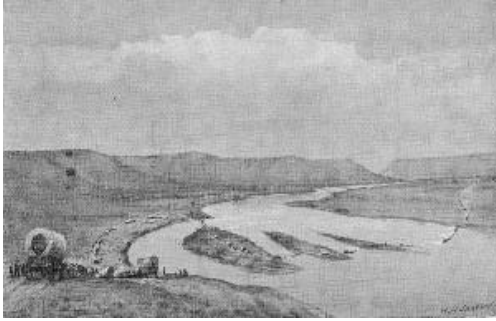


Three Island Crossing



Three Island Crossing is where travelers on the Oregon Trail crossed the Snake River. When the Snake River was wild and untamed (before the dams were built), it was dangerous to cross.

The water was deep, fast, and usually extremely cold. However, crossing the river saved many miles of travel to Fort Boise. The wagons were floated across the river. Men would swim to the opposite bank of the river. Then by the use of ropes, they would pull the wagons across.

Wagon trains made the crossing where there were three small islands situated like stepping stones across the river. These three islands split the current into channels and made crossing easier. Where the channel was most narrow between the bank and the first island, they pushed in their cattle and wagons, crossed, then went to the head of the next island, repeated this process one more time, and if no other mishaps occurred while negotiating the river, the crossing was completed.

Indians sometimes harassed the wagon trains at Three Island Crossing. A party which got only half its wagons across and had to camp on both sides of the river would have difficulty guarding both camps adequately that night. If the water was too high, an alternate trail to the south was used, but it was longer and more difficult.