

OREGON HISTORIC TRAILS REPORT



Presented by the Oregon Trails Coordinating Council
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Salem, Oregon

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Oregon Historic Trails Report

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**Lewis & Clark
National Historic Trail,
1804-1806**

Route description

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail in Oregon is comprised of the Columbia River segment which reaches from the confluence of the Snake River to the mouth of the Columbia at the Pacific Ocean and includes the Corps' coastal explorations. The segment is represented by both a water trail and a land trail. The water trail is the entire Columbia River in Oregon, including the portage and camp sites on both sides of the river, and the Expedition's route along the north and south shores of the Columbia estuary, around Young's Bay, and up the present Lewis and Clark River to Fort Clatsop. The land trail goes west from Fort Clatsop National Memorial to the Pacific Ocean shoreline, south to the Salt Cairn site (Seaside), and over Tillamook Head (Ecola State Park) to Whale Beach (Cannon Beach).

Oregon has the only National Park Service unit (Fort Clatsop National Memorial) dedicated solely to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



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Oregon has the only National Park Service unit (Fort Clatsop National Memorial) dedicated solely to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.



Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, 1804-1806

Authority/Recognition

- National Trails System Act: Public Law 90-543
- Congress: NHT est. 1978
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
- Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council

Significance

In 1804, Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery, under direction from President Thomas Jefferson, set forth on a lengthy expedition into the Western Lands of the continent to survey the resources, to serve as US ambassadors to the tribes living west of the Mississippi River, and to locate a waterway that would equal the Missouri River as a means of transporting goods and products from the interior to world-wide markets.

The successful completion of the Lewis and Clark Expedition strengthened the United States' possessory claim to the Pacific Northwest and the lands drained by the Columbia River and its tributaries. The journals kept by the explorers provided the initial knowledge of the American West, describing the geography, flora, and fauna of the region and the first recorded contacts with native peoples who lived here.

Historical context

As early as 1783, Thomas Jefferson mulled an expedition to explore the Missouri River and the lands west of the mighty river. His intentions were fed by a life-long curiosity about the country and the people living in the "unknown" lands of North America. In 1804, one year after Napoleon deeded rights to the land bounded by the 49th parallel, the Rockies, the Mississippi River, and the Gulf of Mexico to the Americans (in what was later to be called the Louisiana Purchase), President Jefferson sent the Corps of Discovery into Western Lands.

With a small band of engineers, botanists, linguists, soldiers, and guides (43 souls in all), Meriwether Lewis, 30, & William Clark, 34, set forth up the Missouri River on May 14, 1804, from their winter headquarters at Wood River, Illinois Territory, near St. Louis. After wintering in 1804-05 with Mandan tribes near present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, the Corps of Discovery (this time with 32 members, including Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman married to a French trapper) pushed further west along waterways and overland to the confluence of the Snake and Columbia rivers.

On October 18, 1805, the Expedition began its journey down the Columbia River. The navigational problems they experienced on the swift Snake River were minor compared to the four major barriers they faced on the Columbia: Celilo Falls, the Short Narrows of The Dalles, the Long Narrows of the lower Dalles, and the Cascades. Portages were often necessary, but eager to reach the Pacific Ocean, Lewis and Clark occasionally took chances and ran their canoes through dangerous areas. In addition to water hazards, the Expedition encountered problems with a number of tribal groups along the lower Columbia River. Some were friendly and cooperative, others were shrewd and crafty.

The Corps of Discovery's problems were perhaps balanced by the increasing indications that the end of their long westward journey was near. On November 7, 1805, Clark joyously recorded that the Pacific Ocean was in view, unaware that the wide expanse of water they were seeing was only the estuary of the Columbia. Actual sight of the Pacific did not occur until November 15, 1805, from the Expedition's Chinook Point campsite on the north side of the Columbia estuary.

The lack of game and shelter and inclement weather, made the Columbia's north bank an unsatisfactory location for a winter camp. On November 25, 1805, the Expedition headed upriver and crossed to the south side the following day. A winter campsite was finally reached on December 7. The Corps set to work building a fortification and quarters, which they named Fort Clatsop after the Indians in the vicinity. Moving day was December 25, completion was December 30, 1805. Two of the most noted activities during their winter stay were the making of salt at a site near present-day Seaside and Clark's trip to see a whale which had washed ashore near today's Cannon Beach. The majority of time was spent hunting, curing meat, tanning leather, drawing maps, and reworking their journal entries.

After wintering at Fort Clatsop, a period in which their journals indicated only six days without rain, the Expedition began their homeward journey on March 23, 1806. Just below The Dalles, Lewis and Clark decided to travel by shore and avoid the water barriers they had traversed before. Procuring horses, they traveled along the north side of the Columbia, crossing above the confluence of the Walla Walla River to follow an overland shortcut to the Nez Perce villages.

Lewis & Clark returned to St. Louis on September 23, 1806. Having traveled more than 3,500 miles, their journals revealed a vast inventory of the people and resources of the Great Plains and the Pacific Northwest, helping the United States lay claim to the land beyond the Missouri. The details of the western lands, those lands already understood and treasured by native peoples, were rich indeed. Lewis & Clark's journals describe Tribal languages and customs; plants, animals, fossils, waterways, geology, topography, and the expedition's adventures and events. In subsequent years, the knowledge gained from the expedition's efforts provided many Americans with a fuller account of the potential and the opportunity possible in a large part of the West.

Bibliography

Scholarly documents

Numerous books are available on a variety of aspects of the Lewis and Clark Trail. Of special note are:

Ambrose, Stephen, E. *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Chuinard, Eldon G. *Only One Man Died: The Medical Aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*. Glendale: Arthur C. Clarke, 1980.

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Strong, Emory and Ruth, edited by Herbert K Beals. *Seeking Western Waters: The Lewis and Clark Trail from the Rockies to the Pacific*. Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1995.

Government and management documents

Fort Clatsop National Memorial: General Management Plan, Development Concept Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement. USDI National Park Service, June 1995. Astoria, Oregon.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use. USDI National Park Service, January, 1982.

The Oregon Lewis and Clark Trail: A Preliminary Report to Governor Barbara Roberts by the Oregon Lewis and Clark Trail Advisory Committee. Draft document; nd.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Hat Rock State Park

LOCATION: US 730 east of Umatilla.

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker at southern picnic area

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark at Hat Rock (sign indicates that the party climbed to the top-
-a factual error)

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department/Travel Information Council

SITE: Hat Rock State Park

LOCATION: US 730 east of Umatilla.

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Local geology, naming of Hat Rock, and contact with the Indians.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: McNary Dam overlook

LOCATION: US 730 east of Umatilla at McNary Dam Overlook and Picnic Area

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Descending the river, bartering for horses, and mountain views.

OWNER: Department of Defence US Army Corps of Engineers

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Irrigon City Park

LOCATION: Irrigon

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Signs of Euro-American trade, the river as artery of commerce, and visit with local Indians.

OWNER: City of Irrigon

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Celilo Park

LOCATION: I-84 east of The Dalles

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Fishery at Celilo Falls, fish preservation, and the scarcity of firewood.

OWNER: US Army Corps of Engineers

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

SITE: Celilo Park

LOCATION: I-84 east of The Dalles

DESCRIPTION: Bronze plaque

SUBJECT/TITLE:

OWNER: Department of Defense US Army Corps of Engineers

SITE: Rock Fort

LOCATION: City of The Dalles industrial area (several directional signs exist)

DESCRIPTION: Bronze plaque

SUBJECT/TITLE: Camp site

OWNER: City of The Dalles

SITE: Rock Fort

LOCATION: City of The Dalles/Industrial area (several directional signs exist)

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/THEME: Need for vigilance, the campsite, the presence of seals, dining on dogs.

OWNER: City of The Dalles

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Downtown

LOCATION: The Dalles/2nd and Federal Street

DESCRIPTION: Wall murals

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark at Rock Fort/Celilo: The Great Falls of the Columbia

OWNER: The Dalles Mural Society

SITE: Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum

LOCATION: The Dalles

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive Center and Museum exhibit

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark

OWNER: Crate's Point, Inc.

SITE: Bonneville Dam Visitor Center

LOCATION: Cascade Locks

DESCRIPTION: Exhibit

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark on the River

OWNER: Department of Defense US Army Corps of Engineers

SITE: Lewis and Clark State Park
LOCATION: Troutdale
DESCRIPTION: Botanical trail
SUBJECT/TITLE: Plant materials described in the journals
OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Oregon History Center/Sovereign Building
LOCATION: Portland
DESCRIPTION: Wall mural
SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery
OWNER: Oregon History Center

SITE: William Clark, York, and a native resident
LOCATION: University of Portland campus
DESCRIPTION: Bronze statue
SUBJECT/TITLE: Commemorative
OWNER: University of Portland

SITE: Sacagawea statue
LOCATION: Portland Washington Park
DESCRIPTION: Bronze statue
SUBJECT/TITLE: Commemorative
OWNER: City of Portland

SITE: Lewis and Clark Columbia River Water Trail
LOCATION: From Portland to Fort Clatsop along the Columbia River
DESCRIPTION: 96-mile-long system of 23 sites including day and overnight parks for canoeists, kayakers, and operators of shallow-draft vessels.
SUBJECT/TITLE: The route traces the final stages of Lewis and Clark's route
OWNER: Public/private

SITE: Bybee-Howell House
LOCATION: Sauvie Island
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive pavilion and educational facility
SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark's explorations at the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.
OWNER: Oregon History Center/ Multnomah County/Metro
Note: Installation planned, pending resolution of zoning issues.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

SITE: Prescott Beach County Park

LOCATION: US 30 east of Rainier

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Evidence of the great Pacific Flyway, homeland of the Upper Chinookans, and plants and animals new to science.

OWNER: Columbia County

Note: Sign topics pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Columbia County Historical Museum

LOCATION: Vernonia

DESCRIPTION: Exhibit

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lewis and Clark in Columbia County

OWNER: Columbia County Historical Museum

SITE: Twilight Creek Eagle Sanctuary

LOCATION: US 30 between Svenson and Fern Hill.

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Evidence of the great Pacific Flyway, and plants and animals new to science.

OWNER: Clatsop County/ Twilight Eagle Coalition

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998. Existing interpretive signs placed by the Oregon Eagle Foundation describe the sanctuary's ecosystem and eagle habitat.

SITE: Astoria Waterfront

LOCATION: 6th street riverfront access or 11th street access (as of February '98, both are under consideration as potential sites; only one will be chosen)

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Clatsop and Chinook lifeways, and the Expedition's trails and tribulations.

OWNER: City of Astoria

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Astoria Column

LOCATION: Coxcomb Hill

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Discovery of the California Condor, the role of the condor in Clatsop oral tradition, and view of three campsites.

OWNER: City of Astoria

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Astoria Column

LOCATION: Coxcomb Hill

DESCRIPTION: Historical column

SUBJECT/TITLE: Astoria's history

OWNER: City of Astoria

SITE: Young's River Falls

LOCATION: 8 miles east on OR 202; right at Olney Store.

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: The quest for food, discovery of the falls, and a diet of blubber, dog, and elk.

OWNER: Clatsop County

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Carruthers Park

LOCATION: Warrenton

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel, the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: The vote on where to spend the winter--its significance, and the consequences of contact between Indians and Euro-Americans.

OWNER: City of Warrenton

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Fort Stevens State Park

LOCATION: Warrenton

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel, the other is locally significant.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Indian use of local forest products, Journal descriptions of Indian lodges, and the replicated long house.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

SITE: Fort Clatsop National Memorial

LOCATION: Astoria

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center/recreated fort site/living history/canoe landing site/land trail to the Pacific/Wayside exhibits and education programs.

SUBJECT/TITLE: (Interpretive sign at Canoe Landing) Seaworthiness of Indian canoes, the skill of local Indians, and Journal descriptions of canoe.

OWNER: USDI National Park Service

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998. An additional site at Sunset Beach site is under development.

SITE: Seltzer Park

LOCATION: Seaside

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other interprets local significance

SUBJECT/TITLE: Sacagawea's visit to the seashore, myths regarding her role in the expedition, and the trek over Tillamook Head.

OWNER: City of Seaside

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

SITE: Ecola State Park

LOCATION: Cannon Beach

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive sign and hiking trail

SUBJECT/TITLE: Purchasing whale blubber

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Shirley Park

LOCATION: Cannon Beach

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive panels: one is a USDI National Park Service-produced orientation panel and the other interprets local significance

SUBJECT/TITLE: Investigating the beached whale, bartering with local Indians for oil and blubber, and the quest for salt.

OWNER: City of Cannon Beach

Note: Sign topic pending. Installation planned for 1998.

Corridor resources

Corridor description: US 730 from the Washington state line through Umatilla and Irrigon to I-84. West on I-84 to Portland. US 30 from Portland to Astoria. US 101 from Astoria to Cannon Beach.

Umatilla City Historical Society Museum, Umatilla
Umatilla County Historical Museum (Pendleton)
McNary Dam Visitor Center, Umatilla
Deschutes River State Recreation Area
Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area
Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum, The Dalles
The Dalles Dam Visitor Center, The Dalles
Fort Dalles, The Dalles
Bonneville Dam Visitor Center, Cascade Locks
Historic Columbia River Highway
Cascade Locks Historical Museum, Cascade Locks
Multnomah Falls
Oregon History Center, Portland
St. Helens Museum and Courthouse, St. Helens
Caples House Museum, Columbia City
Columbia County Historical Society, Vernonia
Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge
Clatsop County Historical Society Heritage Museum, Astoria
Columbia River Maritime Museum, Astoria
Flavel House, Astoria
Fort Clatsop National Memorial, Astoria
Sunset Beach, Camp Rilea

Historical markers and interpretive signs:

Deschutes River State Recreation Area
Ancient fishing grounds, Celilo Falls
Memaloose Island, west of The Dalles
Hood River
Broughton's Expedition, Tunnel Point
Beacon Rock, Warrendale
Cascade Locks
Lewis and Clark Expedition, Sandy
Sandy River Bridge, Sandy
Troutdale
Thomas McKay, Scappoose
US Customs House, Astoria
Ecola, Cannon Beach

State Parks:

Hat Rock State Park
Heritage Landing State Park
East Mayer State Park
Mayer State Park
Memaloose State Park
Koberg Beach Wayside
Seneca Falls State Park
V. Lausmann State Park
Wygant State Park
Viento State Park
Starvation Creek State Park
John B. Yeon State Park
Ainsworth State Park
Benson State Park
Bridal Veil Falls State Park
Shepperds Dell State Park
Guy Talbot State Park
Rooster Rock State Park
Crown Point State Park
Portland Women's Forum State Park
Dabney State Park
Lewis and Clark State Park
Bradley Wayside
Fort Stevens State Park
Del Rey Beach Wayside
Ecola State Park
Saddle Mountain State Park

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI National Park Service - Fort Clatsop National Memorial
USDI National Park Service - Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail
USDD Army Corps of Engineers
Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council

Tribal

Nez Perce Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs of Oregon
River People
Chinook Tribe

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

certified local governments
local historical societies
local chambers of commerce
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
City of Irrigon
City of The Dalles
North Wasco County Parks and Recreation
Columbia County parks
Clatsop County
Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Association, Inc., Clatsop County
private land owners

Recommendations

Continue development as planned. Install interpretive signs. Develop and implement maintenance standards program. Develop an interpretive map/brochure for the Lewis and Clark Trail in Oregon.

Oregon National Historic Trail, 1843-1883

Route description

The Oregon National Historic Trail enters Oregon in two locations: at the Snake River Crossing where the Hudson's Bay Company outpost of Fort Boise was located, and along the South Alternate Route which follows the south bank of the Snake River. The two routes come together and go through Keeney Pass to Farewell Bend where the trail met the Snake River for the last time. There, it turns northwest and ascends the Burnt River Canyon, and crosses over the divides to the Powder River and Grande Ronde valleys. From present-day La Grande, the trail goes west over the Blue Mountains on a north-westerly course to the Upper Crossing of the Umatilla River. Here the main trail turns west, crossing the hills to the Lower Crossing of the Umatilla River where Echo is located today, and continues west over the arid Columbia Plateau crossing and the John Day River before meeting the Columbia River near the mouth of the Deschutes. From here, the trail again mounts the plateau before returning to the Columbia at The Dalles.

From The Dalles, many emigrants took the Columbia River Route until 1846 when the Barlow Road was opened, giving emigrants an alternate route of passing over the south shoulder of Mount Hood to Oregon City and the Willamette Valley.



Oregon National Historic Trail, 1843-1883

Authority/Recognition

- National Trails System Act: public law 90-543
- Congress: NHT est. 1978
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

The Oregon Trail is the predominant symbol of American westward expansion in the 19th century, a period of Manifest Destiny when the nation realized its dream of stretching from ocean to ocean. It demonstrated the feasibility of large-scale movement by wagon across great distances and over the Rocky Mountains, once perceived as an impassable barrier. The Oregon Trail was at the core of the largest and longest mass migration in United States history to that time and provided the means for strengthening American claims on the Pacific Northwest. Of the various western trails used by fur traders, missionaries, gold seekers and emigrants, the Oregon Trail became the most famous.

Historical context

Beginning in 1843, and for forty years thereafter, hundreds of thousands of Americans sold their mid-Western farms and homes and walked nearly 2,000 miles along the Oregon Trail—across open prairies and rugged mountain ranges toward the ideal called the West. The “Oregon Road” was, like our interstate highways, a main artery to the West. Many emigrants settled in today’s Oregon; many more traveled west along the Oregon Trail to trail junctions that led them to Utah and, especially after gold discoveries in 1848, to California (among those routes was the Applegate Trail³).

The reasons for migrating were as varied as the persons who traveled the Trail. To some emigrants, the idea of “Oregon” meant personal or religious freedom; to others, it was patriotic action against the British (who were vying for control of the Oregon’s natural resources); to others, in meant free land; and still to others, a life away from the disease-ridden swamps of the Mississippi River valleys.

The land the emigrant trail crossed was home to Native Americans—the Sioux, the Pawnee, the Shoshone, the Nez Perce, the Cayuse, the Walla Walla, and the Umatilla. For

³ From more information on the Applegate Trail, please see the following chapter narrative.

decades, wagon trains crossed the land. The wagons' rumble and dust clouds persisted during the summer months. During the winter, the emigrant flow stilled, beginning again as soon as the grasses greened and the ice moved off the creeks and rivers. Native Americans traded with the emigrants, and often guided them along the way. Without the help of those who were here first, many emigrants would have perished in the effort. Emigrants settling in the West affected native groups irreversibly, setting off the chain of events that led to the reservation system and Indian Wars of the 1850s and 1870s.

The Oregon Trail stretches 547 miles across Oregon. It was the final leg of a long and tiresome journey for those who crossed to the Oregon Country on the overland trails. Emigrants entered this portion of the Oregon Trail, and today's state of Oregon, at the Snake River Crossing near Nyssa. They crossed the sagebrush steppe, the Blue Mountains, the desolate Columbia Plateau, and maneuvered wagons and oxen down the Columbia River or across the Barlow Road before reaching the Willamette Valley and the end of the Oregon Trail.

For many of the emigrants, the effort was worth the reward. Laying before them, as they crossed the Cascades' summit, was the Willamette Valley—a land of crisp, clean air, sweet water, towering fir, and dark, rich soil. They found home.

Bibliography

Scholarly documents

Numerous books are available on a variety of aspects of the Oregon Trail experience. Of special note are:

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Palmer, Joel. *Journal of Travels On the Oregon Trail in 1845*. Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1993.

Rumer, Thomas A. *The Wagon Trains of '44: A Comparative View of the Individual Caravans in the Emigration of 1844 to Oregon*. Spokane, WA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1990.

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Unruh, John D., Jr. *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60*. Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1979.

Management or government documents

Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails: Management and Use Plan Update. USDI National Park Service, 1998.

Oregon National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Land Use Plan. USDI National Park Service, August 1981.

Oregon National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Land Use Plan, Appendix II, Primary Route. USDI National Park Service, August 1981.

Oregon National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Land Use Plan, Appendix III, Selected Historic Sites and Cross-Country Segments. USDI National Park Service, August 1981.

Oregon National Historic Trail High Potential Sites and Segments Inventory: A list of recommendations for Oregon and Washington. Prepared by Jim Renner, Oregon Trails Coordinating Council for the USDI National Park Service, 1997.

Our Oregon Trail: A Report to the Governor. Oregon Trail Advisory Council, 1988.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Ontario Rest Area

LOCATION: Ontario, OR; I-84 westbound at mp 377

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Gateway information center about the Oregon Trail

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Snake River Crossing

LOCATION: Malheur County (Sec 13, T2S, R46E); south of Nyssa on OR 201

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk; Ezra Meeker stone marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Where Oregon Trail enters Oregon

OWNER: Bureau of Reclamation

SITE: Keeney Pass

LOCATION: Malheur County (Sec. 14, T19S, R45E); southeast from Vale on Enterprise Avenue

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDI Bureau of Land Management ramada with pedestal signs; hiking trail with ruts

SUBJECT/TITLE: Deep wagon ruts

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Note: Oregon Trail Historic District: Date listed: 10/29/75; 75001589

SITE: Vale (Complex)

LOCATION: Vale (Sec. 29, T18S, R45E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Oregon Trail kiosk at Vale City Park

Historical marker at Malheur River

Old Stone House

Ezra Meeker stone marker at county courthouse

Henderson grave and monument, 7/10 mile south of town

SUBJECT/TITLE: The town of Vale grew up where the Oregon Trail crossed the Malheur River and has several Oregon Trail historic and interpretive sites.

OWNER: Public/private

Note: National Register Status: Old Stone House. Date listed: 5/19/72; 72001085

SITE: Alkali Springs Segment

LOCATION: Vale to Willow Camp Springs; Malheur County (Sec. 25, T17S, R44E to Sec. 30, T15S, R45E)

DESCRIPTION: Beginning at a point about six miles north of Vale and continuing to Willow Camp Springs, the Oregon Trail survives as dirt ranch road.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Thirteen-mile long-distance segment of trail

OWNER: Public/private

Note: Segment needs trail/road signing and a public road egress from Willow Camp Springs to Birch Creek to provide an Oregon Trail backroad byway from Vale to Farewell Bend.

SITE: Alkali Springs

LOCATION: North of Vale on Alkali Springs Segment

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside

SUBJECT/TITLE: The noon stop at Alkali Springs provided only poor water in the 22 mile crossing from the Malheur River to Birch Creek.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: Birch Creek

LOCATION: Malheur County (Sec. 9, T15S, R45E); I-84, exit 353

DESCRIPTION: Site features a stretch of trail ruts for hiking and an interpretive wayside.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Birch Creek was an Oregon Trail camp site that provided good water and grass

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

SITE: Farewell Bend State Park

LOCATION: Baker County (Sec. 33, T14S, R45E); I-84, exit 353

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Here, the trail left the Snake River for the last time.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Huntington

LOCATION: Huntington, OR

DESCRIPTION: Stone marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Ezra Meeker commemorative marker

OWNER: City of Huntington

SITE: Weatherby Rest Area

LOCATION: Baker County (Sec. 30, T12S, R44E); I-84, mp 336

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: The arduous ascent of the Burnt River Canyon

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Durkee

LOCATION: Baker County (Sec. 29, T11S, R43E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - historical marker and Ezra Meeker stone marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Favorite camping place for emigrants and later the Express Ranch, the Durkee Valley and Alder Creek provided an area to camp and rest livestock.

OWNER: Travel Information Council

Note: Another Ezra Meeker marker is located where the trail turns at Straw Ranch Creek.

SITE: National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill

LOCATION: I-84, exit 302, then five miles east on OR 86

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Oregon Trail Story. Sub-themes are the history of the General Land Office, and mining in eastern Oregon.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Note: Site also includes rut segments and general visitor services.

SITE: Baker Valley Rest Area

LOCATION: Baker County (Sec. 33, T7S, R40E); I-84 at mp 295

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - Oregon Trail kiosks

SUBJECT/TITLE: Having passed through the arid reach of Virtue Flats, emigrants welcomed the relief of water and bunch grass found in the Baker Valley.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Ladd Hill Segment

LOCATION: Union County (Sec. 13, T4S, R39E to Sec. 12, T4S, R39E)

DESCRIPTION: Two mile segment of trail

SUBJECT/TITLE: Wagon ruts remain where the trail crossed this hill to the Grande Ronde Valley.

OWNER: Private

SITE: Charles Reynolds Rest Area

LOCATION: Union County (Sec. 12, T4S, R39E); I-84 at mp 268

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - Oregon Trail kiosks

SUBJECT/TITLE: Upon reaching the Grande Ronde Valley, the emigrants found local tribes eager to trade food supplies for goods or to barter for livestock.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: La Grande (Complex)

LOCATION: La Grande (Sec. 8, T3S, R38E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Birnie Park - Oregon Trail memorial

Ezra Meeker stone marker - 2nd and B streets

Gangloff Park - historical markers and log cabin

SUBJECT/THEME: The "Old Town" section of La Grande was founded in the area where emigrants camped in preparation for their first ascent into the Blue Mountains.

OWNER: Public/private

SITE: Blue Mountain Segment

LOCATION: Union County and Umatilla County (Sec. 7, T3S, R38E to Sec. 31, T1S, R36E)

DESCRIPTION: Seventeen-mile long-distance trail segment

SUBJECT/TITLE: Trail ruts through meadows and pine forest from La Grande to Summit Road

OWNER: Public/private

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: Hilgard Junction State Park

LOCATION: Union County (Sec. 31, T2S, R37E); I-84, exit 252

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive Wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk; ruts on park land where the trail descends from the mountain to the river.

SUBJECT/TITLE: After crossing the mountain from La Grande, emigrants camped here along the banks of the Grande Ronde River before their next ascent into the Blue Mountains.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at Blue Mountain Crossing

LOCATION: Union County (Sec 16, T2S, R36E); I-84, exit 248 (follow signs)

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail interpretive park featuring pristine ruts, fully accessible interpretive trails, and living history demonstrations.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Crossing the Blue Mountains.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Meacham

LOCATION: Meacham; (Sec. 3, T1S, R35E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - historical marker and stone monument

SUBJECT/TITLE: This area was first used for Oregon Trail encampments and evolved into freighting, stagecoach and railroad uses.

OWNER: Travel Information Council/private

SITE: Emigrant Springs State Park

LOCATION: Umatilla County (Sec. 29, T1N, R35E); I-84, exit 234, south on OR 30.

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk; historical markers; stone monuments including an Ezra Meeker marker.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Summit campsite

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Deadman Pass Rest Area

LOCATION: Umatilla County (Sec. 1, T1N, R34E); I-84, mp 228.

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - Oregon Trail kiosks. Ruts are visible and accessible on private lands adjacent to both rest areas.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Crossing the Blues and the Columbia Plateau.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Emigrant Hill Segment

LOCATION: Umatilla County (Sec. 1, T1N, R34E to Sec. 22, T2N, R34E)

DESCRIPTION: Four-mile-long segment of the trail

SUBJECT/TITLE: From the Deadman Pass rest area to the northwest corner of section 22, intermittent segments of ruts show the descent from the Blue Mountains to the Umatilla River. Despite the disruptions of the concurrent pipeline and power corridor, this potential hiking segment provides an excellent feeling of the landscape.

OWNER: Public/private

Note: Remaining rut segments must be marked and preserved. Agreements must be made with private landowners and the Indian lands held in trust to permit hiking access and egress.

SITE: Whitman Mission National Historic Site

LOCATION: Walla Walla County, Washington. (Sec. 32, T7N, R35E)

DESCRIPTION: National Historic Site including visitor center and mission complex site

SUBJECT/TITLE: The mission was established in 1836 and became an important way-station on the Oregon Trail until its destruction in 1847.

OWNER: USDI National Park Service

Note: National Register Status: Whitman Mission National Historic Site. Listed 10/15/66; 66000749

SITE: Tamastlikt Cultural Institute

LOCATION: Umatilla Indian Reservation (Sec. 15, T2N, R33E). I-84, exit 216, one mile north on OR 331

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center and museum complex

SUBJECT/TITLE: The impact that the Oregon Trail and westward expansion has had upon the tribes.

OWNER: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

SITE: Pendleton (Complex)

LOCATION: Pendleton (Sec. 11, T2N, R32E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Oregon Trail kiosk at First and Frazer streets

Umatilla County Historical Museum

Ezra Meeker stone marker at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institute

Historical markers

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants camped along the Umatilla River finding opportunities for trade with Indians before continuing west or turning north to the Whitman Mission. Pendleton was established as a trade and transportation center where the Oregon Trail made its upper crossing of the Umatilla River.

OWNER: Public/private

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: Echo (Complex)

LOCATION: Echo (Sec. 16, T3N, R29E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Fort Henrietta Park interpretive wayside

Koontz grave and OCTA pedestal sign

Fort Henrietta archeological site

Echo historical museum

Various rut segments

SUBJECT/TITLE: This was an important campsite on the lower crossing of the Umatilla River offering plentiful grass, water and wood. The Umatilla Indian Agency house was located on the north bank, but was burned in the Yakima War. Built in its place was Fort Henrietta.

OWNER: Public/private

SITE: Echo Meadows

LOCATION: Umatilla County (Sec 22, T3N, R28E); 5.5 miles west of Echo, then 0.5 mi north on gravel road

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside with ramada, walking trails, and scenic overlook

SUBJECT/TITLE: From the lower Umatilla River crossing, emigrants could travel west across the Columbia Plateau, or follow the Umatilla River to the Columbia. Those who chose the plateau route passed through Echo Meadows where the trail may still be walked today.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Note: Nearby, an OCTA pedestal sign on OR 207 marks the Butter Creek Crossing of the Oregon Trail.

SITE: Stanfield Rest Area

LOCATION: Umatilla County (Sec. 1, T3N, R28E); I-84 at mp 186

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - Oregon Trail kiosks

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants who chose to follow the Umatilla River passed this way on their way to the Columbia River and down its south bank to The Dalles.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Boardman Segment

LOCATION: Morrow County (Sec. 13, T2N, R25E to Sec. 20, T2N, R24E)

DESCRIPTION: Twelve-mile long-distance trail segment.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Trail ruts through the shrub-steppe of the Columbia Plateau

OWNER: Department of Defense-Navy/ State of Oregon

Note: National Register Status: Oregon Trail (Well Spring Segment)

Date listed: 9/13/78; 78002305

Pending: amendment to include Lower Well Springs Diversion (an additional four miles)

SITE: Well Springs

LOCATION: Morrow County (Sec. 20, T2N, R25E); 13 miles east of Cecil

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside, kiosk, pedestal signs and walking trails

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Well Springs were a meager but crucial oasis for camping between Butter Creek and Willow Creek.

OWNER: Morrow County Historical Society (interpretive wayside)/Department of Defense-Navy (pedestal signs and walking trails)

Note: National Register Status: Oregon Trail (Well Spring Segment)

Date listed: 9/13/78; 78002305

SITE: Fourmile Canyon

LOCATION: Gilliam County (Sec 27, T2N, R22E); I-84, exit 137; 4 miles south on OR 19; east onto Eightmile Road; then Fourmile Canyon Road

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDI Bureau of Land Management pedestal signs

SUBJECT/TITLE: Deep ruts

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

SITE: Arlington

LOCATION: Arlington (Sec. 28, T3N, R21E); I-84, exit 137

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Travel by water and land along the Upper Columbia River Route of the Oregon Trail

OWNER: City of Arlington

SITE: Weatherford Monument

LOCATION: 8 miles south of Arlington on OR 19 (Sec. 27, T2N, R21 E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside (4' x 6' bronze panel hung from a frame of eight-inch welded pipe)

SUBJECT/TITLE: Marks the crossing of the Oregon Trail

OWNER: Weatherford family

SITE: John Day River Crossing

LOCATION: Gilliam County and Sherman County (Sec. 11, T1N, R19E) 14 miles east of Wasco on the Klondike-John Day River Road

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDI Bureau of Land Management ramada with pedestal signs on west side of river; monuments on both sides of river

SUBJECT/TITLE: This site provided an easy crossing of the John Day River. After ascending the west side of the canyon, emigrants could take a right fork of the trail to go to The Dalles, or after 1846 take the left fork and follow a cutoff to the Barlow Road.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: Biggs Segment

LOCATION: Sherman County (Sec. 18, T2N, R16E)

DESCRIPTION: One-mile-long marked hiking trail; "First View" monument nearby

SUBJECT/TITLE: One of the last remaining rut segments along the Columbia River.

OWNER: White Trust (private)

SITE: Deschutes River State Park

LOCATION: Sherman County (Sec. 26, T2N, R15E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants camped here before crossing the Deschutes River.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: The Dalles (Complex)

LOCATION: The Dalles (Sec. 3, T1N, R13E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Fort Dalles Surgeon's Quarters

Ezra Meeker stone marker

Pulpit Rock

SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon Trail sites in The Dalles

OWNER: Public

SITE: The Dalles

LOCATION: Downtown/ 2nd and Federal Streets

DESCRIPTION: Wall murals

SUBJECT/TITLE: Decision at The Dalles

OWNER: The Dalles Mural Society

SITE: Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and the Wasco County Historical Museum

LOCATION: The Dalles. I-84, exit 82, and follow the signs west on the Historic Columbia River Highway

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center and museum

SUBJECT/TITLE: With the opening of the Barlow Road, emigrants at The Dalles faced a decision: whether to float their wagons and families down the Columbia River, or to cross the southern flank of Mount Hood. Interpretation of the Oregon Trail and other topics of the area's natural and cultural history are presented at the Gorge Discovery Center complex.

OWNER: Crate's Point, Inc.

Note: National Register Status: Fort Dalles Surgeon's Quarters. Date listed 9/10/71; 71000682

SITE: Memaloose Rest Area

LOCATION: Wasco County (Sec. 32, T3N, R12E); I-84, mp 73

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - Oregon Trail kiosks

SUBJECT/TITLE: From an area overlooking the river route, two gateway kiosks present major themes of the Oregon Trail.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

Note: Other interpretive signs on site describe memaloose islands

SITE: Hood River

LOCATION: Hood River (Sec 25, T3N, R10E); I-84, exit 64

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign

SUBJECT/TITLE: Along this portion of the river route, men and boys driving livestock along the south bank had to swim them across to the north bank of the Columbia. They would later recross the Columbia near the Sandy River.

OWNER: Port of Hood River

SITE: Cascades of the Columbia

LOCATION: Cascade Locks (Sec. 12, T2N, R7E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside

SUBJECT/TITLE: While men drove livestock along the river shore, women and children stayed with the wagons and floated the Columbia River on boats, canoes, and rafts. At this site, waterborne emigrants were forced to portage around the rapids of the Columbia Cascades.

OWNER: Port of Cascade Locks

Note: National Register Status: Cascade Locks Marine Park; date listed 5/15/74; 74001686.

Nearby is Bonneville Lock and Dam Historic District (National Historic Landmark); date listed: 4/09/86; 86000727

SITE: Troutdale

LOCATION: Troutdale (Sec. 25, T1N, R3E); I-84, exit 17

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides - pedestal signs at Harlow House and Columbia Gorge Factory Stores

SUBJECT/TITLE: Many emigrants left the Columbia River route here at the Sandy River and proceeded overland to Oregon City and the Willamette Valley.

OWNER: Private

Note: National Register Status: Harlow House; date listed: 2/16/84; 84003078

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

LOCATION: Vancouver, Washington (Sec. 27, T2N, R1E)

DESCRIPTION: USDI National Park Service National Historic Site including visitor center and interpretive facility

SUBJECT/TITLE: Fort Vancouver, a Hudson's Bay Company post governed by Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin, provided great assistance to exhausted emigrants. A replica of the original fort and a visitor center are administered by the National Park Service.

OWNER: National Park Service

Note: National Register Status: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site; date listed 10/15/66; 66000370

SITE: Dufur

LOCATION: Dufur (Sec. 25, T1S, R13 E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign; related site at Dufur Historical Society Wayside and Park

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants taking the Barlow Road route camped here at Fifteen Mile Creek.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service/private

SITE: Tygh Valley

LOCATION: Tygh Valley (Sec 9, T4S, R13E); West on Wamic Market Road from Tygh Valley

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants descended from Tygh Ridge to camp along Tygh Creek where they traded with Indians before turning west to the Barlow Road.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Barlow Road Segment

LOCATION: Wasco, Hood River and Clackamas Counties (Sec. 35, T4S, R11E to Sec 11, T3S, R7E)

DESCRIPTION: Thirty-two-mile long-distance trail segment

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Oregon Trail crosses the Cascades through the Mt. Hood National Forest where the Barlow Road still exists as either a dirt road or a forest trail. Interpretive waysides at Rock Creek Reservoir, Gate Creek, White River Crossing, Fort Deposit, Devil's Half Acre, Barlow Pass, Pioneer Woman's Grave, Summit Meadow, Timberline Lodge, Government Camp, Laurel Hill, and West Barlow Tollgate.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service/private

Note: National Register Status: Barlow Road Historic District; date listed 4/13/92; 92000334

SITE: Gate Creek

LOCATION: Wasco County (Sec. 35, T4S, R11E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDA Forest Service pedestal sign

SUBJECT/TITLE: The first of several tollgates on the Barlow Road operated here from 1846-1852.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Barlow Pass (Complex)

LOCATION: Clackamas County (Sec. 29, T3S, R9E); Highway 35, mp 62

DESCRIPTION: USDA Forest Service interpretive waysides--

Barlow Pass

Pioneer Woman's Grave

Summit Meadow

SUBJECT/TITLE: From where the Barlow Road crosses the summit of the Cascade Mountains to Summit Meadow is a resource area consisting of trail ruts, emigrant graves, and historic sites.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Government Camp (Complex)

LOCATION: Clackamas County (Sec. 23, T3S, R8 1/2E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

shelter and monuments at city park

interpretive signs in snow lodge

pedestal sign on Palmer snowfield at Timberline Lodge

ruts with hiking trails

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants named this site for the abandoned cavalry wagons they found here after troops abandoned them in an 1849 winter storm.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service/private

SITE: Laurel Hill

LOCATION: Clackamas County (Sec. 15, T3S, R8E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDA Forest Service pedestal signs; historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Laurel Hill was the last major obstacle on the Oregon Trail as emigrants made their way down the western slopes of Mount Hood. To lower their wagons down the various chutes used on Laurel Hill, emigrants frequently resorted to dragging trees behind their wagons or snubbing ropes around trees and belaying their wagons down.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service/Travel Information Council

Oregon National Historic Trails

SITE: West Barlow Tollgate

LOCATION: Clackamas County (Sec. 11, T3S, R7E); US 26 between mp 44 and 45

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDA Forest Service pedestal signs

SUBJECT/TITLE: This site was the last used of five locations that collected tolls on the Barlow Road. It operated from 1883-1918. A replica of the tollgate stands today beside two maple trees planted by tollgate keeper Daniel Parker in the 19th Century.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Wildwood Recreation Site

LOCATION: Clackamas County (Sec. 31, T2S, R7E); US 26 west of Welches

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - USDI Bureau of Land Management pedestal sign, rut segment.

SUBJECT/TITLE: After 1847 almost all emigrants passed this site on their way to the upper crossing of the Sandy River.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Note: National Register Status: Oregon Trail, Barlow Road Segment, South Alternate; date listed 11/20/74; 74001679. Nearby is Rock Corral on the Barlow Road; date listed 12/19/74; 74001673

SITE: Sandy (Complex)

LOCATION: Sandy (Sec. 13, T2S, R4E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Meinig Park

Jonsrud Overlook

monument and Sandy Historical Museum at city hall

SUBJECT/TITLE: After crossing the upper Sandy River, emigrants followed a long ridge called the "Devil's Backbone" to the lower crossing of the Sandy River. Here they encountered Francis Revenue's trading post and the second Barlow Road tollgate which operated from 1853-1865.

OWNER: Public/private

SITE: Philip Foster Farm

LOCATION: Eagle Creek (Sec. 31, T2S, R4E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive signs, historic house and barn, replica Foster store.

SUBJECT/TITLE: In 1846, Philip Foster joined Sam Barlow's effort to build and operate the Barlow Road. For many emigrants, Foster's farm was their first sign of settlement at the end of the trail. Foster succeeded Barlow as the primary owner of the toll road in 1851 and operated it under territorial charter until 1857.

OWNER: JZH Historical Society

Note: National Register Status: Philip Foster Farm; date listed 8/15/80; 80003305.

SITE: End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center
LOCATION: Oregon City; 1726 Washington Street, off of I-205, exit 10.
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive Center complex
SUBJECT/TITLE: The official end of the Oregon Trail
OWNER: Oregon Trail Foundation

SITE: Oregon City (Complex)
LOCATION: Oregon City (Sec. 29, T2S, R2E)
DESCRIPTION: Additional Oregon Trail interpretive locations--
 John McLoughlin House
 Clackamas County Historical Museum
 Baker Cabin is nearby (Sec. 13, T2S, R2E)
SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon City, with its numerous historic structures and sites, may be
 considered the most important historical site in Oregon.
OWNER: Public/private
Note: National Register Status: McLoughlin House (NHS); date listed 10/15/66;
 66000637.
 Baker Cabin; date listed 12/12/76; 76001578

Corridor resources

Corridor description: I-84 follows the route of the Oregon Trail to The Dalles. The trail forks there, one branch follows the Columbia River Route continuing along I-84 into Portland and south on I-205 to Oregon City. The other is the Barlow Road Route going south on US 197 to Tygh Valley, then west on Wamic Market Road to Forest Highway 48 and US 26 to Sandy. There the route goes south on OR 211 to Eagle Creek, north on OR 224 to Barton, and west on county roads to Oregon City. The official End of the Oregon Trail is at Abernethy Green in Oregon City where the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center is located.

Four Rivers Cultural Institute, Ontario
Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker City
Oregon Trail Trolley Tours, Baker City
Historic Baker City
Oregon Trail Museum, Baker City
Eastern Oregon Museum, Haines
Union County Museum, Union
Historic churches, Cove
Downtown La Grande's historic main streets
Wildhorse Resort, Pendleton
Pendleton Underground
Round-Up Hall of Fame, Pendleton
Pendleton Woolen Mills
Umatilla County Historical Museum, Pendleton

Echo Walking Tour
Sherman County Historical Museum, Moro
The Dalles Dam
Historic Carnegie Library, The Dalles
Historic Columbia River Highway
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area
Timberline Lodge
Clackamas County Historical Museum, Oregon City
Rose Farm, Oregon City
Willamette Falls

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI Bureau of Land Management
USDI Bureau of Reclamation
USDI National Park Service
USDA Forest Service
USDD Army Corps of Engineers
USDD Department of the Navy
Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs of Oregon

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society
Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

certified local government
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations

Recommendations

The main stem Oregon Trail interpretive sites and segments and interpretive centers are completed. Sign maintenance should continue to be a priority. Wherever and whenever possible consideration should be made to integrate preservation and promotion of the other branches of the Oregon Trail in Oregon. These are: Whitman Mission Route, 1841-1847 (p. 141); Upper Columbia River Route, 1841-1851 (p. 167); Meek Cutoff, 1845 (p. 199); Cutoff to the Barlow Road, 1848-1884 (p. 217); and Free Emigrant Road, 1853 (p. 225).

OREGON

Applegate (California) National Historic Trail, 1846-1883

Route description

The Applegate Trail follows Hudson's Bay Company trappers' routes south from the central Willamette Valley (present Dallas, OR) along the eastern foothills of the Coast Range, across Mary's River and the Long Tom River to the southern end of the Willamette Valley. The route continues south to Pleasant Valley, across the North and South Umpqua Rivers, and through the Calapooya Mountains to the Rogue River Valley. Continuing south through Bear Creek Valley to Emigrant Creek, the trail turns east at Tyler Creek, going over the top of Greensprings Mountain and the Cascade Mountains to cross the Klamath River at present-day Keno. The route then winds south around lower Klamath Lake before crossing a natural stone bridge over Lost River. It rounds the north end of Tule Lake, continues east, going around the south end of Goose Lake, and then ascends Fandango Pass to cross the Basin-Range region on a southeast course to the Humboldt River. The Applegate Trail intersects the California Trail and the Humboldt River where today's Rye Patch Reservoir is located.



Applegate (California) National Historic Trail, 1846-1883

Authority/Recognition

- National Trails System Act: Public Law 90-543
- Congress: NHT est. 1992
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

The Applegate Trail is an alternate southern route of the Oregon Trail and was blazed from west to east intersecting the California Trail at the Humboldt River. It is historically linked to the Oregon Trail in that it was developed as an alternative route into Oregon that avoided the obstacles of the Burnt River Canyon, the Blue Mountains, and the Columbia River. After its opening, Oregonians used part of the Applegate Trail to travel back and forth to California's gold fields. As designated by Congress under the National Trails System Act, the Applegate Trail is a branch of the California National Historic Trail.

Historical context

In 1843, Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, members of the first wave of Oregon Trail emigrants, watched helplessly as their ten-year-old sons drowned in the Columbia River when a boat overturned in rapids near The Dalles. The Applegates, like so many overland emigrants who lost loved ones on the Trail, continued sadly toward the Willamette Valley.

The Applegate brothers vowed to find a better route into the Willamette Valley—one that bypassed the Columbia River all together. The Provisional Government of Oregon also hoped an alternate route would be opened because the Hudson's Bay Company essentially controlled the Columbia River corridor, and so controlled a significant segment of the only overland route connecting the American settlements with the United States. By 1846, after settling on Salt Creek (near present-day Dallas), the Applegate brothers felt the time was right to follow through on their commitment to search for a new route.

In mid-June, Jesse and Lindsay Applegate met with other trailblazers at La Creole Creek (today called Rickreall Creek) to prepare for the trip. Eleven of the party had scouted the route earlier in the year as far south as Calapooya Creek in the Umpqua River valley. Jesse Applegate was elected leader of the group which included Lindsay Applegate, Henry Boygus, Benjamin Burch, David Goff, Samuel Goodhue, Moses ("Black") Harris, John Jones, Bennett Osborn, John Owens, William Parker, John Scott, Levi Scott, Robert Smith, and William Sportsman.

The fifteen men, each with their own saddle horse, packhorse and supplies, followed Hudson's Bay Company trappers' routes, working their way south from the central Willamette Valley to the Bear Creek Valley in southern Oregon. From there, the group knew they would be blazing an entirely new trail. Turning east, their plan was to intersect the Oregon Trail near Soda Springs (in present day Idaho). Instead they intersected the California Trail on the Humboldt River and continued eastward to meet emigrant parties and guide them onto the new route.

The trailblazers crossed the Cascade Mountains approximately where OR 66 crosses today and then headed south around lower Klamath Lake. Local Indians led them to a natural crossing of Lost River where the water flowed over a shelf of solid rock making a substantial natural underwater bridge that wagons could traverse safely. The bridge was the critical key to establishing a wagon road through the Lakes Country. After crossing Lost River, the party rounded the north end of Tule Lake and headed east again, eventually crossing the Black Rock Desert to reach the Humboldt River.

There, the trailblazers decided some of the party should stay behind to rest their stock while others continued on to Fort Hall to replenish supplies and tell Oregon-bound travelers of the new route. Jesse Applegate led the advance group to Fort Hall and persuaded more than 200 men, women, and children--some historians report nearly 100 wagons--to travel over the southern road.

The trailblazers who stayed behind could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the number of people, wagons, and cattle coming down the trail to meet them. There had been no attempt while the supply party was at Fort Hall to clear a road for wagons. The emigrants of the new wagon train would have to do that themselves.

Levi Scott and David Goff agreed to stay behind to guide the wagon train. Meanwhile, equipped with pack horses and a few tools, the trailblazers had about sixty days before winter storms set in to open more than 500 miles of road and to blaze the trail for the wagons. To make matters worse, the winter of 1846-47 was a year of record snowfall, with heavy storms starting early. (These storms were the same ones that trapped the Donner Party heading over the Sierras not far south of where Scott was crossing the mountains with his wagon train.)

The wagon train did not move as fast as Scott would have liked. By the time the wagons reached the Rogue Valley, the winter rains had set in and from then on it rained or snowed most of the way. Supplies were running out and game was scarce. The trail had become harder to clear with brush and trees everywhere. The weather was cold and everything was slippery and muddy. Trying to start a fire to get warm was almost impossible. The emigrants were strung out for miles and Scott tried to persuade those who were stopped to keep moving because things could get worse. When word reached the Willamette settlements, relief parties headed down the trail to rescue those in need.

Although the trailblazers always referred to this route as the "Southern Road," critics such as J. Quinn Thornton chose to belittle the Applegates' name by referring to it as the "Applegate Trail." Thornton blamed Jesse Applegate for hardships members of the first wagon train endured and felt that Applegate should suffer for what the emigrants endured. Thornton began a war of words through the newspaper that nearly led to a duel between him and an Applegate supporter. Although people such as Levi Scott and David Goff supported the Applegates, remnants of those hard feelings survive today.

Applegate (California) National Historic Trails

Despite its detractors, the Applegates' alternate route through Oregon contributed substantially to the development of the Northwest. At the urging of the provisional government, Levi Scott agreed to return over the Southern Road to Fort Hall in 1847 to lead additional emigrants back over the new route. In doing this, Scott made noticeable improvements to the route. In 1848 with the discovery of gold in California, Peter Hardeman Burnett led 150 pioneers with fifty heavily laden wagons from Oregon City over the Applegate Trail going south to the gold fields. They were followed a few days later by a smaller group of men and wagons from north of the Columbia River. Intersecting Peter Lassen's wagon tracks south of Tule Lake, Burnett's cavalcade helped Lassen blaze a new trail to his rancho in the Sacramento Valley, establishing the first route for wheeled vehicles between the valleys of California and Oregon. This remained a major wagon route for more than a decade. In 1852, a group blazed a trail off the Applegate route south of lower Klamath Lake to the Yreka area; this trail was used for many years to help populate that part of northern California.

