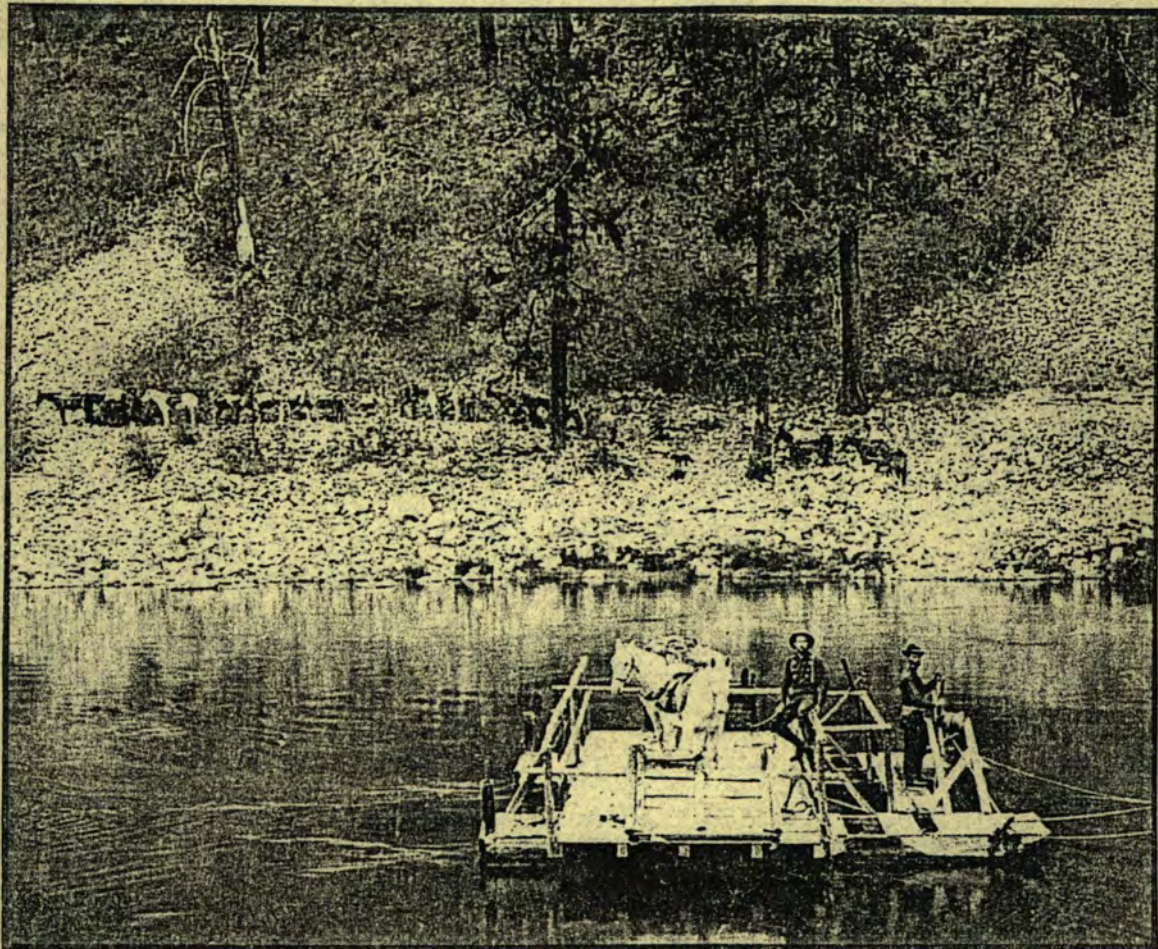


Campbell's Ferry

A Historic Site in Idaho's
Salmon River Wilderness

by Peter Preston



CAMPBELL'S FERRY WITH W.A. STONEBRAKER PACK TRAIN, 1903

HERITAGE PROGRAM, PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST
FOREST SERVICE, INTERMOUNTAIN REGION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AUGUST 2002

Campbell's Ferry

A Historic Site in Idaho's
Salmon River Wilderness

by Peter Preston



CAMPBELL'S FERRY WITH W.A. STONEBRAKER PACK TRAIN, 1903

HERITAGE PROGRAM, PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST
FOREST SERVICE, INTERMOUNTAIN REGION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AUGUST 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Three Blaze Trail to Thunder Mountain	1
William Campbell	3
Warren E. Cook	3
Bad Luck Owners	6
Robert A. Hilands	6
Joseph Zaubmiller	6
Frances Zaubmiller Wisner	6
Frances as Journalist	8
Frances as Bridge Builder	9
Frances as Wilderness Activist	9
Latter Day Owners of Campbell's Ferry	10
Appendix 1: A Wilderness Essay by Frances Zaubmiller	13
References Cited	15
Illustrations:	
Photo, Campbell's Ferry, 1903	Cover
Map, General Location, Chamberlain-Big Creek	2
Survey Plat, Campbell's Ferry, 1919	4
Photo, Campbell's Ferry Ranch, 1952	5
Photos, Campbell's Ferry Scenes, 1952	7
Photos, Campbell's Ferry Scenes, 2000	11-12

