

JESÚS URQUIDES: IDAHO'S PREMIER MULETEER

by

Max Aaron Delgado, III

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DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

Max Aaron Delgado, III

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Max Aaron Delgado, III, and they evaluated his presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Errol Jones, Ph.D. Chair, Supervisory Committee

John Bieter, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

Todd Shallat, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Errol Jones, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

ABSTRACT

Jesús Urquides: Idaho's Premier Muleteer

Max Aaron Delgado, III

The life of Mexican mule packer Jesús Urquides is the subject of this work. Urquides was a Mexican-born mule packer who brought the skills of his profession to the American West, where he eventually settled in Boise, Idaho in the 1860s.

The focus of the work is to shed light on the activities of mule packers and their work in the American West as it related to the mining activities of the region and to also examine Urquides' role in the establishment of Boise's Spanish Village. Jesús Urquides: Idaho's Premier Muleteer is a case study of the profession and its contributions to the mining industry of the late 19th century.

The life of Urquides' personal life is examined. Other topics include: (1) the history of mule packing as a profession that was developed and refined over centuries of practice in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, (2) mule packing in Idaho, (3) the Sheep Mountain mining district of central Idaho, (4) the decline of mule packing, and (5) the establishment of Boise's Spanish Village.

Conclusions established during this study include: (1) that mule packing was ideally suited to provide logistical support for Idaho's early mining industry despite unpredictable weather and rugged terrain, (2) that the use of the mule packing system contributed to the United States Army's military success in its campaigns against Idaho's Native American tribes, (3) that mule packing declined at the end of the 19th century due to economic factors and intense competition from freight wagons, (4) that Spanish Village was an ethnic neighborhood that encouraged multinational bonds among Boise's Spanish-speaking population, and (5) that Jesús Urquides emerged as a singular figure for his role in the early development of Idaho and was widely respected by its pioneer community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
PREFACE	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
URQUIDES' EARLY YEARS	5
Boise's Basque Packer?	5
From Sonora to Idaho	7
MULE PACKING: A HISTORY	10
The Mexican Mule	10
The Aparejo Pack Saddle	11
Arrieros (Mule Packers)	14
The Organization of the Pack Train	17
PACKING IN IDAHO	21
Pack Trails of Idaho	26
Native American Wars	29
The Packers of Central and Southern Idaho	35
SHEEP MOUNTAIN AND THE WOOD RIVER RUSH	40
THE INCIDENT	59
RETIREMENT, FINAL YEARS, AND THE SPANISH VILLAGE	64
Spanish Village	65

CONCLUSION	73
NOTES	76
REFERENCES	82

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	<i>An Aparejo</i> Pack Saddle	13
Figure 2.	Ketchum Fast Freight Line Ore Wagon	47
Figure 3.	Urquides Demonstrating His Packing Skills	63

PREFACE

Jesús Urquides, Idaho's Premier Muleteer began as a research paper in 2001 as part of the Hispanics in Idaho course offered by Dr. Errol D. Jones. Initial research revolved around the ground breaking work of Dr. Erasmo Gamboa of the University of Washington, who wrote a number of articles on the role of Mexican packers in the Pacific Northwest. Articles about Jesús Urquides had also been written by local historian Arthur Hart in the *Idaho Statesman* and the research began to branch out from those sources. The Idaho State Historical Society published the initial paper as a book in conjunction with the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho in 2006.¹ The book contained information on Urquides' activities as a packer and included chapters on the Spanish Village and the Urquides family. In 2010, my supervisory committee suggested that I use the book as a basis to continue my work in uncovering more on the life and occupation of Jesús Urquides focusing my attention more on the life of a mule packer and the packing activities of Urquides and others in Idaho.

New research centered on local newspapers of the era, particularly the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. The *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* and *The Ketchum Keystone* were invaluable resources that yielded much new information on Urquides and mule packing in general. One problem in the research was an inability to find United States Government documents relating to the use of packers during the Native American Wars of Idaho in the years 1877-79. Also, repeated attempts to contact the descendants of Jan

Spangler, Jesús Urquides' adopted granddaughter to be granted access to the Urquides family archive went unanswered, thus denying the opportunity to gain more insight on the life of Jesús Urquides. However, the newspapers proved to be fertile ground for information along with John Keast Lord's *Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia* which gave valuable insight on the daily routines of mule packers in the American West.

INTRODUCTION

Hispanics played an integral part in Idaho's Territorial history. As the rush for riches in the new territory came, so did a few rugged and extremely skillful Spanish-speakers. Although there is still much to learn about these men and women, it is safe to say that Idaho as we know it would not have been the same without them. Many Hispanic men filled an important niche in the mining activities and future development of Idaho as *arrieros*, or muleteers. They carried on a long tradition of freighting that first gained notice in Spain and then spread throughout the New World.

If there ever was anything close to perfection in the mule-packing business, a man named Jesús Urquides was just that. Urquides distinguished himself as Idaho's premier muleteer. Described as a "trim, trail-hardened little man, who wore a goatee and enjoyed excitement," Urquides was Idaho's most well-known and reliable freighter. Known throughout the region as "Kossuth," an Anglo corruption of his first name, he was widely sought after to pack anything from the iron stamp mills used to crush gold-bearing ore to ammunition for the United States Army. Urquides also possessed a "high executive ability, and his word was law in the packing business." Even in winter, with snow depths one to twenty feet deep, Urquides' mule trains provisioned remote communities. He was the first to pack to the Jarbidge Mountains of Nevada, as well as to Thunder Mountain in Idaho's Valley County during its rush in the early 1900s. Idaho historians Merrill Beal

and Merle Wells said that the packers “furnished the sinews upon which the rudiments of civilization were fairly thrust into some of the most sequestered nooks and crannies of gemland.”² The last quote best exemplifies the importance that men like Urquides had in the development of Idaho’s fledgling mining industry.

When Jesús Urquides arrived in the Boise, Idaho Territory in the early 1860s, the future capital had been a collection of tents and impromptu shelters and store fronts. The town had sprung up as a supply hub to the nearby Boise Basin mines and had been connected by the “Boise Road” that linked the area to towns such as Umatilla, and The Dalles, Oregon as well as Walla Walla, Washington, key centers in supplying the interior territories. Through his lifetime, Urquides saw and took part in the building and development of Boise, as well as the rest of the state.

His occupation, that of mule packing, also warrants attention as a key component in the logistics of supplying far flung mining camps throughout the Intermountain West. Hardly the only packer in Idaho, he was part of a packing fraternity that included men of diverse backgrounds; each enduring the same hardships and dangers on the trail in their quest to bring some sense of civilization and sustenance to isolated mining camps.

Packing in Idaho evolved and adapted to the rugged terrain, which enabled the packer to continue his trade here longer than most places. Initially, packers in central and southern Idaho used the “Boise Road,” but wagon roads were not too far behind, forcing the pack trains farther afield. The advent of the railroad in the 1880s also impacted the mule packer’s work and changed supply routes and brought opportunity to such towns as

Ketchum during the Wood River Valley's silver boom in the 1880s. Idaho's packers braved inclement weather, raging rivers, unfriendly Native Americans, disease, wild animals, and a host of other dangers. When it seemed that snow bound and isolated mining camps such as Atlanta would suffer for lack of food and supplies, it was the hardy packer who delivered. It is difficult to find an occupation that was so intimately connected to the early western mining industry than a mule packer. Packers worked closely with merchants packing their goods into the camps, and they also served as sources of information on the particular mines for local newspapers.

Urquides also established himself as a pioneer of Boise City and lord of his "little world" later known as "Spanish," or "Urquides" Village, located at 115 Main Street in Boise City. Spanish Village was a beehive of activity for the packing trade that initially served as an ethnic enclave to most of the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of Boise City. He was well liked and appreciated by the city's most prominent merchants and citizens, a point that was resoundingly emphasized following an incident that occurred in downtown Boise in 1898. This incident highlighted the complex social climate that was encountered throughout the west, one which Urquides faced with courage, perseverance, and hard work.

Although Jesús lived to the age of ninety-five, surviving many brushes with death along the way, his family life was a tragic and heartbreaking one. The Urquides family endured extreme pain and suffering due to losses of family members. Often removed from his family as much as eight months out of the year, Urquides nonetheless was a

loving husband and father who provided for his family. In his later years, he was cared for by his devoted daughter Lola, until his death in 1928.

What made Urquides unique was his origin in Mexico's northern frontier, the last *arriero* (packer, or muleteer) in a long, continuous chain of hardy individuals that stretch back to the ancient commercial cultures of the Old World. His movements traced almost every mining rush in the western United States and unlike most, if not all of his contemporaries, he stayed true to his profession until his retirement in 1911. It is through Jesús Urquides that the life of the mule packer comes into sharper focus.

URQUIDES' EARLY DAYS

The early life of Urquides is vague at best. All sources seem to agree that he was born on 18 January 1833. However, it was where he was born that causes some confusion. Many sources claim that he was born in San Francisco, Alta California, which at the time was a part of the Republic of Mexico. However, when *Sunset* magazine interviewed him in 1925, Urquides himself stated that he was born in Sonora, Mexico and became part of the massive wave of Mexicans who made their way to the Alta California (present-day California) mines in 1849.³

Boise's Basque Packer?

The confusion continues about Urquides' origins, since there have been many references to him as Boise's Basque packer. However, Basque historian Julio B. Bilbao acknowledged that there was little evidence that Urquides spoke Basque and it was most probable that he was several generations removed from the Basque country.⁴

The name Urquides is undoubtedly Basque in origin, as it is a Castilianized version of the name Urquidi (*Urki*—birch tree, and *-di*—forest of).⁵ However the men he was most closely associated with (the only exception being Jesús Galindo) did not have Basque surnames. After a few generations in the New World, many Basques had assimilated with non-Basque Spaniards, and with the native populations. There have been

many well-known Mexicans of Basque descent in the history of Mexico and the west, including but not limited to Agustín de Iturbide y Arámbaru (the first emperor of independent Mexico), Juan Bautista de Anza (the younger), and Doroteo Arango (Pancho Villa). It is interesting to wonder to what extent Urquides was aware of his origins. The influx of Basque immigrants to Idaho from the Spanish province of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) starting in the 1880s may have awakened some sense of his ancestry.

Bilbao brought up an interesting possibility that could be a key to knowing more about Urquides' origins. He stated that the name Urquides shows up in Alta California. In 1794, the King of Spain, Carlos IV appointed Diego Borica y Retegui (a Basque from Vitoria, Álava, Spain) as governor. Borica's wife, María Magdalena Urquides de Borica, was from a wealthy family that owned large estates in the Mexican province of Nueva Vizcaya (a territory that now encompasses a number of modern Mexican states, including Durango and Chihuahua and portions of Sonora, Sinaloa, and Coahuila).⁶ Nueva Vizcaya, along with the present Mexican state of Sonora, was a stopping point for trade and goods along the Old Santa Fe Trail.⁷ This is where the practice of mule packing achieved its peak of efficiency and value as a way of transporting goods from one point to another over the steep and rocky terrain of the west.

Urquides did have some contact with the Basque community in Idaho. Francisco Odiaga, a native of Lekeitio, Bizkaia in Spain, worked with him for a period of two years after Odiaga's arrival to this country in 1895.⁸ Urquides was also close friends with José Gestal, also known as "Spanish Joe." Gestal's wife Narcisa Zabala was Basque, though her husband, a native of the Spanish province of Galicia, was not. The Gestals are buried

next to Urquides in Boise's Pioneer Cemetery. Boise Basque Henry Alegría, in his *75 Years of Memoirs*, wrote that in the summer of 1912, he, his parents, and Mateo Arregui (a Basque boardinghouse owner), went to see Urquides at the "Spanish Village." Alegría stated explicitly that Urquides did not speak Basque, which meant that Spanish was undoubtedly the language used in conversation. Alegría also added that Urquides' daughter Lola was later a bridesmaid during his mother-in-law's second marriage.⁹

From Sonora to Idaho

After weighing the evidence, this author certainly believes that Urquides was Mexican born and was part of the large group of *Sonorenses* who made the overland trek to the mines of Alta California during the 1849 Gold Rush. Many Sonorans were familiar with Alta California from years of overland immigration and trade. *Sonorenses* first came over with Juan Bautista de Anza (the younger), in the years 1775-1776.¹⁰ They were some of the first settlers of Alta California and many would return to Mexico as seasonal migrants.¹¹ The exodus to Alta California reached a point where the Mexican government worried that there wouldn't be enough inhabitants to hold off the Apache raids on Sonora. Most important was the departure of thousands of mules, which commanded high prices and were critical to the mule packers' success in the western mines.¹²

Urquides did, however, become a United States citizen. In 1898, in a letter to the editorial staff of the *Idaho Daily Statesman*, he stated that he was indeed a citizen and very proud of this country, its institutions, and a "supporter and defender of her flag."

