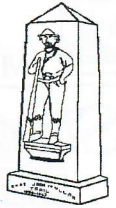


MULLAN CHRONICLES

Volume Eight

Summer 1999

Number One



A history of the M.R. from early Montana newspaper

Bryon Valett of Polson, MT sent us a photocopy of a piece in The Gazette Missoula and Coeur d'Alene Edition dated January 1, 1892.

The Mullan Road

An Historic Thoroughfare By Which the Country Was Reached

Description of the "Trail," and its Famous Builder and Adventureous Followers Reviewed

The old Mullan road is so interwoven with the history of Montana that any description of the country, or reference to its early settlements without mention of this great thoroughfare is well nigh impossible. Long before the country was settled by the whites the Indians had established trails over the mountains and through the valleys, which they used in their hunting excursions, in reaching trading posts, and in friendly intercourse, or war, with each other. These trails were generally well selected by the best and shortest routes, but all objects or localities

which required labor for their removal or improvement, were carefully avoided by the Indi-

Almost the entire course of the Mullan Road is along one of these old [Indian] trails, or rather several of them, which united, led from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla and on to the Dalles and Portland, Oregon.

ans. These trails were generally followed by the early white settlers, who sometimes found it expedient to make innovations in the way of removing a fallen tree, or changing the course somewhat by digging away a hill, or removing a few stones or boulders. Almost the entire course of the Mullan road is along one of these old trails, or rather several of them, which united, led from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla and on to The Dalles and Portland, Oregon.

Fort Benton, the head of

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Mullan Day walk on Chuck Mead's place

It was a good day to do a nice walk-about on the portion of the Mullan Road that Chuck Mead is working on to get into the historical trail system. Some 20 persons joined Chuck, Bill Weikel and hiked down a piece of history. According to reports it was thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by all that went.

In the afternoon the survivors and the not-so-brave met at the courthouse in Superior

for the afternoon session. We had many new faces and so much new material. Part of which was the newly acquired Ramsey collection as well as materials from OCTA (Oregon California Trail Association) members who have recently "discovered" our road and its importance to the development of the northwest. Kay's cousin, Don Popejoy, of Spokane, was so enthusiastic about what can

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Steamboat terminals defined ends of M.R.

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navigation on the Missouri river, was established as a trading post by the American Fur company in 1816. It became a government military post in 1869. Fort Walla Walla was first established as a trading post long before there was any

There were no railroads at this time west of the Mississippi River; they had not even reached the east bank of that stream.

white settlements in Montana, and subsequently became a military post. Communication was established between the two posts by means of the Indian trails. The discovery of rich gold placers in Montana brought thousands of adven-

Have You Heard the One About the Sign at Mullan Pass?

Dr. Richard Buswell of Helena called in May and asked if we had ever heard of a sign board that was on the Continental Divide some years ago that was a memorial to the fact that Mullan was the first white man to cross the divide at that point. Dr. Buswell said he and his father remember seeing something written about it being there but cannot remember where it was.

MC

turous persons into the country, and soon made it expedient to devise some better mode of obtaining supplies for their use than by pack trails over the old Indian trails. As a consequence wagon roads were opened where the expense was not too great, nor the natural obstacles insurmountable with the means at hand. There were no railroads at this time west of the Mississippi river; they had not even reached the east bank of that stream, and nearly all supplies for the west were transported across the plains and through the mountains by wagon and pack trains.

Now and then some lone steamboat made its way up the turbulent Missouri to Fort Benton with such supplies as the early settlers required. From Fort Benton they were transported by wagon and pack trains to the various settlements and mining camps. On the Pacific side similar supplies were brought around Cape Horn to Portland by ships and from Portland they were brought by steamboats up the Columbia river to The Dalles, Oregon, the head of navigation. The rapids prevented further transportation by steamers and recourse was had to wagons and pack trains as from Fort Benton.

Those were glorious days for teamsters and pack trains, and fortunes were often made in a short time by men en-

gaged in the business with sufficient capital to conduct it on a large scale.

As the settlements of the northwest increased, better transportation facilities were demanded, and thus the construction of a great national road from Fort Benton to The Dalles became an important question. Prior to 1850 the building of such a road, both as an aid to immigration and as a military necessity, was advocated by statesmen of the time.

