

## **Changing Maps of Idaho's Lost Rivers Region**

The maps of any region change through time, both because the maps become more accurate and because the region changes. This, at least to some minds, makes looking at the sequence of maps through time interesting. One might expect accuracy of maps of one area to increase through time, but in some cases information is lost and maps change to being less accurate. In this respect, maps of Idaho's Lost Rivers region are doubly interesting. Firstly, those maps portray an innately interesting region where rivers go to die. Secondly, the various maps' accuracy waxes and wanes and waxes again across the decades, rather than steadily increasing. This essay surveys some of those maps, progressing through time from earlier to later.

This document is divided into three parts reflecting the early lack of knowledge and later greater knowledge of the region. Part I looks at maps of the entire Pacific Northwest from the late 1700s and early 1800s, when knowledge of the region was sparse. Part II looks at maps of south-central Idaho during the 1800s, when knowledge waxed and waned and waxed again. Part III looks at sets of maps from the 1900s to examine specific changes as details changed both on the ground and on the maps, both for the better and for the worse.

In many cases, maps have been cropped, latitude and longitude markers have been rescued from the cropped areas, and map borders have been tidied. Even with those modifications, labels are commonly small, but many viewing programs, such as Adobe Acrobat products, will allow the reader to enlarge the view and see more detail than is apparent from views of entire pages or that will be visible from prints onto 8.5 x 11" paper. The sources of the maps are given on the last page of this document.

### **Part I – Early maps of the Pacific Northwest**

The map on the next page was made by Italian mapmaker Paolo Forlani in the 1560s. It was thus made about seventy years after Christopher Columbus stumbled onto the Americas, and it was the first map specifically showing just North America. As one goes clockwise around North America on the map, things start well. One goes from Labrador ("Terra Dellabrador") in the northeast to Canada's maritime provinces (Acadia, here as "L'Arcadia") to Canada in general ("La Nova Franza" and "Canada Pro") to Bermuda seaward of Cape Hatteras to Florida to the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan and Mexico to the Sea of Cortez and Baja California and finally to the Sierra Nevadas. Inland is Quivira, the land of the Seven Cities of Gold sought by Coronado in Texas and Kansas in the 1540s. The Appalachians ("Aplachen") are much farther to the west than we would expect but named nonetheless.

On the other hand, the Northwest is hopeless, and the mapmaker admitted as much, labeling it "Terra In Cognita" or "Unknown land". To the west, across the narrow Strait of Anian ("Streto de Anian") is China, an expected neighbor. This pattern of growing knowledge about the rest of North America but ignorance of the Northwest would persist for two, or arguably three, centuries. Clever mapmakers learned to put their names plates in the northwest corners of their maps of North America.



The French map below shows North America according to at least one understanding of the mid-1700s. For anyone from Idaho, the most striking feature is that most of Idaho (and Wyoming and Nebraska) was thought to be flooded by the “Mer de l’Ouest” or “Western Sea”. Out of that sea, to the north, went a channel connecting with Hudson’s Bay. Both bodies of water were part of the European fantasy of a Northwest Passage through North America to the Pacific and China. Here the fantasy is maximally developed, in what Derek Hayes, the author of the book from which the illustration is taken, called a “superbly bizarre map”. The strength of that fantasy becomes even more apparent when one appreciates that this map was made in 1780, but its notion of geography had been disproven decades earlier.





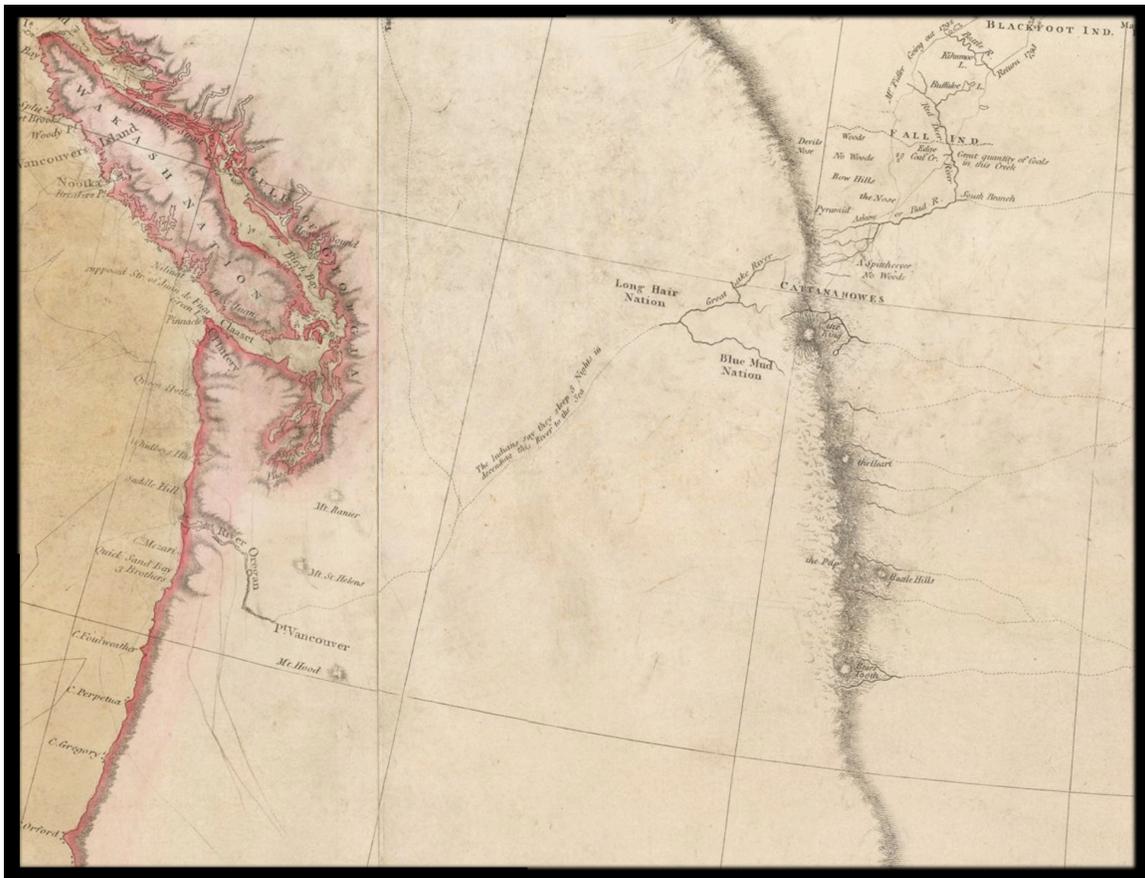
The Spanish map below dates from the **1790s** and shows many advances over the previous two in this series. On the positive side, it shows many major rivers systems east of the Continental Divide. They include the Mississippi, the Missouri, and rivers flowing to the Missouri, including the Platte, up which Spanish and French explorers had passed. To the north are Hudson's Bay and rivers and lakes to the west, such as Lake Winnipeg, reflecting the knowledge gained by the Hudson's Bay Company there.

Among its advances on the negative side, it no longer has any fantasies about a Northwest Passage, and in fact all speculation about rivers flowing to the Pacific is omitted. The mapmaker's willingness to admit ignorance and leave regions blank is in fact a strength, because the creative insertions common to earlier maps only deceived, rather than informed, the viewer.



The map below was made in **1802** by British famous cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith for the Hudson's Bay Company. It differs from previous maps in showing the coast in great detail, thanks to the efforts of the British Navy. It also differs from previous maps in giving some sense of mountains as well as rivers. Otherwise, the inland region is left blank for the last time.

The map is of interest to the course of history because it shows the understanding of the region that Britain and the United States had just before the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804 to 1806. In fact, this is reportedly the only map taken by Lewis and Clark on their expedition. The map shows why Lewis and Clark were frustrated as they came west: maps like these suggested that there was just one mountain range to cross from the headwaters of the Missouri to those of the Columbia. Furthermore, the note along the Columbia says that “the Indians say they sleep 8 nights in descending this River to the Sea”, implying a relatively easy journey unlike what Lewis and Clark’s party actually encountered. The Northwest Passage had long since been disproven, but the highway-like “river of the west” was a persistent if flawed idea.



The decade from 1804 to 1814 saw an explosion of geographic knowledge about the Pacific Northwest, thanks to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the explorations of the Columbia River by David Thompson, and the trip down the Snake River by the Astor Overland Expedition led by Wilson Price Hunt. The explosion can be seen by comparing the **1814** map below with the one on the previous page. Where that map was largely blank, this one shows the Cascade and the Rocky Mountains and the main Columbia, Clark's Fork, and Lewis (Snake) Rivers. The geometry is not perfect and many names have changed, but the basic layout of the landscape was shown for the first time.



The map above is sufficiently good that it closes Part I of this document. Part II uses the same map to begin its examination of growing (and sometimes) dwindling knowledge of Idaho's Lost Rivers region.

## Part II – Maps of Idaho’s Lost Rivers region in the 1800s

Part II of this document looks at maps of the Lost Rivers region as knowledge of the region grew into the 1830s, declined until the 1870s, and then grew back by the end of the century. For people familiar with the region, it will be easy to see how well the maps match the landscape. For people not familiar with the region, the map on the next page provides something against which to compare. Key things to keep an eye on include . . .

Two things to the west:

- 1) Do two rivers (the modern Big Wood River and Little Wood River) come together and flow as one (the modern Malad) to the Snake?
- 2) Do those rivers stay well west of the Big Butte, as they should?

Three things near the centers of the maps:

- 3) Are there *three* lost rivers (today’s Big Lost and Little Lost Rivers, and Birch Creek)?
- 4) Do those rivers flow from northwest to southeast?
- 5) Are they truly “lost”: do they sink into the plain rather than flowing to the Snake?

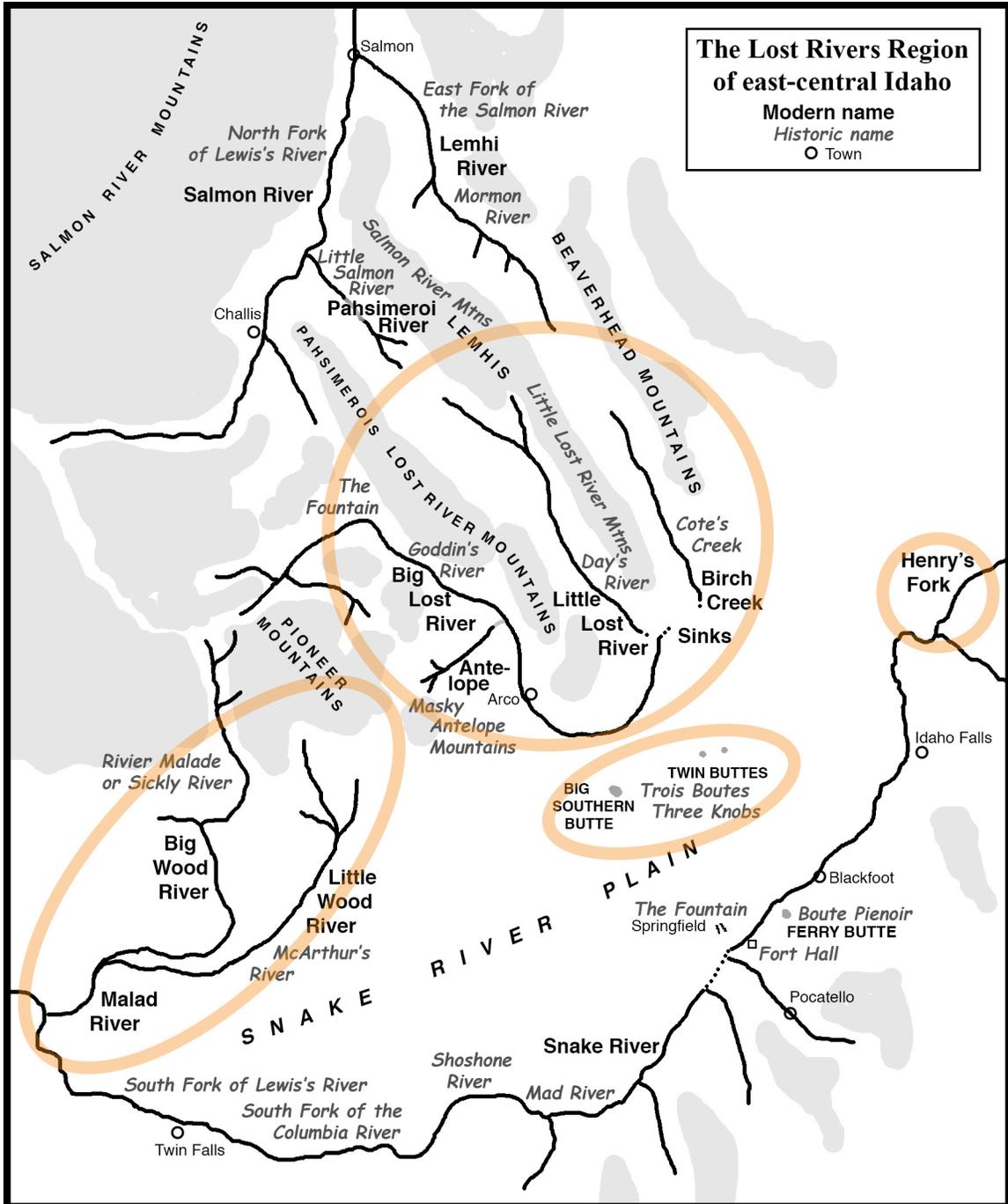
Three things to the east:

- 6) Are there three buttes, the modern Big Southern Butte and Twin Buttes?
- 7) Are the three buttes in a line?
- 8) Does that line run WSW–ENE?

And one thing far to the east:

- 9) Is the confluence of the Henry’s Fork with the Snake north or south of the buttes? If it’s south of the buttes, many problems arise.

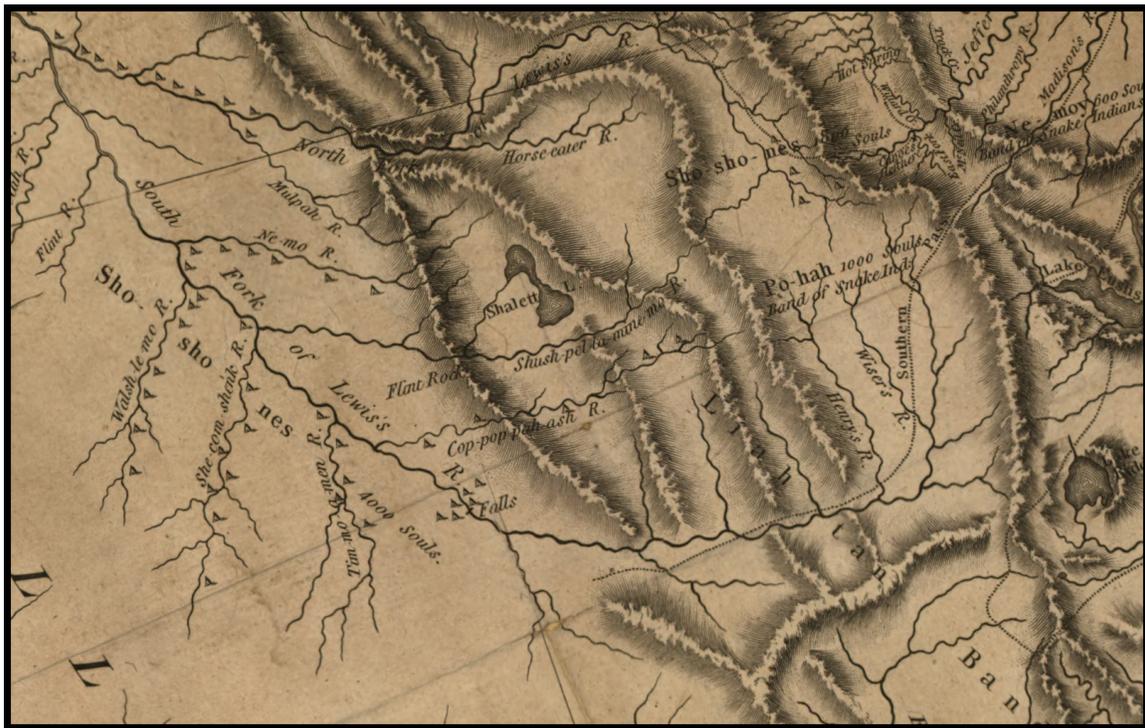
A discerning reader will note that we aren’t even worrying about mountains, which will be somewhere between non-existent and widely wrong on most these maps from the 1800s.



