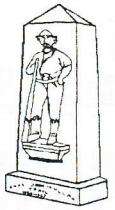


# MULLAN CHRONICLES

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Number One



## Descendants shed light on Sohon

**A**s we mentioned in the Fall issue, our visit with Sohon descendant Julian Sohon and his wife, Nancy, last summer bore fresh fruit in the form of a Smithsonian Institution publication called "Gustavus Sohon's Portraits of Flathead and Pend D'Oreille Indians, 1854," written and compiled in 1948 by John C. Ewers, an associate curator of ethnology. The information in that issue about Sohon, and in this one, comes from that publication written with a sprinkling from John Owen's Journals kept by Owens from 1850-

1871 when he ran the Fort Owen trading post in the Bitter Root Valley, southeast of Missoula, Montana. We pick up on Ewer's narration:

"Governor Stevens was so favorably impressed with the work of Gustavus Sohon while under Lieutenant Mullan's command that he made a special request to Major General Wool, Commander of the Military Department of the Pacific, to have Sohon transferred to his command. On March 31, 1855, by authority of . . . Wool, Private Sohon was ordered to detached duty with Governor Stevens' expedition."

In the spring of 1855, before setting out on an important expedition to obtain additional detailed information for the railway survey and to make the first treaties between the United States and the Indian tribes of the Upper Columbia and Northwestern Plains regions, Gov. Stevens paid tribute to Sohon:

"I also secured the services of a very intelligent, faithful, and appreciative man, Gustavus Sohon, a private of the Fourth Infantry, who was with Mr. Mullan the year previous in the

(See "Sohon's..." on Page Two)

SMITHSONIAN MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS

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THE FLATHEAD TREATY COUNCIL, JULY 1855

# Mullanites: Heed this call for help!

*We received a letter recently that all of you may be interested in so I'm not putting it in the Mail Pouch section but am featuring separately.*

*This letter came in early December from Walla Walla resident Walter J. Gary who is asking for help. Mr. Gary did not realize that we are the ones who publish the Mullan Chronicles, as is apparent in his letter, but he should be assured that he wrote to the right place.*

*If everyone could make an effort to address his concerns stated in the letter, maybe a change could be made. Please read:*

"Can you help me? Walla Walla has only one monument commemorating the Mullan Road built by the United States Army. It is on the grounds of the Washington State Penitentiary. If you stop near it out of curiosity to see what is on the monument, you will quickly be confronted with law enforcement officials. Several years ago I finally found

## **One may ask why all the interest in the Mullan Road?**

the monument. While in a county car taking pictures for a talk I was to give on transportation, I stopped at the monument to get its picture. Within 45 seconds, I was confronted by three separate groups of law enforcement personnel from the penitentiary. Although their behavior was

quite commendable in trying to foil any prisoner escapes, it is terrifying to historians and tourists with an interest in the history of this region.

"Since this episode, I have never found the courage and fortitude to return to the monument to share it with my family

***"In Superior, Montana, a town on the Mullan Road, they have formed a group to commemorate this road.***

guests. Once was enough under those conditions!

"It would be much better if this monument was moved to another part of our city so that the public could visit it and enjoy it.

"In Superior, Montana, a town on the Mullan Road, they have formed a group to commemorate this road. Four times a year they publish the *Mullan Chronicles* (copy enclosed). Once a year they have a Mullan Road festivity that I have been told numerous people attend. Ye Galleon Press has just republished the 1863's federal government's report on the construction and completion of this road. Dr. Tom Edwards, Whitman College historian, will give a talk on the road on Jan. 26, 1995 at the quarterly meeting of Walla Walla Pioneer and Historical Society.

