

# Oregon and California National Historic Trails Oregon-California Trails Association

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## Oregon and California National Historic Trails

May 15. We started on our journey. We found the road in a terrible condition . . . We drove thirty-two miles this day.

Mary Rockwood Powers

on the trail to California, 1856

# Oregon and California National Historic Trails

How far would you  
walk for a better life?



# Oregon and California National Historic Trails

Would you walk over 2,000 miles?

Hundreds of thousands of people did before you!



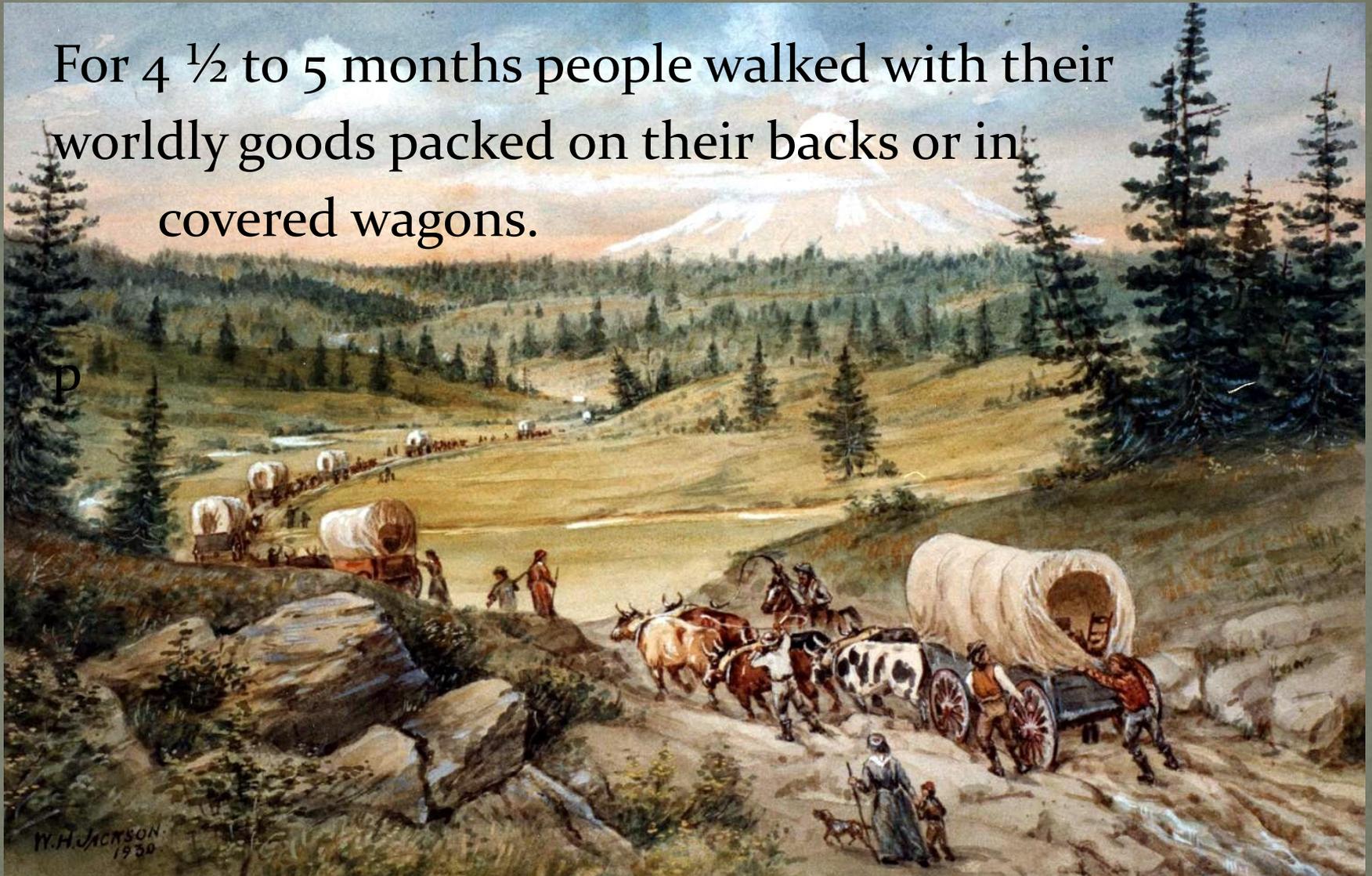
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From the 1840s to 1860s, people walked from the Midwest to Oregon and California – crossing open prairies, waterless deserts and high mountain passes.



