

MULLAN CHRONICLES

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Mullan Day II a Success



DR. G. THOMAS EDWARDS, professor of history at Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA, emphasizes a point in his talk titled "Walla Walla as a Gateway into the Interior Northwest, 1860-1885."

available at \$2 a copy. Dorothy and Bernie Merriman of Coeur d'Alene were delighted to hear Joel's voice again. They interviewed him years ago when making their presentation about the Mullan Road and its commemorative markers.

Raymond Borchers followed with his talk titled *Mapping the Mullan Road* wherein he discussed the trials and tribulations of locating the maps then the actual locations of the route of the Mullan Road.

Borchers' project, and the result-

Only if John Mullan was present himself could those who attended the second annual John Mullan Day conference enjoyed the event even more. About 45 loyal Mullanites showed up for the event that was held on May 11 in Superior to hear about and discuss John Mullan and the Mullan Road.

The festivities were opened by a cassette-taped oration delivered by Joel Overholser titled *Fort Benton's Crucial Role in the Development of the Mullan Road*. The museum has printed copies of his address



ing booklet that he published, *Mullan Road Detail Maps From Walla Walla, Preliminary Edition*, sparked a lot of interest and Ray sold several copies at the event. He also generously provided about a dozen copies to the Mineral County Museum and Historical Society to sell and allowed us to keep the proceeds. We still have four copies left if anyone is interested at \$5 a copy plus \$2 to cover postage and handling. Thanks, Ray, for your gift.

The conference attendants then



RAYMOND BORCHERS ponders the facts in his presentation Mapping the Mullan Road. Copies of his booklet of detail maps are available for \$7.

took a break to dine on coffee and delicious homemade cookies provided by members of the historical society. Then Floyd Stancliff and Kay Strombo took a contingent on a field trip to view a couple of pioneer roads and a segment of the Mullan Road, one just west of Superior on the old Highway 10 and the work retaining wall and lies only a mile from Kay's home. Russell Corn, our historical reference for Mineral County, said this was a part of the original road.

More Mullan Road Commentaries

From the *Olympia Pioneer and Democrat*, Dec. 17, 1858:

As proper subjects for memorials of the Legislative Assembly, the Governor (Mason) suggests; first, the creation of a port of entry at some point near the northern boundary line. Its giving as a reason thereof, he adverts to the fact that Fort Langley, near the mouth of Frazier's river in British Columbia is to be the future capital of that Colony, and for the facility to American commerce, shipping should not be forced to go so far out of the way as to Fort Townsend, the present post of entry.

Second, the great necessary, beneficial and, when accomplished, the crowning monument of the age—the Pacific Railroad, meets with a proper share of attention; and as incident to and as necessary precursor of, the northern route, connecting the great Lakes and Northern Mississippi valley with Puget Sound or the Columbia River is the Military wagon road from Ft. Benton to Walla-Walla ... It is needless to add that east of Fort Benton, a good road exists for emigrants, abounding in game, grass, water and timber; that the great Missouri, also to that point, is navigable for the steamers of a certain class, and thus will be secured the best immigrant route across the continent.

—30—

The California State Library has been a gold mine untapped until just a short time ago. One of the copies sent to the museum was from *Sunset: The Magazine of the Pacific and of all the Far West*. (Vol 24, #6, June 1910) The following is a first person interview with John Mullan made in 1908, a year before his death by Day Allen Willey. It was Mr. Willey who took the picture of Mullan we have seen of Mullan in his scull cap and flowing beard. There is a marvelous forward to the interview in which Willey outlines the history of the road and John Mullan.

In June of 1859 we barged it up the Columbia from the Dalles where we had prepared for the expedition, leaving the river at Wallula and marching overland to Walla Walla. I had about two hundred men, of whom one hundred formed an escort from the third Artillery, under Lieutenant White. They were to do the Indian fighting if we had any, while the rest of us attended to business.

Sohon was a good engineer, a skilled mapmaker, could speak English, French and several Indian languages, and was not afraid to go fifty or a hundred miles in advance looking for the best route.

Luckily I had with me Sohon, the bright Frenchman who was with us in exploration of the Bitter Roots. Sohon was a good engineer, a skilled mapmaker, could speak English, French and several Indian languages, and was not afraid to go fifty or a hundred miles in advance looking for the best route. He had a way of making friends with the Indians, so he obtained much information from them. Sohon was my right-hand man in the work. We had an astronomer with the party and I organized several surveying corps who went ahead of the road-makers. My brother, Dr. James Mullan, acted as surgeon.

It was the last week of June 1859 when we actually turned up the first dirt on Toukanon creek, in the southeastern corner of what is now the state of Washington. I believe it was June 25th to be exact as to the date. When we had finished the first mile I hap-

pened to think of the way the old Roman roads of Europe are marked. Of course we could not stop for any milestones, but we had an old branding-iron with us containing the letters M and R. So I had a young tree cut down, the bark stripped off, then the wood was branded and there was our first mile-post. It was easy to get the exact distance with our instruments, so each mile was indicated. Besides being useful for measuring the distance, I thought the posts would aid in keeping travelers from getting off the route.

