

MULLAN CHRONICLES

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Gen. Sherman and the Mullan Road

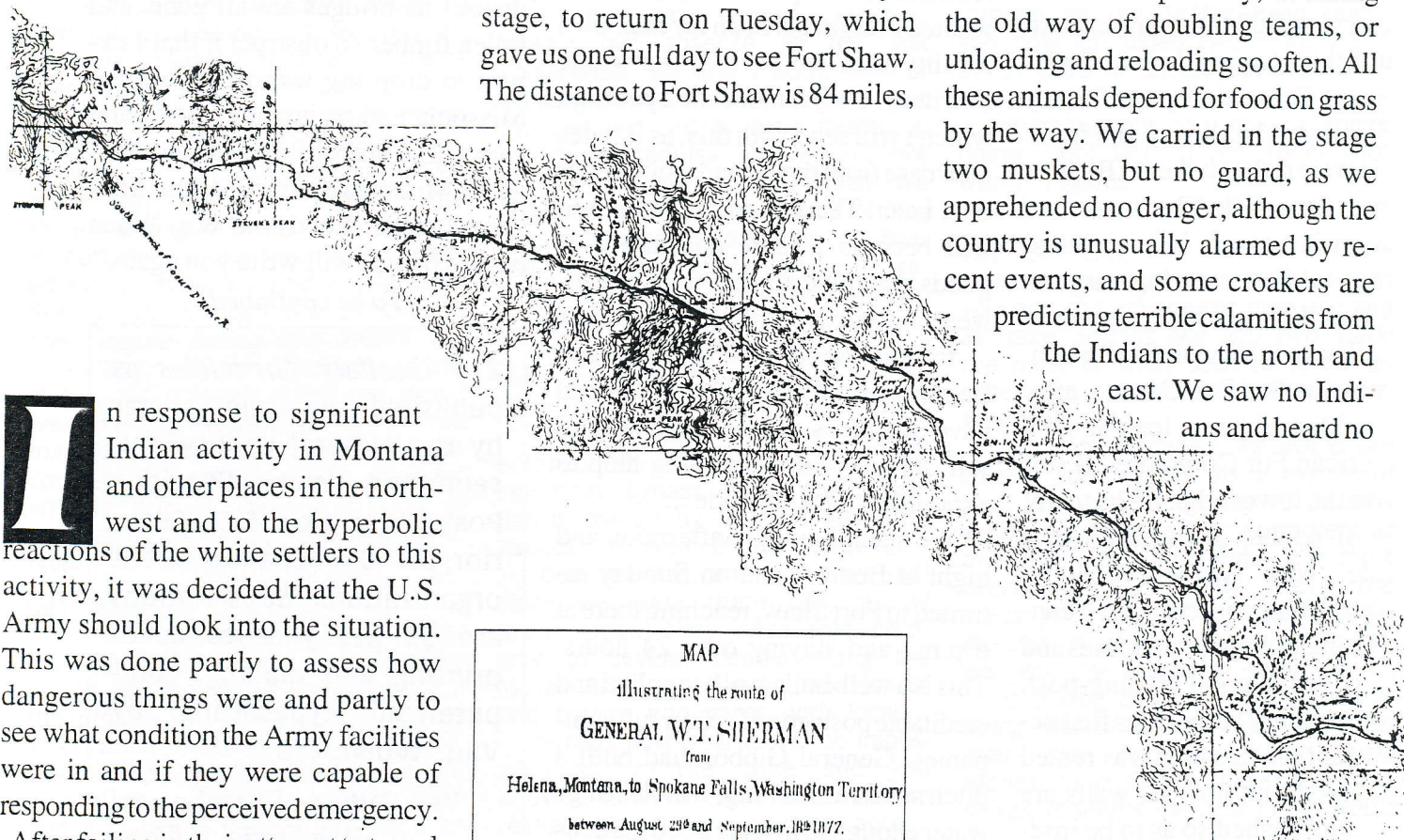
[Note: The first part of this article appeared in the Fall 1993 Mullan Chronicles. At that time we mentioned that we were looking for Sherman's actual report to Congress about that trip. Mullanite Robert Marshall read of our search and lent us his copy of Reports of Inspection Made in the Summer of 1877, by Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman and Gen. Philip H. Sheridan that was reprinted in 1984 by Ye Galleon Press of Fairfield, Washington. We have now secured a copy of that book for our files. Thanks, Robert, for your help in locating it.]