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Existing interpretive resources (listed from south to north)

In 1994, the Applegate Trail Coalition sponsored placement of 18 interpretive signs along the Applegate route in Oregon. The project was supported by the Oregon Trails Coordinating Council as part of the Council's mission to promote, preserve, and protect Oregon's National Historic Trails. The Applegate Trail signing project was funded, in part, by a matching grant from the Council, and complemented existing interpretive signs, exhibits, and commemorative markers on the Trail's route.

SITE: Goose Lake State Park

LOCATION: Lakeview, Oregon

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside

SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon at Last and A Truly Horrid Sensation

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Malin City Park

LOCATION: Malin (Sec. 16, T41S, R12E)

DESCRIPTION: Historical markers; also nearby, "T" style marker SE of Malin on state line

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location on route of Applegate Trail

OWNER: City of Malin/Oregon-California Trails Association

SITE: Natural Bridge on Lost River

LOCATION: Klamath County (Sec. 7, T41S, R11E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign; "T" style marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: The most important key site to the establishment of the Applegate Trail, the natural phenomenon consisted of two parallel sandstone formations, each ten to fifteen feet in width, that lay just under the surface of the Lost River. It was the only practical ford for wagons existed within the Lower Klamath Lake basin.

OWNER: Klamath County

Note: The site today is used as the foundation for an irrigation-diversion dam.

Applegate (California) National Historic Trails

SITE: State Line Welcome Center

LOCATION: Oregon-California border on US 97, Klamath County (Sec. 20, T41S, R8E)

DESCRIPTION: Rest area interpretive wayside - pedestal signs; "T" style marker nearby

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location on the route of Applegate Trail.

OWNER: Klamath County

SITE: Upper Klamath River Crossing

LOCATION: Keno, Klamath County (Sec. 31, T39S, R8E)

DESCRIPTION: "T" style marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: 1846 Applegate Trail route crossing of Klamath River.

OWNER: Klamath County Historical Society

SITE: Lower Klamath River Crossing

LOCATION: Klamath County (Sec. 29, T39S, R7E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs; historical marker; "T" style marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Applegate Trail route crossing of Klamath River from Bear Valley cutoff initiated by Levi Scott in 1847.

OWNER: Klamath County/Travel Information Council

SITE: Jenny Creek Wagon Slide

LOCATION: Klamath County (Sec. 34, T39S, R4E)

DESCRIPTION: "T" style marker; another "T" style marker placed by Applegate Trail historians Devere and Helen Helfrich is located about 3/4 mile northeast.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location of wagon descent to Jenny Creek ford.

OWNER: Klamath County Historical Society

SITE: Tub Springs State Wayside

LOCATION: Jackson County (Sec. 2, T40S, R3E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs

SUBJECT/TITLE: A Welcome Water Source/Crossing the Siskiyou: Wagon ruts of Cascade Wagon Road

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Cascade Mountains Summit

LOCATION: Jackson County (Sec. 33, T39S, R3E)

DESCRIPTION: "T" style marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: From this point, emigrants crested the Cascade Mountains and descended into Tyler Creek; junction with Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

OWNER: Southern Oregon Historical Society

SITE: Tyler Creek confluence with Emigrant Creek
LOCATION: Jackson County (Sec. 1, T40S, R2E)
DESCRIPTION: "T" style markers located nearby at Tyler Creek and Emigrant Creek
SUBJECT/TITLE: Junction with Hudson's Bay trapper trail to California. Site where Applegate trail blazers departed trapper trail to seek pass over the Cascade Mountains.
OWNER: Southern Oregon Historical Society

SITE: Jacksonville Complex
LOCATION: Jacksonville (Sec. 32, T37S, R2W)
DESCRIPTION: Historic district
SUBJECT/TITLE: First town established in area when gold discovered in 1851-52. Settlement provided aid to emigrants on Applegate Trail and volunteer military personnel.
OWNER: Public/private
Note: Jacksonville Historic District/National Historic Landmark. Date listed: 11/13/66; 66000950

SITE: Valley of the Rogue State Park
LOCATION: Jackson County (Sec. 25, T36S, R4W)
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Applegate Trail kiosk
SUBJECT/TITLE: Native American Seasonal Round/Attitude of Prejudice/Rogue Valley Trail of Tears/Free land--First Come, First Served/On the Trapper's Trail/Petty Disputes and Jealousies
OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Grave Creek
LOCATION: Sunny Valley (Sec. 11, T34S, R6W)
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign
SUBJECT/TITLE: No Time to Mourn; Site of 1846 Martha Leland Crowley grave and historic covered bridge.
OWNER: Josephine County
Note: Applegate Trail interpretive center under development nearby. National Register site: Grave Creek Bridge. Date listed: 11/29/79; 79002077

SITE: Wolf Creek Tavern State Heritage Site
LOCATION: Wolf Creek (Sec. 22, T33S, R6W)
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs; historic building
SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon State Park located along Applegate Trail route; tavern opened in 1880s to serve Oregon-to-California stagecoach route.
OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department/Oregon Department of Transportation
Note: National Register Site: Wolf Creek Tavern. Date listed: 09/22/72; 72001081

Applegate (California) National Historic Trails

SITE: Canyon Creek Road
LOCATION: I-5, Exit 95 (Sec. 2, T31S, R5W)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Canyon Creek Trail, 1828-1884
OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Canyonville Pioneer Park
LOCATION: Canyonville (Sec. 27, T30S, R5W)
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive Wayside - Applegate Trail kiosk
SUBJECT/TITLE: Trail of Adversity/A Reckless Breed of Men/Pioneer Women/Lure of Free Land & the Consequences/Perspectives/One of Oregon's First Treaty Tribes. The descent down Canyon Creek was one of the most arduous portions of the entire Applegate Trail. In 1851, land claims were taken at Canyonville and businesses started to serve travelers on the Applegate Trail
OWNER: City of Canyonville

SITE: Roseburg County Courthouse
LOCATION: Roseburg, Oregon
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive sign
SUBJECT/TITLE: Applegate Trail
OWNER: Oregon-California Trails Association

SITE: Cabin Creek
LOCATION: Oakland (Sec. 4, T25S, R5W)
DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal sign
SUBJECT/TITLE: In the winter of 1846-47, Rev. Joseph A. Cornwall erected a cabin to wait for better weather and health. In 1851, the region's first grist mill and town, Oakland, was established across Calapooya Creek from Cornwall's cabin.
OWNER: City of Oakland
Note: National Register Site: Oakland Historic District. Date listed: 03/30/79; 79002058

SITE: Pleasant Valley/Yoncalla Complex

LOCATION: Yoncalla (Sec. 3, T23S, R5W)

DESCRIPTION: Area where the Applegate Trail forked into eastern and western branches and where Applegate family settled. The two branches rejoin near the Long Tom River Crossing.

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Applegate Trail split into two branches in this area. The eastern fork of the trail, opened in 1846-47, branched east crossing over the Calapooya Mountains to the Coast Fork of the Willamette River where it followed the Willamette Valley north. The western branch closely followed the Hudson's Bay trappers trail to California and became part of the Applegate Trail after the Applegate families relocated their homesteads to Yoncalla and developed the route as a shorter way to the west side of the Willamette Valley. In Yoncalla, an Applegate monument is located at the corner of Front and Applegate Avenue and nearby is the historic Charles Applegate house (Sec. 34, T22S, R5W). North of Yoncalla, a historic marker commemorates the location of the Jesse Applegate homestead (Sec. 28, T22S, R5W).

OWNER: Public/private

Note: National Register Site: Charles Applegate House. Date listed: 03/17/75; 75001583

SITE: Riverside Park

LOCATION: Cottage Grove (Sec. 29, T20S, R3W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs

SUBJECT/TITLE: Changing Trail to Oregon/Crossing the Calapooya Mtns./A Trail by Any Other Name/River Road- Historic Trail to Modern Highway/A Tale of Two Cities/ Lane County's Emigrant Trails

OWNER: City of Cottage Grove

Note: Eastern branch of Applegate Trail

SITE: Skinner's Cabin

LOCATION: Skinner's Park, Eugene (Sec. 30, T17S, R3W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs. A replica of Skinner's Cabin is located at approximately the original cabin's location

SUBJECT/TITLE: Skinner's Cabin/Genesis of a City/Lane County's Applegate Trails. Skinner Park is located along the eastern branch of the Applegate Trail. In 1846, Eugene Skinner's cabin was the first sign of civilization that emigrants encountered at the end of their 2,000 mile journey.

OWNER: City of Eugene

Note: Eastern branch of Applegate Trail

Applegate (California) National Historic Trails

SITE: Zumwalt Park

LOCATION: Fern Ridge Reservoir, Lane County (Sec. 33, T17S, R5W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lane Country's Emigrant Trails/Smoke, Fire, and Misunderstanding/If This Land Could Speak

OWNER: Lane County

Note: Western branch of Applegate Trail

SITE: Richardson Park

LOCATION: Fern Ridge Reservoir, Lane County (Sec. 5, T17S, R5W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Magnetism of Oregon

OWNER: Lane County

Note: Western branch of Applegate Trail

SITE: Long Tom River Crossing

LOCATION: Washburne State Wayside, Lane County (Sec. 12, T15S, R3W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - pedestal signs.

SUBJECT/TITLE: Lane County Emigrant Trails/ Journey of a Lifetime. Applegate Trail near the crossing of the Long Tom River and the rejoining of the eastern and western branches.

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Avery Park

LOCATION: Corvallis (Sec. 17, T12S, R5W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside - Applegate Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Yet Another River to Cross/A Varied Cast of Characters/ Heart of the Valley/ Resolving the Oregon Question/ Transportation Hub/ We Do Not Wish to Leave Our Country. In 1846, the Mary's River was the last place that the emigrants would need to disassemble their wagons and ferry them across a river on canoe.

OWNER: City of Corvallis

SITE: La Creole (Rickreall) Creek Complex

LOCATION: Dallas (Sec. 32, T7S, R5W)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides--

Oregon-California Trails Association pedestal sign at Dallas City Park (Sec 32, T7S, R5W);

Applegate Trail kiosk at Polk County Fairgrounds (Sec 31, T7S, R4W);

Pedestal sign at Guthrie Park (Sec. 18, T8S, R5W).

SUBJECT/TITLE: Remedy for an Evil/Sage or Scoundrel/Levi Scott-Trailblazer/Polk County-

Land of Promise/Grand Ronde Reservation/The First Investors/Guthrie Park. The official

beginning and end of the Applegate Trail, La Creole Creek (now Rickreall Creek) was

the gathering site where the company of trail blazers met in 1846 to depart on their trek to

seek out a southern route from the Oregon Trail into the Willamette Valley. The original

Applegate land claims are located 4 miles northwest.

OWNER: Public/private

Corridor resources

Corridor description: The Applegate Trail enters Oregon near Malin and follows the Klamath Falls-Malin Hwy (OR 39) to Malone Road where it turns south back into California. The route re-enters Oregon on US 97 and follows the Keno-Worden Road to Keno, then goes west on OR 66 to Ashland. The route then goes north on I-5 to Eugene, north on OR 99 to Junction City, and north on OR 99W through Corvallis into Polk County. The route then goes west on Airlie Road to OR 223 and then north to Dallas.

Malin

Bear Valley Eagle Refuge

Lower Klamath Wildlife Refuge

Favell Museum, Klamath Falls

Klamath County Museum, Klamath Falls

Baldwin Hotel Museum, Klamath Falls

Keno

Ashland Shakespearean Theater complex

Ashland historic homes and buildings

Schneider Art Museum, Ashland

Jacksonville Historic District

Jacksonville Museum of Southern Oregon History

Jacksonville Woodlands Historic Natural Park and Trail System

Historic Discovery Drives: Your Guide to Jackson County's Past brochure

CC Beekman House, Jacksonville

Butte Creek Mill, Eagle Point

Eagle Point Historical Society

Eagle Point General Store Museum

Applegate (California) National Historic Trails

Antelope Creek Covered Bridge
Prospect Hotel, Prospect
Gin Lin Trail (15 mi s of Jacksonville)
Woodville Museum, Rogue River
Rogue River rafting
Southern Oregon Historical Society & Center, Medford
Railroad Park, Medford
Savage Rapids Dam, Gold Hill
Rocky Point, Gold Hill
Schmidt House Museum/Josephine Co Historical Society, Grants Pass
Newman United Methodist Church, Grants Pass
Haines Apple Tree, Merlin
Grave Creek Covered Bridge, Sunny Valley
Golden's carpenter gothic church (1895)
Whiskey Creek Cabin, Grave Creek boat landing
Floed-Lane House, Roseburg
McKays Fort Site, Roseburg
Mill-Pine Neighborhood Historic District, Roseburg
Douglas County Museum of History and Natural History, Roseburg
Pioneer Memorial Museum and Indian Culture Center, Canyonville
Historic Oakland
Oakland Museum
Stephens Community Historic District (west of Oakland)
Winston Historic District
North Umpqua River/ Steamboat Springs
Azalea General Store, Azalea
Dorris Ranch, Cottage Grove
Lane Co Historical Museum, Eugene
Museum of Natural History, Eugene
Willamette Valley covered bridges
Benton County History Center, Corvallis
Benton County Historical Museum, Philomath
James O. Wilson House, Corvallis
Benton County Courthouse
Polk Co Courthouse, Dallas
Muir-McDonald Tannery, Dallas
Gentle House, Monmouth
Campbell Hall, Monmouth

Existing area tours of interest (brochures are available)

Willamette Valley Driving/Cycling Loop (Scenic byway)
South Cascades Route (Scenic byway)
Rogue/Umpqua Scenic Byway
Scenic Applegate Valley Tour
Galic-Hellgate USDI Bureau of Land Management backcountry byway
Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway
Grants Pass historical tours
Oregon Redwoods tour

Municipal Parks, State Parks, USDI National Parks and USDI Bureau of Land Management properties:

Crater Lake National Park
OC&E Rail Trail State Park, Klamath Falls
Jackson F. Kimball State Park, Klamath Falls
Tub Springs Wayside, Pinehurst
Indian Mary Park
Caveman Bridge/Riverside Park, Grants Pass
Oregon Caves National Monument
Valley of the Rogue State Park, Rogue River
Washburne Wayside
Tou Velle State Park, Medford

Historic markers and interpretive signs:

Upper Klamath Lake/Klamath Falls City Park (Travel Information Council)
10 mi south of Monmouth/Camp Adair (Travel Information Council)

Partners and players**Federal and national**

USDI Bureau of Land Management
USDI National Park Service
USDA Forest Service
Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde
Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua
Klamath Tribes

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Historical Society

Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Trail Advisory Council
California State Parks

Regional and local

certified local governments
county historical societies
local chambers of commerce
regional visitor associations and tourism groups
private land owners

Recommendations

Opportunities exist to develop and interpret two hiking segments. One recommendation is to develop Bear Creek Valley Hiking Segment to link the Applegate Trail route through Bear Creek Valley to the Lower Klamath Crossing. (Sec. 32, T40S, R8E to Sec. 29, T39S, R7E.) The 10-mile-long segment intersects both private and public property.

The Cascade Mountain Crossing Hiking Segment, in Klamath County and Jackson County, presents significant potential and significant barriers, too. The 30-mile-long segment links interpretive waysides and markers at Lower Klamath River Crossing, Tub Springs State Wayside, Sheppy Creek, Jenny Creek Wagon Slide, Round Prairie, Lincoln, Hyatt Lake, Keene Creek Wagon Slide, Cascade Summit, Tyler Creek, Emigrant Creek, Songer Gap, and Emigrant Lake. (Sec. 30, T39S, R7E to Sec. 34, T39S, R2E.) As with the Bear Valley Hiking Segment, the Cascade Mountain Crossing Hiking Segment crosses both public and private property.

In addition to long-range opportunities to develop these hiking segments, an immediate opportunity exists to produce a trail-wide interpretive and marketing brochure to complement the interpretive signs and communities along the trail. The signs provide a logical focus for a heritage driving tour through the Applegate Country, a brochure would greatly complement the existing signs, and provide a tourism and educational resource.

Because each recommendation includes a variety of potential partners and players, the Council encourages a cooperative approach, linking federal agencies, state agencies and local organizations to each project.

OREGON

Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail, 1877

Route description

The Nez Perce National Historic Trail extends approximately 1,170 miles from Wallowa Lake, Oregon to the Bear Paw's Battlefield near Chinook, Montana weaving through Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

Approximately 55 miles of the Nez Perce Trail is located in Oregon. Wallowa Lake is the symbolic beginning of the trail within the traditional homelands of the Nez Perce. From Wallowa Lake, the trail goes northeast to the crossing of the Snake River at Dug Bar. This trail segment was normally the route between the summer home of the Wallowa band and their winter homes in the canyons of the Imnaha, Snake, and Grande Ronde Rivers. Although this segment was not used in its entirety during the 1877 trek, it is included in the National Historic Trail to symbolize the gathering of people and livestock, and their departure from traditional homelands.



0 50 100 KM
25 50 MILES

Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail, 1877

Authority/Recognition

- National Trails System Act: Public Law 90-543
- Congress: NHT est. 1986
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Nez Perce National Historic Trail Foundation

Significance

In 1877, the Wallowa Band Nez Perce, under the leadership of the brothers Joseph and Ollokot, joined four other tribal groups traveling from their traditional homeland in the Wallowa Valley to the Nez Perce reservation in Idaho Territory. At Tolo Lake (Idaho), several young warriors (who were not members of the Wallowa Band) avenged the death of tribal members by killing four white men. Fearing retaliation from the military, the non-treaty Nez Perce, joined by bands of the Palouse, left for White Bird Canyon--and the cavalry followed. Thus began the flight of Joseph, Ollokot, and the non-treaty Nez Perce; a journey that would capture the imagination of the nation.

About 800 people, herding more than 2000 horses and carrying whatever possessions they could manage, embarked on a circuitous 1,100 mile route through four states. They made this trek in less than four months, fleeing from the U.S. Army which was under orders to place them on a reservation in western Idaho Territory. The 250 Nez Perce men fought more than twenty engagements and five major battles against 2000 US soldiers and civilians. Time and again the non-treaty Nez Perce out-maneuvered the military as they tried to reach the Canadian border. The exhausted bands surrendered just forty miles short of its goal. It was there that Chief Joseph reportedly made the speech: "My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." The story of the non-treaty Nez-Perces' flight from their traditional homelands and Chief Joseph's diplomacy in the years that followed are internationally-recognized symbols of Indian skill and resilience.

Historical context

The Nez Perce people had lived in the mountain ranges and high plateaus of what we now call northeastern Oregon, southeastern Washington, and central Idaho for centuries before Euro-Americans ever crossed the land. Members of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery were the first from the relatively new nation of the United States that the Nez Perce met. Their congenial meeting lead to years of peaceful coexistence with the ever-increasing population of trappers and traders, missionaries, and emigrants. The emigrant's hunger for land severely affected native groups as Euro-Americans moved across the continent and the government initiated a reservation system to divide Indian lands.

In 1855, Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens and headmen of fifty-six bands or villages signed the first treaty defining the Nez Perce Reservation as seven million acres--from southeast Washington, across the Wallowa Country of northeast Oregon, to central Idaho, from the Palouse River, to south of the Salmon River. An 1860 gold discovery on Nez Perce land near Orofino, Idaho, prompted the government to enter into treaty negotiations again, reducing the lands to 700,000 acres. Lawyer, a Christian leader and fifty-four Christianized Nez Perce representatives signed the treaty, but five bands of the Nez Perce, who were non-Christian, refused to sign. The Nez Perce people became divided into Christian and non-Christian, treaty and non-treaty factions. The Americans claimed Lawyer represented the entire Nez Perce people and the U.S. Government launched a campaign to move all Nez Perce onto the reservation.

The non-treaty Nez Perces, however, remained on their traditional homeland. In 1871, Old Chief Joseph, leader of the non-treaty Wellamotkin Band of Nez Perce, died. He was 85. At nearly the same time, the first white emigrants pushed their herds of cattle from the Grande Ronde Valley into the Wallowa Valley's lush meadows. Chief Joseph, the old chief's oldest son, assumed responsibility for the band's civil relations with other tribes and the U.S. Government and its agents.

As the years passed, it became increasingly difficult for the Nez Perce to accommodate the constant flow of whites into the Valley. Hostilities began when settlers and cattlemen increasingly trespassed upon the Indians' land. The government told emigrants that the valley was United States property and that they could settle there as easily as anywhere else. Moreover, the government agreed to protect the white settlers.

Increasing demands on limited resources pressed the Nez Perce and the emigrants to the breaking point. In the spring of 1877 an ultimatum was issued and the cavalry was sent to move the non-treaty groups onto reservation land. When the orders came for all non-treaty bands to move, the Wallowa Band was at its winter camp on the lower reaches of the Grande Ronde. Seeing no alternative, the Wallowa Band agreed to move peacefully. Approximately 400 Indians, including about 64 braves ages 16 and over, and only 1,000 head of horses and cattle were gathered and the move to the ancient gathering place of Tephalewam, near Tolo Lake, began on May 14, 1877.

The Indians assembled at Dug Bar, where they crossed the Snake River. After climbing to Joseph Plains and crossing the Salmon River, they proceeded to Tephalewam where a majority of the non-treaty Nez Perce had gathered to await the final move onto the reservation at Lapwai. The last few days were emotional ones for the Nez Perce. Several young warriors, intent on avenging the deaths of tribal members killed by miners and settlers, killed four white men. Fearing retaliation, the non-treaty Nez Perce fled to White Bird Canyon and the cavalry followed. When the military ignored a truce flag flown by the Nez Perce and attacked, the Nez Perce warriors defeated the troops, killing thirty-four and losing none. They continued their flight to freedom in Montana, hoping that their buffalo-hunting friends, the Crows, would help them. When the Crow were unable to help, Canada held the last promise for freedom.

Nez Perce National Historic Trail

Their 1,100 mile circuitous route through four states was dictated by terrain and strategic advantage. From the beginning to the end, the warrior force led by Joseph's brother, the war chief Ollokot, never exceeded 250 men. They fought some 20 engagements and five major battles with forces which totaled some 2,000 soldiers plus numerous civilian volunteers and the support of Nez Perces' tribal enemies. The Nez Perce defeated and humiliated the cavalry again and again as they struggled toward Sitting Bull's Sioux in Canada. Still, the cavalry pursued, frustrated by this small group's resilience and skill.

Some forty miles from the Canadian border, the Army cornered Joseph's exhausted band forcing them to surrender. Though the Nez Perce fared better than did the cavalry, too many on both sides died. It was cold and the Nez Perce were without blankets. It was here that Joseph reportedly said: "My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

The 1877 War yielded greater casualties than the Battle of the Little Bighorn. About 300 of the 750 fugitive Nez Perces--men, women, and children--died before reaching the Bear's Paw Mountains, or shortly thereafter as prisoners. During the surrender negotiations, the Nez Perces were first told they could return to the Idaho reservation, but then were sent to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. For the next eight years, Chief Joseph lobbied for the return of his people to Idaho. Finally in 1885, 118 Nez Perces were returned to the Nez Perce Reservation, Idaho. The remaining 150, including Joseph, were sent to the Colville Indian Reservation, Washington. Many died as prisoners.

The USDA Forest Service has designated the route of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail in Oregon. Of a total of 55 miles of trail, 40 miles are across private lands and 15 miles on national forest land. The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail in Oregon cannot be followed in its entirety by wheeled vehicles. Except for portions where existing roads coincide with or intersect the Indians' route, the trail is in rugged country largely inaccessible to vehicles. Neither historic continuity of trail use nor accessibility is a standard of the trail's significance.

The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail is complemented by the Nez Perce National Historical Park. In 1992, Congress added fourteen additional historic sites in Oregon, Washington, and Montana to the Nez Perce National Historical Park, expanding the park to thirty-eight sites. The Trail, managed by the USDA Forest Service, and the Park, managed by the USDI National Park Service, have exercised agreements to share the management and development of some sites in Oregon: the Old Chief Joseph Gravesite and Dug Bar Crossing. In addition, the Joseph Canyon Overlook and the traditional summer campground at the confluence of the Lostine and Wallowa Rivers have been added to the Nez Perce National Historical Park.

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Nez Perces National Historic Trail Draft Interpretive Plan. USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI National Park Service, 1993.

Nez Perces National Historical Park, map/brochure, USDI National Park Service, 1993.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Chief Joseph Monument (Old Chief Joseph Cemetery)

A unit of the Nez Perce National Historic Park, the gravesite is the officially-designated start of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail.

LOCATION: OR 82, north of Wallowa Lake and one mile south of Joseph, Oregon.

DESCRIPTION: A small sign on OR 82 directs visitors to "Chief Joseph Monument."

SUBJECT/TITLE: Cemetery site itself does not have an interpretive sign.

OWNER: Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and managed by the National Park Service.

Note: This highly visible and visited site on the shore of Wallowa Lake, is an Indian cemetery which contains the grave of Old Chief Joseph. Deeded to the federal government as trust land in the late 1920s by a local irrigation consortium, the site was originally intended to serve as a marked cemetery for the reinterment of Native remains disturbed through agriculture throughout Wallowa County. In 1928, the remains of Old Chief Joseph were reinterred to the site. The site received a major renovation in the late 1930s and early 1940s by a Umatilla Tribe Civilian Conservation Corps group. The resulting improvements, now historic structures, included a rock wall fronting today's OR 82, fencing, irrigation, landscaping, and miscellaneous rock structures. A dedication held in 1940 was widely attended by dignitaries and citizens from across the state. Following this period of intense activity, the site once again fell into federal neglect until the site's inclusion into the Nez Perce National Historical Park in 1992.

SITE: Old Joseph Cemetery

LOCATION: OR 82, north of Wallowa Lake and one mile south of Joseph, Oregon

DESCRIPTION: Historic markers

SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon Geology, Wallowa Lake (a brief explanation of the formation of Wallowa Lake and the adjacent glacial moraine)/Oregon History, National Indian Cemetery (explains the use of the cemetery by the Nez Perce and Umatilla Tribes)

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Imnaha River Canyon Trail

LOCATION: On the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Recreational Trail within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Wallowa Whitman National Forest

DESCRIPTION: Existing wayside with minimal interpretation

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Wallowa Band split into small groups and spent winters along the Grande Ronde or Imnaha canyons. Interpretation tells of the early days of the Wallowa Band's journey and Joseph's hardships in departing Imnaha Canyon and crossing the Snake River to join the other Nez Percés

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

Note: National Historic Trail site

SITE: Dug Bar Crossing

LOCATION: On the Snake River just southeast of the Lower Dug Bar Rapids

DESCRIPTION: Two interpretive trail signs along the Dug Bar road mark the point where the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail intersects the road.

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Nez Perce Crossing and the beginning of the War of 1877

OWNER: USDA Forest Service cooperative site with National Park Service; managed through a Cooperative Agreement between the USDA Forest Service and the National Park Service.

Note: The sign is meant to be read from the river by passing boaters. There is no potable water at Dug Bar and a round-trip by road takes a full day. The National Park Service added the Dug Bar Crossing as a Nez Perce National Historical Park site in 1992. The National Park Service 1997 General Management Plan includes proposed additional interpretation. The Dug Bar Cabin and Blacksmith Shop were determined by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register. Located in Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, Dug Bar was a traditional Nez Perce seasonal migration crossing of the Snake River. This is the site identified by scholars as the probable crossing point for Joseph's Band in 1877 as they were being forced onto the reservation at Lapwai. Interpretation describes the effort, the losses, and the consequences of the Wallowa band's forced exit from the Valley and onto the reservation. Accessible by a 25-mile-long one-lane graveled road or by river. This site is recognized as a National Historic Trail Site and a National Historical Park site.

Nez Perce National Historic Trail

SITE: Tick Hill

LOCATION: Tick Hill near the town of Wallowa, just north of OR 82. The site can be accessed from Troy Road.

DESCRIPTION: 160 acre site under development by the local nonprofit Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, Inc. and includes a celebration ground and interpretive facility

SUBJECT/TITLE: The site will tell the story of the Wallowa Band Nez Perce.

OWNER: Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, Inc.

Note: The Wallowa Band Nez Perce Interpretive Center will serve as a gathering place for Nez Perce people returning to the Wallowa Valley and will help perpetuate the customs of the people. The site will accommodate hiking trails and outdoor interpretation. Three groups of Nez Perce people are involved in the project: representatives from the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, the Chief Joseph Band of the Nez Perce and the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington, and descendants of the Nez Perce on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The National Park Service has endorsed the development of an interpretive facility and is working with the nonprofit organization to craft a Cooperative Agreement. The Nez Perce National Historical Park Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the Tick Hill site as an enhancement to the Lostine Campsite location added to the park in 1992 and intends the site to be the focus of their interpretive efforts in Wallowa County. The Oregon Trails Coordinating Council provided funding for purchase and development of the property.

SITE: Joseph Canyon Overlook

LOCATION: 30 miles north of Enterprise and 11 miles south of the Oregon/Washington line, on OR 3

DESCRIPTION: Highway pullout overlooking Joseph Canyon

SUBJECT/TITLE: The traditional wintering grounds of the Wallowa Nez Perce in and around Joseph Canyon.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service; a cooperative agreement among the Oregon Department of Transportation, the USDA National Park Service, and the USDA Forest Service is pending.

Note: The viewpoint provides a valuable opportunity for interpreting the seasonal migrations of the Nez Perce and the use of native plants for food for both the people and their horses. This site is along the designated auto route of Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail and provides a view of the canyon-bottom environment where the Wallowa Band Nez Perce wintered. In the past the site had a USDA Forest Service interpretive sign which was damaged and removed. This site was added to the Nez Perce National Historical Park in 1992. The 1997 General Management Plan calls for site improvements including road work, restrooms, trail development, and interpretation. In 1997, the Oregon Trails Coordinating Council provided partial funding to the National Park Service for site improvements at the Joseph Canyon Overlook. Installation planned.

Corridor resources

Corridor description: OR 82 from Elgin through Minam Grade, Wallowa, and Enterprise, to Joseph with options north from Enterprise on OR 3 along the National Historic Trail auto tour route, or the adventurer's route (4 wheel drive only) from Joseph through Imnaha to Dug Bar.

Elgin Opera House

Minam Grade vistas

Wallowa

Lostine Flea market

Enterprise: Buildings with pressed tin facades and the county courthouse

Wallowa Mountain Visitor Center

Nez Perce National Historic Trail Highway Auto Tour Route (OR 3)

Nez Perce Art in the Wallowas Art Festival

Joseph's bronze foundries

Wallowa County Museum

Wallowa Lake

Wallowa Lake State Park

Wallowa Lake Tramway

Wild and Scenic River Corridor (Joseph Creek)

Eagle Cap Wilderness Area

Hat Point Overlook

Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

Hells Canyon Scenic Byway

Nee-Me-Poo National Recreation Trail

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI Bureau of Land Management

USDI National Park Service

USDA Forest Service

Nez Perce National Historic Trail Foundation

Tribal

Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho

Colville Confederated Tribes

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

State

Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, Inc.
private land owners

Recommendations

Oregon has one high potential route segment: the Imnaha River segment which totals eighteen miles; thirteen miles owned by Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and five miles of private land. Ten miles are road, and eight miles are trail. Two significant opportunities exist to complement the interpretive development already planned along the Nez Perce National Historic Trail.

Lone Pine Saddle is on the 18-mile-long Imnaha River “high potential route” segment from Corral Creek to Dug Bar. Lone Pine Saddle is within the Nez Perce National Recreational Trail in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. The section from Corral Creek to Dug Bar is on a designated Scenic section of the Wild and Scenic Snake River. The seven-mile segment over Lone Pine Saddle includes both a hiking and/or horse trail and a very primitive road. Lone Pine Saddle is recognized in the USDA Forest Service *Nez Perce National Historic Trail Comprehensive Plan* as a historic site, giving responsibility for interpretation to the managing agency. This is the route followed by the Wallowa Band as they moved from their Wallowa Valley camp across the canyon to the Snake River in 1877. This particular route allows visitors to hike the actual route the Wallows followed.

The Minam Hill Overlook (Minam Grade) is on OR 82, 8.5 miles east of Elgin at the summit of Minam Hill. This is an unmarked and undeveloped site with potential for wayside development and interpretation. The National Park Service and the Oregon Department of Transportation are discussing site development. The Minam Hill Overlook represents the western boundary of the Nez Perce homeland established by the Treaty of 1855 and marked by Old Chief Joseph to identify the band’s ownership of the valley to white settlers. The site serves as the western portal to the Nez Perce National Historical Park, and could provide basic orientation to the park and the Nez Perce history in Wallowa County.

OREGON HISTORIC TRAILS

Klamath Trail, 19th Century
Jedediah Smith Route, 1828
Nathaniel Wyeth Route, 1832/1834
Benjamin Bonneville Route, 1833/1834
Ewing Young Route, 1834/1837
Whitman Mission Route, 1841-1847
Upper Columbia River Route, 1841-1851
Fremont Route, 1843
Meek Cutoff, 1845
Cutoff to Barlow Road, 1848-1884
Free Emigrant Road, 1853
Santiam Wagon Road, 1865-1939

Oregon's nineteenth-century history can be traced along its historic trails. From north to south, east to west, whether along well-established ancient trails or wandering explorers' routes, the Klamath Trail, the Smith, Wyeth, Bonneville, and Young routes, the missionaries' trails, the traders' trails, the emigrant trails, and the freight lines all combine to tell the story of Oregon's changing landscape and culture since 1800.

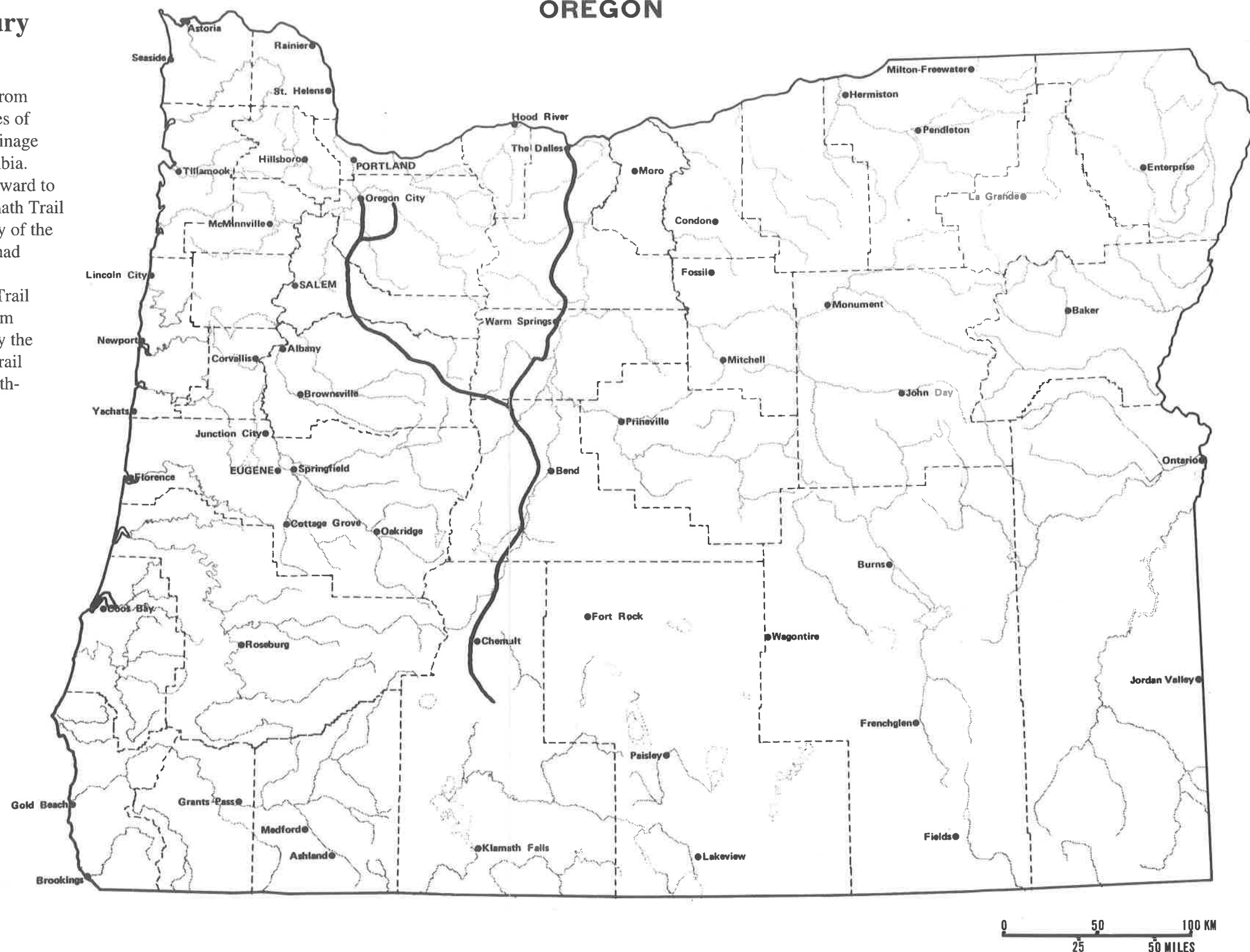
OREGON

Klamath Trail, 19th Century

Route description

The Klamath Trail led northward from the Klamath Marsh along the eastern slopes of the Cascades and followed the general drainage of the Deschutes River towards the Columbia. One branch of the Klamath Trail led northward to The Dalles. Western branches of the Klamath Trail crossed over the Cascades into the territory of the Molala Indians with whom the Klamaths had close relationships.

A primary branch of the Klamath Trail over the Cascades was located near Santiam Pass and crossed into the slopes drained by the North Santiam River. Here the Klamath Trail merged with the Molala Trail, a major north-south route that skirted the foothills of the eastern Willamette Valley.



Klamath Trail, 19th century

Authority/Recognition

- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057

Significance

The Klamath Trail is representative of what was once a vast network of Indian trails throughout the landscape. These trails were used to travel to and from specific resources (such as obsidian pits or fishing areas), and for trade of goods and slaves as well as maintaining social relations among tribes. The first non-aboriginal people to arrive in Oregon--explorers, trappers, traders, and emigrants--used trail networks established by Indians. Some Indian trails were developed into wagon roads and remain today as rural roads and even highways. Other Indian trails continue to exist as recreational hiking trails.

Historical context

The Klamath Trail (named for its use by the Klamath Indians), was used as a trade route between the Klamath Lakes area and the Great Trade Center located at The Dalles and Celilo Falls region of the Columbia River. The Klamath Trail is also sometimes referred to as the "slave trail" because of its use by the Klamaths to transport slaves captured from northern California tribes who were taken to The Dalles and traded for horses and other goods.

Every summer Indians from all over the Northwest would come to The Dalles bringing with them the specialties of their own region. Objects were often traded several times and might end up hundreds of miles away from their place of origin. Trade goods from The Dalles have been found as far away as Alaska, southern California, and Missouri. The Chinookan-speaking Indians of the Lower Columbia utilized their central position near The Dalles to become one of the most influential traders of the West Coast.

The two most significant trade resources were salmon and slaves. Indians with access to the fisheries of the Columbia River dried and traded tons of salmon each year. The Dalles was also the greatest slave market for trade between the peoples of the interior and those of the coast. Indian people preferred to own slaves from faraway places, since there was less chance that the slave would try to return home. Chinookans purchased slaves at The Dalles and traded them for canoes to the peoples of the North Pacific coast.

Before acquiring horses, distance and the natural isolation of the Klamath homelands probably limited Klamath trade with The Dalles except through intermediaries. Because the Klamaths were remote from the waterways which formed the major avenues of communication for fur traders and explorers, their contact with Europeans was gradual. In 1825, the Klamaths

were visited by Finian McDonald, a trapper for the Hudson's Bay Company. In the following year, Peter Skene Ogden, chief of the Snake Expedition for the Hudson's Bay Company, wrote the first description of the Klamaths, noting that they had but one horse. A few years later, another party of French-Canadian trappers visited the Klamaths and on their return trip to The Dalles took Klamath people with them and opened up for perhaps the first time direct contact with that region. From then on, Klamath travel to The Dalles increased.

In a short time, the Klamath Trail became a much-used avenue for trading at The Dalles and the Klamaths became the premier traders of interior Oregon. The adoption of horse culture, travel, and slave commerce caused a relatively short, but intense transformation of the Klamaths into a stratified society that would again be changed by the treaty of 1864 and the formation of the Klamath Indian Reservation.

Slavery in the Pacific Northwest was a well established practice before contact with European explorers and traders, but intensified in practice with the introduction of foreign trade goods made available through the fur trade. When the Klamath Indians acquired horses in the early to mid-19th century, their new method of transportation made it easier to raid and capture Shasta and Pit River Indians for slave trade, and then travel the long distance to The Dalles via the Klamath Trail.

While one branch of the Klamath Trail led northward to The Dalles, western branches of the Klamath Trail crossed over the Cascades and into the territory of the Molala⁴ Indians who occupied the western Cascades from the upper Rogue River in the south to the upper Clackamas River in the north. Three sub-groups of Molalas have been recognized: 1) the Southern Molala, occupying areas west of Crater Lake, 2) the Santiam Band, living in the upper regions of the North and Middle Santiam rivers, and 3) the Northern Molala, who were focused in the drainage of the Molalla River. The Molala and the Klamath traded, intermarried, hunted together, and were allies in war.

A primary branch of the Klamath Trail over the Cascades was located in the region of the Santiam Pass and crossed into the slopes drained by the North Santiam River. Here the Indian trail system merged with the Molala Trail, a major north-south route that skirted the foothills of the eastern Willamette Valley from Oregon City to the distant region of the Southern Molala. From the North Santiam River, the Molala Trail went north through the Waldo Hills, on to the villages of the northern Molala, and then to the Willamette Falls trading mart.

Documented use of the Klamath and Molala Trails come together in the incidents surrounding the Molala War, also known as the Battle of the Abiqua. In 1847, following the Cayuse attack on the Whitman Mission, it is believed the Northern Molala leader Crooked Finger visited the Klamaths and other tribes seeking recruits for an uprising against the white settlements in the Willamette Valley. That winter, about 150 Indians, including men, women, and children, (over half of whom were Klamath), made camp at Abiqua Creek near Silverton. White settlers with land claims located along the Molala Trail felt threatened by the combined presence of the Klamaths and the absence of local militia who had gone to fight in the Cayuse War. In early March 1848, two Cayuse scouts were captured by settlers near the Abiqua camp.

⁴ "Molala" has a number of contemporary spellings, including "Molalla," the spelling used on today's maps. "Molala," used here, is the ethnographic spelling for the tribe.

Suspicious of the scouts' motives, the settlers went to the Molala chief Coosta and demanded that the Klamaths leave the valley, but Coosta asserted the right of the Klamaths to remain, saying they were his kinsmen and under his protection. On March 4, fifty Molala and Klamath went to the cabin of one of the settlers with the accusation that the two Cayuse had been killed. The accusation was denied and the Indians turned away, but the settlers were now thoroughly alarmed. On March 5, a company of militia approached the Molala village on Butte Creek and a battle ensued, sending Indians into retreat. The following day, the Klamath camp on Abiqua Creek was attacked and routed. The surviving Klamaths were given three days to leave and departed on the Klamath Trail, bearing their dead with them.

A historic account says the defeated Klamaths left on their way to Jefferson Pass and that the ancient path taken to the mountains was the Abiqua Trail. Recent archeological studies indicate that there were probably countless Indian trails through the Cascade Mountains and many crossings. Archaeologists suggest that the Molala made use of their position in the western Cascades to develop and exploit trade routes. Tested archeological sites on ridges or saddles suggest these sites were seasonally occupied and located on travel routes.

The Moose-Molala One⁵ site in the Willamette National Forest is located within the area attributed to the Santiam Band of the Molala. Like a number of other archeological sites in the area, it is located on a known historic trail which in turn may be an aboriginal route and connects with other ridgeline trails. Materials from the site show a strong preference for obsidian, which not only traveled with the people who moved through the landscape, but may have also played a role in trade.

A major cache of obsidian discovered approximately ten miles east of the Moose-Molala site precipitated a Forest Service study of obsidian procurement and transport. The biface cache was sourced to Obsidian Cliffs located on the west slope of North Sister Peak, some 30 miles to the southeast. An array of known historic trails, the likely remnants of aboriginal trails, link Obsidian Cliffs with the biface cache and the Moose-Molala One site.

Obsidian Cliffs is the most common identified source of obsidian found at archeological sites located further north. The Short Saddle site, fifty miles to the north of the Obsidian Cliffs, is located on a small saddle along a north-south trending ridge, just south of the major east-west trending ridge system between the Clackamas and North Santiam river drainages in the western Cascades. It is within the territory of the Northern Molala and is located on the Scorpion Ridge trail, a part of the Cascade trail network that was likely used prehistorically. Obsidian found at Short Saddle and other nearby archeological sites are predominantly sourced to Obsidian Cliffs. All of the sites are on ridges that are presumably associated with prehistoric travel routes and thus tied into a larger trail network.

The Table Rock Trail is considered to be part of a larger cross-Cascades trail system. Located in the Table Rock Wilderness near the upper reaches of the Molalla River, Table Rock Trail is a prehistoric trail that remains in use to this day. Evidence of the trail's Indian origins is

⁵ As identified by archaeologists.

provided by archeological sites found along the trail including Image Rock, a petroglyph boulder. This trail is within the range of the Northern Molala Indians who camped and wintered at lower elevations nearby and who used the uplands for hunting and gathering. Because the Molala maintained contact with tribes east of the Cascades and crossed the mountains regularly, it is speculated that the Table Rock Trail was perhaps one of the routes regularly used for crossing the Cascades for the purposes of trade, raiding, warfare, social interaction and contact, gathering, and maintaining kin relationships. Indians from the Warm Springs Reservation continued to pick huckleberries along the Table Rock Trail into the 1930's.

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Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Roadside pullout

LOCATION: US 20, one mile west of Sisters

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Convergence of Indian trails

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Indian Ford Campground

LOCATION: Off US 20 at entrance into USDA Forest Service campground

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location of Indian mountain trail

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Roadside pullout

LOCATION: US 26, 12 miles west of Warm Springs

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location of Indian trails followed later by Ogden, Wyeth, Fremont, and Abbot

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: The Dalles

LOCATION: Downtown/2nd and Federal Streets

DESCRIPTION: Wall murals

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Dalles: Trade Center for 10,000 Years

OWNER: The Dalles Mural Society

SITE: Celilo Falls Park

LOCATION: I-84, mp 97

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Site of Celilo Falls, ancient Indian fishing grounds.

OWNER: Travel Information Council

Corridor resources (south to north)

Corridor description: There is a common corridor from the Klamath Marsh; north on US 97 to Chemult, LaPine, and Bend. Just beyond Bend, the trail forks into two distinct branches.

Klamath Route:

From Bend, continue on US 97 to Madras, then northwest to Warm Springs. At Warm Springs turn north on Agency Hot Springs Road to Kahneeta, then continue on Shinnasho-Hot Springs road to Shinnasho, then on Wapinitia Road to OR 216, and east to Maupin. Travel north on OR 216/US 197 from Maupin through Tygh Valley. Continue north on US 197 through Dufur to The Dalles, then east on I-84 to Celilo.

Collier State Park and Logging Museum

Chemult

LaPine

High Desert Museum, Bend

Deschutes County Historical Museum, Bend

Deschutes

Madras

Warm Springs (Museum at Warm Springs and Kah-Nee-Ta)

Shinnasho

Wapinitia

Maupin

Tygh Valley

Tygh Valley All Indian Rodeo

Celilo Park and The Dalles

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center/Wasco County Historical Museum, The Dalles

Molalla Route:

From Bend, drive north west on US 20 to Tumulo, then to Sisters, past Black Butte and Camp Sherman, over Santiam Pass, and past Three Fingered Jack. Then follow OR 22 north to Sublimity, the Cascade Hwy to Silverton, then OR 213 to Oregon City.

Tumulo

Sisters

Black Butte

Camp Sherman/Metolius headwaters

Three Fingered Jack

Idanha

Detroit Lakes

Sublimity

Silverton

Molalla

Oregon City

Partners and players

Federal and national

- USDI Bureau of Land Management
- USDA Forest Service
- USDI Bureau of Reclamation

Tribal

- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
- Klamath Tribes

State

- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon Tourism Commission
- Travel Information Council
- Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

- certified locals governments
- local chambers of commerce
- local historical societies
- regional visitor associations and tourism groups
- private land owners

Recommendations

The Klamath Trail, as listed in the Oregon Revised Statutes, provides some formal recognition to the importance of Indian trails to the history of Oregon. Given its nineteenth-century development as a route to conduct slave trade, it does not have great potential as a heritage tourism theme, nor is it representative of what most people think of as an aboriginal trail.

However, the western branches of the Klamath Trail and their connections with the Molala Trail system have much greater prospects for development. Considerable research could be undertaken to identify where existing recreational trails follow the same paths or corridors used first by Indians. Since many of these trails are already located on public lands administered by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, public use should be encouraged and historic themes should be developed to augment their recreational use and interest.

