)

In 1879, J. M. Steele acquired the ferry. The Ada County Commissioners granted him a license on October 6, 1879, and authorized the following toll charges:

Wagon and single span or yoke, \$1.50
 Additional span or yoke, .50¢
 Horse and rider, .75¢
 Footman, .50¢
 Pack animal, loaded, .25¢
 Pack animal, empty, .12 1/2¢
 Loose animal, .10¢
 Sheep and hogs, .05¢
 (Ada County Commissioners' Records, Book A, p. 71.)

In the spring of 1880, Daniel Masterson became the proprietor, and the Ada County Commissioners granted him a license on April 6. The authorized tolls remained the same, with the exception of raising the price for crossing sheep and hogs to ten cents each. (Ada County Commissioners' Records, Book A., pp. 86-87.)

In 1881, Robert Henderson acquired the property. On July 5, the Ada County Commissioners granted him a license and authorized the following toll rates:

Wagon and single span or yoke, \$1.00
 Additional span or yoke, .50¢
 Each additional wagon, .50¢
 Horse and rider, .50¢
 Footman, .25¢
 Pack animal, .25¢
 Loose animal, .12 1/2¢
 Sheep, .05¢
 Hog, .08¢
 (Ada County Commissioners' Records, Book A, p. 141.)

Soon after acquiring the ferry, Henderson moved the operation downstream a few miles and relocated in T4W, R2N, Section 2. During a

strip to Caldwell in 1886, Henderson reported,

the travel over the new Jordan Valley road improving, and that as soon a sufficient travel has passed over it, it will make one of the best roads in the country. . . . He states that he crossed 3,600 head of sheep and one team of horses on his ferry one day last week in little over three hours. (Caldwell Tribune, June 26, 1886, p. 3, c. 1.)

The new Caldwell-to-Jordan Valley road that he referred to was constructed during the summer of 1886 under the supervision of C. A. Force. The new road omitted the necessity of passing over French John Hill by bearing to the right from Henderson's ferry and crossing and recrossing Poison Creek before returning to the old road near Rockville. (Ibid., May 1, 1886, p. 3, c. 1; June 12, 1886, p. 2, c. 1.)

In addition to his ferry enterprise, Henderson cut the high grass growing on the Snake River islands and sold the product to passing stockmen and freighters. In order to reach the islands, he constructed a large sailboat that carried his mower and held several tons of hay. He noted that the islands would yield from two to three tons per acre. (Ibid., July 17, 1886, p. 3. C. 2.)

In 1888 Henderson went to Chicago to purchase a steamboat which he proposed to run on the Snake River between Weiser and Glenns Ferry. He also planned to utilize the boat at his ferry to cross customers. The Caldwell Tribune reported:

The boat will be fifty feet long, about fourteen feet wide, and the screw propeller will be driven by a 33-horse power engine. The boat will have a capacity for 100 passengers besides an immense amount of freight, and will tow two barges, thus making the freight capacity wonderful.

The boat will draw only about four feet of water, thus making it possible to navigate the Snake for a long distance. Mr. Henderson thoroughly investigated the scheme, and is not only convinced that it is practicable, but that it will be a paying investment. He expects to have the boat running in September. (June 2, 1888, p. 4, c. 3.)

Henderson reached Chicago on Wednesday, July 25, and registered at the Ogden House. His room was illuminated by a gas light; not being entirely familiar with its operation, he made a fatal mistake by improperly extinguishing the flame upon retiring. A Chicago paper commented:

A man registering under the name Robert A. Henderson, Silver City, Idaho, stopped at the Ogden House Wednesday. He purchased a small steamer from C. P. Willard & Co., 236 Randolph street, paying \$1,600 of the purchase price down. At his hotel in the evening he retired early and the bell boy showed him how to light and turn off the gas. He observed that it was a "pretty slick contrivance" but he guessed he could work it. He was found in bed yesterday

morning in an unconscious state the room and corridor being filled with gas. Drs. Ballard and Henrotin succeeded in inducing respiration, but up to a late hour last night he was still unconscious. (Chicago Daily News, July 27, 1888, as quoted in Caldwell Tribune, August 4, 1888, p. 4, c. 5.)

Henderson succumbed to the effects of the gas on July 28, and his body was shipped back to Boise for burial in the Masonic Cemetery. (For additional reports on his death, see Owyhee Avalanche, July 28, 1888, p. 3, c. 3; August 4, 1888, p. 3, c. 2; Idaho Daily Statesman, July 29, 1888, p. 3, c. 1, July 31, 1888, p. 3, c. 1.)

In August 1889, Mrs. Henderson moved with her children to Shenandoah, Iowa, and she resided there with her parents until her death in 1892. For the next few years, the ferry was run by various individuals. In 1906, the ferry became known as the Nampa Ferry.

A new ferry has been put in at Henderson's old site on Snake river. The boat which has been used by E. H. Dewey at Guffey, the largest and best boat on the river, has been bought by a company and taken down river. It will be anchored at the site and made ready for business on the latter part of this week. The Henderson ferry site, which is on the old Indian trail, is conceded to be the most natural crossing on the river. The prime mover in this new enterprise, which will result in great good to our Nampa business men, since it will bring a large portion of the Jordan Valley business here, is J. S. Hickey, who, backed up by other business men, has taken hold of the matter in his usual energetic way and brought it to a successful conclusion. Mr. Hickey, accompanied by several others, will go to the site in a few days to arrange for the putting up of the buildings, corrals and conveniences for housing the teamsters and passengers who stop over night. (Nampa Leader-Herald, March 13, 1906, p. 1, c. 1.)

The ferry, which also became known as the McKenzie ferry, remained in operation under several different owners until completion of the Marsing bridge in 1921. Some of the later owners included C. E. McKenzie, E. H. Dewey, Frank Meek, and Hank Price. (Huntley, pp. 168-170.)

By Larry R. Jones