action, troops used other avenues to explore the area. They had passed through Yellowstone Park and marveled at its vistas, then paid a visit to Last Chance Gulch. From there we pick up Sherman's narration beginning Wed., Aug. 29, 1877 (Sherman addressed his letters to Secretary of War George W. McCrary at Washington, D.C.):

"It was my intention on reaching Helena to go right on to Forts Shaw and Benton; but we found only a tri-weekly stage, and had to stay here two days, when by arrangement with the stage company, we took Friday's stage, to return on Tuesday, which gave us one full day to see Fort Shaw. The distance to Fort Shaw is 84 miles,

and thence to Benton 62, usually taking two days each way.

"Accordingly on Friday last, at 5 a.m., we started. The road is well traveled because Benton is the head of navigation of the Missouri River, and that is found the cheapest route for freighters to this mountain region. The hauling is all done by ox and mule teams, the wagons being joined in twos and threes, so that six yoke of cattle or pairs of mules will haul these trains with three or four tons of freight. The advantage of thus distributing the load is that in steep places each wagon can be hauled separately, avoiding the old way of doubling teams, or unloading and reloading so often. All these animals depend for food on grass by the way. We carried in the stage two muskets, but no guard, as we apprehended no danger, although the country is unusually alarmed by recent events, and some croakers are predicting terrible calamities from the Indians to the north and east. We saw no Indians and heard no



MAP
illustrating the route of
GENERAL W.T. SHERMAN
train
Helena, Montana, to Spokane Falls, Washington Territory
between August 29th and September 10th 1877.
Based upon the Map of Mullan's Oregon Road.

(See "Sherman" on page two)

In response to significant Indian activity in Montana and other places in the northwest and to the hyperbolic reactions of the white settlers to this activity, it was decided that the U.S. Army should look into the situation. This was done partly to assess how dangerous things were and partly to see what condition the Army facilities were in and if they were capable of responding to the perceived emergency. After failing in their attempt to travel the Big Horn River to the heart of the

"Sherman," from page one

facts that justify such fears...

"We reached Fort Shaw, on the Sun River, about eleven at night. The telegraph reaches that point, and no farther. This is the most important fort in Montana; is the headquarters of General Gibbon, now here (Helena) wounded, but temporarily commanded by Major Freeman, who met me with a bunch of telegrams; so I stopped long enough to answer them, and, intending to stop on the return trip for a whole day, we pushed on all night and the next day until about 2 p.m. when we reached Benton...

Benton is a small group of houses and stores on the river-bank, at the head of navigation of the Missouri River, nearly, if not quite, 4,000 miles from the sea. Each year the navigation improves, so that, for three months, boats carrying 300 tons can reach it. We found the stores well stocked with staple articles, and we passed many teams of wagons hauling to and from. There were no boats then at Benton, and none expected. The season of navigation is passed, but we heard of two boats carrying cargo at Island, 125 miles below, whose loads will have to be hauled to Benton. The place called Fort Benton, after established there, long ago, by the American Fur Company. It still stands on the lower edge of the town; built of adobe, in the form of a triangle, with two-story block-houses at the diagonal corners. It contains the necessary store-houses and buildings for a good trading-post. In the military authorities first occupied Montana this post was rented and occupied, but now its walls are decayed and washed so as to be insecure, and it has been abandoned by

the military, and is only occupied by a few half-breed families. The present garrison is Maj. Guido Ilges and five men, who occupy rented houses in town; the real garrison is one company Seventh Infantry, which General Gibbon had with him in his fight at Big Hole, and it had not yet returned. I understand the same company will return to Benton.

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"I was waited on by a very respectable delegation of citizens, who represented their exposed situation; who wanted a larger garrison for their own locality than we have in the whole Territory. They handed me a petition, which I will send with this, as it states their case from their stand-point better than I can. There is no doubt Benton will become a large depository of goods for trade to the great Northwest, embracing British possessions ... for the present Forts Shaw and Benton must suffice, only they should have garrisons not only capable of self-defence, but of sending help to exposed interests outside ...

"We spent Saturday afternoon and night at Benton, and on Sunday returned to Fort Shaw, reaching there at 6 p.m., and staying over 24 hours. This is a well-built, well-supplied and creditable post; good for four full companies. General Gibbon had built a ditch seven miles long, which brings water enough to irrigate good gardens and to flow all through the garrison.

