

# MULLAN CHRONICLES

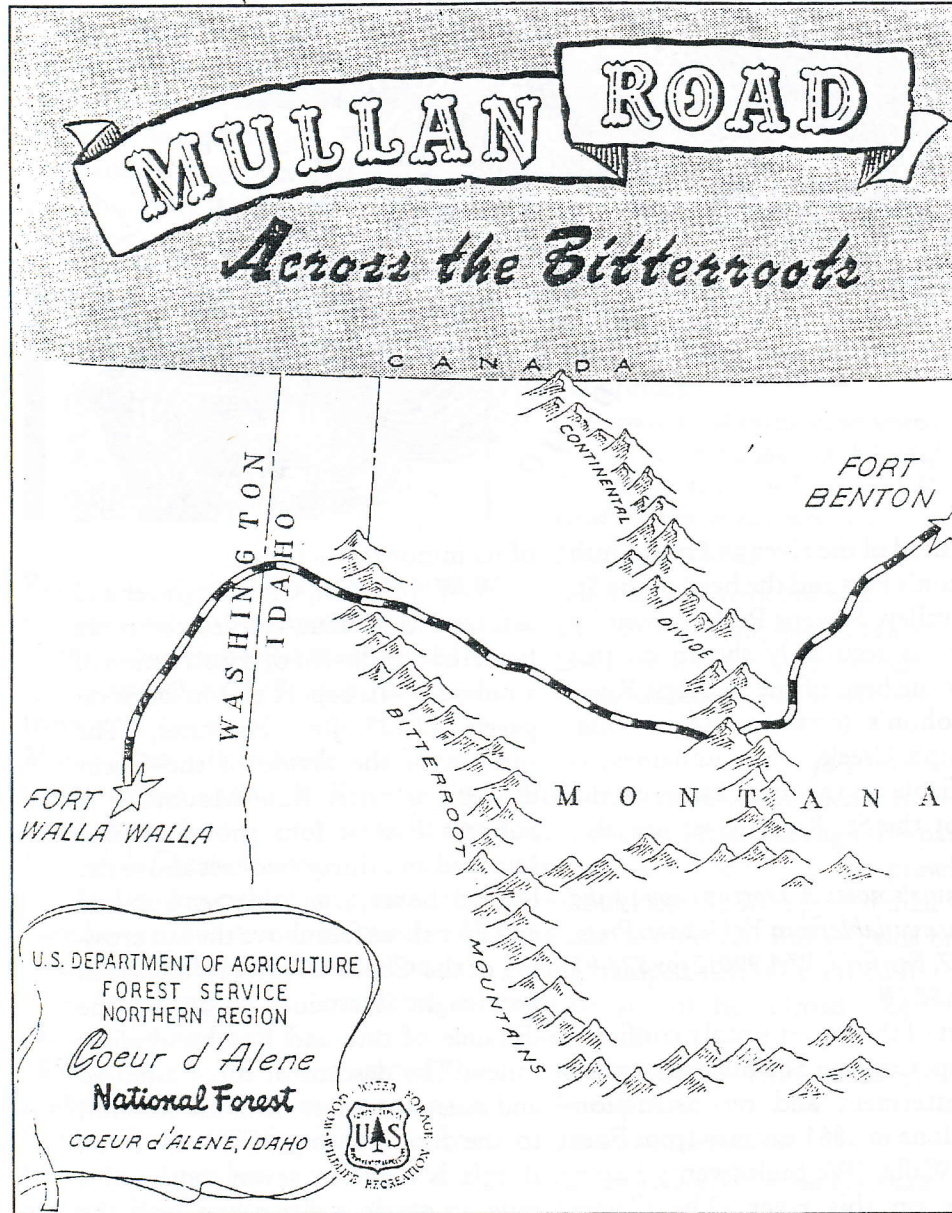
Volume Six

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Number Four



## Mullan Road across the Bitterroots



*Mullanite Chuck Mead, who was raised in the Alberton area in eastern Mineral County, MT, acquired and gave to us in 1994 a copy of Mullan Road Across the Bitterroots. This paper, compiled and produced by the staff of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest, was introduced by Carl G. Kruger, then supervisor of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest. It concerns the area in which we met for the May 11th Mullan Day.*

**M**ullan Road is the popular name of the military road between Fort Walla Walla, Washington and Fort Benton, Montana. The road was built under the supervision of Lieutenant, later Captain, John Mullan, U.S. Army, in 1858-1861. It was an important access route to and across northern Idaho for many years. Much of its route parallels U.S. No. 10 and the new Interstate No. 90.

