

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### CAMAS PRAIRIE STAGE LINES

Number 790

1985

Camas Prairie experienced rapid growth as an agricultural and stock-raising area following the Nez Perce War in 1877, and Grangeville soon became the dispersal point for the rich interior mining districts. It became difficult for local freight and stage lines to handle the increasing volume of business and the construction of a railroad appeared the most sensible solution. As the railroad advanced up the Clearwater River and across Camas Prairie, the days of the freighter and stage driver drew rapidly to an end. Stage and freight companies adjusted their routes and schedules to connect with the various advancing railroads. The Clearwater Short Line reached Stites in September 1900; Grangeville received direct railroad service in December 1908; and a spur was extended to Nezperce on June 24, 1910. Camas Prairie and Clearwater River towns could now receive their mail and supplies much sooner. Some local stage service between the various towns remained available for a short period after the arrival of the railroads, but it soon gave way to the automobile and commercial motorized companies.

#### **Kamiah - Nezperce - Cottonwood**

Stages began running between Kamiah and Nezperce around the turn of the century to make connections with the Clearwater Short Line Railway. In the spring of 1901 Charles Pomeroy was back handling the reins after being laid up for several weeks due to ill health.

(Nezperce Herald, April 19, 1901, p. 1, c. 3) By the next spring the headquarters for the Kamiah-Nezperce line was located in the Kamiah Hotel. (Ibid., April 3, 1902, p. 4, c. 6) In October 1904 the stage upset after starting the downgrade toward Kamiah. Two female passengers were thrown out and the driver was dragged some distance before getting the team under control. Fortunately, those involved only suffered minor injuries and were able to proceed on to Kamiah. (Weiser Signal, October 8, 1904, p. 2, c. 4)

The following month the Nezperce Herald noted, "G. W. Williams lowered the record in stage traffic between Kamiah and Nezperce last Friday evening, having brought eleven people with hand baggage and one trunk on a hack and two horses, reaching here [Nezperce] before nine o'clock." (September 14, 1906, p. 1, c. 3) By the next summer Miller & Miller appeared as the principal carrier along the route. They charged one dollar for the trip and boasted of employing only expert

drivers. (Nez Perce Herald, June 22, 1907, p. 5, c. 3) On January 23, 1908, the Millers placed the following advertisement in the Nezperce Herald: "The Nezperce Livery Stable stage line to Kamiah. It costs no more to ride on a first class stage. Clark's patent foot warmer used at every seat. You are absolutely warm no matter what the weather may be. Miller & Miller the old reliables, Nezperce, Idaho." (p. 4, c. 5) That summer new proprietors were once again in charge. "Winter schedule for Stellmon's Mail and Express stage. The stage now leaves Nezperce in the morning at 6:00 a.m. making connections at Kamiah with the train for Stites and Lewiston. The stage arrives in Nezperce from Kamiah about 3:30. The fastest of time will be made with safety of passengers considered when condition of roads will permit. We look after the comfort of our passengers and always aim to make the trip a pleasant one. Any inattention on the part of the drivers should be reported at headquarters. Passengers wishing to engage seats are requested to call at the Boss Barn. Stage leaves Kamiah at 11:30 a.m. and arrives at Nezperce at 3:30 p.m. Stage leaves Nezperce at 6:00 a.m. And arrives at Kamiah at 10:00 a.m. Stellmon, Gray & Stellmon, proprietors. Nezperce headquarters at the post office or Boss Barn."

(Nezperce Herald, June 11, 1908, p. 8, c. 5) In July it was announced that after the 18th the mail route between Kamiah and Nezperce would be discontinued. The Camas Prairie railway had reached Vollmer and mail would now be directed to that point. In Addition, after the 20th the route to Cottonwood would also be changed. The stage would now leave Cottonwood and return to Winoma, arriving in the afternoon. This would cut out that portion of the route between Winoma and Kamiah. (Kamiah Progress, July 10, 1908, p. 4, c. 4) This action effectively caused the demise of the Kamiah-Cottonwood stage line, which had been initiated in the spring of 1907 by C. C. McCarty. This line had been leaving Kamiah daily, except Sunday, at 6 a.m. and arriving in Cottonwood at noon. The return stage reached Kamiah at 7 p.m. (Ibid., April 12, 1907, p. 4, c. 1)

### **Nezperce - Vollmer**

In the spring of 1908 N. B. and Curtis Miller expanded their stage business and put on a line between Nezperce and Vollmer. Shortly after inaugurating this new line, they ceased operations on the Kamiah route. The Nezperce Herald noted: "The Nezperce Livery Stable stage line to Vollmer. After Monday, March 9, we will run our stage direct to Vollmer, making connections with the incoming and outgoing trains. While the roads are bad we will leave Nezperce at 8 a.m. and returning will arrive here at about 4:00 p.m. Fare \$1.00. Clark's patent foot warmers used at every seat and passengers always made comfortable. N. B. Miller, proprietor, Nezperce, Idaho." (April 23, 1908, p. 6, c. 5) In June the schedule was changed; stages left Nezperce at 7:30 a.m. and returned about 7:00 p.m. (Ibid., June 18, 1908, p. 4, c. 5) That same month Curtis Miller announced his retirement from the business and asked all those indebted to him to

make prompt settlements. N. B. Miller continued to run the business.

