

# MULLAN CHRONICLES

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## Contact from family of John Mullan's Daughter



*John Mullan's daughter Mae Mullan Flather, center, flanked by step-grandchildren William Flammer, left, and Katharine Flammer, right. Picture taken August 29, 1941 at Tulip Hill, the Flather plantation in Virginia.*

In October of last year we had a wonderful call from Harry Anderson of San Rafael, CA. His wife, Katherine (Caddy), is the step-grand daughter of May Mullan Flather.

Harry found out about us through the article about the efforts of Chuck Mead to preserve a section of the original road that is on his property. Harry's sister lives in Missoula so the news item was sent to him by his sister.

"Caddy" remembers going to the White House and meeting Lou Hoover, wife of then president Herbert Hoover, and attending an Easter Egg hunt on the lawn. She also recalls going to the Flather residence in VA, a plantation called Tulip Hill, and that Mrs. Hoover had a girl scout camp named for her friend, Mae Flather, in the Shenandoah Mountains of Virginia.

Lucy Flather (Caddy's mother), at about age 15, stepdaughter of Mae Mullan, recalled to her family stopping in Missoula with Mae on a trip to San Francisco when she was presented there as a debutante. They stayed overnight in Missoula to find and view a statue of Mae's father that had recently been donated as a cenotaph set up by W.A. Clark, Jr. of Montana. According to Harry they were surprised to find one at the train station the next morning.

Mae, before her marriage to Henry Flather, was a very successful businesswoman, opening a French laundry in Washington, D.C. Mae and Henry's address was on "O" street, an area of Georgetown. Mae gave the building to Georgetown University to be used for diplomatic affairs. It was sold some years later to a private party.

"Caddy" said dinner was a very formal affair; the grandchildren, Katherine and her brother, Bill, had to be dressed up. Mae wore long dresses and summoned servants with a bell. Mae died about 1965 and is buried near Baltimore, MD.

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# Mullan Tree records passing of road builder

[From the *Spokesman-Review*, Spokane, WA, Monday, July 29, 1996]

Correspondent R.G. Robertson

On July 4, 1861, a young Army officer stood in the dense forest of Idaho's panhandle, watching one of his soldiers brand the date and initials "M.R." into a tall pine tree.

During the previous two years, Capt. John Mullan had seen "M.R." embalzoned 624 times, once for every mile of his Mullan Road.

Of course, the War Department never intended that the road be named for its builder. The initials meant "Military Road." But in truth, even though the Army was paying its \$230,000 cost, the road belonged to John Mullan.

The need for such a road had existed since 1848, when the U.S. Congress established the Oregon Territory, a vast land that included what is now Oregon, Washington and Idaho, plus big pieces of western Wyoming and Montana.

On the Missouri River, steamboats could go as far as Fort Benton, Mont.; while on the Columbia, shallow-draft vessels could reach the old fur trading post where Wallula, Wash., now sits. In between these ports stood an impenetrable barrier: the Bitterroot Mountains.

In 1854 when Mullan was two years out of West Point, he rode more than 1,000 miles as he crisscrossed the northern Continental Divide six times, seeking a suitable passage. After receiving his recommendation, the Army filed it away.

By 1858 population growth in the Pacific Northwest had fueled Indian unrest, compelling a link between the region's two principal waterways. The Army resurrected Mullan's dusty report, secured a congressional appropriation, and ordered Mullan to begin construction.



*The stump records the military's work to link the water routes of the nation.*

Because a road already existed from the river port at Wallula to Fort Walla Walla, Mullan's brigade of 100 enlisted men, three officers and 100 civilians started working from the Army post in late June the following year. Within a month, they reached the wetlands at the south end of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Further progress required that Mullan's crews build a 60-foot bridge over the marshes, establish a ferry across the St. Joe River, and lay endless yards of log corduroy. On August 18, 1859, at the Cataldo Mission (Idaho's oldest standing structure), the mileage marker read "M.R. 199 Miles."

Alarmed about having a "white man's" road on their land, the Coeur d'Alene Indians began to complain. Determined that nothing would halt his progress, Mullan warned chiefs that he would hang anyone who interfered. None did.

Pushing east from the mission, the workmen hacked through the mountainous terrain alongside the Coeur d'Alene River. For days on end,

Mullan's road grew not by the mile but by the foot, each earned with sweat and muscle.

Using axes and saws, the crews attacked trees that grew thick as grass. Where the hillsides steepened and the streams frothed white, the men dug their trail into the slopes, and built so many bridges that history has lost count. Mullan kept his men at their task, even squelching a rumor of gold when one of them found color.

Winter forced everyone into camp. Mullan chafed at the inactivity, but, at least his road had reached the eastern slope of the Bitterroots. He was now in Montana.

In Feb. 1860, crews jumped ahead to the Clark Fork River, built a ferry, then headed up its right bank. It was late March before other crews could continue chopping or shoveling their way down the countains. The linkup took until the end of June.

Using the valley carved by the Clark Fork, Mullan ran his road 70 miles past the future site of Missoula, then swung east toward the Continental Divide, which he crested on July 17.

Beyond this mountainous rib, the gently rolling plains of the upper Missouri River offered easier passage. On Aug. 1, 1860, a day after his 30th birthday, Mullan watched the 624-mile marker set at Fort Benton.

The Mullan Road, as it was nicknamed, slashed a 25-foot-wide swath through 120 miles of dense timber, most of them in Idaho. Every river and stream was spanned with a bridge or ferry.