A potential interpretive site might be located near Warm Springs where the route crossed US 26. This is an opportunity to interpret Indian trade trails over and through the Cascades.

Additional resources are available through the Klamath County Department of Tourism and Mr. Francis Landrum, who has identified the trail on all the township maps between Madras, Bend, and Klamath Falls. Mr. Landrum has extensive documentation and would be an excellent information resource.

OREGON

Jedediah Smith Route, 1828

Route description

Jedediah Smith and eighteen others drove 300 horses and mules up the Oregon Coast north from California. Smith and his party followed the Oregon coastline north to the Umpqua River where they crossed near Cromwell Point. After moving to a campsite at the confluence of the Smith and Umpqua Rivers, Smith's party was attacked. Fifteen men were killed by Kelawatsets; the four survivors (Jed Smith, Arthur Black, Richard Leyland, and John Turner) fled north to the Tillamook Bay area where friendly Tillamooks took them to Fort Vancouver.



Jedediah Smith Route, 1828

Authority/Recognition

- National Trails System Act: Public Law 90-543
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057

Significance

Although Jedediah Smith is overshadowed only by Lewis and Clark in the exploration of the American West, his influences and impacts on the American West are perhaps no less significant. During his eight years in the West, Smith made the effective discovery of South Pass and was the first American to travel overland to California, the first to cross the Sierra Nevadas and the Great Basin, and the first to reach Oregon by a journey up the California coast. These accomplishments were coupled with involvement in the three greatest disasters in the fur trade. He survived the Arikara defeat of 1823, the Mojave massacre of 1827, and the Umpqua massacre of 1828, battles which cost the lives of 40 trappers.

Jedediah Smith is regarded as one of America's premiere trailblazers, yet his expedition to Oregon and its disastrous end is not commonly known to Oregonians.

Historical context

Jedediah Smith was born in New York in 1799 and while still a child, moved with his family to Pennsylvania and then to Ohio. In 1822, Smith traveled to St. Louis to join the American Fur Trade Company organized by General William Ashley and Andrew Henry. After wintering at the company's fort near the Yellowstone River, Smith was sent back down the Missouri to meet General Ashley. The two met near the Grand River, where an ensuing battle with the Arikaras resulted in the loss of thirteen of Ashley's men and fostered an appreciation on the part of Ashley and others for Smith's bravery under fire. Later in 1823, Smith was sent out as leader of a party to explore beaver country south of the Yellowstone. After wintering in the Wind River Valley, the trappers crossed the Continental Divide over South Pass, eventually reaching the Green River.

After trapping and exploring the areas around the Green, Bear, Snake, and Clark's Fork rivers, Smith became a partner in Ashley's business. In the summer of 1826, Ashley sold his business to Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette. The new partners held a rendezvous on Bear River where it was decided that Jackson and Sublette would go north to trap the Snake River while Smith would explore and trap to the south. Smith and seventeen trappers traveled south along the eastern side of the Great Salt Lake, following the Sevier and Virgin Rivers to the Colorado River where they rested and traded at Mojave Indian villages. From there Smith decided to travel west to California crossing the Mojave Desert and arriving at Mission San Gabriel. The trappers were hospitably received at the mission, but Smith was summoned to San

Diego by Governor Echeandia to explain the American's presence in the Mexican province. Smith's request to continue their expedition north through coastal California was denied and Smith was eventually ordered to leave Spanish California by the way they had come.

In January 1827, Smith and his men retraced their way back over the San Bernadino Mountains, but then turned north and crossed to the San Joaquin river basin. Working their way up the valley as they trapped, they eventually reached the American River where the company turned east and made an unsuccessful attempt to cross the Sierra Nevadas. Smith decided to leave eleven of his men at an established camp while he and two others attempted another crossing, intent on reaching the rendezvous at Bear Lake and returning with more men and supplies. On May 20, Smith and his two companions began crossing the Sierra Nevadas, the first non-Indians to do so, and then crossed the Great Basin of Nevada and Utah where the exhausted and starved men reached the rendezvous on July 3.

Staying in rendezvous for only ten days, Smith departed with eighteen trappers, two Indian women, and two-years' worth of supplies for a return trip to California. Following the same route taken a year earlier, Smith followed the Sevier and Virgin Rivers to the Mojave villages where they rested for three days. Smith and his party attempted to cross the Colorado River by swimming their horses and floating their supplies across on rafts. However, while Smith and some of his men were ferrying their goods, the Mojaves attacked and killed all of the party who still remained on shore, leaving Smith and eight others on the opposite shore. The survivors gathered what supplies they could and staved off a second attack behind a makeshift fort before escaping at nightfall. Smith's party crossed the Mojave Desert on foot. Upon reaching the San Bernardino Valley, they obtained supplies and proceeded north to the camp on the Stanislaus River, arriving there in September.

Smith decided to go to Mission San Jose to present himself and buy supplies. At San Jose, he was arrested and charged with attempting to claim the lands he had trapped for the United States. Taken again to Governor Echeandia, Smith was vouched for and bonded by Captain John Cooper, a respected Bostonian shipmaster who had married and settled in Monterey. Smith was given two months to leave California. In late December, Smith and his men began their journey up the Sacramento River with a purchased herd of 330 horses and mules which they planned to sell once the party returned to the Rocky Mountains.

Smith's trip up the Sacramento was a slow one. Trapping as they went, slowed by mires and sloughs, they reached their farthest point up the river near Red Bluff on April 10, 1828. It was at this point that Smith, evaluating the mountains around him, chose to abandon an attempt to leave California by a northern route, and instead go west to the coast and north to the Columbia River and Fort Vancouver. The route to the coast proved to be a monumental struggle through rocks and brush until they reached the Pacific Ocean on June 8. The trappers found the Indians of the interior valleys to be highly fearful, but peaceful. However, as the party crossed the mountains to the coast, the local Indians shot arrows into camp and at the livestock which prompted the trappers to fire their rifles in return.

Smith in Oregon

Camp 1. The expedition reached Oregon on June 23, traveling along the shore and making its camp on the north bank of the Winchuck River. That evening, Indians visited camp bringing berries, small fish, and roots to trade.

Camp 2. On June 24, because of high tide, the expedition travelled only three miles and camped on the south bank of the Chetco River. Near the camp was a village of 10 or 12 lodges, but the inhabitants had all run away.

Camp 3. On June 25, the group traveled 12 miles, turned inland, took an old trail behind Cape Ferrelo, crossed Whalehead Creek and camped that night near the mouth of Thomas Creek on its north bank. Indian lodges were close by, but again the inhabitants had run away. No Indians were seen that day, but two men sent back to hunt for a mule reported being attacked by Indians and escaped by retreating on horseback and swimming a creek. The next morning, three horses were found badly wounded with arrows.

Camp 4. June 26 was a relatively easy day of travel spent following an Indian trail to the mouth of the Pistol River where, because of high tide, the group camped on the south side. When counting horses, one particularly valuable animal was found to be missing and presumed killed by Indians when the earlier three horses were wounded.

Camp 5. On June 27, the expedition crossed over Cape Sebastian and traveled along the beach to the mouth of the Rogue River where they camped on the south side. A large number of Indian lodges were on both sides of the river, but again, all of the inhabitants had disappeared. The trappers tore down one of the lodges to get puncheons to make rafts. Timber was scarce along the beach. Smoke signals were observed on the north side of the bay.

Camp 6. The next morning, rafts were used to ferry goods across the river, followed by driving in the herd. Twelve to fifteen animals drowned, producing the loss of some 23 horses and mules in just three days. Once across, the brigade moved along the shore to camp at Euchre Creek (near Ophir).

Camp 7. Only five miles were made on June 29. High tides prevented travel on the beaches and forced the brigade into the thicket-covered hills. Camp was made at Mussel Creek.

Camp 8. June 30 took the group up the beach and then behind Humbug Mountain where camp was made on Brush Creek. Two more mules were lost; one fell into an elk pit made by Indians, the other fell down a precipice.

Camp 9. Continuing the next day, the brigade moved along the beach and crossed the hills through Port Orford, past Garrison Lake, and through a gap at Cape Blanco to the Sixes

River where camp was made on the south side to wait for low tide. One horse was crowded off a cliff and killed.

Camp 10. July 2 was an easy day of travel along the beach and over small sand hills past Floras Lake to a campsite just south of Bandon. As most of the men's time expired this day, Smith called all hands and re-engaged them at a rate of one dollar per day.

Camp 11. On July 3, the expedition made another early start and reached the Coquille River in two miles. Reaching the river ahead of the group, Smith discovered some Indians moving as fast as possible up river in a canoe. Smith galloped his horse to get above them and when they saw they could not outrace him, they pulled ashore and attempted to destroy the canoe. With Smith screaming at them, they abandoned the canoe and fled. The trappers then used the canoe to ferry their goods across the river. All but one of the horses swam over. The group travelled five miles further and camped at Whiskey Run creek. One of the men caught an Indian boy about ten years old and brought him to camp where he was given some beads and dried meat. By signs he indicated that all of the other Indians had fled in canoes and left him. The boy was from the Willamette Valley and was a slave of one of the bands who fled at Smith's approach. The trappers gave him the name of Marion and he continued with the group to the Umpqua.

Camp 12. The brigade hugged the coastline and experienced difficult travel through thickets and across bad ravines. Camp was made on a long point of Cape Arago and marked the first American 4th of July in southern Oregon.

Camp 13. July 5 was a short day of travel making less than two miles. Finding good grass and judging the horses as tired, camp was made in the natural meadows of Shore Acres and, for the first time since the Winchuck River, friendly contact with Indians was made. Two Indians who spoke Chinook jargon visited camp and told the trappers the welcome news that they were only ten days travel from the Calapooya people in the Willamette Valley. Meeting Indians who could communicate in trade language indicated the brigade had entered the region of Hudson's Bay Company influence.

Camp 14. July 6 was another short day going only two miles through brush and mires until camping at Sunset Bay. After encamping, two elk were killed and it was decided to maintain the same camp over July 7 to rest the horses, prepare meat, and clear a road to Coos Bay. On the 7th about 100 Indians came into the camp with fish and mussels for sale. Smith bought a sea otter skin from the chief. All of the Indians had knives and tomahawks, one had a flintlock musket, one a cloak, and others had cloth pieces, all items presumed to have been obtained through trade for otter and beaver skins.

Camp 15. On July 8 the expedition moved two more miles and broke through the brush to the beach at Charleston where they found a large Indian village and camped. The villagers brought goods to trade including fish, shell fish, berries, and some furs. In the evening it was discovered that arrows had been shot into eight of the livestock, killing three mules and one horse, and maiming another horse that had to be left behind. Indian interpreters told the trappers

the killing was done by an Indian angry over a trade he had made. Tribal oral history identifies the hostile Indian as a visitor from a lower Umpqua village who tried to steal some elk meat and was driven from camp by the cook. Angered, the Indian wanted the Coos to attack the brigade to avenge the insult.

Camp 16. Using canoes, the expedition crossed South Slough and then moved up the east shore of Coos Bay to encamp near Empire. The area was well-populated with Indian lodges. Many Indians came to the camp with fish and berries for sale. The trappers bought as much as they could. More beaver and otter skins were also purchased. When asked about the shooting of the horses, the chiefs disclaimed any responsibility.

Camp 17. On July 10, the trappers again engaged canoes and crossed Coos Bay to the North Spit where they camped in the area of Henderson Marsh. The crossing went well, although Smith, who remained on the east side with five men (to swim over the last horses and mules), felt apprehensive because the Indians' behavior indicated they were considering an attack.

Camp 18. July 11 produced a long drive along the beach to the mouth of the Umpqua River and an encampment near a small Indian village on the south bank of the river at Winchester Bay. The Indians living there appeared friendly and a number of them spoke Chinook jargon; 70 to 80 Indians brought fish and berries which they sold at an expensive rate. The Hudson's Bay Company dealt with the Umpqua Indians in a guarded manner and sent only well-armed parties in and through their country. The brigade was unaware that these Indians had a reputation for being hostile to fur traders.

Camp 19. On the morning of July 12, the brigade crossed the Umpqua River to a landing near the future site of Umpqua City. From there they traveled three miles up-river and camped on the north side of the bay. Along the way, one of the Indians accompanying the caravan stole and hid an axe. Smith and another seized him and tied a cord around his neck to scare him into revealing the location of the axe while the other trappers stood by with guns drawn in case there was resistance from the other 50 Indians present. The axe was recovered, but the incident carried with it a foreboding circumstance: the Indian involved was an Umpqua Chief. The rest of the day passed peacefully enough in trading of furs and buying berries.

Camp 20. On July 13 the expedition continued around the east side of the bay about four miles and camped at the mouth of Smith River; the best evidence places this final campsite and location of the massacre at a spot on the north bank of the Smith River channel opposite the west tip of Perkins Island. Fifty to 60 Indians again visited camp to trade furs and food; they also reported that within 15-20 miles up river was easy traveling to the Willamette Valley. During this encampment another incident occurred which fueled the attack that would occur the next day. The chief involved in the stolen axe incident wanted his tribe to retaliate against the

trappers, but was overruled by a chief of higher authority. Subsequently, this second chief mounted one of the brigade's horses to ride it around camp, but was ordered to dismount by one of Smith's men. The incident was an insult to the higher chief and he gave his concurrence for an attack on the expedition.

The morning of July 14 Smith left camp to look for a route east toward the Willamette Valley. Departing in a canoe, he traveled up the Smith River and took with him John Turner,⁶ Richard Leland, and an Indian guide. While they were gone, those who remained allowed about a hundred of the Kelawatsets into camp. On a signal, the Indians rushed the trappers. Arthur Black was cleaning his rifle when the attack came; two attackers wounded his hands with knives while fighting him for his gun; a third hit him a glancing blow in the back with an axe. Black released his rifle and ran into the woods, seeing others of the party falling in the attack. He wandered in the woods for the next four days until emerging on the ocean shore a few miles north of the Umpqua River.

When Smith paddled back down the river, he thought it strange that none of his men were visible. Just then an Indian on shore called to Smith's guide who turned around in the canoe, seized Smith's rifle and dived into the water. Kelawatsets hidden on shore then began to fire on the canoe. Smith and his two men paddled to the opposite bank and climbed a hill to get a view of the camp. Seeing none of their party and having none come forward to help them, it was concluded that they had all been cut off. Deciding that nothing could be done for the rest of his men, Smith headed north with Turner and Leland.

Arthur Black, knowing that he could seek refuge at Fort Vancouver, set out to the north following the coast. The first Indian he encountered wanted to take his knife, but Black resisted. A little later seven Indians stripped him of all his clothing except his pants. After escaping this group, he saw no more Indians until he came to a Tillamook village. Here he met friendly people who led him through to the Willamette Valley (presumably by following trails up either the Trask or Wilson Rivers) to a Hudson's Bay freeman who delivered Black to Fort Vancouver on August 8, 26 days after the attack.

It is uncertain what route was taken by Smith's party, but they reached Fort Vancouver on August 10. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, recorded that Smith reached the ocean at the Alsea River (staying inland for 50 miles) and then followed the coast to a Tillamook village where Indians took him through to the Willamette Valley and Fort Vancouver. Historian Dale Morgan contends this route would have gone up the Trask River, descended to the Tualatin River and then to the Willamette. History instructor Nathan Douthit suggests that Smith came upon a southern village of the Tillamooks, was taken up the Salmon River then down the Yamhill River to Champoege as is suggested by information on the Fremont-Gibbs-Smith map produced by Dale Morgan and Carl Wheat.

After hearing the reports of Smith and his men, McLoughlin immediately sent Indian messengers and Michel Laframboise to the Umpqua to seek survivors and offer rewards for their return. Preparations were already in progress for a trapping expedition to the Umpqua, but instead McLoughlin ordered that Smith's property be recovered by an expedition led by Alexander McLeod. On September 6 the expedition, including Smith and his surviving men, headed south through the Willamette Valley, then over the Calapooya Mountains to the Umpqua.

⁶ Turner also traveled with Ewing Young a few years later. Please see the Ewing Young narrative for more information.

On October 28 McLeod's party arrived at the site of the massacre. Eleven skeletons were found and buried; four others of Smith's men were unaccounted for. At the time of the attack, Smith had 228 horses and mules, 780 beaver and 50-60 sea otter skins, 200 lbs. of beads and 100 lbs. of goods and tobacco. Moving along the coast, McLeod was remarkably successful in recovering the goods taken and then traded by the Kelawatsets, including 38 horses and mules, 700 skins, several rifles, cooking pots, traps, clothes, beads and other items. On November 12 the group turned back up the Umpqua River to return to Fort Vancouver. In an act of good will, the Hudson's Bay Company bought the livestock and furs (despite their now poor condition) from Smith for \$3,200. In return, Smith assured that the Rocky Mountain Fur Company would confine its operations to the region east of the Great Divide.

On March 12, 1829, Jedediah Smith and Arthur Black ascended the Columbia River and returned to the northern Rocky Mountains to be reunited with David Jackson and William Sublette. In 1830, Smith, Jackson, and Sublette sold their Rocky Mountain Fur Company and Smith returned to St. Louis where, in 1831, he entered a trading venture on the Santa Fe Trail. On May 27, while in route to Santa Fe, he left the main party to search for water. Near the Cimarron River he was killed by Comanche Indians.

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Management and government documents

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Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Bolon Island

LOCATION: US 101, one-half mile north of Reedsport

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Jedediah Smith expedition; nearby massacre site

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Winchester Bay wayfinding overlook

LOCATION: US 101, 1.5 miles south of Winchester Bay

DESCRIPTION: Several interpretive signs at viewpoint

SUBJECT/TITLE: Jedediah Smith recognized on one sign

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

Corridor resources (listed south to north)

Corridor description: US 101 from the California state line north to Reedsport

Chetco Valley Museum (1855 Blake House), Brookings

"Battle of Pistol River" historical marker/Oregon Coast Trail, Pistol River

Jerry's Rogue River Museum has Jed Smith exhibits; four panel interpretive wayside about Rogue River estuary; Curry County Historical Museum at county fairgrounds, Gold Beach

"Battle Rock" historical marker, Port Orford

1870 Lighthouse; 1898 Hughes House; pioneer cemetery; Oregon Coast Trail, Cape Blanco Bandon Historical Society Museum

Bullards Beach 1896 Lighthouse; Oregon Coast Trail

Seven Devils South Slough Estuarine Sanctuary - interpretive center and study trail

Shore Acres State Park's formal gardens and observation building

Coos County Historical Society Museum, North Bend
1894 Lighthouse and Coastal Visitor Center at old Coast Guard Station, Umpqua River
Umpqua Discovery Center and Antarctic research vessel "Hero," Reedsport

State Parks:

Harris Beach State Recreation Area
Humbug Mountain State Park
Cape Blanco State Park
Cape Arago State Park
Shore Acres State Park
Sunset Bay State Park

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDA Forest Service
USDI National Park Service

Tribal

Coquille Indian Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
Southern Oregon Historical Society
private land owners

Others

Jedediah Smith Society, University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA
Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park in Crescent City, CA

Recommendations

The National Park Service, in its feasibility study for a Jedediah Smith National Historic Trail, noted that Smith's accomplishments as an explorer of the American West have not been adequately recognized and hence his stature as an explorer is not properly appreciated by the general public. The National Park Service recommends the following actions to recognize the contributions of Jedediah Smith: 1) public land management agencies in close proximity to Jedediah Smith's route should provide markers and exhibits which explain his expeditions and accomplishments; 2) trails should be developed over portions of Jedediah Smith's route; and 3) a private program should be instituted to encourage the placement of markers along the route and to publish guidebooks for the use of those wishing to retrace portions of Jedediah Smith's travels.

The state of Oregon is poised to fulfill these recommendations. Parks managed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department coincide with several of the campsites made by Smith's brigade and would provide excellent interpretive locations. In addition, the Oregon Coast Trail replicates long stretches of the Jedediah Smith Route. Private program support could be provided by the Oregon Trails Coordinating Council or its successors.

Serious efforts should be made to develop interpretive waysides at Oregon State Park properties along the Jedediah Smith Route. The best candidates are the Harris Beach State Recreation Area, Humbug Mountain State Park, Cape Blanco State Park, and the Cape Arago/Shore Acres/Sunset Bay State Parks area. Harris Beach has a heavily visited day use area with visitor facilities and beach access which is directly on the Jedediah Smith route. Across the highway is a State Welcome Center. This locale would be an excellent gateway opportunity to introduce travelers to the Jedediah Smith story and provide information about related heritage sites along the southern Oregon coast to Reedsport. Humbug Mountain State Park is the site of one of the Jedediah Smith campsites; it also contains a short segment of the Oregon Coast Trail. Camp Blanco State Park is traversed by the Oregon Coast Trail and its day use area on the Sixes River is also one of the Smith campsites. The Cape Arago, Shore Acres, and Sunset Beach State Parks are all Smith campsite locations that could easily lend themselves to interpretation of the historic trail.

The development of Jed Smith sites at these State Parks, coupled with existing Jed Smith interpretation found at Gold Beach, Winchester Bay, and Bolon Island, could provide a sufficient number of interpretive waysides to warrant the creation of a themed brochure and self-guiding tour of the Jedediah Smith Trail in Oregon. Utilizing the additional resources of the Oregon Coast Trail and existing heritage attractions such as local museums and historical markers would round out an attractive and economical heritage tourism product.

Additional opportunities exist to partner with California State Parks and the Jedediah Smith Society at the University of the Pacific for state-to-state cooperative development of tour resources and interpretive installations.

Nathaniel Wyeth Route,
1832/1834

Route description

Wyeth and his companions followed what later became known as the Oregon Trail as far as the Grande Ronde Valley, then followed what later became known as the Whitman Trail over the western summits of the Blue Mountains to Fort Nez Perces and rafted down the Columbia River. Wyeth built a trading post on Wapato (Sauvie) Island and made a number of trips up the Willamette River. He established a farm near the Willamette Mission.



Nathaniel Wyeth Route, 1832/1834

Authority/Recognition

- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057

Significance

Nathaniel Wyeth's two expeditions into this region encompassed many of America's interests in the Oregon Country. Wyeth's initial trip in 1832 provided the foundation and experience for the 1834 trip. In 1834, Wyeth and his companions, Jason and Daniel Lee, Thomas Nuttall, and John K. Townsend each sought elements of Oregon that we cherish today. Wyeth dreamed of farming, lumbering, and fishing opportunities. The Lees were fueled by religious missions and perhaps more practically, by the opportunity to build a community. Nuttall and Townsend, renowned naturalists, were compelled by a deep scientific curiosity about the region's natural history and ecosystems. Wyeth's route was a precursor to the Oregon Trail route followed by hundreds of thousands beginning just a decade later. Wyeth and his compatriots traveled already established Indian and trapper trails from the Snake River to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Vancouver.

Historical context

In 1830 and 1831, a Boston school teacher, Hall Jackson Kelley, began promoting the Oregon Country to any who would listen through the Oregon Colonization Society. Among those who heard were Nathaniel Wyeth and Benjamin Bonneville. Kelley appointed the two men "captains" and continued developing the Oregon Colonization Society's strategies. When Kelley's plans fell apart (due, in part to poor logistical planning and outright impracticality), Wyeth and Bonneville both set forth on independent expeditions to the Oregon Country in 1832 and 1834.⁷

Nathaniel Wyeth was a Boston hotelier's son employed in the ice making business. He was fascinated by the fur trade and the potential for shipping dried salmon to eastern US markets. At 29, Wyeth was a bright and gregarious advocate for Oregon. He researched and studied available materials, borrowing books from Hall Kelley and reading Lewis and Clark's journals.

⁷ Please see the Bonneville Trail historical context narrative for additional information about Bonneville's expeditions through the west. It is interesting to note that although historians agree that both Wyeth and Bonneville were strongly influenced by Kelley's promotions, historians' interpretation of why the two proceeded on their own differs. Some suggest that, inspired and eager to move on, Wyeth and Bonneville continued on their own after Kelley changed the originally scheduled departure date. Others suggest that Wyeth and Bonneville realized the lack of substance in Kelley's initial proposal and withdrew from his scheme, developing their own plans shortly thereafter. Please also read the historical context for Ewing Young, who also was an acquaintance of Kelley's.

Wyeth formed the Pacific Trading Company and invited all comers to join. He enlisted only about half the number he had hoped for. When he departed Boston, bound for the Columbia River and the Oregon Country in March of 1832, Wyeth had 21 men in his entourage, each wearing a uniform and carrying a rifle, bayonet, and axe. Ten bugles were carried to help inspire a quick step and speedy movement across the country. Wyeth sent trade goods around the horn on a sailing ship, the *Sultana*, hoping that its timely arrival would provide goods to trade with the Indians and, competition being competition, the HBC trappers.

After steaming across waterways, hiking through mountains and riding the rails, the group arrived at St. Louis where Wyeth and his company met Kenneth McKenzie of the American Fur Company. McKenzie, charmed by Wyeth or perhaps seeing this group of "greenhorns" as a potential distraction to both the Hudson's Bay Company and the emerging Rocky Mountain Fur Company, encouraged Wyeth to join up with William Sublette at Independence, Missouri.

After joining efforts, Sublette and Wyeth set out with 80 men, and oxen, sheep, and horses. Over the next months, the group endured freezing nights, scorching days, dusty trails, mountain fevers, dysentery, turbid water, dangerous stream crossings, and snow squalls. They followed trappers' trails along the Platte River (on what would later become the Oregon Trail) to the Green River, then north to the Hoback and the Snake Rivers.

The annual Rendezvous was held in Pierre's Hole that year. Nine members of Wyeth's group, concerned over an apparent lack of direction, resigned. With eleven men still in his company, Wyeth worried about their chances in Indian country. Problems between the Blackfeet, the Gros Ventres tribes, and the white trappers had more than once erupted into violence. As Wyeth made arrangements to return to southern Idaho, the Blackfeet and Gros Ventres moved toward the rendezvous site at Pierre's Hole. Meanwhile, Sublette gathered allies from the Nez Perces and Flathead tribes and worked back to attack. A brief and bloody battle ensued in which at least twenty-six Gros Ventres were killed, including women and children, and perhaps a dozen whites and Flatheads. Many more were injured, including William Sublette, who returned to the States for medical care.

Following the battle at Pierre's Hole, Wyeth and his men moved towards the Snake Plains, across the Blackfoot River, returning to the trapper's trail that evolved into the Oregon Trail (and where, in 1834, he would build Fort Hall). The party zigzagged across the trapper's trail, working toward streams that might hold beaver, but trapping was poor. The Hudson's Bay Company had already worked many of the streams and those animals remaining were in lower-grade summer fur.

By mid-September, Wyeth and his men returned to the Snake River where it flowed northward (south of Nampa, Idaho on today's maps). After a month, Wyeth's company traveled to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Nez Perces,⁸ on the banks of the Walla Walla.⁹

⁸ Although Fort Nez Perces was often referred to as Fort Walla Walla by HBC employees and Americans alike, in the historical context for this narrative and those that follow, the place is referred to as *Fort Nez Perces*. The US Army established another fort near Walla Walla in the 1860s that is also named Fort Walla Walla.

⁹ John W. Evans describes the route in contemporary terms: "Wyeth's journal is not always clear in terms of the route followed, but it appears that [from its confluence with the Snake River] his party ascended the Burnt River Canyon to Durkee Valley and camped; Wyeth then took some of the men with him and went up on Burnt River, perhaps as far as the present location of Bridgeport or Hereford. He then crossed the divide between Burnt and Powder Rivers in the neighborhood of Dooley Mountain. The others followed the main trail which was the more direct route that would later be taken by travelers."

While there, Wyeth and his men enjoyed the hospitality of the HBC and Pierre Pambrun, the Chief Trader at the post. Pambrun provided clothing, food, and loaned Wyeth and his company a barge and a guide for the remaining miles down the Columbia River to the HBC post at Fort Vancouver.

The Columbia enthralled and terrified Wyeth's company; the flat waters were serene but the rough falls and cataracts were frightening. Wyeth hired Indians to portage the barges and belongings around the falls, and back on the river, they enjoyed a smooth sail to Fort Vancouver. When they arrived, the *Sultana* was nowhere in sight.

To kill time, Wyeth and four of his men canoed the hundred miles to the mouth of the Columbia. Along the way, they investigated Indian fishing operations with an eye toward establishing an international salmon market. At Fort George (the HBC's renamed Astoria), Wyeth learned that the *Sultana* was wrecked enroute and that his supplies were lost.

It is likely that John McLoughlin, Chief Factor at Fort Vancouver, never considered Wyeth a legitimate threat and so entertained the American hospitably at the Fort. In spite of the loss of the *Sultana* and the subsequent resignation of his entire company, Wyeth remained steadfast in his desire to develop the Pacific Trading Company. After McLoughlin loaned him a canoe and crew with which to explore the Willamette Valley, Wyeth recognized the commercial opportunities the Valley presented for a new venture, the Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company.

In February, 1833, Wyeth and two of his former company members joined Francis Ermatinger's brigade as it traveled north toward Fort Colville. Wyeth noted in his journal

I parted with feelings of sorrow from the gentlemen of Fort Vancouver . . . Doct McGlaucland the Gov. of the place is a man distinguished as much for his kindness and humanity as his good sense and information and to whom I am so much indebted as that he will never be forgotten by me.

By April, the party was camped on Clark's Fork of the Columbia, where Wyeth noted in his journal: "went out to collect some flowers for friend Nuttall."¹⁰ Even though the HBC held the fur trade in tight control, Wyeth saw other opportunities for trade including using with the HBC as an intermediary, trading with American trappers at the annual rendezvous, and through agricultural development. Wyeth's good nature and generosity got the best of him, and after developing the idea, presented it in a formal letter to the HBC Governor George Simpson. Simpson was far less amenable to working with Americans than McLoughlin was and turned Wyeth down.

From Fort Colville, Ermatinger continued into Flathead country, and Wyeth began working his way southward, aiming for Bonneville's party and the 1833 Rendezvous. Wyeth watched as pelts were traded and imagined breaking through old trade patterns to establish new

¹⁰Thomas Nuttall, a fellow Cambrian and Harvard professor, knew Wyeth before his trip and asked that Wyeth collect flower specimens along this route. In a letter sent to Nuttall from Bonneville's Camp on July 4 and 5, 1833, Wyeth wrote "... I shall remain here one more year. You if in Camb. may expect to see me in about a year from the time you receive this. I shall then ask you if you will follow another expedition to this country in pursuit of your science. The cost would be less than living at home. . . ."

partnerships that would allow him to participate in the business. He envisioned building a post on the Columbia, in direct competition with the HBC, modeled after Fort Vancouver complete with farms, shops, and stores. He would go one step further than the HBC and establish salmon fisheries.

Wyeth negotiated a contract with Milton Sublette, William's brother, and Tom Fitzpatrick to bring their 1834 supplies from St. Louis to the Rendezvous. In so doing he cut out William Sublette and Robert Campbell--and would pay for it later. Wyeth, Milton Sublette, two *engages* (laborers hired for the trip) and two Indians (a 20 year old Nez Perce and the 13-year-old son of a Flathead woman and a French Canadian trapper), set out for Boston. Enroute, Wyeth's small party met Milton's brother, William, and Robert Campbell building a fort at the confluence of the Yellowstone and the Missouri Rivers.¹¹ Milton stayed behind with his brother while Wyeth forged ahead with his two *engages* and the Indian boys.

By November Wyeth was back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, repudiating negative rumors about his previous expedition and raising funds for his next venture. A number of investors supported Wyeth based solely on his contract with Sublette and Fitzpatrick and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

1834

In early 1834, Wyeth bought supplies, which were loaded onto the *May Dacre*, bound for the Hawaiian Islands and then the Columbia. He also arranged for the ship's crew to buy livestock and plants while in the Islands. Wyeth secured the necessary livestock and goods for an overland trip. In the process, he met naturalists Thomas Nuttall and John Townsend,¹² who both hoped to join the venture, collecting specimens of plants and animals during the trip. In addition to the naturalists, Wyeth was approached by Reverend Jason Lee and his nephew, Daniel, Methodist missionaries eager to bring the white man's God to the western tribes, especially the Flatheads.

Wyeth consented to all. He provided lists of goods and livestock that the other party members would need to survive the trip. Townsend recorded in his journal that Wyeth

Accompanied us to a store in the town, and selected a number of articles for us, among which were several pairs of leathern pantaloons, enormous overcoats, made of green blankets, and white wool hats, with round crowns, fitting tightly to the head, brims five inches wide, and almost hard enough to resist a rifle ball.

Wyeth suggested routes to the Missouri and took time to explain what he knew about the tribes and the western landscapes. With as many as 50 persons in the party, he set out for the Oregon Country. Townsend described his excitement at beginning his western adventure:

On the 28th of April, at 10 o'clock in the morning, our caravan, consisting of 70 men, and two hundred and fifty horses, began its march; Captain Wyeth and Milton Sublette took the lead, Mr. N. and myself rode beside them; then the men in

¹¹Jedediah Smith was also among those building the fort. Please see the historical context for the Smith Route for additional information.

¹²Nuttall, as mentioned earlier, was already an acquaintance of Wyeth's. Wyeth's small collection of plant materials inspired and enthused Nuttall to join Wyeth's second expedition and to bring along Robert Townsend, a younger, but no less enthusiastic and accomplished naturalist. Wyeth's "herbarium" included 112 species of flowering plants, of which 51 were new.

double file, each leading, with a line, two horses heavily laden, and Captain Thing (Captain W.'s assistant) brought up the rear. The band of missionaries, with their horned cattle, rode along the flanks. . .

It was altogether so exciting that I could scarcely contain myself. Every man in the company seemed to feel . . . the same kind of enthusiasm.

Wyeth's second group encountered trials and tribulations similar to those experienced by the previous expedition: furious rain storms, dysentery, extreme temperatures, lost or stolen livestock, and stampeding horses. Throughout however, bright hope and deep appreciation for the land and its potential was noted. Townsend and Nuttall kept diaries, recording and collecting plants and animals, and events--the day a hunter brought in a small pronghorn, no larger than a kitten and the tender care they administered to the little animal. Jason Lee quickly emerged as a stalwart traveler, hunting, even on the Sabbath, and sustaining the group's temporal and spiritual needs.

Wyeth pushed his group to the limit of their endurance. He worried that William Sublette would double-cross him and that he would be left with a full load of supplies and no buyers for the goods. It took just 51 days to travel from St. Louis to the Green River rendezvous. A significant accomplishment, but a futile one--William Sublette had hurried from his post on the Yellowstone to St. Louis, purchased supplies and had beaten Wyeth to the rendezvous. He sold as much as he could to all comers before Wyeth arrived.

Ray Billington describes Wyeth's reaction to being swindled:

To his shocked horror he found that the Rocky Mountain Company partners, aware of their small year's catch and reluctant to share any of their returns with an outsider, had hurriedly dispatched their own caravan westward under William Sublette. . . .

No Yankee of [Wyeth's] shrewdness would stand quietly aside while a contract was violated in this inexcusable manner. 'Gentlemen,' he was reported to have said, 'I will roll a stone into your garden that you will never be able to get out.'

Wyeth had been beaten again, but he still pressed on. With the naturalists, and the missionaries, with Scottish sportsman Sir William Drummond Stewart in tow, Wyeth left the bawdy rendezvous continuing west. With a full load of goods meant for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, but now available to anyone, Wyeth decided to make the most of the opportunity and level a bit of revenge. Tom McKay, McLoughlin's stepson, joined Wyeth's party, just to see what Wyeth might do with all that merchandise. Clearly, the HBC was very concerned about the impact the Americans would have on their already dwindling business in the West.

Wyeth selected a site and built a fort on the Snake River, the 'stone' in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company's garden. While the Lees and Stewart went ahead with McKay, Wyeth set to building the rough fort, naming it Fort Hall after one of his financial supporters. After leaving a dozen men or so to run the Fort, Wyeth continued west with the remaining members of his party.

McKay led the missionaries and Stewart as far as (present-day) Glenn's Ferry on the Snake River. Upon reaching the Snake, McKay turned away, ostensibly to trap streams to the north, but really to circle back and build Fort Boise on the Boise River, five miles from its confluence with the Snake River, and a post situated between the HBC's Fort Vancouver and Wyeth's Fort Hall.¹³ McKay clearly hoped to provide an option to Indians well-familiar with the HBC's generous practices and the American's unknown business operations.

The Lees and Stewart worked west alone on what trails they could find. They crossed the Owyhee, then the Malheur Valley, and rejoined the Snake. They followed Burnt Canyon into the desert and then moved into the Powder River Valley.

Once through the Powder River Valley, the group continued on a northwesterly track along established Indian trails to the Grande Ronde Valley. Fires burning in the valley obscured the view for miles. After meeting briefly with Bonneville, who was out reconnoitering, the group continued over the Blue Mountains.¹⁴

Townsend recorded their efforts through the Grande Ronde Valley:

About half an hour's brisk trotting brought us to the foot of a steep and high mountain, called the Blue. This is said to be the most extensive chain west of the dividing ridge, and, with one exception perhaps the most difficult of passage. The whole mountain is densely covered with tall pine trees, with an undergrowth of service bushes and other shrubs, and the path is strewn, to a very inconvenient degree, with volcanic rocks. In some of the ravines we find small springs of water; they are, however, rather rare, and the grass has been lately consumed, and many of the trees blasted by the ravaging fires of the Indians. These fires are yet smoldering, and the smoke from them effectually prevents our viewing the surrounding country, and completely obscures the beams of the sun. We travelled this evening until after dark, and encamped on a small stream in a gorge, where we found a plot of grass that had escaped the burning.

September 1st.-Last evening, as we were about retiring to our beds, we heard, distinctly, as we thought, a loud halloo, several times repeated, and in a tone like that of a man in great distress. Supposing it to be a person who had lost his way in the darkness, and was searching for us, we fired several guns at regular intervals, but as they elicited no reply, after waiting a considerable time, we built a large fire, as a guide, and lay down to sleep.

Early this morning, a large panther was seen prowling around our camp, and the halloeing of last night was explained. It was the dismal, distressing yell by which this animal entices its prey, until pity or curiosity induces it to approach to its destruction.

¹³Both posts would later be very important to Oregon Trail emigrants.

¹⁴Again, John W. Evans describes the route: "The route followed by Wyeth's Party and Jason Lee has been determined with a high degree of probability by the US Forest Service and others familiar with the terrain involved. The route crossed the Grande Ronde River where the stream enters Grande Ronde Valley; it then climbed Fox Hill and traversed the plateau southwest to Mount Emily to Five Points Creek. From there the trail continued northwest past Sugarloaf Mountain and Spring Mountain. Here it descended very steeply to the point where Owsley Creek joins East Meacham Creek, continued from there to Meacham Creek, and made an even more difficult ascent of the opposite canyon wall to Horseshoe Ridge. It then proceeded northwest and north on Horseshoe and Gibbon Ridges, and ascended to Squaw Creek at a point three miles above that stream's confluence with the Umatilla River. From there the distance to Fort Nez Percés, near the present site of Wallula, was a little over 30 miles. This route was the one followed in 1836 by the Whitmans and Spaldings and has become known as the Whitman Trail."

Once the summit had been gained, the cattle drivers (both members of Lee's group) stayed behind with the animals while the rest of the party hurried on to Fort Nez Percés. Townsend provides vivid narrative of their course through the Blue Mountains:

September 1st. [Later in the day.] The path through the valley, in which we encamped last night, was level and smooth for about a mile; we then mounted a short, steep hill, and began immediately to descend. The road down the mountain wound constantly, and we travelled in short, zigzag lines, in order to avoid the extremely abrupt declivities; but occasionally, we were compelled to descend in places that made us pause before making the attempt: they were, some of them, almost perpendicular, and our horses would frequently slide several yards, before they could recover. To this must be added enormous jagged masses of rock, obstructing the road in many places, and pine trees projecting their horizontal branches across the path.

The road continued, as I have described it, to the valley in the plain, and a full hour was consumed before we reached it. The country then became comparatively level again to the next range, where a mountain was to be ascended of the same height as the last. Here we dismounted and led our horses, it being impracticable, in their present state, to ride them. It was the most toilsome march I ever made, and we were all so much fatigued, when we arrived at the summit, that rest was as indispensable to us as to our poor jaded horses. Here we made a noon camp, with a handful of grass and no water. This last article appears very scarce, the ravines affording none, and our dried salmon and kamas bread were eaten unmoistened. The route, in the afternoon, was over the top of the mountain, the road tolerably level, but crowded with stones. Towards evening, we commenced descending again, and in every ravine and gulley we cast our anxious eyes in search of water; we even explored several of them, where there appeared to exist any probability of success, but not one drop did we find. Night at length came on, dark and pitchy, without a moon or a single star to give us a ray of light; but still we proceeded, depending solely upon the vision and sagacity of our horses to keep the track. We travelled steadily until 9 o'clock, when we saw ahead the dark outline of a high mountain, and soon after heard the men who rode in front, cry out, joyously, at the top of their voices, "water! water!" It was truly a cheering sound, and the words were echoed loudly by every man in the company. We had not tasted water since morning, and both horses and men have been suffering considerably for the want of it.

2d. - Captain W[yeth] and two men, left us early this morning for Walla-walla [Fort Nez Percés], where they expect to arrive this evening, and send us some provision, of which we shall be in need, to-morrow.

Our camp moved soon after, under the direction of Captain Thing, and in about four miles reached Utalla river, where it stopped, and remained until 12 o'clock.

As we were approaching so near the abode of those in whose eyes we wished to appear like fellow Christians, we concluded that there would be a propriety in attempting to remove at least one of the heathenish badges which we had worn throughout the journey; so Mr. N.'s razor was fished out from its hiding place in the bottom of his trunk, and in a few minutes our encumbered chins lost their long cherished ornaments; we performed our ablutions in the river, arrayed ourselves in clean linen, trimmed our long hair, and then arranged our toilet before a mirror, with great self-complacence and satisfaction. I admired my own appearance considerably, (and this is, probably, an acknowledgement that few would make,) but I could not refrain from laughing at the strange, party-colored appearance of my physiognomy, the lower portion being fair, like a woman's, and the upper, brown and swarthy as an Indian.

In the afternoon, soon after leaving the Utalla, we ascended a high and very steep hill, and came immediately in view of a beautiful, and regularly undulating country of great extent. We have now probably done with high, rugged mountains; the sun shines clear, the air is bracing and elastic, and we are all in fine spirits.

The next day, the road being generally level, and tolerably free from stones, we were enabled to keep our horses at the swiftest gait to which we dare urge them. We have been somewhat disappointed in not receiving the expected supplies from Walla-walla, but have not suffered for provision, as the grouse and hares are very abundant here, and we have shot as many as we wished.

At about noon we struck the Walla-walla river, a very pretty stream of fifty or sixty yards in width, fringed with tall willows, and containing a number of salmon, which we can see frequently leaping from the water. The pasture here, being good, we allowed our horses an hour's rest to feed, and then travelled on over the plain, until near dark, when, on rising a sandy hill, the noble Columbia burst at once upon our view. I could scarcely repress a loud exclamation of delight and pleasure, as I gazed upon the magnificent river, flowing silently and majestically on, and reflected that I had actually crossed the vast American continent, and now stood upon a stream that poured its waters directly into the Pacific. This, then, was the great Oregon, the first appearance of which gave Lewis and Clark so many emotions of joy and pleasure, and on this stream our indefatigable countrymen wintered, after the toils and privations of a long, and protracted journey through the wilderness. My reverie was suddenly interrupted by one of the men exclaiming from his position in advance, "there is the fort" We had, in truth approached very near, without being conscious of it. There stood the fort on the bank of the river; horses and horned cattle were roaming about the vicinity, and on the borders of the little Walla-walla, we recognized the white tent of our long lost missionaries. These we soon joined, and were met and received by them like brethren. Mr. N. and myself were invited to sup with them upon a dish of stewed hares which they had just prepared, and it is almost needless to say that we did full justice to the good men's cookery. They told us that they had travelled comfortably from Fort Hall, without any unusual fatigue, and like ourselves, had no particularly stirring adventures. Their route, although somewhat longer, was a much less toilsome and difficult one, and they suffered but little for food, being well provided with dried buffalo meat, which had been prepared near Fort Hall.

At Fort Nez Perces, the group found little food, only bread and fish, but Pierre Pambrun, the post's chief trader, was willing to supply what he could and agreed to care for the missionaries' cattle and rent a barge to carry the missionaries and Stewart to Fort Vancouver.

Wyeth followed a few days behind. Enroute, he met with Bonneville, where they apparently discussed a joint venture "against the common enemy," before hurrying on toward Fort Nez Perces. Wyeth crossed the Lees' trail, and followed it through the burned Grande Ronde Valley to Pambrun's post.

Their time with Pambrun was short. The group quickly gathered their belongings and went down the Columbia--some went overland, following the river bank, the others traveled in scattered canoes. The trip down the Columbia was as treacherous as before. Canoes floundered or were lost, belongings were soaked and the straggling party was in dire need of help when they arrived at Fort Vancouver.

John McLoughlin was, as was his custom, generous and hospitable to the Americans. He provided guides to Jason and Daniel Lee who led them through the fertile Willamette Valley. The Doctor welcomed the missionaries sobering and soulful influences on the retired trappers and traders, and Indians around the Fort. The Lees found an appropriate site 60 miles up the Willamette River in an area partially settled by retired voyagers and their families near French Prairie. The Lees and their assistants began building a home and school house immediately.¹⁵

While the missionaries were on tour, Wyeth met his supply ship, the *May Dacre*, which arrived at Fort Vancouver the day after the Americans. The ship had been delayed in storms damage and arrived too late to capitalize on the spring salmon season. Nonetheless, Wyeth saw opportunity. He moored the ship to a rock on Wapato Island (now Sauvie Island) at the mouth of the Willamette River and unloaded his shipment of hogs, sheep, goats, poultry, and a variety of plants. As long as he stayed out of the fur trade, the HBC 'allowed' Wyeth to fish and trade in the sphere of their influence.¹⁶ He proceeded to build the second of his forts, this one named Fort William¹⁷, and traveled up the Willamette to select a farm site in the Valley.

Returning from his excursion into the Valley, Wyeth moved up the Columbia to trade what he could and to check on the fortunes of Fort Hall. Wyeth's misfortune followed, and his crew of Hawaiian Islanders (Kanakas) deserted, taking valuable horses with them. Wyeth continued trapping into the north country, where he realized that the fur trade was a dying industry; streams were over-trapped and the yields were ever diminishing. He returned to Fort Vancouver and Fort William in February 1835.

While the missionaries were building their mission in The Willamette Valley, Wyeth explored the region for commercial opportunities, and the naturalists, tired of the oppressive winter rains, boarded an HBC ship bound for the Hawaiian Islands where they spent the winter of 1834-5 researching the Islands' flora and fauna. In May, 1835, Townsend and Wyeth met again. Townsend reported:

¹⁵David Lavender notes Bernard DeVoto's suggestion that the Lees had, by this time, decided that building farms and communities was a solid Christian goal for the Willamette Valley.

¹⁶Billington notes that McLoughlin's correspondence reveals that the HBC played a direct--and subtle--role in Wyeth's failures: "We opposed him as much as was Necessary."

¹⁷Fort William was named for a partner in the Boston firm which had a large interest in the Wyeth's venture. It was later named Sauvie Island after an HBC employee who oversaw dairy operations there after 1837.

May 20th, 1835. Mr. Wyeth, came down from Walla-walla yesterday, and this morning I embarked with him in a large canoe, manned by Kanakas, for a trip to the Wallammet falls in order to procure salmon. We visited Fort William, (Wyeth's new settlement upon Wappatoo island,) which is about fifteen miles from the lower mouth of the Wallammet. We found here the missionaries, Messrs. Lee and Edwards, who arrived to-day from their station . . . They give flattering accounts of their prospects here; they are surrounded by a considerable number of Indians who are friendly to the introduction of civilization and religious light, and who treat them with the greatest hospitality and kindness. They have built several comfortable log houses, and the soil in their vicinity they represent as unusually rich and productive. They have, I think, a good prospect of being serviceable to th[e] people; and if they commence their operations judiciously and pursue a steady, unwavering course, the Indians in this section of country may yet be redeemed. . .

The spot chosen by Captain W. for his fort is on a high piece of land, which will probably not be overflowed by the periodical freshets, and the soil is the rich black loam so plentifully distributed through this section of country. The men now live in tents and temporary huts, but several log houses are constructing which, when finished, will vie in durability and comfort with Vancouver itself.

As seemed to be Wyeth's luck in the west, Fort William was a marginal success. He traded some with Ewing Young,¹⁸ and the small group of Americans settled in the area. Trade was controlled by the HBC and a newcomer was easily defeated. The water in and around Sauvie Island was a breeding ground for outbreaks of a variety of diseases, including malaria and typhoid. Trading trips inland from the Columbia, both up the river and into Oregon's interior, were unsuccessful. Wyeth stayed at Fort William until 1836, when, after losing 17 men to disease or violence, he sold Fort Hall to the HBC in 1837, and left the West forever.

Wyeth returned to Boston where he was reinstated in the ice business. With his old partner, Wyeth found success in the East as an inventor and entrepreneur. His personal successes in the East far outweighed his misfortunes in the West. Still, Wyeth found reward in his western adventures, never regretting, openly at least, his losses or the time spent here.¹⁹

¹⁸Please see Ewing Young narrative.