In his 1925 interview with *Sunset* magazine, Urquides stated that he had arrived in the gold fields of California around 1850.¹³ The fact that he seemed to have little interest in the actual prospecting of gold and silver suggests that he was always a muleteer and his skills most definitely showed that. He had at first packed out of Stockton, but then moved his operations to Marysville, which had become the main distribution center to the Northern Mines of the Mother Lode.¹⁴ On any given day in Marysville at the time, one thousand mules would leave town with one hundred tons of freight, the equivalent of two steamboat loads. Up to 2,500 mules were used just to pack between Marysville and Downieville, an operation that employed up to four hundred men, mostly Mexicans.¹⁵ It was in California that Urquides would have learned how to pack in heavy snow, as he packed through the high Sierra supplying the mines with goods and food. He also made trips down to Sacramento and San Francisco. With the shift in mining activity from California gold to Nevada silver in the 1850s, Urquides began to pack consistently over the Sierra Nevada. His first journey to Carson City was motivated by an offer of a “two-bits” per pound freight rate by John C. Fall, a Marysville merchant.¹⁶

In the 1860s, he transferred his operations from California, and headed north to Walla Walla, Washington. From there he moved on to Lewiston, which by that time had become an important mining center. From Lewiston, he went to The Dalles, Oregon, which had developed commercial links to southern Idaho. In the mid-1860s, he packed thirty-two mules with whiskey and trekked to Boise, Idaho, which at that time was nothing more than a village.¹⁷ During this time, the route was very dangerous, because of hostility between native tribes and Euro American immigrants. In 1862, gold had been

discovered in the Boise Basin and settlements were quickly established at Centerville, Pioneerville, Placerville, and Bannock (later Idaho City). With millions of dollars in gold extracted from the basin, Bannock, which had a population of over 6,000, featured dance halls, saloons, and card parlors.¹⁸

The rich strikes created an opportunity that was to be a boom for what was then known as Boise City. The large population of the Boise Basin provided an excellent market.¹⁹ With its mild climate and abundant water supply, Boise City became primarily a farming community that supplied the mining towns with fresh vegetables and meat. It was under these circumstances that Jesús Urquides came to Idaho. Already a shrewd and calculating young fellow, he no doubt figured that Boise had a future. Also, as an itinerant packer who had moved all over the west, he probably sought a place to call home. He quickly established a supply route that took him from Umatilla, Oregon, then a steamboat landing and freight-shipping center on the Columbia River, to Boise. From there Urquides would pack freight up into the Boise Basin. In 1863, this route made him 25 cents a pound or \$500 a ton. However, the next year he saw that cut in half when a wagon road was completed.²⁰ A decade later, when Urquides inherited a piece of land from an acquaintance on the outskirts of Boise City, he quickly set up his operation and built some stables and corrals to accommodate his outfit.

MULE PACKING: A HISTORY

Mule packing as we have come to know it has its roots in Spain. The pack system was basically of Moorish design and was introduced to the Americas from the Spanish region of Andalucía.²¹ In the New World, mule packing was extremely important to the development of Spain's colonial empire. With the discovery of silver in Zacatecas, Mexico it was necessary to get supplies to the mines, as well as getting the mineral back to the coffers of the king. Supply trails grew into a much larger corridor of commerce, which in part became the Santa Fe Trail. Routes connected Mexico City in the south to Santa Fe, New Mexico across the plains to the Mississippi and further east to the eastern seaboard of New England. The *Hispanos* who had traveled these roads and trails had perfected the art of mule packing and showed quite an entrepreneurial spirit, engaging in trade and commerce.²²

The Mexican mule

The heart of the mule packing system revolved around the animal itself, the progeny of a male donkey and a female horse. Heavier boned North American mules were used as draft animals in the eastern United States, while the much smaller Mexican mules proved themselves time and again on the trail. Selective breeding of the Mexican mule produced an animal 11 to 13 hands high and weighing 700 to 800 pounds. They were capable of carrying half their weight or more on their backs. A few animals in Idaho were also noted for their ability to carry even heavier loads, hauling over 600

pounds for more than 100 treacherous miles. Other physical traits included the ability to work hard and still manage on less forage and water than other beasts of burden. This was a great advantage packing in sparsely vegetated deserts and snow bound mountain trails. Yet another advantage was the mules' small hooves, which were perfectly adapted to the west's rocky terrain and invaluable during the fall and winter months when rain and snow made trails next to impassable. These mules were also noted for a certain "native canniness," a combination of instinct, stubborn caution, and intelligence, which made them wary of precarious trails and impossible tasks. Historian Erasmo Gamboa writes that a remarkable blend of physical characteristics, stamina, and intelligence made the Mexican mule a highly prized asset in the Pacific Northwest. Until they were bred locally, a great number of the animals were either shipped or driven up from California and Sonora, Mexico. Once they arrived in the Pacific Northwest, they commanded exorbitant prices.²³

The mules, on at least one occasion, proved to have uncanny homing instincts as well. Urquides' daughter Lola told a story about a time when Native Americans near Lovelock, Nevada attacked Urquides' pack train and managed to steal all of the supplies and half of the pack mules. Three weeks later the mules showed up in Boise at Spanish Village!²⁴

The *Aparejo* Pack Saddle

As far as equipment, there probably was no piece more valuable than the *aparejo* (literally, "equipment or gear"), a packing saddle used by the Mexican *arrieros*. The *aparejo*, as Gamboa describes it, was made from two leather bags, stuffed with dried

grass and joined at the top to form an arch, or gable. Its design allowed it to resist condensation, and more importantly, to distribute the weight of the pack over the mule's rib cage and away from its back. The practice of custom-fitting each mule with its own *aparejo* was standard in the west and saddles were never switched between animals for fear of injuring a mule's back.²⁵ In the 1860s, packer and author James W. Watt commented that *aparejos* were far superior to American saddles and that they were very well made and often ornamented. At the time, they ranged in price anywhere from \$35 to \$60.²⁶ Another author in gold rush California commented that the *aparejos*, and *alforjas* (saddlebags), were of "the same fashion as those which, for three hundred years past, have been seen on the hills of Grenada and the Andalusian plains" of Spain.²⁷

Further praise for the *aparejo* came from naturalist John Keast Lord, who led an expedition that was part of the British North American Boundary Commission. His observation and experience with his pack train made him come to the following conclusion:

Pack-saddles of all sorts and patterns, that have any element of woodwork in their construction, I decry as worse than useless. The frame broken, your pack saddle is done for; no mending will ever make it fit for use. It will work unsteadily on the animal's back; the load easily shifts, and a gall is the consequence that may take months to heal. We had a few "crosstree" pack saddles, made to begin with on the most approved plan and the strongest materials, but abandoned them for the *aparaejo* [sic] a Mexican invention, which I believe to be the very best contrivance ever made for packing freight of various kinds for transport on mule-back.²⁸

The necessary accoutrements of the *aparejo* included the cinch, which was a canvas and leather belt that ran under the mule's belly to tighten the saddle to the mule. A sweat cloth made of canvas was placed on the mule's back topped by a blanket.

Finally, the *corona*, or saddle pad, was placed on top of these blankets and the *aparejo* was finally placed on top. *Coronas* could be decoratively embroidered but mainly had numbers on them to correspond with a particular mule. Also included were two ropes, one to bind cargo together before being lashed on, and finally the *reata*, a braided rawhide rope used to keep the cargo attached to the mule.²⁹

The *aparejo* was further developed by the addition of wooden sticks placed inside to stiffen it. Initially it was done to allow the *aparejo* to “stand on its boots,” meaning to give the pack saddle the ability to stand up off the ground. This gave the *aparejo* a triangular tent-like shape and significantly decreased its surface area in contact with the ground. The practice also allowed for the placement of all of the rigging in an organized manner on top of the *aparejo*. This was a plus in wet or muddy conditions. Experimentation with the use of wooden sticks placed inside the *aparejo* continued until packing became almost obsolete in the 20th century.³⁰



Figure 1 **An Aparejo Pack Saddle**
From *Saga of Rancho El Tejón*. (Exeter, California: Bear State Books, 2006), 102.

Arrieros (Mule Packers)

The *arrieros* themselves also embodied Spanish and Mexican traditions. Good packers were highly sought and it was one way in which Mexicans created a niche for themselves and managed to make a good living. As tough as their mules, these men were capable of many Herculean feats of strength, endurance, and skill. A typical day for a packer would generally begin around two o'clock in the morning with the rounding up of the mules. The packers would then pair up and load each mule, with each muleteer lifting and loading up to 200 pounds to each side. Each packer was usually responsible for fifteen to twenty mules in a full pack train. James W. Watt, in his *Journal of Mule Train Packing in Eastern Washington in the 1860's*, stated that it took two experienced packers 2 minutes or less to pack a mule and four men could load 40 to 60 packs in 45 to 50 minutes.³¹

Packers, due to the nature of their work, were by necessity “jacks of all trades.” It was an absolute requirement to master the many knots and splices that were needed to keep the cargo attached to the mule. The diamond hitch was the most widely used to lash the cargos onto the *aparejo*. This hitch was believed to be invented by packers in the Sierra Nevada in the 1850s and 1860s, and it was used throughout the west along with the “squaw” and army hitches.³² Yet another adaptation of the diamond hitch was the double diamond hitch, a hitch implemented by packers out of the supply hub of The Dalles, Oregon.³³ Muleteers needed to be particularly careful in lashing loads, as the threat of

losing fingers was a real one. One packer in Bellevue, Idaho had his “finger taken off smooth at the first joint,” while leading a mule out of town.³⁴

Another side of the Mexican muleteers is mentioned by Ferol Egan, in his book *The El Dorado Trail*, “In town muleteers were sometimes rowdy, sometimes drank too much *aguardiente*, and sometimes got into brawls.” Even though some packers were prone to rowdiness and drinking, Egan finished his statement by saying that “on the trail they assumed a different posture—a posture that said... this is my business, look at me, follow me, and we’ll both drink together in [town].”³⁵

Many years after the event, James De Chambeau, who had worked for Urquides related a story about a certain trip to Atlanta via the Middle Fork Boise River route. Upon reaching the North Fork Boise River Bridge they found that a massive avalanche had destroyed it. As was the practice in crossing rivers, a raft was built to ferry the freight across to the other side. It was quite a chore to cross the river and once the crossing had been completed, a number of the packers felt a celebration was in order. DeChambeau stated that “various ones (packers) tapped the kegs of whiskey in their load and most of the crew got ‘raring’ drunk. Fights sprung up thick as flies—much to the disgust of De Chambeau and Pete Smith who didn’t drink and were kept busy separating the belligerents.”³⁶

Although many packers had a soft spot for whiskey, at least one Idaho packer was known to smoke opium, with deadly results. Working with Nick Johnson’s pack string in 1881, John H. Henderson did not show up for breakfast. An attempt to rouse him from his sleep discovered that Henderson, who had partnered with Johnson in a Ketchum area

mine, was dead in his blankets. The packers concluded that he overdosed from the drug after finding a small quantity on his person.³⁷

Louise A. Jackson, in her book *The Mule Men: A History of Stock Packing in the Sierra Nevada*, relates, “The independent packers—mostly Mexican—became the saviors of the mining camps.” She continued by saying that “before their arrival the costs of commodities were so exorbitant, that few miners could afford to do much more than live off of the meager provisions of the foothill lands.”³⁸ Another writer noted that the cheaper provisions brought “no complaint from the miners, who could buy onions, potatoes, and other supplies all the more cheaply and had come to associate Mexican mule bells with savory cooking smells and a few cheap comforts of life.”³⁹

Some of the packers were entrepreneurs who had enough sense to know that the “real—assured—money lay in the service industry.”⁴⁰ This attitude stemmed from the long traditions along the Old Santa Fe Trail. Mexican packers in the American territories were employed by American shipping companies, and provided the animals, equipment, know-how, and labor for these businesses. Leonard Pitt related that:

American freight shippers... learned that the Mexican *arrieros* (mule skimmers) were the most reliable of hired hands—skillful, proud of their work, and sure to get the pack train through the worst blizzard, over the toughest mountain trail. A genuine paternal fondness sometimes linked the *arriero* and his new Yankee *patrón* (boss).⁴¹

Because of the high overhead and value of their animals and equipment, many packers garnered wages of \$100 to \$150 a month in the 1860s and 1870s. However, some ran their own mercantile businesses and sold their cargoes in the mining camps. Many of these men often sold all their freight in a single day.⁴²

Jesús Urquides was one of these men and had established a warehouse, located at his home in Boise City, where he stocked the goods that he packed into the mines. Asa Clark, an Anglo American packer from Boise, demonstrated another example of entrepreneurial genius. He packed into Thunder Mountain in the early years of the 1900s and incorporated a most clever way of making money. Clark used cows to pack in supplies, which he milked all summer at 25 cents a quart. When fall came and there was no forage, he slaughtered the cows and made a nice profit off of the meat.⁴³

Organization of the Pack train

The organization of the pack train was also an important aspect of the operations of the muleteers. The (*h*)*atajo*, or drove of pack mules, was handled in a very systematic manner. Each packer was responsible for a particular part of the train. Explained one observer, “regulations and technicalities are about as unintelligible to the uninitiated as sailor’s terms.”⁴⁴

A pack train contained a certain hierarchy of positions and responsibilities. The *Patrón*, or boss was the owner of the pack train. The *Patrón* could have been an independent pack train operator such as Urquides, or it could have been a merchant who owned the pack train and hired men to run it. The latter arrangement was the one most used by American merchants in the west, as they oversaw the operation, but left the packing to the packers. Next was the *cargador*, literally “loader,” a skilled packer who supervised a crew of *arrieros*. The *cargador* also took responsibility for the distribution of the freight to be loaded and for the maintenance of the *aparejos* and other gear. They had to be proficient at estimating how much could be reasonably loaded onto an animal.

