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THE TOANO ROUTE

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After the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific were open for transcontinental railroad traffic, May 10, 1869, new stage and freight routes were established to connect southwestern Idaho with the Central Pacific. Four different stations on the railway competed for the Idaho trade. East to west they were Kelton in Utah and Toano, Elko, and Winnemucca in Nevada. Each of these communities was the terminus of a different road to Idaho.

Toano commenced to flourish late in 1870. A division point on the Central Pacific, Toano served Nevada mines as far south as Pioche before undertaking to gain the Idaho trade as well. When Payne's Ferry across Snake River at Thousand Springs began service at the beginning of October, the Toano route gained a good connection to the already established stage road north of Snake River, and freight began to move over the Toano Road in the fall of 1870. F. F. Marx, a Toano freighter who promoted the Toano Road to Idaho, reported that by September of 1871, he had shipped about 45,000 pounds of freight to Boise. At that point, the great Pioche fire disrupted the Idaho traffic from Toano. Rebuilding of Pioche created such heavy freighting demands that the Toano freighters were tied up until 1874 hauling supplies and materials to Pioche. Then F. F. Marx and John W. Moffett decided to start a fast freight line to Boise, with service in six to eight days at the same rate Kelton freighters charged for eighteen- to thirty-day delivery. By supplying a new copper camp on Salmon Falls Creek at Contact, Nevada, with agricultural supplies hauled back from the Boise region, they could freight in both directions. (Contact was about fifty miles northwest of

Toano.) Service, provided by a six-horse team and express wagon with 3,900 pounds on the initial trip, began from Toano April 1, 1874, and reached Boise on April 7. The road from Toano to its connection with the Kelton road north of Payne's Ferry was described as better than the old road over the route of the Oregon Trail (which extended from there on west to Boise). Having demonstrated the feasibility of the route, the new line provided tri-weekly service, with capacity for 40,000 pounds weekly. Thus by the summer of 1874, Toano had entered an effective challenge to Kelton for the Idaho trade. The Toano and Idaho fast freight line proceeded to build new stations along the Toano Road (particularly at Contact) and along the Oregon Trail route in southwestern Idaho during the summer of 1874.

By 1879, construction of the Utah Northern to southeastern Idaho made it possible for that railway to compete for freight in south-central and even in southwestern Idaho. Then by 1882, the Oregon Short Line had progressed far enough west across southern Idaho that further freighting from Kelton or Toano no longer was necessary. Yet some of the ruts of the Toano freight road north through Nevada to Payne's Ferry on Snake River still are visible in places, as are a few traces of the ghost town of Toano.

[Based on information compiled by Victor Goodwin.]