Campbell's Ferry: A Historic Site in Idaho's Salmon River Wilderness

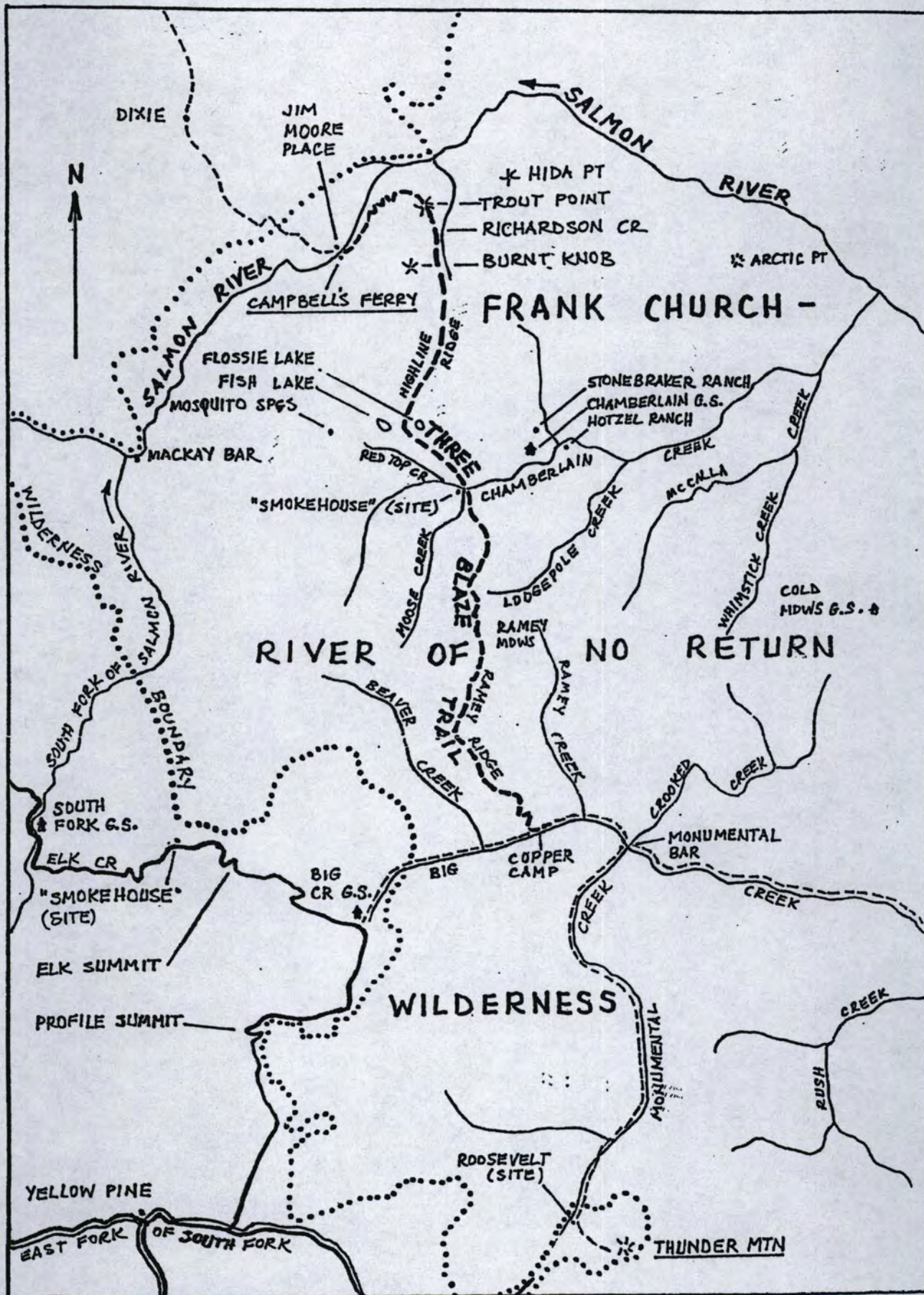
by Peter Preston

Introduction

The Campbell's Ferry Ranch is located on the south bank of the Salmon River, 48 air miles east (up river) from Riggins, Idaho. The 85-acre property is a privately-owned enclave surrounded by the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness. The property is so named because William Campbell established a home site there by 1897 and built a cable-drawn ferry by 1900. Although the property has had a number of owners, and the ferry was replaced by a pack bridge in 1956, it continues to be known as Campbell's Ferry. The ranch has no road access; however, it can be reached by trail and river boat, and has a short airstrip. The Campbell's Ferry Ranch is historically significant as a strategic river crossing for access to the Chamberlain Basin highlands, and as the beginning point of the Three Blaze Trail which was one of the primary routes to Thunder Mountain during the gold rush of 1900. An area location map is on Page 2.

Three Blaze Trail to Thunder Mountain

In 1896 gold was discovered at Thunder Mountain, south of Big Creek, near the head of Monumental Creek. By 1900 a gold rush had begun, with the initial access to the area via Warren and the South Fork, crossing into the Big Creek drainage and up Monumental Creek, to Thunder Mountain. The trail to Thunder Mountain via the South