Most importantly, they had to possess excellent knowledge of their animals and understand each one's abilities, as well as knowing when they were in need of treatment or veterinary care.⁴⁵ Constant vigilance was needed to make sure that packs were secure and not slipping, as this created bunches, or galls to form on a mule's back, thus making it unfit for use as a pack animal.⁴⁶

It is highly likely that Urquides served as a *cargador* before going into the business for himself. He was mentioned in a number of articles with a man named McMahon in the 1870s, who could have owned the pack train that Urquides ran. *Cargadores* probably all had some English skills, which were useful in relaying orders between the boss and the packers. Finally, the *arriero* who did the bulk of the packing and maintenance, along with the cook, rounded out the workforce.⁴⁷

At night the pack train was looked after by a *savanero* whose job it was to keep an eye on the mules, which were let loose without tether or hobble. The mules tended to stay close, mainly because of their attachment to the *mulera*, or bell-mare, which in most cases was the only horse in the entire pack string. Although the mules appeared to be attached to the *mulera*, it was "about as much to the bell as for the animal." However, "the *mulera* was to the *hatajo* as a queen bee is to a hive. When she was taken away from the pack train, the mules became 'depressed and melancholy.'" The "*madre*" (mother), as the cook was facetiously called, then led the *mulera* down the trail and the rest followed in "orderly procession."⁴⁸

John Keast Lord penned the finest description of the morning routine for a pack train:

Imagine a camp chosen with due regard to the three primary requisites—wood, water, and grass: breakfast over, bedding rolled up, tents struck and packed in the tent-bag, and the tinkling bell heralds the approach of the mules, being driven in by the packer whose duty it is to ‘herd’ them. Fifty come trotting in; the packers, blinders in hand, await their arrival, standing by the *aparaejos*[sic], that are placed side by side in a kind of half-circle. The bell-mare seized on first, is haltered, and tied to the first *aparaejo*[sic]... The halters are then put on from the opposite side of the *aparaejo*[sic], and each fastened to that of its neighbor. This saves counting; if the halters are all used, the mules are there to wear them. Saddling begins immediately after haltering. Two packers loose a mule from its neighbor, find the *aparaejo*[sic] belonging to it, slip the blind over its eyes, adjust the saddle cloths, fling on the *aparaejo*[sic], and then ‘synch up[sic].’⁴⁹

Music was another part of the day’s journey along the trail. The muleteers didn’t carry musical instruments, as they utilized every ounce of the mules’ capacity for the cargo. They used the constant cadence of the bell of the *mulera* for their rhythmic sound. The packers kept a harmonic dialog along the trail with their animals, giving them orders along the way. This could have had a calming effect on the animals if they were particularly agitated. At times they sang old songs from their homeland to break the solitude of the forests and canyons.⁵⁰

These processions became a most welcome sight among the miners of some of the most remote mining camps. For most miners, “the arrival of a pack train is an event of some importance and men gather around it with as much apparent interest as though they expected to see some dear old friend stowed away somewhere among the packs.”⁵¹

Oftentimes, the packers were more than a welcomed sight; they were a lifeline. A letter from Rocky Bar in the *Owyhee Avalanche* on 11 December 1875 stated this point explicitly. During a series of snow and rainstorms, the writer praised those who came through with supplies to their snowbound town. Jesús Urquides was among these men as

he brought in a train of forty mules with supplies. The writer continued by giving “All Honor to the brave fellows who have faced the storms and endured hardships and exposure, that we might have sufficient provisions and not go hungry.”⁵²

The use of the Mexican mule pack system was a key element in the logistical network that supplied the early mining camps of the American West. Mexican mule packers brought an efficient transportation system out of northern Mexico into California and the Pacific Northwest. The Mexican mule equipped with the *aparejo* pack saddle proved to be the most effective in supplying far flung mining camps with food and equipment. Refined over hundreds of years, the Mexican mule pack system was a well organized operation that got the attention of American merchants as a means to transport their goods to a profitable market in the mining camps. Many American observers vouched for its effectiveness and superiority over other systems. This was high praise considering the Anglo American’s racial and cultural attitudes in regards to all things Mexican. Jesús Urquides and other Mexican mule packers were a hardy and intrepid group of men who brought this system to Idaho where it would be employed for fifty years in rugged backcountry. They ranged far from home in search of an opportunity to continue a profession and way of life that many had learned as young boys.

PACKING IN IDAHO

The most dangerous and unpredictable variable with packing in Idaho was the weather. This variability had mostly to do with snowfall, as that was the one factor that created the most difficulty, whether as snow or spring runoff. In Idaho, packing in heavy snow was just part of the job. The adaptation to deep snow for Idaho's packers began in the Sierra Nevada of California with the practice of night packing. In the spring, when the snow pack became soft, it was necessary to move at night, mostly around 2:00 AM when the snow hardened from the freezing temperatures.⁵³ In the Loon Creek mining district, located near the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, as many as five pack strings supplied the town of Oro Grande (north of Stanley) in this manner, packing in from Idaho City. Once the pack route was established in 1870, the town of Oro Grande swelled to over three hundred.⁵⁴

The winter of 1875-76 created a host of calamities that made supplying the mining camps of southern and central Idaho difficult at best. Rain and snow led to a near crisis in Rocky Bar in early December 1875. With insufficient supplies of flour and other necessities, and the onset of winter fast approaching, residents began to panic that there would not be enough to make it to spring. A much needed break in the weather allowed Urquides to bring in a load on forty mules for Henry Swanholm, a Rocky Bar merchant. Packer Joe Adin and others also brought in supplies to help Rocky Bar through the winter.⁵⁵

The amount of snowfall in the high country that winter was significant and packing into the more isolated camps did not begin until June. The amount of snow that fell in the Payette River drainage was great enough to destroy Jourdan's Bridge across the river by its sheer weight. When news of the occurrence reached Idaho City, editors of the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* immediately made a call for the speedy reconstruction of the bridge. The threat of not having the bridge for the upcoming mining season was worrisome. A vital link between Boise and Lemhi County, it was used by "Pack-trains, prospectors, and pleasure-seekers alike." The *World* warned that if the bridge didn't get rebuilt in short order, "Idaho City will lose considerable trade from Lemhi county [sic] which would be transferred to Salmon City." The most disrupting aspect of not having the bridge was the inability to bring quartz from Loon Creek and the Yankee Fork areas to Banner for milling.⁵⁶

The effects of a heavy snowpack can last well into the summer when the snow begins to melt. The torrents of runoff created even more problems for packers. Whatever bridges survived the weight of the snowfall fell victim to washouts. The pack trail up the Boise River's Middle Fork into Atlanta was one example of this. The new trail was just opened in April 1876 when two bridges, one across the Middle Fork and the other one across Queen's River, were completed. By the end of June, the Middle Fork Bridge had been washed out, delaying pack trains arriving in Atlanta.⁵⁷ Prior to the washout, the Middle Fork Trail had been supplying Atlanta via Boise and was Atlanta's only connection at the time, as the Rocky Bar route was late in opening due to heavy runoff on Boise River's South Fork.

Rocky Bar was inaccessible well into mid-June. Intense heat melted a massive amount of water into the South Fork of the Boise River drainage causing a number of problems, including a cut telegraph line into town. Pack trains were forced to wait out the worst of the flood, until finally making a dangerous crossing at Pine Grove (modern-day Pine) to break Rocky Bar's isolation.⁵⁸ Pack trains in Idaho adopted the procedure of unloading the mules on the banks of the river that needed to be crossed. The freight was arranged on small rafts that were built and used to float the freight across the river. The process ensured that the freight would stay as dry as possible, while allowing the mules to swim across unencumbered by their packs. The trick in getting the naturally cautious mule to cross in such a manner was a dangerous, but necessary, task for a packer. The first step was to gauge the current of the river or stream and stage the mules accordingly upstream from the desired landing. A packer would tie the bell-mare to a raft and once removing the bell from the horse, begin to shake the bell as loudly and vigorously as possible. Instinctively, the mules would frantically splash into the water and swim across to the other side. Once safely there, the packers would then re-pack the freight onto the mules and proceed on to their destination.⁵⁹

The weather for 1876 was but an example of what one could expect while in Idaho's backcountry. Atlanta experienced torrential rain storms that further exacerbated the massive runoff from the snowpack. High temperatures in Rocky Bar also caused its share of problems. But in mid-July, the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* reported a heavy frost, something the editors noted was "unusual for July."⁶⁰ Extremes in temperatures due to

Idaho's continental climate posed its hazards, claiming many lives. On one particular trip to Rocky Bar, Urquides came close to freezing to death. He related the following story:

It grew dark before we got to Dixie (Elmore County). The snow was deep and the weather exceedingly cold. There was no shelter for my 45 mules and no wood in sight. I gathered them (the mules) in a circle and took the boxes in which some canned goods were packed, made a tiny fire and cooked some coffee over this, and the hot drink sustained me so that I could resist the cold until morning which we could see to move on.⁶¹

If that wasn't enough, packers needed to be ever vigilant, especially in the wilder areas of the west. Many pack trains became victims of highwaymen or Native Americans. Pack trains, whether coming or going, carried large amounts of goods and gold. These trains were extremely vulnerable to depredations by outlaws. Many packers and mules lost their lives along the trails. James Watt noted that the Boise Road was considered the most dangerous, and nightriders were needed to keep the pack train safe from these villains.

In 1863, packer Lloyd Macgruder and four other men were murdered and robbed on their way back to Lewiston, Idaho from Virginia City, Montana. A year later, another packer named John Welch lost his head in a burst of buckshot on the same trail for \$1,600 in gold dust.⁶² Packer Miguel Soto was yet another victim of violence. In September 1870, Soto had just sold out his stock and carried two or three thousand dollars. He was murdered near Boise along Cottonwood Creek in a manner so gruesome that the details are best left unmentioned. His attackers then pillaged his belongings and robbed him of his money.⁶³

Francis S. "Frank" Turner was more than a bit lucky in 1884. Turner was just outside of Atlanta when a man jumped out onto the trail and pulled a gun. The

highwayman demanded the money and as Turner went to get it, he pulled an unloaded pistol, which prompted the would-be robber to flee. Turner's quick thinking saved the day as the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* reported that "he had quite a lump of scads belonging to other parties."⁶⁴

Run-ins as a result of the unrest between Native Americans and whites were also prevalent. Needless to say, it didn't take long for packers to appreciate the security that a small arsenal of firearms could provide. Even the camp cook was known to carry a shotgun, while the packers carried side arms and rifles.

In dealing with the threat of highwaymen, packers resorted to an old trick in concealing gold. The practice appears to be an old one that was used in Mexico, in which gold was hidden inside the *aparejo* pack saddle. The gold, whether it was in small bars of bullion, or in dust, was put inside the leather pouches that contained the grass padding.⁶⁵ When on the trail, gold was nearly impossible to get to unless the mule was completely unpacked and even then, in a pack train of up to fifty mules, it was impossible to tell which *aparejo* held the valuables. Highwaymen were not known to spend much time in the act as one never knew who might be coming up the trail.

Dangerous wildlife could also be a concern for packers in the high country. Bears proved quite troublesome to pack trains. Many times just the smell of a bear on the trail could spook a mule. On precipitous cliffs or in treacherous conditions, this could mean disaster as mules were known to roll down hills and canyons. Bears also would scatter a pack train when coming into camp looking for food.⁶⁶

Even one of the smallest denizens of the mountains, the wood tick, had the potential to cause problems. The exact cause wasn't known at the time, but "mountain fever," known now as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, is a disease spread by wood ticks. Although much more prevalent among those working in the sheep industry,⁶⁷ miners and packers could be vulnerable to bites and infections. The sleep habits of many on the trail when in camp was to "roll up in a blanket on some pine boughs," and sleep.⁶⁸ Residents in Atlanta were of the notion that the only thing that would keep the illness away was a dose of (Cyrus) Jacobs' whiskey.⁶⁹ But even whiskey didn't keep the diminutive wood tick from taking his share of victims. Urquides' friend and business partner John Danskin died from the disease in 1889.

Pack Trails of Idaho

In the early 1860s, the main pack route into southern Idaho was the Boise Road. This road began from the steamboat ports of Walla Walla, Washington or Umatilla, Oregon. It then followed across the Blue Mountains of Oregon over the Grand Ronde and Powder Rivers to the Burnt River. From there it crossed the Snake River at Olds Ferry, near Farewell Bend. It continued up the Snake to the Payette River where it then followed Harris Creek into the Boise Basin.⁷⁰ Wagon roads were not long in coming over the route and the packers saw their rates cut dramatically. The packer's constant quest to stay ahead of the wagon was yet again set in motion. In the 1860s, mining activity revolved around the Boise Basin near the town of Idaho City with significant mining also occurring in the Owyhee Mountains. Pack trails developed to supply these areas until the arrival of wagons.

The Loon Creek mining rush in 1869 created enough excitement to become another opportunity for packers to find work. The trail began out of Idaho City over the summit to the South Fork of the Payette River, making its way over Banner Summit to Cape Horn. Going around Cape Horn, it then followed Valley Creek down to the Stanley Basin. From there, the trail followed the Salmon River and turned north. By August of 1869, the town of Oro Grande was being built with about a thousand active miners in the area. One particular packer loaded seventy mules with supplies in Idaho City for Loon Creek.⁷¹ The surrounding area continued to attract lots of attention as mines such as the Charles Dickens, which netted W.A. Norton \$11,500 worth of gold in thirty days, were discovered in the Yankee Fork district in 1875.⁷²

Packers from Lemhi County also managed to establish routes out of Salmon and Challis. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, supplies were loaded from the railway at Corrine, Utah and shipped into either Challis or Salmon and subsequently into the Yankee Fork region. The Lemhi packers enjoyed some advantages over the Boise and Idaho City based packers, as they were much closer geographically and better able to monitor local conditions. The region is prone to severe winters, making even mule packing difficult, if not impossible at times. The best known of these Lemhi packers was a man by the name of Jim Woods.⁷³

Until completion of the Custer Mill in 1880,⁷⁴ the route to the Boise Basin continued as a means to bring in supplies as well as to haul quartz ore to G.W. Craft's stamp mill at Banner. Packers out of the Boise area continued to use this trail until the Oregon Short Line Railroad reached Ketchum as its terminus in 1884.

The Kelton Road was yet another route that was made possible after 1869. Freight was unloaded at Kelton, Utah from the railroad and loaded onto mules. In the early 1870s, packers loaded as many as a hundred mules to bring freight into Boise.⁷⁵ The route passed by the City of Rocks and crossed the Snake River at either Clark's or Glenn's Ferry and proceeded into Boise. The trip took Urquides a month to complete in 1876 with 40 mules loaded with 12,000 pounds of supplies.⁷⁶

Mining strikes on the South Fork of the Boise River also made Rocky Bar a popular destination. The subsequent discovery of mines around Atlanta made Rocky Bar an important supply hub in the mid-1870s. Because of the difficult route that connected Rocky Bar with Atlanta, it was extremely difficult to get a wagon road completed to connect the two points. These isolated mining camps surrounded by difficult terrain combined to provide packers with some sense of job security, but the specter of the wagon road always threatened.

