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SOUTH BOISE WAGON ROAD

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Constructed originally in 1864, the South Boise wagon road began as a toll operation. Daniel McLaughlin, Robert A. Sidebotham, and Julius Newberg were "constituted a body corporate under the name and style of the South Boise wagon road company" by legislative act of January 22, 1864. Their franchise required them "to bridge all the streams on said route [from Little Camas Prairie to the quartz mines at Rocky Bar] so that the same may be passable on or before the first of July" 1864 and "to keep the road in good repair after that date." Failure to complete the road within two years "so that there shall be a safe and easy passage for loaded wagons" was grounds for forfeiture of their franchise. Toll rates were rather high: a team and wagon had to pay \$4.00; extra teams, \$1.00 each; horses and riders, or pack animals, \$1.00; loose stock, 75¢; and sheep, 15¢. Julius Newberg, an experienced "old mountain trader" who had lived in Sacramento and had mined in Florence and Boise Basin, managed construction for the company. Although he hoped to get the road finished early in the summer of 1864, continued delays held him back. But by August 1, all the streams were bridged, including the South Boise, which was crossed by "a substantial structure" intended to be safe during high water. Aside from the bridges, most of the \$16,000 costs went into constructing of the grade up Lincoln Creek and down Red Warrior Creek to the mines: this last section required about \$1,000 a mile.

Once it was completed, the South Boise wagon road--"a good road, over which you can drive a buggy in good style"--was regarded as "of incalculable benefit for the development of the upper country." Such a road was essential to enable quartz miners to operate profitably in a district as remote as the South Boise mines. When freight wagons finally were able to get through to Rocky Bar, October 5, 1864, the entire community rejoiced.

A correspondent wrote October 6 to the Boise News in Idaho City:

Last night was a time long to be remembered by the citizens of this place. About sundown, the people were aroused by the reverberations of a salute fired from the anvils of our enterprising blacksmiths, Mess. Boles & Annibal. Upon inquiring the cause 'twas ascertained that

three heavily laden wagons were coming in over the new wagon road just completed by that enterprising individual, Mr. Julius Newberg. Long and loud huzzahs rent the air and made the welkin ring. All business was for the time suspended and everybody seemed loud in their praises of the energetic and thorough-going Newberg. In commemoration of the event, at the hour of ten o'clock, about one hundred of the sturdy pioneers and business men of Rocky Bar, assembled at the Alturas Restaurant to partake of a sumptuous supper prepared on a few hours' notice by mine host Mr. Francis deSilvia, alias 'Portugese Frank.' For some time the crowd seemed silent, so absorbed were they in the bounteous repast spread before them. Mr. S. B. Dilley, presided with his usual dignity, and introduced Mr. Newberg, which was followed by three cheers and a tiger. Champagne and wine flowed freely, and "all went merry as a marriage bell." Speeches were made by Messrs. O'Connor, Margery, Wm. Law, Jr., N. B. Dover, Prof. Gaffney, Wm. H. Howard, Merritt Relly, W. Waddingham, Mr. Prager, Mr. Hebner, and many others after which the crowd dispersed, each wending his way to his respectable (?) place of abode as best he could.

There need now be no fears about quartz mills coming into this camp. A good wagon road is completed to Rocky Bar, confidence in the future prosperity of Alturas county restored, business again resuming its usual activity, and everything moving smoothly.

Problems connected with the use of the new road arose almost immediately. Freighters had to rush supplies into the camp in the fall of 1864, since they knew that the emigrant road (Goodale's Cutoff: see Reference Series 51) with which the new road connected at Little Camas Prairie, could not be used in the spring. In contrast, the toll part of the route was regarded as the "best mountain road in Idaho," and Newberg kept a crew at work maintaining and improving the road during the following summer. At that time, John Mullan's Boise-Rocky Bar stage line commenced operating on a triweekly-weekly schedule; the initial coach which reached Rocky Bar July 8, 1865, carried United States mail and Wells Fargo express. Up until then, a passenger train (of saddle horses) had provided the only public service to Rocky Bar. But by the spring of 1866, vehicles could get only as far as the toll gate at the crossing of the South Fork, where the river had to be forded. Apparently the well-designed bridge at that point had been swept away. The "naturally good" road below the bridge, though, still was "firm and hard, but [contained] some of the most perpendicular mountains to go up and down that ever a vehicle was taken over. But the scenery was charming," according to Rasey Biven.

In spite of high toll rates, the road soon fell into disrepair. A traveler complained in the spring of 1869 that toll companies ought to be required to do a better job of maintaining their roads: "I made my return trip to camp [Alturas City, right next to Atlanta] in four days, without accident or much inconvenience except that I had to ford the South Boise River with gum boots. More than four years since the legislature granted the South Boise Wagon Company a charter to build a road up the South Boise River, and as yet this road is impassable except for some three or four months of the year, and then only by fording and refording a dangerous river; not only this, but this company has been allowed to collect a heavy toll for persons passing over their right of way, not a road." But by the spring of 1870, E. J. Nichols took over the road and began to restore it to its original fine condition. Since rail service never reached Rocky Bar or any of the places on the road, the old toll route continued to be the thoroughfare to the South Boise mines--and to the Atlanta mines as well--during the years that those camps were active in the nineteenth century. The South Boise wagon road thus lived up to its early expectation of enabling the Rocky Bar mines to be developed.