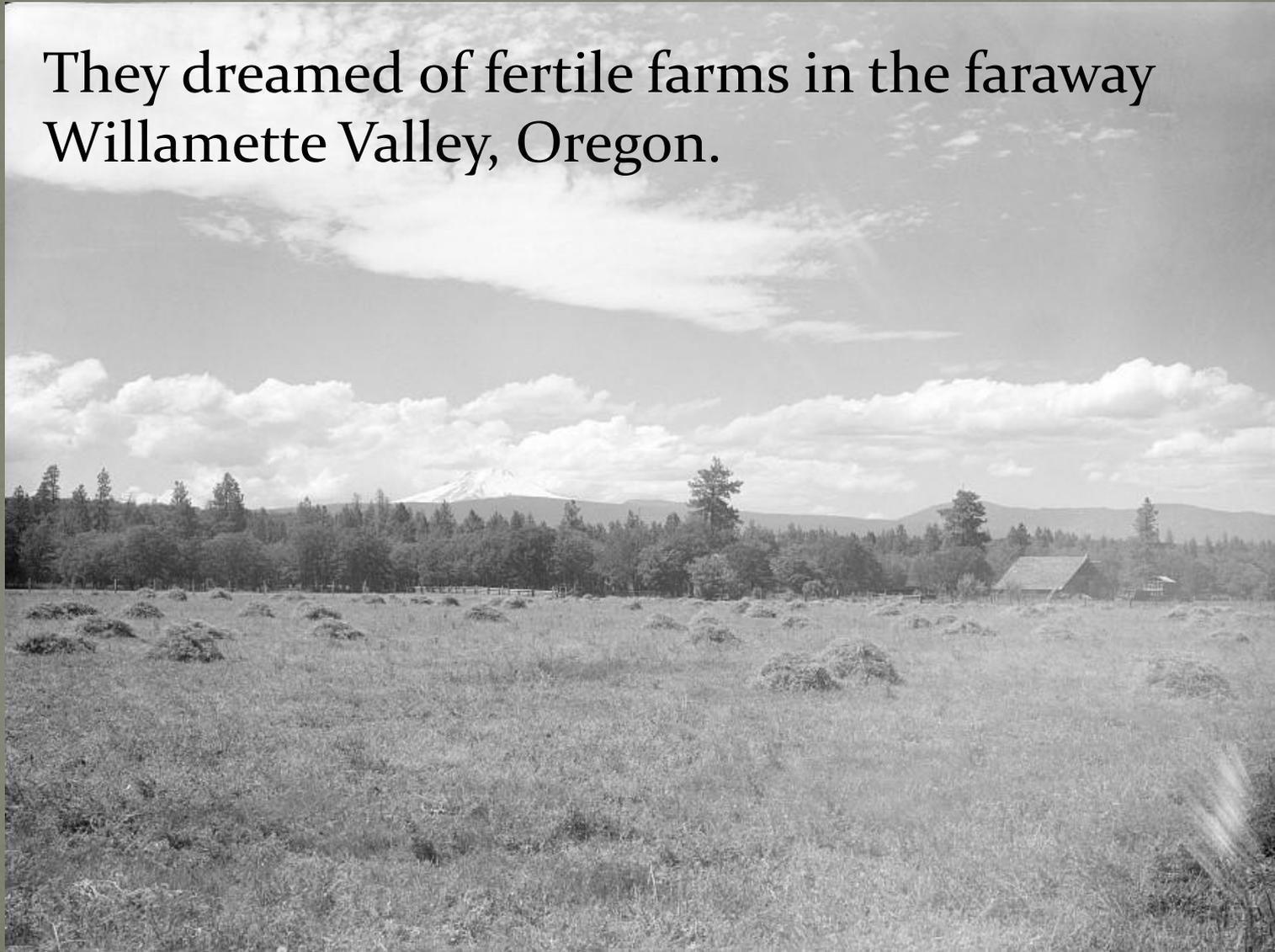
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For 4 ½ to 5 months people walked with their worldly goods packed on their backs or in covered wagons.