As the mines in Atlanta became more productive, calls for "a good wagon road" increased. By 1877, four potential routes were being considered as a way to fully develop Atlanta's mineral wealth.⁷⁷ Events from the previous year had frustrated the residents as supplies and food were slow in getting in as a result of the heavy snowpack and the subsequent massive runoff. Panicked residents worried that not enough food and supplies would make it to town by early November of that year. Freight into Atlanta via Rocky Bar cost three cents a pound and one hundred thousand pounds of freight was needed. Frustration with the packers was evident in a letter written to the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World*, in which the writer stated that, "The packers have the inhabitants

besieged, and the chances are they will have to pay for everything that is brought into camp this fall.” Despite all the anxiety, packers managed to deliver all contracted supplies to Atlanta by the end of November 1876.⁷⁸

Talk of building a wagon road into Atlanta continued for at least another decade, but not much action was taken as issues such as cost became a concern.⁷⁹ Despite not having a wagon connection, two pack trails served Atlanta, the one from Rocky Bar, as well as the Middle Fork Boise River trail. The Middle Fork Boise trail became a popular route for packers out of Boise and Idaho City. As mentioned previously, the Middle Fork route could be traveled sooner in the year and provided a more direct connection to Boise.

Native American Wars

The United States Army in its campaigns against hostile Native Americans was quick to take advantage of the mule packers’ services. The pack train’s ability to quickly deliver supplies in treacherous terrain became a key component to the army’s success. Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant was given credit to be the first to use Mexican packers in a military campaign while fighting during the Mexican-American War and the practice continued. In the Pacific Northwest, packers were used in 1855 during the Rogue River War in central Oregon. Famed Native American fighter General George Crook, in his time spent at Fort Boise in the late 1860s, had grown to appreciate the use of the pack train. In 1875, Crook had the U.S. Army buy 200 Idaho pack mules from Lewiston trader A.H. Robie to be shipped to him at Cheyenne via Ogden, Utah.⁸⁰ Crook was a great

promoter of the use of pack trains in Native American warfare, which led to great success in the desert Southwest.

In the 1870s, the United States government needed packers. General Oliver Otis Howard, in his campaign against the Nez Percé in 1877, employed Urquides and others to haul ammunition and supplies.⁸¹ In a lifetime of adventure and danger, it can be safely said that this chapter in his life was the most exciting and harrowing. Urquides was under the command of Major John Wesley Green who led a regiment of troops from Fort Boise.⁸² They marched to the Weiser Valley to keep other tribes from joining Chief Joseph and his warriors. They then arrived in Kamiah where they joined Gen. Howard's group. The whole packing operation consisted of 350 animals that were to haul supplies for the army. They also hauled artillery that included two Gatling guns and two howitzers, which were dismantled and packed.⁸³

During this campaign, in which General Howard called him the "fast little packer," Urquides and fellow packers had difficulties as forage in the high mountain passes proved meager and insufficient. General Howard commented that the poor mule was "obliged to fast all night, and tremble and sway himself back and forth as he undertook to take his load." Later the general remarked that after seven miles, the mule's steps became "strong and firm" after they approached a mountain glade with plenty of green grass.⁸⁴

Treacherous conditions plagued the campaign. Major and Brevet-Colonel W.R. Parnell noted in his diary in July 1877 on the Salmon River that:

It rained all day and night. Several pack-mules were lost—overboard!—in the steep climb; the animals would slip and founder in the mud, under

heavy loads, and in the struggle to get a foothold in some particularly steep places and several lost their balance and went rolling down the mountain side, nearly two thousand feet, with frightful velocity. Of course, there was not much pack and very little serviceable mule when the bottom was reached.⁸⁵

Native American raids and ambushes scattered many of the mules and horses and made it quite a chore to reorganize the train. The Nez Percé understood the importance of the pack trains to the army and sought to disrupt them as a much as possible. During the Battle of the Clearwater, Nez Percé warriors attacked and killed two packers, and ran off with two packed mules, until cavalymen were able to recover several other animals loaded with precious ammunition.⁸⁶

Urquides lived through some dangerous experiences and close calls. He continued working for the Army during the 1878 Bannock War. Many years later in a 1924 interview with the *Idaho Daily Statesman*, one particular incident still incensed him. He related the story about the time he once packed supplies from Boise to Canyon City, Oregon. A certain Lieutenant (W.C.) Brown insisted that Urquides take his pack train along with the supplies to the front lines. With bullets buzzing overhead, he no doubt wondered how he got himself into that situation. In a life that certainly had its share of death-defying feats, this episode stood out in his mind.⁸⁷

Once again, in 1879, the army was in the field against hostile Native Americans; this time it was the Sheep eater band of the Shoshone tribe. In the town of Oro Grande, in the Loon Creek mining district, five Chinese miners who had overwintered there had been found dead. Captain Reuben F. Bernard, who was in command of the cavalry at Fort Boise, was sent to investigate the incident. The situation escalated when two more

miners were presumed killed by Native Americans not far from Oro Grande. Bernard left Fort Boise with 62 men and a pack train on May 31. The difficult terrain and the earliness of the season plotted against the military campaign as snow blocked access into the Cape Horn region. Six mules and their packs had already been lost and conditions turned worse as the snow melt began in earnest. A combination of the terrible conditions and the incidence of “mountain fever” among some of his men prompted Bernard to send the pack train back to Boise for supplies, fresh mules, and reinforcements. In July, three detachments were sent out: Lt. Farrow from Pendleton, Oregon with a group of Umatilla scouts, First Lieutenant Harry Catley from Fort Howard, and Captain Bernard from Fort Boise.⁸⁸

Lt. Catley caused much indignation among his superiors for his actions on 28 July 1879. Despite being warned by one of his packers, a man named White, of an Native American presence, Catley dismissed the intelligence, while spending the afternoon fishing. Catley and his men were later ambushed by the Native Americans twice in as many days. The second attack came when Catley ordered his men to leave camp and climb out of a steep canyon. The Native Americans attacked the column at its most vulnerable and specifically targeted the pack animals. In desperation, Catley ordered that the mules be unpacked, and the freight used for cover from hostile fire. To make matters worse, the Native Americans set fire to the surrounding brush trapping Catley and his men for a total of fourteen hours. Stuck and in want of water, the men and animals resorted to opening a keg of vinegar and drinking from it. This skirmish, now known as

the “Battle of Vinegar Hill,” ended with Catley and his men retreating, leaving the supplies and the mules to the natives.⁸⁹

A month later, after meeting up with Captain Bernard, Catley’s rearguard was attacked, severely wounding Private Harry Eagan, who later died after an emergency amputation of his legs. During the commotion, Idaho packer Jake Barnes took action:

In this affair the chief packer, Jake Barnes, showed up splendidly. Having moved his train to a sheltered position, he, under a heavy fire, recrossed the exposed ground, bringing ammunition to the troops engaged, and then, securing a rifle which had been thrown away by one of the stampeding men, he approached the corporal and awkwardly executing the “Rifle Salute,” said with a laugh: “I want some of this myself. Private Barnes reports for duty, sir.” This had an excellent effect upon the men, who were naturally somewhat shaken by having seen half their number run away.⁹⁰

Barnes came through again when Captain Bernard’s pack train led by Boisean Manuel Fontes went missing. The men were left without food for three days until they caught some salmon. Taking the initiative, Barnes took two mules and made a quick trip to Bonanza securing enough food to hold the troops over until Fontes’ pack train arrived.⁹¹ The Sheepeater Campaign continued until October 1879 when the last fugitive Native Americans surrendered to Lt. Farrow and his Umatilla scouts. The Sheepeater War left a trail of broken down mules, scattered supplies, and the grave of Private Harry Eagan. It stretched the abilities of both man and beast, dealing hardship and suffering to all who served in it.

Urquides participated in both the Nez Percé War of 1877 and the Bannock War the following year. It appears that he did not participate in the Sheepeater War. Perhaps his close call at Canyon City during the Bannock War in 1878 made him reconsider

serving in yet another campaign. Urquides had just married his wife Adelaida and brought her to Idaho from San Francisco, California and their trip back was marred by Native Americans on the warpath. He was in the process of building a home at what would become Spanish Village. Urquides' friend and compatriot, Manuel Fontes, did participate in the Sheepeater War as an army packer. Fontes had previously mined in the Loon Creek mining district and was hired to pack for Captain Bernard. Fontes was under contract to recover lost articles from the Sheepeater Campaign in 1880 when he found promising leads for mining.

The impact of the Native American wars in Idaho was significant in that it considerably disrupted the development and trade of the territory. In 1877, three pack trains left Atlanta in July to pack for the U.S. Army. The editor of the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* noted with some sense of anxiety that:

There are not enough (mules) left to pack ore out and supplies in (to the mines). Uncle Sam must be offering strong inducements to cause packers to throw up contracts for the season, and go into his service. I am told that in one instance a packer forfeited five hundred dollars already earned, and went off to pack for the Government. The price of packing from here to Rocky Bar has advanced from fifteen to twenty-five dollars per ton.⁹²

Earlier in November of 1877, anxiety set in again for the delivery of winter supplies. A large backlog of freight was sitting at Kelton, Utah and it was one teamster's opinion that there weren't enough teams to deliver it all before winter. However, a letter received by the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* written on 22 November 1877 from Rocky Bar stated that despite two feet of snow between Atlanta and Rocky Bar, the "pack trains are still running from here to Atlanta with merchandise and a little of Jacobs' best to keep the boys happy during the holidays."⁹³ Packers like Urquides didn't have much time to

switch between military and civilian service as there was plenty of work to be done after the Native American wars ended.

The Packers of Central and Southern Idaho

The packers of Idaho were a varied lot all tied to an ancient profession. Although none stayed as true to the job as Urquides did, packing was not a trade that one could do without a considerable amount of skill. All the packers active in the west had spent a great deal of time learning how to pack. One observer noted:

A month's daily practice is insufficient to make an apt scholar a good packer. One may watch the mode of fastening the load with a riata for a year twice a day, and be no more able to do it at the twelve month' end than the flute could be learned by looking at another blow and finger it.⁹⁴

Many learned the skill as young boys and continued with it. Others preferred to mine and used their packing skills as a way to bring in more consistent income, or at least to transport their ore to be processed. John Keast Lord commented that "It takes a great deal of skill and long practice to pack and lash goods properly on an *aparaejo* [sic]; but, believe me, the knowledge to a traveler is worth all the time and trouble it takes to acquire."⁹⁵

Like Urquides, there were other Mexican packers in Idaho. Miguel Soto, who met a violent death near Boise, had taken a similar route to Idaho as Urquides. Counted in the 1860 Census in Marysville, California, Soto was packing in Loon Creek by the summer of 1870.⁹⁶

Other Mexican packers included Manuel Fontes who was born in Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico. Fontes came to California as a young boy, packing out of Stockton into the southern Sierra mines. For a time, he worked at the steamboat landing at Sacramento,

before moving to Yreka where he worked a claim at Canal Gulch. Fontes moved north to Boise where he found work packing from the Columbia River steamboat ports to Boise in the 1860s. Fontes also ran a saloon in Boise, but he was a miner at heart. The *Idaho Statesman* reported that Fontes had brought into town some rich quartz samples out of Loon Creek in the 1870s. His activity in the area made him a great candidate to pack supplies for the U.S. Army in the Sheepeater War of 1879. After his service with the U.S. Army, Fontes went back to mining. He opened up the Sheep Mountain mining district and his descendants maintain those claims to this day.

It is difficult to know exactly how many Mexican packers made it into Southern Idaho. Census records are helpful in getting a good idea. Tomás Morales was counted in the 1880 census at Indian Creek in Alturas County. Packer Steven Chávez and cook Eduardo Pasos were both counted in Challis that same year.⁹⁷ Manuel García packed supplies into the Dollarhide mines surrounding Ketchum during the lead/silver rush of the 1880s.⁹⁸ García previously packed out of The Dalles, Oregon.⁹⁹

Although it would be impossible to know by his name, Nick Johnson was a Greek immigrant who changed his name shortly after arriving in the United States. Johnson was counted in the 1870 Idaho census at Idaho City in 1870 as a dairy laborer. By the end of the decade, he was packing into Atlanta. In the 1880s, he packed into Sheep Mountain where he owned a share in the Mountain King mine. He and Urquides consistently packed out of the area until the end of that district's activity. Adele McGown recalled that, in the 1890s, Johnson had employed two Greek compatriots, "that

had just come from Greece and they could only say a few words in English.”¹⁰⁰ Johnson eventually married an Italian woman and settled near Clayton where he farmed.¹⁰¹

Although Urquides’ and Johnson’s pack trains added an international flavor, Anglo Americans were also active, especially in Lemhi County. Eli Minert packed supplies into the Loon Creek district and made trips into Idaho City after flour and other supplies.¹⁰² Minert later was a road supervisor in Lemhi County and mined at Blackbird, before retiring as a farmer in Salmon.¹⁰³ Kentucky-born Jefferson Riggs, an “old time packer,” packed regularly into Bonanza out of Challis during its heyday and also made trips into Idaho City. Illinois native and Sheepeater War packer Jake Barnes packed out of Challis bringing supplies into Bonanza and other parts of the Loon Creek district.¹⁰⁴ Barnes and Ezra Orn also packed ore in the 1880s to the Bayhorse smelter.¹⁰⁵

Described by G.E. Shoup as “educated and years experienced,” James F. (Jim) Woods was well known in Lemhi County, packing out of both Challis and Salmon into the Yankee Fork region.¹⁰⁶ Woods began packing out of Sheep Mountain in the late 1880s and worked alongside Dave Pearson in packing ore out of the East Fork Salmon River.¹⁰⁷

George Kemp and Frank Beagle went into the packing business, buying out the Tague & Clark pack train in the 1880s. Kemp and Beagle packed in and around Ketchum, hauling ore out of Germania Basin. Kemp also frequently packed out of Sheep Mountain and partnered with a man named Pardum when Beagle left to work with Jim Woods as an engineer. Beagle later took over the Morrison & Steen pack train in 1890, and worked in packing supplies for the company’s mines in Bonanza and at Yellow

Jacket.¹⁰⁸ He later became a stockman near Roosevelt with his brothers Perry and Benjamin.¹⁰⁹

Boisean Frank Turner packed out of the Seafoam and Boulder districts beginning in the early 1890s. Turner garnered attention for hauling a 600 pound piece of ore out of the Boulder mines in 1891, which was later shipped to Chicago intact.¹¹⁰ Turner had previously packed extensively into Atlanta before moving on to the Wood River country.¹¹¹

The addition of non-Mexicans to the ranks of mule packing was an interesting development that began in California and became more prevalent as the migration of Mexican packers into Idaho slowed to a trickle. The numbers of Mexicans in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho was miniscule in comparison to those in California. Anglo Americans adopted the Mexican pack system and used the lingo that they learned from their Mexican counterparts. However, almost all seemed to use packing as a skill to earn supplemental or temporary income. Most came out west to mine and most did. George Kemp was a prospector who packed ore out of central Idaho as was Nick Johnson who owned a number of mines himself. Frank Beagle and his brothers also ran a mine before retiring as stockmen. Jim Woods does not show up in any other record after 1895.

