

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

BONNEVILLE POINT

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A spectacular view of Boise Valley inspired Indians, fur hunters, and emigrants who came westward after 1811 when Astorian adventurers found their way to that area. After a lot of hard desert travel, they came to an outstanding oasis that Captain B. L. E. Bonneville described with unlimited enthusiasm when he reached that viewpoint in 1832. Washington Irving gave his reaction international recognition by affirming that:

The country about the Boise (or Woody) River is extolled by Captain Bonneville as the most enchanting he had seen in the Far West, presenting the mingled grandeur and beauty of mountain and plain, of bright running streams and vast grassy meadows waving to the breeze.

Boise River or Wood River (French and English translations of a single term that had been used as a river name there for two decades before Bonneville arrived) provided a welcome relief for emigrants on their way to western Oregon, and Boise City that grew up below Bonneville point was destined to get a population larger than any other Oregon Trail community between its Missouri River origins and its Willamette Valley destination. Through his publicity of Boise Valley's attraction, Captain Bonneville joined in Francois Payette's successful efforts to ensure that a French form (Boise) prevail over its English equivalent (Wooded) for a river, valley, and finally city that emerged there. A Bureau of Land Management tourist center at Bonneville point interprets Oregon Trail history.

(This information has not been edited.)

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