After we had gone north of the Snake river, Sohon and his Indians who had reached the foothills of the Coeur d'Alenes, came back to say that a road could be made by way of the Jesuit Mission in the Coeur d'Alene mountains. As this would be at least one white settlement on the road we cut our way to the mission, but it was a cut in truth. In one place we had to hew a lane three miles long through a dense forest where it seemed as if every foot was covered with trees or underbrush. Then came a rock wall through which we pried and blasted and shoveled before we finished the mile long passage, but when we reached the Jesuit colony up here hundreds of miles from civilization and received the welcome from the fathers, we thought it worth while for the mission was the first white settlement reached since leaving Walla Walla, two hundred miles back of us. We had been in the wilderness for six weeks.

But the scouts had reported a very rough country ahead. There was little time to stop, for we knew we must cross two if not more mountain ranges before we came to the Plains. Sohon had

(continued on page 3)

... commentaries

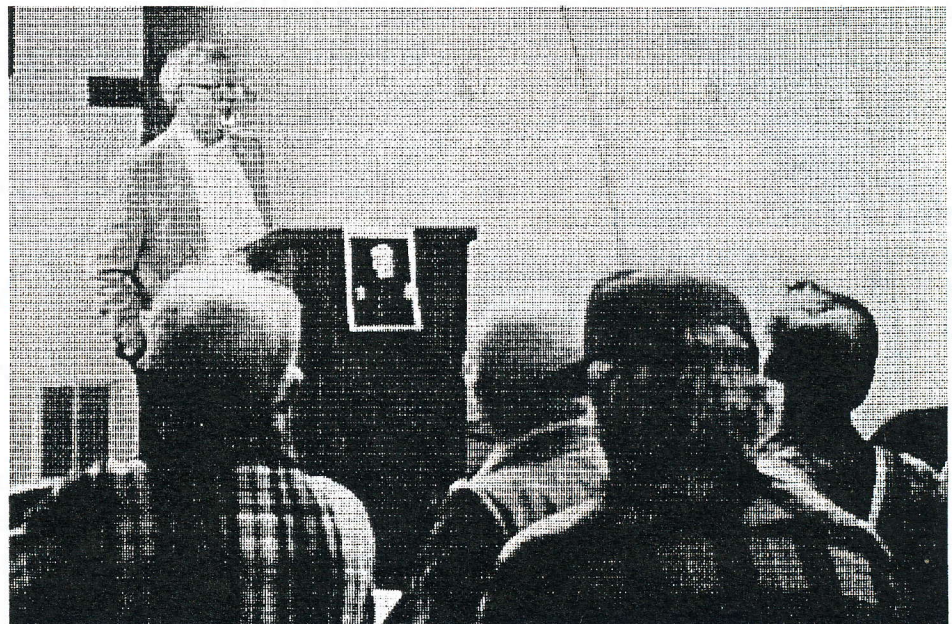
heard of a cleft in the Coeur d'Alenes that might be crossed by wagons. I sent a surveying corps to take its actual measurements and went over it myself. It was located not far from where the town of Mullan was afterwards laid out. To reach its divide meant to dig and blow out a roadway nearly two mile long up the western slope.

When we reached our first large river, The Snake, we carried the outfit across on floating pontoons, except the horses that swam as they were held by men on the pontoons. Coming to the St. Joseph river the Indians showed us something new in navigation. This stream has a very swift current and when in flood is quite deep. Instead of canoes, the natives had a sort of circular boat made of tough grass woven into a framework of reeds and twigs. They crossed the river by going into one of these panniers, as they would be called in French, and letting the current carry them, gradually working the thing farther and farther away from the shore with their hands. They might get a mile or more down stream before reaching the other side, but this was their ferry. Sometimes they drove a horse into the river and let him tow the pannier by holding on to his tail.

(To be continued)



JOHN AMONSON, of the Wallace Mining Museum, filmed the second annual John Mullan Day Conference on video tape. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, please send \$7.50 to: John Amonson, Box 92, Wallace, Idaho 83873.

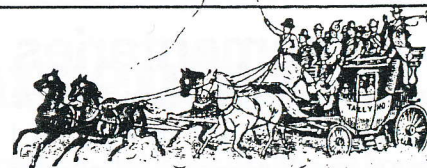


After the conference reconvened, Dr. Edwards made his presentation of Walla Walla as a Gateway to the Interior Northwest, 1860-1885. In this talk, Edwards talked about the prominence of Walla Walla in the early days and the direct link that existed between Walla Walla, Helena and Fort Benton merchants. In all, it was well received and led to a discussion—headed by Carl Cliff—how to get the Mullan Road nationally recognized. Dr. Edwards said that he knew a writer who had his work published by the National Geographic. He said he would contact the writer to see if he would be willing to write an article about the Mullan Road.

Need a Program?

For those who were unable to attend the conference, we have attached souvenir programs to their *Mullan Chronicles*. If you did not receive your program, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we will send you one.

from the mail pouch



Research Pays Off

Nancy Morebeck, a researching acquaintance of Kathleen Sedoff, spent considerable time at the California State Library in Sacramento last month. Thanks to her we have several interesting bits and pieces to add to our growing files of Mullan information. We received a note from her as follows:

Thank you very much for the check for \$25 for the work done

by me on John Mullan. I hope it added to your collection. If I can be of any help to you in the future let me know. The check was a nice surprise!! Thanks again, and I wish you the best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

*Nancy Morebeck
409 Dennis Drive
Vacaville, CA 95688.*

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