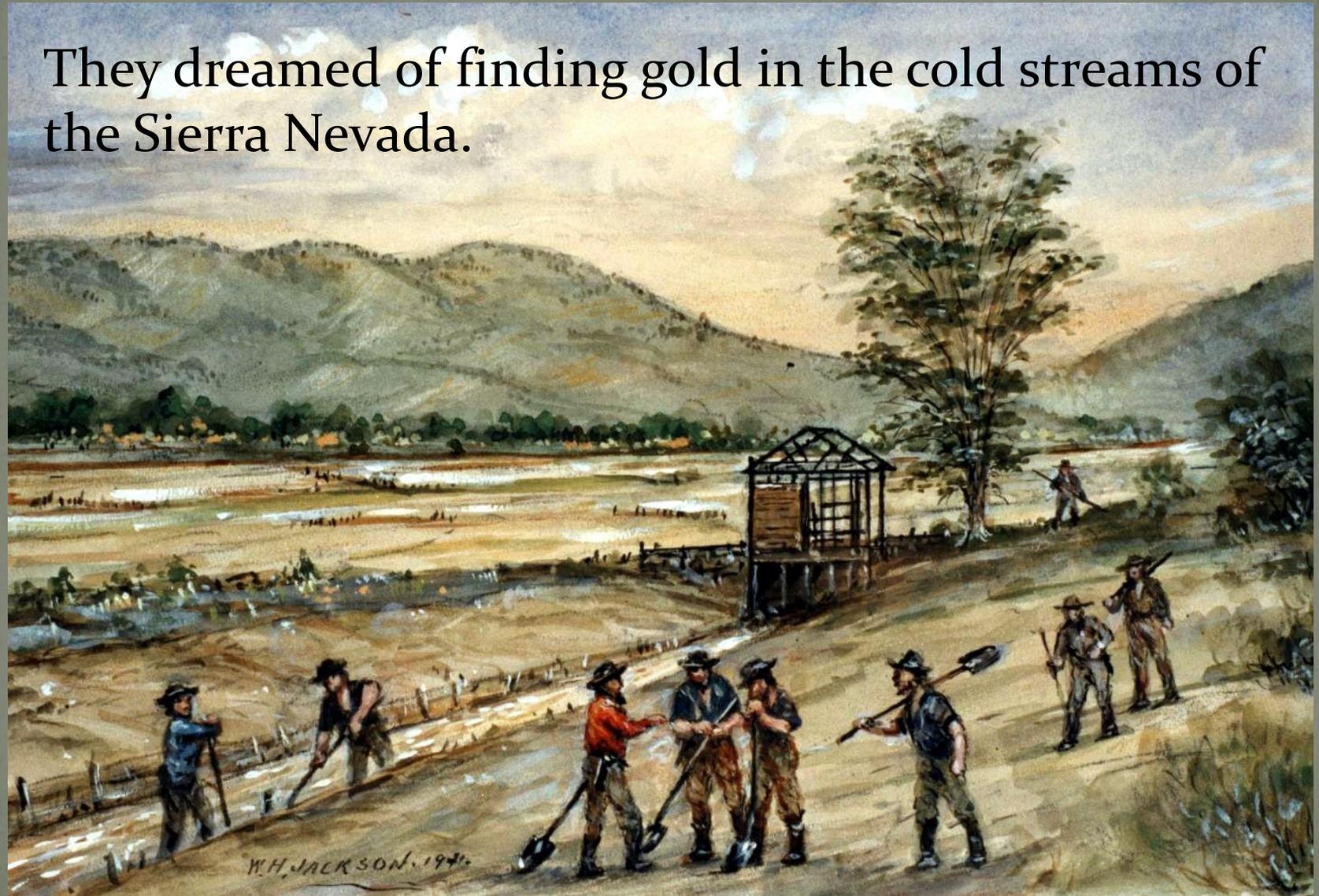
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They dreamed of fertile farms in the faraway  
Willamette Valley, Oregon.



