

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

MALAD GORGE AND LOWER SALMON FALLS

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A remarkable spring comes up in a pool where Malad Gorge begins, almost directly under bridges where Interstate 84 crosses that feature. Its volume exceeds that of Wood River which shoots over a high falls into that same pool, from which Malad River flows several miles into Snake River not far below Lower Salmon Falls. Power plants fed by diversion of lower Malad River and by Snake River at Lower Salmon Falls contribute to Idaho's hydroelectric resources. A state park at Malad Gorge interprets all of these interesting features.

Emigrant wagons joined stage and freight traffic in avoiding precipitous lava walls that made Malad Gorge a total obstacle to traffic past there. A freight and stage station at a Wood River ford about one-half mile above Malad Gorge goes back to 1864. It accommodated traffic that flourished before railroad service diverted commercial transportation from that vicinity shortly after 1882. Building foundations and wagon tracks cut into lava outcrops still can be seen there. Altogether Malad Gorge and nearby Hagerman Valley scenic and historic resources provide spectacular tourist attractions that large numbers of travelers never see as they speed by--unless they go to Malad Gorge State Park or follow U.S. 30 into Hagerman Valley.

(This information has not been edited.)

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