Fork crossing was long and difficult. To accommodate the many prospectors going to Thunder Mountain from northern Idaho, a more direct route via Dixie was desired. In early 1900, \$3000 was collected by subscription and paid to four men to establish what became known as the "Three Blaze Trail" across the Chamberlain Basin wilderness to link up with the existing Monumental Creek trail to Thunder Mountain (Elsensohn 1951:457). The four men were William "Bill" Campbell, William Allen "Al" Stonebraker, Harry Donahue, and August Hotzel. Al Stonebraker had a large pack train operation supplying miners in the Gospel Hump mining area on the north side of the Salmon River, and the others are believed to have been associated with the Stonebraker business. The Three Blaze trail originated at Bill Campbell's place on the Salmon River. The trail climbed up the steep Salmon River canyon wall in a series of switchbacks into the Richardson Creek drainage, crossed Chamberlain Basin on high ridges, then dropped down to Big Creek to join the existing trail to Thunder Mountain (Preston 1995:1-2). As the gold rush reached its peak in the spring of 1902, over 150 prospectors were camped in tents at Campbell's place, awaiting the snow to dissipate on the high Chamberlain plateau (Wells 1983:149). Jim Moore, who had a ranch on the opposite side of the river, reported nearly 1800 men had crossed the river on the ferry from 1900 to 1902. (Hockaday 1968:7).