A map highlighting the four areas “to keep an eye on” listed on the previous page: the configuration of the two Wood Rivers, the presence of three lost rivers (rivers or creeks that sink), the number and organization of the buttes, and the position of the Henry’s Fork relative to the buttes.

The map below is a small bit of the **1814** map with which Part I ended. It shows the Snake River, labeled as South Fork of Lewis's River (Lewis's River was the Snake, its north fork was the modern Salmon, and its south fork was the Snake upstream from its confluence with Salmon). In the eastern quarter of this map, the Henry's Fork (in the shadow of a mountain range) joins the Snake. In the western third, Shallet Lake is modern Lake Payette, draining into a fork of the modern Payette River and thus to the Snake. South of the Payette is the modern Boise River.

So far, so good. In the mid-right portion of the map and thus in the Lost Rivers region, things aren't so good. The path of the Snake River, known from the passage of the Astor Overland Expedition under Wilson Price Hunt in 1811, is reasonable. However, there is no Snake River plain, and mountains from the north (effectively stand-ins for the Lost Rivers and Lemhis) and from the south reach to the river itself. Perhaps even more distressingly, rivers between the northern mountain ranges (stand-ins for the Big Lost and Little Lost) drain into the Snake. With no Snake Plain, there was no room for the three buttes, and conversely to the east the Tetons were missing in favor of a plain.



Clearly work remained to be done. Nonetheless, most of these problems in the 1814 map, most notably the flow of rivers from the north to the Snake, were repeated in an 1830 map of the Oregon Territory by H.J. Kelley – years after fur trappers had complained that the long trip across the dry and rugged Snake Plain was the “greatest impediment” to their travels and had come to appreciate the Buttes as useful landmarks. The repeated appearance of this map’s phantom rivers, like the repeated appearance of the Western Sea after it was disproven in the 1700s, illustrate that once a misconception was published, it could persist for decades in other maps by later cartographers.

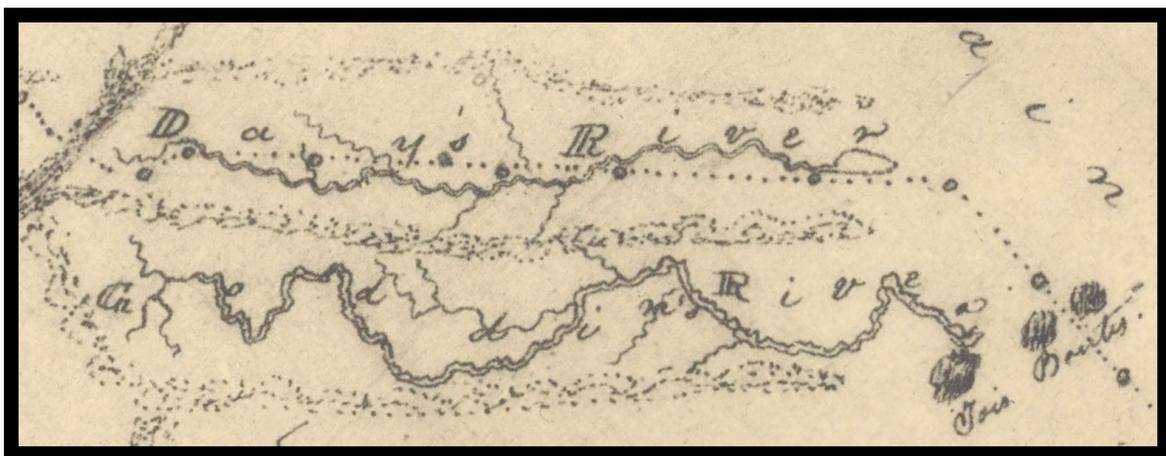
The map on the next page is the first to show the lost rivers, the three buttes, and the Snake plain as they are. The upper panel shows an enlarged portion of the lower panel, which is in turn only a part of the entire map. A bit of the upper panel is also shown at the bottom of this page, further enlarged and rotated for easy reading.

The map was drawn by William Kittson, a “clerk” (more a field lieutenant) of the Hudson’s Bay Company to replace a map by Archibald MacDonald, another HBC clerk. MacDonald was something of a scholar within the HBC; Kittson had been through the Lost Rivers country in 1819-1820 with Donald McKenzie and in **1824-1825** with an HBC trapping brigade led by Peter Skene Ogden.

The map shows the three buttes (the “Trois Boutes”). Flowing down (and excessively close to) the Big Butte is the Big Lost River (“Goddin’s River), and parallel to it is the Little Lost River (“Day’s River). Both were named in 1819-1820 when Donald’s McKenzie’s HBC brigade seemingly became the first people of European descent to enter the Lost River’s region. Thyery Goddin was a Native American trapper in the party and John Day was a member who died in February 1820 in the valley of the river named after him here (two rivers in Oregon also have his name). Farther (excessively far) to the east is Birch Creek (“Burch Forks”).

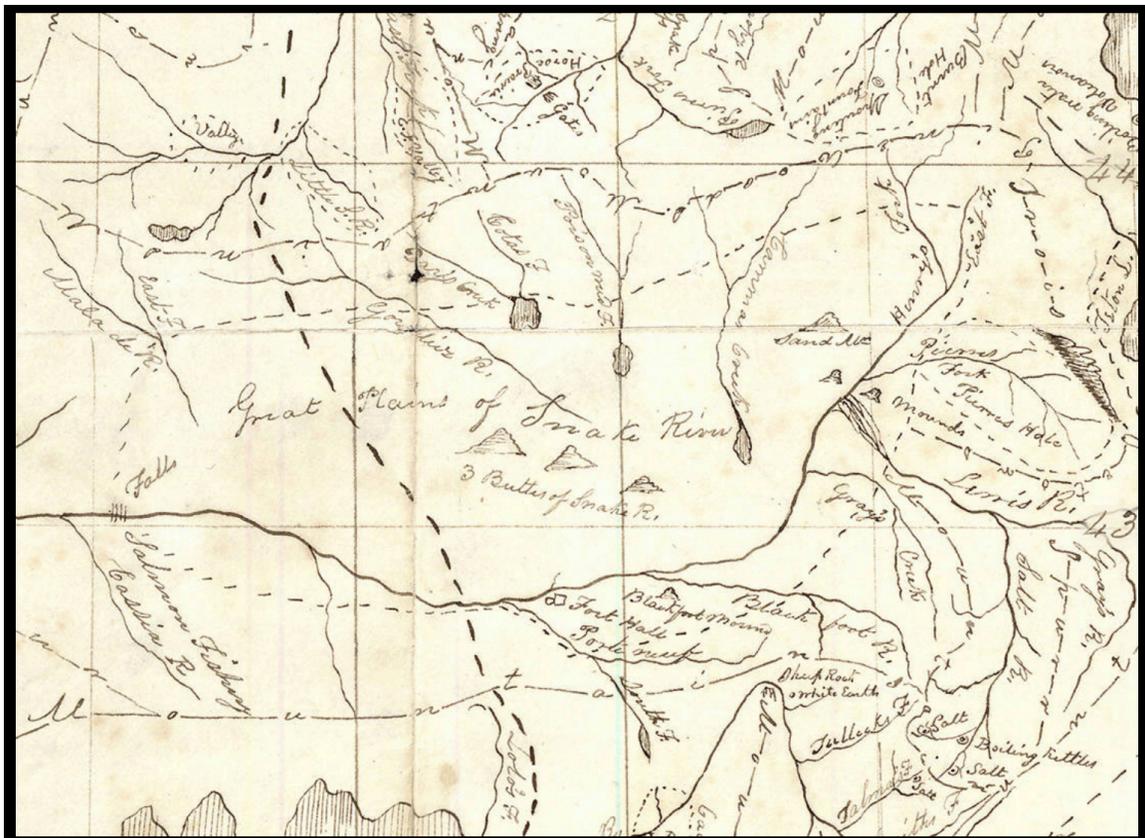
In the lower panel, south beyond the plain is the Snake River, and to the east the Henry’s Fork joins the Snake’s main course. In the southwest, the Wood/Malad River flows to the Snake. To trappers, the entire river was the “Malade River” or “Sickly River” because eating beaver meat from it repeatedly made them seriously ill. To the northwest are the headwaters of the Salmon River.

This map went into the archives of the HBC and wasn’t seen again by the public until 1950. However, the knowledge of the region persisted with a succession of HBC trappers and with the American trappers who (literally) followed them. The name “Day’s” was in use until the 1830s if not 1840s, and it appears – but wrongly – on an 1884 American map. “Goddin’s” can be seen on an American map made in 1881. After that, those names were gone.



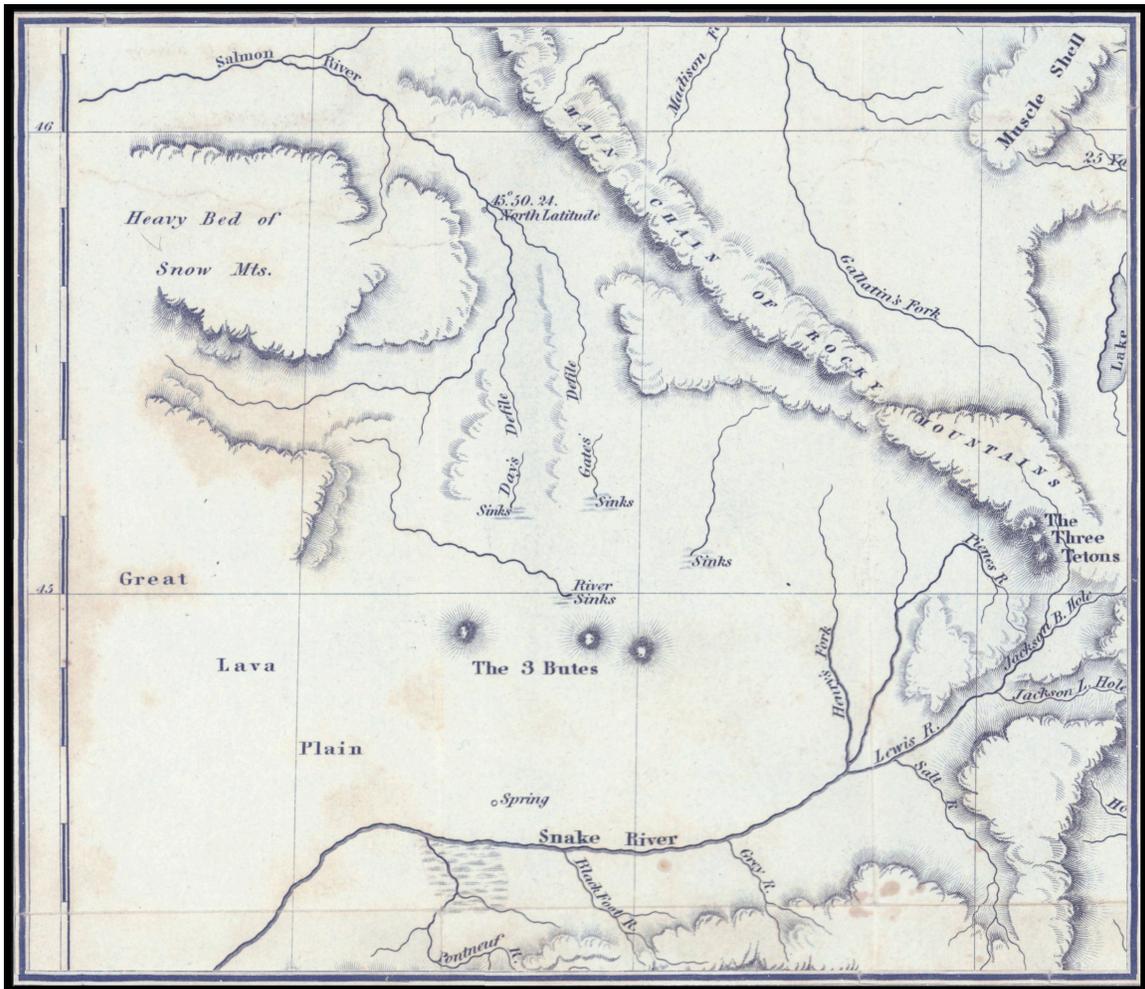


The map below is that of American trapper Warren Angus Ferris, who came through the Lost Rivers region in **1831** and more broadly was active in modern Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah from 1830 to 1835. His map has three buttes, as well as the St. Anthony sand dunes to the east and the Tetons as a ridge at the eastern margin of this snippet of his larger map. The Big Lost River (the “Gordiez”, Ferris’s corruption of “Goddin’s”) flows toward the buttes. To its north are the Little Lost (“Day’s Creek”) and Birch Creek (“Cotas Fork”, Ferris’s corruption of “Cote’s”, the American name remembering a trapper who died there on today’s Birch Creek). They flow into a lake, seemingly conflating the sink of the Big Lost into a lake akin to Mud Lake, but without the flow of the Big Lost. Farther north, the Pahsimeroi (the “Little S.R.” for “Little Salmon River”) flows to the Salmon, which is shown more accurately than on any previous map. To the west, Ferris’s Wood River (the “Malade”) is shown as a lost river, whereas it actually flows to the Snake. At the southern margin of this snippet in the northern edge of an east-west Great Salt Lake, which Ferris labeled “Big Lake or Salt Lake”.



Ferris made this map and wrote an account of his travels as *Life in the Rocky Mountains 1830–1835*. However, in his lifetime, his account was only published as a series of articles in the *Western Literary Messenger* from 1842 to 1844, and presumably without the map. *Life in the Rocky Mountains 1830–1835* was finally published as a book long after his death, in 1940 and 1983, only bringing his map to public attention more than a century after it was made.

The map below accompanied Washington Irving's 1837 book *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*. Benjamin Bonneville had led a party through the Lost River region in **1832-1833**, ostensibly as fur trapper but also scouting the landscape for the U.S. Army. This map is like that of the other trappers in showing at least three lost rivers: the Big Lost is obvious but not labeled, the Little Lost (in "Day's Defile", where a "defile" is a valley) and Birch Creek (in "Gates' Defile", where "Gates" is a corruption of "Cote's"). To the north, the Salmon is shown in good order. To the south the Snake is shown as on the other two trappers' maps: with the Portneuf and Blackfoot entering farther south or west than is correct. Like the other two maps, it shows three buttes in a line, but a line trending south of east, rather than north of east. The agreement of both the correct and errant aspects is remarkable, given that none of the three explorers is likely to have seen the others' maps.





