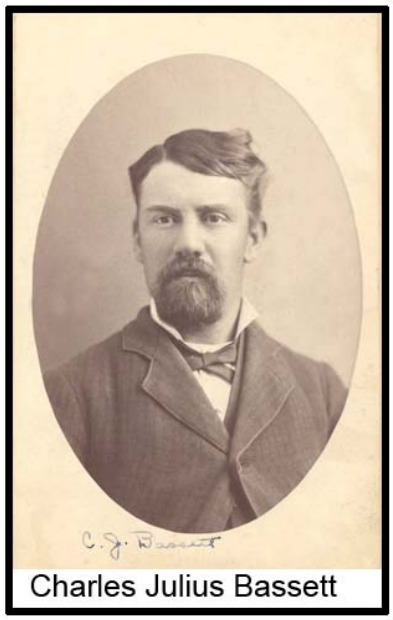
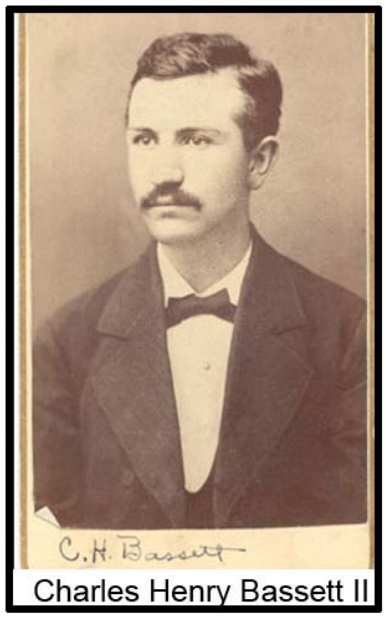
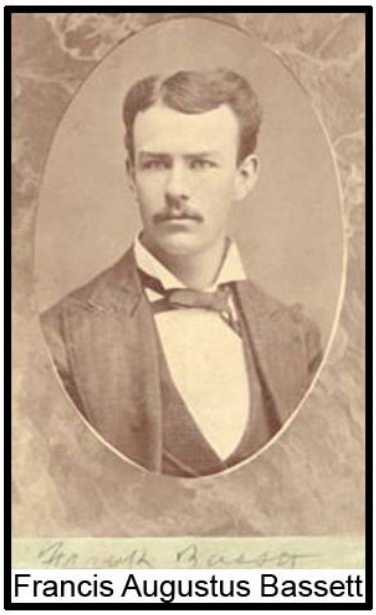
Bassett Bros. Stage Line

1880 - 1898

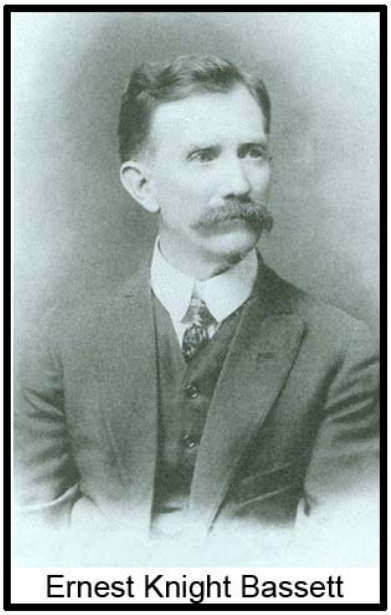
The Union Pacific Railroad aggressively advertised Yellowstone Park to attract tourists and investors. Charles Henry Bassett's sons obtained a contract from the railroad for a stage line from the railhead at Beaver Canyon (just above the present Spencer on I15), near the Idaho-Montana line, to Yellowstone Park. The brothers and half brothers were Charles Julius (29), Charles Henry II (25), Francis Augustus (Frank) (24), William Henry (22), Ernest Knight (19), and Fred Clayton (15). The numbers after the names are their ages in 1880 about the time the stage line was started. Their ages when the pictures were taken are not known.


Charles Julius Bassett


Charles Henry Bassett II


Francis Augustus Bassett

William Henry Bassett

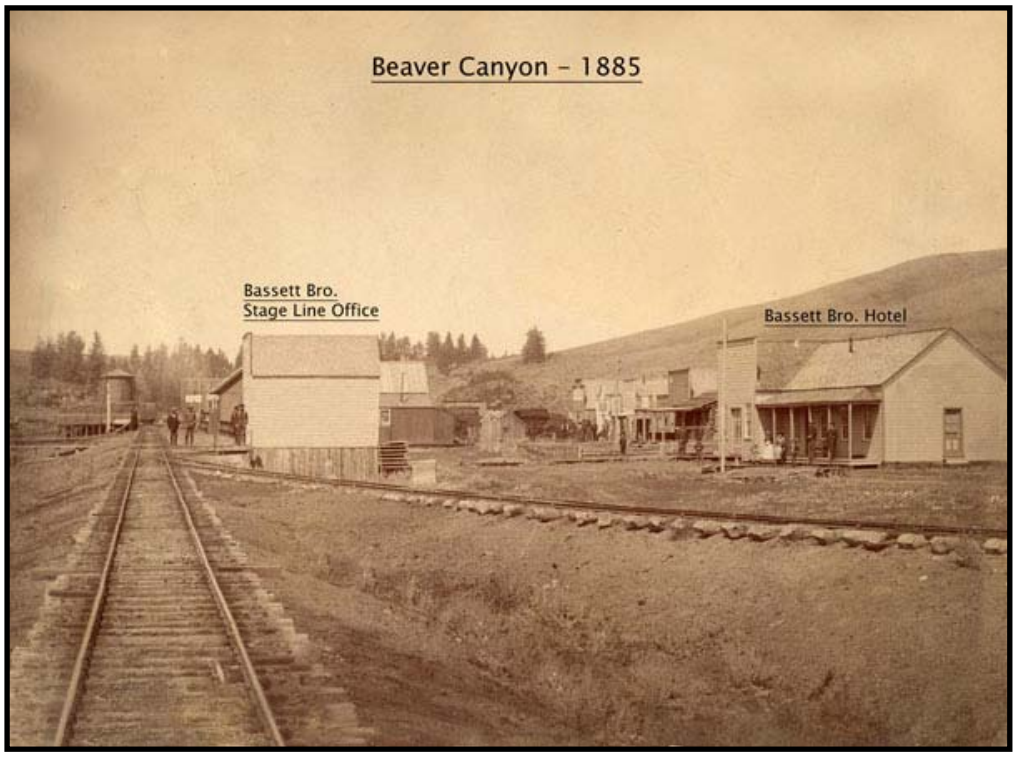

Ernest Knight Bassett

Fred Clayton Bassett

The stage line appears to have begun operation in 1881. In their newspaper advertisement in the Salt Lake Daily Herald on 9 July 1882 (attached) they offered "Light Spring Wagons, Good Teams, and Smooth Road. Good Hunting and Fishing anywhere on the road." They also owned a hotel and saloon at Beaver. The stage line had began with a office in Beaver (shown in the picture below). Later there was an office at Monida and a route from Camas to the Kilgore region.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