CHAMBERLAIN-BIG CREEK GENERAL LOCATION MAP

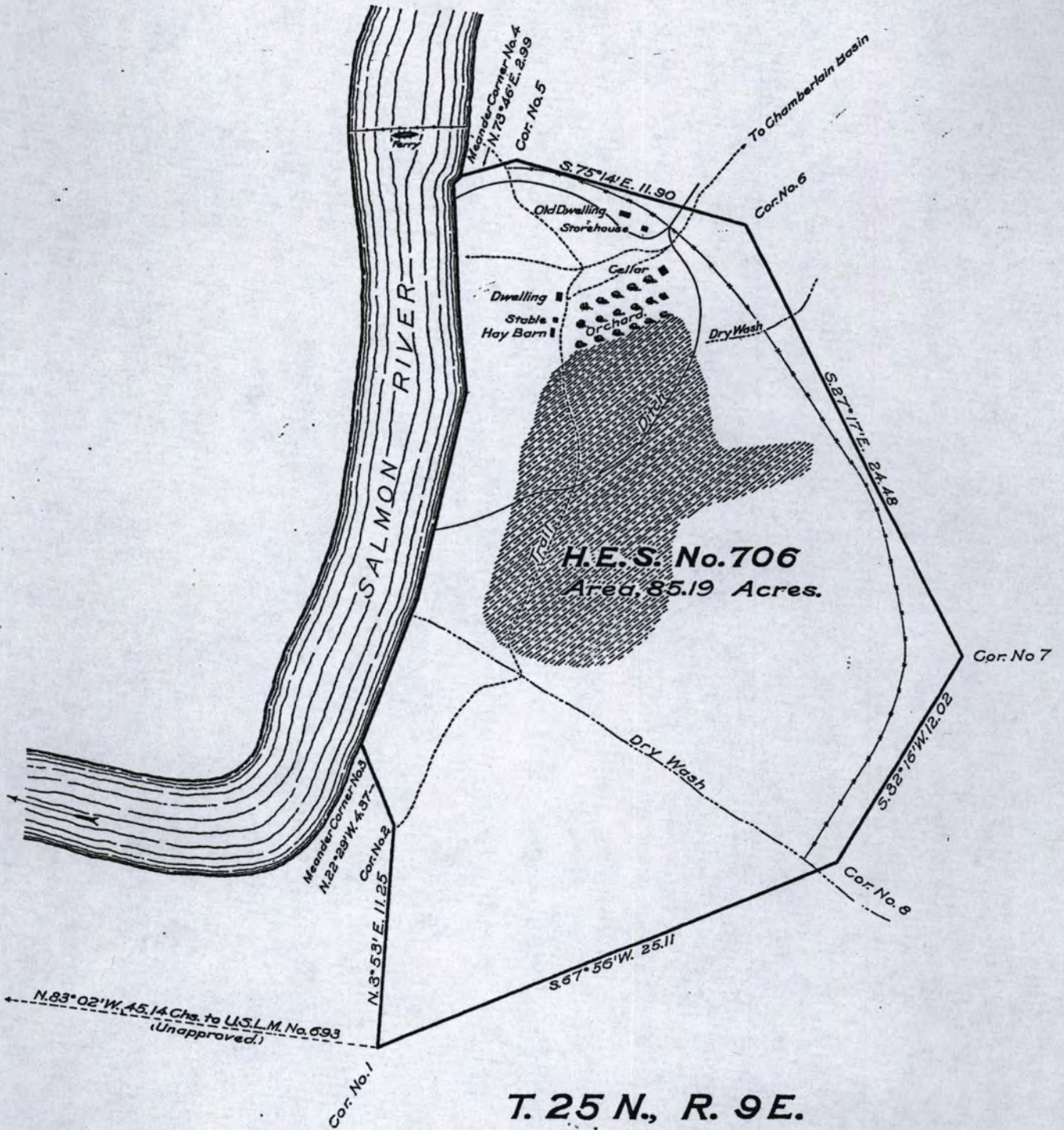
William Campbell

William "Bill" Campbell was born in 1868, the son of William (Sr) and Sarah Campbell who were school teachers in Elk River, a Clearwater River mining town in the backwoods of Idaho County (U.S. Census 1880, Idaho County, Idaho). In a 1902 newspaper interview, Bill indicated he had been prospecting in the Thunder Mountain country since 1896 (Idaho County Free Press [ICFP], May 8, 1902). His route of travel from Elk City must have been down the Dixie trail, crossing the Salmon River at the current ferry site. By 1897 Bill had established a squatter's claim and had built a cabin on a high bench across from the Jim Moore ranch which was settled in 1898 (McCormick 1923:1). As an essential element in the establishment of the Three Blaze Trail, Campbell constructed a toll ferry at his cabin site in 1900, as shown in the photo on the cover page (photo by Al Stonebraker, from Donna Henderson collection). Campbell died in transit from Thunder Mountain to the ferry in the winter of 1902-1903, reportedly lost in a snowstorm at the head of Lodgepole Creek, but his body was never found. Campbell's will left his squatter's claim and ferry to C. Eugene Churchill who lived four miles up river at Little Mallard Creek, now the Whitewater Ranch.

Warren E. Cook

Warren Cook (1876-1951), a veteran of the Spanish-American War, was post-master at Elk City when he met widowed school teacher Rose Bernardi Aiken. Warren was 27 and Rose was 40 when they married on June 22, 1903. Warren had heard that Campbell's Ferry was for sale, so they took a look and bought the place from Eugene Churchill in the late summer of 1903, believing that the ferry would produce a good income from the traffic going to and from Thunder Mountain. In the early months of 1905, at age 42, Rose became pregnant. In October Rose became seriously ill and probably had a stroke. Jim Moore and Eugene and Ella Churchill came to assist. Rose's child, quite probably not full term, was stillborn. Five days later, Rose died on October 12, 1905. Rose and her child were buried by Warren Cook on the far side of the meadow, south of the Cook's cabin (Deinhardt-Hill 2001:66-68). The earlier account of this event in The River of No Return is incorrect (Carrey and Conley 1978:163).

