

MULLAN CHRONICLES



Volume Nine, Issue #3

Fall 2002

Mullan Day 2002 Tours Camel's Hump

The meeting of about twenty persons interested in John Mullan and all facets of the building of the Mullan Road met at DeBorgia, MT on Saturday, May 11, 2002. Everyone met at the schoolhouse for a presentation by Bill Weikel, surveyor from Missoula.

Bill showed instruments used by Mullan and his crew as well as describe where the actual road was, where it was relocated and where many believe it to be. In this case it can be anywhere from a few yards to a quarter-mile distant from what is believed to be the original route. Using old BLM maps and overlaying them onto Mullan's maps, few discrepancies are found. Where the road differs, it is mostly due to human activity over the past 140 years.

After a snack and discussion, the group went to three different places on the Camel's Hump route where original sites were examined and shown to many looking at them for the first time. It is amazing how the road can be identified even after so many years when left undisturbed.

At one place the group was distressed to see that a logging company had used the road as a skid trail. Most of the original landscape had been obliterated. Chuck Mead returned to the area later to find that some repair work had been done. He, Glenn Koepke and Carole Johnson walked that portion and found it at least presentable.

Carole Johnson of the U.S. Forest Service has been working to have signing and a few picnic areas put in

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Led by Missoula surveyor and avid Mullanite Bill Weikel of Missoula, attendees at the 2002 Mullan Day visited several places where the Mullan Road is visible along Camel's Hump Road, such as this gentle curving grade.

Mullan's axe and shovel passage—

This article was found by our good friend and Mullanite, Robert Dunsmore of Osburn, ID in The Pacific North-westerner, Winter 1958. Reprinted by permission.

By Joe Baily

The Mullan Road is a vagary, winding back into the storied past with the sylvan charm of one of those rarely used old mountain roads one comes upon sometimes in the deep woods.

John Mullan was an Irishman of vim and versatility, son of a native of Ireland, eldest of ten children. When he was only a year out of West Point, and only a brevet second lieutenant, he was assigned to service with the governor of the new and distant Washington Territory, Issac Ingles Stevens, in the making of the northern surveys for the Pacific Railroad.

Through Cadotte's pass in the main Rockies, Stevens came. He spread his exploring men widely over the mountain areas. Before winter closed, he built cabins on the Bitter Root river, and at Cantonment Stevens he left Mullan with 13 men and a howitzer and orders to continue the winter exploring.

Mullan's first command was an inspiring one to him and he threw himself eagerly into the explorations that winter of 1851.

Mullan was a jack of all trades. He fought the Seminoles in Florida in 1856-57 as a 1st lieutenant and led the Nez Perce scouts with Col. George Wright in 1858. He built his road through 1862. In after times he ran an express and mail company that failed in a year, and attempted to run a huge ranch near Walla Walla.

He had an Irishman's flowery ex-

pressiveness as when he advised packers to govern their mules as they would a woman with kindness and affection.

The problem of passes was the immediate one and Mullan devoted his attention to it. Through talks that winter with the voyageur and companion of the Jesuits, the halfbreed Gabriel Prudhomme, he learned of a pass in the Rockies practicable for wagons.

For Mullan the way westward beyond Cantonment Stevens then became the problem, and three routes presented themselves as possibilities, either the Clark's fork and Lake Pend Oreille, or the St. Regis Borgia and the Coeur d'Alene mountains which the Stevens party had taken, or the Lo-Lo, northern pass of the Nez Perces and the way in general of Lewis and Clark.

Mullan explored the Clark Fork valley through to Pend Oreille lake. There the swollen stream covered the trail and he had to abandon his pack train and continue to the Lower Pend Oreille mission by canoes. He went from there over the Tiger Pass, to Fort Colville, the Hudson's Bay post, to replenish his supplies. From Colville he went by the way of the Spokane river to the Mission of the Sacred Heart in the Coeur d'Alenes where he met Fathers Joset, Ravalli and Gazzoli.

Bassile, one of the Coeur d'Alenes, accompanied him as a guide through

the Coeur d'Alene and St. Regis Borgia valleys on his return to Cantonment Stevens. This was June and the rivers were swollen, but the way so impressed him that from this time dated his support of the Coeur d'Alene pass route.

It attested to his enthusiasm for finding the best crossing that he set out for the coast that autumn by the only route still unexplored of the three first considered as possibilities, the Lo-Lo fork. This he found most difficult of all, and he struggled through it for 11 days to the open region where later Orofino was to stand.

All fired up by January of 1855 with resolutions passed by the Washington territorial legislature recommending the building of a road and letters from Governor Stevens, Mullan went to Washington, only to have the war department rule against the road, unless needed in some large military movement.

It was the spring of 1857 before the growing Indian unrest following the Stevens' treaties, turned the attentions of congress again to the military road. Temporarily sidetracked through the following winter, it was brought up in the early spring of 1858, when the war department delegated Mullan under special instructions to commence the road.