¹⁹Please see the bibliography for additional information about the further adventures of Nuttall and Townsend and Daniel and Jason Lee.

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Existing interpretive sites

No known interpretive signs specifically relate to Nathaniel Wyeth and his influences in the Oregon Country. Several signs exist about the Lees, the Willamette Mission, and the naturalists Nuttall and Townsend.

Corridor resources

Corridor description: Wyeth and his companions followed what later became known as the Oregon Trail along the I-84 corridor as far as LaGrande. I-84 is the only contemporary route through the Blue Mountains near Wyeth's route. The recommended corridor options from that location are:

I-84 to Kanine Ridge Road, to Thornhollow Road, to Spring Hollow Road, to Pambrun Road, to Athena, to Athena-Holdman Road, to Havana-Helix Road, to Helix, and to VanSycle Canyon Road.

La Grande to Elgin on OR 82 to OR 204 (the Weston-Elgin Road) to Tollgate to Weston. From Weston, travel to Athena, then on the Athena-Holdman Road to Havana-Helix Road to Helix and to VanSycle Canyon Road.

From VanSycle Road, continue on WA 12 to Wallula, then south on WA 12/US 730. Continue on US 730 to Boardman and join I-84. Continue on I-84 to Portland. Links in the metro area include Fort Vancouver and Sauvie Island as well as further south along the Willamette River to the Willamette Mission site.

Oregon Trail Interpretive Sites and Segments

Four Rivers Cultural Institute, Ontario

Bridgeport/Hereford

National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Baker City

Oregon Trail Museum, Baker City

Geiser Grand Hotel, Baker City

Eastern Oregon Museum, Haines

Oregon Trail Trolley/elk feeding, Elk Mountains

Union County Historical Society, Union

Union County Museum, Union

Cove and Union

La Grande

Blue Mountain Crossing, La Grande

Umatilla County Historical Society, Pendleton

Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, Pendleton

Athena

Helix

Hat Rock State Park

Irrigon

Celilo Falls

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center/Wasco County Historical Museum, The Dalles

Oregon History Center, Portland

Bybee-Howell House, Portland
End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Oregon City
Willamette Mission State Park
Mission Mill Museum grounds, Salem
French Prairie Tour
Aurora Colony
Champoeg State Park

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI Bureau of Land Management
USDI National Park Service
USDA Forest Service
USDD Army Corps of Engineers

Tribal

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Nez Perces Tribe

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society
Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
private land owners

Recommendations

Although the Oregon Trail sites and segments interpretive effort has been completed, there are several opportunities to integrate Wyeth's story into existing sites, especially at Hilgard Junction State Park (where Wyeth cut northwest across the Blue Mountains to Fort Nez Percés), at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at Blue Mountain Crossing (an opportunity to interpret the story of those who traveled the trail before the great migration--Native Americans, HBC trappers and trader, Wyeth and his companions, Bonneville, and Whitman/Spalding missionaries), and at the Willamette Mission State Park (in the general vicinity of Wyeth's farm).

Additional interpretive sign sites might include Wyeth's Juniper Canyon Crossing (perhaps at the junction of North and South Juniper Canyon Roads in Umatilla County), on Sauvie Island at the Fort William site (an opportunity to interpret the relationship between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Americans) and at the Bybee-Howell House. Fort Vancouver might also offer an appropriate location for additional interpretation.

OREGON

Benjamin Bonneville Route, 1833/1834

Route description

Bonneville traveled through the Oregon Country on two different occasions. His first foray into Oregon, in January 1834, was through the Hell's Canyon, Wallowa Mountains and Wallowa Valley area. During his second expedition into Oregon in 1834, Bonneville crossed the Snake River to the Powder River to the Grande Ronde Valley, then west to the Columbia and John Day River (along the route which became the main stem of the Oregon Trail a decade later), then south and east along the John Day River and overland to the Snake River Crossing.



Benjamin Bonneville Route, 1833/1834

Authority and Recognition

- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057

Significance

Bonneville, on an authorized leave of absence from service in the US Army, traversed the western states of Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming with a small group. In addition to his own explorations, Bonneville sent emissaries into California and Utah in 1832-1834. Bonneville's effort included orders to note the natural and cultural landscape he traversed. A proud and committed military man, Bonneville took his orders seriously, fulfilling his obligations as best he could. Bonneville trapped and traded with the illustrious Mountain Men of the era (William Sublette, Stephen Meek, Ewing Young, and others) at the Green River Rendezvous and continued west into the Oregon Country. Bonneville's explorations ranged far and wide, and he is credited with mapping major areas of the West. Several western landscape features were named by Bonneville or in honor of Bonneville's efforts. Bonneville is also acknowledged by a number of reputable historians to have been the first white to see the Wallowa Valley. His easy way and generosity with the Indians made their encounters positive ones.

Historical context

Benjamin Louis Eulalie de Bonneville, the French-born son of a civil engineer, received an appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point in 1813. He was 18 years old. Just two years later, Bonneville graduated and was commissioned brevet second lieutenant of light artillery. He served in posts in New England, Mississippi, and the Arkansas Territory. In 1824, he was transferred to Fort Gibson, Indian Territory and shortly thereafter, promoted to Captain. After traveling home to France as a guest of General Lafayette, Bonneville was transferred to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri in 1828.

Inspired by editorials in the St. Louis Enquirer, edited by Thomas Hart Benton, and the writings of Hall J. Kelley, Bonneville wanted to explore the west, and if possible join the westward movement. Bonneville met with Kelley. Soon thereafter Kelley appointed Bonneville to lead one of two expeditions to the Oregon Country.²⁰ Kelley anticipated that 3000 emigrants would join him. When only 400 signed up, he rescheduled the group's departure date from January, 1832, to June. Frustrated by the delay, many who signed on dropped out and Kelley abandoned his plan altogether.

²⁰Nathaniel J. Wyeth was appointed to lead the other.

Bonneville, however, was firm in his desire and commitment to explore the West. He petitioned the War Department for leave of absence that would also serve as an extended military reconnaissance. In his letter requesting leave, Bonneville proposed:

To explore the country of the Rocky Mountains and beyond, with a view to ascertaining the nature and character of the several tribes of Indians inhabiting those regions, the trade which might profitably be carried on with them, quality of soil, productions, minerals, natural history, climate, geography and topography, as well as geology of the various parts of the country within the limits of the territories of the United States, between our frontier and the Pacific.

In granting Bonneville's request, the commanding officer, General Alexander Macomb, added several stipulations:

The leave of absence which you have asked . . . has been sanctioned. You are, therefore, authorized to be absent from the army until October, 1833. . . It is understood that the government is to be at no expense . . . It is desirable . . . that you note particularly the numbers of warriors that may be in each tribe or nation that you may meet with; their alliances with other tribes, and their relative position as to a state of peace or war, and whether their friendly or warlike dispositions towards each other are recent or of long standing.

You will gratify us by describing their manner of making war; of the mode of subsisting themselves during a state of war, and state of peace . . . In short, every information which you may conceive would be useful to the government.

You will avail yourself of every opportunity of informing us of your position and progress, and at the expiration of your leave of absence, will join your proper station.

1832

Bonneville's found a willing sponsor in John Jacob Astor, who was deeply interested in the fur trade of the Rockies and Far West.²¹ With resources in hand, it took Bonneville just a few weeks to recruit a company of experienced trappers and traders eager to head west. With 110 men in his company, assorted mules, horses, oxen, and twenty wagons, he moved out.²²

²¹ Astor founded the Pacific Fur Company in 1811 at the point of land now called Astoria, Oregon. When the Hudson's Bay Company moved into the region, their experience and resources easily squelched any outside efforts, including Astor's. Nonetheless, Astor remained interested in economic opportunities in the Far West and if he could beat the HBC at their own game, so much the better.

²² Lovell notes several of the mountain men in Bonneville's cadre of men. The included Wm. Hodgkiss, A. Matthieu, Benjamin Hardister, (?) Jennings, (?) Ross, (?) Le Roy, A. Montero, B. Bourdaloue, E. Burbno, J. D. Green, Stephen Meek, Joe Meek, N. Daily, J. Enos, Wm. Craig, Wm. Williams, J. Gale, Z. Leonard, M. Head, A. Godey, R. Mitchell, A. Janisse, G. Nidever, Robert Newell, among others.

Newell and the Meek Brothers (Joe and Stephen) were influential characters in Oregon's early history. Please see the Meek Cutoff narrative for additional information about Stephen Meek and the Whitman Mission Route for additional information about Newell and Joe Meek.

Bonneville headed west from Fort Osage on the Missouri River on May 1, 1832.²³ By early June, his party struck the Platte River and as they passed between Chimney Rock and Scott's Bluff, they noted that the prairie was black with buffalo. By mid-July, they reached the Sweetwater, coming at last into view of the Rocky Mountains. Soon thereafter, Bonneville crossed the South Pass, a trail that would prove essential to the overland emigration that followed a decade later.

Bonneville's party settled into the Green River valley to rest livestock, hunt and replenish what stores they could in early August. After the rendezvous, Bonneville realized that his wagons and many of the stores could be cached in the Green River Valley. Bonneville stored what he could, buried the wagons, built a makeshift fort between the Green River and the Horse Creek²⁴ and divided his company into groups. Twenty men stayed at "Fort Bonneville." The others were sent off in three brigades to hunt buffalo and other game.

While his men were securing the winter's supply of meat, Bonneville surveyed the tribes he met. He visited the Flatheads and camped among the Nez Perces during his first winter in the West. Bonneville's assessments of the tribes (as reported later by his "biographer" Washington Irving),²⁵ were characterized by a keen and genuine interest in the cultures and customs of the tribes he met. His report of the Nez Perces serves as an example:

Simply to call these people [Nez Perces] religious would convey but a faint idea of the piety and devotion which pervades their whole conduct. Their honesty is immaculate. Their purity of purpose and their observance of the rites of their religion are uniform and remarkable. . . . Their customs and manners are all strongly imbued with religion.

In November 1832, Bonneville again sent brigades out to hunt and trap. He continued visiting tribes, collecting information and pelts and anything else that was fit for trade. The Hudson's Bay Company had been trapping and trading in the region since the early 1820s. McLoughlin's tactics inspired great loyalty among the tribes. Although "the Indians were sorely tempted by his blankets and other trade goods, they refused to trade with him because they feared that when he had gone the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company would not buy their furs." Bonneville had counted on tribal trade to replenish his supplies of blankets, clothing, and weapons.

²³Wyeth left Independence, Missouri on May 12, 1832 with 31 men enrolled in his company. For more information on Wyeth and his route in Oregon, please see the Nathaniel Wyeth Route narrative.

²⁴Lovell noted that because Bonneville rarely visited his fort, it was sometimes called "Fort Nonsense" or "Bonneville's Folly" by local or competing trappers. Bernard DeVoto, in *Across the Wide Missouri*, suggested that Bonneville situated Fort Bonneville for precise strategic opportunities for the War Department and American settlement and not, per se, as a trapping and trading post.

²⁵Irving is reputed to have woven a number of glorious events into the *Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U. S. A.* that were fabrications of Bonneville's actual experience.

Word of Bonneville's presence and activities reached Fort Vancouver's John McLoughlin. In very terse and direct terms, McLoughlin forbade the HBC traders to associate with Bonneville or his men.²⁶ Having established themselves and developed trade relationships with the Indians, the HBC was determined to maintain control of fur trade in the west. Caught between the HBC's control and the tribes' reticence to stir the HBC's ire, success and survival in the Oregon Country for Wyeth and Bonneville was difficult.

1833

In early 1833, Bonneville sent a group of 50 men to the Snake River to trap and collect information about Indians, instructing them to rejoin the party in July, 1833. Bonneville also sent Joseph Walker²⁷ and a small company to explore the Great Salt Lake in Utah and meet with the Crow Indians.²⁸ He completed his own reconnaissance work too, traveling along the Snake River, camping near the Bannock Indians, hunting buffalo, and meeting bands of Flathead and Nez Perces and small groups of white trappers, among them, Milton Sublette and J. B. Gervais.

In early July, Bonneville and Wyeth met again, and together they traveled to the Green River Rendezvous.²⁹ Bonneville and his men remained at the rendezvous for a fortnight before leaving for the Wind River range.³⁰

Bonneville realized, in late July, that a year was an insufficient period in which to finish his information-gathering, nor could he fulfill his promises to General Macomb to return to the States by October. There was too much yet to accomplish. As his leave lapsed, Bonneville composed a letter to Macomb detailing his explorations, the watersheds and riverways he traveled, the tribes he met and their temperaments, and the soils' potential for sustainable agricultural operations.

*The information I have already obtained authorizes me to say this much:
That if our government ever intends taking possession of Oregon, the sooner it shall
be done the better, and at present I deem a subaltern's command is equal to the task,
yet I would recommend a full company, which by bringing provisions to last till June
could then live upon the salmon which abounds there (on the lower Columbia)
during the summer and fall, and farming for themselves for the next year could
subsist themselves well. . . .*

²⁶McLoughlin may also have learned that his old competitor Astor was bankrolling both Bonneville and Wyeth.

²⁷Walker later traveled with Fremont. Please see the Fremont Route narrative for additional information.

²⁸Lovell and Josephy [in Alvin Josephy, *The Nez Perces Indians and the Opening of the Pacific Northwest*, Abridged Edition (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979)] recount details of Walker's exploits of Indians and Mexicans in California, and of his routes. Although no maps have been found of Walker's route, he is credited with "discovering" a five-hundred mile long trail that linked California and the Green River area. He named the wide salt flats near the Great Salt Lake (Bonneville Salt Flats) and crossed the Sierra Nevadas. Walker's party included the Meek brothers.

²⁹Lovell reports that, although a partnership scheme contrived by Wyeth to guide Bonneville into California collapsed, the two remained friends and allies against the British and all others who slandered or otherwise belittled the other. According to Wyeth's journal, Bonneville apparently learned much of what he knew about the HBC from Wyeth and from local tribes.

³⁰The Green River Rendezvous of 1833 is noted as being one of the most significant of the fur trade gatherings. Lovell suggests that most of the Shoshonis and scores of trappers and traders were there. Pack trains from the states sold goods and one of Bonneville's men set up a store from the cached goods, exchanging munitions, knives, and ornaments (buttons and beads) for pelts. The Rendezvous attendance lists are a "who's who" of the far west fur trade: Milton and William Sublette, Thomas Fitzpatrick, Robert Campbell, Joe and Stephen Meek, Nathaniel Wyeth and so on.

As to the cultivation of the bottoms of the Columbia, the lands are of the best, the timber abundant, but it is deluged at the rise of the river, but the Multnomah, or as it is named here the Wallamet (Willamette), runs through one of the most beautiful, fertile and extensive vallies in the world--wheat, corn and tobacco country.³¹

In this letter, Bonneville also asked for an extension of his leave. He cited several reasons for lingering in the West. He described at length the Hudson's Bay Company's operations and successes in the Oregon Country and his interest in their operations in New Caledonia (British Columbia) and the Cottonais (Kutenai country, Montana). Bonneville wanted to survey the lower Columbia River, California, and parts of the Southwest before his return. With his reconnaissance work to date documented and his letter enroute to General Macomb (carried by a trustworthy courier), Bonneville continued his trek through the West.

He met trappers Campbell, Fitzpatrick, Stewart, and Wyeth again after the Rendezvous ended and traveled again over the South Pass and through the Wind River range, meeting Shoshones and (in a pattern well established by now), carefully recorded their habits, customs, and territories for the Army. Bonneville returned to Fort Bonneville in mid-September 1833.

After a brief respite and several short trips away from the Fort, Bonneville and his men set out again, this time bound for the Portneuf River where they established a winter camp.

1834

Bonneville left the Fort again in early January, 1834, with a small group of men and a Shoshone guide aiming for the Willamette Valley by way of the Columbia River.³² By January 12, the party reached the Snake River. Their guide quickly departed for other obligations, leaving Bonneville to his instincts. The group traveled through the steep gorge now called Hell's Canyon, past Homestead (Oregon), the Big Bar and the present Hell's Canyon dam site, until the canyon's ragged walls became too steep to safely maneuver. After backtracking a bit, the group found their way out of the canyon, up and over the Wallows near Himmelwright Springs. Still traveling in deep snow and growing very hungry, Bonneville's company butchered a mule before continuing toward the Imnaha valley, where they found grass just turning green. On the banks of the Imnaha River (at the present community of Imnaha), Bonneville was welcomed by Nez Perces. In a description that echoes his apparent generosity towards the Indians he met during the western adventures, historian Edith Lovell wrote:

Bonneville enjoyed royal treatment. He won good will by fashioning turbans for the women from his own plaid jacket; the Indians eyed his shiny pate and titled him "The Bald Chief." In a dos-a-dos of gift giving, Bonneville received a fine horse in exchange for a rifle, hatchet, and ear bobs. Chief Yo-mus-re-cut butchered a colt in welcome to his village.

³¹ Although Bonneville writes authoritatively about the Willamette Valley's prospects, his maps and journals indicate that he traveled only as far west as the John Day River. His information, accurate though it is, may have been based on stories and anecdotes he heard from Indians, trappers and traders.

³² Depending on one's perspective, Bonneville's trip during the dead of winter seems foolhardy, traveling in snow and cold in unknown country; or wise, from a commercial aspect, beaver pelts were at their prime.

Alvin Josephy describes Bonneville's departure from the Imnaha village:

When it came time to leave that settlement they were accompanied by the headman and a young Indian, who guided them up and down the steep draws and across high, broken country from the lower valley of the Imnaha to the deep canyon of Joseph Creek. They reached that stream near its junction with the Grande Ronde River, which Bonneville called the Way-lee-way, close to where it flowed past the high goosenecks of land to empty into the Snake. As the travelers approached the mouth of Joseph Creek, their guide informed them that he had sent word of their arrival ahead to an important village at the junction of the Grand Ronde. Rounding a high grassy hill, they came upon the Indian settlement, the sheltered winter camp of the principal chief of the Wallowa Nez Perces, Tuekakas. The father of the more celebrated Chief Joseph (who would be born in this vicinity six years later), Tuekakas was in his late forties. . . .

No white man knew of the Wallowa Valley, much less wanted it at that time, and the Indians welcomed Bonneville and his companions as representatives of a friendly and honorable people.

Tuekakas and his people welcomed Bonneville with a reception (in which the Nez Perces individually greeted Bonneville and pledged friendship to him and his party) and feast followed by long and intent conversation about the United States and the Nez Perces.

Bonneville was again accompanied by Yo-mus-re-cut and the Indian guide when he left the Nez Perces meeting and celebration. After following the Grande Ronde River to its confluence with the Snake River, Bonneville's party entered another Nez Perce village, where they were greeted with another warm reception and celebratory feast. Near Asotin (Washington) on the Snake River, Bonneville met Apash Wyakaikt, later called Looking Glass. (His son, also named Looking Glass, was War Chief through the Nez Perces war of 1877). Apash Wyakaikt worked closely with the HBC at Fort Nez Perces and on the Snake and Clearwater Rivers. He knew that the Americans "gave better terms" than did the HBC and was eager to trade with them. Journals and reports recounting the meeting do not include what arrangements the men might have negotiated.³³ After their meeting, Bonneville continued on the Snake from Asotin to the Columbia, then on the Columbia to Fort Nez Perces, the HBC's post situated on the Walla Walla River.³⁴

The HBC chief trader at Fort Nez Perces, Pierre C. Pambrun, welcomed Bonneville and his men into the Fort on March 4, 1834. Pambrun provided gracious hospitality but the HBC considered Bonneville a rival for the pelt trade and so declined to provide any goods. Two days after arriving, Bonneville set out again, empty handed, retracing his original route. He returned to the camp on the Portneuf River by May 12. Forays into the American Falls, Blackfoot River, and Bear Lake areas occupied Bonneville's time through the early summer of 1834.

³³Josephy notes the changes in the pelt trade. Traders were paying up to \$9 a pound for pelts at the 1832 Green River Rendezvous. By the time the caravans reached St. Louis, changes in technology, manufacturing, and fashion reduced the price to \$3.50 a pound. It was a ominous note for the entire fur trade industry.

³⁴Please see the Wyeth Route, Whitman Mission Route, and Upper Columbia River Route narratives for additional references to Fort Nez Perces or Walla Walla.

Bonneville was discouraged by the HBC's rejection at Fort Nez Perces in March, but he was persistent, too. In July, after sending a trapping brigade to the Crow country of Wyoming and sending another to St. Louis with the few pelts he had obtained, Bonneville and a small group determined to try trading again with the HBC--at Fort Nez Perces and at Fort Vancouver. Along the way, he hoped to establish trading relationships with the Nez Perce and Cayuse and visit the Willamette Valley.

Bonneville traveled from the Portneuf to the Snake. This time, Bonneville followed an easier course into the Nez Perces country through the Blue Mountains, along the Powder River and into the Grande Ronde Valley.³⁵ He was impressed by the Cayuse and Nez Perce horse herds and their Christian perspectives. According to Josephy, Bonneville noted the way in which Christian traditions were "grafted onto ancestral beliefs and practices." Equal in significance to Bonneville was the breadth and scope of modern farming practices used by Indians in the Grande Ronde Valley. Both features of the changing culture had been introduced by the HBC.

While Bonneville camped in the Valley, he visited with Nathaniel Wyeth (who was on his second trip to the West). The two men met and perhaps discussed the beginning of a joint trading effort. Correspondence indicates that they were negotiating with the Nez Perces and Cayuse. The men planned to meet Apash Wyakaikt on the Asotin River, but Bonneville needed food and supplies first and when he again approached Pambrun he found the same warm welcome but the same denial of trade and service.

Without food or supplies, Bonneville's position became more desperate. Rather than go back to the Asotin, he headed down the Columbia River hoping to get to Fort Vancouver and the Willamette Valley. Along the way he tried trade with river bands of Sahaptins to no avail. The HBC's hold was deep and widespread. As Bonneville neared the junction of the John Day river and the Columbia he realized that McLoughlin would likely greet him in the same manner as Pambrun, with the same futile result.

Notwithstanding the unkind reception of the traders, I continued down the Columbia, subsisting on horses, dogs, roots, and occasionally a salmon, until I reached the vicinity of Mounts Hood and Baker [Adams]. . . .

I now discovered that if I advanced much farther, the snow that was then falling in the mountains would soon prevent my retreat from this impoverished country and that in the spring I would not have a horse left, as it became indispensably necessary to slaughter them for subsistence. I consequently took a south course and entered the mountains of John Day's river, gradually turning my course towards the mountains of the upper country, which I reached the 15 November, 1834.³⁶

Captain Bonneville was through with the Oregon Country.

³⁵This route, originally used by William Price Hunt in 1811 was followed by Wyeth and William Drummond Stewart in 1833. By the early 1840s the route was used by the overland emigrants traveling on the "Oregon Trail."

³⁶Keith Clark and Lowell Tiller suggest [in *Terrible Trail: The Meek Cutoff* (Bend, OR: Maverick Publications, 1966)] that Bonneville, with Stephen Meek among his compatriots, traveled through the Harney Valley by way of the John Day River Valley south to the Silvies country. It might have been Meek's memory of the route through here that inspired him to attempt a central route into Oregon. For more information on Stephen Meek please see the Meek Cutoff narrative.

Once out of the Oregon Country, Bonneville stayed the winter with the Shoshone Indians on the Upper Bear River. In April, Bonneville returned to the Green River before working his way east over the Wind River range toward Missouri. He arrived in Independence on August 22 to learn that his July, 1833, letter requesting an extension had arrived, but was not delivered to Macomb. In the interim, Bonneville's commission had been revoked. By September 26, 1834, the first of Bonneville's volley of letters to the Secretary of War, Lewis Cass, was received in Washington, D. C.. Bonneville petitioned tirelessly to have his commission reinstated and in early 1836, he was recommissioned. He immediately set out again for duty stations in the mid-west and on the western frontier, including a stint as a colonel at the Columbia Barracks adjacent to old Fort Vancouver, which had been a US Army post since 1849.

Bonneville's military career continued through the western expansion and the Civil War. In 1866, as a Brevet Brigadier General, he retired and moved to Arkansas to live out his remaining days. Bonneville died in 1878 at age 80.

Bonneville's travels in Oregon and throughout the region were characterized by constant movement. Bonneville replicated his understanding of much of the western landscape on maps that helped both the military and the emigrants find their way west.

Bibliography

Scholarly documents

Clark, Keith and Lowell Tiller. *Terrible Trail: The Meek Cutoff*. Bend, OR: Maverick Publications, 1966.

Irving, Washington, with Edgeley Todd, ed. *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U. S. A. in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

Joseph, Alvin. *The Nez Perces Indians and the Opening of the Pacific Northwest*, abridged edition. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Lovell, Edith Haroldsen. *Benjamin Bonneville: Soldier of the American Frontier*. Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1992.

Lockley, Fred. *More Power to You*. Portland, OR: The Oregon Journal, 1934.

Management and government documents

None known.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Wayside near entrance to tunnel for Bonneville Dam

LOCATION: I-84, mp 40

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Capt. Bonneville; fish hatchery/dam

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Bonneville Dam Visitor Center

LOCATION: Cascade Locks

DESCRIPTION: Exhibits

SUBJECT/TITLE: Bonneville's influence and experiences in the Oregon Country

OWNER: Department of Defense US Army Corps of Engineers

Corridor resources

Bonneville's excursions into the Oregon Country included the Wallowa Valley area and south from Biggs into the High Desert. Two corridor descriptions follow.

Corridor description: Hat Point/Imnaha/Joseph/Enterprise/north on OR 3 and WA SR 129 to Asotin. (Resources listed according to proximity.)

Hells Canyon NRA

Hat Point

Wallowa Lake

National Indian Cemetery marker at Wallowa Lake Cemetery (Travel Information Council)

Wallowa Lake Historical Marker/Wallowa Lake (Travel Information Council) glacial influences

Wallowa Co. Historical Society

Joseph

Museums

Enterprise

Nez Perces War historical marker/W of Enterprise (Travel Information Council)

Joseph Canyon Overlook

Corridor description: OR 97 from Biggs south to Wasco. OR 206 from Wasco across the John Day River to Condon. OR 19 from Condon to Fossil and on to Spray, then to Dayville, Mt. Vernon and John Day. At John Day turn south toward Burns on US 395. From Burns, turn south on OR 78 to Crane. North from Crane to Buchanan. East on US 20 through Juntura, the Stinkingwater range, to Harper, Vale and Ontario. See also Meek Cutoff. Sections of this route intersect and overlap with the Journey Through Time Tour.
(Resources listed according to proximity.)

Sherman County Museum, Moro
J S Burres State Park
Gilliam County Depot Museum Complex/Union Pacific Depot, Condon
Dyer Wayside
Shelton Wayside
John Day Fossil Beds National Monument
Old Red Barn, Dayville
Stone Stable, Mt. Vernon
Clyde Holiday State Park, Mt. Vernon
Kam Wah Chung & Company, John Day
Journey Through Time Tour Route/Scenic Byway
Grant County Historical Museum, Canyon City
OxBow Trading Company, Canyon City
Strawberry Mountain Wilderness
Silvies (ghost town)
Malheur Lake Wildlife Refuge
Fort Harney historical marker, between Burns and Buchanan
Great Basin historical marker, Buchanan
Peter Skene Ogden historical marker, Juntura
Vale Murals
Malheur crossing sign/historical marker, Vale
Rinehart Stone House, Vale
Rinehart Butte, Vale

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI National Park Service
USDD Army Corps of Engineers
USDA Forest Service

Tribal

Nez Perces Tribe
Burns/Paiute Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

- certified local governments
- local chambers of commerce
- local historical societies
- regional visitor associations and tourism groups
- private land owners

Recommendations

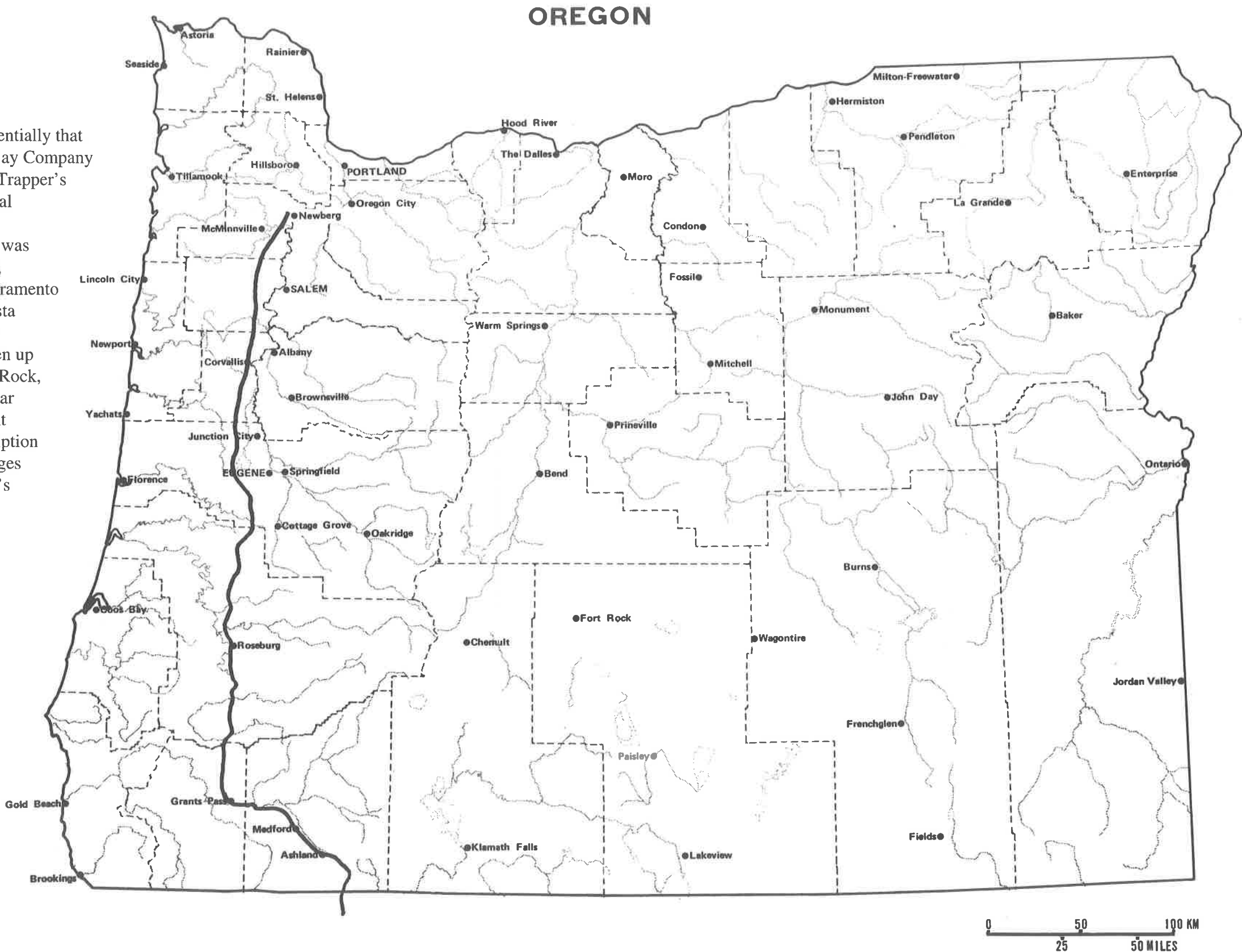
There are a number of appropriate and interesting interpretive opportunities along Bonneville's route, especially at Homestead (near his estimated river crossing), Imnaha, along the Nee-Me-Poo trail, at the Hell's Canyon Dam, Joseph Canyon Overlook (a USDI National Park Service site), at the John Day Fossil Beds (a USDI National Park Service site), at Service Creek (where OR 19 crosses the John Day River, Dayville or at Rufus, at the confluence of the John Day and the Columbia), and at the Fort Vancouver/ Columbia Barracks (USDI National Park Service/Department of Defense US Army). There is also potential to develop hiking segments along the John Day River.

Ewing Young Route, 1834/1837

Route description

The route Young followed was essentially that used by the fur brigades of the Hudson’s Bay Company and is sometimes referred to as the “HBC Trapper’s Trail” or the “Old California Trail.” General descriptions of most of the route place it approximately where the Pacific Highway was later developed. From the area of Redding, California, the route went north up the Sacramento River drainage, past Mt. Shasta to the Shasta Valley, north to the Klamath River, up the Klamath River and Cottonwood Creek, then up Hutton Creek, and over the divide at Pilot Rock, into the drainage of Emigrant Creek, to Bear Creek, to the Rogue River. Other important deviations from the old Highway 99 description are where the trapper’s trail kept to the ridges west of Canyon Creek, and where the trail’s course went by Anlauf to Lorane, Veneta, Cheshire, and Monroe.

The site of Young’s rancho is the logical terminus of the trail. However, his property was fifty square miles in extent, bounded by the Willamette River at Newberg on the east, Chehalem Mountain on the north, the Red Hills of Dundee on the south and by Wapato Lake near Gaston on the west.



Ewing Young Route, 1834/1837

Authority/Recognition

- State of Oregon: OR 358.057

Significance

When Ewing Young arrived from California with his large herd of horses and settled in the Chehalem Valley in 1834, his rancho became the most western of all American farmsteads. When Young successfully led the 1837 Willamette Cattle Company expedition with 630 cattle into the Willamette settlements, it made American settlers more independent of the Hudson's Bay Company and permanently opened livestock trade from California.

Ewing Young was a master trapper and a great entrepreneur. He was a pioneer in the opening of the Santa Fe Trail, a central figure in the fur trade of the southwest, and opened trails between New Mexico and California. In Oregon, he was the first American to ranch, farm, and mill in the Willamette Valley. He raised horses and cattle, grew wheat, built and operated a sawmill and a gristmill, and his farm became a trading post, general store and bank for his neighbors. He employed a labor force and supplied housing for them. He even uncovered the earliest find in the field of paleontology to be reported from the Pacific Northwest. When he died intestate in 1841, the problems of settling his estate led ultimately to the creation of Oregon's provisional government in 1843.

Historical context

Ewing Young was born in 1799 to a Tennessee farm family. By the early 1820s, he had matured, left home, and bought a farm at Charitan, Missouri, on the north bank of the Missouri River. Young's tenure as a farmer was short-lived and by the spring of 1822, he sold his interest to another farmer and set out with a small group bound for Santa Fe and a career in the fur trade.

Young's career as a trapper and trader in the Santa Fe and Taos region was marked by protecting trade goods and pelts, Indian battles and retribution. Pelts were stolen and retrieved, often with injuries and fatalities for both Indians and white traders. The trading group traveled from St. Louis to Santa Fe on a number of occasions between 1822 and 1826. In 1826, with a trappers license in hand, Young organized a trapping party large enough to withstand attacks and losses. More than a hundred men, guided by Young and four others, moved into the Colorado River basin to trap beaver.³⁷ The size of the trapping parties were no deterrent to Indian attacks and after a violent engagement with Indians near the junction of the Gila River and the Colorado

³⁷ Among these was Milton Sublette. Please see Wyeth and Bonneville narratives for more information about Sublette and his long-distance involvement in Oregon's early fur trade history.

(near present Yuma, Arizona), Young decided to continue traveling northward along the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon toward Long's Peak and the South Platte, (essentially across the states of Arizona and Colorado to Greeley, Co). Historian Harvey Carter speculates that from the South Platte, Young's party may have swung toward the Laramie River, the North Platte, the Sweetwater, and the Little Snake rivers. He continued his travels until summer, 1827, when he returned to Santa Fe. Enroute, Young lost furs and trade goods to corrupt agents and assorted thieves. Shortly after his return, Young and his business partner William Wolfskill opened a trading store in Taos, supplied with goods from St. Louis.

Amidst the trading and trapping, skirmishes between various tribes, predominantly Apaches and Comanches, and the traders continued. Lives and trade goods were lost on both sides. During the late spring of 1830, Young and a large trapping party traveled west from Taos, over the Mogollan Plateau, and west down the south side of the Grand Canyon to the Mojave Desert. After trading with Mojaves for food, the group continued west through Cajon Pass to the mission at San Gabriel before turning toward the San Fernando Valley and over the Tehachapi Range to the San Joaquin River.

Once on the river, the trapping party realized that the area had already, and very recently, been trapped out. Still, they continued north toward the Sacramento Valley, where they met Peter Skene Ogden and a Hudson's Bay Company trapping brigade. In a rare case of cooperation, the HBC group and the American trappers worked the streams from Sacramento to Redding simultaneously--and without argument.

Young traveled to the San Jose mission, and on to the San Francisco Bay, where he traded pelts with a ship's captain and purchased livestock, mostly horses and mules, for the return trip, effectively creating a trade link between California and St. Louis, by way of Taos. In the fall of 1830, Young's party started back toward Taos. After a brief stop in Los Angeles, the group hurried to the Colorado River, then south to the Gila River, and back toward home. All along the way, Young and his men set traps. They arrived back in Taos with nearly a ton of fine pelts.

In the years that followed, Young formed new partnerships with other business-minded trappers and traders, especially David Jackson, with whom Young began a mule trading business.³⁸ He also continued trading with California merchants and trapping California rivers. In the spring of 1833, Young traveled as far north as the Umpqua River, following it to its source, then crossing the northwest shore of Klamath Lake before looping south towards Mt. Shasta and the upper reaches of the Sacramento River. By the winter of 1834, Young was back in San Diego.

Among the growing American population Young met there, he found an eccentric promoter of Oregon, Hall J. Kelley, who recorded his impressions of Young:

Near the port of St. Diego, I met with Capt. Ewing Young and his party of hunters. He was the very man to accompany me; because, like myself, he had an iron constitution, and was inured to hardships. He was almost persuaded.

³⁸David Jackson arrived in Taos with the Jedediah Smith, Jackson and William Sublette wagon train. Jedediah Smith had been killed on the Cimmaron River and his partners continued on toward their agreed destination. William Sublette had dealing with Nathaniel Wyeth along the Yellowstone River in 1834. Please see the Smith and Wyeth narratives for more information.

Kelley stirred a variety of passions during his visit in California. Everyone had a remark to make about the man. This odd little schoolteacher from Massachusetts caught "Oregon Fever" years before actually seeing the place. He touted Oregon zealously to anyone who would listen.³⁹

Young recalled meeting Kelley this way:

I was in California, where I met with Mr. Hall J. Kelley on his way to the Columbia River, who represented himself to be the agent of a colonizing company. He wished my company, holding out many inducements.

Still, Young declined. Young had already been to Oregon and well understood the difficulties that lay a head for such a venture.

Kelley didn't get much support from other Californians either. Sailing from San Diego to San Pedro, then up the coast to Monterey, Kelley approached every American he could locate, inviting and coaxing any who would listen (then insulting them when he was rejected). He succeed above all in irritating his audience as well as their employers, who saw Kelley's antics as a direct effort to lure desperately needed employees away. When the employers confronted Kelley about his methods, he accused them of being brutes and villains.

In spite of Kelley's bullying antics, Young apparently reconsidered his decision against exploring more of the Oregon Country and in July, 1834, he approached Kelley agreeing to travel north. The Californians were all too happy to see Kelley go.

The group traveling under Young's guidance bought supplies in San Jose and slowly increased as they traveled northward.

When we set out from the last settlement, I had seventy-seven horses and mules. Kelley and the other five men had twenty-one, which made ninety-eight animals which I knew were fairly bought. The last nine men that joined the party had fifty-six horses. Whether they bought them, or stole them, I do not know.

Young's experience in the Sacramento Valley compelled him to move from the San Francisco Bay inland to the Sacramento River, then travel north along the river's east side.

The nine men who joined Young's party late were described by Kelley as "marauders." These were fur trappers and traders who were used to the rough conditions of the trade. Kelley's eccentric nature might have made him an especially savory target for jokes, which, in the days of the fur trade, ran toward a very violent humor. It didn't take long for trouble to start for Kelley.

After a few days, those men, finding that I was not disposed to connive at their villainy, sought an opportunity to destroy me. One of them discharged his rifle at me, and very nearly hit the mark; and at a subsequent time the rifle was again levelled at me, but at the moment a word from Young staid the death-charged bullet.

³⁹ Kelley influenced Wyeth and Bonneville directly and hundreds more indirectly in the promise of the Oregon Country. Please see the Wyeth and Bonneville narratives for more information.

The violence intimated here was never far from the surface. Americans used to fighting Indians and each other were less sympathetic than suited Kelley's naive perspectives. Although the California tribes were considerably less aggressive than the Southwestern tribes, Young and his companions generally believed that the rules were "Kill or be killed." They acted accordingly.

When the party crossed from Spanish California into the Oregon Country, they met the Rogue Indians, who seemed quite friendly. While traveling along the Rogue River, several members of the Young party came down with malaria. Young stopped to camp on an island, to give the men time to recuperate in a place deemed safe from horse thieves.

When two Rogues swam to the island however, the Americans grew concerned that the swimmers might be spies and that an attack might be imminent. They decided to kill the two and bury their bodies on the island. As soon as they could, the Americans moved from the island and hurried toward the Umpqua.

Not surprisingly, the Rogues' bodies were soon discovered and word traveled quickly north among the Indians that these men had killed in cold blood. The incident would haunt whites in the Rogue Valley for years to come.

Kelley was among those suffering from malaria. When Young's group coincidentally met an HBC brigade hurrying toward Fort Vancouver, the brigade adopted Kelley for the rest of his trip northward. He arrived at Fort Vancouver a feeble, ill, grumpy dreamer, the unsuccessful colonizer of the fabled Oregon Country.

One of McLoughlin's employees recalled Kelley's entrance into the Chief Factor's home.

He was penniless and ill-clad, and considered rather too rough for close companionship, and was not invited to the mess. He may have thought this harsh. Our people did not know, or care for, the equality he had perhaps been accustomed to. It should be borne in mind that discipline in those days was rather severe, and a general commingling would not do . . . Kelley was five feet nine inches high, wore a white slouched hat, blanket capote, leather pants, with a red stripe down the seam, rather outre! even for Vancouver.

Before Young or Kelley reached Fort Vancouver, however, Chief Factor John McLoughlin received a letter from Governor Joseph Figueroa of the Santa Clara Mission accusing Young of horse-thievery. Whether true or not, the accusations cooled any warmth the normally gregarious McLoughlin held for the Americans.

The Chief Factor did only what was "humanitarian." McLoughlin made sure that medical care was available, but did little else to accommodate Kelley. As one would expect, Kelley, relegated to a cabin outside the fort, complained.⁴⁰ Young arrived at Fort Vancouver several days after Kelley. McLoughlin kept them both at arm's reach.

⁴⁰Kelley complained not only about the HBC treatment, he complained that Young neglected his social duties by not visiting enough. Nathaniel Wyeth was in the area for a brief time and his visit was too short too. When Jason Lee visited, Kelley complained that he was in too big a hurry to stay long. By spring, Kelley had had enough of the Oregon Country. He left and never returned.

Young's welcome by McLoughlin was heavily influenced by Figueroa's letter. When confronted, Young admitted that the horses *might* have been stolen, but that he didn't know for sure. Still, McLoughlin cast him as guilty and refused trade. Young was a proud and well-accomplished businessman, one who held trust as a vital component to all business and personal dealings. As might be expected, McLoughlin's suspicions and ill-will fostered Young's resentment, which lingered for several years. Except for Wyeth and the Willamette Mission, Young was isolated from outside trade. McLoughlin eventually softened his position, perhaps realizing that the accusations of horse-thieving were unfair. When McLoughlin sent Young gifts as a token of peace, Young sent it all back, "indignantly refus[ing] to receive the goods or refreshments." Although Young and McLoughlin sent letters jointly to Governor Figueroa, Young held his grudge against McLoughlin well into 1837.

Kelley turned and left Oregon as soon as he could the following spring. Young, however, realized that Oregon was indeed a very special place, perfectly suited to developing business and agricultural operations. Young located a 50 square-mile plot⁴¹ in the Chehalem Valley, called it his own and proceeded to build a cabin on the Red Hills, established a ranch, planted 150 acres of wheat, and began fledgling trading operations with American ships that sailed the Columbia from Fort William on Wappato Island, Nathaniel Wyeth's post. Near neighbors were the retired HBC *engagees* who had settled farms of their own on French Prairie near Champoege. A distant, but American, neighbor of Young's was the Reverend Jason Lee.⁴²

In 1836, Young met Sol Smith, who traveled to the Oregon Country in 1834 with Wyeth. Young and Smith built a small sawmill, and began plotting to build a distillery--a direct aim at the tight hold the HBC held on alcohol in the Oregon Country. Although there were no temperance laws in Oregon, there was a temperance society and some in the community were against the sale of alcohol.

In the midst of Young's efforts to build a distillery, he had the opportunity and fortune to meet Lieutenant William A. Slacum, sent by President Andrew Jackson to look into affairs in the Oregon Country. Apparently, Slacum's influence, combined with efforts from the Oregon Temperance Society caused Young to abandon his plan to establish a still in the Chehalem Valley.

Slacum also recognized the American settlers dependency on the HBC for cattle. Although the HBC generously loaned cattle, it required that any calves produced be returned to the Company. This rule applied to Americans, HBC employees, and former HBC employees.

Slacum and Young established a new enterprise, the Willamette Cattle Company. The Willamette Cattle Company was a venture welcomed by the emigrants and many settlers, including Lee, McLoughlin⁴³ and several other HBC employees, subscribed money for buying livestock. With capital in hand, the partners decided that Slacum would transport Americans to California by ship; Young would purchase cattle in California and, with the help of the Americans, drive their investment north into the Chehalem Valley.

⁴¹ A 50-square-mile claim was a standard size "squatter's claim" by New Mexican and Californian standards.

⁴² Lee arrived in 1834 with Wyeth's second expedition to Oregon.

⁴³ In a surprising move, McLoughlin invested \$558 in the Willamette Cattle Company, securing a small herd for himself and making a bold move against HBC governors' orders. This investment spoke volumes about McLoughlin's business acumen and his growing trust of and interest in Young's enterprises.

After weeks of negotiating with Mexican generals in San Solano and San Jose, Young bought 729 head of cattle (mostly heifers) purchased for \$3 a head. In July, the Americans turned the herd north toward the Chehalem Valley. It would not be an easy trip.

Young and his company pushed the cattle toward the San Joaquin River. It took them more than three weeks to cross. Philip Edwards, a Missourian who accompanied Young south from the Chehalem Valley,⁴⁴ kept a diary:

Little sleep, much fatigue! Hardly time to eat, many times! Cattle breaking like so many evil spirits and scattering to the four winds! Men, ill-natured and quarrelsome, growling and cursing! Have however, recovered the greater part of the lost cattle . . . Another month like the last, God avert! Who can describe it?

During the crossing, their only keg of gunpowder was soaked. Young sent Edwards back to the Bay Area for more. Finally, on July 27, 1837, with Edwards back in the fold, the group began moving through the scorching Sacramento Valley.

The company spent time swapping stories, reminiscing, and recounting adventures of previous trips. John Turner, a former guide for the HBC, traveled with Young now. They told their own stories of the first trip north. Young told of the ravages of the malaria epidemic and its devastating impacts on Indian villages, where corpses littered throughout a community, visited only by scavenger birds. John Turner was a survivor of the Kalawatsets' attack on the Jedediah Smith party along the Umpqua in 1828 and a member of the HBC expedition that buried the men killed in the attack. Both had grim stories to tell.

As the party worked their way through the Siskiyous, near present Redding, they struggled to find grass for the cattle. The men were restless--irritable and hungry. Tired of fighting belligerent cattle and tired of their diet of dried beef, the men argued to butcher a heifer. Young, according to Edwards, suggested that if anyone killed one of the animals, it was at his own peril.

Tensions were relieved in late August when the party found a stream with plenty of wood and some grass near by. Young consented to the men killing a beef. After eating and resting a bit, the party moved more placidly toward Mount Shasta. By the first week of September, they were in the Shasta Valley.

While on the trail, several men who traveled through the area previously spoke quietly about killing an Indian in the Rogue River country. Edwards listened, but said nothing to Young about this. George Gay and William Bailey had been members of a party attacked after to the Young-Kelley murder of the two Rogue River Indians in 1834. Bailey wore a deep scar across his face as a reminder of the event. Between Turner, Gay, and Bailey, the fur trade rule "kill or be killed" still held true, only now a substantial dose of revenge was added to the mix.

While they were still in the Shasta Valley, Gay shot a friendly Indian standing less than ten feet away. Young was incensed, Edwards was polite in his condemnation ("it was a mean, base, dastardly act"), others among the group considered it avenging the death of Americans.

For the next several days tensions ran higher than normal. Bailey, Gay, and Turner wanted Young to stop so they could engage in a fight, but Young was adamant that they keep going. Indians were all around, and although they shot arrows at several animals near the end of the cattle column (injuring several and killing, among other animals, Young's horse), the

⁴⁴Edwards was attached to Jason Lee's mission and was appointed treasurer of the Willamette Cattle Company.

Americans pushed on. They traveled from Klamath River over the divide to the Rogue River and followed what is now the I-5 corridor into the Umpqua watershed.

From the Umpqua Valley, Young and his men worked toward the Willamette, then along the western side of the Willamette Valley, skirting the eastern slopes of the Coast Range. Young arrived in the valley with about 630 head, valued at \$8.50 each. Of those, 135 were Young's own animals, making him the largest rancher in the Oregon Country.