Several months prior to Rose's death, on May 31, 1905, Warren Cook made a homestead application for the Campbell's Ferry property (Payette National Forest Application No. 6), signed by Chamberlain Forest Ranger David Laing. David Laing was from Salubria, Idaho, and probably became a friend of Warren Cook, as there were few people living in the wilderness. Rose's death devastated Warren Cook and he began to see that the traffic crossing the ferry was waning rapidly as the Thunder Mountain gold rush began to fade. Circumstances suggest that Laing encouraged Cook to apply for the Forest Service ranger's job at Chamberlain that was soon to be vacated by Laing. Warren Cook did become the Chamberlain Deputy Ranger in the spring of 1907. Cook canceled his home-





CAMPBELL'S FERRY RANCH ON THE LEFT, LOOKING
SOUTHWEST; JIM MOORE RANCH ACROSS THE RIVER
(PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST PHOTO: JULY 8, 1952)

stead application and sold his interest in Campbell's Ferry to Edward Oscar Eakin who immediately sold it again to Ernest "Fred" Sillge in October 1907. (Preston 1999:6, Preston 2001:11). Warren Cook remarried in 1908, subsequently resigned from the Forest Service, and became a very successful businessman in McCall.

Bad Luck Owners

Fred Sillge took possession of Campbell's Ferry in October, 1907, and he operated the ferry for a number of years. Fred Sillge made a homestead application for the property in 1919, which resulted in the survey plat on page 4. However, Fred and William Sorrel drowned in the river in June, 1921, when the cable trolley in which they were riding was struck by a floating snag, dumping them into the swollen river. Al Stonebraker, whose ranch was near the Chamberlain Ranger Station, and two other visitors were witness to the tragedy. Fred Sillge's former partner Sam Myers was named administrator of Fred's estate, but Sam died in the autumn of 1921 when he fell from his horse while en route to Dixie to get his winter supplies.

Robert A. Hilands

Bob Hilands (often misspelled) was appointed administrator of Myers's estate. Bob took possession of Campbell's Ferry in the spring of 1922. He was probably a fishing and hunting guide for spending money, as there was not enough use of the ferry to be considered an income. The ranch, however, was virtually a self-sustaining place with a few head of cattle, hay, pasturage, and almost year-round garden crops. Robert A. Hilands received a patent on the Campbell's Ferry 85-acre property on July 29, 1927 (McCormick 1923; U.S. General Land Office records).

Joseph Z aunmiller

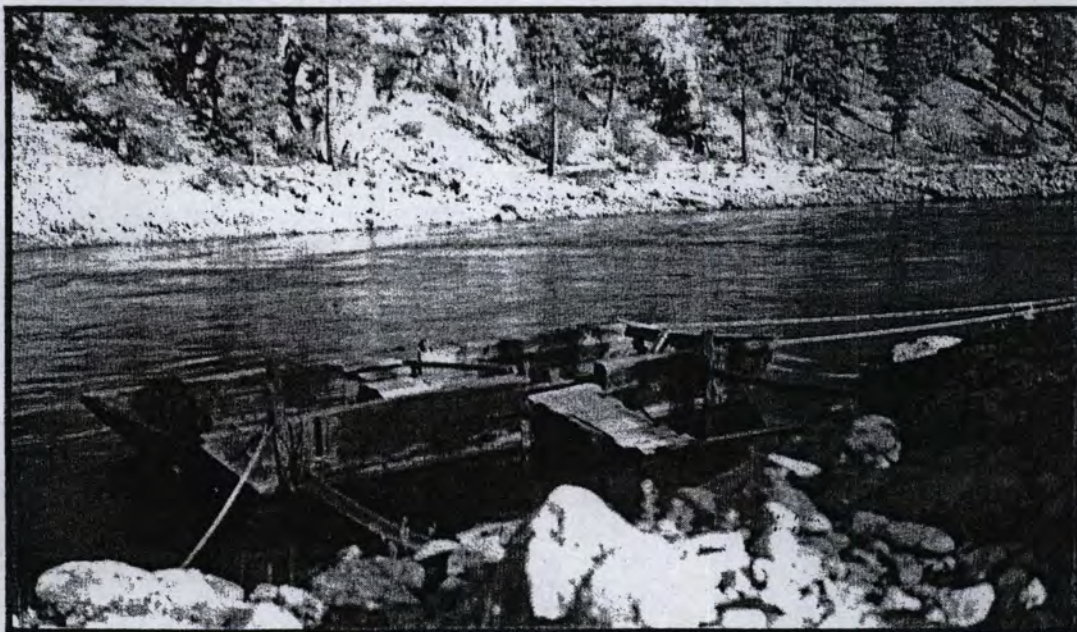
Joe Z aunmiller (1891-1962) and first wife Emma had the Harbison Ranch on the Salmon River, which they purchased in 1926. They came to Campbell's Ferry in 1933 to work with Bob Hilands, seeing a better opportunity at that location. By 1935 the Z aunmiller's had acquired a half interest in the property and, concurrently, Bob Hilands departed Campbell's Ferry. Emma Z aunmiller died in 1938, reportedly from a head injury as a result of striking a tree limb while on horseback. Joe was making a living as a Forest Service packer, and as a guide for fishermen and big game hunters. Joe's primary big game hunting camp was at the Shake Cabin site, on the Three Blaze Trail, in the head of Richardson Creek.