"One may ask why all the in-

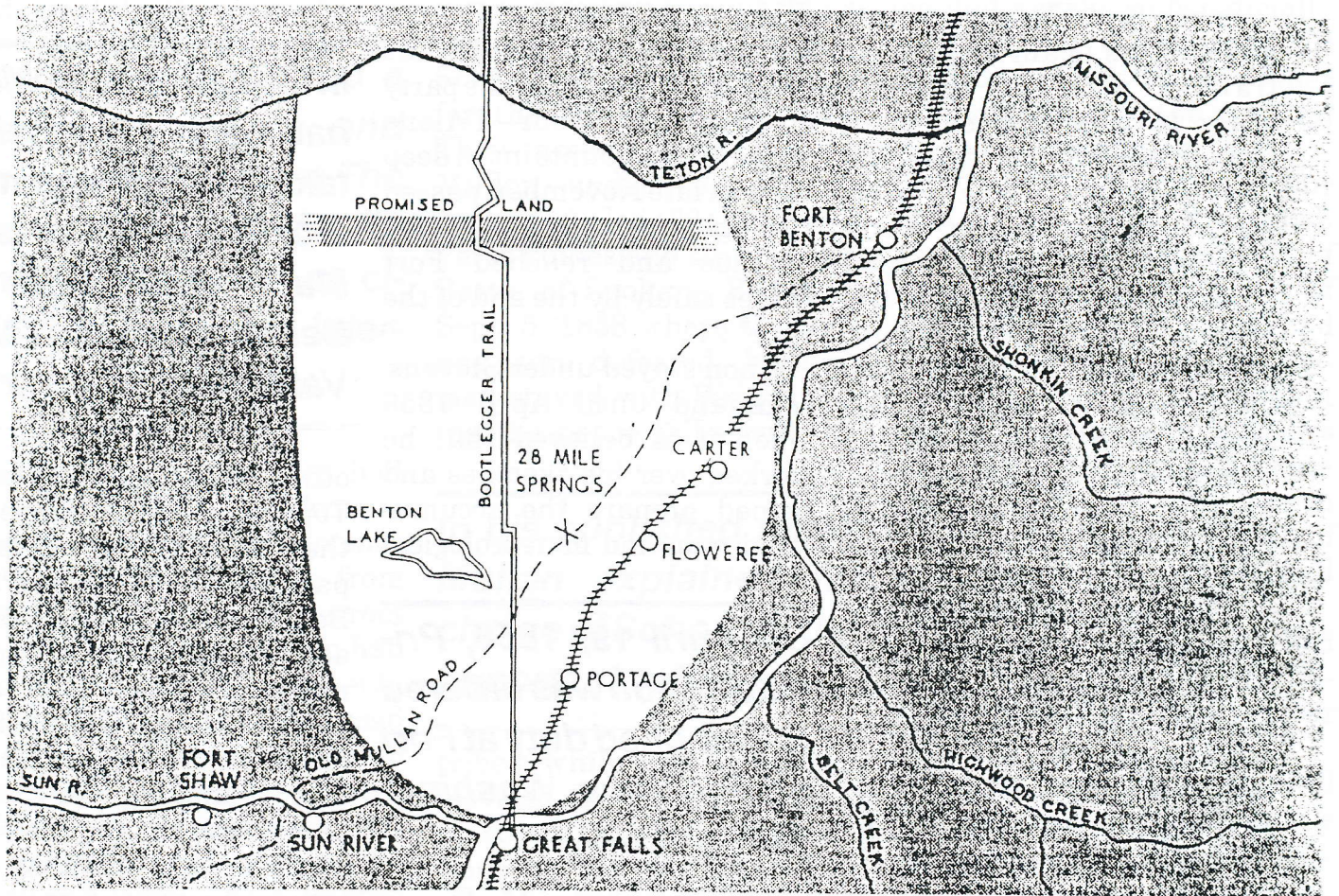
terest in the Mullan Road? This road was constructed from about 1858-1862 after the Indian wars here ended. It was 624 miles long and it connected the Columbia River via Fort Walla Walla in this city and Spokane to Fort Benton, Montana—the highest point on the Missouri River that steamboats could reach under good conditions. As such it played a major role in the opening of a large area of the Northwest to development. Many goods were shipped from Portland to Wallula to Walla Walla and then on the Mullan Road to the mines and settlements in Canada, Idaho and Montana. The Walla Walla Valley was often full of thousands of mules