Among his contemporaries, Urquides had no equal as a mule packer. It was an occupation that he stuck with for the rest of his life. Urquides packed for a total of 62 years beginning in California and ending in the Jarbidge Mountains of northern Nevada. Many times he appeared in the local papers as “the well known packer,” or as “Kossuth, the name that he is known by in all the mining camps far and near.”¹¹² He was

consistently called upon to pack massive pieces of machinery into the Idaho backcountry and his actions became legendary. He was a figure that was not soon forgotten by the people of early Idaho and he was interviewed and written about by people who saw him as a singular personality in Idaho's history. He was a rugged, hardy individual who faced innumerable dangers and challenges in delivering civilization into the remote recesses of Idaho. He was also something more, a link to a people, a culture, a way of life that stretched across four continents to the ancient commercial civilizations of the Old World. He was the real deal; a Mexican mule packer who took his job as far as it would take him. He also provided for and nurtured a family, making Boise his home.

SHEEP MOUNTAIN AND THE WOOD RIVER RUSH

During the Sheepeater War of 1879, a new mining region was on its way to becoming a factor in Idaho's mining industry. Manuel Fontes, under contract by the United States Army to pack supplies for Colonel Reuben F. Bernard, noticed promising prospects for mining. Upon further inspection, he found gold near Soldier Creek. After his military service was complete, Fontes and a small group of men left Boise in the spring of 1880 to explore the leads that were previously found. The party first discovered the Greyhound belt, which is located eighteen miles north of Cape Horn. The Greyhound belt was found to be a total of fifteen miles long, containing silver milling ore. In 1882, Fontes discovered Sheep Mountain, some six miles from the Greyhound.¹¹³ He named the area Sheep Mountain after finding three dead Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep at the base of the mountain.¹¹⁴ There, he found a number of leads that contained galena, a type of ore suitable for smelting, containing a combination of lead, silver, and even small quantities of gold. Fontes and others saw enormous potential in developing the new district, but the region's isolation managed to keep mills and smelters from making their way into the area.¹¹⁵ Isolation, weather, and the possibility of encountering hostile Native Americans also were cause for concern. When Fontes and two other men, named Teachenor and Monahan, passed through Idaho City in May 1883, the editors of the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* commented that the expedition was well supplied and "armed to the teeth." They further noted that it was the first party of the season and predicted that they would

have a tough time getting to their destination on account of the heavy snow in the high country. The difficulty in reaching Sheep Mountain that year must have been serious enough to warrant a much later start the following year. Fontes passed through Idaho City with a party of seven men in early July 1884.¹¹⁶ During the 1885 season, he took a chance on an early return, leaving Boise May 9th and arriving at his destination on the 28th!¹¹⁷

Although development of the region was slow and tedious as a result of the isolation and weather, Fontes and others managed to attract a number of prospectors and investors to the area and excitement slowly materialized. By 1883, there were a hundred men prospecting in the area. A number of them gathered to survey and plot out a bona fide town. The men chose to name the place Bernard, in honor of Colonel Bernard of the Sheepeater Campaign.¹¹⁸ The town, however, failed to materialize, although as the years went by, Greenhow & Rumsey, merchants from Ketchum would later set up a branch store in the area comprised of a large tent in the town of Seafoam, which also contained a number of tents and two unfinished log cabins.¹¹⁹

Miners began to pack ore out of the area during the 1883 season. Nick Johnson loaded 35 mules with ore for the smelter at Bayhorse at \$60 per ton. Johnson ended the season by bringing in five loads totaling 60,000 pounds. He retired for the winter to Boise with a payout of \$1800. For mine owners, early returns showed a profit of \$45 a ton after packing and smelting. High packing costs prompted mine operators to seek the opening of wagon roads to the region. Some packers bought shares in mines, such as Nick Johnson who bought a 1/8th share of the Mountain King mine in 1883.¹²⁰ Mine

operators who brought packers into the fold managed to decrease the cost of freight to some extent. By 1888, however, packing costs dropped to as low as \$35 a ton as packers competed with ever increasing freight wagons.¹²¹

Urquides was active early on in the district and closely associated with John Danskin in mining interests in the area. It is believed to be the first and only time that Urquides ever took interest in a mine.¹²² Danskin was a native Canadian raised in New York who moved west as a young man. He was a successful businessman for a time in the Boise Basin and once served as Boise County sheriff. Urquides' pack train packed ore to both the Bayhorse and Custer smelters from the Mountain King mine near Sheep Mountain. On the trips to Bayhorse, one of Urquides' mules provided a bit of entertainment and disbelief on the trail. When Urquides passed through Idaho City on a trip down to Boise, he was no doubt amused to share his story with the editors of the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World*. They told the following:

Kossuth (Urquides), the packer, has a famous little mule—not famous for kicking qualities and stubbornness, those leading characteristics or traits of character of those half-breed, long-eared quadrupeds, but for friskiness under a heavy load, the statement of the weight of which seems almost incredible. The first trip that Kossuth made from Sheep Mountain to Bayhorse with ore, the little mule mentioned, which is about the smallest one in his train, was altogether too lively—was either away ahead of the train, or was frisking around outside of the trail, or both. So the next trip they put an extra pack on him. His load was weighed when the train reached Bayhorse, and the weight was just five hundred and fifteen pounds, and with this heavy pack the little mule was the liveliest animal in the train. The distance from Sheep Mountain to Bayhorse is ninety miles.¹²³

Packing ore from the Sheep Mountain district revolved around the loading and shipping of galena ore to the smelter, whether at Bayhorse, or Custer. The packing of ore

had its precedent in Idaho. In the 1870s, quartz ore was routinely shipped from the Yankee Fork/Loon Creek mining districts to stamp mills at Banner to be processed. Urquides and Johnson's pack trains made as many trips as the conditions allowed. The miners at the various prospects worked to make sure that ore was left at the dumps for loading and shipment to the smelters.

By the end of the 1884 season, plans were being made by mine operators to continue work throughout the winter. Mining shafts were sunk into both the Mountain King and Greyhound mines and miners found that the ore increased in richness as the depth increased. The Mountain King mine was dug to a depth of 100 feet, while the Greyhound was sunk to about 50 feet, by September of 1884. Wintering over in the area could only be possible with the necessary supplies on hand. In this regard, packers had a dual duty of shipping ore to the smelters and then slipping away to Boise City for a load of food and other supplies. With forty-four mules, Urquides made trips to Boise to pick up cargoes of fruit and vegetables.¹²⁴ The packing of apples, onions, and other fruits and vegetables was an important, but easily overlooked activity. These fruits and vegetables not only brought variety to a miner's diet, but more importantly they also halted the onset of scurvy among them. Scurvy became a serious factor in isolated mining camps and first showed up in the Mother Lode of California. Onions, in particular, were the most sought after vegetable, especially after a long winter as they were the most effective antidote to the effects of the disease.¹²⁵

Wintering over in the area appears to have occurred for the first time in 1884-1885. Surprisingly, the snowfall was not as bad as first imagined. A number of men

wintered near a place called the “Hot Springs,” located eight miles from Sheep Mountain. These men reported that the snowfall at that place was never over fifteen inches deep. One of the men, a miner named Martin Barber, reported that one of his horses survived the winter on its own and upon seeing it in the spring remarked that the animal looked as if “had not suffered as much as some that had wintered in a lower altitude.”¹²⁶ Although reports such as these may have changed some people’s opinions on the feasibility of wintering over in such an isolated area, seasoned miners understood that weather in Idaho was unpredictable at best. However, the promise of riches often trumped the risk involved. Wintering over meant that work could continue in development and extraction of ore from the various mines over an extended amount of time. This increased the potential for better profit. For the packers, it meant job security, as mules were the only means of transporting supplies in less than favorable conditions. Extended mining activities also meant more ore to pack down to the smelters.

Initially, the supply routes into the Sheep Mountain area came from Boise City via Idaho City and Banner. This route made sense due to the fact that the district was by far an operation initially run by Boiseans. Trade into Salmon and Challis came in via Corrine, Utah, and later Blackfoot as railroad routes continued to develop. However, the logistical networks began to change dramatically with the arrival of the Oregon Short Line Railroad in the early 1880s. A spur of the railroad was completed into the Wood River Valley at Hailey in 1883. This development along with the timing of rich mineral strikes in the area proved to be a great opportunity for the region. By 1884, Ketchum had become the railroad terminus,¹²⁷ which proved to be a boon for the burgeoning town.

This rail connection put the town in a great position to corner the region's trade and become a distribution center to the area's mining camps. The completion of the Philadelphia smelter just two years prior further strengthened Ketchum's hand in attracting the ore market. By the fall of 1884, the editors of *The Ketchum Daily Keystone* could not help but notice the steady flow of supplies into the high country from their town:

Freight traffic to the terminus is continually improving and a number of the large Blackfoot teams are now plying between here and Challis. The trade is rapidly coming this way and merchants and miners over there realize a decided advantage over the old route. Ketchum as a distributing point for freight and travel to surrounding parts, is fast coming into prominence.¹²⁸

Ketchum initially benefitted from the local mines such as the Elkhorn, Parker, West Fork, Bullion, and Mayflower claims. These mines fed the local smelters, namely the Philadelphia, which had undergone considerable expansion by 1883.¹²⁹ The Sheep Mountain district trade continued to gravitate toward Boise via Idaho City for a couple more years. Urquides traveled this route at least through the 1885 season. By early May of 1886, *The Ketchum Keystone* noted that "'Kasoo' (Urquides) has arrived in town with his pack train." By mid-August, Urquides had brought down the first ore shipment of the season into Ketchum, a load of about seven tons.¹³⁰

Ketchumites were not slow to notice the potential of the Sheep Mountain district for local trade. An article in June 1887 stated that a number of Boise men with interests at Sheep Mountain intended to build roads to further develop direct links between the two places. Editors of the *Keystone* exuded confidence that building a road would secure "all the trade from that locality."¹³¹ Long the bane of mule packers, the wagon road was a

serious threat to pack train operators. This trend began in the mining and supply depots in California and muleteers had always been pushed farther afield in an attempt to stay one step ahead of the wagons. A wagon road had been established from the Wood River Valley to the Stanley Basin via Galena in 1885 and supplies were now flowing in much cheaper than if brought in by pack train.¹³² Cheaper transport worked in the best interest of the mine operators and merchants, as one wagon could haul the same amount of freight as a forty-mule pack train.¹³³ James Waters reported in 1889 that the cost of shipping ore from Sheep Mountain, a distance of 110 miles was prohibitive, and that after “freighting, sampling, assaying, etc., is deducted from the proceeds of the ore, [the miners] have but a small margin left.”¹³⁴ When possible, ore was graded at the dumps and only high grade ore was shipped out. Lower grade ores were not worth the high price of packing and were left on the dumps in the hope of the arrival of a wagon road.

Competition with wagons continued to intensify with the construction of a wagon road up and over Trail Creek Summit. The road traveled over the summit to the Big Lost River and turned north to Challis. This development extended Ketchum’s reach as a distribution center throughout the Central Idaho mines. The most notable teamster to utilize these roads was a man named H. C. Lewis. In 1885, Lewis, the son of Isaac I. Lewis who owned the prosperous Elkhorn Mine, had put together Ketchum’s largest freight outfit. Lewis had a 30 X 60 foot warehouse surrounded by a platform of considerable size, along with a total of 155 animals that comprised 14 teams. His company’s routes included those connecting Challis, Bayhorse, Custer, Bonanza, Clayton, and Challis.¹³⁵ His Ketchum Fast Freight Line would eventually design

enormous wagons to haul ore and supplies. In 1889, the company began using twenty-four mule teams “attached to a trail of four immense wagons loaded with upward of 80,000 pounds of freight.”¹³⁶



Figure 2

Ketchum Fast Freight Line Ore Wagon
Idaho State Historical Society 72-103-1.

Joseph McGowan in “Freighting to the California Mines, 1849-1859” rightly concluded that the following was true about the relationship between packing and wagon roads:

By 1860, the pattern of the advance of transportation in northern California had already been set. Pack trains were the immediate answer to problems of supplying demand created by the influx of miners. High cost of this type of transportation induced merchants or individuals to form joint-stock companies to construct roads to lower freight costs. Advance of wagon roads pushed packing depots farther back into the mountains. Finally roads connected main population centers in the mountains with bases of supply in the valley. Thereafter, pack trains supplied only those areas where population was so sparse as to exclude any profitable road construction.¹³⁷

The same dynamic was true in Idaho as mule packing days would be numbered with the ever encroaching wagon road. However, Urquides and others managed to string a few more years of work in the area. Urquides was not inclined to convert his operation to the use of mule teams and wagons, simply because it would have been a massive departure from what had made him successful for so many years. Hauling freight with teams requires a different kind of mule, one that is larger and trained to pull a wagon, instead of carrying a loaded *aparejo*. Economically, the change would not be feasible as freight rates would be lower and competition high. One would have been hard pressed to challenge H.C. Lewis’ massive fleet of wagons in central Idaho. Packing still maintained certain advantages, such as the ability to pack earlier and later in the season when wagon roads were impassable, the ability to cross flooded rivers and streams, and the ability of supplying more isolated mining districts throughout Idaho.