The post is well described in the report of the Surgeon-General on military posts. The present garrison is very small and was much cut up in Gibbon's last fight. I want the Adjutant-General to send recruits to this regiment as soon as possible ... On Monday night we took the stage; reached Helena at 2 p.m., and are now busy preparing for our departure to Missoula and the Pacific. (He then goes on to praise the farming, mining and lumbering potential of the territory) ...

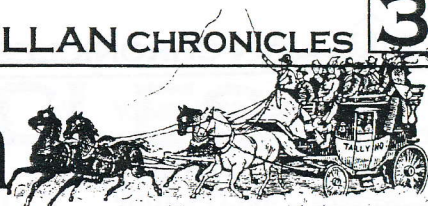
"My conviction is also that the best interests of this people and of the nation call for a closer relation with the Pacific States and Territories, and it is with this view that to-morrow I turn in that direction. There was once a wagon-road hence to Walla Walla—the Mullan Road—on which a good deal of money was spent. For years it was traveled, but now it had gone into disuse; its bridges are all gone, and fallen timber so obstruct it that I expect to drop my wagons at or near Missoula and try to take horses and packs. The probability is that we will go via Missoula, Coeur d'Alene, Spokane Bridge, Lewiston, &c. When passed over, I will write you again."

(To be continued)

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Cathryn Strombo and
Deb Davis, Editors.

from the mail pouch



Hello!

I don't think you'll remember me, but I'm the school teacher (history) from Hellgate (High School in Missoula) who attended one of your fine little gatherings a few years ago, and then faded from sight.

I've often wanted to assure you that my failure to attend subsequent meetings was not due to a rejection of your efforts, nor a loss of interest. It is simply due to a conflict in scheduling; my National Guard unit in Helena usually drills on the first weekend of each calendar month, and that seems to be the date for your annual gathering.

I'd like to bring my membership back to active status, and to continue to receive copies of the *Chronicles*.

-Kermit Edmunds

Kermit,

Welcome back!

We hate to cut off anyone's subscription as much as we hate to lose participants. But without continued financial support, we can't afford to continue publishing. So we will always be delighted to have old members renew and come back.

We also have some good news. The annual Mullan Conference will be held on Saturday, May 14, 1994. We're also moving the event to the same building in which the museum is housed so we will have ready access to materials, and it will allow folks to go through the exhibits at their leisure during the breaks.

What's on the schedule? We're still in the planning stage and would welcome any suggestions any of you may have for topics and speakers. Contact us at P.O.Box 533, Superior, MT 59872 if you have any ideas. Or call Kay at (406) 822-4626 or Deb at (406) 822-4078.

Dear Kay and Deb,

I don't suppose there is a chance that the television documentary would be shown on Canadian TV if the project you mention in the May 1993 issue is completed and televised. Hope you will keep us informed as to when it may be seen and if Canadian viewers will have an opportunity to see it. We do get some

American channels on our TV as we have what is called cable TV here. The life and work of this man (John Mullan) never ceases to amaze me.

-Joan Munholland
Strasburg, Sask., Canada

Joan,

We haven't heard anything about the project since we last published the MC. Perhaps we will hear something this winter.

It is my understanding that if the documentary is completed, it would probably be broadcast on the Public Television Network (PBS) in the U.S.A. I don't know how that translates to Canada or elsewhere but we will pursue that if it comes to pass. As with many PBS programs it may become available on VCR tape after being broadcast. That would be exciting!

-Deb

Dear Kay & Deb,

Like a letter from home, the *Chronicles* cheered me, and were very much enjoyed. Thank you both.

I should have written sooner to explain our absence at the last (conference). Bill and I both, without realizing it, were committed on that day and felt bad to have missed it.

Our schedules allowed us five days this year during which we videotaped the entire bypass of "Big Mountain," east of Superior, on float and four-wheel drive, after we replenished our firewood from (Glenn & Kay's) woodpile.

Then we videotaped the old stage coach route from Gold Creek, MT to Deer Lodge, an outstanding route.

Last, but most important, we videotaped the entire Medicine Park Mountain bypass from the Sieben Ranch, owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Baucus, to Wolf Creek, Montana.

Deb and Kay, am I glad we did! Since we were there last, out of Lyons Creek, they have sold property to several people along the Mullan Road and they've built fences and houses and gates with locks.