Through many years a misconception has grown regarding the route of the Mullan Road over the Bitterroot Mountains between Mullan, Idaho and Saltese, Montana. For some unknown reason, this seems to be more prevalent in Montana than Idaho. The misconception is unfortunate, since the record is so clear that there would seem to be no room for error.

Some records suggest that the original road was from Mullan, Idaho up the main stem of the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River, over the present Mullan Pass and down Randolph Creek to the St. Regis River and Saltese, Montana. The fact that the pass on the Bitterroot Divide is now called Mullan Pass has perpetuated the error. Recently the United States Geological Survey Saltese quadrangle, dated 1956, compounded this error; it labels the road up Randolph Creek as the Old Mullan Road.

## Eighth annual Mullan Day in DeBorgia is resounding success

**T**he eighth annual Mullan Day was a resounding success being held at the old schoolhouse at DeBorgia, MT, Sat., May 11, 1996. Many of our old friends and many new ones were in attendance to hear

the latest reports on findings and make an on-sight tour of the Yellowstone Trail that followed the Mullan Road along that part of the route.

(See "Eighth annual..." on page six)

(See "Changes in..." on page two)

# Changes in place names have confounded

(from page one)

The route of the Mullan Road is easterly up the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene to the locality now known as Shoshone Park, where Mullan's party had one of their work camps. There the road turns almost due south, crossing the Bitterroots at the pass shown on Mullan's map as Sohon's Pass, but now known as St. Regis Pass. That this pass has also sometimes been called Mullan Pass does not help clarify matters. It is a short drop from this pass into the head of the St. Regis valley. The road follows the St. Regis River past the mouth of Randolph Creek and on to the Saltese area.

Records showing the correct route of the road are:

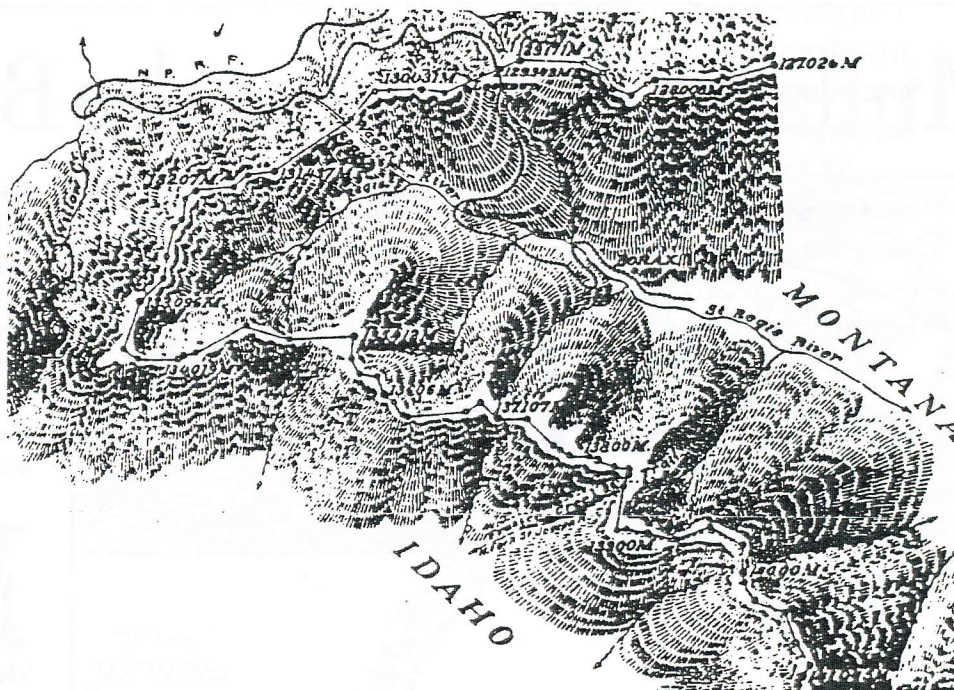
1. Mullan's report and maps, 1863.
2. *Idaho-Montana Boundary Survey*, 1904-1905.
3. *United States Geological Survey Professional Paper No. 62*, 1908.
4. General Land Office surveys, field notes and maps, 1899, 1911, 1914, 1916.
5. Coeur d'Alene National Forest map, 1911.
6. United States Geological Survey maps, five editions, 1908-1956.