The cattle buying trip had several impacts. Not only did Young reaffirm his trustworthiness among any who might have doubted, his profit margins and extraordinary bookkeeping endeared him to the growing population of Americans, who entrusted their precious money with him, gradually establishing Young as a banker of sorts.

Young settled easily into life in the Chehalem Valley, trading, ranching and farming. The American population slowly grew, as did his sphere of friends, and by the early 1840s, there were nearly 500 whites in the area.⁴⁵

Though Young developed several successful business ventures in the Oregon Country, his most significant impact came in his death. After a particularly bad bout of dyspepsia related to an ulcer, Young died in February 1841. He was just 41. Following his funeral (he is buried under an oak tree near present Newberg), neighbors realized that his death created certain problems for the Americans: he had died a man of great wealth but had no will. Since there was no government in place to settle his estate, the community gathered to auction his property, the proceeds were invested in a jail (until someone came forward with a legitimate claim as an heir⁴⁶).

Meanwhile, Young's wandering and untended livestock were increasingly hunted by wolves and mountain lions, creating fears within the French-Canadian and American settlers nearby. Meetings were held and strategies were developed to keep the marauding predators at bay. The community suggested methods for protecting civil and military rights in the region. In 1843, the Oregon settlers forwarded a petition to Washington, D. C.. Oregon's settlers formally requested the protections of a provisional government. Six years later, the Oregon Territory was officially designated.

Ewing Young's personal history shaped many of the early years of American settlement in the West. From Kansas to California and north and south, Young explored, trapped, traded and fought throughout the American West. His sawmill, the cattle ranch, and the grist mill helped provide a foundation for Oregon's early agricultural industry. When his neighbors were forced to deal with the complications of Young's estate, he inadvertently shaped the state of Oregon.

⁴⁵ An interesting side note: in 1840, Young discovered prehistoric--and gigantic--bones on his farm, which were transported to archaeologists in Boston. The bones were identified to be from a giant sloth, an elephant, and a bison.

⁴⁶ In 1854, Joaquin Young arrived, the child of a common law relationship between Ewing Young and Maria Josepha Tafoya in Taos. His birth certificate was witnessed by Charles Beaubien, Christopher (Kit) Carson--a protege and employee of Young's in New Mexico and California--and Manuel Lefevre. When the heir apparent arrived and satisfactorily demonstrated his entitlement to the estate, he was presented with \$4,994, a significant sum in 1854.

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Management and government documents

None known

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Roadside pullout

LOCATION: OR 240, 3 miles west of Newberg

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Ewing Young

OWNER: Travel Information Council

Corridor resources

Corridor description: Follow I-5 north from the California state line to exit 162, then follow the Territorial Highway (OR 200) north through Veneta to OR 36, then east on OR 36 to Cheshire, then north on OR 99W to Newberg.

Champoeg State Park

Champoeg State Park Historical Marker

Willamette Post Historical Marker

Willamette Mission State Park

Applegate Trail resources

I-5 corridor

OR 99E corridor through the western Willamette Valley and the Chehalem Valley

Partners and players

Federal and national

None known

Tribal

Cow Creek Band of the Unipqua
Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
Southern Oregon Historical Society
private land owners

Recommendations

Most of the Ewing Young Route from Ashland to Corvallis is superseded by the Applegate (California) National Historic Trail where it, too, followed the earlier HBC trapper's trail. Interpretive sites along this corridor, particularly those in the canyons and mountains of southern Oregon, would be enriched by including the topics of Ewing Young's journeys in 1834 and the 1837 cattle drive. Other opportunities might include an interpretive sign in the Red Hills area of Dundee (the Ewing Young ranch and the Willamette Cattle Company, Oregon's first cattle company) and at the Rogue River (near the site of the Ewing Young/Hall Kelley attack; this would provide an additional opportunity to talk about malaria's effects on the tribes and the attack's subsequent effects on Indian-emigrant relations).

For Ewing Young historic trail theme, the best opportunity would be a route from Corvallis to Newberg, and on to Champoege State Park. A stronger idea might be the development of an "old Oregon" loop tour that would present a theme around the pre-Oregon Trail white settlement era in the Willamette Valley that would connect the stories of the retired Hudson's Bay men and their families in the French Prairie with the American missionaries at Mission Bottom and the American mountain men, particularly Ewing Young.

The only interpretive site dedicated to Ewing Young is inadequate. Consideration should be given to moving this site to a better location and expanding its interpretation.

The Chehalem Valley would make a splendid bike tour route, integrating Ewing Young's story, the Willamette Cattle Company, Champoege, and the French Prairie area.

OREGON

Whitman Mission Route, 1841-1847

Route description

The Whitman Mission Route went northward from the Umatilla River at the base of the Blue Mountains near today's community of Cayuse, Oregon. From there, the route continued northward through the area near Umapine, Oregon to the Whitman Mission. From the Mission, the Oregon Trail's original route went west along the Walla Walla River to the Columbia River near Wallula, Washington, the first site of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Nez Perces.

In 1845, after the Oregon Trail had been modified to a more direct route to the Willamette Valley, the Whitman Mission was bypassed by many emigrants who often crossed the Umatilla River and continued west through the Umatilla Valley to the Plateau area. Undaunted, Dr. and Mrs. Whitman often traveled the old route to meet and trade with emigrants on the new main route of the Oregon Trail.



Whitman Mission Route, 1841-1847

We are emphatically situated on the highway between the States and the Columbia River.

Narcissa Whitman, 1840

Authority/Recognition

- National Park Service: Management and Use Plan Update, Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

The Whitman Mission Route served as the main stem of the Oregon Trail during the earliest years of the mass overland migrations. The Oregon Trail's route led emigrants out of the Blue Mountains and north to the Whitman Mission, where hungry and road-weary emigrant groups could buy provisions, make repairs, and obtain medical services if needed. The Whitman Mission was an important way-station for Oregon Trail emigrants.

Between 1841 and 1847, the Oregon Trail's main route stretched from the Blue Mountains' western summit at Deadman Pass, crossed the Umatilla River and continued northward to the Whitman Mission, where Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa operated a Presbyterian Mission and supplied travelers with much needed services and supplies. Hudson's Bay trappers, mountain men, explorers, and emigrants traveled to and from Whitmans' mission. This route remained open until the Whitman Massacre of 1847 when emigrants began crossing through the Umatilla Valley near present Pendleton (bypassing the Walla Walla area, Fort Nez Percés, and the Upper Columbia River Route) on their way to the vast Columbia Plateau.

Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa established the Whitman Mission in 1836. The Whitman Mission remained in operation until 1847, when the Whitmans and several others were killed inside the mission during an Indian attack.

Historical context

Thursday, October 5. Started about noon for Dr. Whitman's. Traveled eight miles and camped for the night. Sticcas, a very friendly Indian who piloted us across the Blue Mountains accompanied us to-day and camped with us tonight.

Friday, October 6. . . . went on with the carriages to Dr. Whitman's, where we arrived about two o'clock. . .

James Nesmith, 1843

Tuesday, Oct 22. Our cattle are almost overdone and Mr. Hawley has gone on to the Doctor's to engage accommodations for himself, Mr. Cave and I. He is expected to return this evening.

Edward Evans Parrish, 1844

It was 1835, when 33 year-old Marcus Whitman was recruited by Samuel Parker to join the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. A native of Wheeler, NY, Whitman was a physician, missionary, and American patriot. When he learned of the opportunity to travel west to the Oregon Country to minister to Indians and to provide medical services at a far away outpost, Whitman eagerly volunteered.

The American Board believed that community was an essential element in the spread of Christianity. To build communities in the Oregon Country, it had to be first proven that women, children, and wagons could cross the Rockies and the Blue Mountains. While women and children could ride horseback, the essential elements of "home"--furniture and belongings--needed transport, somehow, over the mountains. The effort required a dependable wagon road.

Whitman and Parker set out from Boston in 1835, following well-established routes to the Missouri River, then venturing west of the United States and into Indian Country toward Oregon. Following trappers, traders, and Indians, they traveled quickly on horseback as far as Green River Rendezvous that summer. There they met several Nez Perce Indians, whose enthusiasm for the white men's religion further inspired the Presbyterians to establish a station in the Oregon Country. As the rendezvous ended, Whitman returned east, planning to raise money from the American Board and other sources. Whitman would return to the western lands the following year. Parker worked his way west to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River.

While in Boston, Whitman met and married Narcissa Prentiss. She shared Whitman's Presbyterian perspectives and values (and had applied to the American Board, who denied her request because of her status as an "unmarried female"). Narcissa was eager to minister to the welcoming Indians. Whitman also found another couple to join the effort, Henry and Eliza Spalding. In early March 1836 (the day after their wedding), Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Henry and Eliza Spalding, and William H. Gray headed west from New York with their wagons full of supplies and furnishings.

In the months that followed, the missionaries worked to adjust to the new and unfamiliar landscapes they crossed, to the trappers and tribal members they met, and to each other.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Henry Spalding once proposed marriage to Narcissa Prentiss. Her rejection, and Spalding's sense of rivalry for the man she accepted, made for very difficult travel as the missionaries crossed the country.

landscapes they crossed, to the trappers and tribal members they met, and to each other.⁴⁷ Although she reveled in the West's new experiences, Narcissa missed her home and family.

In an effort to recapture the event for her far-away family, Narcissa kept notes of her adventures and heartaches. She wrote on August 7, 1836: "We love to think and talk of home . . . It warms our hearts, Strengthens & encourages us in the work of our beloved Master & makes our journeying easy." Narcissa was the first of many overland emigrants who recorded the loneliness they felt as they left loved ones behind.

The missionaries arrived at the 1836 Green River Rendezvous in mid-July. Normally, the rendezvous was a raucous event. Trappers and traders from throughout the Rockies met to trade supplies and furs and to revel in each other's company before returning to the solitude of the mountains. The presence of white women at the rendezvous had an immediate effect. In apparent deference to the American women, the normally raucous trappers cleaned up their language, bathed, and toned down their bawdy behavior.⁴⁸

Father Jean DeSmet was there as well, the first of the prominent Catholic missionaries who traveled throughout the west baptizing tribal members.⁴⁹ DeSmet's presence disturbed Whitman who was deeply suspicious of Catholics and their theology.

From the rendezvous, the Whitmans and Spaldings traveled west with John MacLeod, an HBC Chief Trader, and a brigade of HBC trappers. It was a strenuous effort to pull wagons across the Rockies. On July 25, Narcissa noted:

Husband has had a tedious time with the waggon today. Got set in the creek this morning while crossing, was obliged to wade considerably in getting it out. After that in going between two mountains, on the side so steep that it was difficult for horses to pass the waggon was upset twice. Did not wonder at this at all. It was a greater wonder that it was not turning a somersets continually. It is not very grateful to my feelings to see him wear out with such excessive fatigue as I am obliged too. He [is] not as fleshy as he was last winter. All the most difficult part of the way he

⁴⁸Tom McKay, stepson of John McLoughlin, the HBC's Chief Factor, met the women at the Green River Rendezvous and looked at their presence in a less romantic light. He immediately recognized that missionary women on the frontier were representing more than just the Lord's word. Competition between Britain and the US was centered on the fur trade for the twenty years previous to the rendezvous. The arrival of the missionary wives demonstrated that the Americans were further working toward establishing a resident white population in Old Oregon. McKay referred to the American women when he said "There is something that Doct. McLoughlin cannot ship out of the country so easy."

⁴⁹The Catholics emphasized adherence to forms and rites and on the necessity of baptism. They administered sacrament to the Indians as soon as possible, giving them fuller religious instruction after baptism. The Congregationalists and Presbyterians, on the other hand, focused on instruction, reserving baptism only for those whom they felt were ready beyond a doubt for membership in the church.

Father DeSmet, a Jesuit, visited many of the western tribes during the 1830s, traveling as far west as the Green River Rendezvous in 1836. Fort Vancouver records indicate that Father F. N. Blanchet visited the Fort in 1838 and continued visiting tribes and baptizing Catholics throughout the Far West. Father DeSmet returned and visited Fort Nez Percés in 1840. The conflicting doctrines, lessons, and representatives of the Catholics and Protestants confused and diluted each theology's effectiveness with potential converts. The theological conflict was further fed by political alliances: Americans generally adhered to Protestant values while the HBC chiefs (especially McLoughlin and Pambrun) held Catholic values.

On July 28, Narcissa continued . . .

One of the axle trees of the waggon broke today. Was a little rejoiced, for we were in hopes they would leave it & have no more trouble with it. Our rejoicing was in vain however for they are making a cart of the hind wheels this afternoon & lashing the forward wheels to it, intending to take it through in some shape or other. They are so resolute & untiring in their efforts they will probably succeed.

In some places, the sagebrush grew tall enough to brush against horses' bellies and to tangle in the wagon axles. On August 12, while camped on the banks of the Snake River, Narcissa lamented the necessity of leaving behind a treasured trunk--and their wagon:

The hills are so steep rocky that Husband thought it best to lighten the waggon as much as possible & take nothing but the wheels, leaving the box with my trunk . . . It would have been better for us not to have attempted to bring any baggage whatever only what was necessary to use on the way. It costs so much labour, besides the expense of animals. If I were to make this journey again I would make quite different preparations . To pack and unpack so many times & cross so many streams, where the packs frequently got wet, requires no small amount of labour, beside the injury done to the articles. . . In going from Elmira to Williamsport this trunk fell into the creek . . . The sleigh came off & all of us came near a wetting likewise.

After further adjustment, Narcissa was able to keep her trunk, but traveling with the cart proved difficult too.

We have come at least fifteen miles & have had the worst route in all the journey for the cart, we might have had a better one, but for being misled by some of the company who started out before their leaders. . . . Husband had considerable difficulty in crossing the cart. Both the cart and the mules were capsized in the water and the mules entangled in the harness. They would have drowned, but for a desperate struggle to get them ashore Then after putting two of the strongest horses before the cart & two men swimming behind to steady it, they succeeded in getting it over.

On August 22, 1836, at Fort Boise, Narcissa added . . .

Perhaps you have wondered why we have left the waggon at the fort, & I have nothing to say about it this time crossing. Our animals were failing & the route in crossing the Blue Mountains is said to be impassable. We regret now to loose the use of [the wagon] when we have been at so much labour in getting it thus far. It is a useful article in the country.

From Fort Boise, the Whitmans, Spaldings, and their HBC guides (including John MacLeod) continued westward. As the group neared the Grande Ronde Valley, the Spaldings lagged behind; their horses and livestock were footsore and weary. The Whitmans pushed on. With MacLeod as their guide, they followed Indian trails. On August 28, 1836, the Whitmans descended Ladd Canyon, skirting the Grande Ronde Valley's tule swamps, and at noon, stopped

near Ora Dell where they enjoyed a relaxing lunch. Narcissa continued, "After dinner we left the plains & ascended the Blue Mountains. There a new and pleasing scene presented itself, mountains covered with timber through which we rode all afternoon, a very agreeable change."

A research team retracing the Whitman's route a century later, estimated that the party followed an Indian trail roughly 20 degrees west of north from Ora Dell toward the HBC's post, Fort Nez Perces.⁵⁰ The route, according to the research team, carried the Whitman party over Fox Hill, crossing the crown of the hill at Dixie Flat. From there, the Whitmans continued to Five Points Creek, where they camped on August 28, 1836.

The next morning, August 29, Narcissa wrote of meeting . . . "old acquaintances, in the trees & flowers, & was not a little delighted. Indeed I do not know as I was ever so much affected with any scenery in my life." Her delight in familiar plant materials was soon replaced by much larger concerns. The steep slopes of the Blue Mountains were just ahead.

Before noon we began to descend one of the most terrible mountains for steepness & length I have yet seen. I[t] was like winding stairs in its descent & in some places almost perpendicular. We did a long time descending it The horses appeared to dread the hill as much as we did. They would turn & wind in a zigzag manner all the way down. The men usually walked, but I could not get permission to, neither did I desire it much. We had no sooner gained the foot of this mountain, when another more steep & dreadful was before us. Our ride this afternoon exceeded everything we have had yet, & what rendered it the most aggravating the path all the way was very stony resembling a newly McAdamized road. Our horses feet were very tender. We were late in making camp tonight After ascending the mountain immediately after dinner, we kept upon the main divide untill sunset, looking in vain for water and a camping place. While upon this elevation, we had a view of the valley of the Columbia River. It was beautiful. Just as we gained the highest elevation & began to descend the sun was dipping his disk behind the western horizon. Beyond the valley, we could see two distant Mountains. Mount Hood & Mount St. Helens. We had yet to descend a hill as long but not as steep or stoney as the others. By this [time] our horses were in haste to see camp as well as ourselves, & mine made such lengthy strides in descending that it shook my sides surprisingly. It was dark when we got into camp but the tent was ready for me, & tea also for Mr. MacLeod invited us to sup with him. We are now on the west side of the Blue Mountains.

August 29, 1836, was a very difficult day. The party rode northwesterly toward Sugar Loaf Mountain and nooned ten miles east of Kamela, having traveled just 8.5 miles since morning. Their afternoon was spent climbing Spring Mountain (where the trail resembled a newly Macadamized road), and then descending it to the point where Owsley Creek joins East Meacham Creek. They continued from there to Meacham Creek. After negotiating an even more

⁵⁰This route, now known as the Whitman Trail was first used by Nathaniel Wyeth and Jason Lee in 1834. Please refer to the Wyeth Route narrative for further description of this trail over the Blue Mountains.

difficult ascent of the canyon wall opposite Horseshoe Ridge, on the ridge crest, the Whitmans could see two distant mountains, Hood and St. Helens far to the west. That evening the Whitman party continued over Gibbon Ridge toward Squaw Creek, where they made their evening's camp and Narcissa enjoyed a cup of tea.

The next day, the Whitmans and their horses rested along Squaw Creek and the Umatilla River. On August 31, the Whitmans traveled again, following an Indian trail from the mouth of Squaw Creek to Saddle Hollow Ridge. After coming out of the canyon, the Whitmans crossed Wildhorse Creek near Athena and Adams. Although they rode 30 miles that day, Narcissa wrote that "We galloped most of the way." The exhausted Whitmans rode over the breaks east of VanSycle Canyon into the basin of the Walla Walla Valley, stopping eight miles from Pambrun's post at Fort Nez Perces. Mr. MacLeod continued to the Fort to announce the arrival. The next morning, horses and riders alike were eager to rest in more comfortable lodgings. On September 1, Narcissa wrote:

If you could have seen us now you would have been surprised, for both man and beast appeared alike propelled by the same force The whole company galloped almost all the way to the Fort. The first appearance of civilization we saw was the garden, two miles this side of the Fort. The fatigues of the long journey seemed to be forgotten in the excitement of being so near the close. Soon the Fort appeared in sight, & when it was announced that we were near Mr. MacLeod Mr. Pambrun. . . sallied forth to meet us After the usual introduction & salutation, we entered the fort & were comfortably seated in cushioned armed chairs.

The Spaldings arrived the next day. After such effort, the Whitmans were happy to rest, pampered by the HBC's gracious hospitality. They rested there for nearly a week. Narcissa wrote of her delight in the "guest room" (a converted gun cache), the roosters crowing, and the pleasure of eating melons ("the finest I think I ever saw"), salmon, pork, and beef, cabbages and turnips, and fresh butter.

The Whitmans, Spaldings, and their hosts traveled the remaining 300 miles by bateaux on the Columbia River, from Fort Nez Perces to Fort Vancouver. Their trip took just 6 days.⁵¹ The missionary wives stayed the winter at Fort Vancouver. Whitman, Spalding, and William Gray traveled back to Fort Nez Perces to locate mission sites.

Whitman selected a place near the Walla Walla River. A day's ride east from Fort Nez Perces, the site had good water, rolling fields, and tall grasses. He called it Waiilatpu, the Cayuse word describing the place where the rye grass grows. Whitman sent Gray back to Fort Vancouver to retrieve tools and supplies. Then, guided by Nez Perces, Whitman joined Spalding's search for another mission site. Spalding selected a location about 100 miles east of Whitman's place, 12 miles north of the junction of the Clearwater and the Snake Rivers at Lapwai, the place of butterflies.

Spalding began immediately building his post among the Nez Perces, while Whitman returned to Waiilatpu to work with the Cayuse and Walla Wallas. Although the Tribes held widely differing cultural perspectives toward work, play and possessions, they quietly shared deep concern for the slowly increasing numbers of whites among them. By 1839, there were

⁵¹ Please see the Upper Columbia River Route for additional information on the route linking Fort Nez Perces and Fort Vancouver.

Hudson's Bay Company employees, Catholic missionaries, Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries and their families in the country. Each summer, a few more white people arrived. Whitman wrote that year: "The Indians are anxious about the consequence of settlers among them, but I hope there will be no acts of violence on either hand. . . ."

Both Whitman and Spalding quickly established their posts. With the help of Indian laborers, the missions were fenced, crops planted, buildings built, and grist mills turned wheat and rye into flour. The missionaries taught lessons from the Bible, as well as reading, and writing.

Whitman willingly provided all he could to whomever was in need, however, in a letter written in 1840, Whitman noted his displeasure in the responsibilities of his post: "I do not think it proper for me to hold the most difficult and responsible station in the mission where all contacts with Traders, Catholics, Travellers & adventurers of every description come in immediate contact & where I have to discharge all the duties of Minister & Physician to the mission".

In May 1840, Narcissa noted a different concern. Although generous in tone, she worried that:

A tide of immigration appears to be moving this way rapidly. What a few years will bring forth, we know not. A great change has taken place even since we first entered the country, and we have no reason to believe it will stop here. Instead of two lonely American females, we now number fourteen and soon may [be] twenty or more, if reports are true. We are emphatically situated on the highway between the States and the Columbia River, and we are a resting place for the weary travelers, consequently a greater burden rests upon us than upon any of our associates--to be always ready.

Beyond the missionaries' immediate realm, life in the West was changing. Many fur-bearing animals had been over-trapped in the HBC's effort to provide skins for the lucrative European markets. The streams and rivers were empty. Because of newly opening trade routes to the Orient, fine silk hats were replacing beaver hats among Europe's fashionable elite. With the fur trade in decline, the trappers and traders found little to hunt and less to trade. The destitute and bored mountain men occasionally joined together and continued to work to provide for a declining market, but some just moved on to other ventures.

Jim Bridger and a brigade, including Joe Meek, Doc Newell, Caleb Wilkins, among others, gathered at Green River in 1840 for what was to be the last of the big rendezvous. Andrew Drips arrived from St. Louis with trade goods, noting as he entered camp that this too, was the last of the supply caravans. Drips was accompanied by independent missionaries hoping to settle in the West and join the effort to convert the Indians. A family of "bona fide" settlers, Joel Walker, his wife and five children, joined the group. When Drips turned back toward St. Louis, the independent travelers hired Doc Newell and Joe Meek to guide them as far as Fort Hall. At Ft. Hall the missionaries, as promised, gave Newell two wagons as pay. The Walkers decided at Fort Hall to abandon their wagons, too, and Caleb Wilkins claimed one of them. The missionaries and their families stayed on at Fort Hall. The trappers, with their Indian wives and families headed west for the Oregon Country with three wagons and a small herd of cattle.

families headed west for the Oregon Country with three wagons and a small herd of cattle.

Meek, Newell, and other emigrants of 1840 endured the same difficulties with horses and wagons as those suffered by the Whitmans and Spaldings as they crossed overland in 1836. At Fort Boise, the boxes were taken off the frames to increase traveling speed. When the group arrived at Waiilatpu in September, the wagons were still intact, and the Whitmans the other missionaries were delighted.

Newell recalled:

In a rather rough and reduced state, we arrived at Dr. Whitman's mission station in the Walla Walla Valley, where we were met by that hospitable man, and kindly made welcome and feasted accordingly. On hearing me regret that I had undertaken to bring wagons, the Doctor said, "O, you will never regret it. You have broken the ice, and when others see that wagons have passed they too will pass, and in a few years, the valley will be full of our people." The Doctor shook me heartily by the hand; Mrs. Whitman too welcomed us, and the Indians walked around the wagons, or what they called "horse canoes," and seemed to give it up.

Meek and his companions had found a way to move wagons (such as they were) through the mountains between Fort Boise and Waiilatpu. There was potential for a road development later; if one wagon could cross the Blue Mountains other wagons could pass through as well.

The group traveling with Newell and Meek disbursed once they arrived at Waiilatpu. The missionary families joined the missions. Meek left his daughter, Helen Mar, at the Whitmans' place to be tutored by Narcissa. The mountain men and their families took their wagons to the HBC station at Fort Nez Percés and continued by boat down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver. Newell later shipped his wagon down-river (it became the first overland wagon to reach the Willamette Valley).

By 1841, Whitman had apparently adjusted to his burden in the Oregon Country. In spite of his earlier complaints about providing services and provisions to assorted visitors, Whitman proposed that all of the cultivation, blacksmithing, printing, and mill work be done at Waiilatpu. While he supplied the material needs of the other stations, Whitman argued, the Spaldings and other ministers would have more time for their missionary work. Although Whitman's proposal was not approved among the ministers working in the field, it reflects a subtle shift in Whitman's priorities; he maintained interest and concern for saving souls, but was clearly eager to enhance and reinforce Waiilatpu's status as a supply post. Besides, the missionaries were having a hard time convincing their Indian neighbors to follow the Lord according to the Presbyterian doctrine.⁵²

In July 1841, Whitman wrote: "It has been distinctly my feeling that we are not to measure the sphere of our action and hope of usefulness by the few natives of the country, but, by all that we can see in prospect, both as it relates to a white population and [to counteract a] Catholic

⁵²Joseph describes the Spalding's efforts, considered by many to be the most successful of the American Board missions. The Spaldings taught reading and writing, cultivation techniques, and domestic talents--weaving and sewing, blacksmithing, and milling to their Nez Perce neighbors. In spite of 225 students under the Spaldings' tutorage, between 1836 and 1844 only 21 Nez Percés were converted. Even so, many of the Spaldings' students built farm homes around the mission proper and placed more than 140 acres in cultivation. Many others however, hundreds of Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla and Nez Perce remained unconverted and were slowly growing ever more resentful of the missionaries' methods.

The Whitmans' disappointment over their failure to convert Indians was lessened by the emigrants' arrival that year. Unlike earlier groups, the emigrants of 1841 were entirely self-supporting. The twenty-four persons who arrived did so without sponsorship or subsidy from religious organizations, governments, or business investors.

In the fall of 1842, another group of independent emigrants arrived. Although they left their wagons at Fort Hall and continued overland to Wailatpu, Fort Nez Perces, and the Columbia River on horseback or on foot, 100 persons rested at the Whitmans before moving on.

Medorem Crawford, emigrant of 1842 wrote:

Sept. 10. Below was the most beautiful valley I ever saw. [The Grande Ronde Valley] We found good grass, a delightful road, & a fertile country in the valley, we crossed some small water courses and camp on a beautiful creek at 3 o'clock . . . traveled 20 miles found several well beaten trails leading from camp but none appeared fresh. After dark two [Cayuse] came to camp on horseback. They were of a different tribe than any which we had seen. They had traps and appeared to have been out but a short time. They told us we could get to Wala Wala in 3 days.

Sept. 11 Sunday started at 7:30 o'clock with our Indians for Guide. They took us a northern direction & put us on the companies trail . . . Came to an Indian village at 2 o'clock and camped near them, traveled 18 miles . . . The first thing to be attended to after we camped was to ascertain whether we could get any provisions from the Indians. We found to our great joy they had plenty and instead of starving as we expected we were able to trade enough fish to last us to Dr. Whitmans. There were several lodges & they were well clad & had hundreds of good horses and an abundance of provision. . . . The beneficial influence of the Missionary Society appears to have reached here. They attended morning and evening devotion in our camp.

12 Sept. Monday. . . . Commenced raising a Mountain by degrees [The Blue Mountains] . . . Camped here for the night trav. 10 miles.

Sept. 13 Tuesday. Camped traveled 20 miles.

Sept. 14 Our Indian Guide told us we would get to Dr. Whitman's today but we hardly expected it as our animals were very much jaded. But it was nearer than we expected and we arrived at 3 o'clock and camped near his house traveled 8 m.

Dr. Whitman is a Missionary of the Presbyterian Order he has been in the Country six years. He has a verry comfortable house and is farming to a considerable extent. He has a Thrashing Machine & a grinding mill all under one roof driven by water power. Many Indians around him. . . . We were treated by Dr. and Mrs. Whitman with utmost kindness. We got what provision we wanted on very reasonable terms . . . Sept. 15 Having rec'd verry bad treatment from the Indians we concluded to get away from here as soon as possible & try to find more grass . . . 16 Started at 8 o'clock kept down the Walawala River and camped . . . within 3 miles of the Fort [Walla Walla]. Traveled 12 miles.

In 1842, emigrant Elijah White delivered mail to Whitman from the American Board instructing that Waiilatpu and Lapwai were to be closed. Whitman hurried to Boston to advocate against the closure of the Oregon missions. He reported on the region's great potential for agriculture, industry, and commerce. He reiterated his opinion that it was essential to secure the place for the United States, build a solid Protestant community, and prevent the spread of Catholicism among the Indians. He announced recruiting efforts, too--the missions needed farmers, carpenters, and others to help build communities while the missionaries were building disciples.⁵³ In spite of Whitman's enthusiastic and persuasive presentations, there was still no viable wagon road from Fort Boise to Whitman Mission. It was a nagging question for both the Board members and for Whitman.

After listening to Whitman's reports, the Board granted permission for continued operation *if* there was no additional expense to the organization. With this mixed blessing, Whitman turned westward in early 1843, and with his only recruit, a nephew, began the return trip to Waiilatpu. When they arrived at Independence, they found a 1,000 emigrants, 125 wagons, and several thousand head of cattle and horses ready to move west to Oregon. With renewed hope and the experience gained from his two previous overland trips, and with memories of Meek's and Newell's arrival with an intact wagon frame, Whitman helped others lead the wagons west.

Even before arriving at Fort Hall, several persons on the 1843 wagon train began worrying over rumored difficulties crossing the Blue Mountains. At the Fort, the HBC's chief trader, Richard Grant, tried to convince the travelers that their wagons could not be taken much further. Grant was new to the post and had recently traveled from Fort Nez Perces on horseback over a rough horse trail. He said, flatly, that wagons could not go over the same route. Peter Burnett, an emigrant traveling with Whitman (and later governor of California), remembered Grant suggesting that although it was not impossible to take wagons over the Blues to Fort Nez Perces, *per se*, Grant himself could not see how it could be done.⁵⁴

Whitman, however, insisted that the wagons could get through. Wagons had been over the Blue Mountains once before and "what could be done once could be done again." Whitman told the emigrants he would get them to the Columbia River if he lived; that if they just kept their wagons and followed him, he would get them through. The emigrants agreed to follow, but only if Whitman would serve a captain and pilot for the remainder of the trip.

Whitman stayed true to his word and guided the wagon train into the Grande Ronde Valley, where he received news that Eliza Spalding was in labor at Lapwai and needed his help. Whitman hurried ahead after first instructing his friend Sticcus, a Cayuse who spoke no English (but communicated with the emigrants through pantomime), to guide the long wagon train through the western Blues.

⁵³ Whitman apparently neglected to report that the Cayuses were threatening trouble for the missions. Confusion over which of the two Christian perspectives (Catholic or Protestant) was the true religion and Dr. Whitman's close associations with the ever-increasing emigrant wagon trains further frustrated and infuriated tribal members.

⁵⁴ Lavender suggests that Grant's motive may have indeed been in the best interests of travelers. Others, however, took his admonitions as an effort to stop wagon travel to the Columbia. Later rumors link Grant's warnings to HBC plots to keep Americans out of the Oregon Country.

Ninevah Ford, an emigrant of 1843, wrote of Sticcus: "Wherever he directed us to go, there we went, without searching for any other route . . . He found us a pretty fair route for getting through. The Indian did not look about much, he was familiar with the ground."

Edward Henry Lenox, another emigrant of 1843, recalled that

Sticcus had with him his wife and two daughters, and at our evening devotions that night the two girls sang beautiful hymns, and Sticcus himself offered a short prayer. [Then] Sticcus mimed, 'Prepare your axes for you will need them tomorrow.' The next morning Captain Lenox detailed sixteen men with axes to cut out logs. At half past eight we started up the Blue Mountains, following the axe men, who cut out the logs from our way as fast as we could travel . . .

As the wagon train crested the western ridge of the Blue Mountains, groups slowed and dispersed, coming into the mission over several weeks' time. By the end of September 1843, the first wagons rolled across the Walla Walla River near Waiilatpu.

James Nesmith wrote on October 5, 1843,

Started about noon for the trail for Dr. Whitman's. Traveled eight miles and encamped for the night. Sticcas, a very friendly Indian who piloted us across the Blue Mountains accompanied us to-day and camped with us tonight. Friday, October 6. This morning I joined with Otey and Haggard and went on with the carriages to Dr. Whitman's, where we arrived about two o'clock.

Tending to Eliza Spalding, Whitman was away from Waiilatpu for most of the migration's passing. Fearing problems while her husband was in the East, Narcissa retreated to Fort Vancouver and she, too, was away from the mission when the main body of the wagon train passed the post. Emigrants needing supplies and aid were met by Mr. Geiger, an emigrant of 1842 who worked for Whitman.

Mr. Lenox wrote:

We found a Mr. Geiger in full charge of the Whitman Station. Here my father found it necessary to get new oxen, ours were so worn out, so we traded our five oxen for two fresh ones, with Mr. Geiger, working our cows to make a team.

John McClane wrote:

[Dr. Whitman] furnished the emigration with fat beef. Our cattle were all poor. He furnished then with fat steers some weighing 1500 lbs., the finest beef I ever saw. He furnished one of these big steers for two head of our cattle. If persons had not had anything to trade with he would let them have the meat anyhow. He was one of those men who would divide the last thing he had.⁵⁵

⁵⁵It would be interesting to note whether McClane's remarks were made before or after the massacre.

Not everyone reported on Whitman and Waiilatpu in such generous terms. William Newby recorded in his journal of 1843:

We lay buy within 3 miles of Doct Whitmans, a mishionary astablishment, to git provision . . . & the emigrants was much disappointed, as the Dr. had got them to come . . . with promices of provisions cheep, & was surprised by high prices that we had to pay for all we got: be[e]f 10 cts, pork 15 ct[s], potatoes \$1.00, flour without bolting 7 c[ts].

Another emigrant was more vehement. Daniel Waldo wrote:

Whitman lied like hell . . . He wanted my cattle and told me the grass was all burnt between this place and the Dalles. I told him I would try it anyhow. The first night I left [for] the Dalles I found the finest grass I ever saw, and it was good every night.⁵⁶

Peter Burnett, noted that the long duration of the overland effort may have spoiled some emigrants' perspectives:

Men under such circumstances, become childish, petulant, and obstinate . . . I remember that while we were at the mission of Doctor Whitman, who had performed such hard labor for us, and was deserving of our warmest gratitude, he was most ungenerously accused by some of our people of selfish motives in conducting us past his establishment, where we could procure fresh supplies of flour and potatoes. This foolish, false, and ungrateful charge was based upon the fact that he asked us a dollar for a bushel for wheat, and forty cents for potatoes. As our people had been accustomed to sell their wheat at from twenty to twenty-five cents, in the Western States, they thought prices demanded by the Doctor amounted to something like extortion, not reflecting that he had to pay at least twice as much for his own supplies of merchandise and could not afford to sell his produce as low as they did theirs at home . . .

Jesse A. Applegate, among those traveling in 1843, later recounted still another perspective:

Journeying from our camp on the Umatilla, we passed across what seemed to me to be a kind of sandy desert, with at times rocky ground, sage brush, greasewood, and occasionally a few willows. We passed Whitman's Mission (some called it a station); situated in about such a country as last above described. There was nothing cheerful or inviting about the place; a low and very modest looking house or two, the doctor in the yard and one or two other persons about the premises, are about all I remember. . . I think we did not halt here, but just passed along by the place. . . After passing Whitman's the aspect of the country continued about the same to the Columbia River. Drifts and hummocks of dry sand, sage brush occasionally, and everything dry, dusty, and dreary all the time. At this place on the

⁵⁶It might be said in Whitman's defense that he had not seen the grass between the mission and The Dalles for more than a year when this was reported. It is not clear whether Whitman himself negotiated the livestock trades or if it was initially negotiated by Geiger and then continued by Whitman.

Columbia was built another Hudson's Bay post, Fort Nez Perces.. . . Mr. McKinley was in charge of the post of Walla Walla, and was very kind and accommodating to the emigrants. There were many Indians here. . . There had been at this place mission establishments, both Catholic and Protestant, and this trading post had been for several years in this part of the country. . .

Although the arrival of the 1843 emigration caused the HBC to accelerate its plan of transferring its fur trade from Fort Vancouver to Fort Victoria, Whitman reported his continued concerns for America's rights in the Oregon country to the American Board:

I feel that this country must either be American or else foreign and mostly Papal. If I never do more than to have been one of the first to take white women across the mountains, and prevent the disorder and invasion which would have occurred by the breaking up of the present emigration, and establishing the first wagon road across the border, to the Columbia River, I am satisfied.

Whitman reflected further on the 1843 emigration and its impact:

I had adopted Oregon as my country, as well as the Indians for my field of labor, so that I must superintend the emigration . . . which was to lay the foundation for the speedy settlement of the country is prosperously and safely carried through; but if it failed and became disastrous, the reflex influence would be to discourage for a long time any further attempt to settle the country across the mountains, which would be to see it abandoned all together . . . I have returned to my field of labor and on my return brought a large immigration of about a thousand individuals safely through the long, and the last part of it an untried route to the western shores of the continent.

Although none of the families Whitman guided across the trail stayed on at the mission, many bought supplies--wheat, potatoes, beef, pork, corn, and other provisions--before continuing westward. Whitman's supplies were so depleted by the emigrant wagon train that he and Narcissa depended on the Spaldings for provisions to survive the winter. The Whitmans were also heartened--the wagon train of 1843 had not only routed a road to the Columbia, it also demonstrated the real need for trade and aid along the road to the Columbia. The Whitmans had a ready and very needy market.

After a winter's rest following the arrival of what was later called the Great Migration of 1843, Whitman wrote to his parents:

As I hold the settlement of this country by Americans rather than by an English colony most important, I am happy to have been the means of landing so important an immigration on to the shores of the Columbia, with their wagons, family, stock all in safety. . . .

Whitman reaffirmed his opinions in a letter to the American Board written in early Spring, 1844:

Perhaps in some way, as we have so eminently aided the Government by being among the first to cross the mountains, and the first to bring white women over, and last but not least, as I brought the late emigration on the shores of the Columbia with their wagons contrary to all former assertions of the impossibility of the route, we may be allowed the right of private citizens by taking lands in the country.

A. Hinman, emigrant of 1844 later remembered:

It has always been known that under the direction of Mr. Whitman the mission was a great assistance for the immigrants in the matter of furnishing supplies, and that great suffering would have been incurred in many cases if it had not been for the existence and policy of the mission. No one, however, but an eye witness could adequately impress upon us the sacrifices with which this was often accomplished. . . . During the winter of 1844 the family at the mission had nothing by way of meats for their own use but the necks of the beef, which were made eatable by boiling, while the better parts were distributed among the immigrants. Mrs. Whitman was not always so long suffering as her husband, and would sometimes protest that it was not fair that the emigrants should get all the best parts, while only the leavings were available for the family. To these protests Mr. Whitman would reply, in a jesting tone, that he could stand the scolding of his wife far better than he could stand the complaints of the immigrants, and so it went on through the winter. . . . Supplies were never refused, and if they could not be paid for they were practically given.

Whitman wasn't alone in his entrepreneurial efforts. As travel along the trail increased, so did opportunities to trade. Trading fresh livestock for worn livestock was common and the Cayuse quickly seized opportunities to trade thin stock for fat ponies. The open range's good grasses sustained the animals through the year and trade provided a cyclic supply of the beasts. Other tribal groups grew grains and produce for trade. The route between the Grande Ronde Valley and the Whitmans' place was dotted with trading opportunities for emigrants and Indians alike. Those who traveled west carried with them many of the eastern prejudices about Indians; few realized the Indians' vital role in trade and economics along the route. The Nez Perces and Cayuse were badly treated by the newcomers.

The emigration of 1844 was larger than that of '43, numbering about 1,500. Narcissa tried to muster strength and humor before the emigrants' arrival, but failed. She wrote to her friend Mrs. Brewer at The Dalles on August 5: "We are all of us, I suppose, on the eve of another such scene as last fall -- the passing of the emigrants-- and as it falls the heavier upon my friends at The Dalles, I hope that they have laid in a good stock of strength, patience and every needed grace for the siege."

By October, anticipating the emigrants' needs weighed even more heavily on Narcissa:

It is now the last of October and they have just begun to arrive with their wagons. The Blue Mountains are covered with snow, and many families, if not half the party, are back in or beyond the mountains, and what is still worse, destitute of provisions and some of them clothing . . . Here we are, one family alone, a way mark, as it was, or center post, about which multitudes will or must gather this winter. And these we must feed and warm to the extent of our powers. Blessed be God that He has given us so abundantly of the fruit of the earth that we may impart to those who are thus famishing.

Whitman wrote the same day to the American Board: "The immigrants are passing and must be for some weeks yet, as the season is now so far advanced, and many desire to winter with us. I have given no one any encouragement for staying . . . "

Edward Evans Parrish, described the travail from the emigrant's perspective. On October 19, 1844 he wrote: "We are camped again on the Uvilla about six miles down. Here the packers who were sent after flour to Dr. Whitman's met, or rather, overtook us with flour and meal."

Sunday, October 20, he continued:

The rain continued moderately through the night and it is cloudy and rainy this morning. This company is going to separate this morning. The families who go on toward The Dalles are: Hoover, Welch and Nelson. Parrish, Cave and Hawley are going to Dr. Whitman's to winter and try it again in the spring. We are twenty miles down the river and have to go back again to the forks of the road twenty miles up river. This I hate. If the packers who went after flour had returned and met us at the forks of the road it would have saved us forty miles travel. We drove back and camped in the narrows between the bluff and the Uvilla River.

Tuesday, October 22, Parrish wrote:

We had a storm of wind and rain last night. All in good health except Rev, Mr. Cave's son William. Having a little wood and water left, we got breakfast. Drove on and camped where we have grass, wood and water. Our cattle are almost overdone and Mr. Hawley has gone to the Doctor's to engage houses and accommodations for himself, Mr. Cave and I. He is expected to return this evening.

October 23:

This morning we saw . . . packers from the back companies. They say the snow is nearly knee deep and they are camped [in the Blue Mountains]. Most deplorable, indeed. We made a fine escape, for which we thank God. Mr. Hawley did not return as expected last night, so we drove on and soon met him. We drove hard and reached the Doctor's at night. Mr. Cave and Mr. Hawley got a room together and I remained in the tent.

Several 1844 emigrant groups by-passed the trail branching off to the Whitman Mission, now referred to as a "side trip." A more direct path route had been traced westward from the Umatilla River crossing. William Shaw, recounting his experiences for H. H. Bancroft, noted that he went to where Whitman lived at the Walla. . . "We did not take all the emigrants there, but I went there myself to lay in provisions . . . I took the Sager children to Whitman's. . . I left the trail and went off with those children. Dr. Whitman took them."

Although the emigrants who stopped in at the Whitman Mission arrived late and were few, long visits and brisk trade (as noted by William Shaw and others) inspired the Whitmans to optimistically plant as early as possible in the spring of 1845 and lay in as many supplies as they could before the emigrants' arrival. In letters home, Whitman reiterated Waiilatpu's importance: "No country now open to settlers presents such a field of enterprise, as this near vicinity to the Pacific Ocean offers a large promise of commercial advantage. . . . I have had much to do with supplying emigrants for the last two years."

However, good weather and increased trade along the Trail's route made the traveling easier for emigrants; fewer arrived in poor condition, fewer needed Whitman's goods or services. In a letter written in September 1845, Whitman lamented: "Few of the immigrants call on us. Four hundred and fifty wagons passed Fort Hall but from seventy to one hundred went to California."

There were, apparently, other reasons for the emigrants bypassing the Whitmans' place: Dr. Elijah White⁵⁷ and a small party, eastward bound (to deliver a memorial of the Provisional Legislature to the US Congress in Washington, D.C.), met the westward emigration. Some asked White if they could obtain supplies at the Whitman station. Although assuring them that they could, White reportedly recommended that the emigrants bypass both Waiilatpu and Fort Nez Percés by crossing the Blue Mountains then following the Umatilla River instead of the Walla Walla to the Columbia. The emigrants could find all the provisions they needed, he said, at The Dalles.

Nancy Osborne, an emigrant traveling with her family in 1845, later recalled:

While along the north bank of the Snake River we met Doct. White who told us of Dr. Whitman at Waiilatpu where we could get provisions. When we reached the Grande Ronde Valley, John B. Courtney and his son John were sent ahead with a little gray mare to secure provisions from Dr. Whitman. On their return to our party, they told us of the need of a mill-wright at Waiilatpu as the Indians burned the mill which Dr. Whitman had erected there. They had told the Doctor of my father as a man who would suit his need, and so we parted from our friends at the foot of the Blue Mts. near the old Cayuse station and wended our way to Waiilatpu, our first camp being near where Athena now is . . .

⁵⁷Elijah White was the early leader of the 1842 emigration. He was also among those who felt that Whitman "extracted exorbitant prices for goods" and publicly denounced the Presbyterian's efforts. In a chance meeting on an Oregon City street, The two men engaged in a very public row over White's perceptions of Whitman's unfair trade practices. Witnesses suggest that Whitman came away the victor, perhaps steeling White's resentment and bitterness. By encouraging the emigrant train of 1845 to by-pass Whitman's station and buy necessary goods at The Dalles, White dealt a great blow to Whitman's success at the mission. According to Drury, White may have also encouraged the development of another route, "blazed" by Stephen Meek, Joe Meek's elder brother and guide of the disastrous Meek cutoff of 1845.

Joel Palmer wrote in his journal on September 12, 1845, "Some of our party becoming scant of provision, started for Dr. Whitman's, the missionary establishment referred to [by Elijah White], intending to rejoin us at Umatilla river, my old friend, Aliquot, generously proffered his services as pilot for them, which were readily accepted."

Although persons traveled to the mission for aid and supplies, the main stem of the trail shifted southward, away from Whitman's station. Many emigrants of 1845 followed White's advice. The road was shorter and supplies could be bought at The Dalles, but as many later discovered, there was no savings in the effort. In some cases, the prices were higher there and supplies more limited. To mitigate the Mission's potential losses, Whitman loaded wagons and traveled to meet the wagon trains on the Umatilla River.

On September 17, Palmer noted:

At eight o'clock this morning, the men who had left us at Grande Round for Dr. Whitman's station, rejoined us, accompanied by the doctor and his lady. They came in a two horse wagon, bringing with them a plentiful supply of flour, meal and potatoes. After our party had taken some refreshment, the march was resumed; our visitors accompanying us to our camp four miles down the river.

On a different note, Whitman reported in April 1846 to the American Board:

I wrote you in the fall about my dealings with the emigrants & told you I had not much call from them. This was owing to Doct. White's telling them they could get a full supply of flour at the Dalls . The result was that they would not buy from me . . .

The emigration of 1846 was smaller than that of 1844 or 1845 from the beginning--2500 left Missouri; 1500 or 1600 came to Oregon, the others went to California. Many emigrants traveled the Applegate Trail. Those who did not, followed the Oregon Trail's cutoff along the Umatilla River.⁵⁸ Whitman's post was used only by those desperate for provisions or medical care, or needing repairs. "Thus far," Whitman wrote in September 1846, "no calls have been made upon me for provision."

In the weeks that followed, normally high in emigrant activity and trade, few emigrants needed Whitman's services. In April 1847, he wrote:

Of those who stopped, four were very sick. Two or three must have died in all probability if they had not stopped and obtained medical aid and rest. Three births have occurred among those who stopped: --the expectation of that event caused them to stop with us for the winter. In all six families besides eight young men wintered with us.

The migration of 1847 was unprecedented: Four to five thousand emigrants traveled west over the Oregon Trail. All resources were put to the test; the sheer number of emigrants

⁵⁸The cutoff, which bypassed the Whitman Mission, took emigrants to the Umatilla River near present Pendleton, then crossed the Columbia Plateau to the Columbia River was ironically called "Whitman's Cutoff."

increased both the opportunity and the need for trade along the route. The traveling emigrants also increased pressure on the tribes. Concerns over the flood of people crossing mountains ranges and prairies combined with the long-held concerns about changes to the land and tribal cultures. During the first stages of a tragic season, the situation worsened--emigrants' reports of harassment and plundering by tribes increased.

Loren B. Hastings wrote on October 10, 1847:

We learned that the Walla Walla Indians had robbed several wagons and killed one white man and the whites had killed their chief, so we intend to take Whitman's near road.

On October 11, he continued:

Crossed the river and came in company with about 40 wagons bound for Whitman's new road [the cutoff to The Dalles]. Struck the road at a creek about 13 miles and all camped . . .

Amidst all the pressures of the overland migration, the measles virus was carried into Indian villages in blankets and clothes.⁵⁹ It spread quickly. When the medicine men were unable to cure the disease, the Indians looked to Dr. Whitman for care. The mission was overwhelmed with sick and dying people, Indians and emigrants alike. His cures were more effective for the emigrants than for the Indians, who had never been exposed to the measles and therefore had no means to build immunities. As Indians died and emigrants recovered, rumors began to spread that the Doctor was using bad medicine against the Indians.