Wagon roads aside, Urquides and the other area packers continued to stay particularly active at Sheep Mountain, Greyhound, and the neighboring Seafoam districts, as well as Bonanza. Urquides had made three shipments of ore from the Mountain King

Mine by early September of 1885. His employees even did a little prospecting, finding a lead that Manuel Fontes began to work that year.¹³⁸ The 1887 season saw Urquides packing between Ketchum and Bonanza, bringing supplies into the Washington and Buckskin mines. On return trips he would bring ore from these mines for the smelter. Urquides worked through 1887 with a heavy heart. The July 16 edition of the *Keystone* reported the death of his twenty-month-old son Francisco in Boise. Jesús had very little time to grieve as he was back to work by the end of the month on his way to Bonanza. Prior to the death of his son, Urquides lost ten mules, roughly a quarter of his pack train to disease as he left Ketchum for the first trip of the season.¹³⁹ One can only imagine the conflicting emotions that he must have felt on the trail.

Nick Johnson continued to pack ore out of the Franklin mine at Sheep Mountain in 1887, and later made a trip to the Custer Mill with 10,000 pounds of flour.¹⁴⁰ He made other trips from the Leonard Mine at Seafoam. The previous year the *Idaho Semi-Weekly World* reported that Johnson was running a pack train of 100 animals on Wood River.¹⁴¹

In 1888, Urquides was notably absent from the pages of the *Keystone*. Perhaps he chose to spend the year closer to home after a tragic year. The death of baby Francisco was the third such loss for the Urquides family since 1881. Urquides' job had forced him farther and farther away from home and in some years left only three months out of the year to spend with wife Adelaida and six-year-old daughter Lola. The loss of some of his mules to sickness also made it harder for him to do his job.

Another concern regarding the business was the closing of the Custer Mill at Bonanza in the fall of 1888. Ore coming into the mill was too low grade to justify processing it, and the machinery had become worn out.¹⁴² The closing of the Custer mill was part of a larger problem, as things were not looking up for Ketchum and the surrounding area mines either. The mines around Ketchum had suffered through labor disputes among the miners starting at the Minnie Moore Mine in 1884. Cost cutting measures by mine operators led to a strike that temporarily favored the miners, although the miners were eventually forced to accept the wage reduction and to continue work.¹⁴³ By 1888, a state of depression existed in Ketchum as mines closed throughout the area.

Issues over railroad freight rates were one bone of contention between mine operators and the Union Pacific Railroad. Although smelting was done in Ketchum itself, the Philadelphia smelter had its limitations. Ore coming into the Philadelphia had to be a higher grade in order to make a profit, if the ore was lower grade or had impurities, it made sense to ship the ore elsewhere. Ore was shipped to other points such as Denver, Salt Lake City, and even as far as Omaha and Kansas City. The wrangling over freight rates and the closing of many of the mines sank the Wood River Valley into a state of depression.¹⁴⁴

Despite all of the problems in Bonanza and the Wood River Valley, Sheep Mountain still managed to stimulate some activity. The depressed state of affairs around Ketchum prompted miners to look elsewhere and Sheep Mountain provided them with that opportunity. *The Ketchum Keystone's* column on 19 May 1888 sought to fuel some sense of optimism on the area. Men were arriving daily to stake claims and another

“Coeur d’Alene stampede” was anticipated. High grade ore was being discovered and shipped and hopes ran high for the district. Prospectors were still left wanting for a wagon road that would connect the region with the Wood River Valley:

That is the main requirement of the country—a market—although many high-grade claims are already shipping quantities of ore and realizing handsome profits, notwithstanding it is 110 miles from this point, and as yet the wagon road is incomplete. This hindrance, however, it is to be hoped, will be speedily removed, and the traffic will be by means of wagons rather than pack animals, as at present.¹⁴⁵

The “Sheep Mountain fever” as the *Keystone* characterized it, finally brought the dream of a town into the realm of possibility. Seafoam, as the town was called, was located at the confluence of Vanity, Baldwin, and Seafoam Creeks. A store comprised of a large tent was set up by Pat Hyde at the town site and received the first stock of goods from Greenhow & Rumsey. The freight was brought up by George Kemp and his partner Frank Beagle on thirty-two mules. A few weeks later, correspondents reported that Hyde was disposing of his merchandise “at a lively rate,” and stated that the town consisted of fifteen tents, two unfinished log houses, along with a bar.¹⁴⁶

With Urquides absent, Jim Woods began packing into the Sheep Mountain district. He ran a pack string of 42 mules delivering ore from both the Washington and Mountain King mines. Woods and George Kemp both packed out of Sheep Mountain making \$37.50 a ton for the season.¹⁴⁷ Mine operators began shipping only the highest grade ore in 1888 in anticipation of a wagon road that would cut down on freight rates. All of the lower grade ores were left on the dumps for shipment at a later time.

Tragedy continued to be a recurring theme throughout Urquides’ life as yet another blow came in June of 1889. While bringing out five and one half tons of ore

from the Seafoam along with fellow packer George Kemp, Urquides' close friend and business partner John Danskin came down with "mountain fever." On the trail to Ketchum, Danskin's condition progressively worsened. He arrived at Baxter's Hotel on Thursday, 6 June and despite the help of a physician and a "devoted" friend in Urquides, Danskin passed away that Sunday morning at age 46. With the loss of a close friend and business associate, Urquides endured yet another difficult season in 1889, until leaving for home in Boise by train around New Year 1890.¹⁴⁸

Beginning in the 1890s, Urquides began using the train as a convenient way of getting to Ketchum. In March 1890, Urquides arrived in Ketchum and took the stage to Challis, spending a month there preparing for the coming season. By then he had hired a young man to care for the mules during the winter. Swedish-born John Bowman was raised in Iowa and came out west to California with a cousin as a young man. In Challis, Bowman met Urquides and went to work for him, taking charge of the Urquides pack train during the winter, as well as packing during the season.¹⁴⁹ A common practice of mule packers was to turn out their stock into the lower valleys where the climate was milder and feed more plentiful. Some packers tended other people's stock along with their mules during the winter months as a way to make extra income. George Kemp and Frank Beagle, both area packers, began the practice in the Wood River Valley in 1887. Earlier that year the two went into business together buying the Tague & Clark pack train, which they used to pack in the area.¹⁵⁰

In the summer of 1890, Urquides trekked to Rocky Bar to take in supplies and reloaded in Ketchum with flour, bacon, and ham for A.J. Phieffer in Bonanza. A few

weeks later, he packed 4,000 pounds of supplies for local merchants Tague & Clark before bringing a load of ore from the Tyrolese mine in the Germania Basin, north of Ketchum. Urquides returned to Sheep Mountain in August to bring out five tons of high-grade ore for Chris Morler. “Kossuth” reported that the mine operators were poised for a big year in which large quantities of ore were to be shipped out. Morler alone was preparing to ship 100 tons from the Mountain King mine.¹⁵¹

In 1892, Urquides’ attention turned to the Yellow Jacket mine in Lemhi County. D.M. Steen, owner of the mine reported that “a number of prospectors [were] already at work in the basin and a genuine mining boom [was to] be expected.”¹⁵² In October of that year a massive amount of freight for the mine was on its way. The freight was initially loaded by H.C. Lewis in Ketchum and transported over the Trail Creek road to Challis. The load included 45,000 pounds of machinery, which included 10,000 pounds of wire cable; 30,000 pounds of provisions rounded out the remainder of the load. *The Ketchum Keystone* reported that the freight would be packed out of Challis by “Kossuth’s pack train to the mine 60 miles through a rough country.” They continued by stating that one piece of cable weighing 4,500 pounds would be packed in one piece, “stretched out on pack mules, making a very hazardous undertaking.”¹⁵³

With this job, Urquides accomplished a feat that showcased his masterful skill and that became an Idaho legend. When the new owners took over at the Yellow Jacket mine, they needed a more economical production system. They planned to erect a Swem aerial tramway with buckets to carry 125 pounds of ore each. It was necessary to use a 7/8-inch cable in the construction of this tramway. The total length of the cable was

8,400 feet and being too stiff to coil for individual mules, it was strung out in the main street of Challis. It became quite a spectacle as the whole county turned out to see the master at work.¹⁵⁴ In his own words, Urquides explained the operation:

It was necessary to get this wire to the mine without any break, for a splice would have been too dangerous for tramway work...and I loaded it on 35 mules, spreading it out with the mules in three rows. We had to pack between 60 and 70 miles up and down the steepest mountainsides. Several times, some of my mules would roll down the side of the mountain, taking the rest with them. Then it was necessary to get them all up, repack again and start out. I never coveted another job like that.¹⁵⁵

The trip from Challis to the Yellow Jacket mine was quite a spectacle, as it lumbered along the trail. The trail was formidable, crossing three mountain ranges as high as 10,000 feet with the mine itself situated at about 8,000 feet in elevation. The trip was set back two days on account of the mules falling down a hillside. Mine superintendent G.L. Sheldon remarked that the mules “went down the mountain 150 feet into the timber in a tangled, twisted condition. It took two days to cut them out, no serious damage being done.”¹⁵⁶ One of the most amazing occurrences on the trail was when the pack train crossed over uneven terrain. Packer John Bowman stated that, “going around a sharp curve in the trail, a mule would occasionally be dangling in the air as the cable would not bend for the curve.”¹⁵⁷ To minimize this, Urquides had men blaze straighter trails to avoid these curves.¹⁵⁸ The epic trip was completed in mid-November, allowing the Yellow Jacket mine to expand its operations. The job earned Urquides and his men \$1200 to pack from Challis to the mine.¹⁵⁹

He was later asked to undertake another difficult job at the Yellow Jacket mine. This time, he needed to bring in a 625-pound camshaft to replace a worn out one. This

was a huge load for one animal, but once again Urquides' resourcefulness and ingenuity made the difference. G.L. Sheldon, in his article *Mining Experiences in Idaho in the Nineties*, described Urquides' modus operandi:

He secured the largest mule in the locality. He then made two tripods the height of the shaft when loaded. These were packed on another mule. The big mule was led with the load, one, two, or three hours, depending upon the condition of the trail. Urquides... would then stop and set up the tripods just behind the loaded mule. Four men would next slide the shaft back onto the tripods. The mule was then allowed to rest and feed for a short time and the procedure repeated.¹⁶⁰

John Bowman related that "some of the machinery they packed into the Yellow Jacket mine would have made Ripley's Believe It or Not column." Examples included a fourteen-foot diameter fly-wheel made of cast iron. The flywheel was to be hooked to a steam engine and was packed in two pieces. A twenty stamp mill was also brought in with each stamp weighing 600 pounds and being ten feet in length. A bit of packing ingenuity was needed to load each stamp on two mules.¹⁶¹ Urquides continued packing into the Yellow Jacket mine through 1895.

In the early 1890s, the Sheep Mountain district and environs had strung together a few seasons of increased productivity, but it was not enough to revive Ketchum, or the rest of the Wood River Valley. As late as 1891, the desire for a wagon road, or better a railroad, topped the wish list for miners in the area. The chronic issues of isolation and shortness of the season were two problems that would not be resolved. The closest a wagon road could reach was eight miles short of Seafoam at Vanity Summit.¹⁶² The terminus of the road was called "Wagon Town," where a man named Mose Storher had set up a store. Freight would be brought to Wagon Town and dropped off, or loaded up

for shipment to Ketchum via the Stanley Basin. Business at Storher's was eventually cut when Arthur McGown and his wife Adele opened up a store on Valley Creek in the Stanley Basin.¹⁶³ The packing of ore out of Sheep Mountain resumed as usual during the 1891 season, with Urquides, Nick Johnson, and Boise old-timer Frank Turner all active in the area. The Panic of 1893 was the final nail in the coffin for Wood River as prices for silver dropped precipitously causing a free fall of world markets. Most operations halted work, while some mining and packing operations that were still contracted to produce ore continued operating; the Wood River boom was effectively over.¹⁶⁴

Urquides and Nick Johnson continued to pack ore from Seafoam and Sheep Mountain as late as 1894. By that time, the store run by the McGowns became a popular way station. Both pack trains brought ore and dropped it off at McGown's. The ore was then loaded onto a wagon driven by a man named McFeters (also spelled McPheters), who then pulled two wagons with a six-horse team over the Galena Summit to the Ketchum smelter. Adele McGown particularly liked seeing Urquides and his mules and enjoyed going out and helping Urquides with the morning packing routine. In fact, it was Urquides who taught her how to throw a diamond hitch. One day Urquides had been suffering from injuries from a kick from one of his mules and stayed at the McGown place to recover. He sent the rest of the packers on without him. McGown noted that Urquides "always rode a fine tall bay mule." This mule was turned loose to follow the rest of the pack train. Within an hour of the pack train's departure, McGown called out to Urquides:

Come out and see what's coming. He did and he said, Jesus Christ, there comes my mule. The mule came across Valley Creek to the house.