## Mullan's Report

The full title of this is *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton* by Captain John Mullan, U.S.A. The report was published by the Government Printing Office in 1863. It includes four maps. The last of these is of

**That this pass has also sometimes been called Mullan Pass does not help clarify matters.**

the mountain section of the road, roughly from Lake Coeur d'Alene to Missoula, showing clearly that the Mullan Road leaves the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene several miles west



of the head of the river and runs south to Sohon's Pass and the head of the St. Regis valley. Stevens Peak, named by Mullan, is accurately shown on this map at the head of the St. Regis River and Sohon's (now St. Regis) Pass. Randolph Creek, while unnamed, is identifiable on the map. Lakes on the head of the St. Regis River are also shown.

*(Editor's note: A reprint copy of the report is available from Ye Galleon Press, Box 287, Fairfield, WA 99012 for \$24.95 + 1.00 S&H)*

Text of the report simply confirms the map. On page 31 Mullan describes the betterment and reconstruction work done in 1861 easterly from Fort Walla Walla: "We built twenty heavy bridges on this river (The Coeur d'Alene) which, together with the repairs in its valley, occupied us until the 15th of September when, crossing the summit of the Bitterroot Mountains, we reached the head sources of the St. Regis Borgia river, on which a similar system was initiated." Surely an explorer of Mullan's ability, with the assistance he had, knew the difference between the head of the river and one

of its minor tributaries.

W.W. Johnson, Civil Engineer and assistant to Mullan, studied the route from the standpoint of construction of a railroad. His report to Mullan is on pages 118-123. Johnson states, "The summit of the divide of the Coeur d'Alene or Bitter Root Mountains at Sohon's Pass is four thousand nine hundred and thirty two feet above the level of the sea,... and thirteen hundred and fifty three feet above the last crossing of the Coeur d'Alene river; which last height is attained in an air line distance of one and five hundredths miles...The descent of three hundred and ninety two feet from the summit, to the first crossing of the St. Regis Borgia is made in seven tenths of a mile, in nearly a direct line, over the natural surface of the mountain...There are two passes to the north and east of Sohon's Pass; the first two miles to the north...the second is some ten miles distant...The St. Regis Borgia river has its rise in a small bowl-like lake 500 feet in diameter, carved by nature out of the steep rocky walls of one of the spurs of Steven's Peak. After leaving this spring it tumbles down 300 feet in

## attempts to locate precisely the MR route

a quarter of a mile, through a narrow, rocky channel; after which it flows through a valley a tenth of a mile in average width, to the first crossing."

Johnson is off about 90 feet in his elevation at Sohön's (St. Regis) Pass. However, the statement as to the two passes north and east is very good, the nearer being the present Lookout Pass, the second the one now called Mullan Pass, between the head of the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene and

**There are no passes into the St. Regis drainage from the Coeur d'Alene north of Mullan Pass.**

Randolph Creek. If he had been at this second pass, no statement as quoted above could have been made, as there are no passes into the St. Regis drainage from the Coeur d'Alene north of Mullan Pass. The statement in regard to the source of the St. Regis is also conclusive; there are no lakes in the Randolph Creek drainage.

Also in the report, beginning on page 309, are notations on a number of meteorological observations at Sohön's Pass, frequently with comments regarding the weather. For October 27, 1859, it states, "No snow among the timber until 1000 feet above the pass. Steven's Peak, 2000 feet higher, only a few snow patches near bushes..." Steven's Peak is not visible from any point in Mullan Pass.

### *The Idaho-Montana Boundary Survey, 1904-1905*

A contract was executed by the General Land Office February 10, 1904 for the survey of the boundary line between the states of Idaho and Montana by Howard B. Carpenter, U.S. Surveyor. The survey began June 6, 1904

and was completed September 13, 1905. Notes are on file in the Boise office of the Bureau of Land Management.