(Ibid., June 18, 1908, p. 1, c. 6) Eliminating the Kamiah route proved profitable for the firm when the Kamiah and Nezperce mail contract was discontinued and after the 18th of June, mail was rerouted to the railhead at Vollmer. (Ibid., July 10, 1908, p. 4., c. 4) The line continued in operation until arrival in Nezperce of the first passenger train from Lewiston on Friday, June 24, 1910. (Ibid., June 30, 1910, p. 1, c. 3-5) Curtis Miler kept close ties with his former business when he completed a new dray and transfer barn in July. The barn contained stalls for twenty-four horses, room for seventy-five tons of hay, an office, and ample space for both wagons and automobiles. (Ibid., July 7, 1910, p. 1, c. 6)

#### **Cottonwood - Mount Idaho**

In the spring of 1897 the Grangeville newspaper reported: "Frank and Hugh Coston have purchased the stage line route from Mt. Idaho to Cottonwood and will run it in connection with the Florence line." (Idaho County Free Press, May 7, 1897, p. 1, c. 5) In addition to local service the two communities also received service from stages running on the Lewiston-to-Grangeville line.

#### **Cottonwood - Lewiston**

During the summer of 1898 Clough and Howe, owners of the Cottonwood Hotel, began a stage line between Cottonwood and Lewiston. (Lewiston Tribune, July 29, 1898, p. 3, c. 6) By 1907 Felix Warren owned and operated the line. He remained the proprietor until completion of the railroad between the two points in September 1908. (Ibid., July 1, 1907, p. 4, c. 2, and Kamiah Progress, October 2, 1908, p. 1, c. 4)

#### **Culdesac - Grangeville**

The Lewiston Tribune, on July 10, 1907 (p. 4, c. 2), announced: "Yesterday Mr. D. L. Higdon, owner of the Culdesac-Cottonwood line, purchased H. C. Jackson's Cottonwood-Grangeville line. This gives Higdon a through stage from Culdesac to Grangeville. Higdon to augment his line, yesterday, bought a 14 passenger coach from Felix Warren, the largest in use in this section. Cottonwood now has five stage lines--Lewiston-Cottonwood; Culdesac-Cottonwood; Kamiah-Cottonwood; Grangeville-Cottonwood and Keuterville-Cottonwood." Felix Warren planned to provide Higdon some competition by inaugurating a line between Culdsac and Grangeville in the first part of July. He reported: "Four horse stock will be used and will make convenient connections with the railroad. The new line will run between Culdesac and cottonwood and will service Chesley, Kippen, Ilo, Vollmer and Westlake. . . . The new line was necessitated due to increased travel in that section as a result of railroad work and the opening of new

towns and industry." (Lewiston Tribune, July 1, 1907, p. 4, c. 2)

#### **Cottonwood - Grangeville**

On July 1, 1902, W. S. Austin succeeded Mark Howe as the proprietor of the line between Grangeville and Cottonwood. (Idaho County Free Press, July 17, 1902, p. 3, c. 3) H. C. Jackson ran the line before selling to D. L. Higdon in July 1907. (Ibid., July 11, 1907, p. 4. C. 4)

#### **Cottonwood - Kamiah**

In the summer of 1895 J. W. Gaines put on a stage line between Cottonwood and Kamiah. (Idaho County Free Press, June 7, 1895, p. 1, c. 3) By 1907 C. C. McCarty was in charge of the line. He remained with the line until the mail contract was changed to Vollmer on July 18, 1908. This action eliminated the need for the line and it went out of business. (Kamiah Progress, April 12, 1907, p. 4, c. 1, and July 10, 1908, p. 4, c. 4)

#### **Grangeville - Kendrick**

After completion of the Camas Prairie and Kendrick wagon road in 1895, Ramsey Walker contemplated starting a stage line between Kendrick and Grangeville in the spring of 1896 by way of Nezperce. (Idaho County Free Press, December 6, 1895, p. 1, c. 3)

#### **Grangeville - Spalding**

In February 1899 Felix Warren started a stage line between Spalding and Grangeville but by March he had withdrawn his stages from the route. (Ibid., February 24, 1899, p. 1, c. 4, and March 10, 1899, p. 2, c. 2)

#### **Grangeville - Stites**

In September 1900 the Clearwater Short Line Railway reached Stites and stages began running between the railhead and Grangeville. Traffic was often heavy between the two points and the California, Idaho and Nevada Stage Company placed night stages on the route to meet the demand. In the fall of 1902 the night stage was withdrawn, but an emergency team was kept at Stites to convey travelers who desired to reach Grangeville immediately after the arrival of the train. (Idaho County Free Press, October 16, 1902, p. 1, c. 4) During the summer months the night schedule was once again put into effect and the stage left Stites promptly after the arrival of the train. (Ibid., June 18, 1903, p. 1, c. 4) In May 1904 H. C. Jackson purchased an interest in the Idaho Transportation Company, an opposition line and assumed management of the route. (Ibid., May 12, 1904, p. 4, c.