***It is fitting that this marker be moved to a more appropriate site in this city***

being loaded up to set out on the Mullan Road. As a result of all this transportation the city of Walla Walla grew, banks opened along with hardware stores, schools, churches, etc. Quite simply, the Mullan Road played a major role in the development and growth of Walla Walla and many other towns and cities in this region. It is fitting that this marker be moved to a more appropriate site in this city so that tourists, historians and students can acknowledge our history in

*(See "Call ..." on Page Eight)*

# First stop on the Mullan Road: Twenty-Eight Mile Springs



*Bryan Vallet dropped us a line at the end of October with some interesting enclosures. One of them was from Prairie Pioneers; A Narrative of Montana Homestead Days, a collection of pioneer stories apparently put out by a group of Cascade County, Montana residents in Nov. 1966. It was a brief piece about Twenty-Eight Mile Spring.*

"The first stop on the Mullan Road from Fort Benton to Helena was at Twenty-eight Mile Springs, where a stage-stop hotel was built. Meals and overnight lodging was furnished for

the travellers, and water from the springs for the animals.

"By the time the homesteaders came to this area in 1910, little remained of the building. It was believed to have burned down. A picture was found in the Montana Historical Society Library.

"A news item in the June 6, 1887 *Great Falls Tribune* notes that J.D. Ryan had disposed of his interest in the 28 Mile Spring Stage Station.

"Lee M. Ford noted that to his knowledge, the last man in charge of the Twenty-eight Mile Springs stage stop was A.J. Vance, who went to Great Falls

when the line was abandoned and was known as Col. A. J. Vance\* and was an auctioneer there.

"According to Montana Historical Society Library records, the operator of the first stage line was C. C. Huntley. An item in the Oct. 20, 1866 *Rocky Mountain Gazette*, Helena, reported the number of passengers which his line had carried between May 1866 and Oct. 1, 1866. He apparently also operated this line during the summer months of 1867.

"As of May 18, 1867, Wells, Fargo & Co. announced it would

(See "First ..." on Page Seven)

# Sohon's work left us the only sketches we

(From Page One)

records of the event, shows this characteristic of the locality.

Sohon and Kiser served as interpreters again when they traveled with the Stevens party to meet the chiefs of three Blackfeet tribes and the Gros Ventures, Nez Perce, Flathead and Upper Pend D'Oreilles at the council ground near the mouth of the Judith River. That treaty, signed on Oct. 17, defined the boundaries of the hunting grounds of the Blackfeet tribes and the Indian tribes from the west of the Rockies who hunted buffalo in the area. Sohon also sketched that meeting.

Ewers continued, "Gov. Stevens intended to make treaties with the Spokane, Colville and Coeur d'Alene tribes during his return journey to the west coast. However, on Oct. 29 (1855) . . . he was met by a mounted courier from the west bearing the alarming report that some of

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***The dispatches warned Stevens not to attempt to return through the country of the hostile Indians . . .***

the tribes with whom he had recently treated at Walla Walla had broken out in open war. The dispatches warned Stevens not to attempt to return through the country of

the hostile Indians, but he obtained additional arms and ammunition from Fort Benton and pressed on as quickly and as quietly as possible. The party crossed the Coeur d'Alene range of the mountains in deep snow in late November, passed through the country of the hostiles and reached Fort Dalles safely by the end of the year" . . .