Carpenter worked from north to south. At the 126th mile post he reached the present Mullan Pass, and his notes read:

*Set an iron pipe 3 ins dia 4 ft long with flanges at the bottom 2 ft in the ground for 126th mile cor. A brass cap on the top of the pipe has raised letters MONT on E., IDA on W., a raised x in the center and stamped 126M on N. Dug pits 36x36x18 in N., S., E., and W. of the corner 5 ft dist. Raised a mound of earth 3 ft base 1-1/2 ft high around the post.*

He then describes four witness trees and continues:

*This corner stands in dense timber and brush in pass. Elevation 5390 ft head of Coeur d'Alene River on W., course SW. Head of Creek on E., course NE.*

*Land mountainous.*

*Soil sandy and stony, 3rd rate.*

*Vegetation, pine, fir, spruce and hemlock, undergrowth of same with snow-brush, huckleberry and service berry brush.*

*July 5, 1904*

Note that there is no mention of a road, or even a trail, through this pass. Further on he comes to the present Lookout Pass. An iron pipe similar to the one at mile 126 was set, this one being stamped 129.342 on the NE, on the east side of the railroad. Then the notes read:

*No trees within limits suitable for bearing trees.*

*Thence on same course.*

*Center of track NPRR bears N. and S. Lookout station house about 4 chs. S.*

*(A chain = 66 feet.)*

No question about the identification of this point. On July 9 he set an angle post east of the pass. Then:

*July 10th. I examine the solar transit and find it in adjustment, compare the steel tapes with the standard and find them of correct length.*

*At 6 hr m A.M., 1 m.t. I set off 47*

*degrees 27-1/2' on the Lat. arc and 22 degrees 17' on the decl arc and*

*Thence*

*Wagon road from Mullan Pass. Elevation 5000 ft. Road bears NW and SE from Saltese, MONT., to Mullan, IDA. Gulches head on each side. One on N. course to Coeur d'Alene River. One on S. course SE to St. Regis River.*

*Ascend, enter dense timber and brush.*

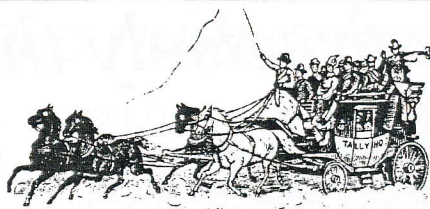
While the surveyor used the name Mullan Pass, which may have been rather common at that time, there is no doubt as to where he was and that he was referring to what is now called St. Regis Pass and that the road was the Mullan Road.

To further verify the surveyor's notes, the plats prepared by Carpenter as part of the survey do not show a road at MP 126, the present Mullan Pass. They do show the railroad at Lookout Pass, and the wagon road, so labeled, at Mullan (present St. Regis) Pass. This cannot be just an oversight. The roads at Thompson Pass and Glidden Pass further to the north are shown. Between mileposts 138 and 139 further south he refers to a "trail from Saltese to some mining prospects" in his notes. We can hardly think that Carpenter identified and platted these other roads, the railroad and even other trails, but overlooked a road in Mullan Pass, particularly a road as well known as the Mullan Road.

### *United States Geological Survey, Professional Paper 62*

The complete title of this publication is *The Geology and Ore Deposits of the Coeur d'Alene District, Idaho* by Ransome and Calkins, published in 1908. On page 78 of this report Ransome gives a brief history of the area and refers to the road built by Mullan and his party. After a brief description of the route west of the town of Mullan he states, "Thence it ascended the main stream and South (see "Historic" on page six)

# from the mail pouch



Dear Cathryn or Deb:

Thanks to whichever sent me the *Mullan Chronicles* latest. Though I can't attend, do like to keep up on the historical trails.

Enclosed a bit on the Fisk Overland from Minnesota which I believe provided many of the passengers heading on west from Fort Benton, the latter still my major interest. We had trails going north too, notably the wonderfully named Whoop Up Trail and also Fort Walsh. Until the Canadian National Guard built in the 1880s Canada's Prairie Provinces relied on steamboat cargos to Benton.

So sheet on the steamboats too, think you may be surprised at the figures.

History sometimes is fun, huh?

Joel Overholser

*Joel, We have your very informative book on Fort Benton and can easily believe the amount of human and cargo traffic that used Fort Benton as a jumping off point. From what we've read of Fisk, it is a wonder he wasn't "lost" in some accident along the way. Keep up the great work.*

—Deb & Kay

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*Mullan Chronicles Nov. 13, 1995*  
Going through some old publications to reduce my load for moving and found this article.

