

**IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY****REFERENCE SERIES****MIDVALE HILL: GOODALE'S ROUTE,  
BOISE TO BROWNLEE, IN 1862**

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North Idaho's gold rush excitement brought a large Oregon Trail emigrant party to open a wagon road from Weiser to Midvale and Brownlee in 1862. That route became a western extension of Goodale's Cutoff from Fort Hall to Oregon, adopted to avoid Indian hostilities in southern Idaho and to come as close as possible to Idaho's fabulous Salmon River mines at Florence. An experienced emigrant guide, Goodale had excellent qualifications to pick out a new Oregon Trail route designed to surmount overwhelming problems that threatened travelers on older emigrant wagon roads west of Fort Hall. Some of those who failed to come with him in 1862 got into a disastrous Indian war near Massacre Rocks, and all who came over older roads faced problems of finding grass for their horses and ox teams in areas that had been ruined by over grazing.

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In its 1862 extension west from Boise to Brownlee, Goodale's Cutoff went northwest to Payette Valley by way of Freezeout Hill—a remarkably steep descent toward later Emmett that became a wagon road from then on. Goodale then led his emigrant company down Payette Valley almost to Snake River, which gave access to Weiser River and to a wagon route close to that used by US 95 to Midvale Hill. To reach that destination, his wagons enlarged an old Indian trail. From Middle Valley, many of his emigrants wanted to take their wagons directly to Salmon River and Florence, but Goodale knew that such a project was impossible. But John Brownlee, who wanted to develop a wagon road to a Snake

River ferry that he planned to open as soon as some construction could be completed from Upper Weiser Valley (which wagons could reach from Middle Weiser Valley below Midvale Hill), offered some of Goodale's scouts an opportunity to complete Goodale's Cutoff to Powder River and a connection with their original Oregon Trail that they had left near Boise. Before they got done, they had to do some more road construction in Oregon to get out of Snake River's deep canyon to Lower Powder River. From there on they could work their way to some exciting new Powder River mines at Auburn. Both Brownlee and Goodale's emigrants finally profited from that deal, and late in 1864, Goodale took over Brownlee's Ferry when its owner decided to go into mining in Boise Basin. Goodale's western extension of his cutoff actually was completed just in time to accommodate a major gold rush that began late in 1862 from Oregon to Boise Basin, so it was used mostly by miners going that way. But those who joined Goodale in opening it could look back on an interesting and unusual experience that few Oregon Trail emigrants could match in their westward journey.

**(This information has not been edited.)**