1) In 1905 the Idaho Transportation Company ran its stages daily from Grangeville at 2 p.m. The night stage left at 12:30 each night, except Saturday, and E. R. Cawley was the agent. (Ibid., September 14, 1905, p. 4, c. 5) The following spring Jackson and his company received the mail contract, which assured them a better hold on the business. (Ibid., September 14, 1905, p. 4, c. 5) By the following spring J. W. Wilkes, of Grangeville, had purchased not only the interests of the Idaho Transportation Company but also those of the California, Idaho & Nevada Company. He now had the mail contract and an exclusive stage business between the two points. In addition, he owned the Grangeville and Florence line. (Ibid., July 11, 1907, p. 4, c. 4, and Lewiston Tribune, July 10, 1907, p. 4, c. 2) Within the year the firm of Jones and McConnel attempted to provide some competition along the route but it soon withdrew and Wilkes continued to maintain his line until the railroad reached Grangeville in December 1908. (Idaho County Free Press, February 13, 1908, p. 1, c. 4)

#### **Grangeville - Stuart (Kooskia)**

In the spring of 1899 Joseph Cox completed arrangements for a twice-a-week stage line between Grangeville and Stuart, and he made his first trip on April 15. (Idaho County Free Press, April 14, 1899, p. 1, c. 5) By that fall Stuart and Cage were proprietors of the line and ran their stages on Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays. A one-way fare cost \$2.00 and round trip was \$3.00. The new owners announced that on December 1 they would connect with the end of the Clearwater Short Line Railway at the crossing of the Clearwater River three miles below Kamiah. (Ibid., December 1, 1899, p. 5, c. 7) Joe Dysart entered the field in May 1900 when he started a line to Stuart. His stage left Grangeville on Tuesday and Friday mornings and returned on Wednesday and Saturday. (Ibid., May 4, 1900, p. 1, c. 3) The California, Idaho and Nevada Stage Company, proprietors of the Lewiston and Grangeville line, kept a close watch on the progress of the Clearwater Short Line, and in May 1900 the Free Press remarked: "In a short time the stage company will discontinue hauling passengers over the Craig's mountain route and will devote its energies to the line between Grangeville and Stuart. Until arrangements can be made with the postal department mails will continue to be brought over Craig's mountain in a two-horse rig." (May 11, 1900, p. 2, c. 2) Arrangements were soon negotiated and mail for the Prairie began arriving on the train at Stuart about June 25. At that time the California, Idaho and Nevada Stage Company pulled its equipment off the Lewiston-to-Grangeville route and began hauling mail and passengers on its stages between Stuart and Grangeville. (Ibid., June 22, 1900, p. 1, c. 1) In July W. E. Travis, superintendent of the line, urged the public to patronize his line instead of hiring private conveyances, as his company was losing money on this route. (Ibid., July 6, 1900, p. 4, c. 1) After the railway reached Stites in September 1900, Travis changed his line to the new railhead, but he

encountered some opposition from the postal department in doing so. "On Monday [February 11] the Idaho, Nevada & California Stage Co. was ordered by postal authorities to receive and deliver Camas Prairie mail at Stuart instead of Stites. This will delay mail to the Prairie by 24 hours. Prompt action is needed by citizens to reverse order and get mail delivered once again to Stites." (Ibid., February 14, 1901, p. 1, c. 5-6) Camas Prairie residents voiced their disapproval over this move by the postal authorities: "A new mail schedule went into effect June 1, in accordance with which, Stuart will be dropped from route no. 70,302 and the mail will be carried to Stites by train." (Ibid., June 13, 1901, p. 1, c. 2)

#### **Grangeville - Harpster**

In the spring of 1913 Sam Riggs purchased the Grangeville-Clearwater stage line from John Phillips. The line was considered one of the best-paying short hauls in the state. (Idaho County Free Press, March 27, 1913, p. 6, c. 4) The following year Phillips regained control of the business when he was awarded the mail contract. (Ibid., July 2, 1914, p. 1, c. 5) In November 1917 George Edwards took the place of Derril Price, the regular driver, and handled the reins on the Clearwater stage from Grangeville to Harpster. (Ibid., November 1, 1917, p. 8, c. 1)

#### **Cottonwood - Winona**

In January 1920 T. M. Atwood, of Winona, purchased the stage line between Cottonwood, Greencreek, and Winona from Albert Rogers. The route covered forty-four miles and Atwood made daily trips. His mail contract did not expire until 1922, and he planned to use the wagons for hauling the mail and passengers until the condition of the roads would permit the use of an auto truck. (Idaho County Free Press, January 8, 1920, p. 1, c. 6)

#### **Denver - Moscow**

In the summer of 1892 George Hills ran a weekly stage from Moscow to Denver and return. He charged eight dollars for a single fare and fourteen dollars for a round trip. His four-horse stage usually ran at full capacity. (Idaho County Free Press, July 15, 1892, p. 4, c. 1)