He talks about traveling on the Mullan Road so thought it might be of interest. Also sending my dues. Virginia Nelson - (New Address) P.O.Box 1349, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

*Thanks Virginia, It is unbelievable how much has shown up in our P.O. box since last fall. The article is from the Seattle Genealogical Bulletin of Autumn 1989. As soon as we get permission to reprint it we will as it talks quite a bit about Henry Bryant traversing the road in 1871. A teaser - "Passing Mullans winter quarters nothing remaining however to establish the fact except the debris of the stone chimneys ..."*

—Deb & Kay

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Hugh Mullan, 2126 Conn Ave, Washington D.C. 20008

Dear Deb,

It is with regret I must report the recent death of two of my sisters, grand nieces of John Mullan, Mary Mullan Kobes and Virginia Mullan Sams. Some years ago Eleanor Mullan Johanboeke passed away. She was the only one of five siblings to know John Mullan for she was born before he died. My sister Barbara Mullan Campbell and I are all who remain in this group. My son Fitzhugh Mullan has two

children, Meghan and Caitlan while my daughter Mariquita Mullan has two girls also, Catalina and Mariah Baker.

I have enclosed a small amount to help you and Cathryn in your excellent work in publishing the *Chronicles*. Do keep it up!

—Sincerely, Hugh Mullan, M.D.

*Dear Dr. Mullan, We were saddened to hear of your loss. You are fortunate to have a fine family to carry on your name and family traditions. And thank you so very much for your kind donation.*

—Deb & Kay

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*Avid Mullanite Walter Gary of Walla Walla sent us the following article from the June 28, 1995 issue of the Portland Oregonian:*

## **Monument at Walla Walla Marks Frontier Road to Gold**

WALLA WALLA—A monument to a road that served the Northwest's frontier gold fields will be dedicated at an old U.S. Army cemetery off Myra Road near Walla Walla at 11 a.m. Friday.

The monument to the Mullan Road, once a major pioneer thoroughfare in the Northwest, recently was moved by the Walla Walla Pioneer and Historical Society.

The road was built between 1858 and 1862 by the U.S. Army. During the 1860s, thousands of pack mules left Walla Walla on the old road carrying supplies to the gold mines of Idaho, Washington, Montana and Canada, said a spokesman for the society.

The Mullan road was said to be more important to Walla Walla's early history than the more famous Oregon Trail, 45 miles south of the community.

*Walt said in his note that he got a picture of the newly relocated monument and that "it is something to see on a highway sign." Thanks for the update, you have been a goldmine of information, we really appreciate it. Anytime anyone sees an article or whatever if you would send a copy of it to us to share we all benefit. Speaking of the Oregon Trail, how many of you saw the PBS show and noticed the use of prints by Gustav Sohon. Also, Dr. G. Thomas Edwards of Whitman College, speaker at our second Mullan Day in 1991, gave us an extensive report on how important the Mullan Road was in the development of Walla Walla commercially.*

*-Deb & Kay*

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*From Bill Brandt, Corvallis, OR we received the following letter:*

Dear Folks,

Many thanks for the announcement about the eighth annual Mullan Day on May 11. I have been very much interested in visiting the site of Cantonment Jordan, but unfortunately will be leaving for a meeting in Texas on May 13. Time and money constraints will thus preclude my attendance at the Mullan Day events. They do sound most interesting and I hope things go well.

I have done some looking into the governorships of Idaho Territory. Sohon's name has not come up in anything I have seen yet. However John Mullan is said to have actively sought the first governorship of Idaho Territory that went, instead, to William H. Wallace.

Those of us familiar with the Mullan Road know that Gustav Sohon was an energetic man of remarkable talent. His knowledge of the terrain, the language of the native peoples and their customs combined with his intelligence and resourcefulness would have better served the nation than some of those actually installed.

The second Territorial Governor of Idaho, Caleb Lyon, is said to have embezzled \$46,418, the entire Idaho Indian appropriation. Sohon would surely not have done such a thing.