Frances Z aunmiller Wisner

Lydia Frances Coyle (1913-1986) came to the Salmon River country in September 1939, from Texas, seeking a new start on life. She was hired to assist the aging Harry Donahue as caretaker at the Stonebraker Ranch in Chamberlain



**JOE AND FRANCES ZAUNMILLER IN FRONT OF THEIR RESIDENCE AT
THE CAMPBELL'S FERRY RANCH (FOREST SERVICE PHOTO, 1952)**



**THE FERRY, OPERATED BY ZAUNMILLERS
(FOREST SERVICE PHOTO, 1952)**

Basin. Frances soon met widower Joe Zaubmiller and married him on November 29, 1942. Although Frances was a gregarious person, she readily adapted to the semi-isolation of Campbell's Ferry. She became very adept at gardening and tending to the guests of the ranch.

In the early 1950s a short airstrip with a very steep pitch was marked out on a pasture on the east side of the property. The airstrip could accommodate the Johnson Flying Service Travelair with experienced mountain pilots, such as Bob Fogg and Jim Larkin. The Travelair brought in supplies and paying guests, including my father for steelhead fishing in 1959 and 1960. The Travelair was a lifeline for Frances for her medical treatments after being diagnosed with throat cancer in the early 1950s. While in McCall, waiting for the weather to break so she could fly home to the river, Frances stayed at the old Yacht Club Hotel (Sally Preston, pers. comm. 2002).

Mail was not brought to Campbell's Ferry by air until the Salmon River Star Route was inaugurated on February 18, 1958 (ICFP, March 12, 1959). Prior to that time mail was brought overland from Elk City via Dixie by trail. Overland winter mail deliveries were sporadic and were made with difficulty, using dogsleds and snowshoes. Voice communication during the early days was by the Forest Service open wire system, connected to the summer-occupied Dixie Ranger Station. In the winter the telephone line was plugged through to Elk City, but the line was down frequently as a result of heavy snow and falling trees. In the 1950s, most river residents, including the Zaubmillers, acquired two-way radios.

Tranquil life on the river ended for Joe Zaubmiller on January 3, 1962, when he died of heart failure at age 70. One of his pall bearers was Jim Hockaday, Assistant Supervisor of the Payette National Forest (ICFP, Jan 12, 1962). Not one to live alone, Frances married long-term friend and river neighbor Vernon Wisner on May 2, 1963. Frances and Vern continued their idyllic life on the river until arteriosclerosis led to his death on March 13, 1974, at age 81 (ICFP, March 20, 1974). Frances continued to live alone on the river until shortly before her death on January 7, 1986, after a 30-year battle with throat cancer. Frances was a very observant woman, had a compassion for wildlife and wilderness preservation, and left a great legacy which is only partially described in the following paragraphs.

Frances as Journalist

Frances began writing about life on the river as early as 1945, with occasional letters to the editor of the Idaho County Free Press, published at Grangeville. In the early 1950s, Frances began writing a weekly column for the newspaper

which was carried for 30 years. Toward the end of her life, a selection of Frances' newspaper articles were brought together in book form as My Mountains: Where the River Still Runs Downhill, with a post-mortem publication in 1987 by the Idaho County Free Press. Newspaper staffer Donna Henderson was the editor of the book and brought it to fruition (Zaunmiller-Wisner 1987). In the book-making process, Donna Henderson received as a gift the diary of Frances Zaunmiller Wisner, which has much more detail about life on the river and her personal life than is covered by her newspaper columns.

Frances as Bridge Builder

In the early 1950s Frances began a persistent plea with the staff of the Payette National Forest, from Chamberlain District Ranger Val Simpson to Forest Supervisor Jack Kooch, to have the ferry boat replaced with a pack bridge, citing safety and better access to what was then the Idaho Primitive Area. The answer to her plea was always, "there is no money," and "the Primitive Area rules do not permit bridges." Not to be dissuaded, Frances put paper in her typewriter and wrote to everyone about the need for a pack bridge. Her letters to Idaho's Senator Henry Dworshak and Congresswoman Gracie Pfost got the action needed, a special Congressional appropriation and approval to build the bridge. The bridge building began in late 1955 and was completed on April 5, 1956. Chet Olsen, Regional Forester from Ogden, Utah, cut the opening ribbon and Frances cracked a bottle of champagne on the new bridge (ICFP, April 7, 1956). A result of the construction of the bridge to replace the ferry was a trail right-of-way granted to the Forest Service across the Campbell's Ferry property. The efforts of Frances Zaunmiller Wisner that brought the bridge into being were memorialized on June 25, 1994, with the bridge being named in her honor. Her friend Donna Henderson started the action on the memorial and followed it to completion.