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They dreamed of finding gold in the cold streams of the Sierra Nevada.





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They painted their names with axle grease to mark their journey.



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They created ruts and swales in the earth as they passed with their oxen and heavy, loaded wagons.



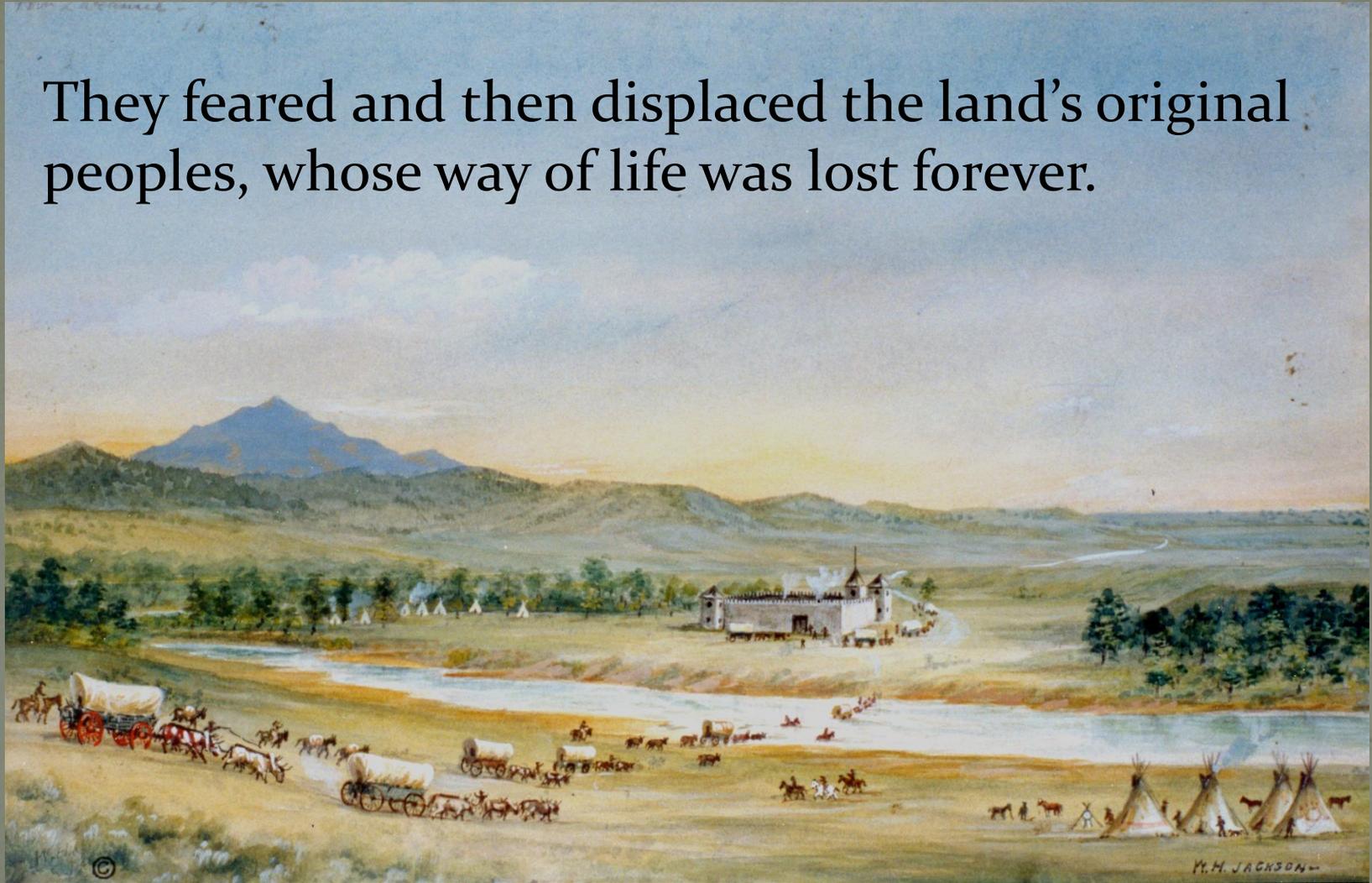
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They died of disease or accidents or in childbirth and were hastily buried alongside the trails.