Sohon stayed under Stevens' command until April 1856 when it is believed that he worked over his sketches and helped prepare the accumulated map and meteorological

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***On April 19, 1856, Private Sohon was ordered to detached duty at Fort Steilacooms, Washington Territory.***

information. The Stevens report of the explorations and surveys done to find a northern railway route were published in 1860 with 10 of Sohon's illustrations and two others redrawn from Sohon's work by John Mix Stanley, the expedition's official artist. Sohon's illustrations included drawings done when he traveled with Mullan from 1853-54 and Stevens in 1855.

"On April 19, 1856," Ewers wrote, "Private Sohon was ordered to detached duty at Fort Steilacooms, Washington Ter-

ritory. Six months later he was transferred to duty in the

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***In March 1854, Lt. Mullan had been successful in taking a wagon train over the Rockies by way of Mullan Pass from Fort Benton to the Bitterroot Valley.***

office of Captain Cram, of the Topographical Engineers, at the Headquarters of the Department of the Pacific, Benicia, Calif., where he served as a draughtsman in the preparation of maps of the western portion of the United States for the remainder of his period of military service. Private Sohon was honorably discharged from the Army at the expiration of his five-year en-

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**Cathryn Strombo and  
Deb Davis, Editors.**

# have of some significant historical events

listment, at Fort Walla Walla, July 2, 1857.”

Meanwhile, Ewers wrote, “In

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***Lt. Mullan organized a party to explore and survey the route at The Dalles, May 15, 1858. He employed Sohon as civilian “Guide and Interpreter” to the party.***

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March 1854, Lt. Mullan had been successful in taking a wagon train over the Rockies by way of Mullan Pass from Fort Benton to the Bitterroot Valley (where John Owen had his fort). Thus he suggested that possibility of a wagon road over the Northern Rockies. In 1855 Congress appropriated \$30,000 for the construction of a military road across the mountains from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla. Continued Indian unrest in the Northwest prevented work on the project. In 1858 Isaac I. Stevens was influential in obtaining an additional Congressional appropriation for this work and in the assignment of Lt. Mullan to the position of officer in charge of the project.

“Lt. Mullan organized a party to explore and survey the route at The Dalles, May 15, 1858. He employed Sohon as civilian “Guide and Interpreter” to the party.”

But continued Indian unrest forced Mullan to stop the survey and disband his party except for topographer Kolecki, Sohon and a few men to care for the stock, Ewers wrote. They accompanied him as Mullan, under Col. Wright’s command, led 33 loyal Nez Perce guides and scouts to the Battle of Spokane Plains on Sept. 5, 1858 where the Indians were defeated. Mullan’s men stayed with Wright during the peace talks with the

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***In his published report Mullan explained his choice of Sohon for this important mission.***

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tribes while the lieutenant traveled to Washington, D.C. to obtain further appropriations for his road project.

“In May 1859 ... Mullan again organized his party at The Dalles. In June he ordered Sohon to move forward in search of a possible route across the Bitterroot Mountains south of the Coeur d’Alene River - St. Regis Borgia River crossing. In his published report Mullan explained his choice of Sohon for this important mission:

‘Mr. Sohon’s early connection with my explorations in 1853 and 1854, his knowledge of the Indian language, his familiarity with the general

scope of the country to be traversed and the influence he had always so beneficially exerted over the Indians, all pointed him out as the proper person to explore the new and dangerous route.’

“Sohon found the Coeur d’Alene unwilling to furnish guides for the exploration of the mountain area south of the Coeur d’Alene River, and strongly opposed to the location of a wagon road in that region. He returned to Mullan’s camp July 7, after an absence of more than a month alone in the country of Indians who, if not in open war, were still unfriendly to whites.”

Undaunted Mullan pushed forward to survey the feasibility of the St. Regis Borgia River route.

“Sohon, in charge of the small advance party, marked out the route and determined the lo-

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***Blake’s party left Fort Benton August 7, 1860, and arrived at Fort Walla Walla without mishap October 4, spending 48 days in traveling and 11 resting along the way.***

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cation of the mountain pass over the Coeur d’Alene to be followed by the wagon road. The party wintered in a group

(See “Mullan ...” on Page Seven)

# from the mail pouch



December 19, 1994

Dear Catherine and Debbie,

Thank goodness for the Holidays! They allow us to climb out of the Black Hole and get in touch with the ones we've been anxious to contact for a long time. We seem to be permanently in overload.