Perhaps next year it will be impossible to film the route, and, you know, I don't think a one of them realizes the history of their access.

Bill and I met Bob Wirth, Box 225,

Wolf Creek, MT 59648, who owns the property where the road comes past Wolf Creek. He is very interested in the road and would be glad to join our group.

He set us straight on the route Mullan took from Wolf Creek to Dearbourne River. We thought it was up Highway 287, but actually, he went up Highway 434 approx. 6 miles then crossed the Dearbourne River and on to the Birdtail. Isn't it exciting!

As the time passes, our interest grows and perhaps we can share our VCRs at one of our get togethers. Who knows? Others may want copies. However, I wasn't mobbed by members wanting my Mullan Road Ballad tape cassette!

No word yet from anyone asking for help on any TV presentation. I keep hoping I won't see a TV show about the Mullan Road riddled with errors and misinformation because of ignorance.

Bill Trueblood takes great pleasure in telling friends what I've put him through on the Mullan Road quest, and how its ruined two pickups and seven pairs of shoes, but we know. He's enjoyed every minute of it.

Congratulations on a fine job you're doing. Until later, I am yours with warm regards.

-Carl Cliff or Cliff Carl

Cliff Carl Cliff,

It's always a pleasure to hear from you and the adventures that you and Bill take. Sounds like you two made the most of what seemed to be an otherwise obnoxious summer, weatherwise.

YES, most definitely we would like to see your videos. As a matter of fact, you are on our list of persons we'd like to invite as presenters at the 1994 Mullan Conference. I think everyone would enjoy seeing the areas you have filmed. Right, Kay? Besides, if you are listed as speakers, you are bound to show up.

It is true that the Mullan Road is being assaulted by subdividing on every side, but, since there is no money to purchase these sites ourselves, it seems the best move would

(See page four)

be to inform the owners of the historic significance of their properties, and, maybe, someday... -Deb

So that's where all the wood went; we noticed quite a dent in the pile!
-Kay

Dear Deb & Kay,

I see by the latest *Mullan Chronicles* that you are trying to get a copy of General Sherman's report on his 1877 tour of inspection. Did you know that Ye Galleon Press published a reprint of this in 1985? It may still be available. Ye Galleon can be reached at Box 287, Fairfield, WA. 99012. They also have an 800 phone, (800) 488-2422. If you need my copy, I'd be happy to lend you mine.

Incidentally, when I visited Ye Galleon in 1984 they seemed to be at work on a reprint of Mullan's 1863 *Report on the Construction of a Military Road*. I don't know whether they ever got this out. Nor do I know whether the proprietor of Ye Galleon, Glen Adams, is still among us. MS had him wheelchair bound at the time. But if that reprint ever did get published and remains available

your faithful readers might like to know about it.

May I mention a small quibble? You observe in passing that Lewis & Clark "never lost a man." The Lewis & Clark Heritage Trail Foundation has a publication on medical aspects of the expedition and guess what the title is: *Only One Man Died*.

Please excuse all my typing errors. The worst thing about coming down with Parkinson's is that one's typing goes to absolute hell. I went out and bought a new computer but I'm not yet adept enough to have it cleaning up after me. Maybe next time...

Keep up the good work.

-Robert A. Marshall

Robert,

Thank you for the loan of your volume of the Sherman report. From your lead we were able to obtain a copy for the museum, it will be a valuable addition to our collection.

The 1863 report was published and was available two years ago. Several Mullanites added it to their collections. I am not sure if copies are still available but a call to Ye

Galleon would be in order if you are interested.

Never hesitate to call our attention to something you feel is in error. We appreciate it. As any of our Mullanites can testify to even a small discrepancy can throw everything out of whack. When I made that statement I felt that Charles Floyd wasn't really an expedition death. He died on August 20, 1804, about a month from leaving St. Louis, and was buried at Sioux City. From other reports of his illness, recovering and then taken more severely ill it is thought he had appendicitis. An awful way to say it is "he was sick before he left so he doesn't count." His replacement as sergeant, Patrick Gass, published his diary before L&C. He lived on the glories of the trip until dying April 3, 1870 in his 99th year. Gone West! of St. Louis, MO, has the book *Only One Man Died* in its catalog as well as many other volumes on the subject.

As for computers—they're machines, and they hate humans!

-Kay

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