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They feared and then displaced the land's original peoples, whose way of life was lost forever.



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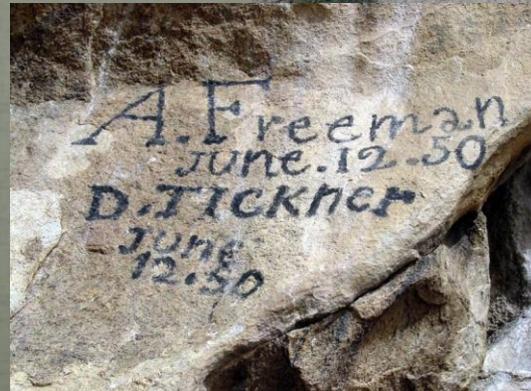
The legacy left by the overland emigrants is visible and touchable.



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Today you can

- see trail landmarks
- walk in wagon ruts
- read emigrant names and dates



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- learn that emigrant interactions with Indian tribes were more often personal and helpful than they were deadly.



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- join with others out on the trails to learn of emigrant strengths and joys, frailties and sorrows



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- walk, hike or bike where emigrants camped or labored



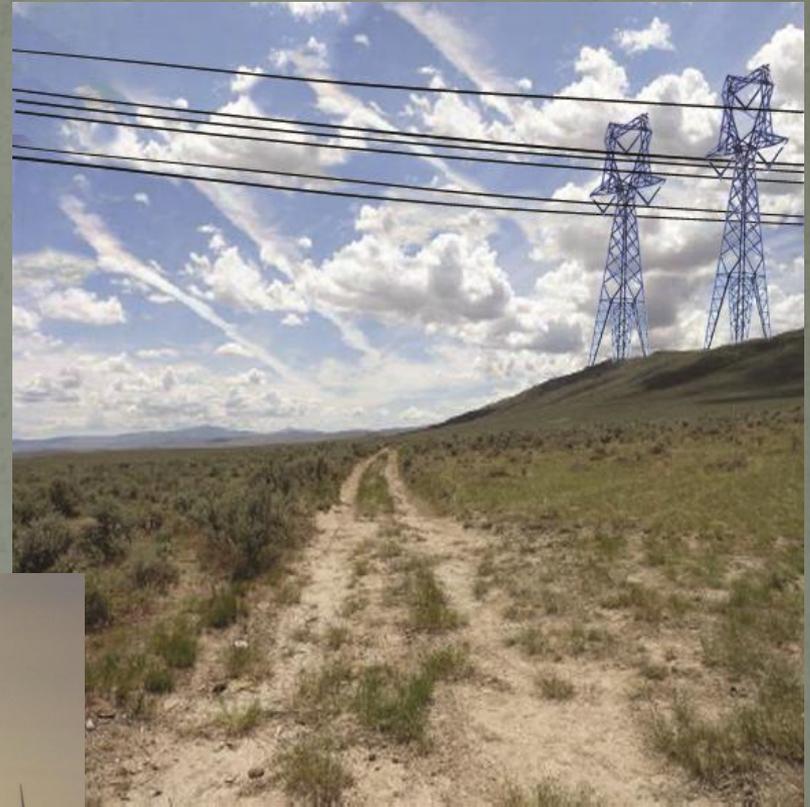
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- help find and protect the trails on public lands through monitoring, archeology, mapping, marking, education or advocacy
- join the national effort to protect the trails



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Many trail sites are threatened by mining, real estate, and energy development throughout the West.



