

Evidence that the railroad passing through Arco was called the Salmon River Railroad, and that it was expected to go to Challis

The Economist, Volume 60, Part 1, p. 70 January 11, 1902:

There is also being built in the interest of the Oregon Short Line a branch, to be known as the Salmon River Railroad, running from Blackfoot, Idaho, to Mackay, Idaho, a distance of 85.5 miles.

The State of Idaho, published by the Bureau of Immigration, Labor, and Statistics, 1904:

Schedule Showing the Mileage of the Railroads in the State, and Each County of the States, with the Assessed Valuation of Each

Railroad	Miles in County
Bingham County	
Oregon Short Line	48.93
St. Anthony Railroad	10.76
Salmon River Railroad	36.98
Blaine County	
Oregon Short Lines	31.74
Wood River Branch	41.49
Salmon River Railroad	35.64
Custer County	
Salmon River Railroad	13.37

The Silver Messenger, Challis, Idaho, January 21, 1902:

From all indications the Salmon River Railroad will extend its Mackay branch to Salmon river next Spring, and from this point will be the outfitting place for the great gold fields, and then the distance by stage will be cut down 50 miles, making it only 90 miles from Challis, the nearest railroad point, over an easy stage road to Thunder Mountain.

From all maps thus far published, one can see at a glance that the Mackay-Challis route to Thunder Mountain is the shortest and most direct. It is on a direct line and no one can well dispute this fact, regardless of all prejudices in the matter.

The Railway Age, January 24, 1902:

The Oregon Short Line on January 7 placed in the field a well-equipped corps of engineers for work above Mackay, Idaho. This point is the terminus of the Salmon River Railroad completed last year. It will be extended at once to Challis, 20 miles, and surveys will be made to see if it is practicable to reach by a further extension the Thunder Mountain district, a mining region of Idaho which is causing considerable excitement in the West. The extension is also pointing to other rich mineral regions, and Short Line officials are greatly pleased with the outlook.

“Report of Commission of Immigration”, in “*The State of Idaho : an official publication containing reliable information concerning the institutions, industries, and resources of the state*” published by The Bureau of Immigration, Labor, and Statistics, Boise , Idaho , 1905, p. 221:

It is anticipated that the branch railroad that has now reached Mackay will be extended up the Salmon into Challis and beyond, making an extension of 100 miles. This would enable hundreds of mines along the Salmon River to operate that are now idle, as they can not afford to move the ore without cheap transportation. There are some properties that are very rich and would pay now with the crude and expensive means of transportation, but the owners consider it a good investment to block out the ores and allow it to remain in the mine until the advent of the railroad and then take advantage of cheap transportation to move their products. With this railroad completed, Custer County becomes a most inviting field for the farmer, prospector, miner, and capitalist.

Robert Bell, “The Geology of Thunder Mountain and central Idaho”: *The Mining and Engineering Journal*, June 7, 1902, pp. 791-793.

In view of the wide spread advertising and the exaggerated accounts of the gold discoveries of the new Thunder Mountain Mining District in Central Idaho

The Oregon Short Line new branch from Blackfoot was built last year, 85 miles northwest to Mackay, a new mining town 4 miles above the old town of Houston on Big Lost River. This terminus is only 115 miles from Thunder Mountain, and the line has been surveyed and permanently located to the main Salmon River near Challis. The Short Line people are ready to push it on into the new district as soon as conditions will justify its extension.

The new Thunder Mountain district, which promises to prove a great producer of gold, is situated between the head of Marble Creek and Big Creek, two tributary streams that lap past each other at their source and enter the main Middle Fork of Salmon River 60 miles apart from the west side. . . . There are half a dozen ways of approaching Thunder Mountain . . . The nearest railway approach to the new El Dorado is Mackay, the present terminus of the Salmon River Railway . . . One railway has a large corps of engineers in the field at the present time permanently locating their Salmon river line from Mackay toward Thunder Mountain, and it is reported that active construction will be commenced as soon as 25-mile section of the survey has been completed, and the line pushed on to the Salmon river at Challis as rapidly as possible.

The Salmon River Railway leaves the Butte [Montana] Branch of the Oregon Short Line at Blackfoot, a station 24 miles north of Pocatello. The new railway strikes due west from Blackfoot bottoms across a large sagebrush plain to Arco, distant 60 miles out and situated at the entrance to the Big Lost River Valley. Arco dates its existence from the arrival of the railway last September. It already has a number of very substantial buildings. It is the natural supply and shipping point for extensive mining in Little [Big?] Lost river to the north. . . .

The town of Mackay, the present terminus of the Salmon River Railway, 85 miles from Blackfoot, was laid out on the level bottom of the Big Lost River valley October 1, 1901, at a point 4 miles above the old town of Houston. It now has 150 substantial buildings, including a first-class hotel, and, though less than four months old, already has a population of 1200 people. . . .

From Mackay a first-class stage road follows up the valley of the Big Lost river, over a low grassy divide at Willow creek and strikes the Salmon at Challis, 50 miles distant. . . At Challis, which is the county seat of Custer County and an excellent outfitting point, the traveler may take his choice of several well-established roads and trails to Thunder Mountain . . .

Such are a few of the principal mineral features of the country approaching Thunder mountain via Mackay and Challis, and associated with them are hundreds of fine prospects . . . and exceptional chances for the discovery and development of rich mines.