They ran 25 Concord coaches and a herd of about 60 horses. The horse herd was first wintered in Cedar Fort, Utah then in the Trout Creek, Idaho area as those homesteads were developed. Beaver began as a road to the gold fields then grew into a large lumber camp and railroad terminus. It was a heavily populated busy place during the 1880's. In 1887 it began to decline as the railroad moved north to Monida and beyond and because of better-located settlements elsewhere. Businesses and people drifted to a new location six miles south named Spencer after the founder. Only a historical marker on the old Beaver town site survives today. There still some business and homes at Spencer.



Yellowstone Park was established in 1872. Over the next several years the Department of the Interior tried to find ways to protect the Park from "opportunists" who "sought to take advantage of the attractions of Yellowstone Park". In 1886 "The Secretary of the Interior comes to realize the hopelessness of trying to keep opportunists from ruining the Park in the face of recent Park superintendents who appeared unconcerned about vandalism and poaching. The Interior department asks the US Army to intervene, and Yellowstone came under military jurisdiction, which gradually brought order back into the Park." See http://www.yellowstone.net/history/earlyyears.htm.

The first surviving government documentation with the Bassett Bros. is a letter (attached) from the Department of Interior in 1887 to Captain Moses Harris who was the Acting Superintendent of the Park. To quote: "As it appears from your endorsement that their stage line affords the only connection by which the travel over the Union Pacific R. R. system can reach the Park you are hereby authorized to permit Bassett Bros., to continue to furnish transportation, as requested." There are other letters back and forth requesting, granting and denying permission to do certain things. The last surviving letter, July 1, 1890, is from William Henry to a customer who believed he had been overcharged arguing that he had not been overcharged and that he had done the stage line an injustice complaining to the Park Superintendent.

The following are applications or permits by the Bassett Brothers in Yellowstone Park (http://home.nps.gov/yell/historyculture/upload/appendix-2.pdf):

03/03/83 Bassett Brothers; erect hotel at either Upper Geyser Basin or other points.

07/26/84 Bassett Brother; Beaver Canyon, Idaho; put up office, stable and cut about 5 tons of hay at Fire Hole Basin for passenger business.

1885 • Bassett Brothers permit to operate stables and corrals at Lower Geyser Basin.

Fire Hole Basin, in Lower Geyser Basin, was 100 miles from Beaver. Routing to the Park is shown on the attached map. A copy of an original ticket in 1883 showing waypoints and distances is attached. An excerpt from Side Roads describing the route is also attached. The route went northeast from Beaver around Signal Peak then southeast to Indian Springs (Kilgore). It then went east to the Snake River (Henry's Fork) where passengers stayed over night at Hotel Creek. The next day they traveled past Henry's Lake to Riverside and into Fire Hole Basin. The tour of the Park was over 150 miles and took five days. Passengers could stay longer at any place in the Park, picking up a later stage. They could also hire a private conveyance. The first fares to and from Fire Hole Basin were $25. Including food and a Park tour the cost was $150. There were stage stations along the way and a post office at Henry's Lake.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

In the 1880's Park authorities built a cutoff road from Riverside (5 miles east of the west Park entrance) over the hills to Firehole Basin. In 1886 the Bassett Bros. were making a new road from Camas Meadows to Riverside. These changes shortened the journey to Firehole by about 40 miles. Mary Bradshaw Richards, in her letters in 1882, describes roads in the Park as "stumps set singly or in clumps at every hitable position, steep pitches both short and long, terminating invariably in bog holes or a yard of corduroy, and perpendicular or soft bottomless approaches to the frequent fords . . ." Trees along the roadway were not removed but cut off to leave stumps that cleared the wagon axels.

Stage Station at Indian Springs (Kilgore)

Stables at Indian Springs (Kilgore)

The station house and stable at Indian Springs existing today are shown in the two pictures above, taken in 2008. This station house was built in 1913 near the original station house, which was built of logs like the stable. Googlieb Rasmussen homesteaded the land and built the stable. The name "Indian Springs", shown on the ticket, has disappeared. In a letter received September 29, 2008 from Eileen Bennett of Dubois she states the following: "We know that Bassett had a stage line from Beaver Canyon into Camas Meadows with a noon stop at Rasmussen's because of our (her) family history. You say, from your records on the tickets that they went to Indian Springs, the place where the stage stopped. Now then, the name Kilgore wasn't known yet. The name Indian Springs would have been. It would have been a place people using that area would have known, maybe by white people because the Indians used Camas Meadows in the summer for hunting, fishing and gathering Camas bulbs."

Stage Stop at Camas Creek

"While the early post office was in the Churchill home, it was soon moved to Rasmussen's because the Churchill's moved. When they got there own post office they were given the name Kilgore. . . . I've been wondering what the area could have been referred to before it was Kilgore and it certainly was referred to as Indian Springs . . ."

The station house is located about one and one half miles northwest of Kilgore. It originally had a columned portico along the front between the two roof stubs where stages loaded and unloaded. The bottom walls, both interior and exterior, of the stable are log. The outside walls are sheathed with long wide vertical planks. The hayloft appears to be pole and beam with some stick framing. The original roofs were probably shakes since there was a large shingle mill in Beaver.

The station house existing today at Camas Creek, taken in 2008, is shown at right. It was probably built about the same time as the Rasmussen house near Kilgore.