Frances as Wilderness Activist

In her newspaper articles, Frances regularly wrote about the beauty of her surroundings and the wildlife she saw. She brought to her readers' attention the unique qualities of the Idaho Primitive Area at her back door, which later became the Frank Church -River of No Return Wilderness. She was appalled that hunting was permitted from aircraft, so she proposed to the Idaho state legislature that aircraft hunting be outlawed (ICFP, March 3, 1963). Her bill was established as law on March 7, 1963. In the process of her writing to politicians about the need for a bridge at Campbell's Ferry (noted above), Frances wrote an eloquent description of the Idaho wilderness, which was included in the Congressional Record, and is included as an appendix to this paper.

Latter Day Owners of Campbell's Ferry

Dr. Richard Forney, a Boise gynecologist now long retired, had a summer home on the west side of Payette Lake (S. Preston, pers. comm. 2002). Dr. Forney had a professional friend, Dr. John Crowe, of Redding, California, whom he introduced to Joe and Frances Zaubmiller in 1959. Dr. Crowe and wife Mary fell in love with Campbell's Ferry and offered to buy the property as their exclusive "get away" place, but allowing the Zaubmiller's to live there the remainder of their lives. The Crowe's visited the property regularly but infrequently, so after Joe Zaubmiller's death in 1962, Frances and second husband Vern Wisner had the place largely to themselves. Soon after the death of Frances in 1986, Dr. Crowe, who was himself becoming too old to enjoy the place, donated the property to the Trust for Public Land (TPL).

The Campbell's Ferry property sat vacant for several years and the buildings began to deteriorate. TPL, with the assistance of the Idaho Heritage Trust and the Idaho Centennial Commission, did some very basic preservation work on the buildings (Pace, pers. comm. Aug 11, 2000). Subsequently, a purchase agreement was worked out with a group of Boise businessmen, headed by Joe R. Denton, which provided for non-commercial ownership of the property. Denton and his associates are in the process of restoring the buildings (Denton, pers. comm. Aug 2000). Although the Campbell's Ferry Ranch is privately owned, the Payette National Forest has the responsibility, by agreement, for protecting the historic buildings from wildfire originating on surrounding National Forest land. I visited Campbell's Ferry in July 2000 to make a photographic record of the historic buildings; the photos were provided to the Heritage Program Office of the Payette National Forest.



**CAMPBELL'S FERRY DWELLING, LOOKING WEST
TOWARD SALMON RIVER (PRESTON PHOTO, 2000)**



**STABLE, WEST OF DWELLING WHICH IS HIDDEN
BY LARGE TREE (PRESTON PHOTO, 2000)**



**HAY BARN AT CAMPBELL'S FERRY RANCH, NORTH-
EAST OF DWELLING (PRESTON PHOTO, 2000)**



**FRANCES ZAUNMILLER WISNER MEMORIAL PACK
BRIDGE ON SALMON RIVER (PRESTON PHOTO, 2000)**

APPENDIX 1

"The Soul of Man Needs a Quiet Place" A Wilderness Essay by Frances Zaunmiller

Back in the days when the United States was a richer nation, there were men, both in and out of Washington, who did not have cataracts in their minds' eyes. They could see the time coming when a tree would not be a tree, but it would board feet for the saw or pulp mill. They saw the future when a creek would not be a place to cool tired feet, nor would a river be for people to play with fishing gear. No, they saw a time coming when these United States would be so poor that creeks and rivers would only be recognized as water power and could not be used as playthings.

Those men were not blind, nor were they stupid. They knew that the soul of man still needs the Stillness of forested mountains and canyons. So, after long deliberation and due process of law, the Primitive Area of Idaho came into being. It is a place where trees grow that were not planted, and a person can walk among them without trespassing. It is for spending a day or a week, or as long as needed, to soak into one's being the Stillness of the mountains that brings healing peace of mind. It is a place where creeks run free and clear, with fish in the quiet pools.

While he sits on the trunk of a fallen tree and eats his lunch, a man can look at all that is around him. If his mind is not closed to understanding, he can hear the voice of the Stillness in the mountains. And he can listen to the story of how the half-rotten tree trunk he is using for both chair and table came to be there, at the edge of the clearing.