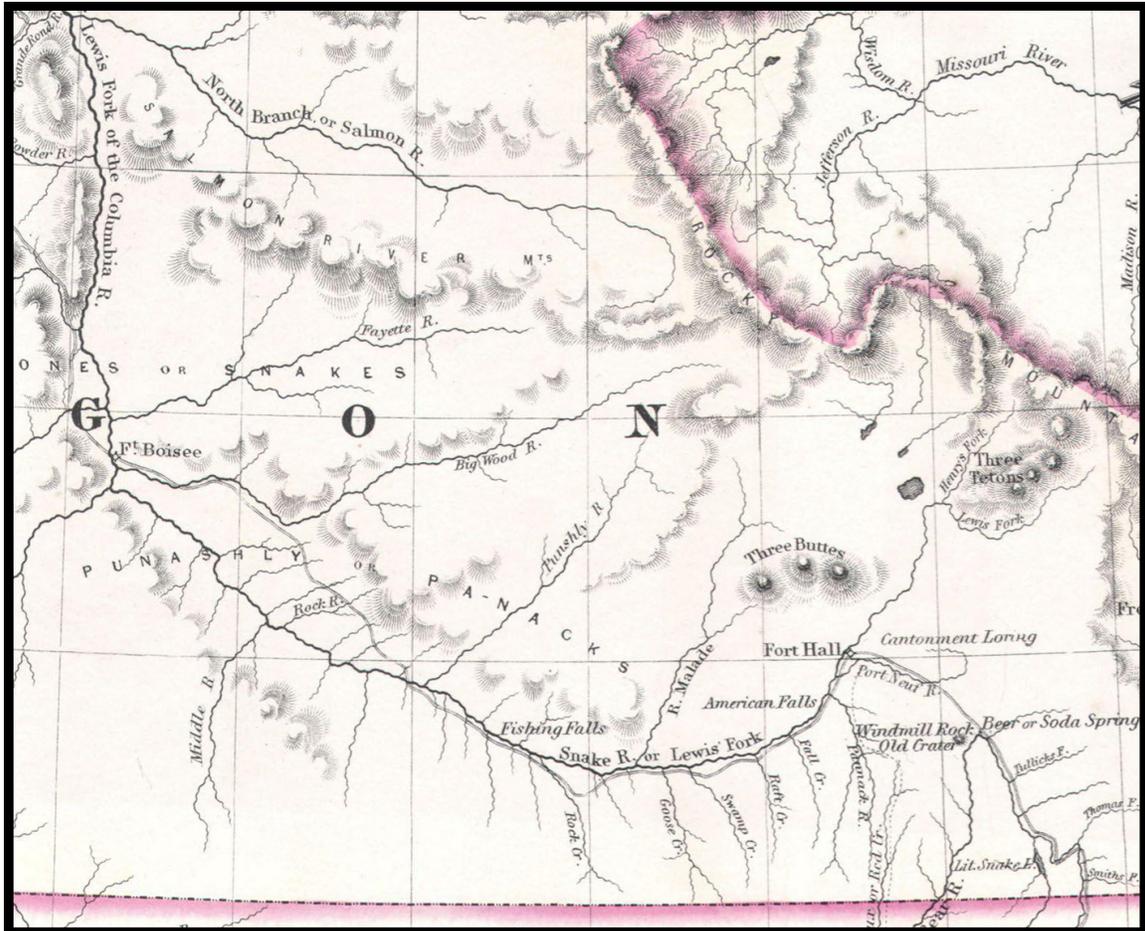
The map below was made in **1845** by James Wyld, “Geographer to the Queen” and a fellow of Britain’s Royal Geographical Society since 1839. This map’s “3 Paps or Tetons” and “Oregon Mountains” suggest that Wyld had seen fellow Briton Aaron Arrowsmith’s 1837 map. However, Wyld’s map took a turn for the worse by putting the three buttes on a mountainous ridge (perhaps a miss-reading of the shading on Arrowsmith’s map). The map inexplicably shows rivers flowing south from each of the western two buttes and joining before flowing into the Snake (comparison with the next map in this document suggests possible confusion with the Wood River). This map has no lost rivers, perhaps reflecting a Briton’s inability to conceive of a land so dry that rivers would simply disappear into the ground.



This map is the last British map in this document, at least in part because the Oregon Treaty of 1846 diminished British interest in land south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Despite the problems noted above, in a decline from Kittson’s map to Arrowsmith’s to this one, within a few years American maps would appear with no buttes at all and/or with no candidates for south-flowing rivers, lost or not.

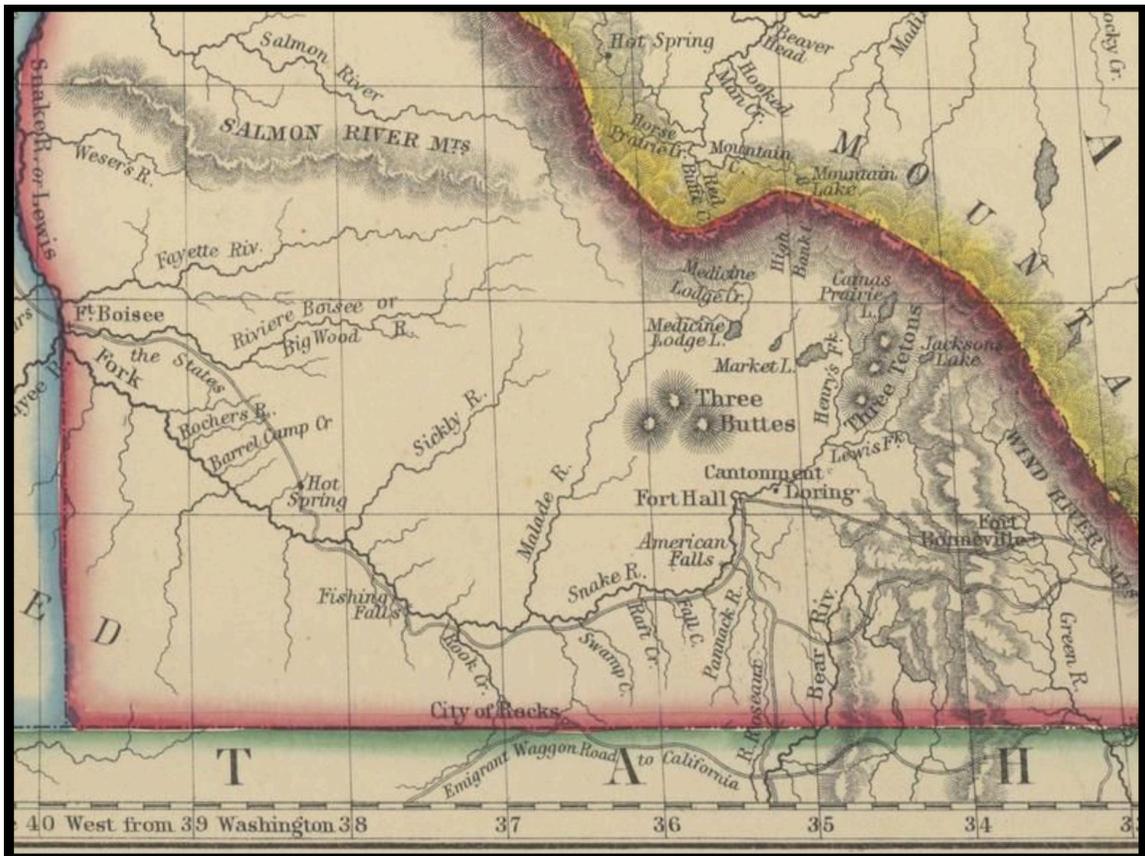
The map below was made by American cartographer Joseph Hutchins Colton in **1853**. Its trend of the Snake River near Fort Hall and American Falls is an improvement on all previous maps: the confluence of the Henry's Fork with the Snake is finally north of the buttes. An addition appropriate to an American map of the times is the Oregon Trail, and in fact it is the first non-natural feature shown crossing the landscape on these maps.

On the other hand, the map's Wood River (the "R. Malade") has tributaries surrounding the Big Butte, and the three buttes for the first time are shown not in a line (they in reality very nearly define a straight line). There are no lost rivers. To the east, the line of the Tetons differs from previous more accurate depictions.



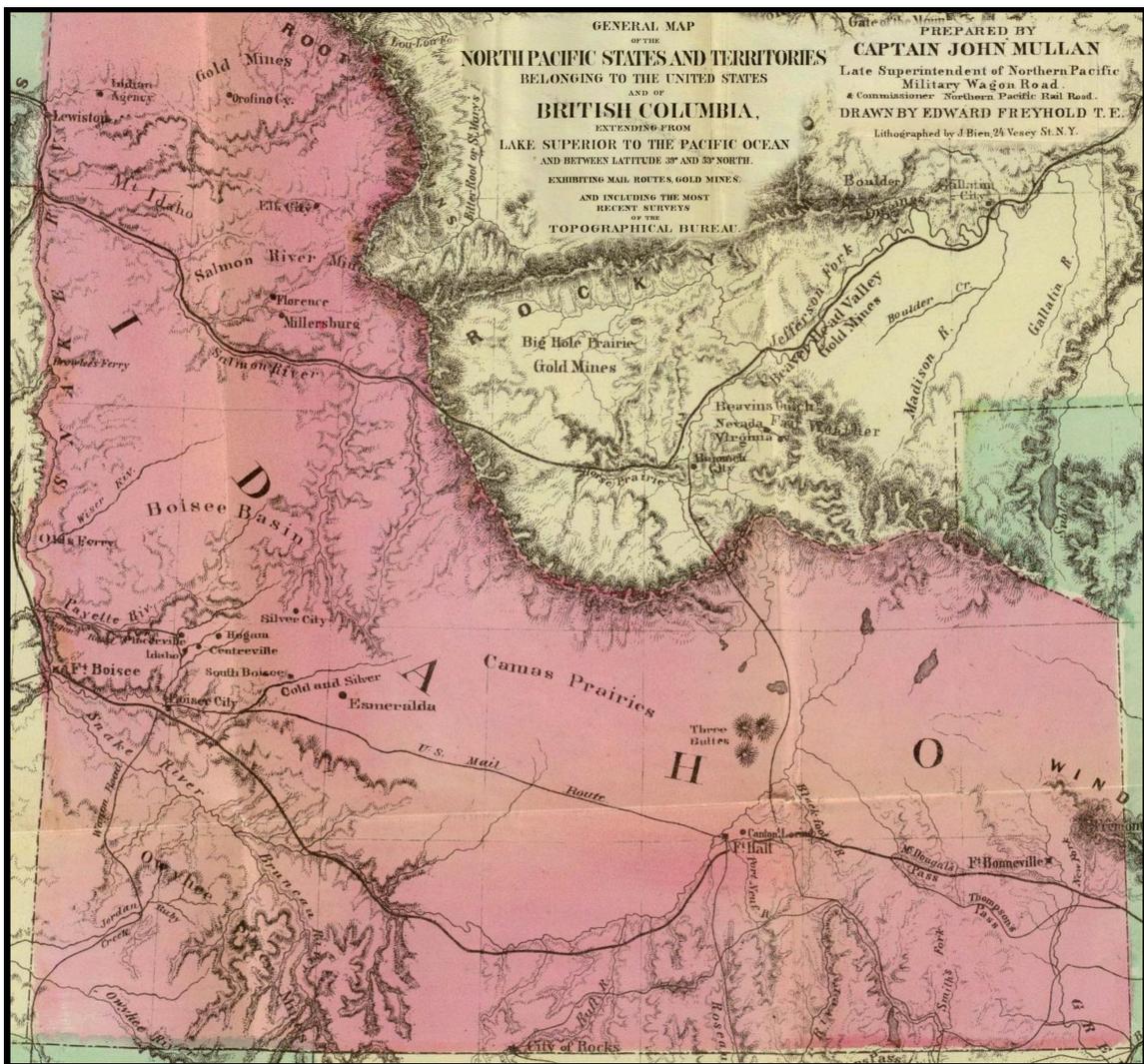
The upshot of the previous paragraph is that knowledge of the Lost Rivers region had diminished from that of previous decades. That situation was not short-lived: this map was almost exactly replicated by publisher Alvin Jewett Johnson in his "Johnson's Washington and Oregon" published by Johnson and Ward in 1862.

The map below is part of a “Map of Oregon, Washington, and Part of British Columbia” made in **1860** by S. Augustus Mitchell, an American publisher of maps and books on geography. At first glance, Mitchell’s map looks much like the one on the previous page, both with regard to its high artistic quality and with regard to its problems: the tributaries of the Wood River (the “R. Malade”) surrounding the Big Butte and the absence of lost rivers. However, closer examination reveals at least two more problems, both related to the three buttes. The buttes in reality lie nearly on a line, and on the previous map they did not, but here they are so far from a linear configuration that they nearly lie at the corners of an equilateral triangle. One can then note that the three buttes and the Tetons have crept closer together, so that the distance between the two groups is hardly more than the distance from one end to the other of one of the two clusters. In addition to the problems related to the buttes, the map has both a Sickly River and a Malade River, which ought to be one thing: the river along which trappers had gone sick (or had maladies) when they ate the meat of beavers there.



The map below was made in **1863** by John Mullan, the West Point grad who discovered Mullan Pass in western Montana and directed the building of a road there, and who went on to be a land speculator throughout the Northwest. The map thus dates from year of the creation of the Territory of Idaho from part of the previous Territory of Washington, which had been created from the Oregon Territory in 1853. Thus “Idaho” appears for the first time on one of these maps. The old Oregon Territory is relevant because it had extended eastward from the Pacific Ocean to the Continental Divide, where it bounded the land of the Louisiana Purchase – and so Idaho is shown here extending the Continental Divide.

That’s the good news. The map sets a record for geographical incorrectitude by putting all three of the three buttes east of Fort Hall (all three buttes are in reality west of Fort Hall, but some maps get one of them east of Fort Hall). It may set a nineteenth-century record for absence of information, leaving the entire Lost Rivers region blank and failing to report the Tetons. It is also a deadly map, in that no one would have crossed the Snake Plain using the track labeled “U.S. Mail Route”: either they would have used the route of Shoshones, trappers, and wagon trains from Fort Hall to the Big Butte to the Big Lost and westward or the route of the (original) Oregon Trail along the Snake. Those two routes offered water along the way.

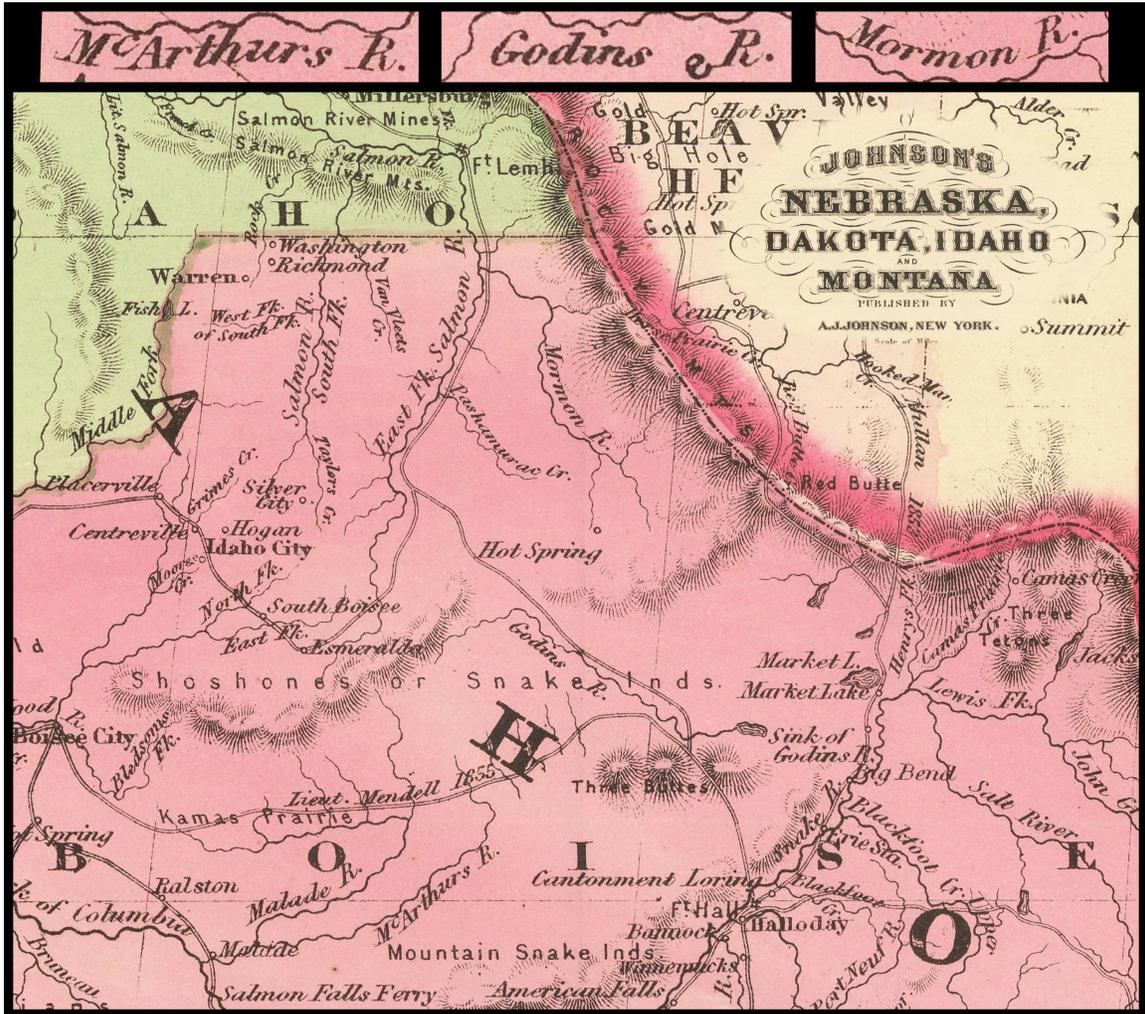


The map below was published in **1866**, three years after creation of the Territory of Idaho. As with the 1863 map on the previous page, this map shows the eastern boundary of Idaho farther east than it is today, and partisans of Idaho may appreciate seeing the Tetons as part of their dominion. Another vestige of early territorial times is that all of southern Idaho, including the Lost Rivers country, was in Boise County.