In 1853 the Stevens expedition was sent out by the government and one of the duties assigned to it was to ascertain the feasibility of constructing such a road. A part of the expedition under the com-

The Hell Gate canyon was then followed to its mouth and then the explorers first beheld the beautiful valley in which Missoula now sits as queen.

mand of Gov. Stevens left Fort Benton in September of that year, and proceeding southwest along the old Indian trail crossed the main divide of the Rocky Mountains northwest of the present city of Helena, and striking the Little Blackfoot river near its head followed

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Gov. Stevens first surveyed M.R. route

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that stream down to its junction with the Hell Gate river near Garrison. The Hell Gate

He recrossed the Rocky Mountain divide in a depression which he called Hell Gate pass, but which afterwards became known as Mullan Pass. It is here the Northern Pacific railroad now crosses through the Mullan Tunnel.

canyon was then followed to its mouth and then the explorers first beheld the beautiful valley in which Missoula now sits as queen.

Still following the old Indian trail Governor Stevens pushed on through Hell Gate valley, thence along the south bank of the Hell Gate river to near the mouth of the St. Regis Borgia where they crossed the Hell Gate river and followed the St. Regis Borgia to its head, thence across the divide of the Bitter Root range, thence to Fort Walla Walla. There was already a well established trail from Walla Walla to The Dalles along the south bank of the Columbia river, which was subsequently explored.

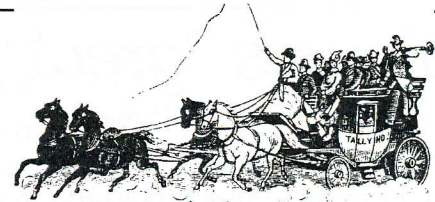
In 1854 Lieut. Mullan went back to Fort Benton and returned again over the same

route traversed by Gov. Stevens, making careful surveys. He recrossed the Rocky Mountain divide in a depression which he called Hell Gate pass, but which afterwards became known as Mullan Pass. It is here the Northern Pacific railroad now crosses through the Mullan tunnel. Lieut. Mullan afterwards made a careful exploration and survey of the route from Hell Gate to Fort Walla Walla and on to The Dalles.

This route was declared practicable and one of the shortest and best that could be obtained. In 1855 Gov. Stevens effected a treaty with the Columbia river Indians by

Gov. Stevens was subsequently elected to Congress where he ably advocated the building of a military wagon road over the route selected between Fort Benton and The Dalles, and succeeded in obtaining an appropriation of \$40,00 for that purpose. Lieut. Mullan was placed in charge of the work.

which they agreed to allow the whites to travel unmolested over this route. Gov. Stevens was
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from the mail pouch

We received a nice note and kind donation from Mildred Mullan Brown of Maryland. She and her husband, Robert, attended Mullan Day in May. She is interested in our efforts and is helping to see that we keep going.

From Marie Shirey: "As a great-granddaughter of Gustavus Sohon, who has the chance to visit you several years ago, it's always a pleasure to find a copy of the *Mullan Chronicles* in among the bills and junk mail. Keep up the good work and keep me on your lists. Thank you, Marie C. Shirey.

Harry & Caddie Anderson sent us a wonderful copy of the wedding picture of Henry Flather and May Mullan taken in 1915 as well as a picture of May in her Girl Scout uniform. We are looking forward to having them visit Superior in the latter part of August.

Large Donation by Hank Ramsey

Our good friend and Mullanite, Hank Ramsey, of Selah, WA donated his entire Mullan collection to the Mineral County Museum on Tuesday, May 4. He is retiring and moving to Arizona and felt the collection would be best enjoyed here. Among the items were original copies of the 1861 and 1863 reports, many maps and lots of clippings pertinent to the road. Thanks so much, Hank. We will miss having you at our gatherings.

M.R. was "great thoroughfare" for immigrants

(continued from Page Three)

subsequently elected to congress where he ably advocated the building of a military wagon

During 1859/1860 the road was completed to the Little Blackfoot river and some little grading was done in that canyon. In the spring of 1860 Lieut. Mullan was dispatched by the government on other duty and work on the road was discontinued.

Chuck Mead's place

(continued from Page One)

be accomplished by getting the two organizations to work together.