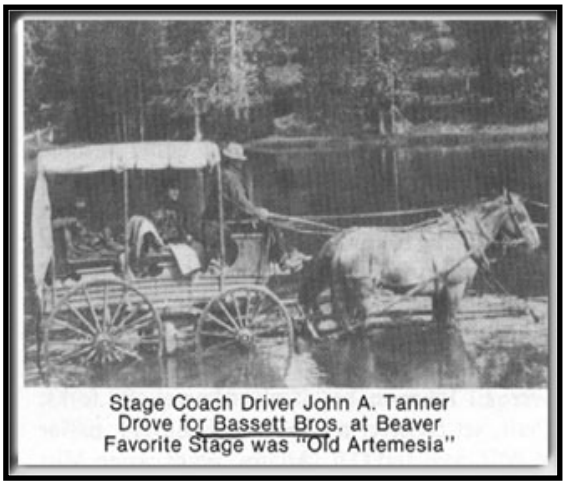
In the 1880's Yellowstone became popular both in the eastern United States and in Europe. Those who could afford it came. They included the wealthy, dignitaries and royalty at every level. The road was primitive and the terrain was rough but spectacular. In those times it was popular to "rough it" and travelers stayed in tents and cooked by open fire.

A stage, driven by John Tanner of the Gentile Valley area is shown in the picture.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

An oral story passed down is that a coach was stopped by robbers who asked the passengers to get down and give them their money and valuables. The travelers thought it was part of the entertainment and jovially "ponied up" thinking they would get it all back later. It was real.

There is another family story, told, not written. It pertains to horses, Chinese poachers, and the law of the west. It happened near one of the way stations where a number of company horses had disappeared, one by one. An investigation revealed that, in a canyon not far away, an encampment of Chinese immigrants, recently laid-off from the copper mines near Butte, were keeping themselves alive on horses from the Bassett herd. The brothers rounded up the "boys", road into the canyon and administered "The Law of the West." One can only imagine.



Stage Coach Driver John A. Tanner
Drove for Bassett Bros. at Beaver
Favorite Stage was "Old Artemesia"

In 1882 Mary Bradshaw Richards and her husband Jesse Richards traveled from their home in New York City to Yellowstone Park. They spent some time in Salt Lake City then traveled to Beaver Canyon aboard the Utah and Northern Railroad. They arrived on July 31, 1882. "At noon of the 31st we reached Beaver Canyon, where our camp life commenced. The village consists of a dozen log houses, two saloons and a big water tank. . . Here are located some half dozen of the Bassett Brothers, fine enterprising fellows of the true pioneer stamp, who undertake to prepare and carry you in and through the National Park in good form; to bring you out all right the way you went in. . . . Our hotel at Beaver Canyon was a little log house, whose door opened almost into the village well. . . Our outfit (two persons) consisted of a wall tent, blankets, buffalo skins, axe, hatchet, nails, ropes, hammer and wheel grease; flour, sugar, lard, ham, eggs packed in oats, canned meats, fruits and jellies; a long-tailed frying pan, bake kettle, coffee pot, tin plates, cups and spoons, knives and forks; a capital driver, an accomplished cook, two large balky horses and lastly the all important spring wagons, canvas-covered, large, strong, rather stiff in the joints, but possessing a fitness for its purpose which we soon learned to appreciate. This outfit cost us eighteen dollars per day. Our driver, Ernest . . ." (Probably Ernest Knight Bassett. He was 21 at that time.)

Beaver Canyon in 1890

1885 — Lee Cafe, L-R: Mr. and Mrs. Morgan and three children, Charlotte Christofferson, Felt Harris, Mrs. Harriett Lee, Chris Barney with Chas. Lee in front, C.H. Bassett, Otto Erickson, little Minnie Lee, Mrs. Minnie Lee, Sam Lee holding son Jasper and Alice Lee on horse

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

"The distance from Beaver Canyon to Lower Geyser basin is about one hundred and ten miles. We are to camp three nights on the route. This, our first night in camp, is in a broad meadow from which the Bassett Brothers have cut a crop of native grass."

"Our tent, white, tight drawn, stands near the margin of a clear creek, across which we see several mink swim. Inside our new home is our furniture, viz.: a bed of blankets folded on a rubber sheet, our hamper for a table, a wagon seat for a sofa, a candle set in a bottle for an electric light, a tin wash basin, soap and towels on a pile of grass for a toilet room - only these and nothing more . . . A campfire, now having finished its blazing, is at work baking bread and boiling coffee and broiling pine-hen and ham. How hungry we are!"

["Camping Out in the Yellowstone, 1882"; Mary Bradshaw Richards, Edited by William W. Slaughter, Univ. of Utah Press, 1994]

Charles Henry II wed Mary (Mollie) Lee of Tooele, Utah in 1877. She was sixteen. They homesteaded in the Trout Creek (Lago), Idaho area first and then persuaded William Henry to file. Molly served as postmaster of their stage office at Henry's Lake from 1885-88. Evidently they spent time at Beaver because their son, Harold, the only Bassett child to do so, was born there. There are stories about the house being so close to the railroad tracks that it shook when the train went by. There is some written history of Alice Lee, the sister of Mary (Mollie) Lee. The following extract tells what life was like in Beaver during the time the Bassett Stage Company was there. It is extracted from her own life story.

"When I was eleven my Mother went to Beaver Canyon with my sister, Mollie Bassett, when her (Mollie's) third child was born. Mother was induced to open a restaurant for the accommodation of the businessmen in the town, some eight in number. That was the beginning of the end. She died with a skillet in her hand. So long as she was in the business of feeding the multitude, I was with her. When she went to Beaver she left me at home (in Tooele) with a housekeeper to look after me, then sent for me. At eleven, mind you, I took the trip from Tooele to Beaver Canyon alone: made a change in Salt Lake for Ogden, Ogden for Pocatello, Pocatello for Beaver Canyon, getting in at 2 o'clock in the morning."

