

Idaho History – Tale of the Burnt Wagon

By Roxanna Allen – Star News September 1997

A company of eight miners heard tales of the lusty rich gold mines at Florence, Idaho – tales that struck their fancy and would make a man crave the riches that could be taken from the earth's bounty. *“Miners on the way to Warren or Florence not later than 1864”*

Instead of taking the established route up the Payette River Trail, the party started up the Wieser River with oxen pulling wagons laden with supplies that they felt would hold them through their initial days at the mines.

Attempting to find the main trail, into Long Valley they selected a route up the Little Wieser River, with no results. Steps were taken to clear a trail for the oxen and wagons to travel up the rough steep mountain western slopes through the timber.

Reaching the top of the divide, the men could view the magnificent Long Valley below them. Attempts to find a route down the steeper east side of the mountain proved futile. This side of the mountain could not compare with the one they had just blazed a trail up. Descent with the oxen and wagons looked impossible.

The miners were not about to turn around and they had no desire to stay where they were, so as necessity is the mother of invention, the wagons were broken up and crude pack saddles were constructed for the oxen out of some of the lumber.

Packing what they could on the oxen, the group then proceeded down the mountain into Long Valley and continued on its way to the gold mines at Florence.

Behind them they left the wagon parts in a small basin. Years later the remaining wagon parts were burnt by Indian Valley Settlers in an attempt to find an easier way to salvage the iron parts from the wagons.

So the miners not only left their wagon parts on West Mountain, but also an historic site that became know as the Burnt Wagon Basin.

Idaho History – The Packer Supporting the Gold Camps

The Packer John Trail led from Lewiston to Payette Lake, then to the lower end of Round Valley and on to the Boise-Basin. Gold Fork and Clear Creek were regular camps enroute. Warrens Trail was from New Meadows Valley past Payette Lake over Search Gibbons Trail, from near where Knox now stands to the upper end of Scott Valley, then to the edge of Long Valley and the lower end of Round Valley, thence to Smith's Ferry, High Valley to Squaw Creek and into Fort Boise