One advance of this map is that, for the first time since 1837, a lost river is shown. It is the modern Big Lost River, labeled “Godin’s River” as it was called by fur trappers of the 1820s and 1830s. It also shows the three buttes in fairly good order.

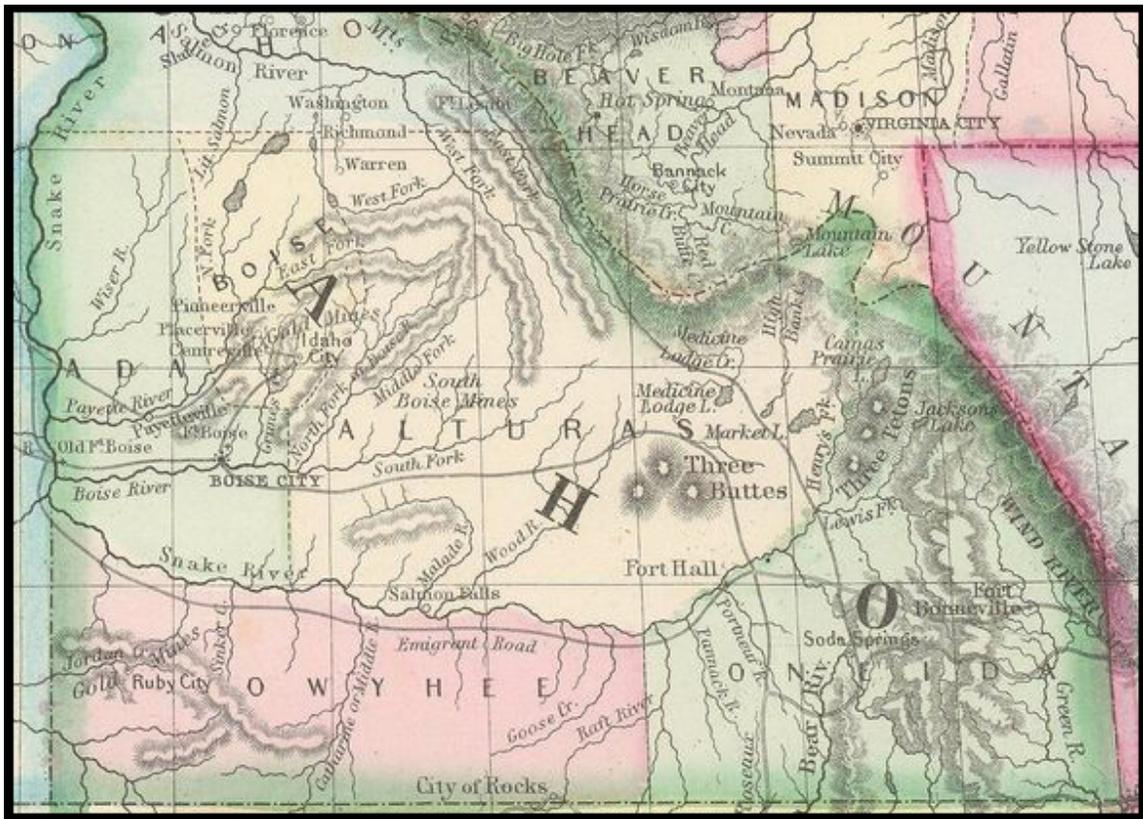
Two interesting names for rivers appear. One is “McArthur’s River” for the Little Wood River, a name seen on an 1859 military map and that would be repeated on an 1873 map. (Douglas MacArthur’s father was an Army officer, but he was born in 1845, too late to explain this name). The other is “Mormon River” for the Lemhi River, seemingly in remembrance of the Mormon outpost at Fort Lemhi from 1853 to 1858, and a name not encountered again.

The “Lieut. Mendell” passing through the buttes and the Camas Prairie in 1855 was Lt. George Henry Mendell, west Point grad and topographical engineer in charge of construction of military roads in Oregon and the Washington Territory in 1856–1858. His route was that of the Shoshone, of fur trappers, and later of Goodale’s Cutoff.



Like the map two pages back, the map below was made by S. Augustus Mitchell. However, this one was made ten years later, in **1870**. One development relative to the map on the previous page is that the Idaho Territory's Boise County had been divided, with the Lost Rivers country in a new Alturas County. Boise County had been huge, but Wikipedia points out the new and smaller Alturas County was nonetheless "larger than the states of Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware combined". Goodale's Cutoff also makes its first appearance, shown hooking around all three buttes (it in fact passed just east of the Big Butte).

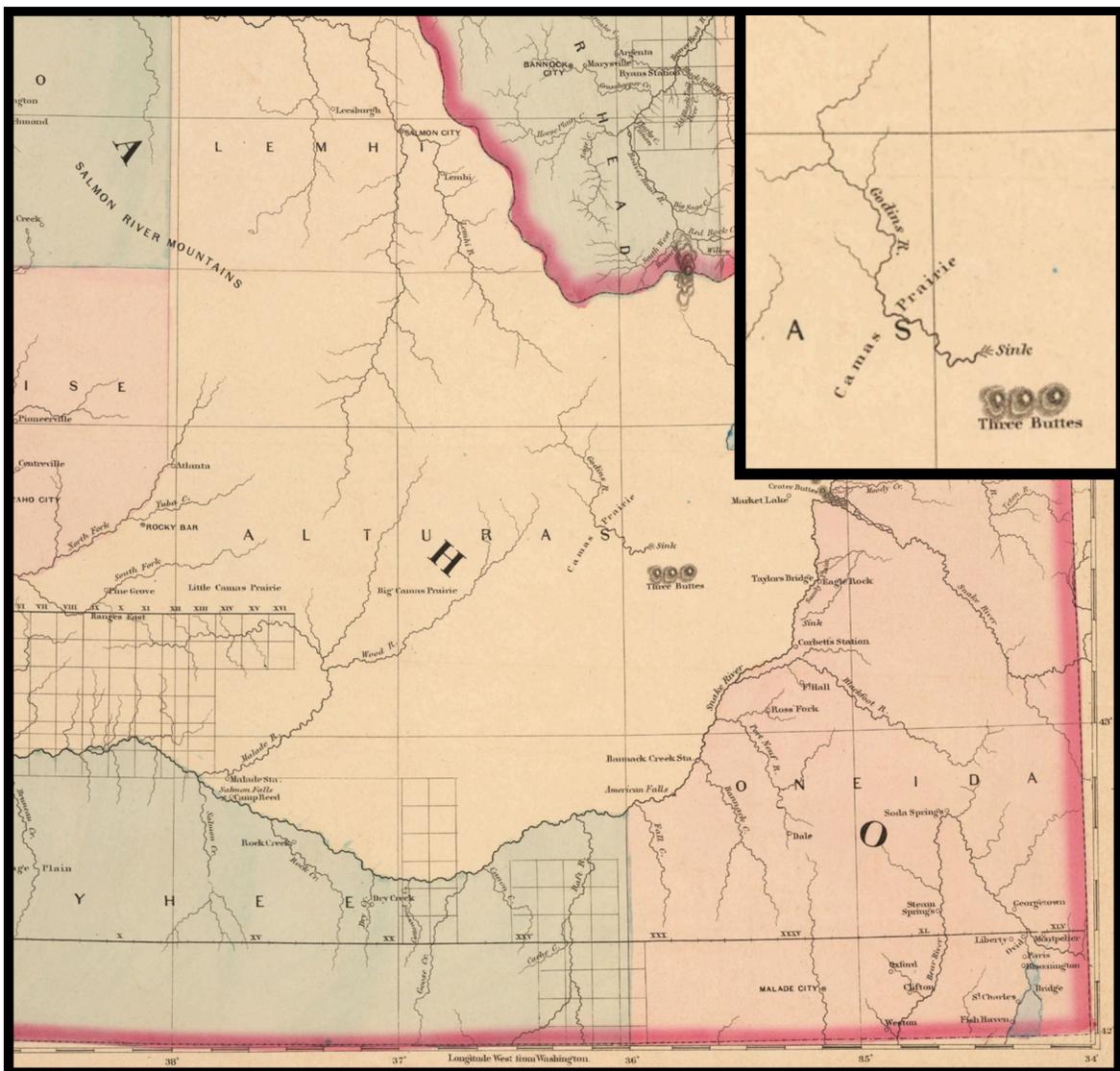
The geography of the natural landscape is perhaps better than that of Mitchell's 1860 map, but not greatly. The map now has a Wood River and a Malade River, both of which flow by separate paths to the Snake. That's a peculiar transition from the geography of the trappers, who simply called the modern Wood the Malade, toward modern geography in which the Big and Little Wood Rivers join to make the Malade that as one entity takes their water to the Snake. The headwaters of the Wood (née Malade) no longer come quite so close the buttes, but the buttes still make an equilateral triangle rather than a line.



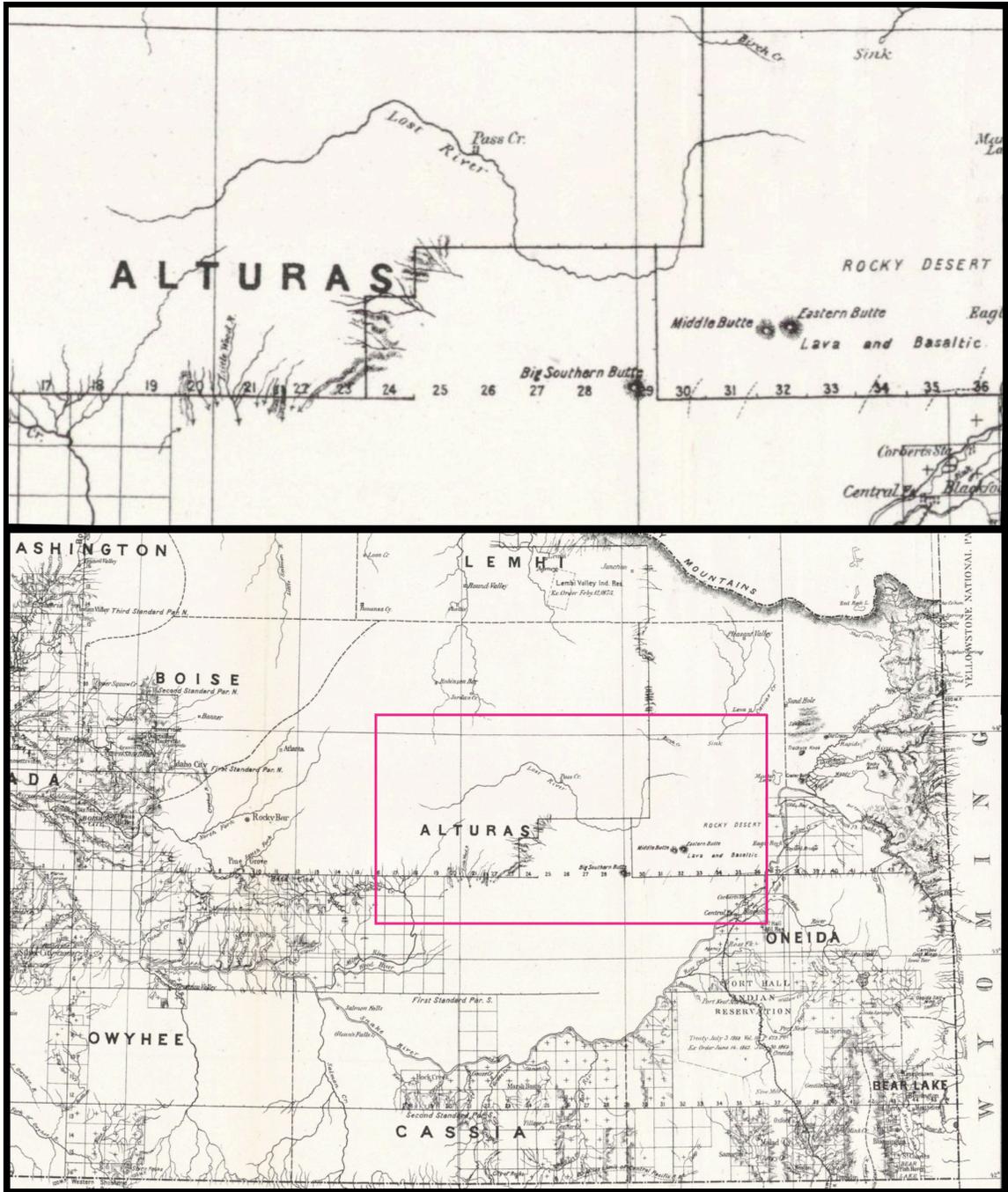
This map was published by Mitchell again in 1877, when other mapmakers had moved beyond the problems noted above.

The map below was made by the New York publishing firm of Asher and Adams in 1874. Like the 1870 map on a previous page, it represents geography in transition. The Wood River that was shown for the first time on the previous page now flows into the Malade in the relationship presently understood, although proportions and directions are not correct.

East of the Wood River, the name “Goddin’s River” for the Big Lost makes one its last appearances. That river flows through a Camas Prairie (there were and are many “Camas Prairies”, but this seems be the only use of the term associated with the modern Big Lost River). The river flows toward three buttes that for the first time are shown in their correct WSW-ENE line, although their relative sizes and spacings are still incorrect. To the north, the headwaters of Goddin’s River are shown meeting those of the Lemhi, so that Goddin’s somehow takes on the area of both the Big Lost River and Birch Creek Valleys, and presumably the Little Lost in between.



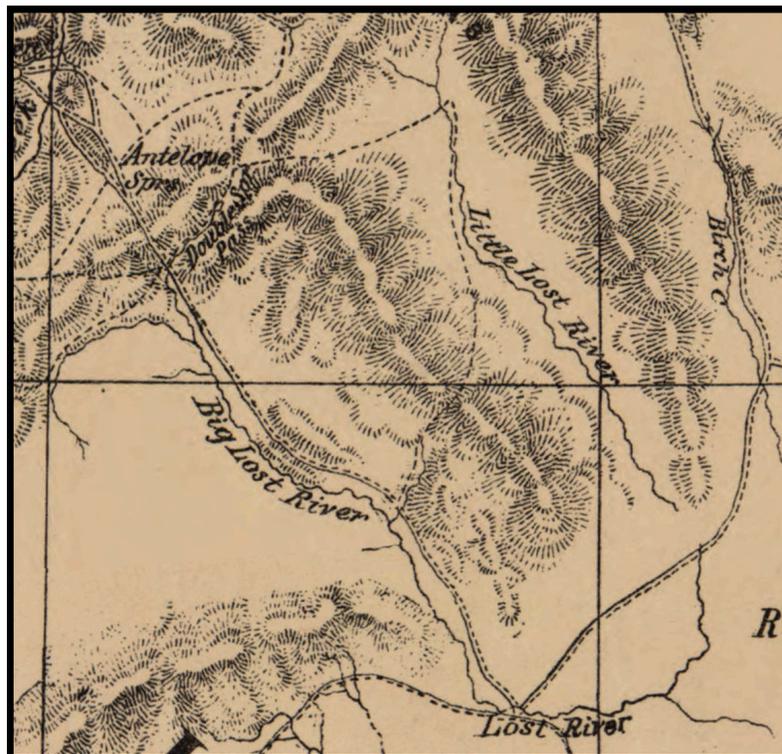
All of the maps on previous pages were made by commercial mapmakers. The map below is the first produced by the United States government, and specifically by the Department of the Interior's General Land Office in **1879** (the year Arco was founded). The map shows considerable detail in regions that had been formally surveyed (those with the grid in the lower image of much of the map). The Lost Rivers region (shown in the upper map) had apparently not been surveyed, and so there are few details and still some problems, mostly in the uppermost (western) and lowermost (eastern) courses of the river. Nonetheless, two advances are shown: the modern name "Lost River" appears (it also appeared on an earlier 1876 version), and the three buttes are for the first time shown in both their true relative positions and collective orientation.