"Beaver Canyon at that time was known far and wide as 'The Dives'. It is so marked on the face of a huge rock leading into town, and believe me, it deserved the name. For nine years my Mother ran the section house. Then she bought her own place of business. Say! Listen! This sounds like the history of my Mother, but I can't tell you anything about myself without including her, as we were never separated until I went to Logan to school for the one winter. In the meantime, I met the redoubtable Calamity Jane. She took her meals with us while in town. Also, Rocky Mountain Mary. She had no legs, only one eye, and parts of her fingers were missing. She had been in an Indian massacre when a baby and left for dead along with her family but someone passing picked her up and raised what was left of the torso. But they had best let her die as she was a notorious horse thief and had a gang of cut throats with her. She made the trip to Beaver to try to get H. H. Spencer to pay her $500 at the time to get her gang to lay off the cattle he was raising at what he called Dairy Canyon. Of course, Spencer told her to get out of that neck of the woods or she and her gang would get hurt. So we heard no more of her."

Julius and Frank also filed for homesteads in the Trout Creek area but appear not to have proven up. The first Bassett Bear River water rights were filed in 1878. Using these homesteads as winter horse range cut travel distance for the herd by half. The family oral history is that the horse herd was driven north through the Grey's Lake area north of Soda Springs to avoid problems further west crossing the Snake River and with the "Indians".

Charles Julius, shown right, was elected Justice of the Peace of Beaver in 1883. He served on the Territorial Grand Jury and in 1898 became the chairman of the Silver Party, and then Idaho Secretary of State in 1901-2.

Francis (Frank) Augustus was the first Beaver Canyon postmaster from 1880-81. Frank and his wife, Ruth, were fine musicians.

Fred Clayton was the railroad agent at Beaver Canyon. He drove the first stagecoach to Yellowstone Park. He was a Brigham Young University graduate. He served as county treasurer and deputy county clerk.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

William Henry managed a store at Cedar Fort, Utah from 1872 to 1876. He married Marrette Cook in 1876. A surviving letter from Will to his father in January 1881 refers to carrying mail for “Marshall” (probably John Marshall) in the Yellowstone Park/Henry Lake area and being snowed in at Fire Hole. There is also a surviving letter from Ernest in February 1881 telling a similar story. Met, with her children, spent summers at Firehole. She probably wintered in Cedar Fort, Utah until the homestead in the Trout Creek area was developed. My stepmother, Lutie, who was Met’s oldest daughter and my mother’s oldest sister, told me about the summers spent in Yellowstone. She would curl her hair with a curling iron heated in the chimney of a coal oil lamp sitting on the kitchen table in front of the window and tell me stories of that time. They lived in a cabin in Fire Hole Basin. They washed clothes and bathed in the hot springs. Indians would come and press their faces against the window to peer inside. The children would be frightened. But Met would sit in her chair, rocking and sewing and paying no attention. She did have a pistol nearby (See “Life of Lutie Marette Bassett Swensen Hansen” for more about this time). The cabins are shown below. The children in the picture at left may be Lutie and Don Bassett, cousins. They were between 6 and 8 years old. Don is the son of Charles Henry II.

Cabins and Cook Tent at Fire Hole Basin

William Henry built a general merchandise store in Lago in 1880. In 1900 he built a larger store. He spent his later life on his ranch in Lago and serving in various elected and appointed positions in Bannock County politics. Charles Henry built a large house across the road from William Henry. Charles (Charlie) spent his later life serving as a Bannock County Commissioner and other elected postions and on his ranch at Lago.

The following is a quote from a newspaper article in 1884. The Mrs. Bassett referred to is probably Marrette (Met) Cook Bassett since she lived in Firehole Basin (lower Geyser Basin in Yellowstone Park) with her family in the summers. She may be the woman by the cook tent in the picture on the right.

The Deseret Evening News Sept 17, 1884.

Strange Country, Geyserland.

"OF ALL THE LOVELY SPOTS to invite the tourist to linger in, none ever seemed so inviting as this one to me. The smooth glassy river swarms with the finest trout; the screech of the wild fowl and the luxuriance of the natural growth of grass and timber; game of the wilder sort, such as elk, bear and deer, roam over the mountains near by. The log hut is embellished with the skins of grizzlies, elk and other animals. This is a good spot to let your own camping outfit have a rest and try the repast served up by Mrs. Bassett in the dinner tent. Trout and venison are the staples, and so stint. Travelers seem to gain wonderful appetites when they reach this place.

One of the attractions here is CATCHING OF TROUT with the spear. A fire of pitch pine wood is placed on an elevated grating in the bow of a fish boat. The light attracts the fish and the nimble operator spears the finny beauties with barbed spears. The night before I arrived there Mister Rea caught 1,002 fish in one night. The lot weighed nearly 1,500 pounds. These are shipped to Butte, Pocatello and other points on the Utah Northern, and must prove very remunerative to the parties interested." (http://idptv.state.id.us/outdoors/shows/henry/reflect.html#2)

The following is extracted from the Fremont County Idaho website:

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

First white men

Andrew Henry and his handful of trappers were the first white men to winter in the country. They left rock markers on Conant Creek near Drummond during their stay in 1810-11 and chiseled their names and the date: A. Henry, J. Hoback, B. Jackson, P. McBride, L. Cather, Sept. 1810, and the initials L.C. on a nearby rock as well as A. Henry on another.

Wilson Price Hunt named the North Fork of the Snake and its lake headwaters for Henry when he arrived in the fall of 1811. The inscriptions, "For Henry, 1811, by Hunt," and "Al the cook with nothing to cook" were found on rocks unearthed over a century later near Egin Bench.

The same Egin Bench was the first settlement when Stephen Winegar and his four sons, George, Willis, Leonard and John, put up the first log shelter during the summer of 1879 when they cut and stacked the wild hay in the river bottoms. Winegar Hole and "Gideon Winegar June, 1882," carved on the cliff beside the Snake River, are reminders of these early settlers.

The towns that later dotted the Delaware-sized county were not even a gleam in the pioneer father's eyes when the first settlers in southern and northern parts of the counties arrived. Richard "Beaver Dick" Leigh - trapper and guide - for whom a lake, a creek and a canyon were named, was the first white man to settle in the southern part of the county.

The frontiersman and Army scout, George Rea, who passed through the Island Park area in 1877, guiding Howard and his troops in pursuit of Chief Joseph and his people, and returned to settle on Shotgun Creek, has a pass, a peak and a post office named for him.