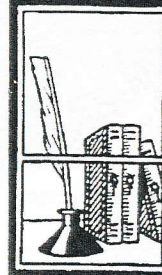
Sincerely,

-Bill Brandt

*Bill, one of the reasons we have heard that Mullan was passed over for the governorship was "he didn't know what side of the river Portland was on." We believe it was more or less because of his support of Stephen A. Douglas, Democrat, against Lincoln in 1860.*

*Avid Mullanite, Robert Dunsmore, of Osburn, ID, loaned us copies of two issues of the Pacific Northwestern that had articles on "our" man and road. We will see if we can get permission to reprint these at a later date. Robert showed us his*

*scrapbook containing his collection of Mullan-related materials, a treasure trove in its own right. We are hoping he will bring it again next year to share with us.*



## New on the bookshelf

A new publication is available from Ye Galleon Press, entitled *Missouri to Oregon in 1860, Diary of August Valentine Kautz*. Kautz met Mullan in September of 1860 at Fort Benton, and said Mullan was "monomaniacal" about his road. The price of this volume is \$9.95 + 1.00S&H.



GENERAL AUGUST VALENTINE KAUTZ,  
United States Army.

# Historic documents make clear the actual

(from pagethree)



Fork to a point about 3 miles east of the present town of Mullan. Here it turned southward, crossed the divide through the Sohon or St. Regis Pass, and continued down the St. Regis River...Roughly constructed as it was, this highway, now familiarly know as the 'old Mullan road' was for many years the only line of travel into the region...The section of the old road that crosses the divide east of Mullan is still in occasional use and is shown on the accompanying topographic map (Pl.1, in pocket)."

The road is shown on the map as stated, and the route coincides very well with Mullan's original map. Field-work for this map was done 1900-1901.

**General Land Office surveys, maps & field notes**

In Montana the route of the Mullan Road in the St. Regis valley is clearly shown and labeled by name in many cases on the General Land Office township plats. The plats involved in this particular are:

*Township 19 North, Range 31 West, Montana Meridian Approved 1899.*

In this township the Mullan Road crossed Randolph Creek in the southeast quarter of Section 7. The road is clearly plotted going up the river, not up Randolph Creek. Field-work for this was done in 1898.

*Township 19 North, Range 32 West, Montana Meridian Approved 1916.*

This plat shows the Mullan Road going up the St. Regis past Borax and Sildex stations on the NPPRR. It leaves the township in Section 6.

In Idaho the portion of the Mullan Road being discussed is on two township plats:

*Township 47 North, Range 6 East, Boise Meridian approved 1914.*

A road is shown entering Idaho from Montana in the approximate center of Section 5, which is the location of St. Regis Pass. On this plat it is labeled Mullan Pass, but the road is shown as Mullan - Saltese.

*Township 48 North, Range 6 East, Boise Meridian Approved 1911*

The present Mullan Pass between the head of the South Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River and St. Regis River via Randolph Creek is in Section 36. The

road shown on the plat coming easterly up the river from Mullan ends near the west edge of Section 36, so no road is shown for 1-1/2 miles. In Section 32, a road is shown turning south at the site of Mullan's camp, the area now known as Shoshone Park. This road connects up with the one from St. Regis Pass shown on T47N., R6E., as described above. Clearly this was the through route, and the location agrees with both Mullan's map and the map in the USGS Prof. Paper 62.

The various surveyors' notes again confirm the plats. As is standard practice, the notes refer to streams, road or trail crossings, or other features along the line run. In Idaho these surveys were not made until 20 or 30 years after intensive mining development had begun. There are consequently many references to road and trail crossings, mines or other human activities. The Mullan Road is not referred to by name. However, as stated above, a road is shown going through St. Regis Pass, called Mullan Pass. The notes confirm this.

In locating the line between Sections 34 and 35, T48N, R6E, the surveyor refers to a road crossing just north of the quarter corner. The plat shows this as ending at a mine near the west edge of Section 35. In locating the line between Sections 35 and 36, which is just west of the present Mullan Pass, there is no reference to a road, but there is reference to a trail, which also shows on the plat. This trail does not go through the pass, but turns north in the western part of Section 36.

In Montana where there was not the extent of development and the surveys were also made earlier, the Mullan Road is usually referred to by name, and its course could be roughly traced without the plats. For example, while locating the line between Sections 14 and 15, T19N, R31W, the surveyor noted that he crossed the Mullan Road 73.10 chains north of the section corner. In this same township, in locating

## route of the Mullan Road

the lines between Sections 6 and 7 and between 5 and 6, the surveyor noted that he crossed Randolph Creek three times, referring to it by name in each instance. There is no reference to a road at any of these three crossings, and as stated earlier, no road is shown going up Randolph Creek on the plats.