Like the map on the previous page, the map on the next page was produced in **1879** by the United States government, in this case by the U.S. Army. At that point the similarities end: the first uses the civil survey system of township and range whereas this does not; the first showed the three buttes in good form but this one is unique in showing only one of the two Twin Buttes. However, the most important development is that this map finally shows something not seen on a map for forty-two years: all three lost streams of the Big Lost River, Little Lost River, and Birch Creek. A snippet shows them in more detail below.

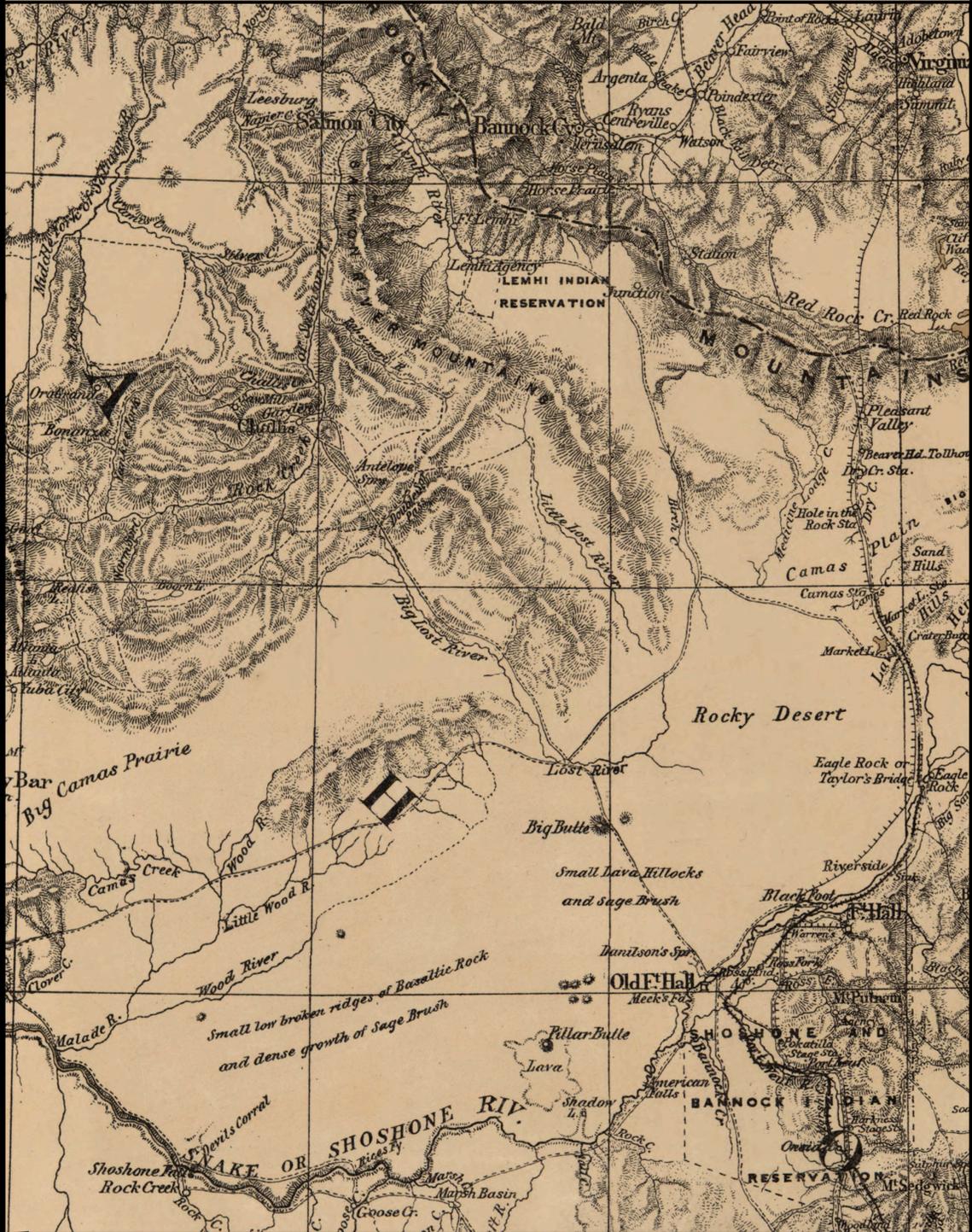
Lesser points of interest are names different than the ones used today. To the south, the modern Snake River is the Shoshone River, a logical and in fact better name because “Snake” was a completely flawed attempt to render the name of the Shoshone tribe into English. To the west, the Wood Rivers are mangled geographically and in name, in that we expect the Little Wood east of the main or big Wood. To the north, the modern Lemhi Mountains are labeled as the Salmon River Mountains, a name that had been widely applied on maps of the region (as on the 1853, 1860, and 1866 maps) but that here clearly represents the Lemhis.

The map also shows roads (still something of a novelty), and they present an interesting scene. Four roads meet north of the Big Butte, on the south bank of the (Big) Lost River. One hardly needs a degree in economic development to imagine a town growing up at that crossroads. When mining booms broke out in both the Wood River country and near Challis, stagecoach service from Blackfoot began, and the crossroads became the site of a stagecoach station and of the first town of Arco, presumably on the south side of the river. When railroad service to Hailley made the stagecoach route west from that town irrelevant, but stagecoach service to Challis continued, the north side of the river became the more logical location, and the town moved to its second site, which later maps confirm was on the northeast side of the river.



# STATE OF OREGON, AND TERRITORIES OF WASHINGTON & IDAHO.

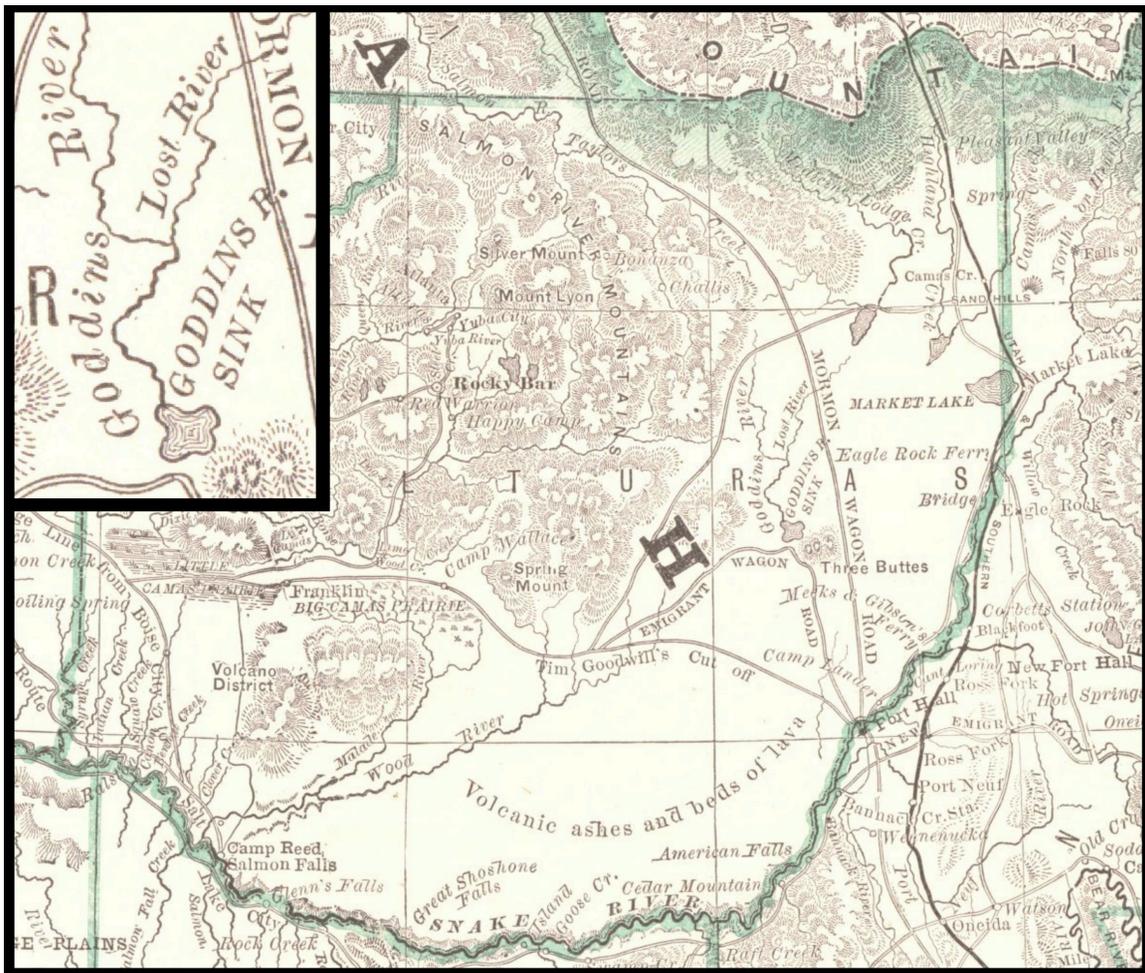
Prepared in the Office of the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS U.S.A. 1879



The map below was produced in **1881** by Rand McNally, a publisher still active in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The company's first business was printing railroad tickets and schedules, and so it's appropriate that this map is the first to show a railroad, the line through modern Blackfoot and Idaho Falls.

With that said, the map is in fact something of a train wreck. It shows Goddin's River (the Big Lost River) with a river to the east, seeming the Little Lost, flowing into it. The headwater of these rivers are in the valley that the "Mormon Wagon Road" to Fort Lemhi follows. They are thus in the valley of Birch Creek. The three buttes are in a line, but closely and evenly spaced. In these respects, the map appears to draw on the 1874 map by Asher and Adams. Challis is shown just west of Birch Creek valley and thus is east of Salmon (off this snippet to the north), whereas it is really west of Salmon. The map shows Goodale's Cutoff as "Goodwill's", and that wagon road is shown missing the three buttes entirely, whereas it actually wrapped around the northeast side of the Big Butte.

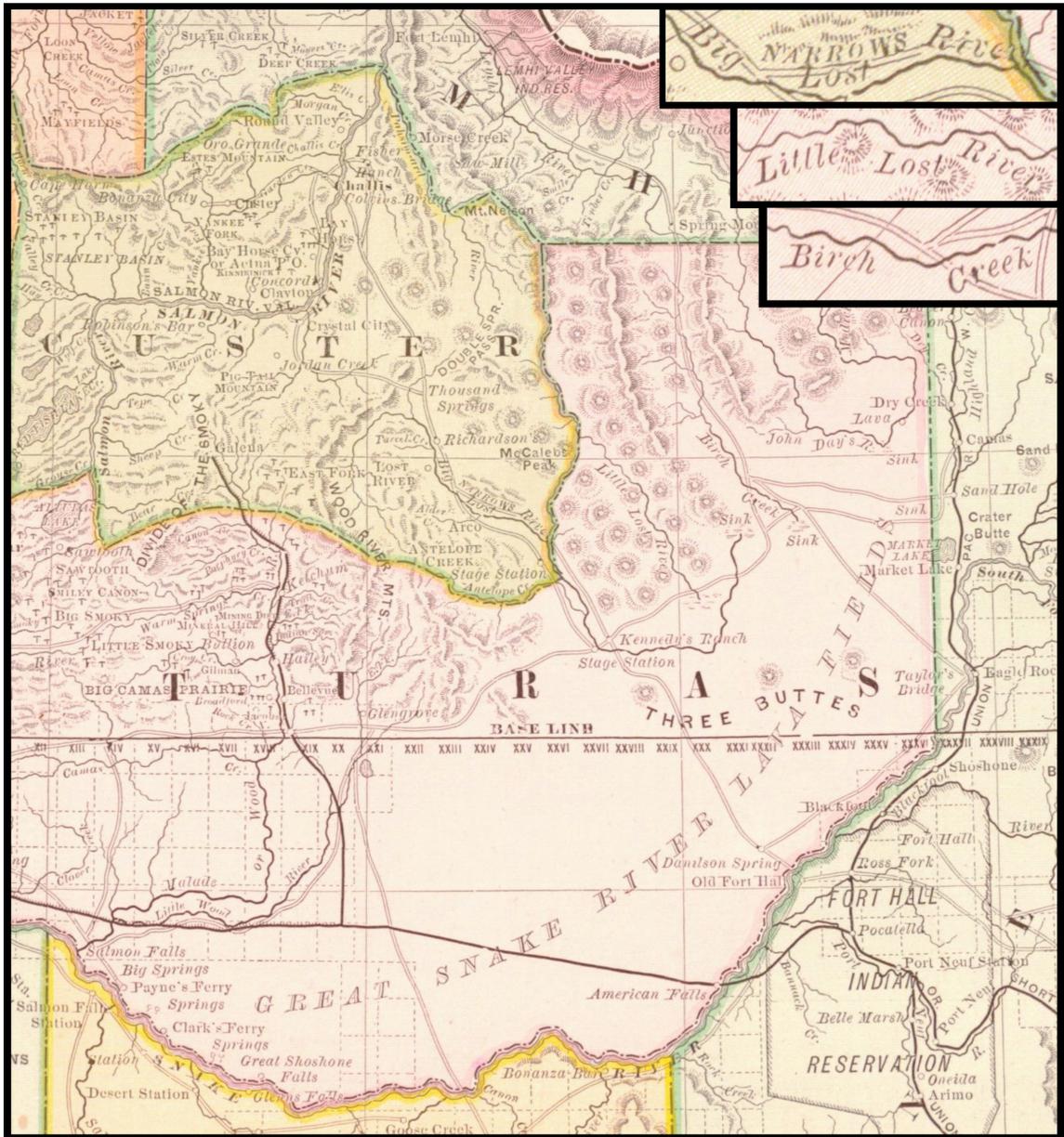
This was the last map to use the trappers' name "Goddin's River" for the Big Lost River. On the other hand, it was the first to include geologic information, such as "Volcanic ashes and beds of lava", following the lead of the Department of the Interior's map two maps back.



The map below, made by H.H. Hardesty & Company in **1884**, is the first commercially made map since 1837 to show all three lost streams: the Big Lost River, Little Lost River, and Birch Creek. The trappers' name "John Day's River" appears for the last time, miss-applied to a stream farther to the east. To the southwest, the two Wood Rivers (Big and Little) finally come together on a map as they do in reality.