Hotel, stage stop

Rea's post office was one of the stage line stations of the Bassett lines from Spencer to West Yellowstone, Mont., with the Arangee Co. Hotel as a stage stop. The Monida-Yellowstone-Western made the run through Red Rock Pass. The Gilmore-Salisbury stages from Spencer to Yellowstone used Salisbury ranch near Henry's Lake as a stage station. The Arangee Co. Hotel later became the summer home of one of the earliest visitors to appreciate and extol the beauties and potentials of the region, A.S. Trude, the eminent Chicago lawyer. (http://www.co.fremont.id.us/about/history.htm)

A letter (attached) on June 8, 1895 to the Park administration is under the letterhead of the Union Pacific Stage Line with C. J. Bassett as proprietor. From the content of this letter it appears Charles Julius attempted to start a new stage company in connection with the Union Pacific Railroad under his own name since in the letter he refers to licensing, transference of money, and readiness of coaches and drivers. Correspondence continued until 1898. C. J. entered politics about that time and the stage line appears to have ceased operating.

Newspaper articles, extractions from books appended to this history and the references tell more of the Bassett Bros. story. The late 1870's and 1880's were a period of high activity in the Park. Numerous stage lines operated. Roads were built and improved. Hotels and other overnight facilities were built and enlarged. Eating and souvenir businesses were established. Cattle ranches raising beef for the Park and freight lines hauling foodstuffs and other consumer goods were developed. In the 1890's large hotels with several hundred rooms were built.

The army effectively ended vandalism and brought order into the management of the Park. Government regulations became more stringent, striving to reduce damaging effects on the Park and bring order to its use as more people came. Larger, better-financed transportation companies appeared who had the resources to build hotels and other conveniences that made tourist travel more comfortable and attractive. The Bassett's concentrated on their farms, businesses and political offices. The stagecoach business, for them, had ended.

This history has been compiled from the following:

1. Various pictures, histories and information from Grace Newey, Bev Newey and Jane Ruud.
2. Letters and information received from Lee Whittlesey, Yellowstone Park Historian, March 2008
3. Idaho's Gold Road, Chapter XX by H. Leigh Gittins
4. "Camping out in Yellowstone", 1882, Mary Bradshaw Richards, edited by William W. Slaughter, University of Utah Press, 1994.
5. Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series Number 906, 1988, Beaver Canyon.
6. Various history extractions and newspaper articles shown at the end of this history. Sources not always known.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

7. Life of Lutie Marette Bassett Swensen Hansen
8. Life story of William Henry Bassett and Marrette Cook
9. Memories of family members and of local area residents
10. See Robert V. Goss *http://www.geocities.com/geysrbob/Transportation_Hist-Bass.html*
11. Life stories and photos can be found on the website Ourgenerationsancestors.org under "Histories" or "Photos

This history was compiled by Stanley D. Hansen, grandson of William Henry and Met Bassett, in 2008.

1883

BASSETT BROTHERS

BEAVER CANYON, - IDAHO,

PROPRIETORS OF THE DAILY STAGE LINE FROM

BEAVER CANYON TO FIRE HOLE BASIN,

IN THE GREAT

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK,

THE WONDERLAND OF THE WORLD.

FARE TO FIRE-HOLE AND RETURN, - - $35.00.

Light Spring Wagons, Good Teams and Smooth Roads. Careful and Experienced Drivers.

DISTANCES.

From Beaver Canyon

To Indian Springs,	*25 miles.*
" *Snake River,*	*45* "
" *Henry Lake,*	*65* "
" *South Fork,*	*75* "
" *Riverside,*	*85* "
" *Fire Hole Basin,*	*100* "

From Fire-Hole Basin

To Upper Geyser Basin,	*10 miles.*
" *Sulphur Mountains,*	*25* "
" *Yellowstone Lake,*	*30* "
" *Yellowstone Falls,*	*33* "
" *Grand Canyon,*	*35* "
" *Mammoth Hot Springs,*	*50* "

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.

The Shortest and Best Route from the Railroad to the

EDEN OF AMERICA!

On and after June 1, 1882, we shall be prepared to carry all parties from

Beaver Canyon, U. & N. R. R., to National Park.

Light Spring Wagons, Good Teams, and Smooth Road. Good Hunting and Fishing anywhere on the road.

Leave Beaver Canyon every day for Fire Hole Basin. Have experienced drivers, well acquainted with the Park.

Fare to Fire Hole and Return. $25

☞ Parties may return when they desire.

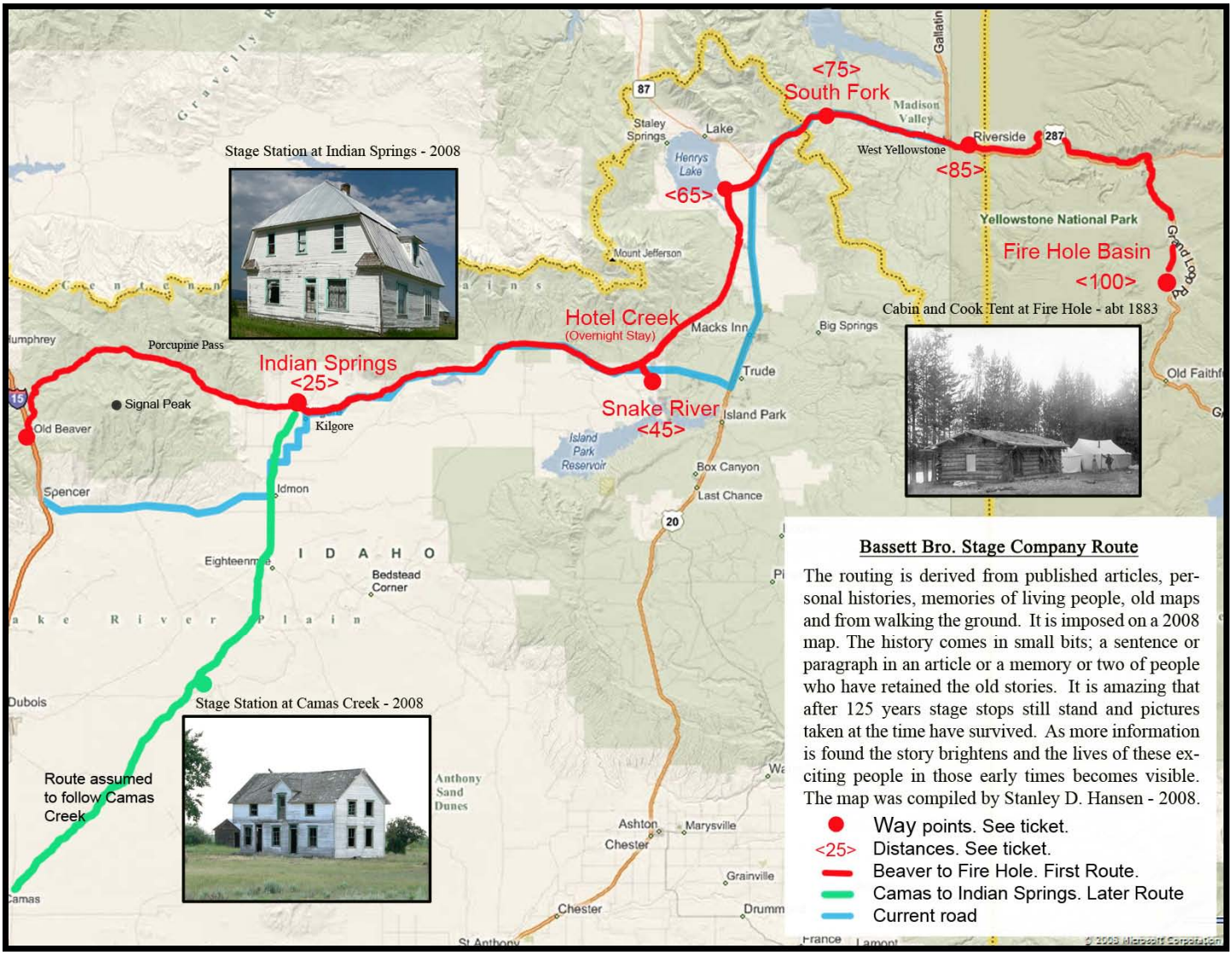
This route is 150 Miles nearer than by Virginia City, and fare $25 less to same point. Parties wishing private conveyances for any period of time, will be accommodated by giving timely notice either by letter or telegraph. For further information, address