Fear and concern grew into anger. Tensions created by the Mission, the road, the ever-increasing whites, limited access to open lands, and the diseases exploded violently. Although worries and rumors about an attack were constant within the white community and tribal groups, on the morning of November 29, 1847, what had been feared became real. Several members of the Cayuse tribe, armed with the Mission's tools and implements, killed the Whitmans and several of their stewards.⁶⁰

News spread quickly of the attack and the other missionaries, American traders, and the Hudson's Bay Company traders in the area hurried to help the survivors, moving them to safety, then providing whatever aid was possible.

In addition to the lives lost in the attack, the station was lost, too. Although business had declined in the last years of its operation, the Whitmans were hopeful for a renewal. Without the Whitmans' management, it was not needed--as a Protestant mission or as a trading post. The route they advocated in the early years had, by 1847, moved south of the mission and only those who were truly desperate for help or supplies veered from the established track. The emigration they so eagerly fostered had essentially proven them unnecessary.

⁵⁹It had been previously understood that several members of the 1847 emigrating group carried the measles and when emigrant wagons were raided, the disease was carried into Indian villages. Recent research into historical epidemics suggests that the disease might have traveled north with tribal members who had traded with the California tribes or missions.

⁶⁰For a detailed exploration of the causes and results of the Whitman Massacre, please refer to the texts identified in the bibliography or contact the Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Walla Walla, Washington.

The Whitmans' role in the days and weeks preceding the massacre continues to be debated. However, the missionaries' role in the events and tensions that accumulated over the years cannot be denied. Whitman's initial accomplishment, bringing white women and a wheeled cart across the Blue Mountains in 1836, was followed in 1840 by his reports back to the American Board that a wagon was able to cross the mountains into Oregon County. When he endorsed an attempt at a wagon crossing and then led the emigrants of 1843 westward, he confirmed his direct role in the westward migrations. The road he opened transported emigrants to him, then away from him, but beyond that, the road also carried families, their belongings, livestock, and diseases. Whitman set in motion a complicated series of events which led directly to his own destruction.

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Existing interpretive sites

SITE: Whitman Overlook

LOCATION: Umatilla National Forest, Forest Road 31 and 3109, approximately seven miles east of I-84, exit 243

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive waysides

SUBJECT/TITLE: Two interpretive signs mark where the Whitmans crossed the summit in 1836 and where the trail leaves the summit and descends into Meacham Creek.

OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Deadman Pass Safety Rest Areas

LOCATION: I-5 at Deadman Pass

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosks

SUBJECT/TITLE: Journey from the Blue Mountains/the trail descended to the Umatilla River

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Umatilla County Historical Museum

LOCATION: City park at train depot/historical museum at Pendleton

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Whitman Mission/Trail to the Mission/Indian and emigrant interactions

OWNER: City of Pendleton

SITE: Tamastslikt Cultural Institute

LOCATION: 6 miles east of Pendleton on Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive Center (open 1998)

SUBJECT/TITLE: Tribal life before, during, after, and since the Oregon Trail

OWNER: Confederated Tribes of Umatilla

SITE: Whitman Mission National Historic Site

LOCATION: 7 miles west of Walla Walla, Washington on WA 12

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center

SUBJECT/TITLE: The Whitmans, the Mission, and links to the Oregon Trail and Native Americans.

OWNER: USDI National Park Service

SITE: Fort Nez Perces (HBC; formerly Fort Nez Perces)

LOCATION: Near Wallula, Washington, just off WA 12

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive sign

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location of HBC trading post

OWNER: Washington State DOT

Corridor resources

Corridor description: I-84 (exit 224) fourteen miles east of Pendleton. North on Old Emigrant Hill Scenic Road to Mission. Mission-Cayuse Road to Cayuse, then Thornhollow Road to Thornhollow. Spring Hollow Road from Thornhollow to Adams. Missouri Gulch Road from Adams to the Havana-Helix Road and on to Helix. From Helix, VanSycle Canyon Road north to the Butler Grade Road. Loop back into Oregon toward Umapine to Sunnyside and north on OR 11 to Walla Walla, then looping around to Wallula and on down the Columbia to Umatilla and back to I-84.

Umatilla County Historical Society Museum, Pendleton

Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, Pendleton

St. Andrews and Crow Shadow, Mission

Pendleton Underground, Pendleton

Hamley's, Pendleton

Greasewood Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, Adams

Reese and Redman General Store, Adams

Thomas and Ruckel Stage Station, Adams

Frazier Farmstead, Milton-Freewater

Ireland House, Milton-Freewater

Still-Perkins House, Milton-Freewater

Walla Walla Valley Traction Co., Milton-Freewater

Fort Nez Percés Museum, Walla Walla, WA

Whitman College, Walla Walla

Downtown Walla Walla walking tour

Walla Walla onion stands

Walla Walla Historic Districts

Mullan Road marker, Walla Walla

Frenchtown Mission Church and Cemetery, Lowden, WA

Site of the 1855 Battle of Walla Walla, Lowden, WA

Twin Sisters near OR-WA state line

Hat Rock State Park, Umatilla

McNary Dam Overlook, Umatilla

Umatilla Historical Museum, City of Umatilla

Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge

Fort Henrietta Park interpretive wayside, Echo

Echo Historical MuseumFort Henrietta archeological site, Echo

Koontz grave and Oregon-California Trails Association pedestal sign, Echo

Echo Meadows, USDI Bureau of Land Management interpretive wayside and hiking trail

Irrigon City Park interpretive markers

Partners and players

Federal and national

- USDI National Park Service
- USDA Forest Service
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Nez Perces Tribe

State

- Oregon Parks and Recreation
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon Tourism Commission
- Travel Information Council
- Oregon Historical Society
- Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Washington counterparts

Regional and local

- certified local governments
- local chambers of commerce
- locals historical societies
- regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
- private land owners

Recommendations

There are several opportunities for additional interpretation along the Whitman Mission Route, and include identifying and marking the Oregon Trail ruts down north slope from Kanine Ridge area. Carsonite markers could be visible from Tamastslikt Cultural Institute and there is great potential in developing a hiking trail down the slope. There is also an opportunity to develop auto tour route connecting resources of Pendleton, Oregon and Walla Walla, Washington areas in a driving loop.

Upper Columbia River Route, 1841-1851

Route description

Emigrants who traveled to the Whitman Mission to buy provisions or services used a direct route, the Upper Columbia River Route, to get to The Dalles from the Mission. The Upper Columbia River Route offered two options: travel by water, or travel along the Columbia River's south bank. Emigrants arrived at the Upper Columbia River Route either by way of Fort Nez Perces or at the confluence of the Umatilla River with the Columbia River.

Emigrants who chose to boat the Upper Columbia River Route risked losing possessions and lives as they traveled down the Columbia to The Dalles. During peak season, the Hudson's Bay Company offered river-worthy bateaux for hire and Indians sold canoes to the emigrants.

Those who stayed on shore followed the Columbia's south bank to The Dalles, negotiating deep sands, rocky shorelines and steep cliffs with foot-sore teams and hastily repaired wagons.

The Upper Columbia River Route was replaced in the late 1840s by the Columbia Plateau Route, a route laid out by Marcus Whitman in response to tribal complaints about the flood of emigrants.



Upper Columbia River Route, 1841-1851

Authority/Recognition

- National Park Service: Management and Use Plan Update, Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association.

Significance

The Upper Columbia River Route was an early branch of the Oregon Trail. About a day's ride (on horseback) west of the Whitman Mission stood the Hudson's Bay Company post Fort Nez Percés. It was a supply post for trappers, traders, and American emigrants. Emigrants "put in" on the Columbia River at the HBC post and floated down river to The Dalles. The River Route was often treacherous, many lost their belongings, a few lost their lives. Some chose to follow the river along the southern shore. They avoided the water's danger, they found other difficulties along the rocky and narrow bank.

Today we traveled leisurely, crossed a small stream, and passed over some very rugged road, the pack trail is some places going along in the steep and almost perpendicular side of the bluffs 100 feet above the Columbia, and rock rising 100 feet almost hanging over the Trail.

James Nesmith, October 15, 1843

Historical context

Although the route traveled by Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery in 1805 was unnamed, it can be easily argued that they were the first Anglo-Americans to travel the Upper Columbia River Route. The Corps of Discovery followed the Snake River to its confluence with the Columbia (at present Kennewick, Washington), a dozen or so miles up-river from the Walla Walla's confluence.

The river's currents carried the Corps of Discovery through the river's rich regions. They described in detail the flora and fauna and the tribes who made this area home. Their descriptions provided enough information to inspire others to follow their lead into the Pacific Northwest, first by English and American trappers and traders, then by overland emigrants.

In the 1810's, Wilson Price Hunt, an employee of the Pacific Fur Company (the Astorians), led an overland expedition which also passed through the area near the Walla Walla's confluence with the Columbia and proceeded on the river to the Pacific Fur Company's post, Fort Astoria.

The West's explorers and mountain men traveled over the route later known as the Upper Columbia Route, including Nathaniel Wyeth, Benjamin Bonneville, Joe Meek, and Robert Newell.⁶¹ The Americans claimed the route as their own from 1841 on.

The Hudson's Bay Company

The Hudson's Bay Company used the river corridor as a conduit from Fort Nez Perces to Fort Vancouver. Fort Nez Perces at the confluence of the Columbia and Walla Walla Rivers was a mud fort built in 1818 by the Northwest Company. When the Northwest Company was amalgamated into the HBC in 1821, the HBC assumed operation of the Fort Nez Perces and, in 1827, moved the post from the Walla Walla's south side to the north side.

The hub of the HBC's activity in the west (Columbia District) was Fort Vancouver, built in 1826. The HBC's Columbia Division was a trapping and trading system that encompassed all the land from the Fraser River south to Spain's border (California's northern boundary) and west from the summit of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. The land held within these boundaries was the focus of a joint occupation agreement signed between the US and the British. Neither government controlled the area, but both had access to the land and its resources. The HBC established water routes and overland routes to move the precious furs from trapping sites through the system of posts and forts to the shipping point at Fort Vancouver. The outlying forts and trading posts (among them Fort Nez Perces) were supply stations, safe houses, and infirmaries as well as places where trappers could trade furs before returning to their trap lines. American entrepreneurs occasionally competed for furs and Indian trade goods in the region, but their influence was generally minimal. The dominant player in the West's fur trade was the HBC.

HBC trappers and traders followed the Columbia River from Fort Nez Perces to Fort Vancouver. In many places, the Columbia's rough cataracts and waterfalls made travel too risky. Portages were established around the most dangerous areas, especially at Celilo and The Dalles, and the Cascades of the Columbia. The trip generally took six or seven days.

The Americans

The established route worked well. In the 1830's, led by HBC guides, the first American missionaries, (Jason Lee, and shortly thereafter, the ill-fated Whitmans) followed the route as well. Narcissa Whitman recorded her first encounter in 1836 with the Upper Columbia River Route:

Sept 7th We set sail from [Fort Nez Perces] yesterday 2 o'clock P. M. Our boat is an open one, maned with six oars and the steersman. I enjoy it much, it is a very pleasant change in our manner of traveling. The Columbia is a beautiful [river]. Its waters are clear as crystal and smooth as a sea of glass, exceeding in beauty the Ohio of the east. But the scenery on each side of it is very different. No timber to be seen. High perpendicular banks or rocks in some places, rugged bluffs and plains of sand is all that greets the eye, as we pass down the waters of this Majestic river, we sailed untill near sunset landed pitched our tents, supped on tea and bread and biter, boiled ham and potatoes, committed ourselves to the care of a kind Providence then retired to rest. This morn arose before sunrise, embarked &

⁶¹Please see the Wyeth, Bonneville, and Whitman Mission route narratives for additional information.

have sailed untill nine o'clock & are now landed for breakfast. Mr Pambruns⁶² cook is preparing it while Husband and myself are seated by a little shrub in the sand writing. . .

8th Came last night to the Chutes,⁶³ a fall in the river not navigable where we slept & this morning before breakfast made portage. All were obliged to land, unload, carry our baggage & even the boat for a half mile. I had frequently seen the picture representing the Indians carrying their canoes, but now I saw the reality. We found plenty of Indians here to assist in the portage. After loading several with our baggage and sending them on, the boat was capsized and placed on the head of about twenty Indians, who marched off with it with perfect ease. Below the main fall of water are rocks, deep narrow channels, many frightful precipices, all this distance. We walked deliberately among the rocks viewing the scene with astonishment, for this once beautiful river seems to be cut up and destroyed by these huge masses of rock. Indeed it is difficult to find where the main body of water passes. In high water we are told these rocks are all covered, the water rising to such an astonishing height. After paying the Indians for their assistance (which was a twist of tobacco each the length of the finger) reloaded went on board, sailed about two miles, then stopped for breakfast. . .

9th We came to the Dalls⁶⁴ yesterday just before noon. Here our way was stopped by two rocks, of immense size and height, all the waters of the river passing between them, in a very narrow channel, & with great rapidity. Here we were obliged to land make a portage of two and a half miles carrying the boat also. The Dalls is a great resort of Indians of many tribes for taking fish, we did not see many however for they had just left. . . Curiosity would lead up to the top of [a] rock to see the course of the river through its narrow channel. . . Took with me a handful of hazel nuts, thought I would divert myself with cracking and eating them, had just seated myself in the shade of the rock, ready to commence work, when feeling something unusual on my neck, put my hand under my cape & took from thence two insects, which I soon discovered to be to be fleas. Immediately I cast my eyes upon my dress before & to my astonishment found it was black with these creatures making all possible speed to lay siege to my neck and ears. . . On opening the gathers in my dress around my waist, every plait was lined with them. Thus they had already laid themselves in ambush against a fresh attack. . . I was not the only sufferer, everyone in the boat was alike troubled both crew & passengers. . . We made fine progress this morning until nine

⁶²Mr. Pambrun, Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun, an HBC clerk at Fort Nez Percés (1832 to 1839), promoted to Chief Trader in 1839. He died in 1841 after being kicked by a horse. Marcus Whitman was among those tending Pambrun during his last hours.

⁶³According to Lawrence Dodd, editor of Narcissa Whitman's journal, Mrs. Whitman referred to Celilo Falls 12 miles east of The Dalles, now inundated by the water behind The Dalles Dam.

⁶⁴The Dalles are the specific structures that gave the place its name, the narrows. It is a twelve-mile-long very narrow stretch of the river's course. These, too, are now covered by water behind The Dalles dam.

o'clock when we were met with a wind & obliged to make shore. The wind that works against us will assist others that are going up the stream. We met Mr. Cowee⁶⁵ last night with the Montreal express.⁶⁶ This express goes from and returns to Vancouver twice a year.

When the Whitmans built their mission adjacent to the Walla Walla River, the Upper Columbia River Route became part of the main road to Oregon's Willamette Valley.

The sparse population of non-Natives worked together to survive and the HBC forts were critical. The HBC had deep and well established ties to the region's Indian population. The traders often intervened on behalf of the American emigrants and, to the chagrin and frustration of some HBC officers, the Americans bought goods and services at the posts. These were, in turn, used to set up farms and homesteads, the foundation for the American wave that settled in the Pacific Northwest.

The River Route

Through the 1840s, the number of Americans migrating across the overland trails (often referred to as the Oregon Trail) grew steadily. For several years, the Upper Columbia River Route was the only option for emigrants enroute to the Willamette Valley.

William T. Newby traveled the Upper Columbia River route by water from Fort Nez Perces:

October 19. We lunched our canoes a bout 2 clock & went a bout 25 miles to the Youtilley Fawls. We had some difficulty . . .

October 20. We continued down the river, passing sevrl rapids &c. Incamping with some wagons &c.

October 22. We continued on & passed 5 verry sevire rapids & encamped at Fawl [Deschutes] River, with more waggeons 12 miles a bove the Meth[od]ist mishion.

William T. Newby, 1843

In 1846, Overton Johnson and William Winter recalled their experience on the river in 1843:

On the first day after leaving the Fort [Nez Perces], one of our canoes, in which there were three persons, one of whom was a lady, in passing through a narrow shoot in the Grand Rapids, struck a rock, upset, and filled instantly. The lady and her husband succeeded in gaining the rock; which was about three feet across the top, and just under the surface of the water. Our pilot succeeded in taking them off in safety, and regained most of their property. We passed on the what is called the Chutes, through many dangerous Rapids; to have accomplished which, would have been very impracticable, without skillful guidance. Here the river is wide, full of large rocks standing out of the water, and falls several feet. We were compelled to make a portage of nearly a mile, over the rocks and sand, carrying our

⁶⁵Mr. Robert Cowie, an HBC Chief Trader.

⁶⁶ The Montreal Express transported pelts to the HBC post in Montreal and returned with goods. The round trip took about six months.

Upper Columbia River Route

canoes and baggage on our shoulders. Three miles below the Chutes, are the Little Dales; where the River runs three hundred yards through a narrow chanel, between high rocks. Here we made another portage of our baggage, and smaller canoe, and with some difficulty hired the Indians to run the others through the rugged canion. A few miles further, and we came to the Great Dales; where we were compelled to leave our smallest canoe and again make a portage of our baggage, a distance of one and a half miles.

O. Johnson and W. Winter, 1846

The Applegate family traveled late in 1843.⁶⁷ Jesse Applegate captured the hope and despair of emigrants traveling the Upper Columbia Route:

At Fort Nez Perces, on the banks of the Columbia River, with our teams about exhausted, we were advised to leave our wagons and animals over winter at that place in care of the Hudson's Bay Company. A portion of the immigrants, including my two brothers' families and my own, accepted the proposition, providing we could secure boats in which to descend the river, as it was supposed we might secure them from the Hudson's Bay Company. Under these considerations we made arrangements with the said company for the care of the latter through winter. We failed in our efforts to obtain boats; having whipsaw and other tools with us, we hunted logs from the masses of driftwood lodged along the river banks, hewed them out, sawed them into lumber and built boats, and with our families and the contents of our wagons, commenced the descent of the river. Dr. Whitman procured us the service of two Indians to act as pilots to The Dalles. From there we thought we would have but little trouble by making a portage at the Cascades. We did well until we reached The Dalles, a series of falls and cataracts. Just above the Cascade mountains⁶⁸ one of our boats, containing six persons was caught in one of those terrible whirlpools and upset. My son, ten years old, my brother's son, Edward, same age, and a man by the name of McClellan, who was a member of my family, were lost. the other three who escaped were left to struggle the best they could until we made the land with the other boats. Leaving the women and children on shore while we rushed to the rescue, it was only with the greatest effort that we were able to keep our boats from sharing the same fate. William Doake, a young man who could not swim, held onto a feather bed until overtaken and rescued. W. Parker and my son Elisha, then twelve years old, after drifting through whirlpools among cragged rocks for more than a mile, rescued themselves by catching hold of a large rock a few feet above water at the head of Rock Island. At the time of the disaster it was utterly impossible to render them any assistance, for it was only with the greatest skill that we succeeded in saving the women and children from the same fate. . . The bodies of the drowned were never recovered. . . . We reached the

⁶⁷Please see the Applegate Trail narrative for more information about the Applegates in early Oregon history.

⁶⁸Near present Rufus, Oregon.

Cascades without any other incidents worth relating. . . . Oh, how we could have enjoyed our [new home] if we could have looked around the family circle and beheld the bright faces that accompanied us on our toilsome journey almost to the end! Alas, they were not there! That long and dreary winter, with its pelting rains and howling winds brought sadness to us.

Along the Shore

Other lives were lost, no doubt, in the Columbia. Many emigrants, those less inclined to test the river or traveling with herds of livestock, followed the river bank to The Dalles. The rough trail was used by emigrants as early as 1842. It was difficult work negotiating the steep cliffs and rocky shorelines with foot-sore teams and cumbersome wagons. Oregon Trail diarists recorded different experiences along the river's shore, but all were struck by the unique qualities of the landscape and climate.

September 16, 1842 Started at 8 o'clock kept down the Walawala River and camped at 1 o'clock within 3 miles of the Fort. Traveled 12 miles. Visited the Fort saw Esqr Crocker, Doct. White had left before noon in the Companies Boat.

All the foremost company had gone by land except Esqr. & Moss who started this evening to overtake them. I had an introduction to Mr. McKenly who is in charge at the fort. The Fort is rebuilding now having lately been burnt. It is situated on a miserable sandy barren place where the sand drifts with the wind like snow. The Walla Walla River empties in and forms the Columbia here.

17. Sept. Saturday started at 9 o'clock drove to the Fort found Mr. McKenly from home not to return until evening could not get the Doct's Things. Drove down the river and camped, traveled four miles. The rest of the company went on. The Banks of the River on each side present tremendous pinnacles of rock mostly perpendicular. We find considerable [amounts] of sage yet in places.

Sept. 18 Sunday. Went to the Fort before breakfast and got our things. Started at [9:30] o'clock lost two animals went back and found [them] and kept down the river, the most of time a steep bluff of rocks was on our left with occasional spots of grass sufficient for camping purposes stopped three hours for dinner, much sand and frequently in large drifts camped near sunset, traveled 12 m.

Sept. 19. Started at 8 a'clock drove on at a good pace very warm day camped in a good spot on the river traveled 15 m.

Sept. 20. Started at 8 o'clock kept down the river very sandy barren country destitute of timber (crossed the Unadilla). Cold wind and a little rain. Mr. Spalding and Lady overtook us at noon rain increased. Camped at 4 o'clock, trailed 18 miles. Considerable rain. Cleared off before bed time. Mr. Gray called at camp on his return from Vancouver.

21. Started at 10 o'clock and parted with Mr. & Mrs. Spalding who in consequence of some intelligence from Mr. Gray resolved to return. Cold wind. Camped at 5 o'clock, trailed 20 miles.

22. Started late, cold wind bad road, trailed 18 miles.

23. Started later, tremendous west wind, lost my horse last night, Indians brought him into camp this morning, very rocky road over steep sidling places, crossed a large creek about noon. Camped at 4 o'clock. Trailed 11 miles.

Upper Columbia River Route

24 th Sept. Started very late, tremendous west wind & sand drifting snow in our faces, passed over some large drifts. came to a tremendous rapid Creek, obliged to take all of our effects over in a canoe which was dangerous. Passed tremendous rocky falls in the River. Large Indian town, traveled 6 m.

25 Sept. Sunday, I feel bad this morning in consequence of getting wet yesterday and my eyes are much affected by the flying sand. Started at 11 o'clock traileed over hills & sidling places, saw a snowy peak which we understood to be Mt. Hood. Passed the Dalls or rapids of the river which is a singular sight.

Medorem Crawford, 1842

James Nesmith and two companions traveled overland with several head of livestock as fall settled over the Columbia River. He described the stretch between the Walla Walla River and the John Day River's confluence in his journal.

Wednesday, October 11. We packed all our effects on two mules and started about eight o'clock [from Wallula Gap, the Walla Walla river's confluence]. Travel leisurely until evening down the [Columbia] river a distance of twelve miles. The river varies from one-half to one mile in width, has bars in the middle frequently; the water is quite clear and beautiful. High bluffs on both sides, not a tree in sight all day. Found a little green grass where we encamped at night near Windmill [Hat] Rock.

Thursday, October 12. Started in good season, traveled all day over a poor, sandy country. Not a tree in sight all day. Met Mr. McDonald and a small party from Fort Vancouver on his way to Fort Hall. He advises us to be on our guard for the Indians, as there are only three of us, and they are very saucy, having three days ago robbed five men of all they had, at the same time drawing their bows and arrows, and threatening to use them if the men did not give up the property. We traveled at least twenty-five miles to-day and encamped a little before sunset, but with little grass for our jaded animals. . . We passed some rocky rapids to-day in several places, but at our camp the river is beautiful, broad, clear and placid, but the barrenness of the surrounding country affords but a dreary prospect to a man from the Western States.

Friday, October 13. Packed up and started about eight o'clock. Traveled down the river over sandy plains. The surrounding country still retains an arid, barren appearance, without timber or grass, but the river itself is most beautiful. Weather fine. Warm days and cool, moonlight nights. Traveled about twenty miles. Camped early in a little ravine, where there is good grass, and is entirely surrounded by willows, in a quiet retire place, hoping that the Indians will not find us. . .

Saturday, October 14. . . . Started early and traveled until late, probably twenty-five miles, which is a hard day's ride over this country of sand and stone.

Sunday, October 15. . . . Today we traveled leisurely, crossed a small stream, and passed over some very rugged road, the pack trail is some places going along in the steep and almost perpendicular side of the bluffs 100 feet above the Columbia, and rock rising 100 feet almost hanging over the Trail. In fact, it was rather

disagreeable riding along the in some places to look down. In the event of your horse making a misstep, himself and rider would be thrown down an awful precipice and buried in the gulf below

James Nesmith, 1843

The shore trail along the Columbia was especially useful to emigrants with livestock. In November, 1844, facing winter, night-time frosts, and overgrazed trails, Edward Evans Parrish wrote:

Monday, Nov 4. A fine morning. . . Drove down the river and came to an uncommonly bad sand hill. We put twelve yoke of oxen to one wagon, and so on until all were up, then camped on a hill. Fine grass here, so we brought the water up from the river.

Thursday. Nov 7. Made a good day's drive and camped on the river. Rained a shower and cleared off, then had a white frost.

Fri. Nov 8. Had a fine, clear day. After a good day's drive camped again on the river. Indians swarm around again to trade. Some have salmon skins, rabbits and one a mink. yesterday one had a weasel. An iron spoon, an old pair of scissors, a pen knife, butcher knife, a sausage cutter and a roundabout were included in their stock and trade, which they had bought of the companies before. The road down the river is generally sandy, though some of it is solid. No timber of any kind. Small willows and cow chips are the chief fuel we have to burn.

Monday, Nov 11. A cool cloudy morning. Looks like snow. Hope it will be stayed a little longer until we poor emigrants get through . . . It did not snow.

E. E. Parrish, 1844

In 1844, emigrants along the Oregon Trail's route began to straighten the path, bypassing the Whitman Mission and following the Umatilla River to its junction with the Columbia River, saving several days' travel. Joel Palmer was among those emigrants who, in 1845, traveled the Umatilla River to the Columbia River. He captured the landscape, its beauty and challenges, in his journal:

September 20. This day we traveled about fifteen miles. For the first eight miles the soil was remarkably rich in appearance, an admixture of sand and loam, and covered with good grass; the stream is lined with timber, in common with many of those that we have passed; the last seven miles was sandy and heavy traveling. The Columbia River presents itself on our right, at a distance of about four miles. The river is in view for miles along this road. The prickly pear is found in abundance. It was our intention to have reached the Columbia before encamping, but from the difficult traveling, were compelled to encamp on the sandy plain, deprived of water, wood, and grass.

September 21. This morning at daylight we started for the Columbia, distance three and a half miles. The river at this place is from a half to three-fourths of a mile in width. It is a beautiful stream; its waters are clear and course gently over a pebbly bottom. Along the Columbia, is a strip of barren country about twelve miles in width; a little dry grass in bunches, prickly pear, and grease wood, dot its surface. With this exception, its appearance was wild and solitary to a great degree;

but sterile as it is in appearance, the view is immediately relieved by the majesty of the river that flows by it. Immediately along the bank of the Columbia is a narrow bottom, covered with green grass, cocklebur, wild sunflower, pig weed, and several other kinds of weeds, all of which were in full bloom. There was something inspiriting and animating in beholding this. A feeling of pleasure would animate our breasts akin to that filling the breast of a mariner, when after years of absence, the shores of his native land appear to view. . . .

September 22. This day we remained in camp, engaged in traffic with the Indians. Some of our party were in want of horses, and took this occasion to supply themselves.

September 23. This day we traveled about twenty miles. The first eight miles, the road is heavy traveling; the remaining portion however is much better, with the exception of the last five miles, which proved to be quite rocky. There is an occasional green spot to be found, but the whole distance we traveled since we first struck the river cannot be regarded as more than a barren sandy plain. In our route today we passed several Indian villages; they are but temporary establishments, as their migratory disposition will not justify more permanent structures.

September 24. This day we traveled but sixteen miles. After a march of seven miles, we arrived at a small creek, a good situation for encamping; nine miles more brought us to Dry Branch [Willow Creek], from whence we proceeded down the bluff to the river; a great portion of the road traveled was sandy and heavy.

September 25. This day we traveled about fourteen miles. The road was quite hilly; sometimes it followed the bank of the river, at others pursued its course along the high bluff. The river is confined to a very narrow channel; country very barren, and the bluffs of great height.

September 26. This day we traveled about three miles. The road ascends the bluff; is very difficult in ascent from its steepness, requiring twice the force to impel the wagons usually employed; after effecting the ascent, the sinuosity of the road led us among the rocks to the bluff on John Days' river; here we had another obstacle to surmount, that of going down a hill very precipitous in its descent, but we accomplished it without loss or injury to our teams. This stream comes tumbling through canyons and rolling over rocks at a violent rate. It is very difficult to cross, on account of the stone forming the bed of the creek; its width, however, does not exceed ten yards. The grazing is indifferent, the grass being completely dried.

September 28. This day we traveled about twelve miles. Two miles brought us to the crossing of the Deschutes or Falls river The mouth of the Deschutes river is near fifteen miles east of the Dalles . . . the river is about one hundred yards wide, and the current very rapid; the stream is enclosed by lofty cliffs of basaltic rock. Four hundred yards from the Columbia is a rapid or cascade. Within the distance of thirty yards its descent is from fifteen to twenty feet. The current of this stream was so rapid and violent and withal such depth, as to require us to ferry it. Some of the companies behind us, however drove over at its mouth by crossing a bar. Preparatory to ferrying, we unloaded our wagons, and taking them apart, put

them aboard some Indian canoes, which were in waiting, and crossed in safety; after putting our wagons in order of travel, and preparing to start, we discovered ourselves minus a quantity of powder and shot, two pairs of pantaloons, which the Indians had appropriated to their own use, doubtless to pay the trouble of ferriage.

In the morning a quarrel ensued among the Indians respecting their canoes, closing in a melee, and such a fight I have never before witnessed; stones and missiles of every description that were at hand were used with freedom. We did not interfere with them, and when they were tired of fighting, the effects of the battle were visible in numerous instances, such as bloody noses and battered, bleeding heads.

We ascended the bluff and traveled along the brink for several miles, then crossed over the ridge to a small creek; after crossing it, we took up a dry run for one or two miles, thence over a ridge to a running branch, and there encamped. The country through which we traveled this day was extremely rough; all prairie, and covered with grass, but dry.

September 29. This day we traveled about five miles, which brought us to the Dalles or Methodist Missions. Here was the end of our road as no wagons had ever gone below this place. We found some sixty families waiting for passage down the river; and as there were but two small boats running to the Cascade falls, our prospect for a speedy passage was not overly flattering.

Joel Palmer, 1845⁶⁹

As early as 1845, the Oregon Trail's route began shorten and as other suppliers (emigrant and Indian) were established on the route, the need for the Whitman's services declined. The mission was by-passed by all those except in desperate need. After the Whitman Massacre in 1847, the mission was closed and use of the Upper Columbia Route declined.^{70/71} The Upper Columbia River Route was replaced in the late 1840s by the Columbia Plateau Route, which led emigrants over the desert far south of the river.

In the 1930's, hydroelectric dams along the Columbia River began flooding the Upper Columbia. Today, most travelers use Interstate 84, which might be considered a modern-day Columbia River route. The river continues to play a vital role in moving goods up and down its length by barge.

⁶⁹ While camped at The Dalles, Palmer and his party watched the vanguard of desperate and hungry emigrants who followed Meek's cutoff begin to arrive in The Dalles. (Please see the Meek Cutoff narrative for more information.)

Palmer headed south from The Dalles along Fremont's road to Tygh Valley where he joined another party, led by Sam Barlow. Together they blazed a route linking The Dalles and Oregon City around the south flank of Mount Hood. The route was known in later years as the Barlow Road.

⁷⁰ Please see the Whitman Mission Route narrative for more information.

⁷¹ By the mid-1840's the HBC was moving posts north into Canada

Bibliography

Scholarly documents

Applegate, Jesse. *Recollections From My Boyhood*. Roseburg, OR: Press of Review Publishing Co, 1914.

Applegate, Shannon. *Skookum: An Oregon Pioneer Family's History and Lore*. New York: William Morrow, 1988.

Beckham, Stephen Dow. "In Their Own Words: Diaries and Reminiscences of the Oregon Trail in Oregon," a report prepared for the Oregon Trail Coordinating Council, Portland OR, 1991.

Rucker, Maude Applegate. *The Oregon Trail and Some of its Blazers*. New York: Walter Neale, 1930.

Government or management documents

Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails: Management and Use Plan Update.
USDI National Park Service, 1998.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Whitman Mission National Historic Site

LOCATION: Walla Walla, Washington

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center

SUBJECT/TITLE: Whitmans; Missionary activities, Tribal interactions and activities, Oregon Trail, HBC, Whitman Massacre

OWNER: USDI National Park Service

SITE: Wallula

LOCATION: US 12, 6 miles north of the OR-WA state line

DESCRIPTION: Stone marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Fort Nez Perces stood here

OWNER: Washington State Department of Transportation

SITE: Stanfield Safety Rest Areas

LOCATION: I-5 near Stanfield

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Fork in the trail: follow Umatilla River to Upper Columbia River Route, or go west through Echo Meadows to cross the Columbia Plateau.

OWNER: Oregon Department of Transportation

SITE: Arlington City Park

LOCATION: Arlington

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants could float on the Upper Columbia River, travel along the south bank of the Columbia River, or cross the Columbia Plateau.

OWNER: City of Arlington

SITE: Columbia Gorge Discovery Center/ Wasco County Historical Museum

LOCATION: The Dalles

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive center and museum; interpretive trail

SUBJECT/TITLE: Oregon Trail and the river

OWNER: Crate's Point, Inc.

Corridor resources

Corridor description: From Whitman Mission National Historic Site, follow US 12 west to Wallula, turn south and follow US 730 through Umatilla and Irrigon to I-84. Continue westbound on I-84 to The Dalles.

Fort Walla Walla Museum, Walla Walla, WA

Walla Walla Historic Districts

Mullan Road marker, Walla Walla

Whitman Mission National Historic Site, Walla Walla

Frenchtown Mission Church and Cemetery, Lowden, WA

Site of the 1855 Battle of Walla Walla, Lowden, WA

Twin Sisters near OR-WA state line

Hat Rock State Park, Umatilla

McNary Dam Overlook, Umatilla

Umatilla Historical Museum, City of Umatilla

Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge

Fort Henrietta Park interpretive wayside, Echo

Echo Historical Museum

Echo Walking Tour

Fort Henrietta archeological site, Echo

Koontz grave and OCTA pedestal sign, Echo

Echo Meadows, USDI Bureau of Land Management interpretive wayside and hiking trail

Irrigon City Park interpretive markers

Deschutes River State Recreation Area

Celilo Park, The Dalles

The Dalles Dam

Partners and players

Federal and national

- USDI National Park Service
- USDA Forest Service
- USDD Army Corps of Engineers
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla

State

- Oregon Parks and Recreation
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon Tourism Commission
- Travel Information Council
- Oregon Historical Society
- Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

- certified local governments
- local historical societies
- local chambers of commerce
- regional visitor associations and tourism groups
- private land owners

Recommendations

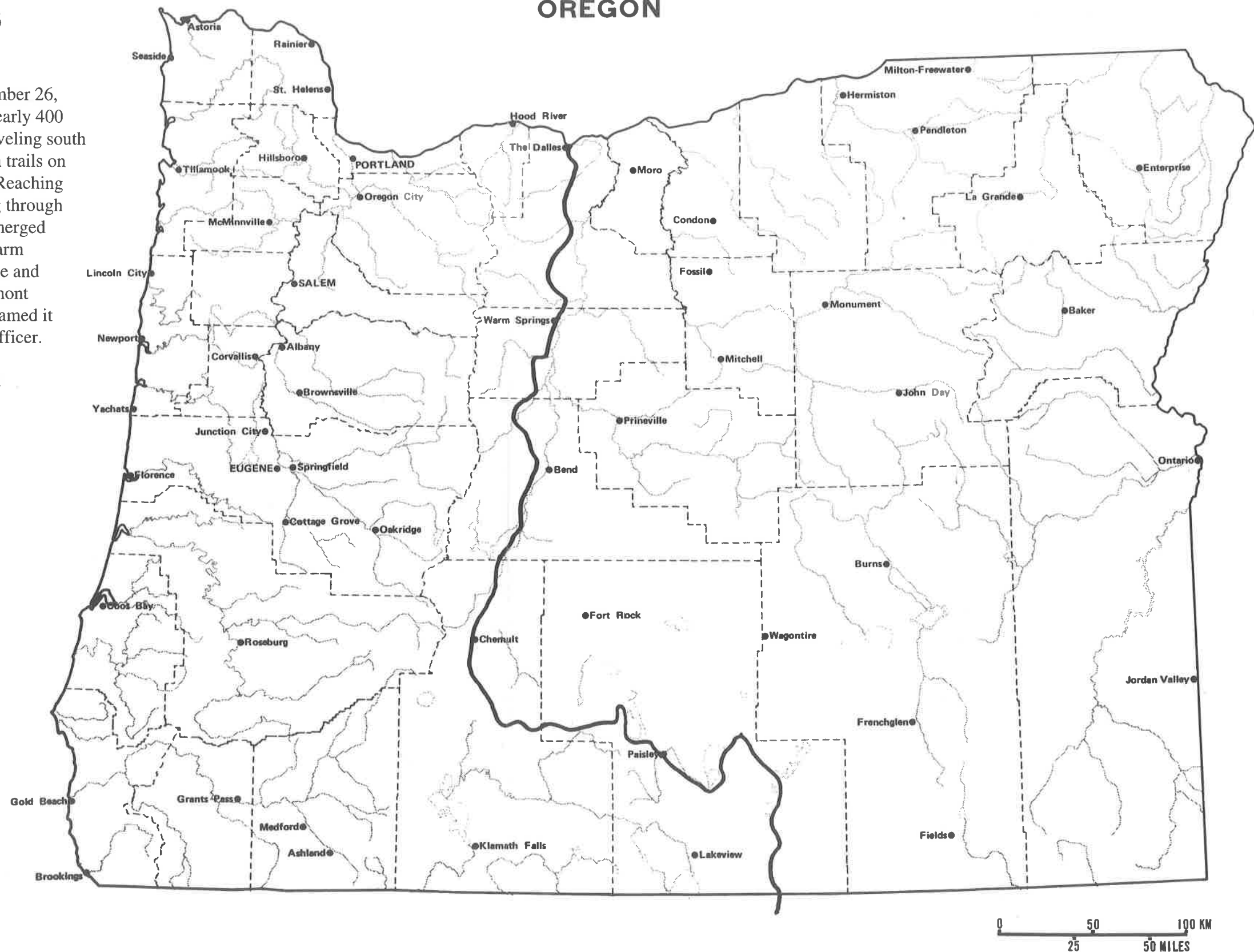
There is an opportunity to link the Upper Columbia River Route with the Whitman Mission Route through a loop auto tour: Pendleton to Tamastslit, to Whitman Mission National Historic Site, to Wallula, to Umatilla, to Stanfield/Echo, to Pendleton.

OREGON

John Fremont Route, 1843

Route description

From November 25 through December 26, 1843, the Fremont Expedition traversed nearly 400 miles of central and southern Oregon. Traveling south from The Dalles, Fremont followed Indian trails on a course paralleling the Deschutes River. Reaching Klamath Marsh, he turned east. Struggling through the mountain snows, Fremont suddenly emerged on a precipice overlooking a sunny and warm basin; he named the two sites Winter Ridge and Summer Lake. Continuing southeast, Fremont encountered a similar body of water and named it Lake Abert in honor of his commanding officer. Going north and then turning southeast, Fremont crossed to the Warner Valley and celebrated Christmas at Hart Lake.



John Fremont Route, 1843

Authority/Recognition

- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057

Significance

John Fremont's expeditions of 1842 and 1843-44 were the most spectacular reconnaissances of the American West since Lewis and Clark. Performed under the auspices of the Army Bureau of Topographical Engineers, the expedition's published reports and maps brought a factor of dependability and trustworthiness that would aid American settlement of the West. Fremont's reports provided a chronicle of heroic adventure which inspired western emigration, as well as capturing national attention.

Although the great "pathfinder" would merely follow the established route of the Oregon Trail, his reconnaissance of the Great Salt Lake and his ability to articulate the concept of the Great Basin provided important geographical information about a region that was largely unknown. Fremont's published reports and Charles Preuss' maps became widely used by western travelers and were even quoted by emigrants in their journals.

With the exception of his route taken over the Blue Mountains, Fremont followed the 1843 route of the Oregon Trail from Fort Boise to The Dalles. But at The Dalles, having completed his primary orders to connect his reconnaissance with the surveys of naval Commander Charles Wilkes, Fremont disregarded orders to return to the United States by way of the Oregon Trail. Instead, he explored south from The Dalles along the eastern side of the Cascade Range. This expedition across central and southern Oregon and into the Great Basin and Sierra passes was his most significant contribution to western exploration.

Historical context

John Charles Fremont was born in 1813 in Savannah, Georgia and educated at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. In 1838, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Bureau of Topographical Engineers and accompanied Joseph N. Nicollet's expeditions surveying and mapping regions of the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers in 1838-39. While working with Nicollet, Fremont learned to conduct scientific field work and record observations.

After this apprenticeship, Fremont was given command of his own expedition, a quick survey of the Des Moines River which he carried out in the late summer of 1841. When he returned Fremont married Jessie Benton, daughter of the powerful and influential Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri and the foremost advocate of westward expansion. Already a follower of Benton's politics, Fremont was now assured of Benton's continued support which allowed him great freedom for his explorations and which would ultimately make him a hero in

the cause of Manifest Destiny. Under Benton's influence a small appropriation was made for the Topographical Engineers to dispatch a scientific expedition along the Oregon Trail to the Rocky Mountains; the reconnaissance would be led by his son-in-law Fremont.

Fremont left Washington on May 2, 1842. By the 22nd, he was in St. Louis. Charles Preuss, a German cartographer and scientist, traveled with Fremont and would accompany him on three expeditions, providing scientific validation for Fremont's published findings. Also along was a veteran of the Rocky Mountain fur trade, Kit Carson, whom Fremont had met on the steamboat heading up the Missouri. Hired as the expedition's guide, Carson would later become famous through Fremont's writings.

At Chouteau's Landing, Fremont spent twenty days carefully equipping his party, mostly French *voyageurs*, and started out on June 10 following the route of the Oregon Trail along the Platte River. Being several days behind Elijah White's emigrant caravan, the trail was easy to follow with its many discarded items showing the way. Fremont's expedition followed the regular trail to Fort Laramie, up the Sweetwater, past Independence Rock and Devil's Gate, and reached South Pass on August 8. Fremont then turned north to investigate the Wind River Mountains and picking what appeared to be the loftiest peak, Fremont and four men climbed to the top. On the summit, Fremont raised a special American flag with thirteen stripes and a field bearing an eagle surrounded by two banks of stars. It was a romantic act which coupled with his romantic writings captured the imagination of a young nation. The mountain was named Fremont's Peak.

Fremont then returned to Missouri and with the assistance of his wife Jessie, Fremont wrote his official report as quickly as possible and submitted it to the Senate on March 2, 1843. One thousand copies were ordered printed. The scientific value of the report was limited, but the impression made upon the public mind conveyed an emotion and ideal of heroism.

In early spring, 1843, Colonel J.J. Abert, head of the Topographical Bureau, received a letter from Senator Benton containing suggestions for an expanded survey into the west. Subsequent orders drawn up by Colonel Abert directed Fremont "to connect the reconnaissance of 1842 with the surveys of Commander Wilkes on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, so as to give a connected survey of the interior of the continent." In 1841-42 naval Commander Charles Wilkes had made a reconnaissance in Oregon as far as Fort Nez Percés and had sent the Emmons-Eld party south into California (by approximately the later Applegate Trail). From these surveys, a reliable map of the Northwest was compiled. The plans of the Topographical Bureau and of Benton now called for Fremont to link his expeditions with those of Wilkes and return from Oregon by way of the Oregon Trail.

The 1843-44 expedition started out with 39 men and included French *voyageurs*, mountain men, and a few green hands, including Jacob Dodson, a young Black servant of the Benton household. The guide was legendary mountain man Tom "Broken Hand" Fitzpatrick. Charles Preuss was along to collect specimens, help with the astronomical observations, maintain scientific instruments, and make topographical sketches of the landscape. Preuss and Fremont were the only scientifically trained men on the expedition which carried a very limited number of scientific instruments. Included in the equipment was a howitzer, the presence of which on a scientific expedition was an outrage to Abert and a burden for the party to carry; and although

Fremont considered it useful, it was used only a few times, including once on a herd of buffalo.

More than a thousand emigrants used the Oregon Trail in 1843's Great Migration. Demand for supplies around the jumping off point at Westport made it hard to outfit an expedition. When Fremont got started he was behind the emigration and would follow it all the way to Oregon. The expedition followed the Oregon Trail for a time but turned south to explore the Kansas River. Later the party split into two divisions, Fitzpatrick with the main group of twelve wagons turned northward to the Oregon Trail on the Platte River while Fremont and fifteen men went straight ahead for a survey. The divisions met at Fort St. Vrain, where Fitzpatrick again took the main force to the Sweetwater route of the Oregon Trail while Fremont ventured south to the Arkansas River where Kit Carson joined the party. After abandoning the search for a new route through the mountains up Cache de la Poudre River, Fremont turned north to the Sweetwater and crossed the mountains via South Pass.

Fremont followed the Oregon Trail to Green River and Bear River. There he turned south to explore the Great Salt Lake, one of primary objectives of the expedition. On September 6, after weeks of groping down the valley of the Bear River and across miles of marshy land, they were able to see "the object of our anxious search - the waters of the inland sea, stretching in still and solitary grandeur far beyond the limits of our vision." Fremont used an inflatable rubber boat for a marine reconnaissance, collected plants and rock specimens, and made astronomical observations to fix its exact location on future maps. But perhaps most important were Fremont's general evaluations of the country around the lake and in the vicinity of the Bear and Weber rivers, for it was Fremont's report with its glowing descriptions that persuaded Brigham Young that the Great Salt Lake was the place for his people to settle.

At Fort Hall, the Hudson's Bay Company post on the Oregon Trail, Fremont's expedition was reunited for the first time since Fort St. Vrain. The wave of emigrants ahead of Fremont had left the fort short of supplies, but Fremont intended to press on. When Fremont offered to pay off those who wished to return home, eleven men turned back. From Fort Hall, the expedition followed the Snake River to Fort Boise across a landscape that Fremont characterized as a "melancholy and strange-looking country - one of fracture and violence and fire."

Fremont arrived at Fort Boise (HBC) on October 9. From there, with the exception of his route over the Blue Mountains, Fremont followed the 1843 route of the Oregon Trail from Fort Boise to The Dalles. Trailing about two weeks behind the emigrants, Fremont crossed the Snake River at Fort Boise, went through Keeney Pass, crossed the Malheur River and passed Tub Mountain to Farewell Bend (where in his later report he articulates his concept of the Great Basin for first time). From there, he went up the Burnt River Canyon and over the divide to Powder River, and on to the Grande Ronde Valley.

At the crossing of the Grande Ronde River (north of La Grande), Fremont "determined to leave the emigrant trail in the expectation of finding a more direct and better road across the Blue mountains." The expedition continued on a northern course across the valley following an Indian

trail and encamped on Willow Creek near Imbler. The next day their course took them to Indian Valley (Elgin) where they left the valley and ascended Gordon Creek to the summit.⁷² Fremont's route continued through the vicinity of Tollgate, along the ridge of Linton Mountain (where Mount Hood was observed at a distance of 180 miles), then descended to the Walla Walla River. Whitman's mission was reached the next day, October 24.

When Fremont moved on to the Hudson's Bay Post of Fort Nez Perces, his official orders to "connect with the surveys of Commander Wilkes" were now met; Fremont had reached the Columbia River. For emigrants to Oregon, Fremont considered this point to be the end of the overland journey estimating the distance east to Westport on the Missouri River as 2,000 miles of "necessary land travel in crossing from the United States to the Pacific ocean on this line." At the time of their arrival, Fremont observed the emigrant party led by Jessie Applegate and their nearly completed boats.⁷³ He also noted that "the other portion of the emigration had preferred to complete their journey by land along the banks of the Columbia, taking their stock and wagons with them."

On October 28, Fremont resumed his expedition down the south bank of the Columbia (Upper Columbia River Route) toiling through deep loose sands and over fragments of volcanic rock which proved a sharp contrast to the rapid progress of Applegate's fleet of boats that glided by. Fremont arrived at The Dalles on November 4, just after the last of the emigrants had departed. There he learned of the tragic wrecking of one of the boats and the drownings of Applegate's twelve year old son, a nephew, and a family friend.

Camping near the Methodist mission at The Dalles, Fremont declared the termination of his overland journey. Writing to Fitzpatrick, who was still at Fort Nez Perces, Fremont directed him to abandon the expedition's carts, make pack saddles, and reunite the party at The Dalles from which point they would commence a homeward journey. Kit Carson was placed in charge of camp at The Dalles. Fremont, with Preuss, Bernier, and Dodson, went on by canoe to Fort Vancouver.