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Join the Oregon-California Trails Association!



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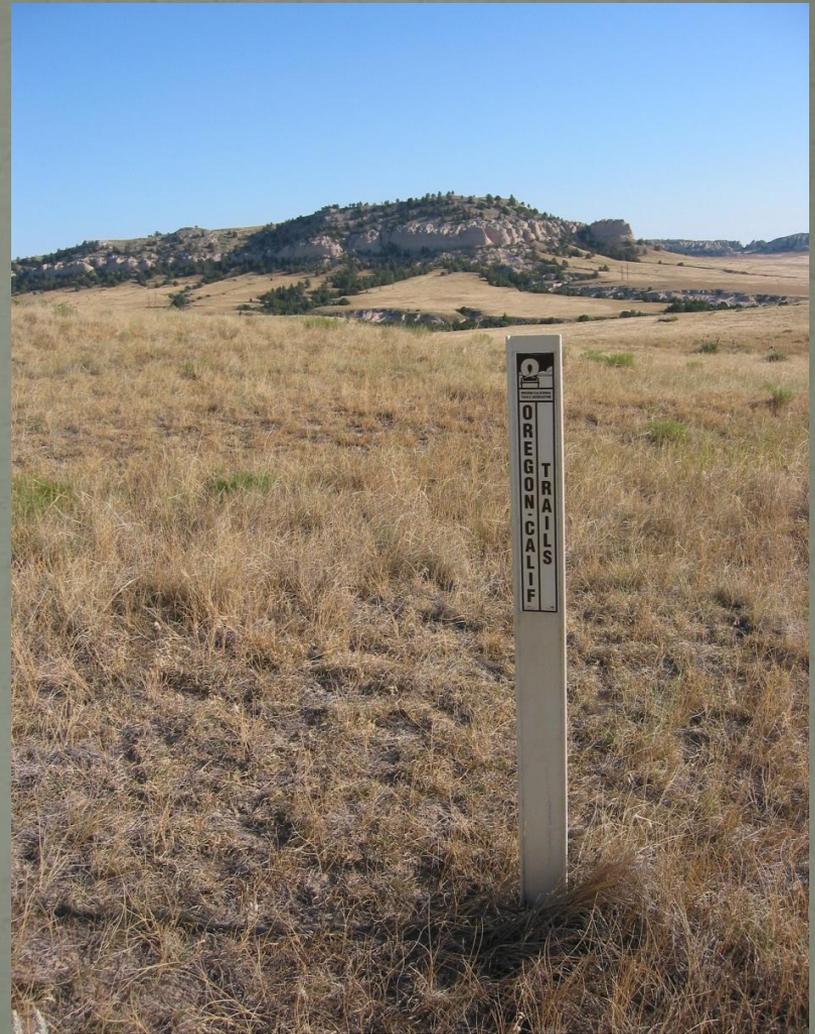
OCTA's mission is to protect the Historic Emigrant Trails legacy by promoting research, education, preservation activities and public awareness of the trails and to work with others to promote these causes.





# Oregon and California National Historic Trails

And only you know –  
how far would you walk  
for a better life?



# Oregon and California National Historic Trails

Oregon-California Trails  
Association

[www.octa-trails.org](http://www.octa-trails.org)

National Trails System

[www.nps.gov/subjects/  
nationaltrailssystem/](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/)



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## Text credit:

Powers, Mary Rockwood. *A Woman's Overland Journal to California*. Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1985

## Photo credits:

California State Library, Signed letter of John M. Kerr to Dick [Ellis]

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Arthur Rothstein, US Farm Security Administration

Carol M. Highsmith Archive

National Oregon/California Trail Center, Montpelier, Idaho

National Park Service

City of Rocks National Reserve

National Trails Intermountain Region

National Trails System

Scotts Bluff National Monument, William Henry Jackson Collection

Whitman Mission National Historic Site

Oregon California Trails Association

Society of California Pioneers, Peter Decker Diary

US Forest Service, Plumas National Forest, Passport in Time