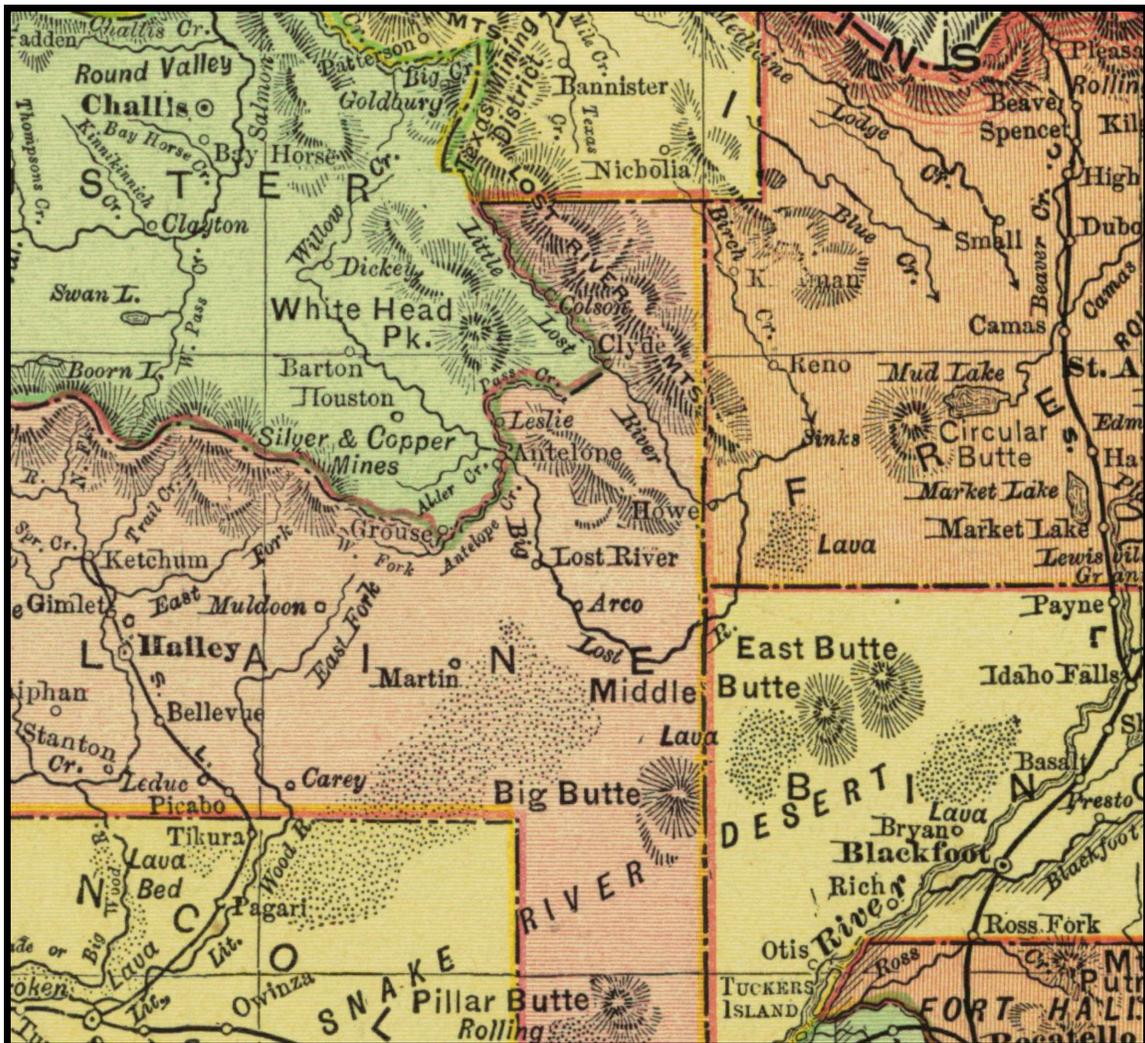
This map also shows progress, both real and cartographic, with regard to transportation. Three rail lines are shown: the railroad from Pocatello north to Montana that was shown on the 1881 map on the previous page, the railroad west from Pocatello and American Falls, and the railroad north to Hailey. Goodale's Cutoff is shown correctly wrapping around the Big Butte.

Another addition is that the towns of Arco and Lost River are shown. Both are too far up the valley of the Big Lost River, but they testify to early settlement of the Big Lost River Valley.



The map below was made in **1896** (but reproduced in 1901) by Rand McNally & Co. It is a map appropriate to Idaho's early statehood and the turn of the century, in that it represents the beginning of stability of the appearance of maps, as mapmakers' understanding of the region's geography coalesced. Modern viewers can thus look at this map and see the region they know without too many immediate questions.

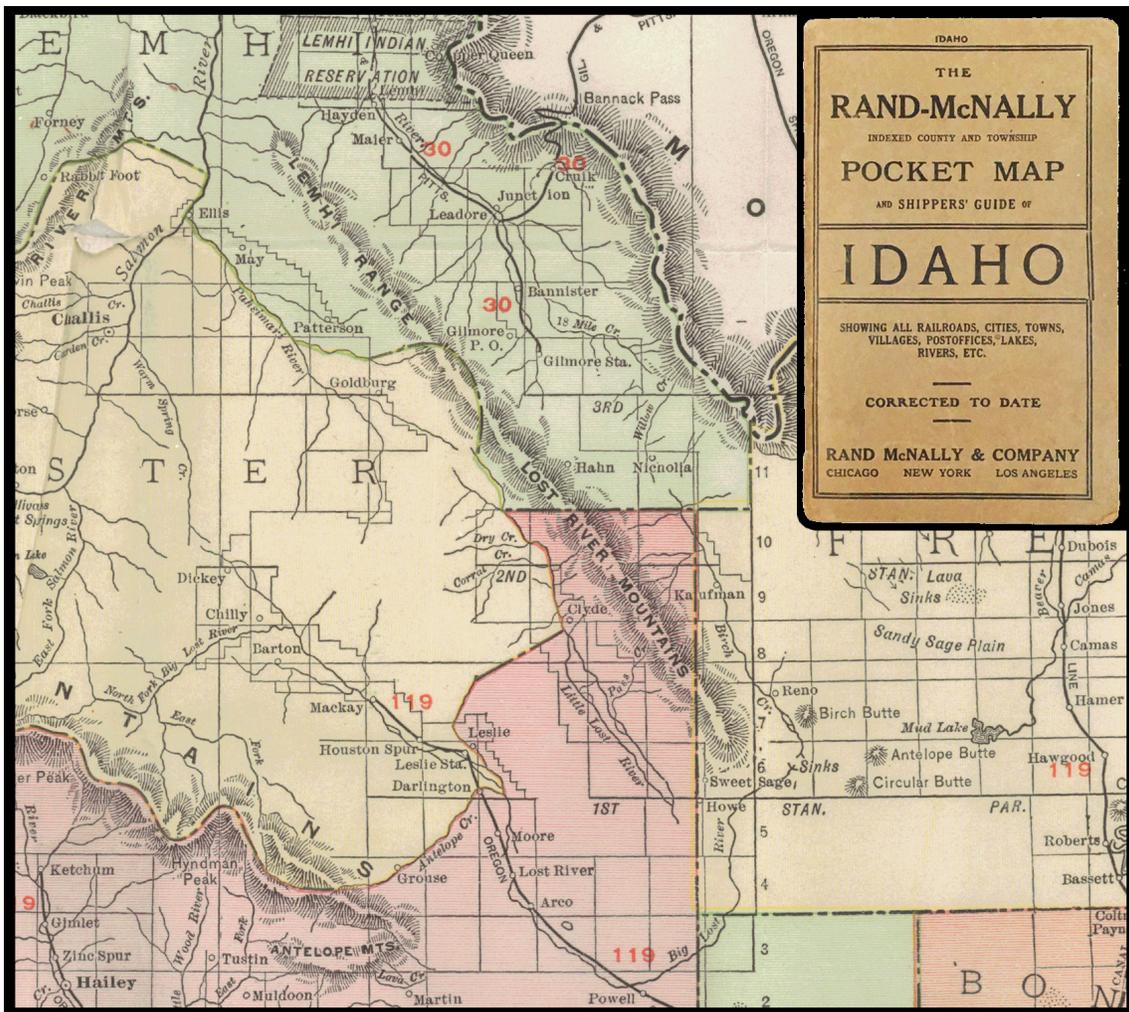
"Without *too many* immediate questions" means that the modern viewer will, with a bit more looking, still have questions. Some questions are about things that are simply wrong or blank: the area around Trail Creek Summit is both. Some questions are about names that will change: the "Lost River Mountains" on this map (and many maps of the same period) will become the Lemhis that modern viewers know. Some questions are about towns not shown because they didn't exist in the 1890s before the coming of the railroad to the Lost River Valley in 1901: Mackay is the most familiar example. Other questions are about towns that existed then but do not today: Martin and Houston are easy examples. The next section will look at the resolution of some of these details (but at further confusion too) in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.



### Part III – Evolving mountain ranges, streams, and towns on maps from the 1900s and 2000s

By the late 1800s or earliest 1900s, the main features of the landscape had been recognized and put in order on maps. Three lost rivers or streams were shown on almost all maps with new names to replace both those known from the trappers and the unrecorded names used by the Shoshone and Blackfeet. The three buttes were shown in reasonable relationships in terms of distance apart and direction from one to the next. To the west, the Big Wood, Little Wood, and Malad Rivers were named fairly consistently. However, close looks at maps from the 1900s and 2000s shows that some details were still being worked out. More strikingly, despite the increasing quantities of information available to mapmakers, some errors crept in – even in the 2000s.

One feature of the early maps is that mountains were not shown at all or shown very schematically (on the 1884 map a few pages back, the Lost Rivers and Lemhis were each a series of buttes individually like the three buttes of the Snake plain, only more numerous and aligned north-to-south). If maps showed mountains, the mountains typically went unnamed, both individually and as ranges. By the early 1900s the situation began to improve – in fits and starts. The 1912 map below is a striking example. It shows the Lemhis, if with an unexpected name for the southern Lemhis. However, it completely omits the mountains known today as the Lost River Mountains, the range with Idaho's three highest peaks!

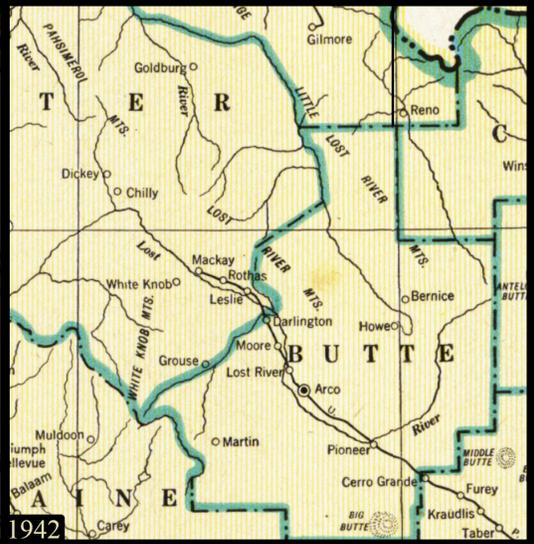
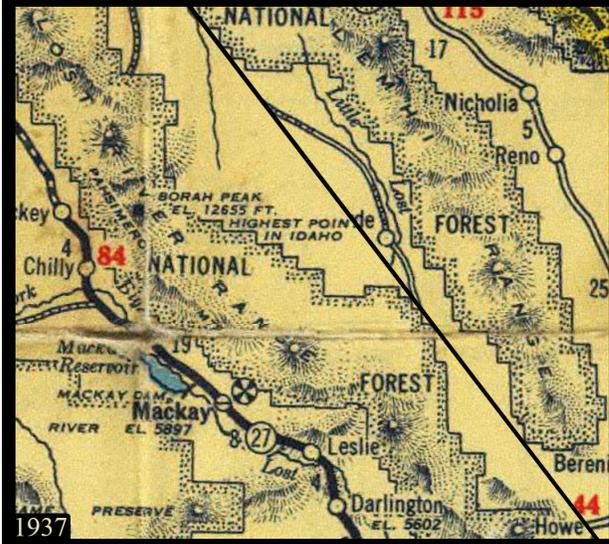
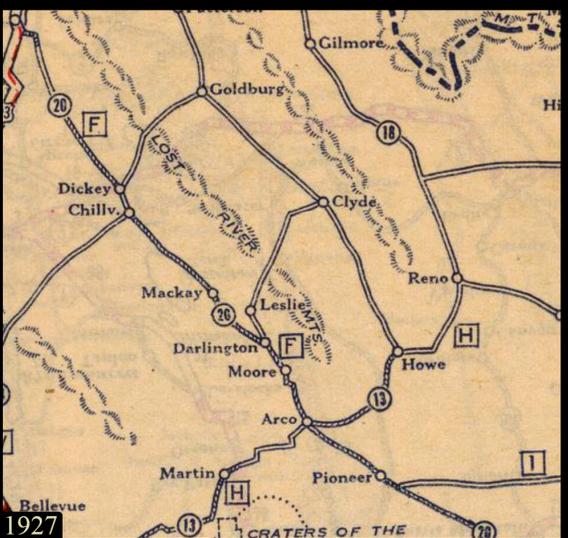
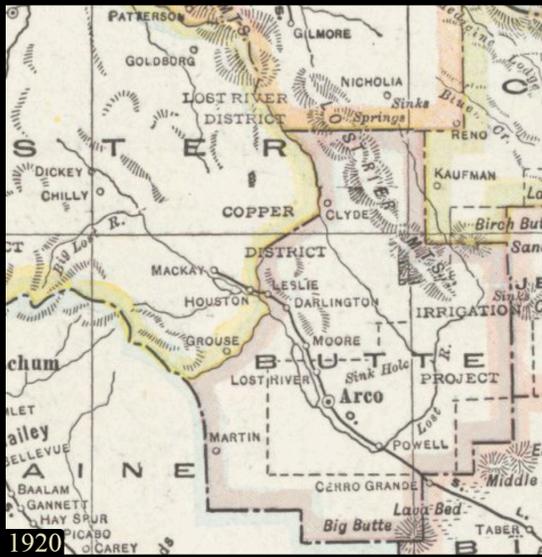
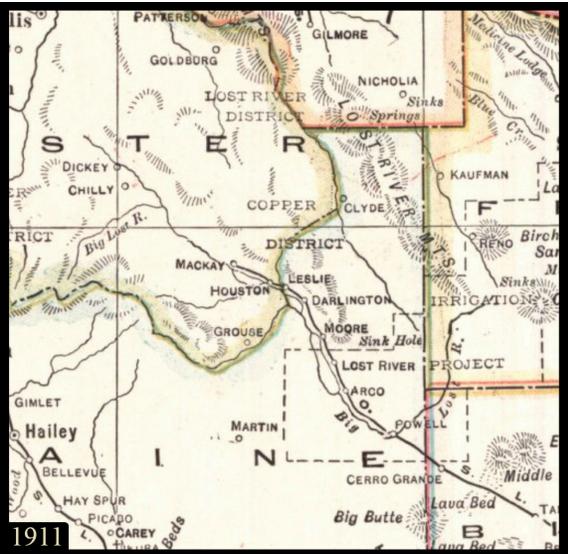
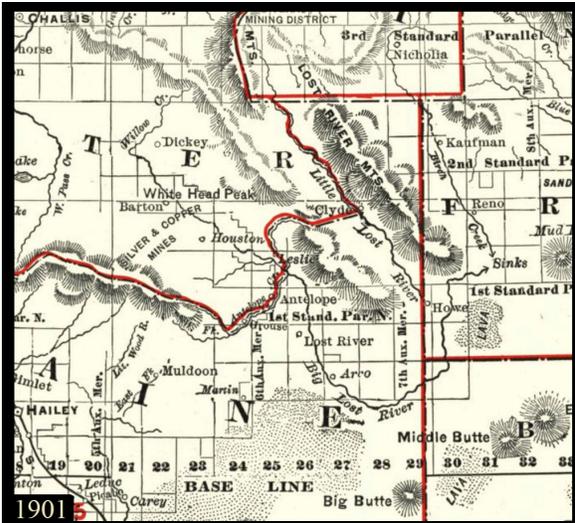


Maps' treatment of mountains changed in the early 1900s, but the six snippets on the next pages show early names that look a bit strange to modern eyes. The 1901, 1911, and 1920 maps show that the previous page's 1912 map and its omission of the modern Lost River Mountains were just an extreme example of a general trend: the Lost Rivers discontinuous on the 1901 map and almost unrecognizable on the 1911 and 1920 maps. That may have been because the mapmakers knew that there were roads over two passes in the Lost Rivers and, seeing only roads, assumed that the mountains couldn't be very significant. By comparison, the Lemhis were shown as a distinct range. However, the southern if not entire Lemhis of today are labeled "Lost River Mountains" on all three maps, whereas today's Lost River Mountains have no label at all.