In Township 19 North, Range 32 West, which lies west of Randolph Creek, the surveyor also notes crossing the Mullan Road. In locating the line between Sections 11 and 12 he notes that he crossed the Mullan Road 49.90 chains south of the section corner. Similarly between Sections 2 and 3 these and other references to the Mullan Road in the township west of Randolph Creek should be conclusive information as to where the road went without all the other supporting information.

### The Coeur d'Alene National Forest map of 1911

This map is part of President Taft's Proclamation of June 29, 1911 establishing the St. Joe National Forest. Up to this time the area had been part of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest. The map itself was probably prepared at least a year earlier. It shows a road over the Bitterroot Divide and down the St. Regis River at what is St. Regis Pass and no road or trail over the present Mullan Pass.

### United States Geological Survey Maps

A series of Geological Survey maps of the area portray the changes in roads over the years and explain some of the misconceptions as to the original route.

USGS. Professional Paper 62 shows the Mullan Road going over the St. Regis Pass. Fieldwork for this map was done in 1900-1901; the Professional Paper is dated 1908.

An *Idaho-Montana Coeur d'Alene Special Map* printed in 1906 and reprinted in 1916, shows a road over the St. Regis Pass. It also shows a secondary road—dashed symbol—up the South Fork

toward Mullan Pass. Unfortunately, the map stops just west of the pass. It cannot be determined whether this road actually went into or through the pass or not.

A third map, the Avery quadrangle; edition of 1917, shows roads over both passes. An advance sheet of the Pottsville and vicinity, Idaho-Montana Map, prepared in 1939, shows a trail over St. Regis Pass. This map does not include Mullan Pass, but it is known that there was a road over Mullan Pass before 1909, so this road would undoubtedly have been shown if the map had extended that far.

The last in the series of maps is that for the Saltese Quadrangle, Idaho-Montana, published in 1956. This map shows a road over Mullan Pass and not even a trail over St. Regis Pass which is cor-

**Because these maps are generally accurate, this error is given a high degree of authenticity.**

rect as of the present time. The unfortunate feature of this map is that the road up Randolph Creek and over Mullan Pass is incorrectly labeled as the Old Mullan Road. Since these maps are printed at infrequent intervals, this error will be carried forward for many years. Because these maps are generally accurate, this error is given a high degree of authenticity.

It is hoped that in future map publications and in any historical articles about the area, the location of the original Mullan Road will be correctly portrayed. More positive action would be the correction of the plates for the Saltese quadrangle by the U.S.G.S. This is the source from which the error is most apt to be perpetuated. Erection of historical markers at appropriate points would also help.

(from page one)

### Eighth annual Mullan Day

The old schoolhouse is the only building in Mineral County to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Happy Homemakers were our hosts and outdid themselves making us feel welcome. Seeing first hand a portion of the road helps us understand some of the difficulties the crew undertook to overcome.

Richard & JoAnn Hopewell, of DeBorgia, who own a section of the land on which the road lies were gracious enough to let us walk about and showed what they have found and are trying to preserve on their property.

Member Bryan Vallett, of Polson, filled us in on the latest concerning the possibility of a video on the road and "our" John Mullan. We will be submitting a grant application to the Dennis Washington Foundation, another road building entity to cover most of the costs which are estimated at about \$15,000.

As we have members with film already available and an interested group it shouldn't take too long once the project gets on line. (Is this a case of famous lost words?)

Our inveterate travellers, Carl Cliff and Bill Trueblood, were there too and Carl sang his own composition about John Mullan and the road. It will make great background music to accompany the film!

Tim Light represented the Forest Service and showed Savanec. We toured the compound and walked two possible road sites, one on the Yellowstone Trail and the other a little north of the trail. Don Cooper, resident of the area since the twenties, mentioned going over the road many times and remembering well traversing the Yellowstone Trail bridge.

An untouched piece of the road was walked by several of the group that lies south of the DeBorgia cemetery. It is easy to see how early travelers made their way through pine thickets that Mullan described in his journals.

Our next Mullan Day will be Saturday, May 10, 1997 at St. Regis. So make a note to mark your calendar for next year.

We have started a new system to tell you when your membership is due. Note the number below your address. If it is a + followed by a number, it shows the number of issues you have coming; if it's a -, you are behind. Be patient with us, please, for there is HOPE.

Cathryn Strombo and  
Deb Davis, Editors.

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