Joyous to be afield at last, Mullan came to The Dalles on May 15, organized his party and went on to Old Fort Walla Walla where he waited for an escort of 60 men and stores, assigned him by General Newman S. Clark of the Department of the Pacific. About the time they arrived, when he was out as far as Five Mile creek, word of Colonel Steptoe's defeat reached him. He returned to The Dalles and discharged his expedition,

Now wired!!

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Memberships are now shown as Volume and Issue number, so 9-3 means you are due to renew. Thank you for all the support you have given us in over 10 years of trying to share information on this most fascinating man and his venture.

MC

A wildland, a varied land, a wonderland

and when General Clark ordered Colonel Wright to the field he volunteered.

By the winter of that year, the energetic Mullan was back in Washington to implore aid again for his wagon road, and largely through Stevens' help an appropriation of \$100,000 for the work was passed. Back again he headed for Oregon in the spring of 1859 and took up his line of march from The Dalles in May, headed for Fort Walla Walla and the road.

Now comes the business of building the road through the wilderness providing the first full northern transcontinental way. This was a new land, a wild land, a varied land, a wonderful land, and into it Mullan plunged.

The first census of Washington territory, taken in the vast stretches of what was then Spokane county by George Taylor on August 8, 1860, counted the escort to the road expedition among the more numerous of the residents of the county. This would have been the second summer of their work, but it was the first expedition over the road.

Of the 72 privates then, 39 showed Ireland as their birthplace; there were Mike Lynch and Mike Rourke and John Slattery and Bob Finnigan and John Feeny and Patrick O'Mally and Mike Shaughnessey. Twelve privates came from Germany, only 10 were American born.

Mullan now was beginning to process of feeling his way forward that was to characterize these first years of the road. He sent ahead one of his ablest men, Gustave Sohon, to scout through the deep woods, and rugged mountains of the Coeur d'Alenes.

Theodore Kolecki, another fieldman, had the task of examining the

Palouse river country, feasting on his way on service berries, wild currants, and gooseberries. In the cool of one evening he and David McKay, interpreter, climbed Pyramid peak (now Steptoe butte) as Mullan he wrote "the rolling prairie resembled a stormy sea."

Meanwhile, the builders themselves were hard at work, stretching their fragile line ever deeper into the mysteries beyond the Snake. They had first come over a wagon road from The Dalles to Walla Walla, while supplies carried up to them by the Colonel Wright passed them and churned on toward the mouth of the Tucannon to await them there. They had laid out their road easily, little more than just the movement of their supply wagons over it, along the rolling prairie from Walla Walla to the Snake, across bridges thrown up quickly over Dry creek and the

Touchet. By the 4th of July of 1859 they were at the crossing of the Snake, near the mouth of the Tucannon.

They lost a man in this crossing (Henry Zunowester who had enlisted in the Army at San Francisco November 1856); he was rafting wood and was swept from sight. They went on by the Colville route to reach the Palouse at Cow creek.

They headed up through rougher canyons and ravines to reach on July 14 the Lahtoo or Nedl-whauld or Hangman creek. They camped where Colonel Wright hanged Qualchan and the others Indians, "from the fact the stream is known to many as Hangman's creek." Wrote Mullan, and he added, "Poor creatures! Had the white man been to them more just, fate had proved less harsh."

MC

(To be continued next issue)

—Mullan Notes—

Loss of historian—We are sorry to let all true Montana historians know of the passing of Audra Arnold Browman on Wednesday, June 12, 2002 in Missoula. Mrs. Browman was a woman that most of us can only hope to be. Her thoughtful and precise notes are the basis of much of what we know about early Montana. Her vast collection has been donated to the University of Montana so others may have the use of her many years of research. She is already missed.

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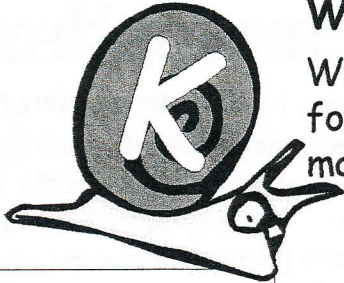
Note from Kay—Among those listed in the 1860 census was a black man, Thomas Lowza, from Jamaica. His occupation was ei-

ther painter or printer. He may well have been the second recorded black man in the present Montana territory, after York of the Lewis & Clark expedition.)

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Historic route maps—Forest Service campground hosts Dan & Aline Capps, whose home is in Florence AZ, have left a series of maps on which Dan tried to line out the three historical routes in Mineral County, Mullan road, Yellowstone Trail and Hwy 10. These are only for Mineral County but he would appreciate anyone who can add to, correct or otherwise amend them to do so. Please contact Kay with information.

MC



We won't give up, hope you won't give up on us!
 We will continue to get the *Chronicles* out. When you pay for a year you will get a full four issues no matter how many years it takes!

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, Editor

Mullan Day 2002

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for persons wishing to experience the road. Also the telephone company put in their fiber optic cable through the road, replacing the terrain as well as possible. They also put in water bars to drain parts of the road to make it passable in many places. As this is an ongoing project we expect to see other improvements along this particular stretch.

MC

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 Wolverton.

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