

## **Lewiston to Mountain House Trail Project Description**

### **By Jim Huntley**

Some six decades ago, while working on survey crews, I was assigned the task of researching the GLO (General Land Office) notes of an early land subdivision in Idaho County. I discovered that the original land surveyors recorded many of the features occurring on the landscape, such as, trails, structures and fields. Thus began my interest in the history of Native and Euro-American history in Idaho County.

For the past several years I have mapped numerous Native American trails, and wagon roads that crisscrossed the Camas Prairie. The following work is the first route I have assessed which meets the standards of the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office.

It is my hope that this assessment inspires others to take in interest in the history of Idaho County and Central Idaho as a whole.

Between 1867 and 1920 the General Land Office contracted with private surveyors to lay out and survey the Township and Range Lines in Idaho County, Idaho. In addition to recording their measurements and bearings, they also recorded other features that existed on the landscape. These old hand written notes have now become a treasure trove of historic information.

As the surveyors moved along each section line they measured and recorded wagon roads, Indian trails, cabins, fences, fields, and on occasion features like an Indian village and the breast works and rife pits where the Battle of the Clearwater was fought. In some instances when recording a cabin site they even recorded the person's name that lived there. They also recorded the names of major routes and trails, which has allowed me to identify the Lewiston to Florence Trail, the Lewiston to Elk City Trail and the Lewiston to Mountain House (Mount Idaho) Wagon Road.

By taking these notes I was able to plot the exact locations where these wagon roads and trails crossed the section lines of the various townships, which includes the direction of travel. It is then possible to project the location of these trails between the known points, which is why I chose to use contour maps. Cabins and other features were tied to by distance and bearing from specific locations along the lines being run.