Upon reaching Fort Vancouver, Fremont was hospitably received by Dr. John McLoughlin, the Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay post. In just two days Fremont was supplied with the provisions needed to refit and support his expedition for a winter journey to return to the states. Fremont chose not to complete his transcontinental journey with a trip to the Pacific Ocean. Citing the conditions of the rainy season and having fulfilled his mission of connecting with the Wilkes' surveys, he felt he could not justify delaying his return home while waiting for favorable weather. On November 10, in a Mackinaw boat and three canoes manned by Canadian voyageurs and Indians, Fremont started back up the Columbia to return to The Dalles.

After a difficult passage through wind and rain, Fremont arrived again at The Dalles on November 18. The camp was now occupied in making the necessary preparations for a homeward journey. Provisions gained from Fort Vancouver consisted of a three month supply of flour, peas, and tallow. Purchased from the mission were some California cattle which were to be driven on the hoof. Other livestock consisted of 104 mules and horses which would have to rely on what grass could be found as they traveled.

⁷²This route was known as the Walla Walla Trail.

⁷³Please see the Applegate Trail and Upper Columbia River Route narratives for more information.

Fremont announced that the expedition would not be returning home via the Oregon Trail, as directed by his orders, but would instead take a new route, a great circuit to the south and southeast to explore the Great Basin region. In taking this new route, Fremont wished to ascertain the character or existence of three landmarks: an examination of the Klamath Lake area, which he believed formed a table land between the headwaters of the Deschutes and Sacramento rivers; a search for the mythical Buena Ventura River, which was said to flow westward from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific; and a survey of the Rockies near the headwaters of the Arkansas and Colorado rivers. The wisdom of mounting such an expedition at the onset of winter must have been questioned, but Fremont claimed his men welcomed the challenge. In his report Fremont wrote

It was a serious enterprise, at the commencement of winter, to undertake the traverse of such a region, and with a party consisting only of twenty-five persons, and they of many nations - American, French, German, Canadian, Indian, and colored - and most of them young, several being under twenty-one years of age. All knew that a strange country was to be explored, and dangers and hardships to be encountered; but no one blanched at the prospect. On the contrary, courage and confidence animated the whole party. Cheerfulness, readiness, subordination, prompt obedience, characterized all; nor did any extremity of peril and privation, to which we were afterwards exposed, ever belie, or derogate from, the fine spirit of this brave and generous commencement.

Thus late in 1843, having followed the Great Migration of pioneers across the Oregon Trail to Oregon, Fremont would now make what would be his most significant contribution to western exploration: a reconnaissance south from The Dalles along the eastern side of the Cascade Range, over the Sierra Nevadas, and back across the Great Basin. The Oregon portion of this expedition lasted from November 25 through December 26.

New exploration in the Oregon Country

November 25. The expedition started their journey south from The Dalles. The little wagon which had carried Preuss and the scientific instruments was left behind at the mission, but the howitzer was taken along. They started about noon and camped at Fifteen Mile Creek (probably Dufur).

November 26. Views of Mount Adams, Mount Saint Helens, and Mount Hood were noted. Following the right fork of the Indian trail they reached Tygh Ridge, overlooking the Tygh valley, and descended and camped at either Tygh Creek or White River opposite an Indian village.

November 27. Two Indian chiefs who had accompanied Fremont from The Dalles, Stiletsi and White Crane, took their leave. The expedition then ascended the Tygh Prairie crossing Juniper Flat. Near the vicinity of Wapinitia, Fremont observed a small trail taking off toward a low point in the Cascades where he surmised there could be a pass to the Willamette Valley. An early camp was made on Nena Creek.

November 28. The party traversed broken, high country, partly timbered, and crossed a ridge (probably in the vicinity between Simnasho and the Mutton Mountains). To the west, they could see a high plain extending about ten miles to the foot of the mountains (likely Schoolie Flat and Mill Creek Flat). That evening, camp was made in a basin narrowly surrounded by rocky hills.

November 29. They emerged from the basin by a narrow pass upon the Warm Springs River and descending the stream came upon hot springs (Kahneeta) situated on both sides of the river. Fremont commented that those on the east side were formed into deep handsome basins, which would have been delightful baths and measured their temperature at 89 degrees. Those on the other side of the river measured 134 degrees. Crossing the river, they ascended to a high plain and obtained a view of six peaks (Mount Jefferson, Three Fingered Jack, Mount Washington, and the Three Sisters) affirming the chained system that constitutes the Cascade range. The trail paralleled the chasm of the Deschutes River until camp was made on a small stream.

November 30. Continuing along the high plain, the expedition arrived suddenly on the verge of a steep and rocky descent into a drainage running directly across their path from the mountains on the west (the Metolius River, now Lake Billy Chinook). Here Fremont remarked upon chasm-like valleys and vertical precipices which rendered the region impracticable for wagons and which could barely be entered by horses. At such places the howitzer had to be disassembled and separately descended by hand. When they reached the bottom, the expedition continued west a few miles and camped where Fremont collected samples of geologic strata that were later declared to be some of the most remarkable deposits of fossilized Protozoa on record.

December 1. From camp they forded the ice lined Metolius River, where the water was 3-4 feet deep and a hundred feet wide. One of the guides pointed out several salmon traps in the water, one of them about twelve feet in diameter. A steep ascent was made on the opposite side and camp was made on a height of land in a marshy place among the pines where there was an abundance of grass (probably Fly Creek). Here they met a Nez Perce family who had in their herd one particularly fine horse which Fremont sought in trade for a good cow. The wife wanted the cow, but the man loved the horse too much to part with it.

December 2. Travel continued over a stony elevated plain scattered with cedar and pine. As they gained elevation, the snow and ice increased. Camp was made on another large tributary of the Deschutes River (probably Squaw Creek).

December 3. The party traveled up Fremont Canyon and camped on a hillside covered with snow that they used for water because they were unable to reach any stream (probably near Sisters).

December 4. On leaving their camp, they followed a mountain trail, passing over a plain (similar to the course taken by Highway 20) until descending into a valley of another branch to the Deschutes where they found occasional meadows of good grass (probably Tumalo Creek and Shevlin Park).

December 5. The country was all pine forest and the weather too warm for winter clothes. After a few hours ride, they came upon the Deschutes River which they ascended along the west bank. Fremont remarked that in all their journeying, they had never travelled through a country so abounding in falls and that at every place they came near the river they heard the roaring of falls (perhaps Dillon Falls and Benham Falls). An early encampment was made on what had been an Indian camp. A great number of deer horns lay about and leaning against one of the trees was a handsome new set of lodge poles. Fremont noted had the owners been here, he would have purchased them, but as they were not, he left the expedition's own worn out poles in their place along with a small quantity of tobacco.

December 6. They continued up the stream and met a village of Nez Perces with a fine band of horses who appeared to be coming down from the mountains. Also with them were a few Snake Indians (possibly slaves). From the forest, the expedition emerged into an open valley where the river (Deschutes) was very broad and issued from a great mountain ridge to the west. Here they crossed and continued up the southern and smaller branch (Little Deschutes) over a level country consisting of alternating meadows and forest.

December 7. Travel was easy following the stream and Fremont appreciated the great beauty of the country.

December 8. The expedition crossed the Little Deschutes (probably near the confluence of Crescent Creek) and followed the trail leading through the pine forests a little east of south.

December 9. Pleasant weather continued as they followed the trail through pine forests descending very gently towards the south.

December 10. Coming upon an extensive meadow, or lake of grass, surrounded by timbered mountains, Fremont believed they had reached Klamath Lake. (Actually, they had reached Klamath Marsh, some thirty miles north of the lake.) Fremont found it to be a picturesque and beautiful spot rendered even more attractive by the abundant and excellent grass which the expedition's animals badly needed. An encampment was made on the point of land that makes a narrow neck connecting the western and eastern shores of the marsh (Military Crossing Road). Wary of the Klamath Indians and seeing smoke from Indian fires around the marsh, Fremont ordered the howitzer to be fired. The smokes in the distance immediately disappeared.

December 11. Fremont determined to pay a visit to the Indian village in the middle of the marsh. Following their guides who had already made contact, Fremont's party were met by the chief and his wife and escorted into the village. There they found huts grouped together on the bank of the river. The huts were large and round, perhaps 20 feet in diameter, with rounded tops where the door was located to descend into the interior; within, they were supported by posts and beams. Great quantities of small fish, smoked and dried, were suspended on strings about the

lodge. Heaps of straw lay about from which their shoes were made, as well as hats, and parti-colored mats about four feet square which Fremont purchased to lay under blankets and use for table cloths. Fremont found that the language spoken by these people was different from the Shoshone and Columbia tribes; this caused communication to be conducted only by sign language leaving Fremont unable to obtain certain information about the country that lay ahead. The guides who had conducted the expedition thus far were about to return to The Dalles. Fremont tried to persuade the Klamaths to accompany him further, but they refused.

December 12. Fremont's camp was thronged with Indians, but being mindful of the disaster that had befallen Jedediah Smith, the camp was kept on constant guard. According to the best information Fremont had been able to obtain, after a few days' travel east, he would reach another large lake. Breaking camp in a snow storm, the expedition crossed the marsh (at Military Crossing Road) and reaching the east side, turned up into a cove where they found a sheltered place among the timber and encamped (probably Skellock Draw).

December 13. The expedition continued up the hollow and entered an open pine forest on the mountain. Snow was four to twelve inches deep and the howitzer was hard to move. Unexpectedly, the Klamath chief and a few others came to help pilot for a day or two. After traveling east for several hours, they reached a considerable stream (Williamson River) and camped.

December 14. Traveling for seven hours through a thick snow storm, the expedition came upon the headwaters of another stream that issued from the mountain in an easterly direction before turning southward. Drawing a picture on the ground, the guides indicated that this stream continued a great distance, uniting with many other streams becoming a great river. Fremont deduced that this water formed the principle stream of the Sacramento River, the main affluent of San Francisco Bay, and that its headwaters were north of 42 degrees latitude and within the United States. (Actually, this was a tributary of the Sycan River which flows into the Klamath River.)

December 15. Fremont made gifts to the Klamaths who had guided them this far and before turning back, the chief pointed out a course north by east that would lead Fremont to the lake where no more snow would be found. Fremont then crossed his Sacramento River and traveled across a hard-frozen swamp (Sycan Marsh) and into a pine forest gradually ascending a mountain.

December 16. They traveled through snow three feet deep, climbing the mountain's gradual slopes. Towards noon the forest looked clear ahead and riding to the spot (Fremont Point) they found themselves, "on the verge of a vertical and rocky wall of the mountain. At our feet--more than a thousand feet below--we looked into a green prairie country, in which a beautiful lake, some twenty miles in length, was spread along the foot of the mountains, its shores bordered with green grass." Fremont named these two places Winter Ridge and Summer Lake. Looking across the landscape before him, Fremont realized that he stood upon the western rim of the same Great Interior Basin that he had entered four months earlier to explore the Great

Salt Lake. Turning north and following the rocky wall for four or five miles, the expedition finally succeeded in getting down an extremely difficult descent. Night had closed in before they reached the bottom and those who arrived first built bright fires to guide the others.

December 17. The howitzer, which was left halfway up the mountain, was retrieved in the morning and the party enjoyed the summer-like temperatures as they recovered themselves and reorganized.

December 18. Fremont followed a clear Indian trail along the narrow strip of land between the western shore of the lake and the high rocky wall they had looked down two days before. Knowing that they were in a country where water and grass would be scarce, Fremont camped near the southeastern point of the lake.

December 19. After a two hour ride in an easterly direction, the expedition reached the Chewaucan River, a rapid stream flowing out of the mountains, and following it downstream, they entered the Chewaucan Marsh covered with high reeds and rushes. Here they found large patches of ground that had been turned up by Indians digging for roots. Crossing the marsh towards the eastern hills and passing over a bordering plain of heavy sands and sagebrush, they camped along the Chewaucan River where they could see ahead a high, dark-looking ridge.

December 20. Following the Chewaucan River downstream, the expedition came upon another large lake, which, along its eastern shore, was closely bordered by the high basaltic cliffs which walled it in. Fremont named it Lake Abert in honor of his commanding officer, Colonel John J. Abert, Chief of the Army Bureau of Topographical Engineers. The escarpment along the lake's east side is now called Abert Rim. Following an Indian trail which led along the base of the precipice, Fremont went north along the lake shore. The lake's water was fetid and saline--unsuitable for drinking--and so the group continued until late in the evening hoping to find a spring emerging from the hillside. Finding none, they halted to make a dry camp and built brush fires to guide those who were struggling along behind.

December 21. After two hours of travel, they reached a place where the mountains made a bay leaving a low bottom at the north end of the lake. Here they found numerous hillocks covered with rushes in the midst of which were deep holes, or springs of pure water, and covering the bottom was abundant grass for their livestock. Camp was made for the remainder of the day while Fremont rode ahead to view their position and to obtain a sketch of the lake and its basin. Ascending the bordering mountain, Fremont observed flocks of ducks on the lake, numerous tracks of Indians, and acres of recently burned grass.

December 22. Leaving the lake, the expedition curved their course to the southeast in order to avoid the rocky ridges they could see to the east (perhaps Poker Jim Ridge). Crossing an extensive sage plain, they could see in the distance ahead a range of snowy mountains (probably Mt. Warner and Hart Mountain) and the country gradually declining towards the foot of them.

Riding on until dark, they made camp among the sage bushes on the open plain. Two India-rubber bags filled with water that morning afforded water for camp, and rain during the night formed pools for the animals. Where they camped, Indians had made circular enclosures, about four feet high and twelve feet across, made of sage brush.

December 23. Riding towards the mountain, Fremont found a lake at its foot (perhaps Anderson Lake). Passing around its southern end, they ascended the slope at the foot of the ridge and found several springs and good grass.

December 24. Seeing another lake to the south (probably Hart Lake), Fremont followed a broad trail along the ridge and camped at the far end where they had good grass and pure water.

December 25. On Christmas morning, Fremont was roused by the men firing small arms and the howitzer in a salute to the day. Given the occasion, Fremont bestowed the name Christmas Lake on the place (today's Hart Lake) and wrote "always, on days of religious or national commemoration, our voyageurs expect some unusual allowance; and, having nothing else I gave each of them a little brandy, (which was carefully guarded, as one of the most useful articles a traveller can carry,) with some coffee and sugar, which here, were sufficient luxuries to make them a feast." Resuming their journey south, they crossed to a similar basin (Crump Lake) which was walled in on the west by a lofty mountain ridge (Fish Creek Rim). Fremont noted, "The plainly beaten trail still continued, and occasionally we passed camping grounds of the Indians, which indicated to me that we were on one of the great thoroughfares of the country." In the afternoon, they attempted to travel east, but were turned back by the impassable country and encamped on the valley bottom.

December 26. Fremont continued south and camped on a creek on the right side of the valley (perhaps Coleman Valley). Taking a navigational reading of the stars, Fremont determined that their camp was directly on the forty-second parallel (today's Oregon - Nevada border).

Into California and homeward bound

Fremont continued south hoping to find the fabled Buenaventura River, but by mid-January the expedition was foundering and Fremont, rejecting an alternative of spending the winter at Pyramid Lake, determined to turn westward and cross the Sierra Nevadas into California. Snowstorms lashed the party and local Indians advised against such an attempt through the deep snows, but by February 20 they reached the summit of Carson Pass, 9,338 feet high. By March 5, they were on the valley floor of the Sacramento River recovering at Sutter's Fort.

On March 24, Fremont's recuperated and re-supplied expedition headed south through the San Joaquin Valley and then southeast through the Tehachapi Pass and on to the Old Spanish Trail. While crossing the southern end of the Great Basin, large bands of Utah Indians began to menace the party and the men became aware that they had lost the traces of the trail. It was then

⁷⁴Joseph Walker traveled the west with Bonneville in 1833, and is credited with creating some of the ill will between American explorers and the Indians and Mexicans in California. Walker remarked of Fremont: "An explorer! I knew more of the unexplored region 15 years before he set foot on it than he does today."

the expedition guide to lead them out of Utah and across the Rocky Mountains to reach Bent's Fort on July 1. By August 6, Fremont was back in St. Louis, the acclaimed leader of the most spectacular official reconnaissance of the American West since Lewis and Clark.

With his wife Jessie again helping him, Fremont presented his 600 page report to Congress on March 1, 1845. As had his previous work, the report combined Fremont's breathless narrative with scientific information, maps, sketches, and practical advice for travelers and settlers. The Senate ordered 10,000 copies, combined with his first report, printed for sale as *A Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44*. All of them were quickly purchased by an adoring public; several publishing houses in the United States and Europe, brought out their own versions. The following year, Preuss completed his detailed seven-part map of the Oregon Trail from Westport to Walla Walla, which became, with Fremont's report, a standard guide for emigrants. These publications proved to be a definite factor and aid to American settlement of the West.

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Government and management documents

None known.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Roadside pullout

LOCATION: US 26, 12 miles west of Warm Springs

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Location of Indian trails followed later by Ogden, Wyeth, Fremont, and Abbot

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Summer Lake by Mill Creek Bridge

LOCATION: OR 31, mp 69

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Fremont Expedition, on December 16, 1843, travels from the snow on "Winter Ridge" to the temperate shores of Summer Lake.

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Roadside pullout near Lake Abert

LOCATION: US 395, 1.25 miles north of intersection with OR 31

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Geologic formation, the Abert Rim, discovered by John Fremont on December 20, 1843 and named in honor of Colonel J.J. Abert

OWNER: Travel Information Council

Corridor Resources

Corridor description: Nearest approximation of Fremont's route paralleling the Deschutes River: From The Dalles, south on US 197, through Dufur to Tygh Valley, then south and west on OR 216 to Wapinita. South on Wapinitia Road to Shinnasho and continue on Shinnasho-Hot Springs Road to Kahneeta, then turn south on Agency Hot Springs Road to Warm Springs, east on US 26 to Madras, and south on US 97 to Bend. From Bend, continue on US 97 to La Pine. At La Pine turn southeast on OR 31 (The Fremont Highway). Continue through Valley Falls on US 395 to Lakeview.

Adventure route: From Valley Falls, turn northeast on US 395. Travel past Lake Abert and turn south again on Hogback Road (the first 30 miles are gravel), continue on to Adel. From Adel, turn west on OR 140 to Lakeview.

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum, The Dalles
Museum at Warm Springs, Warm Springs
Deschutes Historical Center, Bend
The High Desert Museum, Bend
Outback Scenic By-way
Fremont Point
Abert Rim
Fort Rock Museum, Fort Rock
Fort Rock State Park
Hunters Hot Springs and Resort
Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge
Lake County Museum, Lakeview
Schmick Memorial Museum
Summer Lake Hot Springs
Fort Klamath Park and Museum
Pla'ik Ceremonial Indian Village, Chiloquin

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDA Forest Service
USDI Bureau of Land Management

Tribal

Burns-Paiute Tribe
Klamath Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

State

Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

The High Desert Museum
certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
regional visitor associations and tourism groups
private land owners

Recommendations

Opportunities exist to recognize Fremont's route over Blue Mountains and to integrate Fremont's story into the scenic byway on Fremont Highway and the Steen's Byway, as well as at Fremont Meadow in Shevlin Park, City of Bend.

OREGON

Meek Cutoff, 1845

Route description

The Meek Cutoff left the main Oregon Trail at the Malheur River crossing (near Vale). Traveling west, Meek's wagon train followed the Malheur River before crossing over to the North Fork of the Malheur River, west to Cottonwood Creek, and south to the Malheur's Middle Fork near the present town of Drewsey. Crossing the Stinkwater Mountains, the route turned southwest to the Harney Valley and skirted Harney Lake. Pushing west, the wagons foundered at Wagonire Mountain where the company sent out search parties to look for water. When water was found at Buck Creek, the wagons moved north. Here, the wagon train split into two groups.

One group went west, crossed Bear Creek (south of today's Prineville Reservoir), and traveled to the Deschutes River (at Bend), then turned north, going past Smith Rock and over Juniper Ridge. The other group went north, followed the Crooked River west, turned north at Wickiup Creek, crossed overland to Ochoco Creek (today's Ochoco Reservoir) and then headed northwest.

The two groups eventually reunited (north of Madras) and crossed the Deschutes River at Sherar's Falls before finally moving on to The Dalles.



0 50 100 KM
25 50 MILES

Meek Cutoff, 1845

Authority/Recognition

- National Park Service: Management and Use Plan Update, Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- State of Oregon: HJM 6 declared 1995 as the Year of the Meek Cutoff
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

The Meek Cutoff is perhaps the most infamous of all Oregon Trail branches. Seeking a more direct middle route across Oregon's High Desert and central Cascade Range, Stephen Meek, an experienced mountain man, led 200 wagons across the arid plains west of Vale, Oregon toward the eastern slopes of the Cascades. Unable to find water on its intended route west, the train turned north and, after a difficult search, found water at Buck Creek and the South Fork of the Crooked River. By the time Meek's wagon train arrived in The Dalles, at least 23 persons had died.

In later years, rumors of a gold discovery—one bright aspect of the Meek debacle—inspired many eager prospectors back onto Meek's trail. Although gold was never discovered along the Meek Cutoff, per se, hopeful emigrants pushed eastward into the Powder River and Baker Valleys where, in the 1860s, gold veins were indeed located. Establishing the mines and the community services necessary to support them were the first step toward permanent emigrant settlements in eastern Oregon.

Historical context

Tuck what is called Meek's Cutoff . . . a bad cutoff for all that tuck it . . . I will just say, pen and tong will both fall short when they go to tell of the suffering the company went through

Samuel Parker, 1845

Stephen Hall Meek was born in Virginia in 1807 to James and Spicy Meek. While in his late teens, Meek's mother died and his father remarried quickly. Meek's new mother, a widow with children of her own, was happy to care for the Widower Meek's family, and in so doing, imposed a new rigor into daily life. High time, the teenaged Stephen Meek thought, to branch into a new life and head west. By 1828, Meek joined the fur trade and, with William Sublette, ventured into the Rocky Mountains.

Over the next seventeen years, Meek followed wildlife trails, Indian trading trails and Hudson's Bay Company trails over much of the west. He joined the great trappers rendezvous⁷⁵ and wintered with the Flatheads and "Napercies." He traveled many of the West's significant rivers—the Platte, Salmon, Snake, American, Greybull, Yellowstone, Humboldt, the John Day, Malheur, Owyhee, Columbia, Klamath, and Shasta. He traveled in the company of the great mountain men and explorers of the American West including Jim Bridger, Captain Benjamin Bonneville and the Hudson's Bay Company's Tom McKay.

In 1842, Meek found himself in Independence, Missouri. Alone, and with no particular direction to follow, Meek joined an emigrant wagon train bound for the Oregon Country. Traveling the Oregon Trail was challenging at best. Under Meek's guidance, the few emigrants who crossed overland that year arrived at Willamette Falls early in October.

At Oregon City, Meek and several of his associates were employed by John McLoughlin surveying and selling lots along the Willamette and Clackamas rivers. Never one to settle for long, Meek was traveling again the following spring. Subsidized by McLoughlin and the Hudson's Bay Company, Meek and his friend, Loren W. Hastings, lead a party of fifty-three men, women, and children from the Willamette River to Sutter's Fort on the American River in California. Although a number of those who were California-bound turned back midway, Meek saw the remaining travelers to Sutter's Fort and then continued alone to Monterey.⁷⁶ After a brief stay in Monterey, Meek continued north to Bodega Bay. There he boarded a ship with intentions to travel the world, but only got as far as New York, via Panama, before a change of heart took him home to Virginia.

By May, 1845, Meek was back in Independence, Missouri, where an unprecedented group of Americans was gathering together to travel to the Oregon Country. Stephen Meek's experience (and perhaps his low bid for services) inspired his companions to select him as guide for the train of nearly 500 wagons.⁷⁷

The Wagon Train of 1845

When the wagons rumbled west from Independence, Meek was accompanied by his new bride Elizabeth. Travel was tedious and difficult. At Fort Hall, promoters encouraged emigrants to travel south to California, taking advantage of Captain Sutter's offer of free land.⁷⁸

While Sutter's promoters encouraged the emigrants, others warned them of the potential of Indian attack along the main stem of the Oregon Trail and of the dangers of crossing the Blue

⁷⁵Stephen Meek was among those who hurried to greet the Whitmans and Spaldings, as they arrived at the Green River Rendezvous of 1836. He reportedly served as an escort for the Whitmans over the Blue Mountains.

⁷⁶It was in Monterey that Meek became a "physician." When a young boy accidentally cut off a toe, Meek realigned the toe as well as he could, wrapped the injury in a mud cast, and the toe reattached.

⁷⁷On May 11th, Meek, a lifelong bachelor now nearing 40, met Elizabeth Schoonover, a seventeen-year-old Canadian, waiting for the wagon train to head west. They married on May 18th. The entire company joined in a celebration picnic.⁸⁰

⁷⁸This was more than three years before gold was discovered and the onslaught of 49ers began. It would be interesting to learn what happened to those claim holders' property rights in the course of the gold rush.

Mountains. Elijah White, returning to Washington D. C. from the Willamette Valley encouraged the emigrants to try a “new” route.⁷⁹ Several turned south toward California, the rest continued west to Oregon.

During this time [after crossing the Snake near Fort Boise] a man whose name was Steven Meeks came along with a company of [Parkers] for Oregon; he said he had traveled the country between this point and Oregon many times and was quite familiar with the route; and that he would pilot us a near way that would save us a number of days’ travel, provided that we would pay him for this service five dollars for each wagon on out trail. We consulted with the Manager [Mr. Craigie] at Fort Boise, in relation to this and he informed us that Mr. Meeks had passed the Fort three times to his knowledge, and also that he knew that there was a pack trail, through the country that Mr. Meeks designed going, so the most of us decided to follow him; after going down the river for a few miles we turned up a creek, leaving the old road that was traveled by the trappers.

Samuel Hancock, reminiscences, 1845

Nathaniel Olney, a merchant from The Dalles who originally traveled the trail in 1843 and was among those gathered at Fort Hall, also tried to convince the emigrants of the dangers on the old road. Meek and Olney devised a plan that would save time and bypass the dangers ahead. By traveling directly west from the Oregon Trail’s junction with the Malheur River, Meek, Olney and others were convinced that they could connect a route through central Oregon, over the Cascades and into the Willamette Valley. Meek made a rough map of the routes he had taken when he crossed over the Malheur, Owyhee, and the John Day Rivers in 1834 with Bonneville.⁸⁰ It was enough to convince about 40% of the emigrants to break from the main wagon train.

While others continued on the main stem of the Oregon Trail, Meek—with between 750 and 1000 emigrants,⁸¹ 200 or so wagons, and thousands of head of livestock—set out across the Malheur River, convinced that this was indeed a safer and shorter route for all concerned.

September 3, 1845 . . . At this place are two trails; the fork is in the bottom above the crossing of the creek, and there is a possibility of emigrants pursuing the wrong route. I do not deem it amiss to give some particulars in relation to this road. Mr. Meek, who had been previously engaged as our pilot, but had previously went in advance of the companies who had employed him, and who after reaching Fort Hall

⁷⁹Elijah White’s motives may have been helpful—or vindictive. Although the reports note that White said that the cutoff would save weeks of time, he was also embroiled in a bitter and long standing argument with Marcus Whitman, whose post at Waillatpu on the main stem of the Oregon Trail was only sustained by emigrant traffic. Without the emigrant’s business, the Mission, and hence the Reverend Whitman, would fail. See the Whitman Mission Route context discussion for more information.

⁸⁰Sam Barlow and Joel Palmer were among those who stayed the course. After arriving at The Dalles, Barlow and Palmer blazed a route around the southern flank of the indomitable Mount Hood as an alternate to the Columbia Gorge. Please refer to the Bonneville Route narrative for more information on this trip.

⁸¹Meek received \$5 a wagon load for the service.

fitted up a party to pilot through to Oregon, informed the emigrants that he could, by taking up this stream to near its source, and then striking across the plains, so as to intersect the old road near to the mouth of Deschutes or Falls river, save about one hundred and fifty miles travel; also that he was perfectly familiar with the country through which the proposed route lay, as he had traveled it; that no difficulty or danger attended its travel. He succeeded in inducing about two hundred families to pursue this route; they accordingly directed their course to the left, up this creek, about ten days previous to our arrival at the forks.

Joel Palmer, 1845

The group broke into companies. Within those companies were parties, small groups of families helping each other through the trip. Among those following Meek were diarists James Field, Jesse Harritt, John Herren, John Howell, Samuel Parker, and Solomon Tetherow.

Here we left the former route, bearing a little south of west; we steered our course over a tolerable good road thirteen miles and encamped on the same stream, found grass and fine willows.

*Jesse Harritt, after crossing the
Snake River near Fort Boise, August 25, 1845*

Meek led the wagon train along the rocky banks of the Malheur river, then up and over rocky and rough bluffs. The wagons, at this point were proving very maneuverable (inspiring James Field to wonder if they could be driven anywhere). The oxen and emigrants had a very difficult time with the route, however, and some of the parties moved more quickly than did others. The miles stretched between small groups following Meek's route; in some cases the companies followed just a day behind the lead, others followed several days behind.

Meek led the straggling train through Harper Valley and the Malheur Mountains, then on to the north fork of the Malheur River near Beulah Reservoir. From Castle Rock, a prominent feature of the area's landscape north of the reservoir, the group moved west only as fast as the oxen could go. The rocky ground cut and bruised the animals' feet. Historian Donna Wojick noted that, "Stones frequently broken by a forward company, iron-stained by wagon wheels and blood-stained by cattle's feet, left a vivid trail for companies behind to follow."

Just south of Castle Rock, Sarah Chambers (an emigrant in the party) succumbed to "camp fever."⁸² Her husband Rowland and the rest of the party marked her passing on a large stone, inscribed "Mrs. S. Chambers Sept. 3rd 1845."⁸³ Her's was the first death among those following Meek; Many others succumbed in the weeks that followed.

Travel became ever more difficult as the emigrants worked through the area near Drewsey, over Stinkingwater Mountain, and on toward the Harney Valley. Grasses grew drier and water became more scarce. The emigrants had been following Meek for ten days and were growing suspicious of his claims about the route.

⁸² Although the "fever" often referred to was the result of fatigue and poor food, it might have also been a form of anthrax.

⁸³ In 1991, the Oregon-California Trails Association erected a marker commemorating Sarah King Chambers.

The route Meek described and the route followed to date were vastly different. There was speculation around the evening campfires that Meek had lied, had been paid by the HBC or by the Indians to lose the Americans. Some decided he should be hanged (and went so far as to arrange their wagons to make a gallows from a tripod of wagon tongues). Others argued that Meek was their only hope for escape; he was the only man among them who had been in this region of the country before.

Matters worsened (as described by Wojick) when Meek and the wagon train crested the rim of Harney Valley and the broad lake (Malheur) he expected to see was gone--a large, marshy and stagnant pool stood in its place. The water was unsuitable for both the animals and the people so dependent on them.⁸⁴ September's first week was ending and the groups were concerned that their situation would worsen. Rumor and frustration mounted within the camps and the group painfully realized that they were indeed "lost."

It was his [Meek's] intention to follow down Crooked river to the Deschutes and down it to the old road, but when he came to the marshy lake spoken of last Sunday, the company refused to follow him if he made the circuit necessary to get around it upon Crooked River again so he struck off in a westerly direction in order to get upon the main Deschutes river. He well knew that there was a scarcity of grass and water across here and so informed them, but it was near and they would have him go it, and now blame him for coming the route they obliged him to.

James Field, September, 11, 1845

The emigrants did find small diversions from their angst at Malheur Lake. Along the dried lake banks were large deposits of alkali which could be used as a yeast substitute. Emigrants eagerly collected the crystals for making bread.

While camped in the valley, the wagon train also met Paiutes living on the shores of the Malheur lake.⁸⁵ Although the emigrants often saw Indians in small groups at a distance, this was the emigrants' first direct encounter with a tribal group since leaving the main stem of the Oregon Trail.

The companies found that the valley was a haven for game birds. Even so, the water was too brackish for human or animal consumption and the companies wandered miles out of the way searching for fresh spring water. The lead parties of the wagon train camped on the north edge of Harney Lake.

⁸⁴Noting the different perceptions of the emigrant experience, some of those who kept diaries wrote terse passages about the poor conditions of the Harney Valley, others however, appreciated the wide open space, full of golden, ripened grass and sage. Harritt wrote: "road butiful and level travleed 16 ms crossed on small stream and encamped on the Northeren margin of a large lake had an abundance of fine grass no wood except sage."

⁸⁵The Burns Paiute Tribe descended from the Wadatika band, named after the wada seeds they collected near the shores of Malheur Lake and used as a food staple. The Wadatika's territory included approximately 5250 square miles between the Cascade Mountain Range in central Oregon and the Payette Valley north of Boise, Idaho, and from southern parts of the Blue Mountains near the headwaters of the Powder River north of John Day, to the desert south of the Steens Mountain. The Burns Paiute would have been collecting seeds and joining for communal rabbit and antelope drives during the late summer and early fall months.

After another day's travel to Silver Lake, the emigrants again held a camp meeting. Meek thought it would be best to stay on the Hudson's Bay Company trapper's trail and cross through the central Cascades into the Willamette Valley.

However, having lost all faith in Meek's abilities and suspicious of his motives, the emigrants argued that it would be better to abandon the trappers' trail and head straight for the Deschutes, cross it and work toward the Cascades; then, if they couldn't find a pass through the mountains, they could still travel up the Deschutes to The Dalles--and safety. Meek's authority and protestations about the lack of water in the region were perhaps dulled by recent events. The emigrants dismissed his opinions and set out on a slow, dry pull to Wagonire Mountain.

Enroute, a toddler succumbed to whooping cough and on September 8, the wagon train marked its second death and buried 21-month-old Elkanah Packwood. Concerned about humans (or animals) stealing from the boy's grave, the emigrants took care the following morning to roll their wagon wheels over the small burial mound, smoothing the ground so that there would be no hint of the child's body within. Illness increased throughout the wagon train.

It took the entire group three days to travel the 25 miles from Silver Lake to Wagonire Mountain. They set up camp just after midnight.

We camped at a spring which we gave the name of "The Lost Hollow" because there was very little water there. We had men out in every direction in search of water. They traveled 40 or 50 miles in search of water but found none. You cannot imagine how we all felt. Go back, we could not and we knew not what was before us. Our provisions were failing us. There was sorrow and dismay depicted on every countenance. We were like mariners lost at sea and in the mountainous wilderness we had to remain for five days.

as remembered by Betsy Bayley in 1849

With several hundred emigrants and several thousand head of livestock milling around the watering hole, the water was quickly stirred to mud. In the days that followed, the spring's flow was nearly depleted.

For days, men rode out into the desert looking for the next watering hole; each night they returned unsuccessful. Scouts finally found a spring September 13 and carried water back to camp, but it was not enough to last long, nor was Lost Hollow a suitable place to stay. Daytime temperatures soared and the little water in camp froze at night. Fall was close at hand.

According to Wojick, scouts had traveled up to 40 miles west of Lost Hollow and still found no water. The crisis was closing in on Meek. The company captains, the emigrants, and the livestock, now numbering more than 4000 cattle, oxen and sheep were in an extremely dangerous condition.

On the night of September 15, the emigrants held another camp meeting. Meek was out with the water scouts when the meeting convened. When Meek came back into camp he was asked why he guided the wagon train so far south when The Dalles was north and west. Meek recounted the dilemmas, discussions, and decisions that led to the present situation.

Meek had yielded to the will of the people rather than rely on his own good judgement and was now being blamed for the present crisis.

Solomon Tetherow

Meek set out again to find water in the rocky hills north of camp. While absent from camp, threats were again made against his life. Several persons reported the discontent and threat to Meek, but his commitment to the emigrants held strong--he again affirmed that since, essentially, he had gotten them into this mess, he would lead them out of it, too. Meek's friends convinced him to hide away in a wagon, a safe place where he could still put his instincts and experience to good use and remain hidden.

While camped at Lost Hollow, the wagon train reorganized. Several of Tetherow's wagons joined several of Ownbey's. They filled beef hides (and anything else they could) with water and headed out of the hollow mid-afternoon on September 15. They proceeded north into the darkness, guided through the night by wagon trails and mounted men.

Tetherow and those who remained with him followed northward, too, along a line of small fires set by the advance group (and Meek) as they plotted the course. As Tetherow's party traveled, they listened intently; those blazing the route agreed to fire three shots when water was found. In the early hours of September 16 the forward wagon heard the shots.

Not all chose to follow the wagons into the night. Some, because of weakened animals, illness, or broken spirits, decided to wait at the Hollow until they were sure that water was ahead. Riders came into camp on the 16th to report that a source had been found 30 miles north. Over the next several days, wagons pulled out of camp, again following wagon tracks and bonfires.

198 wagons, 2299 head of cattle, 811 head of oxen, 1051 souls all consume a heap of water.

Samuel Parker

There was considerable sickness in our company. Notwithstanding this we traveled all the afternoon and night succeeding our departure from the rest of the emigration, and turned our cattle out to feed upon all they could get, and to obtain the dew that had fallen the night before; after this we started again and traveled all day; towards evening we gave our oxen a little of the water we brought from the Springs [at Wagontire Mountain], then continued traveling all night, allowing our animals to graze and avail themselves of the dew; as we did the day before and then started on the third day's drive from the Springs, first giving our teams a little water to enable them to proceed. Just before sunset of this day we heard a number of shots fired in the direction we were going and afterwards firing was renewed much nearer to us; looking forward we discovered a man coming a full speed on horseback--our guide [Meek] had found water!

Samuel Hancock

The campsite north of Lost Hollow is near the present G. I. Ranch on the south fork of the Crooked River. As they moved out of the Hollow, some in the group wanted to go directly to The Dalles; others however, wanted to go west to the Deschutes and, if there was no pass into the Cascades, simply follow the river north to The Dalles. The captains decided to divide the groups; the wagon train split just south of the Maury Mountains. One group followed Tetherow's (and

Meek's) trail northwest toward the Deschutes; the other followed the North Star and the sun's shadows, north toward the Columbia.

Many of us thought that at all events, the company had better separate as nothing was being accomplished by remaining together except greater distress. . .

Samuel Hancock

Toward the Deschutes: Meek and Tetherow

About 40 wagons and two hundred persons followed Meek and Tetherow west from the watering hole on Crooked River. After a long night's travel, the group pulled to rest along Bear Creek, stopping along the way to bury another child. As the wagons moved on, scouts ventured out each day to find water. In camps, folks looked for water, too. Legend holds that on September 17th or 18th a child found lumps of gold mixed into the sand at in the bottom of a blue water bucket.⁸⁶ Legend or not, gold would be of little use to the desperately thirsty emigrants.

A few miles past the camp, the wagon train faced a steep slope, and again, Meek was nowhere to be found. Some tried to find a way up the long hill; others sat and cursed Meek.

One of the men that happened to be just ahead of us said: "When I get to the top of this hill, if I ever do, I am going to hunt for Stephen Meek and if I find him, I'll kill him!" Meek was sitting just above us, back of a big sagebrush. He stepped out with his gun in his hand and said, awful slow and cool, "Well, you've found me, go ahead with the killing!" The man wilted down and didn't have spunk enough to kill a prairie dog. He was like a lot of other bad men--just a bad man with his mouth.

Mrs. Asa Peterson

Once they reached the long hill's summit, the exhausted groups set up camp for the night and prepared supper. During mealtime, an Indian walked into camp. The Indian and the emigrants eyed each other warily before someone presented the guest with food. After eating hurriedly, Meek and Tetherow, using jargon and hand signals, asked the Indian where they were and how best to get to the Crooked River and on to The Dalles. The Indian, a member of the Warm Springs tribe, showed them where water was and how to get to the Deschutes River.

An Indian came to us, pointed out the course to [The Dalles] to which he said it was 5 days journey, and so far from refusing to follow the advise of the Indian, at my request he was employed by Mr. Meek to pilot us to Crooked river, which he did for a blanket.

Solomon Tetherow

When they reached the summit of the mountains they camped on a meadow, and while there some Warm Springs Indians came to camp. One of the Indians could speak a little English. He told them that if some of them would go with him to a high

⁸⁶ Although steeped in legend, the Blue Bucket story does include a bit of instructive information. Families in wagon trains often painted their tools and other belongings a special color to identify the objects as their own.

ridge near by they could see down into the Deschutes and Crooked River valleys. He showed them some buttes that lay south of Prineville and said that they would find water there, but no water between there and the Deschutes. He also showed them what is now called Pilot butte, and told them if they would steer straight for that butte they would find a place in the bend of the river where a man could cross it, go down on the west side, through by way of the Metolius and Tygh valley and that they would eventually reach The Dalles.

W. H. Herren

While plans were made to follow the route described, a relief party went ahead to The Dalles following the Indian's instructions and several riders, a scouting party, continued west looking for a pass through the Central Cascades. The following day, September 19, the emigrants started out, following the Indian's lead. They traveled across Bear Creek Buttes, camping on the edge of Bear Creek. The next day, the groups traveled another twelve miles to present Alfalfa. Wojick indicates that the group buried one, if not two, person(s) there.

The group turned northwest from Alfalfa, and at what appears to be a nooning place, someone carved "Lost Meeks 1845" into the lower limb of a large juniper. Continuing toward the Deschutes River, in line with where they expected to find a mountain pass, they made camp a little south of Cline's Falls. While here, the scouts returned, unable to find a route through the Cascades in the prescribed time. The group decided to put off finding a pass through the mountains and instead to make haste toward The Dalles, and then head west on the main stem of the Oregon Trail.

The emigrants stayed their northward course until they reached the Crooked River's deep canyons. They followed the river's south rim eastward to a crossing within sight of Smith Rocks. Several of the emigrant families were using the last of their flour and meat. They shared as much as they could afford to, still hoping that they would be in The Dalles soon, but not entirely sure when they would arrive.

Once across the Crooked River, the group returned to a north-northwesterly course over the plateaus and Juniper Ridge, through Madras, to Sagebrush Springs, setting up camp there on September 25. They were in territory familiar to Meek (and others) at last, and in fact, when they set up camp, it was too dark to see the worn path created by the other faction of lost emigrants just a few hours earlier. Although Wojick notes that one, perhaps two, died among those following Tetherow and Meek, she adds that at Sagebrush Springs that night, a baby was born.⁸⁷

Parker and Riggs: The Northbound Group

From their camp on the south fork of the Crooked River, the other faction straggled onto a northbound path on September 17 and 18th (the same day the other group found gold). Some traveled a dozen miles, some only half a dozen. A number of their party were sick; camp fever, lack of water, and limited rations of rancid beef were compounding the difficulties of already difficult travel.

⁸⁷Wojick further notes that the baby died just two months later.

The wide-spread group traveled along the south fork of the Crooked River to Cold Springs. They turned northwest from Crooked River to the top of Stein's Ridge. Working together, the emigrants slowly eased wagons down the slope before moving into the Camp Creek Valley, another dozen miles from the previous camp site. From there, they worked across the sagebrush plain at the east end of the Maury Mountains before again joining the Crooked River just west of the mouth of Camp Creek.

For two more days, the emigrant group struggled through hills, valleys, and even through the waters of the Crooked River, moving northwest toward the center of Oregon near the present town of Post. After resting overnight, the group struggled over rocky ledges and through thick timber before reaching Wikiup Creek. They crossed the Crooked River again at Wikiup Creek, then moved north onto a plateau that was dry and sparsely timbered. After they crossed Combs Flat and Dixie Meadow, the group slowly moved into the Ochoco Creek watershed. Once at the creek, they continued west on their course back to the Crooked River. The next day, the company moved on through Prineville northwesterly to Lytle Creek.

As September's days grew shorter and the group neared the Cascades, the emigrants noted the beautiful mountains to the west. Against that magnificent backdrop, an ever increasing number of people fell ill with camp fever. There was water enough and plenty of grass for the livestock, but food for the humans was ever-diminishing. Hurrying to The Dalles was essential, but nearly impossible. Parker kept a record of the sick and dying and noted on September 23: "Beried 4 persons heare." They were camped just beyond Willow Creek, northwest of Lytle Creek.

The emigrants packed up and continued the next day, working their way northward, knowing that the Deschutes was just to the west and that to get to The Dalles, they would eventually have to descend the steep canyon and cross the river. While the main body of emigrants continued on their parallel course to the river, several scouts were sent ahead to locate a crossing. The Deschutes was daunting and unyielding--there seemed no easy way down-slope to the river's water and no safe place to ferry the wagons and animals across the water.⁸⁸

On to The Dalles

The group was joined on September 26 by Tetherow and Meek's companies. The wagon train had split up for nearly ten days, and still arrived at Sagebrush Springs at the same time. They convened to camp and proceed on again as one wagon train. As before, the wagon train took hours to get started. Families packed and left when they could. Camp fever, hunger, and illness took lives. For those who left family members behind, the departure must have been agonizing.

*many codent get to water and water was taken to them 32 in number heare
we beried 6 persons.*

Samuel Parker

Slowly the emigrants pulled east through Lyle Gap, up Bull Mountain and across the Shaniko Flats before camping at Criterion Summit. The wagon train took days to pass and on Bull Mountain (a dry camp for one group) on September 29, Parker again noted "beried 3 heare."

⁸⁸No diary notations were located for the northbound group.

The next day, Parker's group continued for another 30 miles before camping on Booten Creek, where, according to Parker's diary: "5 beried heare."

The advance members of the wagon train reached Buck Hollow Ridge on September 28. From there, scouts went out again to look for a way down the deep canyon and across the river. They found the smoothest path down a very steep slope and working together, as they had done so many times before, set up drag teams to move the wagons to the bottom of the canyon.

The place at which we struck the Deschutes river presented the most unfavorable place for crossing that could be imagined. The river is, at that point, four rods wide, flowing between perpendicular walls of basalt, the water very deep and the current very rapid.

William A. Goulder

At the canyon floor (a narrow rim along either side of the river), the emigrants watched Indians fish from platforms. Drying racks were set up at intervals, providing plenty of room for the trickle of wagons to park before being ferried across the river. The first persons in the canyon, Meek, Olney and Elizabeth Meek, began working immediately to devise a system of ropes across the river. Once across, Meek estimated that they were 30 miles from The Dalles. The Meeks and Olney hurried to secure supplies and alert the Mission and the community that the 200 families and their wagons were coming in. The Meeks and Olney bought food, axes, ropes, and pulleys and tried to get help from the mission, only to learn that the missionaries' work was for the Indians, not, according to Wojick, the emigrants, and help was denied.

At this place they met an old mountaineer, usually called Black Harris, who volunteered his services as a pilot. He in company with several others, started in search of the lost company, whom they found reduced to great extremities; their provisions nearly exhausted, and the company weakened by exertion, and despairing of ever reaching the settlements.

Joel Palmer

Supplies were moved as fast as possible and were welcomed by all at the crossing. The emigrants set to work caulking the wagons and converting them into ferries. With the Indians' help, the livestock, people, and wagons were moved over the river.

Our friends, white and red, are on the opposite bank of the river having arrived from The Dalles, bringing axes and ropes and other implements and materials to assist in the task of crossing. They are led by a brave old mountaineer, one of the noblest . . . , who was known to everybody as "Black Harris." They are soon at work improvising temporary floating structures and suspension bridges. Pretty soon an Indian is seen to plump into the river with the end of a long rope in his mouth, and swim over to our side. Now it is necessary for some of our party to be on the other side to look out for the running gear of the wagons that are fastened to

the ropes and thus dragged through the water. In order to test the strength of the rope and the safety of this method of transit, the rope was passed around my body, just under my arms, and I was dragged through the raging torrent to the other side. I could but feel that I was in the hands of my friends, nor could I be insensible to the fact that the water was of icy coldness, just being lately arrived from the snowy brow of Mt. Hood. It has been my good fortune to enjoy some very cool and refreshing baths, but nothing in my experience every equalled this one. Several of the young men followed my example, while the main body of the company waited for more elaborate contrivances.

William A. Goulder

Crossing the Deschutes took two weeks. Wagon by wagon they maneuvered the entire wagon train over the river. Those who were the most ill were ferried across first. Parker's diary notes that Mrs. Butts died on October 2 and her body was carried until October 5 when, finally out of the steep river canyon, they were able to bury her and three others on an open prairie. The last of Meek's wagon train arrived in The Dalles in mid-October.

After crossing the river we had everything made ready for starting in the direction of Waller's mission [at The Dalles], which we had reached the following day; here Mr. Waller had wheat, peas and potatoes, which he sold to the half famished emigrants, who were too hungry to cook their food more than half done, before eating it, in consequence of which, before morning many of them were very sick, and my most intimate companion on this journey had died from the effects: the others all recovered but I felt the loss of my friend most sensibly.

Samuel Hancock

Parker arrived in The Dalles on October 7. He wrote: "got in A house with my family got something to eat this was the first day we had done without something to eat But some of the Company had been with out bread fore 15 days and had to live on pore beef with out any thing else." A week later, Parker buried his wife and newborn baby; just days later his young daughter died from mountain fever.⁸⁹

Sarah Cummings, whose family followed the Oregon Trail's main stem, watched as the first members of the Meek wagon train struggled into town:

One day shortly after our arrival in The Dalles a man was seen approaching . . . he told us that his wife, and five other mothers had died. The children and the remainder of the party were in camp about a day's travel up the river. They were

⁸⁹ As the remaining emigrants straggled into The Dalles, Meek and his wife headed toward the Willamette Valley. They continued their characteristic patterns of moving from this to that, from Oregon City to the Tualatin Plains. He owned a freight line, served as a commissary agent in the Cayuse War; he moved Elizabeth and infant daughter south to California's gold fields where he worked as a miner and butcher. In 1850, Meek directed a street clearing project in Oregon City. Soon he returned to Coloma, California. A mine cave-in in 1852 caused Meek to move on again, returning to Santa Cruz and a career as a butcher.