No, the trees are not planted in the Primitive Area, and yet they grow, even the tiny little one, so small you'd think something would step on it and it would be crushed. But it has a toughness not dreamed of in the nursery rows and it will grow, each year lighting candles to the spring. The day will come when the tree will be a monarch of the mountains, tall and straight with slender strength, asking only for its top in the sun while the rich brown dirt covers its feet. And still it grows, offering shelter from sun and storm to both two- and four-legged people, and the ones that fly and wear feathers. The tree only grows and asks for little, until a summer storm comes over and it bows its head to pray, even as you and I:

"Let not the thunder notice me and call my name, for then the lightning will find my place and use my length as a path for its journey to its marriage with Earth.

"Let not the wind twist my branches, for should they break and fall to Earth, the nest that they shelter will be broken.

"Let not the wind and rain come together, else the dirt will be washed from my roots and the wind will bend my body, and I will fall to Earth, no longer a tree.

"let me pass safely through this storm, as through those in the past, so that I might give shade and shelter as I have done in the past."

And the man sitting on the trunk of the fallen tree sees the nest of the grouse in the tangled branches. He hears the squeak of a mouse that has built its home in the dry needles. A chipmunk comes from somewhere to clean up the crumbs that have fallen from his lunch. And the man takes that part of the Stillness with him, even after he has been long gone from the mountains.

No, it was not a wasteful United States that set aside the Primitive Area of yesterday and today and tomorrow. Even as the belly needs meat and bread, so does the soul need a quiet place apart from cities and people, to reach an understanding with the inner being. It is for this that they made the Primitive Area: a gift to you and your children who are not yet born, to play in and keep for all time, yours.

[A note by Peter Preston: This eloquent essay was written by Frances Zaunmiller in 1954, as a supporting document for her successful request to the Congress of the United States for the pack bridge that replaced the antiquated ferry used to cross the Salmon River at her Campbell's Ferry ranch in the Idaho Primitive Area. The Idaho Primitive Area, established in 1931, was the basis for the larger Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness, established in 1980. The pack bridge was completed in 1956 and was named in her honor in 1994. She was a strong-willed woman who knew how to use our written language with clarity and to great advantage.]

References Cited

Carrey, John and Cort Conley

1978 River of No Return, Back Eddy Books, Cambridge ID

Deinhardt-Hill, Kathy

2001 Spirits of the Salmon River, Back Eddy Books, Cambridge ID

Denton, Joe R.

2000 August, pers. comm., correspondence pertaining to ownership of Campbell's Ferry property

Elsensohn, Mary Alfreda

1951 Pioneer Days in Idaho County (Vol II), Caxton Printers, Caldwell ID

Hockaday, James

1968 History of Payette National Forest, USDA Forest Service, Payette National Forest, McCall ID

Idaho County Free Press, newspaper published at Grangeville ID

1902 May 8 interview with William Campbell

1945 to 1985, newspaper articles by and about Frances Zaunmiller Wisner that became the basis for her book noted below.

McCormick, William C.

1923 Three Year report on Homestead Claim (H.E. 023803, Ernest F. Sillge) Historic homestead files in Heritage Program Office, USDA Payette National Forest, McCall ID

Pace, Gaetha L.

2000 August 11, pers. comm., pertaining to Idaho Heritage Trust activities on Campbell's Ferry property.

Preston, Peter

1995 Chamberlain Basin's Historic Three Blaze Trail, Heritage Program monograph, USDA Forest Service, Payette National Forest, McCall ID

1999 Payette National Forest: Chamberlain Administrative Site History, Heritage Program monograph, USDA Forest Service, Payette National Forest, McCall ID

2001 An Outline of the Cultural History of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, Heritage Program monograph, USDA Forest Service, Payette National Forest, McCall ID

Preston, Sally

2002 August 31; Interview with Peter Preston

U.S. Bureau of the Census

1880 Idaho Territorial Census, Idaho County, Elk City District

U.S. Dept of Agriculture, Forest Service

Homestead applications in historical records file of Heritage Program Office, Payette National Forest, McCall ID

U.S. Dept of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Idaho homestead patents, available on Internet.

Wells, Merle W.

1983 Gold Camps and Silver Cities, (2nd Edition), Bulletin 22, Idaho Bureau
of Mines and Geology, Moscow ID

Wisner, Frances Zaubmiller (Edited by Donna L. Henderson)

1987 My Mountains: Where the River Still Runs Downhill, Idaho County Free
Press, Grangeville ID