There is to be a walking tour of a piece of the road in September (registration enclosed) that should be exciting for those who have not been there. Our good friend, Carl Cliff will be joining for the evening get-together. Hope to see you there.

The next day, Don and friends Richard & Lethene Parks, spent their time at the museum copying many of our files for their collection and to include in the OCTA materials. It was a great day and in going through Hank's materials we found some choice tidbits that we will share as time goes on.

MC

road over the route selected between Fort Benton and The Dalles, and succeeded in obtaining an appropriation of \$40,000 for that purpose, Lieut. Mullan was placed in charge of the work. He began at The Dalles in the spring of 1856 and opened the road as far as the Coeur d'Alene Mission, in Idaho, when the hostility of the Indians put a stop to further construction. It was two years before it was considered safe to go on again with the road, as the Indians continued their hostilities until whipped into submission by Gen. Wright. During 1859/60 the road was completed to the Little Blackfoot river and some little grading was done in that canyon. In the spring of 1860

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Lieut. Mullan was dispatched by the government on other duty, and work on the road was discontinued. Although not fully completed by the government the road became a great thoroughfare. Thousands of immigrants passed over it on their way to western and middle Montana, Idaho, Wash-

ington and Oregon. These immigrants did considerable work on the uncompleted portion. The work done by Lieut. Mullan consisted of much heavy grading over the moun-

The bridges, however, were less substantial being constructed of timber taken from the forests along the route, and they were soon washed away, making much of the road impassable.

tains which is almost as perfect today as when he left it. The bridges however, were less substantial being constructed of timber taken from the forests along the route, and they were soon washed away, making much of the road impassible. The total length of the road from The Dalles, Oregon. to Fort Benton, was about 800 miles.

In 1866 the territorial legislature memorialized congress

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New Member

Through the efforts of Don Popejoy, we have a new member, the Post Falls Historical Society, P.O. Box 57, Post Falls, ID 83877. Also another one who sent dues but whose name and address has not found its way to us.

MC

Mullan Road, Spokane Area
Saturday-Sunday, September 25-26, 1999

Conceived during Isaac Stevens' 1853 survey of a northern railroad route and built 1860-1862 by Army Lt. John Mullan, the Mullan Military Road connected the head of navigation on the Columbia River at Wallula, Washington, to the head of navigation on the Missouri River at Fort Benton, Montana. It was intended as a route for the movement of troops and freight, as well as an emigrant route.

The Northwest chapter of OCTA (Oregon-California Trails Association) is planning a weekend tour over the route of the Mullan Military Road from the southern border of Spokane County to the Sacred Heart Mission at Cataldo, Idaho. We'll start Saturday morning at Malden, Washington, with brunch, then follow the Mullan Road route across private and public property through the Spokane area to Plante's Ferry Park. Along the way we'll re-set a Mullan Road marker, see a Mullan campsite and the spot where the Mullan Road forded Latah (Hangman's) Creek, and hear mini-lectures by several knowledgeable local folks. Saturday evening we'll have dinner at Casey's Restaurant in Spokane, followed by a talk and music by Cliff Carl, who has studied—and walked—the Mullan Road for many years.

On Sunday we'll cover the route from Plante's Ferry east through the Idaho Panhandle to the Sacred Heart Mission, oldest building in Idaho. There will be an opportunity to walk in some excellent ruts at Fourth of July Pass.

The cost of \$38 per person includes Saturday brunch, dinner and evening program, admissions, refreshments for breaks, and an illustrated tour booklet. Bring a sack lunch for Sunday. Each car should have a CB for listening to tour directions.

For more information, call or e-mail Don Popejoy at 509/328-9368 (e-mail: dpoptalc1@aol.com) or Lethene Parks at 509/722-6161 (e-mail: lethene@theofficenet.com).
Maps and specific directions will be sent to those who register by September 18.