The paper about Gustav was wonderful. You did a great job. Thank you. We would be interested in purchasing a dozen for the family. We have not been able to do any further research since we've seen you. Your news about Georgetown (University) was a real surprise. Hopefully we'll get there in '95.

The enclosed check is a small donation for the museum. Perhaps it will help with postage or whatever.

Grandchild due in '95 and a Wedding. Research will have to go on the back burner for awhile. We have come across an old photograph album that may have some goodies. We have to get Gustav's granddaughter to identify for us. We'll let you know what we find.

Wishing you good health and much energy to carry on your work.

Happy Holidays,

Nancy and Julian Sohon

P.S. Just got our first computer and this is our first attempt at a letter! We need a lot of practice!!!

*Its a machine, so watch out for quirky messages from it -Kay*

Saskatoon, SASK

Dear Deb & Kay,

I am enclosing \$10 to cover the cost of another year of great reading from your neck of the woods. \$5 to cover printing and mailing and \$5 to put towards furthering the research and documentation of Mullan history. I look forward to receiving each issue as you always have something very interesting to report concerning the road and the people who built it.

My cousin dropped in here last May bringing with him a letter from my Dad's uncle Charles Mullin who once lived at Conway, N.D. It was addressed to my grandmother and was dated May 4, 1939. Uncle Charlie was describing his trip from Conway to Yakima, Wash. via #10 hwy (now Hwy 90). It was such an exciting trip for him especially when he passed through "Mullan" and "Wallace" - the tow towns with statues of Capt. John. He referred to him as cousin but I'm sure they weren't first cousins. He says and I quote, "Captain John Mullan, a cousin of ours surveyed 2 routes through the Rockies from off the great Columbia River in 1859-1860 and predicted that someday there would be railroads running through those great mtns. But little did he think that a cousin

of his, Charles Mullin, would pass through on his trail 79 years later in a "rig" at the rate of 50 miles per hour."

He also mentions the statue in Wallace and I quote. "When one reaches the top of the mountain there he stands (Capt. John) with his cap pulled down over his forehead as the Mullin family always did and I do myself."

He speaks of seeing those most beautiful lakes that Capt. John surveyed around. Lake Coeur d'Alene would be the lake he was speaking of I presume although he didn't name it.

Charles Mullin, my dad's uncle. was born in Quebec, Canada around 1861. Moved to Conway, N.D. where he farmed in the summers and then spent the winters in Yakima, Wash. Since he was born during the time the road was being constructed, he must have received all his information about Capt. John from his father, Dr. George Mullin and his Aunt Matilda who had worked as a governess on a large plantation in Virginia. Thought you may find the comments of our uncle interesting. I certainly did. All the best to you both in 1995.

Sincerely,

Joan Munholland

## First stop on Mullan Road

(From Page Three)

run tri-weekly, first class Concord coaches from Helena to Benton. In January of 1870, Gilmer and Salisbury announced the purchase of Wells, Fargo stage line from Helena to Benton. Since this firm did not go out of business until 1885, it is assumed that it continued operation of the line until it was no longer needed.

"The distance from Fort Benton to Helena was 169 miles. The stagecoach fare was \$25 in gold. For some time, the stages ran on a seven-day schedule.

"A man named Edward Reinike was in charge of the stage stop at one time . . . (as did) a man named Kelly . . .

"While the stage line carried mail and passengers at remarkable speed, the freight wagons lumbered along the same route carrying gold from the Helena mines to the steamboats at Fort Benton. (On the return trip) the supplies from the fort came back to Helena and the mining camps."