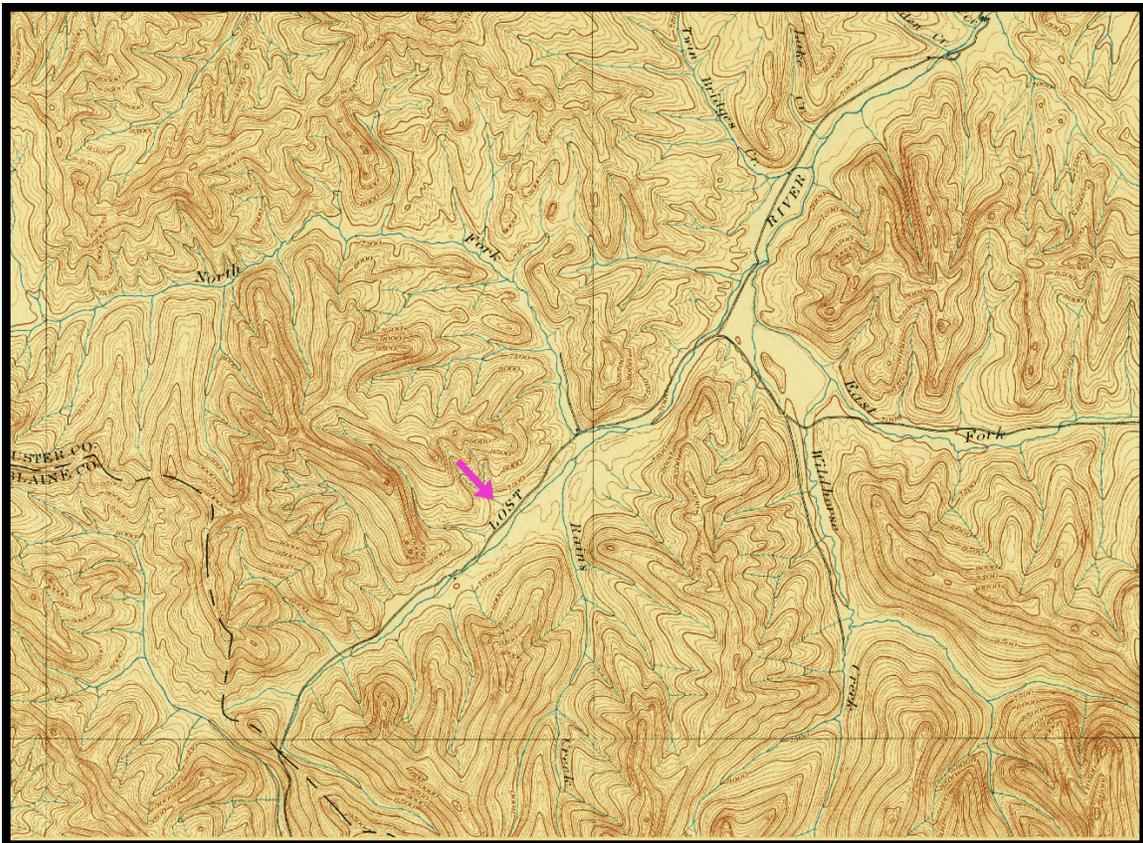
Rand McNally's 1924 Standard Map of Idaho, of which a bit is shown below, shows transition in progress: each range's southern portion is named after its river to the west, providing the modern usage of "Lost River Mountains" for the first time. However, that means that the southern Lemhis were designated the "Little Lost River Mountains". Each range's northern end has another name, using "Lemhi" for the northern part of today's Lemhis.

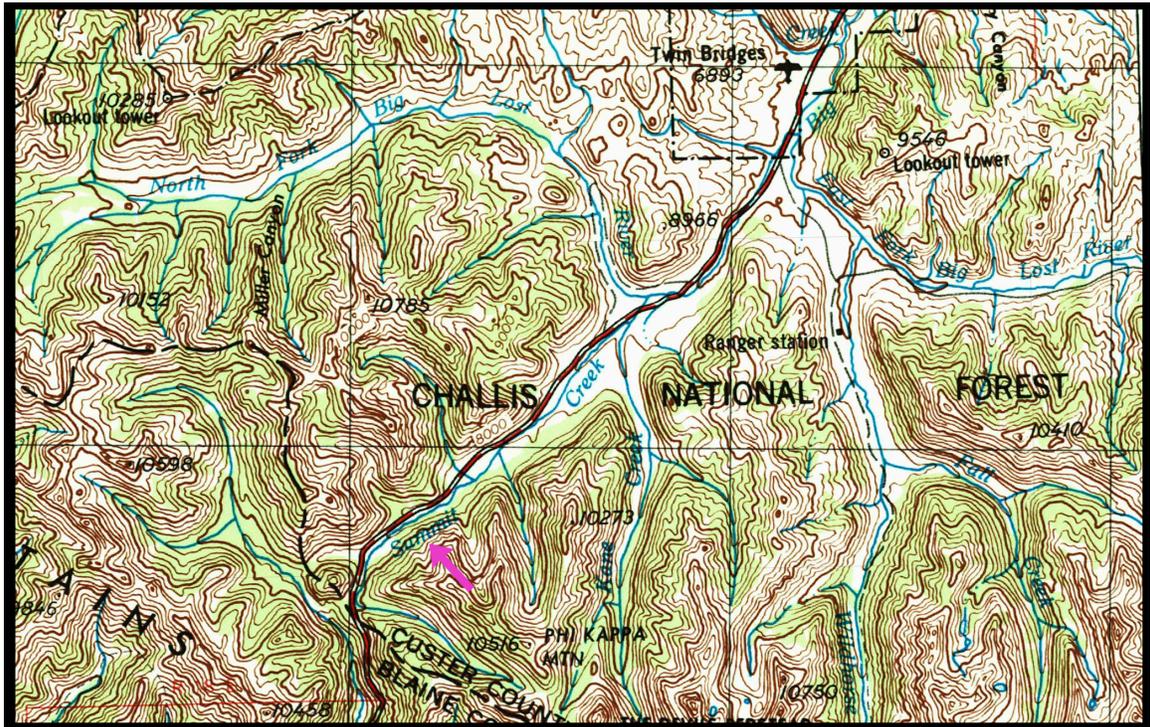
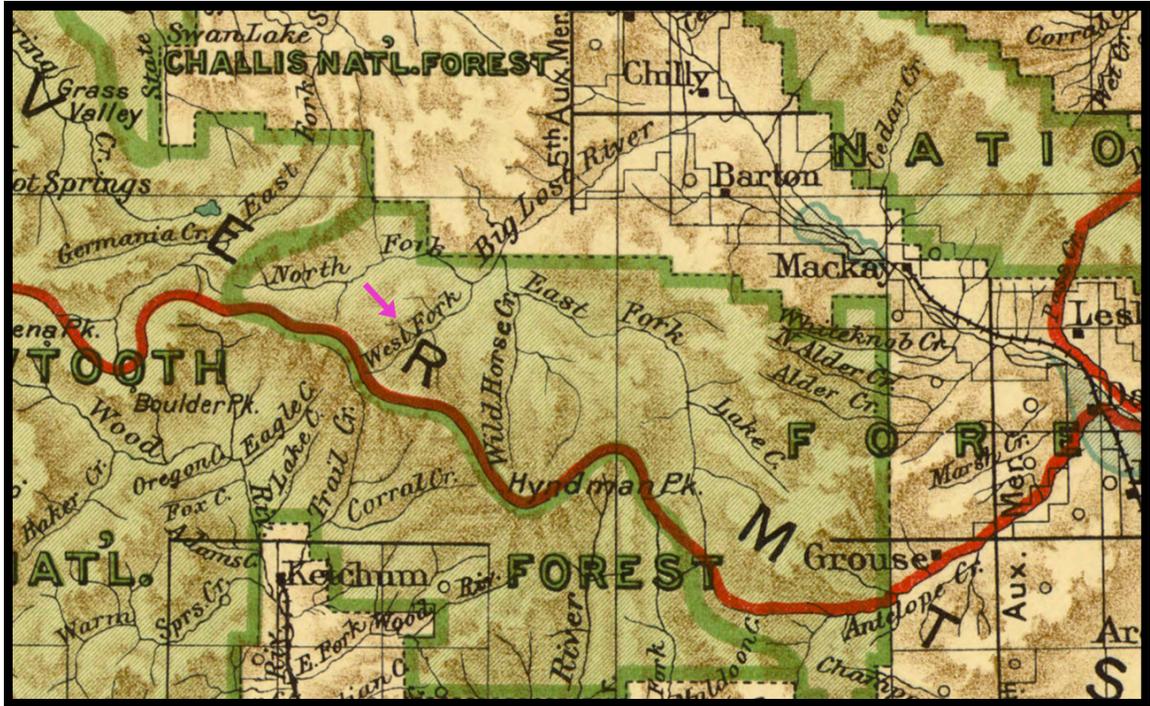


The 1927, 1937, and 1942 maps on the next page have the name "Lost River Mountains" on the location of today's Lost River Mountains, and the 1927 and 1937 maps show more continuous mountains in that range. The naming situation was more tenuous for today's Lemhis: the 1927 map gave them no name at all. The 1937 map labels them as the "Lemhi Range", and a modern reader might conclude that all was well after that. However, the 1942 map again labeled the southern Lemhis as the "Little Lost River Mountains", and only later would "Lemhis" become the uniform name for the mountains between the Little Lost River and Birch Creek.



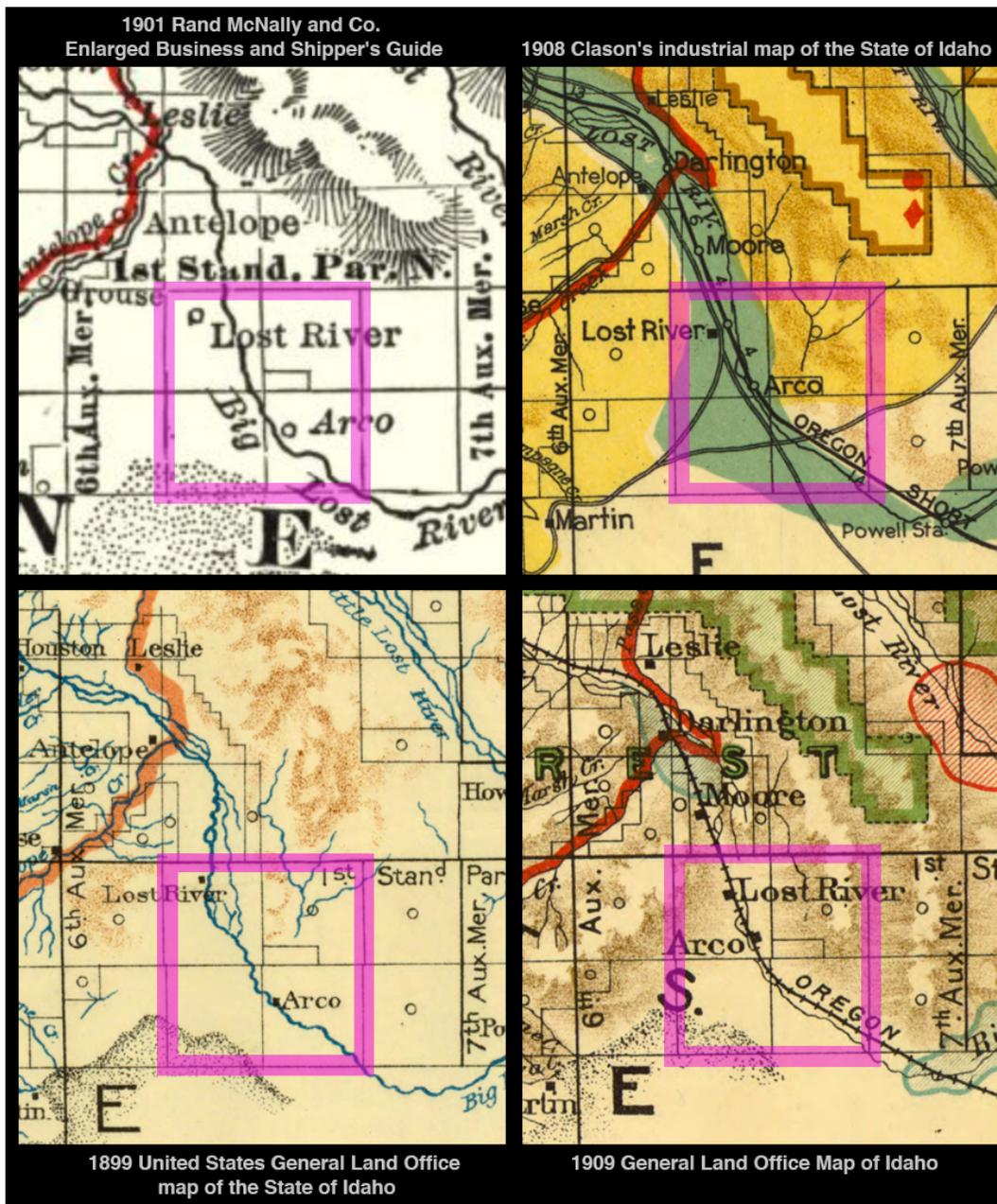
Three maps below and on the next page show an example of the details of naming being worked out. By the late 1800s, Goddin's River had become the Lost River or Big Lost River on all published maps. However, the name of its headwaters (the present **Summit Creek** descending from Trail Creek Summit), along which trappers and wagon trains had passed for decades, remained in flux. Trappers had uniformly considered this watercourse the uppermost expression of the river: for example, Peter Skene Ogden in his journal entry for October 13, 1825, had described the approach to Trail Creek Summit from the east as "ascending until we reached the Sources of Goddins River". On the 1897 US Geological Survey map below, the headwaters were designated as the main stem of the Lost River, into which the North and East Forks flowed downstream. However, on the 1909 map at the top of the next page, it had been demoted to being one of three forks, and thus it was the West Fork joining the North and East ones. That wasn't the end of it, however: the USGS map at the bottom of the next page shows that by the mid-1950s the headwaters had been further demoted to a creek, the modern Summit Creek, flowing into the North Fork, a river that the trappers never mentioned and most modern travelers hardly notice at all.





The two previous pages showed the changing names given to landscape features. This one, in contrast, shows a town truly on the move. That town is **Arco**, which many written sources reported moved in late 1901 when the new Salmon River Railroad bypassed its earlier site.

The four maps below precede in time from lower left to lower right. The first two, on the left, precede the coming of the railroad through Arco; the later two on the right postdate that event. Magenta boxes have been added to highlight the changing location of Arco; each box encloses an area of twelve miles by twelve miles and thus four township-and-range units in surveyors' system of measurement of much of the United States. On the left and earlier maps, Arco is the southeastern of those four units, whereas on the right and later maps it is in the northwestern unit. This accords with historical accounts that Arco moved from an older site southeast of the present town, simply to be on the railroad and thus to survive.

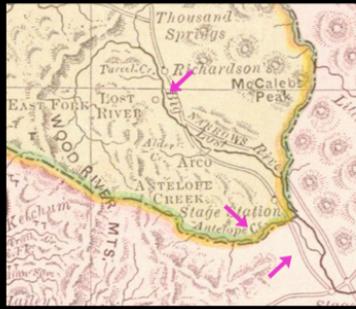


The previous page looked at maps that reflect the changing actual location of a town. The next two shows maps in which the positions of features change, but seemingly only as the result of mapmaker's mistakes.

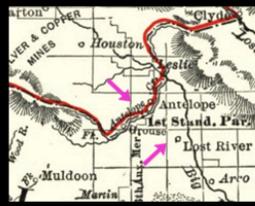
The first of these sets of maps shows the remarkable travel of the town of **Lost River**. Lost River is first seen on a map from 1884 made by H.H. Hardesty & Company. On that map, the towns of both Arco and Lost River are shown too far north up the Big Lost River Valley. The mistake isn't surprising, in that maps of southern Idaho from that era have many errors of position.

A 1901 map shows the town of Lost River where it actually was, about six miles northwest of Arco. However, in the fall of the 1901, the real town of Lost River had a real problem: the railroad up the valley passed a few miles to east, leaving the town off this new modern avenue of traffic. Arco faced the same problem and was moved to be on the railroad. Lost River instead had a station on the railroad but otherwise seems to have largely stayed put at its original location to the west. Thus the 1910 map shows both the town of Lost River and the Lost River Station on the railroad (a 1908 map not shown on the next page likewise showed both the town and the station). Lost River persisted on maps, if less and less on the ground, into the middle of the 1900s. The Lost River Cemetery still reminds us of the general location of the now lost town of Lost River.