BASSETT BROS.,

v18 BEAVER CANYON, IDAHO

Salt Lake Daily Hearld
Sun 9 Jun 1882

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association



© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

24

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

WASHINGTON, July 27th, 1887.

Captain Moses Harris, U. S. A.,

Acting Superintendent of the

Yellowstone National Park.

Sir:

I acknowledge the receipt by your reference of the 10th instant of a request of Messrs. Bassett Bros., of Beaver Canon, Idaho, for permission to continue to provide transportation to visitors within the Park, pending consideration by the Department of their application for a lease of ground and the formal grant of such privilege.

As it appears from your endorsement that their stage line affords the only connection by which the travel over the Union Pacific R. R. system can reach the Park you are hereby authorized to permit Bassett Bros., to continue to furnish transportation, as requested.

Very respectfully,

H. L. Muldrow

Acting Secretary.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

Chapter XX

SIDE ROADS

Speaking of the Gold Road, what happened to it since the railroad took over most of the freight and all of the passengers a decade ago? The freight and stage lines from Blackfoot, Eagle Rock, Market Lake, and Camas were necessary to the Birch, Lemhi, and the Lost River areas for some years to come. However, there were two side roads on the extreme northern end of the Gold Road which still had the magic touch of stages with a new purpose. Regardless of the necessary tie-in to the original Gold Road, its ultimate purpose was to serve the public better. To people engaged in mining in the Salmon River mountains, ranching or farming in the valleys, or to tourists traveling to Yellowstone Park, the Gold Road was the vital vein from which radiated interlacing thoroughfares of eastern Idaho.

In the *Daily Salt Lake Tribune* of April 23, 1882, appeared a large advertisement from the Bassett Brothers of Beaver Canyon, Idaho. In this advertisement, they offered the shortest and best route from the railroad (the Utah and Northern) to the "Eden of America." This service was to begin June 1, 1882, at which time they would be prepared to carry all persons from Beaver Canyon to Yellowstone National Park. Light spring wagons with good teams were to furnish the transportation over a smooth road. Good hunting and fishing were available anywhere along the road. Wagons were to leave Beaver Canyon every day for Fire Hole Basin of Yellowstone Park. Experienced drivers, acquainted with the park were employed. The round-trip fare to Fire Hole was twenty-five dollars and passengers could return at their own leisure. The Bassett Brothers pointed out that their route to Fire Hole Basin was 150 miles shorter than by way of Virginia City and the fare twenty-five dollars less. Private conveyances for any period of time were available upon due notice.

You will recall the importance of Beaver Canyon with its toll gate to the Harkness interests. You will recall that at this spot Matt Taylor secured the tall trees necessary for his famous bridge over the Snake River at Eagle Rock. The town of Beaver in the 1880s and 1890s was an up-and-coming place; its economy was based primarily on the abundant surrounding timber growth. Several sawmills, shingle, and planing mills were operated in that area. The total lumber footage shipped out in 1884 was twelve million feet and fifteen million feet in 1884.[1] The town contained all the essential services needed in pioneer days such as stores, butcher shops, cafes, saloons, a post office, and a school with even a debating society.

Add to all this activity the famous Bassett Brothers' Stage Line to Yellowstone and you have a bustling little town. Jules and C. H. Bassett were the active partners of the stage line. Frank, a third brother, was the Utah and Northern agent and also the postmaster at Beaver. Jules was a political associate of Fred Dubois and later a partner with Martin Patrie of Market Lake in the Idaho Sheep and Land Company. C. H. (Charles) Bassett was later a Bannock County Assessor and still later a Bannock County Commissioner.[2]

The Bassett Brothers' Stage Company had a contract with the Union Pacific Railroad (Utah and Northern) to operate twenty-five coaches and surreys. The coaches were Concords, the same famous make of main line conveyances and carried as many as eleven passengers. Two, four and six horses were used – depending on the load and the type of stage. Surreys were sometimes used for private parties. The Bassetts also operated a branch line to Camas. A hotel was operated at Beaver for the convenience of passengers. The road's first route was to the northeast, around Signal Peak and over a gentle pass southeast to Kilgore; from there, northeast to Hotel Creek where passengers could rest overnight. The second day completed the approximately 100-mile trip to Yellowstone. Many of the drivers were knowledgeable about points of interest in the Park. Such a person was John A. Tanner, a veteran driver for the Bassett line. The majority of these drivers continued on through the park with their passengers. The leisurely five-day trip around the 150-mile park loop was tremendously exciting to the visitors in this new spectacular wonderland, The trip included stops at Fountain Geyser Basin, Old Faithful, West Thumb, Yellowstone Lake, Grand Canyon, and Mammoth Hot Springs. The entire nine-day excursion cost about $150 with meals, lodging and stage fare. The price of the round trip as previously advertised from Beaver to the Fire Hole Basin was later raised. The early offer according to C. H. Bassett, was a special, [3] undoubtedly designed to attract trade and get the company off to a good start.