Kasoose stood in the door and that mule came to him and began to rub him with his nose. Kasoose petted him then told him to go and eat so the mule did but he kept his eye on the house. He stayed there until the pack train came back two days later. Kasoose said he would not take a thousand dollars for that mule after that.¹⁶⁵

By 1896, it seemed that Urquides' occupation was on its last legs. An article in the *Challis Silver Messenger* stated that by then the days of pack trains in Custer County had almost gone, citing the number of wagon roads as the main reason. However, in areas too rugged for wagons, the packers were still in business. Urquides managed to find work in Oregon and in other parts of Idaho.¹⁶⁶ He packed wood in the Owyhee Mountains at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁶⁷

Even so, no one soon forgot the incredible feats of Urquides and his mules. After resuming his Boise-Boise Basin routes, he was again called into the rugged central Idaho wilderness. In 1901, Thunder Mountain, northeast of present-day McCall, was the site of yet another mining rush. Col. W. H. Dewey ordered delivery of a 10-stamp mill, a huge piece of machinery for grinding ore.¹⁶⁸ The story goes that when Dewey sought to get his stamp mill packed to Thunder Mountain, someone told him that "only Jesus Christ" could take such a load over the rugged terrain. "Naturally," author Rafe Gibbs wrote, "Dewey thought of Jesús Urquides, and engaged him to perform the miracle with the aid of 40 mules." Again employing techniques and strategies used in packing to the Yellow Jacket mine, he built and used tripods as supports to transfer freight from mule to mule in the process of climbing steep hills. Since it was next to impossible to turn sharply with the freight, Urquides staged mules at switchbacks and transferred the freight from one mule to the next until the loads were over the mountain. It was an incredible amount of work,

and Urquides and the mules were compensated accordingly. Urquides received a rate of 10 cents a pound for freight and the mules received extra rations of hay. Upon arriving to Thunder Mountain with the mill intact, Urquides remarked, "I thank God that He gave us mules."¹⁶⁹ Urquides not only brought in the mill, but also brought in more cable just like the cable he delivered to the Yellow Jacket mine.¹⁷⁰ He was to be known as the first packer into the Thunder Mountain region. He again packed 600 lbs. on one mule. A number of years later, his exploits took him south to mines in Nevada's Jarbidge Mountains, an area that is still one of the most remote places in the lower 48 states.

THE INCIDENT

Apart from his amazing feats of mule packing throughout the west, Jesús Urquides was also known for a most unfortunate and embarrassing incident. In 1898, the town of Boise was in a patriotic mood. The Spanish-American War had begun and the Idaho National Guard had just left to fight the Spaniards in the Philippines.¹⁷¹ A large crowd had formed and apparently a joke had been made by Urquides that the Spanish navy would win the first naval battle of the Spanish-American War. The crowd attracted the attention of the Boise chief of police and Urquides was ordered to leave the scene. Urquides had objected to being told to leave and was subsequently arrested and charged for “obstructing the sidewalk.” The details of the incident were reported in the *Idaho Daily Statesman*, but the paper had mistaken Urquides for José Uberuaga who had been reported as “Uberuga, a Mexican by birth.” The error had been repeated a number of times until Jesús Urquides’ name was finally listed as the one arrested. It was not clear if Uberuaga had been arrested along with Urquides. Shortly after the incident, Urquides did something that proved that he would defend his honor and dignity and not become a passive victim. He wrote a letter to the editor in the *Statesman* that spoke of the “unjust humiliation in which [he] was subjected,” and complained of “the unnecessary haste and violence used.” He further explained that the whole thing was a misunderstanding and that he was “no broiler, no disturber of the peace, but a quiet, peaceable American citizen, a lover of American institutions and a supporter and defender of her flag.”¹⁷²

The letter was undersigned by over fifty of Boise's most well-known and prominent citizens at the time in an incredible show of support. By this time, Urquides had resided in Boise for thirty years and had established himself as a pioneer of that city. He had just as much to do with the development and prosperity of the capital city as anyone else. The founding community understood the contributions that he had made and he became somewhat of a legend in the backcountry hauling incredible loads over the most treacherous terrain to deliver food, machinery, and anything else that was needed in some of the most inaccessible places in the region.

On 22 April, the editors of the *Statesman* wrote, "Everybody has recognized the case as an unfortunate incident." The article also stated "everybody regrets that the unpleasant incident occurred as he (Urquides) is recognized as one of our best citizens."¹⁷³

The incident does shed light on the complex social and political climate in the west. The fact that Uberuaga's name came up a number of times in the *Statesman's* reporting causes one to speculate if Uberuaga did in fact make the 50 cent wager. What would Urquides, a Mexican born packer who spent practically his entire life on the trail know anything about the Spanish naval forces? Uberuaga, a Basque from the coastal province of Bizkaia (Vizcaya) in Spain might know something about the Spanish navy. Uberuaga did live at the Spanish Village for a time before opening his own Basque boardinghouse in Boise and it is entirely possible that it was a joke that went wrong due to the political climate made worse by yellow journalism. Urquides most likely was

accompanying Uberuaga and perhaps tried to defend him getting himself arrested and fined.

One aspect of the Urquides letter that warrants more thought was his statement regarding his American citizenship. In his experience in the American West, from California, with stops in Oregon, Nevada, and finally Idaho, he no doubt experienced the racism and prejudice that existed among some Anglo Americans who targeted not only Mexicans, but Chinese and other groups, such as Mormons. By his statement, Urquides made it very clear that he was not someone that would tolerate unjust humiliation and that he would not be someone that could simply be dismissed or marginalized.

Conditions in California and in other parts of the west had deteriorated for Mexicans since the advent of the Anglo Americans. Hundreds were lynched¹⁷⁴ and the rest were derided as “greasers” and “foreigners” and dismissed as “lazy,” or “indolent.” Interestingly enough, even the native-born Californios had become “foreigners” in their own land in the eyes of many Anglo Americans. Patricia Nelson Limerick noted that this idea “is surely one of the greater paradoxes of our time that a large group of these people, so intimately tied to the history of North America, should be known to us under the label ‘aliens.’”¹⁷⁵

Another interesting aspect of frontier development in the west was the attitudes regarding race and ethnicity. An amazingly diverse society, it was a place as cosmopolitan as any other on earth. Early Anglo Americans upon arrival mixed and mingled with people from Mexico, Chile, Peru, China, France, Germany, and Australia, as well as local Native American tribes. Some even married Mexican, Chilean, and

Chinese women. Obviously, many Americans longed for the comforts and familiarity of home somewhere back East, but a good number of them adapted and even thrived in their new surroundings. For many, California was merely a place to make a fortune and return home. Some accounts spoke of how these people of different backgrounds cooperated and coexisted. Los Angeles, however, was but one example up to the 1860s in which the city was described by Leonard Pitt as, “Californian in the center, Mexican toward the east, Yankee in the west, and cosmopolitan everywhere.”¹⁷⁶ Increasing numbers of Americans arriving overland had made the diggings particularly crowded; leading to a deterioration of conditions that ultimately soured relations between Euro Americans and the foreign born. Americans who longed for the comforts and institutions of home no longer had to wait. After 1870, order and familiarity had come to the west with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad. These developments occurred to the detriment of the Spanish-speaking and the Chinese in particular.

By the 1890s, Boise underwent these changes that had previously occurred in California. A society and a way of life were changing. Boise had continued to cling to its frontier heritage and Jesús Urquides was one such symbol of that heritage. In fact, Boise historian Carol Lynn MacGregor states that “the presence of Urquides helped travelers realize that despite all the efforts by Boise society to bring eastern amenities to the town, Boise remained a western community.”¹⁷⁷ Perhaps the episode in which Urquides was arrested was one of the first examples of that change. A chief of police who saw Urquides as a “Mexican,” a foreigner, a lowly mule packer, was rebuked by a man and a community that saw him much differently—someone who was a pillar of the

community, who in his thirty years there saw it grow from a city of tents to become the capital of an American state. Just as in his profession in which the wagon road was poised to put him out of business, the specter of racism and intolerance was something that Urquides had managed to keep at bay. In his day, however, he enjoyed an iconic popularity in Boise and the rest of Idaho. Urquides continued to be a symbol of the frontier days of Boise with the presence of his pack train in Boise's "Pioneer Parade," which honored Idaho's early settlers. Again during the 1920s, Urquides was featured in *Sunset* magazine under its "Interesting Westerners" column. Even the famous western novelist Zane Grey gave tribute to him in his novel *Thunder Mountain* in 1935.



Figure 3 **Urquides Demonstrating His Packing Skills**
University of Idaho 3-0746a [1]

RETIREMENT, FINAL YEARS, AND THE SPANISH VILLAGE

In 1911, Urquides retired from packing. His failing eyesight was the main reason, for even at 78 years of age he was otherwise still in great physical shape. He stated in an interview that he was “completely lost when he gave up freighting and felt obliged to remain at home on account of failing eyesight.” In hindsight he also confessed that he “wouldn’t live his life of a freighter over again for a million dollars.” The personal tragedies that occurred in the years following his retirement no doubt made it much more difficult. However, he continued to preside over his “little world” known as Urquides Village and enjoyed the company of his tenants as well as his beloved daughter Lola. The *Statesman* reported that Urquides spent his last years “puttering about his garden, talking Spanish with old friends, and when tired resting in his comfortable home.”¹⁷⁸

Urquides died on 26 April 1928. His funeral service was described as “simple, but impressive,” a most fitting exit. The Reverend W.T. Lockwood, who stated that Urquides brought the three most cherished gifts of life—sympathy, faith, and courage—conducted the services. His pallbearers were James E. Bruce, I.H. Nash, Charles Mack, Wynn Tatro, James Lusk, and W.E. Pierce.¹⁷⁹ He was laid to rest at Pioneer Cemetery in Boise, Idaho, just a stone’s throw from his “little world.”

Lola later related her memories of her father to reporter Faith Turner:

Father was so kind and good and upright. In all those terrible days of lawlessness, no one ever molested or robbed him when he carried thousands of dollars in gold dust in the cantinas (saddlebags) he packed—no one that is except once when the Indians stole his train....He was such

a good provider too. Always he bought in quantities—bananas by the bunch, hams by the dozen, fruit by the crate....¹⁸⁰

His will stated that Lola was to be the executor of his estate. She was to pay all debts and also pay her brother Manuel a total of \$1,000 dollars, which was to be paid in installments not less than \$50 a month.¹⁸¹ Apparently, he had an oral agreement with his daughter that after his death, the tenants and the village be kept intact. Lola kept that promise until her death.

Spanish Village

The actual Urquides homestead located at 115 Main had a history all its own. Once described by more affluent Boiseans as a “dilapidated” block of houses on the way to Warm Springs Road, Spanish Village held a special place in Urquides’ heart.¹⁸² A man named Antonio de Ocampo originally owned the property after buying it from the Boise City government in 1873.¹⁸³ It appears that Ocampo and several other Mexicans and Californios had already been living on the parcel for several years. Ocampo was a native of Juchipila, Zacatecas, Mexico, and had been employed as a stock herder for the people of Boise. Like Urquides, he was in California during the Gold Rush, and then moved to Boise around 1868. He died on 29 December 1878 in Boise at the age of 62. On his deathbed, he stated to Manuel Fontes that the executor of his will would be Don Jesús Urquides, and he bequeathed to Urquides all his belongings, including his house with the lot that it stood on. Urquides was also to inherit three horses, “one yellow, one bay, and one dark brown.” Manuel Romero, Esteban Ruíz, Refugio Olivas, M. Sánchez, and Felipe Lerma witnessed the oral testament. It was dictated by Ocampo in Spanish, translated to English by Manuel Fontes, and transcribed and filed with the county

recorder on 27 January 1879.¹⁸⁴ Ocampo's obituary in the *Idaho Statesman* on 31 December 1878 described him as "faithful and industrious and...scrupulously honest," and mentioned his skill as a horseman, noting that he was rarely seen off his horse.

In 1882 and 1883, Urquides bought adjoining lots from a neighbor named James Flanagan.¹⁸⁵ In 1885, he filed a declaration of homestead, stating that he resided on Lots 3 and 9 in Block 29 on the town plat of Boise City.¹⁸⁶ Shortly after his marriage, he built a small, one-room house.¹⁸⁷ As his packing business continued to grow and thrive, he made additions to accommodate his operations. A corral behind the house was a beehive of activity at the time, and as the Urquides children were growing up, the circle where the men worked was irresistible for them. Many a time their mother, Adelaida would say, "Stay out of the corral—you get hurt! Play in the patio!"¹⁸⁸ In 1893, fire insurance maps showed that the property included a few dwellings, a couple of cabins and a hen house. Over the next decade, a stable and three more cabins were built. By 1912, there were 21 cabins built on the property, which housed packers and other tenants.¹⁸⁹

Urquides had his fair share of legal squabbles in order to keep his property intact. Twice he was brought to court over property lines. Apparently, the homestead was staked out prior to any accurate surveys. In November 1909, in *Bayhouse v. Urquides*, the Idaho Supreme Court ruled that Urquides' fence, which had been in place since Ocampo lived there, was to be the boundary due to adverse possession. It was lucky for Urquides that the law was on his side, as the subsequent survey placed a stake that would have cut off four feet of the Urquides home.¹⁹⁰

This “village,” also known as “Spanish Village,” was inhabited by many Spanish-speaking individuals, including a man named Esteban “Stevie” Ruíz who was the camp cook.¹⁹¹ Urquides built the first of many cabins for him. Other denizens included Antonio de Ocampo’s replacement as stock herder who was also living at Spanish Village in 1880. Santos Pais [sic], most likely Páez, was originally listed as a packer, but had advertised in the *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* as a herder. Following Ocampo’s death, Páez’s ad read:

Ranching Cows.—I will commence ranching city cows next Monday, March 3rd, and will ranch all summer. Grass is getting quite good in the hills and all that want their cows in careful and attentive hands will do well to give them to me, as I will promise strict attention and moderate charges.