Meek's appetite for moving on continued through the rest of his life. He traveled between California and Oregon, between opportunity and despair, and from family to solitude. Elizabeth died in 1865. With his children grown and married, he continued wandering until his death in 1889 in California.

dying of starvation . . . One woman whose death occurred in this party was Mrs. [Rev.] Sam Parker. She left a large family of children . . .

Sarah Cummings

Once at The Dalles, many of the emigrants who followed Meek recuperated and, with strength restored, continued on to the Willamette Valley. A number of others died at The Dalles, but specific information is difficult to obtain.

Emigrants' animosity and mistrust of Stephen Meek was sustained for years following the cutoff disaster of 1845. The emigrants' bewilderment, anger, and losses stigmatized Meek and all who participated.

On August 8, 1848 (almost exactly three years after Meek led the unfortunate wagon train west), Riley Root, an emigrant who later crossed the Cutoff to the Barlow Road, wrote:

16 miles [from the Owyhee River], over a good road, on Malheur (pron. malare) river. Grass plenty. No firewood but willows. At this place, Mr. Meek attempted a cut-off to Oregon city, by following up the course of the river south, for some distance, and then directed his course westward, till he should arrive at the Willamet valley, south a considerable distance from Oregon city. His attempt proved a failure, with the loss of considerable property and the lives of some of his company. It is said there were nearly 200 wagons in his train.

Although the first effort across the high desert was permeated with loss and fury, Meek's route served as a conduit for permanent roads. In later years, rumors of the gold discovery inspired many eager prospectors back onto Meek's trail in the 1860s.

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Government or management documents

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Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Vale

LOCATION: City Park on east Washington Street

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/THEME: Malheur River camp is where Meek Cutoff begins - attempted shortcut leads to disaster; map shows route/Legend of the Blue Bucket gold

OWNER: City of Vale

SITE: Beulah Reservoir

LOCATION: Sec. 33, T18S, R37E

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive sign

SUBJECT/THEME: Sarah King Chambers Grave

OWNER: Oregon-California Trails Association

SITE: Harney County

LOCATION: US 20, mp 144

DESCRIPTION: Historical marker (new style)

SUBJECT/THEME: Cutoff attempts by Meek and Elliott

OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Sherars Falls

LOCATION: Deschutes River

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside

SUBJECT/THEME: One sign addresses how Meek wagon train crossed the river using a rope-cable system.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Corridor resources

Corridor Description: Follow US 20 west from Vale through Little Valley and Harper to Juntura. (At Juntura, visitors might consider traveling north to the Beulah Reservoir.) Continue on US 20 to Buchanan. At Buchanan, turn south to Crane on the Crane Buchanan Road. At Crane continue south on OR 76 to New Princeton. Just south of New Princeton, turn west onto the Narrows-Princeton Road. Travel through the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (partly gravel), turn north on OR 205 to Burns. At Burns, continue west on US 20 to Bend. At Bend, turn north onto US 97 through Madras and Shaniko to Grass Valley. From Grass Valley, follow signs to the Sherars Falls Bridge on the Sherars Bridge Road (OR 216). Continue to Tygh Valley and turn north on US 197 and continue to The Dalles.

Vale murals

Rinehart Butte, Vale

Rinehart Stone House, Vale

Malheur Crossing (Travel Information Council), Vale

Great Basin (Travel Information Council), Buchanan

Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Burns

Harney County Museum, Burns

Burns Indian Reservation, Burns

Sage Hen Hills

Pilot Butte State Park

Ochoco Lake State Park

Ochoco Wayside

Cline Falls State Park

Tumalo State Park

The High Desert Museum, Bend

Deschutes Historical Center, Bend

Smith Rock State Park

Deschutes Scenic Waterway

Odgen Scenic Wayside

Shaniko

White River Falls State Park

Oregon Trail (USDA Forest Service interpretive sign), Tygh Valley

Sherar's Bridge

Oregon Trail (USDA Forest Service interpretive sign), Dufur

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center and Wasco County Historical Museum, The Dalles

Players and partners

Federal and national

- USDI Bureau of Land Management
- USDA Forest Service
- USDA Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

- Burns-Paiute Tribe

State

- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
- Oregon Department of Transportation
- Oregon Tourism Commission
- Travel Information Council
- Oregon Historical Society
- Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

- certified local governments
- local chambers of commerce
- local historical societies
- regional visitor associations and tourism organizations
- Columbia Gorge Discovery Center/Wasco County Historical Museum
- High Desert Museum
- private land owners

Recommendations

Opportunities exist for a number of interpretive options including a driving tour and map/brochure of corridor (subject: The Meek Cutoff and sub themes: a) Indians, b) ecosystems/desert/regional landscape (beyond state lines); and an interpretive sign at White River Falls State Park.

Cutoff to the Barlow Road,
1848-1884

Route description

The Cutoff to the Barlow Road branched from the Oregon Trail about 2.5 miles west of the John Day River and led emigrants to the Tygh Valley and the main Barlow Road. It passed near the present-day towns of Moro and Grass Valley and then descended the ridge called Hollenbeck Point to Buck Hollow Creek and its confluence with the Deschutes River. Emigrants crossed the Deschutes below Sherars Falls. From Sherars Falls, the emigrants continued west to Tygh Valley and the route's connection to the Barlow Road.



Cutoff to the Barlow Road, 1848 - 1884

Authority/Recognition

- National Park Service: Management and Use Plan Update, Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Sherman County Historical Society
- Bureau of Land Management
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

In 1847, a cutoff providing a link between the main stem of the Oregon Trail and the Barlow Road was established to save Oregon Trail emigrants time and effort. The Oregon Trail, which skirted the Columbia River's south bank for miles, was indeed the most practical route for the early emigrants, but as more and more emigrants traveled the main route, cutoffs or branches, routes designed by the emigrants themselves, became more popular.

Historical context

Following the opening of the Barlow Road in 1846, which provided an alternative route around Mount Hood to the Willamette Valley, a cutoff to the Barlow Road came into use. The Cutoff to the Barlow Road saved emigrants as much as a week of travel time.

Previously, emigrants traveled to The Dalles, then followed a well established Indian trail south from The Dalles to Tygh Valley. In Tygh Valley, emigrants caught the Barlow Road and followed it over the Cascades to Oregon City. Oregon Trail emigrant and diarist Riley Root first mentions the already-established Cutoff in 1848. In the years that followed, the Cutoff was used extensively by Oregon Trail emigrants.

*On the top of this bluff, the road divides, one leading to the Columbia River.
The other, at the left, is the one we took.*

Riley Root, 1848

According to the *History of Central Oregon*, the Barlow Cutoff . . .

Was called the Old Emigrant Road and Road in Ravine. The route was established and was being used increasingly by the emigrants--especially those with animals. The toll over the Barlow Road was \$5 a wagon and 10 cents per animal. . . It entered [Sherman] county one mile below Leonard's bridge, climbed the hill in a

southwesterly direction, paralleled Grass Valley canyon until near the present site of Grass Valley, where it entered the canyon and continued southwesterly to Buck Hollow. The emigrants ferried themselves across the DesChutes on wagon boxes one mile north of Sherar's Bridge.

Giles French reported that . . .

After Barlow had marked the road over the mountains it was not long before a shortcut was made to meet it at Tygh Valley. It turned off the Oregon Trail at the top of the hill west of the John Day River, went southwest and entered Grass Valley canyon at Nish, above Hay Canyon. It stayed in this canyon until past the head of the valley where the tall rye grass grew and where the town of Grass Valley was established. From there it went southwest to the ridge south of Finnegan Canyon and Buck Hollow. To get down into this canyon, the emigrants tied juniper behind their wagons for brakes and went down Hollenbeck Point to the bottom of Buck Hollow which they followed until they reached the Deschutes. Here they crossed below the dangerous rapids to climb part way up Tygh Ridge before crossing the valley to go to Wamic and the beginning of Barlow's toll road. This cut off was not extensively used but there are records of several wagon trains that took it.

Emigrants made boats from their wagon boxes and swam the stock across the Deschutes. On August 30, 1848, Riley Root wrote,

Traveled about 5 miles, to the crossing of Deshutes or Fall river. Here, we breakfasted in a deep chasm, almost as difficult of descent and ascent, as the valley of Sinbad the sailor, with nearly precipitous rocks, from 1000 to 1500 feet high, on every side. Afternoon employd in caulking wagonboxes, to ferry our goods across the river.

Even with help from local Indians, it took Root and his party three days to ferry their goods across the Deschutes. In the years that followed, a series of ferries and bridges were built and washed out, but the road remained.

In 1852, the cutoff was so clearly established that many emigrants referred to the fork in the road: Esther Belle McMillan Hanna, wrote "The road forks. . . One takes to The Dalles, the other is a cut-off leading to the Cascade Mountains."

Mr. Olney⁹⁰ established a ferry at the crossing. The ferry toll was three dollars per wagon and, according to E.W. Conyers, "we swim our own cattle."

George Miller West reminisced years later about the Falls and the troubles they had there. Their party lost two mares and a mule over the Falls, but they were able to buy salmon from Indians who were fishing from the ferry boat.

By 1846, a bridge was built. It was washed out and rebuilt in 1862. In 1866, S.B. Eakin wrote that, "We crossed DeShutes River on a bridge. Toll 7.75." In 1871, Joseph Sherar bought the bridge and maintained both the bridge and the roads leading to it (investing more than \$80,000 in both projects combined). The bridge and the falls bear his name.

⁹⁰Nathan Olney traveled the Oregon Trail in 1845 and followed Meek searching for a route across central Oregon. Olney was loyal to Meek during the ordeal on the trail. In later years, Olney established a successful trading post at The Dalles.

The Falls was an important crossing point for years before American emigrants used the route. In 1826, the HBC's Peter Skene Ogden wrote: "Proceeded down River of the Falls (Deschutes) to the Falls where we found an Indian camp of 20 families. Finding a canoe also a bridge made of slender wood, we began crossing . . ." At either end of the bridge was a fairly well established trail. According to several reports, Odgen lost five horses trying to cross the Indian's foot bridge.

In 1845, the Meek party crossed the Deschutes here, hiring nearby Indians to swim the cattle across and rigging pulley systems to ferry the wagons across.⁹¹

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Government or management documents

Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails: Management and Use Plan Update. USDI National Park Service, 1998.

⁹¹Please refer to the Meek Cutoff narrative for more information about Meek's crossing at Sherar's Falls.

Existing interpretive resources

SITE: Arlington City Park

LOCATION: Arlington

DESCRIPTION: Oregon Trail kiosk

SUBJECT/TITLE: Emigrants could float the Upper Columbia River, travel along the south bank of the Columbia River, or cross the Columbia Plateau. On the plateau route and after crossing the John Day River, there was a fork in the road: left was the Cutoff to the Barlow Road, right was to The Dalles.

OWNER: City of Arlington

SITE: Weatherford Monument

LOCATION: Gilliam County, 8 mi south of Arlington on OR 19 (Sec. 27, T2N, R21E)

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside (4' x 6' bronze panel hung from a frame of eight-inch welded pipe)

SUBJECT/TITLE: Marks the crossing of the Oregon Trail

OWNER: Weatherford Family

SITE: Sherman County Historical Museum

LOCATION: Moro

DESCRIPTION: Museum

SUBJECT/TITLE: Sherman County Historical Society provides interpretation of the Cutoff to the Barlow Road trail through driving tours and brochures.

OWNER: Sherman County Historical Society

SITE: Barlow Road Cutoff crossing

LOCATION: Grass Valley

DESCRIPTION: Marker

SUBJECT/TITLE: Sign indicating the trails crossing

OWNER: City of Grass Valley

SITE: Sherars Falls

LOCATION: Deschutes River

DESCRIPTION: Interpretive wayside

SUBJECT/TITLE: One sign addresses how the Meek wagon train crossed the river using a rope-cable system.

OWNER: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Corridor resources

Corridor description: From the John Day River Crossing on the Klondike-John Day River Road, go west to Klondike Road. Turn south on Klondike Road and cross OR 206 (the road becomes the Hay Canyon Road). Turn west on Monkland Road. Continue to US 97. Turn south on US 97.

Cutoff to the Barlow Road

Travel through Moro to Grass Valley. At Grass Valley, turn onto OR 216 (the Kent-Grass Valley Road). Continue on OR 216 (which becomes the Sherar Bridge Hwy) into the Deschutes Canyon. Cross Sherar's Falls and continue to the Tygh Valley.

There is a signed auto tour from the John Day River Crossing to Sherar's Falls to Tygh Valley.

Klondike (ghost town) buildings remain
Columbia Southern Railroad grade
USDI Bureau of Land Management Campgrounds on the Deschutes River
Deschutes River Scenic Waterway
DeMoss Springs Memorial Park
Badger (ghost town)
OWRR&N Co. line
Michigan cemetery/school site
Licksillet school site
Ram's Horn Inn site
Sherar's Bridge and falls (fishing--dip nets and poles)
White River Falls State Park

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI Bureau of Land Management
Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society
Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

Sherman County Historical Society
certified local governments
local chambers of commerce
local historical societies
private land owners

Recommendations

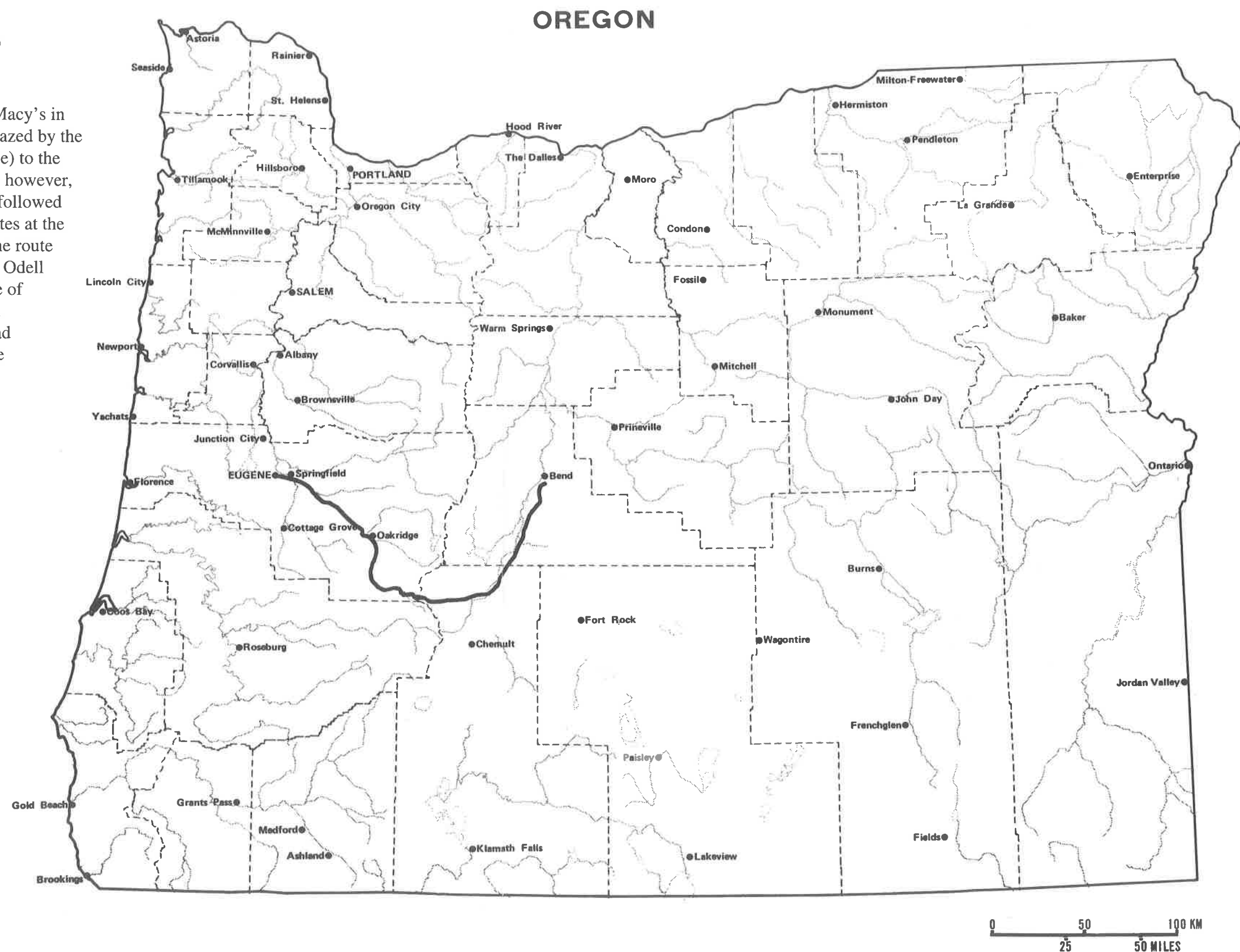
Opportunities exist to interpret the Cutoff at the Tygh Valley State Wayside (east of Tygh Valley on OR 216) and at the White River Falls State Park. Both properties are under jurisdiction of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Although the driving tour includes assurance and directional signs, it is not interpreted. Interpretive opportunities exist to complement the route with signs and a self-guiding brochure.

Free Emigrant Road, 1853

Route description

Elliott's wagon train in 1853 and Macy's in 1854 generally followed the same route blazed by the Meek Cutoff from the Malheur River (Vale) to the Deschutes River (Bend). At the Deschutes however, the Free Emigrant Road turned south and followed the river to a crossing of the Little Deschutes at the present-day site of Crescent. From here, the route went west, passing along the south side of Odell Butte and Crescent Lake, on the north side of Summit Lake, and through Emigrant Pass. Turning northwest, the Free Emigrant Road descended Pioneer Gulch and followed the Middle Fork Willamette River to the settlements at Eugene City.



Free Emigrant Road, 1853

What most discourages me is the prospect of having to go the old road and cross the mountains making our journey two hundred miles farther than if we could take the cutoff but no one has taken that Route and though we have every reason to believe it is finished and Staked out all are afraid to try it

Charlotte Stearns Pengra, 1853

Authority/Recognition

- National Park Service: Management and Use Plan Update, Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails
- State of Oregon: ORS 358.057
- Oregon Governor's Oregon Trail Advisory Council
- Oregon-California Trails Association

Significance

The Free Emigrant Road, a branch of the Oregon Trail, successfully opened a middle route across Oregon for emigrant travel from the Malheur River (Vale) to the southern Willamette Valley (Eugene).

Three different wagon trains made the attempt to cross by a middle route. The first, led by Stephen Meek in 1845, ended in disaster when the wagon train foundered in the desert before turning north for rescue at The Dalles. The second, led by Elijah Elliott in 1853, succeeded in crossing the desert, but became stranded in the Cascade Mountains for lack of a cleared wagon road and were rescued by a relief party from the settlements. The third attempt, led by William Macy in 1854, was finally successful in both crossing the desert and crossing the Cascades using the newly completed Free Emigrant Road.

The combined Meek-Elliott-Macy wagon trains brought some 2,500 emigrants into Oregon. The routes they blazed were later used by gold seekers, freighters, the military, and settlers moving to central and eastern Oregon.

Historical context

As settlers moved into the area surrounding Springfield and Eugene in the early 1850s, residents realized that they needed a more direct route from the main stem of the Oregon Trail into the southern Willamette Valley. Over time, and as they came to know the land, settlers discovered Indian and trappers trails that criss-crossed the Cascades' foothills. It seemed logical that the HBC trappers would have used a route that crossed the Cascades' summit.

For months the project's supporters talked about how and when to get a formal search started for that route. Residents of Willamette Forks took the lead and soon brought in folks from the Coburg area. Among them were John Diamond and William Macy.

Eager to get underway, the residents petitioned the Territorial legislature for funds to support the effort. Although the legislature encouraged the effort, they sent no funds. Undaunted, the settlers passed a hat around to collect contributions for a scouting effort. With funds and seven volunteers⁹² committed to the project, scouts set out in the early summer to find a pass through the Cascades. Eight years after Stephen Meek's disastrous foray in search of a middle route across Oregon, the Road District of Benton, Lane, and Linn counties hired William Macy to lead a party called the "Viewers" to search for a road from Eugene City in the Willamette Valley to Fort Boise.

Preliminary efforts yielded nothing. In July, 1852, a second scouting expedition worked their way up the Cascades, climbed a peak (they named it Diamond Peak), and located a viable pass. As soon as possible, before the snow started falling, Macy and his companions set out. They traversed the new pass and followed an Indian trail toward the Deschutes River and the Bend area. From there, they continued eastward across the old Meek route.⁹³ The Viewers spent about two weeks looking for gold along the Meek Cutoff through the Maury Mountains.

Near Harney Lake, the "Viewers" were attacked by a small party of Snake Indians. In the skirmish, the Viewers lost their notes, four horses, and several mineral specimens they collected along the way. Moreover, Macy, Diamond, and Clark were wounded. Still, they managed to reach the Oregon Trail near the Burnt River. A passing emigrant, who was also a physician, treated the wounds as well as possible. The Viewers returned home along the Oregon Trail.

In spite of the difficulties they encountered, the Viewers knew that a mid-Cascade route was indeed feasible and that with more investment and a lot of work, the middle road could be opened. Although Macy thought it was reprehensible to charge poor emigrants a toll, the others joined parties traveling over the Barlow Road, paying toll charges as they went.

The Viewers quickly went to work, preparing a report for the legislature that suggested that \$3000 would open the road from Springfield-Eugene to the Deschutes. After their previous attempt with the legislature, the road promoters were skeptical of receiving funding support from that body. Interest was spreading; residents of Benton and Douglas counties wanted the road as well. Levi Scott (who was among the group that opened the Applegate Trail) and J. C. Avery of Marysville were lending support. The hat was passed again, this time to a wider group than before. Elijah Bristow of Pleasant Hill, for one, offered \$240.

With seed money in hand, the promoters appointed an eight-man committee to plan the road, which would be open to everyone. Unlike the Barlow Road, this would be a free road--no tolls would be charged. Macy, Cady, and Asahel Spencer were elected commissioners to oversee the project. The Road District promptly hired Dr. Robert Alexander to construct the road. They would call it the Free Emigrant Road.

⁹²William Macy, John Diamond, William Tandy, Joseph Meador, Alexander King, J. Clark, and a man named Walker.

⁹³Please read the Meek Cutoff Route narrative for more information.

Elijah Elliott, the brother-in-law of a Pleasant Hill settler, had traveled to Oregon by way of California and claimed land east of Pleasant Hill. Elliott donated \$30 to the road building effort and when the organizers learned that he was traveling back on the Oregon Trail to meet his family in Idaho, they encouraged, and possibly paid him, to lead the party back over the new road.

After crossing the Barlow Road, Elliott traveled on the Oregon Trail to Fort Boise where his family greeted him and others listened as he told about the new road. Elliott, having never seen the new road, left Fort Boise leading 215 wagons and followed the Oregon Trail to the point where it crossed the Malheur River. From there he turned west to follow Meek's old road.

As with Meek's effort over Oregon's desert country, Elliott's party wandered a bit--lost, confused and growing angry. Elliott's attempt to avoid the stagnant marshes the Meek group encountered carried the group south around the Malheur and Harney lakes. They went for long days without water (70 miles in one stretch) and with dwindling provisions.

As they neared Silver Lake, arguments broke out among the emigrants and efforts were made to calm their fears of being stranded in the desert. A party of eight men was appointed to go ahead and alert settlers that a party was coming over the new road. As the advance group hurried ahead, the emigrants moved more slowly, arriving at the present location of Bend, in October, 1853.

With the advance party out, Elliott still had scouting needs and formed a small contingent to locate the new road. No one knew that the road builders were working just miles away to get the road blazed on their own. Elliott's second group of scouts located the road builders' blazes near LaPine, three days after the builders turned back toward the Valley.

The emigrants had found their road, but it wasn't what they anticipated or were promised. Elliott fully expected the road to be cleared; instead, the trees along the road had been felled but not cleared. Dr. Alexander had defaulted on his road building effort.⁹⁴

Still, the emigrants pushed on, following the blazed trees over the Cascade mountains. As Elliott's group traveled, winter snows settled over the Cascades. The emigrants were slowly starving in October's freezing mountain temperatures. They were making decisions on their own. The route was littered with downed trees making any travel slow and arduous. Many wagons were left at the Pine Openings (10 miles above Hills Creek Dam), and a grave was dug there, too, for a woman was killed in a wagon accident near the present Hills Creek Reservoir.

After several days of crawling on hands and knees through thickets, climbing over logs, wading down streams, their provisions gave out and they were reduced to the necessity of living on snails and mice and anything they could lay their hands on. They at last reached the cabin of a settler who took them in and cared for them and got on his horse and spread the news. There was not a moment's delay in the efforts of the settlers and to furnish relief. All night they worked in getting together supplies and as soon as morning dawned a large pack train was on its way for their relief.

*James Addison Bushnell, emigrant of 1852,
whose family followed Elliott
across the Free Emigrant Road in 1953*

⁹⁴ Alexander was sued and Commissioner Spencer took it upon himself to oversee the completion, such as it was, of the road.

Earlier, when the main body of Elliott's party crossed the Deschutes, one man in Elliott's party, Martin Blanding, rode ahead. Near where Lowell is today, his old grey mare went into labor and delivered a dead colt. Blanding prepared a fire and began roasting the colt. The valley's settlers saw the fire's smoke and, fearing Indians, hurried to investigate. When they learned of the extreme conditions of the rest of the emigrants still miles away, the settlers mounted an all-out relief effort. Ninety-four pack animals and 23 loaded wagons were sent out to help the struggling emigrants. By October 19, near the camp on the Big Marsh Creek, the rescuers reached the first of Elliott's desperate party. With the support of their welcoming neighbors, the emigrants arrived and settled into the southern Valley.

The advance party was having problems too. Early in their effort, they mistook Three Sisters for Diamond Peak. They had no way of knowing that they had traveled too far north. They struggled across lava beds and down the McKenzie River, living on rodents and birds. While the relief party was making its way up the Willamette River's Middle Fork to Elliott's group, the last of the advance party was rescued near Springfield.

In 1854, William Macy successfully led a train of 121 wagons along the route taken by Elliott. The road continued to be used through the 1860s when the Central Oregon Military Road was established⁹⁵ as a supply route from the Willamette Valley to the military posts situated in eastern Oregon. Although nearby, the Central Oregon Military Road crossed the Cascades south of the Free Emigrant Road. It angled south to the Klamath Marsh, passed through the Warner and Steens Mountains, and went on through the Jordan Valley to Idaho.

Altogether, Meek, Elliott, and Macy guided, for better or worse, nearly 500 wagons and 2500 persons across the high desert and central Cascades into the Willamette Valley. In later years, this Oregon Trail cutoff was used by freighters and the military and settlers.

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⁹⁵Charlotte Sterns Pengra's husband, Bynon, applied for federal grants to improve the road. Mrs. Pengra was an emigrant of 1853 and her journal has provided insight into the emigrant experience in the years since.

Government or management documents

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USDI National Park Service, 1998.

Existing interpretive resources

None known.

Corridor resources

Corridor description: The trail's route generally follows US 97 from Bend south through LaPine to Crescent. At Crescent, turn west on the Crescent Cutoff Road around Black Rock Butte and Odell Butte to OR 58, the Willamette Highway. Continue west on OR 58 past McCredie Springs to Oakridge and Westfir into Eugene.

Adventurer's tour (the route closest to the actual Free Emigrant Road): From the Crescent Cutoff and OR 58 junction, turn south to Forest Road 6020 (maintained for 4 wheel-drive/high clearance vehicles) travel west to Forest Road 60, then west on Forest Road 60 to Forest Road 6010, then west to Forest Road 380, then west to Forest Road 2160. At the junction with Forest Road 2149, turn south, continue south to Forest Road 21. Turn west on US 21, the road will loop around the western edge of Hills Creek Reservoir. Turn west on OR 58 and continue as above.

High Desert Museum, Bend
Deschutes Historical Society, Bend
Newbury National Volcanic Monument
LaPine State Park
Oregon Cascades Recreation Area
West Cascades Scenic Byway
Pacific Crest Trail
Diamond Peak Wilderness
Willamette Pass
McCredie Springs
Kitson Hot Springs
Oakridge/Westfir
Lookout Point Dam
Elijah Bristow State Park
Elijah Bristow Historical Marker

Partners and players

Federal and national

USDI Bureau of Land Management
USDA Forest Service
Oregon-California Trails Association

Tribal

Burns-Paiute Tribe

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Transportation
Oregon Tourism Commission
Travel Information Council
Oregon Historical Society
Oregon Trail Advisory Council

Regional and local

certified local governments
county historical societies
local chambers of commerce
regional visitor associations and tourism groups
Oakridge Museum & Upper Willamette Pioneer Association.
High Desert Museum
Archaeological Society of Central Oregon
private land owners

Recommendation

There are several opportunities to interpret the Free Emigrant Road including the Big Marsh Creek crossing of OR 58; at the Hills Creek Dam and Reservoir (where the road viewers and the road builders traveled, along with 1000 emigrants after the “road” was built. Pengra’s military road crews also followed this road); at the grave of Mrs. Joseph Petty at Hill Creek Reservoir; and the Campsite on the Middle Fork.

There is also an opportunity to recognize the significance of the Oregon Central Military Wagon Road which shares the trail corridor along Middle Fork Willamette River through Emigrant Pass.

OREGON

Santiam Wagon Road, 1865-1939

Route description

The Santiam Wagon Road was a route developed between Albany and Sisters. It was opened in the 1860's and was used until 1939 when it was replaced by US 20, the Santiam Highway. County roads connected Albany with Sweet Home. From Sweet Home, the wagon road crossed Wiley Creek and over Whiskey Butte to the South Santiam River. It then continued east, staying on the south side of the river until crossing Seven Mile Creek and ascended Seven Mile Hill through Tombstone Pass, across Tombstone Prairie and Lost Prairie to Fish Lake. From here, the wagon road jogged south and then east, staying on the north side of Sand Mountain and Big Lake, through the Santiam Pass to Cache Creek and around the north side of Fivemile Butte.

An extended version of the Santiam Wagon Road was also known as the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Wagon Road, which at one time extended from the Santiam Pass east to Prineville and southeast to Fort Harney. This road was originally intended to reach Ontario, but was never finished. Military wagons, however, were taken through to Fort Boise. On survey maps produced by the General Land Office, the route is named the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain *Military Road*.



0 50 100 KM
25 50 MILES

Santiam Wagon Road, 1865-1939

Authority/Recognition

- State of Oregon: ORS 359.057
- USDA Forest Service, Willamette Nat'l. Forest: Special Interest Area.
- Determined eligible for National Register of Historic Places by Oregon SHPO.

Significance

Unlike the pioneer wagon roads that were developed to bring emigrants into the Willamette Valley, the Santiam Wagon Road was built from west to east to move livestock over the Cascade Mountains to central Oregon's grass lands and to provide access to markets in eastern Oregon and Idaho. Operating as a toll road until 1914, the Santiam Wagon Road was a maintained route that included bridges, road houses, and toll gates. In 1905, the first automobiles to cross the North American continent passed over the Santiam Wagon Road in a transcontinental auto race from New York City to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland. Remnants of the Santiam Wagon Road have been preserved in the Willamette National Forest and provide the longest stretches (with very high integrity) of any historic wagon road in western Oregon.

Historical context

In 1859, a group of Willamette Valley settlers explored a course following the South Santiam River to the Santiam Pass. When they returned, they reported they had found a splendid route to central Oregon and called for the development of a road. By 1864, the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Road Company was formed and submitted plans to the United States government for a road from the Willamette River to Ontario. The company was granted sections of land that totaled 861,512 acres. By 1867, the road was completed as far as Fish Lake and, in 1868, was extended to Camp Polk, about two miles northeast of present day Sisters.

Known as the Santiam Wagon Road between Sweet Home and Camp Polk, it served as a livestock, freight and stage route. Superintendent's records for 1871 show that 3,128 head of cattle and 2,310 head of sheep were driven through the toll gate three miles east of Sweet Home. West-bound wagon trains, often a half-mile long, carried wool to the mills in Waterloo, Brownsville, and Jefferson. A stage and mail line operated between Sisters and Cascadia. It is estimated that about 5,000 wagons used the road from the time it opened until 1880. Covered wagons still used the route after 1905.

In 1905, the first transcontinental auto race was held pitting two Oldsmobile Curved Dash Runabouts against each other in a race from New York City to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland. On June 20th, Dwight B. Huss driving "Old Scout" was the first to cross the continent and Santiam Pass. At the Cache Creek toll station on the east side of the pass, the gatekeeper was

puzzled as to what to charge for a toll. An eight-horse team cost \$4; a six-horse team, \$3; saddle horses were 50 cents; sheep and hogs, 3 cents a head. The car had a seven horsepower engine, but some of the freighters classed the cars as road-hogs. When descending the Cascade Mountains both cars faced disasters. "Old Scout" used a tree as a drag just as the covered wagons did. The other car "Old Steady" went into a skid and came to rest hanging over a precipice. The driver of a passing covered wagon hauled the car back to safety.

Railroads considerably reduced the wagon road's freight traffic. The Columbia Southern Railway to Shaniko was built in 1900. Then came the Oregon Trunk Railroad to Bend in 1911. Use of the wagon road declined and almost ceased in the 1920's when the McKenzie Highway was completed to Sisters. The Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Road company was dissolved in 1925 and the rights to the wagon road were sold to Linn County. In 1939, the Santiam Highway was completed, supplanting the route of the old Santiam Wagon Road.

Today, the Santiam Wagon Road exists as a driving tour route and recreational trail. The Linn County Tourism Coalition and the Willamette National Forest (Sweet Home Ranger District) have partnered to preserve the Santiam Wagon Road on the west side of the Cascades. A Santiam Wagon Road logo depicting a freight wagon and team is used for the directional signing of an auto tour route that stretches from Albany to Fish Lake. In west Linn County, the driving tour follows the old county road system along the wagon road route from Albany to near Cascadia. As the tour route enters the national forest, the logo signs indicate where portions of the wagon road continue to exist as a recreational trail. Near Upper Soda, the route of the Santiam Wagon Road lies south of the US 20 corridor and provides about 21 miles of recreational trail. Portions of the old road that received road bed improvements may still be used by wagons or pre-1939 vehicles through a special permit system. Unimproved segments of the road are open only to hikers, horse riders and mountain bikes.

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Existing interpretive resources (listed west to east)

SITE: Cascadia State Park

LOCATION: US 20 (Sec. 32. T13S, R3E)

DESCRIPTION: Four-panel interpretive exhibit

SUBJECT/TITLE: Four topics: Location (orientation); Native Americans (migrations into area); Early 1900s (mentions Santiam Wagon Road); Cascadia Bridge

OWNER: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

SITE: Walton Ranch Interpretive Trail
LOCATION: US 20 (Sec. 32, T13S, R4E)
DESCRIPTION: Short hiking trail with three-panel interpretive exhibit
SUBJECT/TITLE: Two signs deal with elk and wildlife conservation. The third sign describes the Walton homestead and its relationship to the Santiam Wagon Road.
OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: House Rock Loop Trail
LOCATION: House Rock Campground (Sec. 32, T13S, R5E)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Santiam Wagon Road
OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Tombstone Prairie
LOCATION: Sec. 31, T13S, R6E
DESCRIPTION: Tombstone monument
SUBJECT/TITLE: Monument to James McKnight, accidentally killed at site
OWNER: Private/USDA Forest Service

SITE: Lost Prairie
LOCATION: US 20 (Sec. 27, T13S, R6E)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Santiam Wagon Road
OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Lost Prairie
LOCATION: US 20 (Sec. 27, T13S, R6E)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Transcontinental auto race on Santiam Wagon Road
OWNER: Travel Information Council

SITE: Fish Lake
LOCATION: Fish Lake Remount Depot (Sec. 29, T13S, R7E)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Grave of Charity Ann Marks and infant child
OWNER: USDA Forest Service

SITE: Fish Lake
LOCATION: Fish Lake Remount Depot (Sec. 29, T13S, R6E)
DESCRIPTION: Historical marker
SUBJECT/TITLE: Santiam Wagon Road and Forest Service uses of site
OWNER: USDA Forest Service

Corridor Resources

Corridor description: Linn County has developed a self-guided auto tour of the Santiam Wagon Road from Albany to Upper Soda. The route begins in Albany on US 20 and goes southeast on Spicer Drive and then on US 20 again to Lebanon. From Lebanon, the route follows the county roads of Cascade Drive, Fairview Road, and Liberty Road to Sweet Home. Out of Sweet Home, the route goes east on Wiley Creek Road and then Whiskey Butte Road (this unpaved portion of the route is not suitable for RV traffic) to its junction with US 20 near Cascadia. From there the route continues east on US 20. The modern corridor follows US 20 through its junctions with OR 126 and OR 22 through the Santiam Pass and southeast to Sisters.

Albany Regional Museum

Albany historic districts

Lebanon murals

Sweet Home murals

East Linn County Museum

Sweet Home USDA Forest Service District Office's exhibits.

Cascadia covered bridge.

Upper Soda Mountain House

Partners and Players

Federal and national

USDA Forest Service

Tribal

State

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Oregon Department of Transportation

Oregon Tourism Commission

Travel Information Council

Oregon Historical Society

Regional and local

certified local governments

local chambers of commerce

local historical societies

regional visitor associations and tourism organizations

Linn County Historical Society

private land owners

Recommendations

In 1983, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined that the Santiam Wagon Road retained enough historic integrity to warrant eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1990, public interest prompted designation of the Santiam Wagon Road as a Special Interest Area of the Willamette National Forest, creating a 660' corridor to preserve and protect this cultural resource. Today, the Santiam Wagon Road provides the longest stretches of excellent integrity of historic wagon road in western Oregon. It is recommended that a nomination of the Santiam Wagon Road be prepared for the National Historic Register.

The Santiam Wagon Road Special Interest Area is approximately 24-miles-long, beginning in the Sweet Home Ranger District and ending on the McKenzie Ranger District boundary with the Deschutes National Forest. In 1993, a capital investment project for trail construction was implemented through the Special Interest Area to preserve the historic resource and connect discontinuous sections of the Santiam Wagon Road into a complete recreation corridor. The proposed second phase of capital investment, to implement an interpretive program through the Special Interest Area, was never realized due to the collapse of federal funding support. The Santiam Wagon Road presents excellent opportunities for public interpretation and education. Limited interpretation exists through a handful of rustic historical markers, but the wagon road deserves much more. It is recommended that an interpretive plan be created and funding be secured to provide further interpretation of this outstanding resource. Interpretive opportunities exist at Sweet Home Ranger District Office, Tombstone Prairie, Fish Lake Guard Station and at various USDA Forest Service campgrounds along the Santiam Wagon Road in the Willamette National Forest.

Thanks to the efforts of the Willamette National Forest, the preservation and public opportunities of the Santiam Wagon Road are secure. A similar effort is now required by the Deschutes National Forest to protect and manage this resource on the lands under its jurisdiction. It is recommended that the Deschutes National Forest undertake a coordinated and cooperative effort with the Willamette National Forest to extend the Santiam Wagon Road Special Interest Area to an appropriate terminus east of the Cascades. It is also recommended that Deschutes County and the town of Sisters consider cooperative opportunities with Linn County and Albany in extending the heritage tourism linkages that are provided through their special Santiam Wagon Road connection.

Finally, it is beyond the scope of this report to consider the continuation of the Santiam Wagon Road's extension as the Willamette Valley and Cascade Mountain Wagon Road to old Fort Harney near Burns, Oregon. Additional study and evaluation of this historic wagon road are recommended.

General recommendations

The Oregon Trails Coordinating Council recommends that Oregonians move forward with the Oregon Historic Trails Program. The Oregon Historic Trails Program can produce an array of benefits for Oregon's economy and its citizens. The opportunity to realize these benefits will depend on the entities that have the authority to act and are willing to collaborate on the program's behalf: land management agencies, government commissions, heritage organizations, and tourism associations. Fully implemented, a statewide historic trails program will provide a number of benefits, including:

- ◆ a system of historic trails developed for their educational, recreational, and economic values;
- ◆ a network of quality cultural heritage tourism projects that are historically accurate and consistent in design;
- ◆ a foundation for a consistent cultural heritage tourism marketing package uniting all of Oregon and encouraging exploration along trail corridors;
- ◆ increased economic opportunity and economic diversity for rural Oregon communities; and
- ◆ a statewide historic trails system in place for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial.

In 1988, the Oregon Trail Advisory Council recognized the 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial as the impetus to preserve and develop the Oregon Trail for economic and cultural benefit to the state. The Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition in 2003-2006 continues the momentum and expands the benefits. As the nation's focus turns to Oregon and the terminus of the Lewis and Clark Trail, there is a remarkable opportunity to shape the commemoration of a single national historic trail into a statewide celebration. All regions of the state will benefit by the implementation and promotion of the statewide Oregon Historic Trails Program, inviting Oregonians and visitors alike to explore all of Oregon's historic routes.

Beyond the one-time opportunity offered by the Bicentennial, a statewide historic trails program merits the attention and commitment of Oregonians. Our trails are our history and our care for the trails, and other heritage resources, will preserve Oregon for the future. We have both an opportunity and an obligation to preserve and interpret the state's historic sites and stories for present and future generations. The Oregon Historic Trails Program provides us with the framework to link people and places, to unite the state in a common effort, and to encourage exploration of Oregon's special places.

Oregon historic trails product development guidelines

Once an idea for a project on a historic trail has surfaced, how does it become a reality? There is no single formula for success, but there are steps identified in the Oregon Tourism Commission's *Tourism Product Development Workbook* that describe a thoughtful planning process which can be applied to a variety of projects. As you think about your idea, try applying the following steps.

Step one: The idea

It takes a clear path to make any idea a reality. You need to be able to clearly define the essence of your idea in a simple paragraph. The process of defining your historic trails project forces you to think about the potential of the idea, to clearly and precisely articulate the project, to gain acceptance on the definition from others, and to begin to assess your resources and ability to complete the project.

Step two: A visit to the marketplace

Whether you are planning a single interpretive sign or developing a tour route, an understanding of your audience will help you determine if the public would be interested in your project and how it might fit with other existing or planned heritage resources. Research may also help you identify key players, surface new ideas, or find undiscovered resources.

Step three: Gaining community support

Building community awareness and support is important to the success of any project which serves the public. Your project may impact life in the local community. A tour route will increase the number of visitors coming through town. An interpretive sign might cause folks to seek out additional historical information or to look for other heritage resources in the area. That same interpretive sign may need the support of your local service club to provide maintenance. Most of all, a project that has the support of the community helps build community pride and ownership.

Step four: Establishing an organization

In order to implement a project, you need to address organizational issues early in the planning phase. If you are a single group working on a historic trails project, that may not be difficult. If more than one entity is involved, you will want to determine how best to combine stakeholders into a single governing body. One of the partners may be able to provide you with a nonprofit status beneficial for fundraising. Other contributors may be able to find volunteers, donate land, or provide staff support. Any collaborative effort requires careful attention to common goals, relationships, structure, responsibilities, accountability, and the sharing of benefits and rewards.

Step five: The site

The proposed site of a historic trails project requires careful consideration of significance, interpretive potential, accessibility, scenic quality, and suitability of the project to the site's history and to the surrounding community. Land ownership, regulatory restrictions, infrastructure, and visitor services need to be considered before a project moves ahead.

Step six: Developing the plans

Any planning process should be in scale with the size and scope of your historic trails project. The actual presentation and detail of project information will vary depending on the individual circumstances of the project--it may require an interpretive plan, master plan, conceptual designs, or a simple written proposal. The planning process offers you the opportunity to commit the concept to paper and provides you with a tool to communicate your vision to a larger public for support and fundraising.

Step seven: Financial feasibility

Most projects require money. As part of the planning process it is important to capture the costs of the project including good estimates of what it will cost to research, design, build, operate, and maintain. Once you know the costs, you can begin to analyze your ability to find the funding. You might also find that your project needs additional partners or a phased implementation plan. It is important that the numbers you present be as strong as possible and that you can validate them with research.

Step eight: The business plan

A business plan is simply a summary of all your research, evaluation, planning, and analysis. The business plan presents project information in a single document which can be used to guide you through fundraising and implementation.

Step nine: Demonstrating economic benefit

You may be undertaking a historic trails project because it is the "right thing to do," but many times we are challenged to provide supporters and funders with information that demonstrates there will be positive economic benefit to the community or region. Resist the temptation to oversell your case but be sure to think about both direct and indirect economic impacts of increased visitation or community enhancement.

Step ten: The marketing plan

Marketing is a way to inform people about what your project has to offer. It is an important step in the overall planning process and should not be left until the project is completed. If the public does not know what you have, what makes your historic trails project special, they won't know why they should visit--and they won't. Marketing plans should include an evaluation of the resource's management needs--assess how many visitors can the project sustain without damage--and should promote stewardship. A directional signage program should be included in both your site plan and your marketing plan. Make sure your plan includes opportunities to maximize the efforts of other complementary marketing efforts in the region or state. Look for good examples of regional or heritage corridor marketing pieces.

Step eleven: The fundraising plan

If you've worked through the steps, you probably have a well-researched and carefully planned project with broad support that is positioned to compete for funding from a variety of sources. There are many resources available to help you identify potential funders, but remember that the family always gives first, including all the partners. Outside funders will want to see substantial commitment by stakeholders before providing additional funding.

The Oregon Trails Coordinating Council has established the Oregon Historic Trails Fund at the Oregon Community Foundation. Funding is limited to projects on one of sixteen historic trails recognized in ORS 358.057: the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the Oregon National Historic Trail, Applegate National Historic Trail, the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, the Whitman Mission Route, the Upper Columbia River Route, the Meek Cutoff, the Free Emigrant Road, the Cutoff to the Barlow Road, the Klamath Trail, the Jedediah Smith Route, the Nathaniel Wyeth Route, the Benjamin Bonneville Route, the Ewing Young Route, the John Fremont Route, and the Santiam Wagon Road.

Oregon Community Foundation staff in Portland, Oregon can be contacted for information about the Oregon Historic Trails Fund.

A few words about historic trails projects . . .

A successful historic trails project combines rigorous historical research, careful design, creative presentation, and effective marketing. It must be meaningful to persons with a wide range of experiences and interests; it can be valued locally but must also have a larger appeal.

Good history is key to any historic trails project. As you look at developing a project, focus on quality and authenticity. Provide your audience with a rigorously researched, accurate and realistic presentation of a person, place or event. At the end of each trail chapter, you will find a list of resources: scholarly documents, management and government documents, interpretive resources, corridor resources, and partners and players. Take advantage of existing resources to develop the best project possible.

Consider your audiences. Are you developing your project for the community, historians, the preservation enthusiast, or the visitor? Be clear about your goals for each audience. Plan to make sites come alive through interpretation which reveals the importance of a site, which relates the essence of the message to the audience's everyday lives or experience, and which promotes an understanding and appreciation of the resource. Be prepared to interpret the complex issues of Oregon's diverse cultures, issues, and events from a number of perspectives.

The Oregon Historic Trails Fund requires that projects meet the interpretive standards equal to those of the National Association for Interpretation, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, or the American Association of Museums. You may want to consider contracting with a professional interpreter or tap into the expertise of a land management agency.

Partnerships are essential to success. Many historic trails projects will include a variety of land owners and land managers. Some partners will provide access to information, expertise, or

funding. Others will have important historical information or contacts within the broader heritage community. Tourism folks will welcome the opportunity to help market a quality project of interest to visitors; Oregon's heritage is their "product." Invite the appropriate local and regional experts in history, preservation, interpretation, and tourism to act as partners or to serve as advisors. Include partners from both the public and private sectors.

Recommended Reading and References

Cultural Heritage Tourism Guidelines, by the Oregon Tourism Commission

Contact the Oregon Tourism Commission in Salem, Oregon.

Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing, by Mary Hall

Contact Portland State University.

Interpretive Master Planning, by John A. Ververka

Contact the Interpretation Publication and Resource Center, North Stonington, Connecticut.

Marketing Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations

Contact Amherst Wilder Foundation, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Oregon Foundation Databook, by C & D Publishing

Contact C & D Publishing, Portland, Oregon.

Oregon Visitor Profile, by Oregon Tourism Commission

Contact Oregon Tourism Commission, Salem, Oregon.

Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits, by Suzanne Trapp, Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman

Contact the Interpretation Publication and Resource Center, North Stonington, Connecticut.

Tourism Product Development Workbook, by the Oregon Tourism Commission

Contact the Oregon Tourism Commission in Salem, Oregon.

Wayside Exhibit Guidelines: the ABCs of Planning, Design, and Fabrication, by the National Park Service

Acknowledgements

After the Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial of 1993, the OTCC's mission focused on the protection, preservation, and development of Oregon's many historic trails. With this broader scope of purpose, the Council benefitted from the contributions and assistance of many individuals. The Oregon Trails Coordinating Council wishes to acknowledge and thank all who helped the Council strive towards its mission from 1994-1998, especially those who are listed here.

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