Promoted to Captain, Mullan spent the next two years repairing and altering his original route. In 1861, he relocated the road around the north end of Coeur d'Alene Lake, then drove east to tie into the original Mullan Road at the Cataldo Mission. On In-

*(continued on page three)*



## Contacts from daughter's family...

*(Continued from page one)*

Harry is very interested in our past efforts to disseminate information about Mullan and his life and accomplishments. We are so very pleased that he added eighteen new subscribers to the *Chronicles*. Welcome aboard all!!

Harry and Katherine made a most generous donation to the museum. We really appreciate your thoughtfulness. They have also obtained copies of local history books as well as a set of the *Chronicles* which we sent to them.

The Andersons hope to locate some materials that the family has had possibly in storage. Harry mentioned a storage trunk that was in the family and someone would perhaps go through it for Mullan related materials. Deb and I offered to do it for them, of course! Perhaps a copy of Rebecca's memoirs are a hidden treasure in there.

Harry and Katherine found a photo of Mae, it is kind of dark and

## Oregon Trail Group Finds Mullan Road

Don Popejoy of the Oregon-California Trail Association who resides in Spokane, WA has become very interested in the Mullan Road.

Don put "our road" on the Internet and came up with multiple replies. He is going to download the material to paper and send it to us. One of the items he mentioned was an unpublished diary of a family that went over the trail in 1867.

He said he is looking forward to coming to Mullan Day. He will be taking in the "forty-mile forced march" on Chuck's property. Really its only about 2 1/2 miles, just seems a lot longer. He will be presenting a program in September in Spokane on his findings about the road. *(It turns out that he is my double cousin through the Popejoy name. —Kay.)*

includes Katherine and her brother Bill. We are so pleased to be able to share it with our Mullanites. Her brother may find others in the trunk.

We were fortunate to have descendants of Gustavus Sohan find us a few years ago and share their materials with us. Now a member of the Mullan family. If we keep at it we may find all kinds of great, new information to add to our knowledge of John Mullan and those associated with the road building effort.

MC

## Mead Update

With any kind of luck we may have good news on the final approval of Chuck Mead's attempt to trade land with three state agencies (Highway Department, State Lands, & Department of Natural Resources) for his section of the Mullan Road. Chuck said in March that it may be approved sometime within 60 days. Jon Axline of the Highway Department is looking at the middle of June for finalization. It's about time, Chuck has put a lot of his own time and money into getting this a done deal that will benefit everyone.

## Mullan Tree stump marks Mullan's visit

*(Continued from page two)*

dependence Day that year, his crews were hard at work in the Coeur d'Alene Mountains when one of his men branded the date into what is now called the Mullan Tree.

John Mullan's road never received the traffic he had envisioned. By the time he died in 1909, the forest had reclaimed most of his labor. But history has proven the wisdom of his route. Today in Idaho and western Montana, Interstate 90 follows much of the Mullan Road.

MC



## from the mail pouch

Carolyn Bryant Peterson, granddaughter of Henry Bryant wrote that she enjoyed our printing her ancestors diary. A small correction though, his name was Henry Martin Bryant and not John Henry. Carolyn said they recently discovered some new materials on him and may work on an enlarged biography. We look forward to adding that to our files.

Thanks to Joel Overholser we were informed about the W. Turrentine Jackson book "Wagon Roads West." Our son-in-law found a copy of it on the internet which we purchased. It has quite a section on "our" road. It doesn't mention the Whoop-Up Trail but as Joel says Fort Benton was indeed responsible for a large percentage of material that went north to the Canadian Provinces.

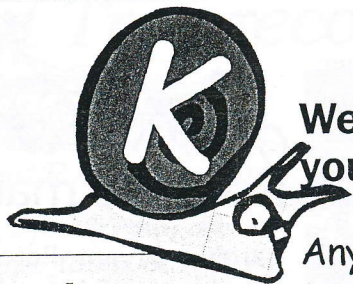
## Steve Fisk now in Mineral County

Steve Fisk, a history teacher of exceptional ability is now a member of the teaching staff at St. Regis. He was formally at the Corvallis High School where they did some digs on historic Montana sites. Steve has done a lot of work with students on the Cantonment Stevens site east of Missoula and Ranchester and is encouraging his St. Regis students in a historical project in Mineral County. Hopefully on Mullan Day, Sat. May 8, they will be taking a "walk about" on Chuck Mead's section of the road.

We look forward to having his expertise and dedication to history carried through to his students. A dig on Chuck's piece of the road may open new information.

MC





**We won't give up, hope  
you won't give up on us!**

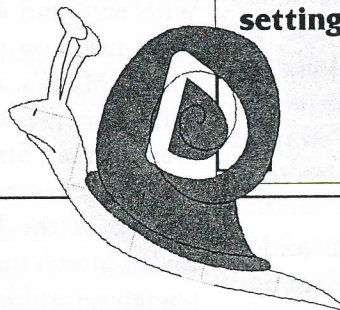
**We have started a new system to tell you when your membership is due. Note the number below your address. If it is a + followed by a number, it shows the number of issues you have coming; if it's a -, you are behind. BE PATIENT WITH US PLEASE, FOR THERE IS HOPE!**

Cathryn (Kay) Strombo and  
Deb Davis, Editors.

Anytime you have something to share, please do so. We really have good intentions and will continue to try and get the *Chronicles* out. When you pay for a year you will get a full four issues no matter how long or how many years it takes!

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