Then a strange thing happened. Sometime in the late 1900s, the town of Lost River began to appear on maps as a place in Antelope Valley and thus about ten miles west-northwest of its actual townsite. Even in Antelope Valley, it has migrated, sometimes residing at a location down the valley from the inflow of Cherry Creek but at other times west of Cherry Creek and just west of the airstrip. How all this happened isn't clear; one surmise would be that a mapmaker deleted the name of Grouse, a long-lost town in Antelope, but mistakenly moved the name of Lost River to Grouse's dot on the map. If Lost River is a ghost town, it seems to be one of those ghosts condemned to wander about, at least on maps made by people not from the Big Lost River Valley.



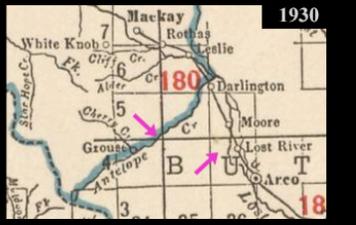
1884



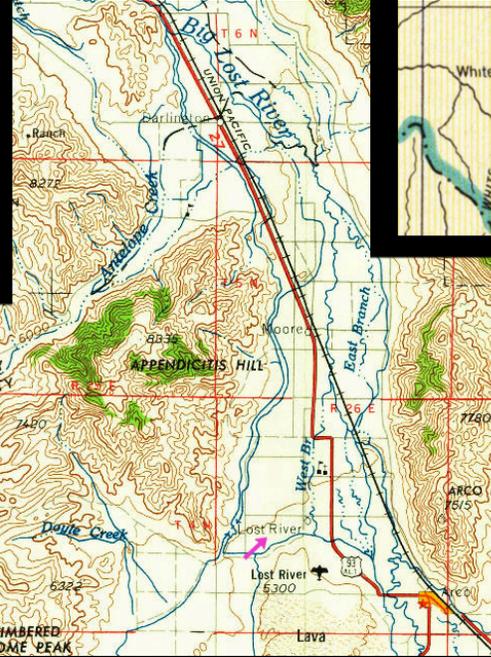
1901



1911



1930



1956

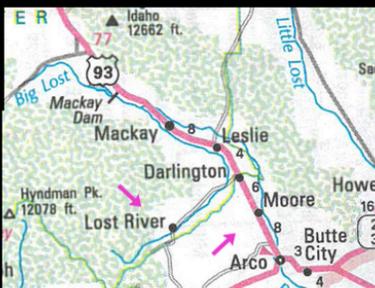


1942

Lost River as it was wrongly mapped in 1884

Lost River as it was from the 1880s to the 1990s

Lost River as imagined since the 1990s



1996

1999



1999



2015

2020

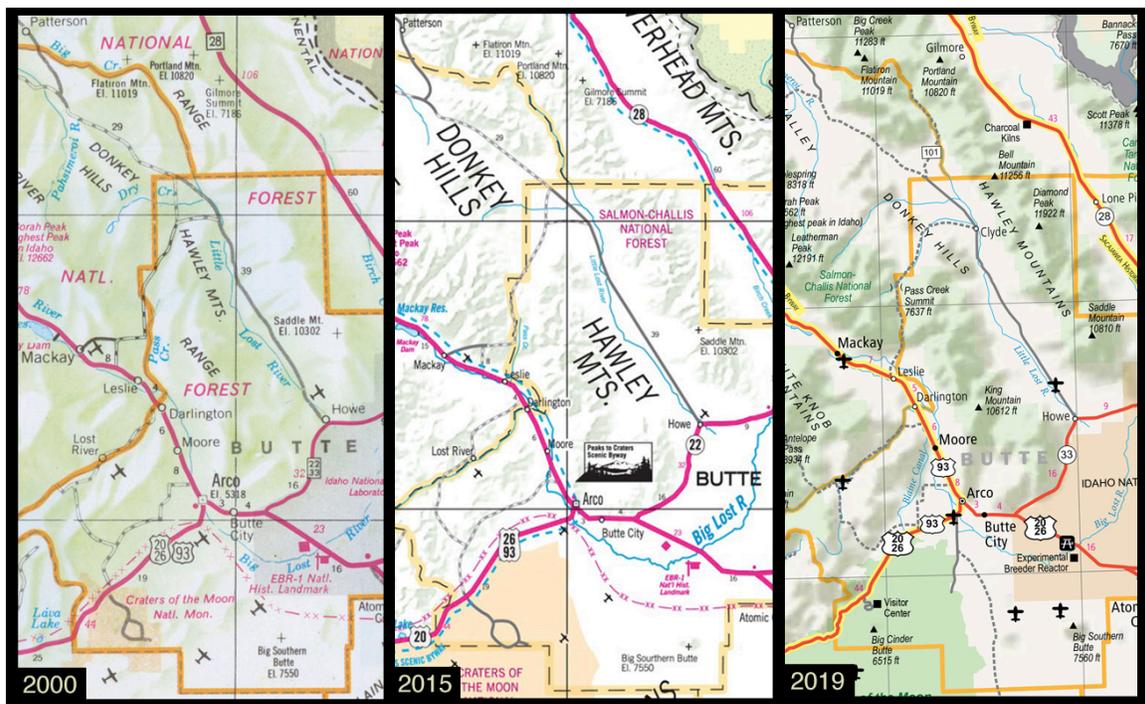


2020

If the 1800s were the years in which the landscape of the Lost Rivers region was mapped and the rivers were named, and the early 1900s were the years in which mountain ranges took on their present names, it would seem that stasis and order were reached by the late 1900s and 2000s. A look at the State of Idaho's official state highway maps defies that expectation. The three snippets below are from the state's official state highway maps across twenty years in the early **2000s**, and they show a peculiar migration of the **Hawley Mountains**, from the west side of the Little Lost (and thus in a sense in the eastern Lost River Mountains) to the east side of the Little Lost (and definitely in the Lemhi Mountains).

The state's cartographers deserve a bit of a break for the 2000 and 2015 maps. The Hawley Mountains are a small area that, on the 2000 map, would be under the "HA" of "Hawley". Their small area thus means that any label is too large, and they should have no label at all, but there was an Idaho governor named "Hawley", and so the state's official maps must have the name. The size issue got worse in by 2015, when names of mountain ranges were made larger and, solely for the sake of space, the name "Hawley Mts" was moved south on the map, completely abandoning the mountains' actual location on the map.

By 2019, cartographic disaster had struck. A return to smaller fonts might have allowed the error of the 2015 map to be corrected, but instead the error was made far worse when the name "Hawley Mountains" leapt over the Little Lost and into the southern Lemhis. Meanwhile, the label for the Donkey Hills crept south, and its "hills" almost exactly covered the actual location of the Hawley Mountains. At this writing, in 2020, one can only wonder if the Hawley Mountains will continue to move east and someday be in Montana, a considerable irony for something with the name of an Idaho governor on an official Idaho map.



## SOURCES

### General:

Four great resources for viewing old maps on the World Wide Web are

Barry Lawrence Ruderman's Antique Maps website at [www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com)

The David Rumsey Map Collection at [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com)

The American Geographical Society Library Digital Map Collection at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee's Digital Collections at [uwm.edu/lib-collections/agsl-digital-map-collection/](http://uwm.edu/lib-collections/agsl-digital-map-collection/)

The University of Alabama Department of Geography's Alabama Maps website at [alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.htm](http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.htm).

### Specific:

1560s map of North America: "Il Disegno del discoperto della nova Franza, il quale s'e havuto Ultimamente dalla Novissima Navigazione de' Franzesi in quel Luogo: nel quale si Vedono Tutti l'Isole, Porti, Capi et Luoghi fra Terra che in quella sono . . . M.D.LXVI" published in 1566 by Bolognino Zaltieri of Venice using plates purchased from Paolo Forlani, as seen at <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/60314bv/il-disegno-del-discoperto-della-nova-franza-il-quale-se-ha-forlani-zaltieri> on the Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps website, a delight to anyone who likes old maps.

Mid-1700s map of western North America and the Western Sea: "Mappe Monde au Globe Terrestre en deux Plans Hemispheres. Dressee sur les observations de Mrss de L'Academie Royal Des Sciences" by Jean Covens and Corneille Mortier and made in about 1780, from Derek Hayes's *Historical atlas of the North Pacific Ocean: maps of discovery and scientific exploration, 1500-2000* published under the auspices of North Pacific Marine Science Organization by Sasquatch Books in 2001.

1751 map showing the River of the West: "Chart containing the Coasts of California, New Albion, and Russian discoveries to the North, with the Peninsula of Kamchatka, in Asia, opposite thereto, and Islands, dispersed over the Pacific Ocean, to the North of the Line", drawn by John Green and published by his employer Thomas Jeffries in 1753, as seen at [www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com).

Spanish map from the 1790s: "North America from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, between the 35th and 60th parallels of latitude" available from the U.S. Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3300.ct000580/> and as reported in *Geographical Review*, vol. 1, p. 330, May 1916.

1802 map of western North America: "A Map Exhibiting All the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America, Inscribed by Permission to the Honourable Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into the Hudsons Bay in Testimony of their Liberal Communications" by Aaron Arrowsmith as seen at [www.raremaps.com](http://www.raremaps.com).

1814 map: "A map of Lewis and Clark's track, across the western portion of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean: by order of the executive of the United States in 1804, 5 & 6" engraved by Samuel Harrison from William Clark's original drawing, and published by Bradford and Inskeep of Philadelphia, available from the U.S. Library of Congress at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4126s.ct000028>.

1824—1825 map by William Kittson: Published as an enclosure in Rich, E.E., ed., 1950, *Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country journals, 1824-25 (and 1825-26)*: The Publications of the Hudson's Bay Record Society XIII.

1831 map by Warren Angus Ferris: Drawn to accompany Ferris's *Life in the Rocky Mountains: a diary of wanderings on the sources of the rivers Missouri, Columbia, and Colorado, 1830-1835* arranged by Herbert S. Auerbach and annotated by J. Cecil Alter as a 1940 book and published again with an introduction and notes by Leroy R. Hafen in 1983 by Old West Publishing Company. The image shown is from the L. Tom Perry Special Collections of the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University as shown at [sites.lib.byu.edu/special-collections/2019/07/22/the-original-1836-warren-ferris-map-now-digitized/](http://sites.lib.byu.edu/special-collections/2019/07/22/the-original-1836-warren-ferris-map-now-digitized/) .

1837 map of Benjamin Bonneville's expedition: "A Map of the Sources of the Colorado & Big Salt Lake, Platte, Yellow-stone, Muscle-Shell, Missouri; & Salmon & Snake Rivers, Branches of the Columbia River", which accompanied W. Irving, 1837, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville U.S.A. in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West*: G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 503 pp. The image shown is from the WSU Digital Libraries Collection of Washington State University and specifically from [content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/maps/id/696/](http://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/maps/id/696/).

1837 map by John Arrowsmith: "British North America. By Permission Dedicated to The Honble. Hudsons Bay Company; Containing the latest information which their documents furnish" published by John Arrowsmith (nephew of Aaron) and from [www.raremaps.com/inventory/search?q=Arrowsmith](http://www.raremaps.com/inventory/search?q=Arrowsmith) .

1845 map by James Wyld: "Map of the Oregon Districts and the adjacent country" by James Wyld, a British geographer and map-seller. The image shown is from [storage.googleapis.com/raremaps/img/xlarge/44416pb.jpg](http://storage.googleapis.com/raremaps/img/xlarge/44416pb.jpg).

1853 map by Colton: "The Territories of Washington and Oregon" by American cartographer Joseph Hutchins Colton and available at [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855\\_Colton\\_Map\\_of\\_Washington\\_and\\_Oregon\\_-\\_Geographicus\\_-\\_WashingtonOregon-colton-1855.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1855_Colton_Map_of_Washington_and_Oregon_-_Geographicus_-_WashingtonOregon-colton-1855.jpg) .

1860 "Map of Oregon, Washington, and Part of British Columbia" by S. Augustus Mitchell. It is from a collection entitled "Map Collections from the University of Texas at Arlington" and was provided by University of Texas at Arlington Library to The Portal to Texas History, a digital repository hosted by the UNT Libraries. The image is from <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth187467/> .

1863 "General Map of the North Pacific States and Territories" by John Mullan and published by William M Franklin of New York, and viewable at [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com).

1866 "Johnson's Nebraska, Dakota, Idaho & Montana" by Benjamin P. Ward and Alvin Jewett Johnson of New York and available at Barry Lawrence Ruderman's <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/65519/johnsons-nebraska-dakota-idaho-montana-ward-johnson>.

The "1859 military map" is "Department of Oregon. Map of the state of Oregon and Washington Territory" by the U.S. War Department and viewable at [www.davidrumsey.com](http://www.davidrumsey.com).

The "1873 map" is "Gray's Idaho, Montana and Wyoming" published by O. W. Gray of Philadelphia and accessed at [www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/63743/grays-idaho-montana-and-wyoming-gray](http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/63743/grays-idaho-montana-and-wyoming-gray).

The information about George Henry Mendell is from *George W. Cullum's Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, since its establishment in 1802* available at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/>

Gazetteer/Places/America/United\_States/Army/USMA/Cullums\_Register/1538\*.html made available by Bill Thayer.

1870 “Map of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and part of Montana” by S. Augustus Mitchell. and available from commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1877\_Mitchell\_Map\_of\_Oregon,\_Washington,\_Idaho\_and\_Montana\_-\_Geographicus\_-\_WAORIDMT-mitchell-1877.jpg .

1874 “Asher and Adams Idaho, Montana, Western Portion” available at <https://www.oldmapsonline.org/map/rumsey/4977.072> and at [www.davidrumsey.com/](http://www.davidrumsey.com/) .

1879 map of the “Territory of Idaho” by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s General Land Office, available at Alabama Maps (<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html>) and courtesy of Murray Hudson, Halls, Tennessee.

1879 map of the “State of Oregon and territories of Washington and Idaho” produced by the Office of the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army viewable at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee’s Digital Collections at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/548/rec/16> as part of the American Geographical Society Library collection of maps.

1881 map of “Idaho” by Rand McNally and Company from their *New Indexed Business Atlas and Shippers Guide*, available at Alabama Maps (<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html>) from the University of Alabama Map Library.

1884 “Map of Idaho” by H.H. Hardesty & Co. of Chicago, available at Alabama Maps (<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html>) and courtesy of Murray Hudson, Halls, Tennessee.

1901 “Idaho” by Rand McNally and Co., of Chicago (copyright 1896 and 1901), from their *Universal Atlas of the World*, available at Alabama Maps (<http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html>) and courtesy of Murray Hudson, Halls, Tennessee.

1924 Rand MacNally Standard Map of Idaho from [www.etsy.com/listing/718773238/idaho-1924-rand-mcnally-state-old-map](http://www.etsy.com/listing/718773238/idaho-1924-rand-mcnally-state-old-map) .

Maps of names of mountain ranges: the 1937 map is a “Texaco Road Map” from the David Rumsey Map Collection at [www.davidrumsey.com/](http://www.davidrumsey.com/) ; the others are all from Alabama Maps at [alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html](http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html).

Maps of modern Summit Creek: the 1897 and 1955 maps are U.S. Geological Survey maps of the Hailey Quadrangle; the 1909 map is from “State of Idaho / compiled from the official records of the General Land Office and other sources under the direction of I. P. Berthrong” published by the U.S. General Land Office and available from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee’s Digital Collections at [collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/3425/](https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/3425/) as part of the American Geographical Society Library collection of maps.

Maps of Arco on the move: the map on the left is from Rand McNally and Company’s 1901 *Enlarged Business and Shipper's Guide* available via Alabama Maps at [alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html](http://alabamamaps.ua.edu/index.html) and ourtesy of Murray Hudson, Halls, Tennessee, and the map on the right is from Clason’s Industrial Map of the State of Idaho available from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee’s Digital Collections at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/>

collection/agdm/id/3429/ as part of the American Geographical Society Library collection of maps.

Maps of the Hawley Mountains are from State of Idaho Highway Maps for 2000, 2015, and 2019.

Bruce Railsback 2020