Many famous people made this strenuous trip via the Bassett Stage to Yellowstone. In 1885 Arthur Knowles, owner of the Knowles Printing Works of England, accompanied by his doctor and aides made the long journey from England to see with his own eyes these unbelievable wonders of Yellowstone.[4] Among noted people who made the trip were Madame von Fickenstein, Mounteford, a famed lecturer, at the very time the stage was held up and robbed by two bandits between Grand Canyon and Norris Geyser Basin.[5] Other noteworthy people using the line included Euro-

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

Beaver Was Once A Lively Center

By Wm. Stibal Pettite
(Part of a series on Eastern Idaho by Mr. Pettite, a former county probate judge and author of Memories of Market Lake, who lives in Fair Oaks, Calif.)

Except for a forgotten cemetery, a once prominent community of 100 years ago, has disappeared from Idaho maps. Though it not only furnished most of the lumber for construction of offices and homes in the early days of Eagle Rock, as well as producing a number of political leaders who helped to make Idaho history, it lies unnoticed. Its significance does not even qualify it for a plaque from the powers that be.

The historic settlement of Beaver deserved a better reward for its labors. Back in the 1870s a book published in San Francisco listed Beaver Canon as a place to expect a big boom due to its large supply of timber. Later called Beaver Canyon, then Beaver, and finally when the town was shifted to Spencer, "Old Beaver", it did indeed become big and booming.

At first only a stage and trading post operated by H. O. and Lauven A. Harkness, who also ran a like operation at Pleasant Valley, five miles further north; its importance grew as the result of the railroad coming through. The Harkness boys noted that their stop was "only 185 miles north of Malad and equal to the stations at Market Lake (Roberts) and Corbett's (near Firth)." After the railroad selected Beaver as a major station, H. O. Harkness disposed of his holdings there for a solid figure and moved to Blackfoot. He sent relative Lauven Harkness to replace employe Lee Mantle at Pleasant Valley, where a postoffice was maintained until 1880, when it was closed and served by Beaver's. (Mantle left a career as telegraph operator and agent for the Overland Stage Co. to become a noted U.S. Senator from Montana as well as mayor of Butte).

Bassett Family

Beaver was next dominated in a business sense by the Bassett family. The Bassett Brothers operated a noted stage line, being headquarters for trips to Yellowstone and Fire Hole Basin, plus a branch line to Camas. They had a large hotel and saloon as well. Even the Eastern press recorded some of the more famous travelers who departed from the Bassett lines for a trip to Yellowstone.

Back in 1885 one Arthur Knowles, owner of the Knowles Printing Works of England, accompanied by his doctor and other aides, made the trip. Frank Bassett, agent for the Utah and Northern Railroad, had the post office. Jules Bassett, a political associate of Senator Dubois, later formed the Idaho Sheep and Land Co. with Martin Patrie at Market Lake. In the 1880's he served in the legislature from what was then Oneida County and later replaced partner Patrie as Idaho's Secretary of State. Brother C. H. Bassett noted that in 1880 a special — for a limited time only — offer could be had from Bassett Brothers Stage. This special was a round trip ticket to Yellowstone for only $25.00 in gold. C. H. later lived in Pocatello and served as the first Bannock County Assessor.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

BASSETT FAMILY

W.H. Bassett C.H. Bassett F.A. Bassett

Bassett Brothers are closely identified with the early history of the Canyon as they began a stage and freight line in 1881. Old Beaver was the center for this large family run organization for many years, with the system having stops at various sites enroute to Yellowstone. Later, the firm had offices at Monida, Spencer and a route from Camas to the Kilgore region.

The brothers and their families first spent their winters at Cedar Fort, Ut., later taking homesteads at Lago, near Thatcher. Their Bear River water rights dated to 1878. Humphrey was named for one of their stage superintendents.

Chas. Henry Bassett I, the father of the Bassett Brothers, was an early LDS member and was married to Permelia Dayton and Mary Knight. Four of the brothers, Chas. J., Chas. H., Frank and Fred were sons of Permelia and Wm. H., the fifth brother, was Mary's son. All were born in Salt Lake City, except for Chas. J.

Chas. Julius (1851-1918), the oldest, was born in Kanesville, Iowa. After his election as Beaver Canyon Justice of the Peace in 1883, he served on the Territorial Grand Jury and in 1898 became chairman of the Idaho Silver Party. A partner with Martin Patrie in the Idaho Sheep and Land Co., he defeated his partner Patrie, the incumbent, for secretary of state in 1900. Their holdings included 1,240 acres seven miles S of Roberts, later called Bassett Siding. He was associated with the Fred Dubois political organization.

Jules, as he was called, wed Christina Rasmussen (1854-1927) in 1876 at Salt Lake City. She was a native of Copenhagen, Denmark. They later lived in Blackfoot and Boise. Both rest in the Pioneer Cemetery at the latter city.

Chas. Henry II (1854-1940), wed Mary (Mollie) Lee (1861-1929), member of another pioneer Canyon family in 1877. She served as postmaster of their stage office at Henry's Lake from 1885-88 and later became a noted lecturer on such subjects as practical psychology, biochemistry and character analysis. She also served as Stake leader for the Relief Society. A Tooele native, she passed away in Salt Lake City.

Charley was chosen the first Bannock County Assessor in 1893. Later, he served six terms as County Commissioner and as County Treasurer. He had also been a Territorial Grand Jury member and in 1890 built a bridge across the Bear River at Gentile Valley. He and wife Mary are buried at Lago.