Lantos Pais [sic]

The *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, further endorsed Santos, by saying that “he is a faithful, industrious hand and will no doubt give us good satisfaction.”¹⁹²

A neighbor and close friend to Urquides was Jesús Galindo, who resided at 200 Second Street, and was listed in the 1880 United States Census as a packer. Galindo had come to Boise in the 1860s (perhaps with Urquides) and packed into the Boise Basin. On 15 March 1881, Galindo married Guadalupe Vargas in Boise. Witnesses to the marriage were Urquides and Gumecinda Fontes (Manuel Fontes’ wife).¹⁹³ In 1882, the Galindos were godparents to Lola Urquides.¹⁹⁴ Although Galindo came to Boise as a packer, he worked mainly for the city, including time with the fire department. Jesús Galindo died on 2 February 1897 at the age of 57 years; his obituary listed his cause of death as consumption (tuberculosis). At his funeral services, the firemen attended as a body.¹⁹⁵

Members of the Ada Hook & Ladder Company, Boise Engine Company, and the Relief and Rescue Companies were in attendance, along with a large group of friends.¹⁹⁶

In Boise, Idaho at this time, a sense of multinationalism was exhibited in a Spanish-speaking community that included Mexicans, Californios, Spaniards, New Mexicans, and even Basques. The Spanish language was a bridge that helped to develop kinships among these groups. Urquides and the small tight-knit community that had formed in and around Spanish Village were connected by bonds of friendship. They served as godparents for each other's children and stood up for each other at their weddings. Connections with other Spanish-speakers, such as José Gestal, a native of Spain, and his wife Narcisa, a Basque woman were also important. Basque immigrants that had come from the Spanish province of Bizkaia formed their own ethnic community and tended also to gravitate towards one another, but there is evidence that they had connections with a larger Spanish-speaking community that included the inhabitants of Spanish Village. Although the Basques in Boise for the most part spoke their ancient tongue known as Euskera, many spoke Spanish as a second language, especially those who had any formal education in Spain. Urquides' own name is of Basque origin and perhaps he felt a certain connection to them. Many Basques had been present as colonists, miners, and military commanders on the northern Mexican frontier. Urquides employed at least one Basque in his packing business for a time and another Basque, José Uberuaga, lived at Spanish Village in the 1890s. His associations with the Basques could be the main factor in the confusion over his origins, as there were many references to him as "Boise's Basque Packer."

Urquides liked to call the *casitas* (little houses) and their occupants his “little world.” He was an extremely generous and understanding landlord. Harold Rhodenbaugh wrote in the *Statesman* that Urquides felt he must “look after them,” which he did. The *patrón*, or landlord, would personally see to it that anyone that was sick was sent to the doctor at Urquides’ expense. When some of the tenants couldn’t come up with the month’s rent, he would allow them to stay and when they did pay him he would generously ask if they could spare the money. Drinking and gambling was not allowed, a rule that Urquides firmly enforced. The village was also strictly a man’s affair, as women were not allowed to live in the cabins.¹⁹⁷

The last conditions were undoubtedly connected to a few incidents that occurred in the village. One, in 1898, ended in the arrest of one man, James Addington, and two women, Ellen McCabe and Alice Treadway. Addington was fined for carrying a concealed weapon, and McCabe and Treadway pleaded guilty to using “vulgar and threatening language.” Treadway was also charged with brandishing a knife. The women were unable to pay fines related to the charges and ended up serving sentence in the police court room, as there were apparently no facilities for women in the jail. Afterwards, Harry Freeman, the man who notified the authorities during the altercation, was also charged with battery of Alice Treadway, who claimed that Freeman had kicked her.¹⁹⁸

The other incident was the suicide of John De Groat in 1903. De Groat was a native of upstate New York and had been a very skilled plasterer in Boise. He had been drinking heavily prior to his death, and at one time was taken to police headquarters to

sober up.¹⁹⁹ It is entirely possible that Urquides had been out on the trail during these events and one can only imagine his reaction to hear of these things on his return.

Before his death, Urquides made sure that after his passing the tenants and the village would stay intact. Lola followed his wishes until her death in 1965.²⁰⁰ Many sources reported that the tenants of the village were all very content with their homes.²⁰¹ For many, it was a community of friends and was home to some unique and illustrious characters. It began as a Spanish-speaking enclave centered on the packing trade, but the village's character had changed over the years. By the turn of the twentieth century, many Anglo Americans began to live there. These included a "General" Smith that *Statesman* reporter Rhodenbaugh described as a "tall, broad shouldered man with a genuine old-time moustache." He was known by Boiseans as the man who would sit everyday "rain or shine" in front of the old Capitol bank on the NE corner of Ninth and Main. The plaza of the village was also a place where lively philosophical discussions were held. Books and magazines were brought in and poetry was often read.²⁰²

By the 1940s, Spanish Village had become a "bachelor's haven." The inhabitants of the village saw Lola as a "queen." One of the residents, Elbert Martin wrote this about her:

I speak for Mrs. Lola Binnard. I might say first why I praise her as a fine person. She is very careful to have about this quaint little village a good law abiding and good clean minded people. If in case of illness of any person in this little village, Mrs. Binnard is on the job to see that all is attended in the proper way. In case it becomes too much for her she sees to it that someone will take care of the patient. Yes, this place has been a haven for poor good and just people and Lola has been the queen and judge. Would anyone ask for more security in a haven of relaxation for tired people... Well I might add that I have been rather well contented here and expect to remain here.²⁰³

For many years, a man named Walter Murphy was the caretaker of the village and lived in front at 111 Main. He said that Lola would charge only \$3 to \$5 a month rent at first, but before her death it went up to \$10 a month. He also stated that although the cabins had electricity, there was no modern plumbing or running water. The tenants would congregate outside the water pump for their water as well as visit with each other.²⁰⁴

Lola Binnard kept her father's legend alive and apparently had a personality as strong as his. During the 1950s, Spanish Village was listed on tourist brochures. According to Geraldine Snowball, whose grandmother Carrie Palmer had been a close friend, Lola was very proud of her father. "She kept a file of everything that he had been involved in and gotten started, and she talked often about (him)... People were taken there on tours through Boise, and she was very good at explaining all the details." She kept crepe paper and ribbons in her attic for decorating her parents' grave, a task she performed regularly. "She had...a nice little white house there in front...with an attic. And the attic was just filled with things that belonged to her father." Lola herself was a beautiful, self-assertive woman. "Everything she had was exquisite, her dishes, she had lots of cut glass, she was immaculate....She was pretty demanding, and...she knew how to get things done." As she got older, she continued to have an active social life, going to baseball games with one of her tenants, and visiting Carrie Palmer once a week for Sunday dinner. Mrs. Snowball remembered her as "real lively. She talked a lot of politics, [and] she was right in the conversation all the time."²⁰⁵

Lola did her best to keep with her father's wishes up until the day she died. She died on 7 September 1965 of a heart attack at home while brushing her hair in front of her mirror.²⁰⁶ Lola was the last of the Urquides clan and sadly left no direct descendants. Her neighbor, Walter Murphy, acted as administrator of her will. Because there was no room in Pioneer Cemetery where her parents, husband, and brother were buried, Murphy purchased a plot in the Cloverdale cemetery, a considerable distance away from the Spanish Village. Manuel's adopted daughter, Jan Spangler of Campbell, California was entitled to the entire residue of Lola's estate.²⁰⁷

After Lola's death, Walter Loder acquired the property. After a fire in one of the houses late in 1971, the city came to inspect the buildings, which it later condemned. In the last week of December 1972 a small crew from the Idaho State Historical Museum worked in biting cold weather to measure the buildings and write one last description of the site. A few months later, Spanish Village was destroyed and a part of Boise's pioneer heritage went with it.²⁰⁸

CONCLUSION

Today not much remains of the Jesús Urquides legacy other than various pictures and newspaper clippings, and his granite headstone in Pioneer Cemetery. There is no historical marker to mark the site of the Spanish Village, although this research has helped in garnering some attention for the old neighborhood. The Spanish Village was featured in a recent book by Todd Shallat, *Ethnic Landmarks*. Future plans to recognize the village and Urquides' place in the founding of it are in the works. Years ago, Walter Murphy donated his saddle and a pair of his boots to the Idaho Historical Museum. In 1935, *Thunder Mountain*, a fictional novel written by well-known author Zane Grey depicted "Juan Uriquides," as "the greatest freighter in Idaho," no doubt a tribute to Jesús Urquides.²⁰⁹

Jesús Urquides in his long and illustrious life made important contributions to the development of the state of Idaho. He and his Mexican compatriots ranged far from home bringing skills and equipment that were well suited and adapted to a rugged frontier. The Mexican mule pack system was the most efficient means of transporting food and supplies into isolated backcountry mining camps. These packers brought technology and lingo that was adopted by their non-Mexican counterparts, a testament to its preeminence as a system of transport. Urquides was part of a fraternity of rugged men all tied to an ancient occupation that was a necessary cog in the development of the American West's early frontier mining economy.

Packers adapted to a number of conditions not found in Mexico through their experiences in California. Deep snow and raging rivers were but two obstacles that were overcome. These packers made certain that much needed materials and supplies arrived safely to their destinations. Rain or shine, through blizzards, over rocky mountain passes, they came through when Idaho needed it. Urquides was instrumental in the early development of Boise, delivering goods and merchandise while braving highwaymen and angry Native Americans along the way. The Mexican pack system also proved to be invaluable to the United States Army in its campaigns against hostile Native Americans. Its success in Idaho made it a key component of the military arsenal until the advent of mechanized vehicles.

Urquides' resourcefulness and ingenuity were called on time and again to load anything from stamp mills to pianos to ammunition. Without men like him, Idaho and the west would not be the same. He and a handful of men helped fuel the mining rushes of the Boise Basin, the Owyhees, and the Wood River Valley where they created a niche in the freighting business, always careful to stay one step ahead of wagons. Urquides operated far longer than any of his contemporaries, logging over 60 years in the business. He was familiar with every mining camp of any consequence in the region and he was known far and wide.

The life and times of Jesús Urquides gives us a snapshot of the incredible pace of development in Boise and the rest of Idaho in the late 19th century. Urquides saw Boise develop from a city of tents to become the capital of an American state. He worked in a profession that was constantly on the move, trying to stay one step ahead of the wagon

and later the railroad. Urquides also witnessed a groundswell of social change that occurred in Idaho and the west. He took part in the military campaigns that ultimately ended a way of life for Native Americans in Idaho and, with the advent of the railroad and the cultural domination of Americans from the East, saw his own place in the community threatened. When his patriotism and standing in the community was questioned, Urquides stood firm, confident in his contributions and his relationships with Boise's founding community, which supported him wholeheartedly.

Mining on the frontier provided men like Urquides an opportunity for work and was responsible for the migration of a number of men who brought a system and way of life from the northern Mexican frontier. He stayed true to the profession throughout his life and gained notice for his work in Idaho's backcountry. It is this author's wish that the amazing feats of Urquides and others like him not be forgotten; neither should the fact that Jesús Urquides successfully lived and contributed as an American citizen of Mexican birth and that he formed a part of a pioneer community that helped build the state of Idaho. Urquides was proud of his adopted country and served it under two wars against Native American tribes. He was an example of honesty, hard work, and perseverance, and his life represented a crossroads of not only cultures but of the transition from a bygone era to the future.

NOTES

- ¹ Max A. Delgado, *Jesús Urquides: Idaho's Premier Muleteer*. (Boise, Idaho: Idaho State Historical Society, 2006).
- ² Merrill D. Beal and Merle W. Wells, eds. *The History of Idaho*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1959), 397.
- ³ A.T. Steele, "A Diamond Jubilee Packer," *Sunset*, September 1925, 52.
- ⁴ Julio B. Bilbao, "Basque Names in Early Idaho," *Idaho Yesterdays* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1972), 29.
- ⁵ Gorka Aulestia, and Linda White, *Basque-English/English-Basque Dictionary*. (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1992). Many Basque surnames derive from the place names where a family's *etxea*, or house is located. In this case, the *Urkidi* (Urquidi) home may have been located in a forest of birch (*Betula pendula*) trees.
- ⁶ Bilbao, "Basque Names in Idaho," 29.
- ⁷ Susan Calafate Boyle, *Comerciantes, Arrieros, y Peones*. (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Special History Study, United States National Park Service, 1994), 54.
- ⁸ Sol Silen, *La Historia de los Vascongados en el Oeste de los Estados Unidos*. (New York: Las Novedades, Inc., 1917), 320.
- ⁹ Henry Alegría, *75 Years of Memoirs*. (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers Ltd., 1981), 20-21.
- ¹⁰ David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. Yale Western Americana Series (Castleton, New York: Hamilton Printing Company, 1992), 256-259. There were two Juan Bautista de Anzas in the northern Spanish frontier. The elder Anza was a native of Hernani, Gipuzkoa, Spain and became *capitán vitalicio*, or captain for life of the Royal Presidio of Fronteras in present-day Sonora, Mexico. His son Juan Bautista de Anza y Bezerra opened the route to present day San Francisco, California.
- ¹¹ Richard J. Orsi and Kevin Starr, eds. *Rooted in Barbarous Soil, People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, California Sesquicentennial Series, vol. 3 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000), 53.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Steele, "Diamond Jubilee Packer," 52.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Richard J. Orsi and James J. Rawls, eds. *A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California*, California Sesquicentennial Series, vol. 2 (Berkeley, California: University of California, 1999), 259.
- ¹⁶ Steele, "Diamond Jubilee Packer," 52.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Carol Lynn MacGregor, "Founding Community in Boise, Idaho" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1999), 9.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ²⁰ William S. Greever, *Bonanza West: The Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963; reprint, Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1986), 265.
- ²¹ Erasmo Gamboa, "Supply Line to the New Frontier: The Mexican Mule Pack System of Transportation in the Pacific Northwest," *Journal of the West* (January 1990), 17.
- ²² Boyle, *Comerciantes, Arrieros, y Peones*, 34-35.
- ²³ Gamboa, "Supply Line to the New Frontier," 17.
- ²⁴ Alegría, *75 Years of Memoirs*, 21.
- ²⁵ Gamboa, "Supply Line to a New Frontier," 18.
- ²⁶ James W. Watt, *Journal of Mule Train Packing in Eastern Washington in the 1860's*. (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1978), 39.

- ²⁷ Bayard Taylor, *Eldorado: Adventures in the Path of Empire*. (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2000), 59. It is interesting to note that the Mexican mule packers referred to the *alforjas* (which they are known as in Spain), as *cantinas*.
- ²⁸ John Keast Lord, *The Naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia, vol. II*. (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), 204.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 205-206.
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