*The Huntley and Gilmer/Salisbury names ring bells with me because both were involved with the staging of traffic during the 1870 Cedar Creek gold rush near Superior which I wrote about.*

—Deb

\* A.J. Vance was Private Andrew J. Vance of Company D, 29th Illinois Infantry He was living in Great Falls in 1918.

## Mullan chose Sohon to work With him on two occasions

(From Page Five)

of log huts on the St. Regis Borgia River which they called Cantonment Jordan."

In the summer of 1860 Mullan's party completed the road and reached Fort Benton. Sohon was transferred as a guide and interpreter to the command of Major Blake who had arrived at Fort Benton with 300 recruits to travel west over the new road. Before embarking Sohon made a quick sketch of the Benton area which is included in Ewers' booklet.

"Gustavus Sohon guided the first wagon party to cross the mountains from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla," Ewers wrote, "the first wagons to reach the Columbia River from east of the Continental Divide by a route north of the South Pass, in the present State of Wyoming. Major Blake's party left Fort Benton August 7, 1860, and arrived at Fort Walla Walla without mishap October 4, spending 48 days in traveling and 11 resting along the way. This successful journey, which was made possible by Sohon's experienced guidance, convinced Lt. Mullan of the practicality of the wagon road.

"Lt. Mullan and Sohon were again in the field in 1861. Starting once more from Walla Walla, they made extensive improvements in the road, laying out new sections over better terrain or shortening the distances to be traveled, decreasing the number of necessary river crossings. When a new section of road was to be laid

out, Sohon moved ahead with a small party to mark out the road and make a detailed observations on the features of the country. The party wintered at Cantonment Wright at the junction of the Hell Gate and Big Blackfoot Rivers (near Missoula). In June 1862 Sohon was in charge of the main party which followed Lt. Mullan's advance party west. Lt. Mullan disbanded his expedition at Walla Walla in late August, 1862."

The road was finally dubbed as completed, after four years of work. It was the first road to connect the head of navigation on the Missouri River with the head of navigation on the Columbia River. It was 624 miles long, varied from 25-20 feet wide and could be traveled by wagon in 57 days and by pack train in 35. It was designed to be a military route but was used primarily as a highway for settlers and gold hunters. The "M.R." initials that were posted along the route by those who constructed it meant "military road," but were commonly thought to mean "Mullan Road." The extensive surveys and data garnered during the Stevens and Mullan expedition led to the building of the Northern Pacific Railroad through the area in 1890, and later the construction of the Yellowstone Trail, Highway 10 and Interstate 90, all of which criss-cross the old Mullan route.

The final chapter on Gustavus Sohon will appear in the next issue of the *Mullan Chronicles*.

# Call for help from Walla Walla

(From Page 2)

general and the Mullan Road specifically.

"If you concur with my thoughts, I would like you to write or call our representative, asking them to seek approval of movement of the monument off the state penitentiary grounds. Possibly some state funds could be found to do so. Once we find out if that is possible, then I would contact the city and county looking for a new location. The names of our senator and representative plus their local address and phone number is thus:

Senator Valoria Loveland  
Representative Bill Grant

Representative Dave Mastin  
12 1/2 East Main, #211  
Walla Walla, WA 99362  
1-800-562-6000

"If you want me to keep you posted on this project, send me a copy of your letter if you write or let me know you call. My home phone number is (509) 505-7664. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Walter J. Gary

Mr. Gary, I would advise you to also get in touch with the Walla Walla Pioneer and Historical So-

*ciety to see if you could get them to take on the issue and open talks with the penitentiary folks. The latter would probably be amenable to the monument's removal because it would make their jobs easier also. Your mayor and city officials could also be of assistance. You could spark a whole new interest in John Mullan and the Mullan Road in your area!*

*And, if you go to the January talk with Dr. Edwards, please say "Hi" for us. Don't forget, he may also be willing to help.*

—Deb & Kay

## MULLAN CHRONICLES

Mineral County Museum

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