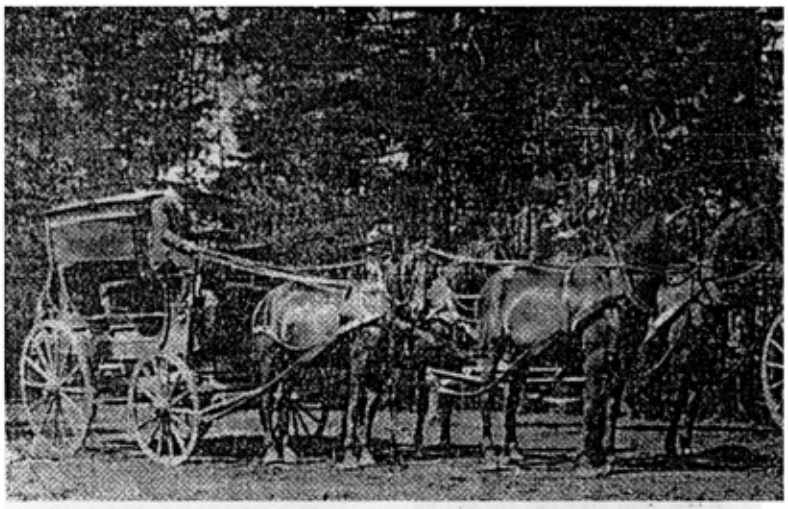
Francis Agustus (1857-1919) was the first Beaver Canyon postmaster from 1880-81. Better known as Frank, he was also associated with the railroad, serving at Butte and in Cache Valley and Ogden, Utah. He wed Ruth E. Sagers (1860-1911) in Salt Lake City. Ruth, a native of Tooele, died at Roosevelt and was buried in Ogden. Frank and Ruth were fine musicians and performed at the Salt Lake Opera. Frank also composed and arranged music. He died at Lago and is buried there.

Wm. Henry (1858-1929) wed Marett Cook (1856-1931) in 1876. She was a Cedar Fort, Ut. native. Wm. managed the ZCMI store there before moving to Idaho. In later years he ran a mere at Trout Creek, which he re-named Sego, due to the many sego lillies nearby. However, due to bureaucratic bumbling, federal officials mistook Sego for Lago and the post office, with Wm., as postmaster, has been known as Lago ever since. They are also buried at Lago.

Fred Clayton (1865-1946) was a Brigham Young University graduate. He was also active in politics serving as County Treasurer and 16 years as deputy County Clerk. He wed Ida A. Harris (1867-1947) in 1886. She was a Salt Lake City native and died in Los Angeles. Fred and Ida are both buried in Salt Lake City. Fred drove the first stagecoach to Yellowstone Park.

Harold L., (1883-1969) a son of C.H. and Mary, was the only child of any of the Bassett Bros. to be born at Beaver Canyon. A cattle rancher near Grace, he served 36 years as president of the Federal Land Bank at Preston.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association



Stagecoach Driver in 1890 Era Recalls Yellowstone Park Tours

By ROSE CORDON
News Correspondent

GRACE, IDAHO — "I was driving Madame von Fickenstein Mounteford when our tourist stagecoach train was help up and robbed by two bandits between the Grand Canyon and Norris Geyser Basin . . ."

John A. Tanner, retired Grace farmer, visualized the famed Jewish lecturer and other celebrated passengers he hauled 60 years ago as stagecoach driver in Yellowstone National Park.

The young farm boy from Gentile Valley, Idaho, hired on as driver for Bassett Brothers of Lago, Idaho, one of two operators who hauled tourists 350 miles from the railroad terminal through the park and back.

25 Coaches

The old transportation company had a contract with Union Pacific Railroad and operated 25 coaches and surreys from Beaver Canyon, Idaho, near Dubois. The trip took nine days. Mr. Tanner drove summers from 1892-1900. He was also guide and escort.

They were Concord coaches, Cadillacs of the Old West, loaded with as high as 11 passengers. They were drawn by two, four and six horse teams in fancy harnesses. The horses were changed three times for the ardous journey 100 miles to and from the park. This took four days. A leisurely five days were spent on the 150-mile park loop.

The young muleskinner knew every twist in the road as well as the palm of his hand.

Titled, Wealthy

Most of the passengers were of the European aristocracy or wealthy Americans. They knew more about the park than Westerners living within a 100-mile radius, he mused, a situation not unlike today.

Madame Mounteford told him the necklace she wore was handed down through her family from the days of Melchizedek, the great king of the Salmen to whom Abraham paid tithes. In those days she was billed as the greatest living lecturer on the Holy Land and the life of Christ. She was a typical passenger.

Williams Jennings Bryan and his family were others on a side-trip from his presidential campaign. Others were Idaho's Sen. Fred T. Dubois, Consul Nicholas N. Ifft II and the Walker Brothers, Salt Lake City bankers.

He recounted details. The trip cost about $130 with meals. Stops were made at Fountain Geyser Basin, the site of Old Faithful, a noon station at West Thumb, Yellowstone Lake, the Grand Canyon and Mammoth Hot Springs.

Mr. Tanner left the work when he married and had to farm in the summer. He has only been back a few times since. A great change has come over the park, he said.

There were no cabins then, he lamented. In the old days the titled and wealthy had no use for them. The few others owned their own rigs.

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association

2085

Union Pacific Stage Line,

C. J. BASSETT, Proprietor.

In connection with Union Pacific Railway to all points in the Yellowstone Park.

Beaver Canon, Idaho, June 8th 1895

Capt Anderson
acting Supt. Y. N. P.
Mammoth Hot Springs Wyo.

Dear Sir - Herewith I hand you my ck for $50.00, to be applied in payment of Liper Fee, as per my application of June 1st. I have been at Beaver Canon for the past ten days, but owing to the bad weather, I have had no passengers before today, hence the delay in reaching the Park. If you can not use the ck, will you kindly place the same in the Bank at Mammoth Springs for collection, and by the time the License is ready, the money will have been returned to Mammoth Springs.

Very Respectfully Yours,

C. J. Bassett

P.S.

The numbers for my Wagons have not arrived from Salt Lake, but I am expecting them by every train, and will have placed on the wagons as soon as I get them. I could not get them properly made this side of Ogden or Salt Lake. Respt. C. J. Bassett

© 2008 All Rights Reserved by Our Generations Ancestors Family Association