Register


Mullan Road, Spokane Area, September 25-26, 1999, Northwest Chapter

Name: _____

Address: _____

Number: _____ Amount: _____

Make checks payable to Northwest Chapter, OCTA

Mail to;  Mr. Don B. Popejoy
P.O. Box 9021
Spokane, WA 99209

**Mullan Military Road
Society Member**



Superior, Montana

Gen. Sherman also took an interest in M.R., a "necessity"

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for an appropriation of \$75,000 to be expended on the road, citing among facts in the memorial that "the road has become impassible for wagons for a distance of 200 miles, embracing all that portion from Frenchtown, in Missoula County, across the Bitter Root and Coeur d'Alene mountains in Idaho territory; that the line of road surveyed and laid out by Lieut. Mullan, crosses in its ascent of the Bitter Root mountains, on the eastern slope, St. Regis Borgia river some forty-seven times, and that said road in its ascent of the western slope of said mountains, crosses the Coeur d'Alene river some forty-three times, and that the bridges, with but four exceptions, have been swept away, rendering those streams entirely impassable during the spring and early summer, at a time when our people are most in need of necessaries not attainable from the east at that early season of the year." No appropriation was made by the government in answer to this appeal, but private parties interested in moving freight over the road, spent large sums in keeping a passable condition. Its maintenance a public necessity, as thousands of miners in Montana and Idaho were dependent upon it for supplies.

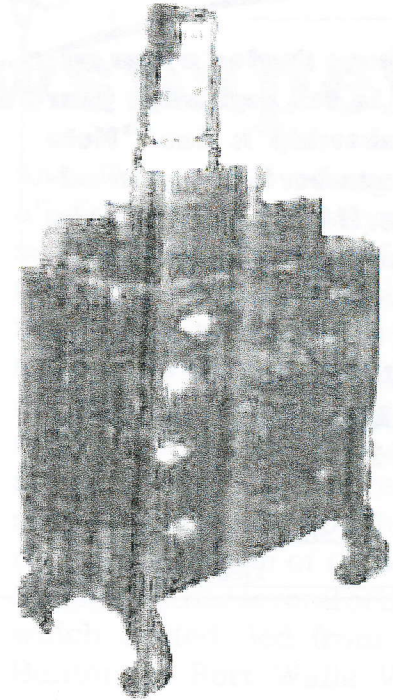
In 1877 Gen. Sherman recommended the road be re-

Cadet Mullan's West Point Chest Preserved in Helena

A line in a *Missoulian* article about the Montana Historical Society gave us the information that a piece of furniture that belonged to John Mullan was located there. We called Janet Sperry and she sent us a picture of the chest of drawers that John used while at West Point. It was donated by Mrs. Flather in 1945. It was made about 1845 and is in beautiful condition. According to the description, the chest is "not ornate: it is masculine and practical." Something like the man himself.

opened by the government not only as a public highway for overland travel, but as a military necessity. It was accordingly done, and the road is now in fair condition, though its necessity is not so great since the building of the Northern Pacific and other railroads.

Lieut. Mullan when building the road marked the distance on trees along the route, accompanied by the letters "M.R." meaning "Military Road", but the traveling public did not understand the initials and supposed them to mean "Mullan Road." The innocent mistake can readily be forgiven since it has bestowed a just tribute where it rightfully belongs. Lieut., now Colo-



nel Mullan, is living happily in Washington, D.C., where he is engaged in the practice of law. While now a veteran and gray with age, Time falls kindly upon him and he loves to recite to the youth his hardships and adventures of 1854.

It was on the line of this road that Capt. C.P. Higgins and Frank L. Worden opened the first store in Hell Gate valley. Frenchtown, Quartz and other settlements were located on the Mullan road. On entering Hell Gate valley several trails spread out over the level tract, but the main line of the road was located through Missoula along what is now Main street.



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

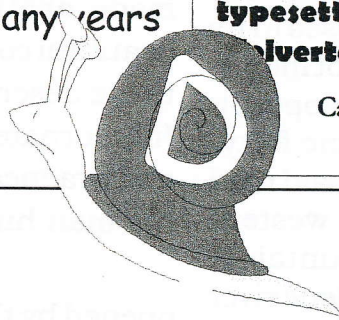
We have started a new system to tell you when your membership is due. Note the number below your address. If it is a + followed by a number, it shows the number of issues you have coming; if it's a -, you are behind. BE PATIENT WITH US PLEASE, FOR THERE IS HOPE!

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!

The *Mullan Chronicles* is published by the Mineral County museum and Historical Society, Post Office Box 533, Superior, MT 59872, a non-profit organization. Subscriptions are \$5 per 4 issues to cover printing and mailing. Computerized typesetting by Van Silverton.

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