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**OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

inspected to assess their conformance with the plotted road. More than fifty maps were identified for the project area. Not only do these maps show patterns of road change through time, but they also denote where settlements were established along the road and the patterns of later development. Using the original surveyors' notes, Barlow Road datum points were plotted onto Clackamas County property maps along with locations of noteworthy natural landmarks. Using projected road information from the various sources, a projected road centerline was drawn. Emigrant diaries were reviewed to identify the route traveled, campsite locations, and other notable cultural and natural features important to road users. These procedures resulted in a plotted road centerline estimate, an identified trail corridor, and the possibility of associated historic sites. Using this baseline of information, the field inspection process began.

We prioritized property owners to contact within each segment based on the following factors: location of plotted Barlow Road datum points on the assessor maps, amount of landholdings, location of known trail remains, and known length of family residency in the area. Information from public meetings and contacts introduced by volunteers helped this process.

To provide a system for recording different types of road-related phenomena and to assist later site evaluations, a classification system of five levels of wagon road integrity was adapted from standards developed by the Oregon-California Trails Association.<sup>12</sup> Individual properties were then inspected to identify road remains and other cultural resource values. Several forms of documentation were maintained, including survey reports for individual properties, site forms for locations of road remains, and updated topographic and county property maps showing the wagon road as refinements were made based on newly gained information. Also during the field work several sets of aerial photos were consulted to determine if road remains could be distinguished before and after field work, what pattern of land use has occurred in certain areas of development, and the extent of damage to the old road by a 1964 flood.

Interviews with knowledgeable persons assisted in locating extant trail ruts, but most informants are removed at least one generation, if not two or more generations, from the period of emigrant use of the Barlow Road. The oldest oral informant, Carolina Vaeretti Hauser, age 102, recalled traces of the road on her parents' homestead when she was a child in the 1890s.

No buildings remain along the road from the peak period of emigration. Archaeological deposits of a number of early farmsteads may be determined from GLO survey notes and county road survey notes. Between Rhododendron and Brightwood a number of rustic log Steiner Bungalow cabins and other log structures were built in the 1920s and 1930s. Though striking, these structures post date the Barlow Road historic period.

### PROJECT FINDINGS

Because of the length of the route investigated and the many property owners contacted, the project area was divided into five road segments to help organize the data. The road segments from east to west are: *High Cascade, River, Devils*

*Backbone, Sandy to Eagle Creek, and Eagle Creek to Oregon City.*

#### High Cascade Segment

The Barlow Road through the High Cascades, including the notorious Laurel Hill which marked the rapid descent at the end of the segment, is on land owned primarily by the USFS. Much of the Summit Meadow area is now owned by the USFS including the meadow itself across which the Barlow Road traversed from east to west. The only segment of the meadow area road which is not presently in USFS ownership is an approximately 1,400 foot segment which corresponds to the present Perry Vickers Road alignment along the west side of the meadow, confirmed by 1884 surveyor's notes showing the "Barlow & Mt. Hood wagon road," a 1923 Marshall Brothers map, field survey work in 1978 indicating no early road remains elsewhere in the area, and information provided by long term Government Camp residents. Near this portion of Barlow Road is a marked pioneer cemetery, containing at least three graves, and the remains of the Summit House which served Barlow Road travelers in the late 1800s. The Barlow Road across private lands in the Government Camp community is slightly more than one mile long. Low growing alpine vegetation allows for relatively good visibility of the road remains. It is through this area that the road winds around many boggy areas in heavy timber. In 1852, John T. Kerns noted, "Drove 12 miles, crossing several small streams winding our way over Roots, stumps, Logs, Brush, Pole Bridges, through mudholes, & across marshy swails in the forest, and finally encamped on the side of Laurel hill for the night without a particle of Grass for stock."<sup>13</sup>

Two excellent segments of road remains are extant. A one-fourth mile long segment, well-known to several local residents, was identified in the residential area of east Government Camp, near the north shoulder of Government Camp Loop road. Surveyors made note of the "Mt. Hood & Barlow wagon road" at this location in 1884. The old roadbed is also apparent on a 1965 Oregon State Highway Department aerial photo. Although the setting has changed, the character of the road itself is well preserved. The roadbed is a compacted earthen, treeless surface. The fragile pumice surface has retained small but continuous berms on both shoulders of the roadbed, and the compacted soil provides a break in the natural contour of the south-facing hillside. For the next one-fourth mile to the west the road has been greatly altered by street and commercial development and is evident only in very short segments on both sides of the central, commercial portion of town.

West of town the road remains are visible again as a treeless, compacted earth corridor with intermittent shoulder berms and occasional bordering boulders, located first on the north shoulder of Government Camp Loop road immediately west of town center and then to the south, crossing the Loop road and following a jeep road through a meadow toward Oregon State Highway 26 where wooden bridge remains are present. South of Oregon 26 excellent road remains wind through a largely undeveloped wooded area before passing into USFS lands. Most of this lengthy segment remains in a natural woodland setting with a brief section traversing a

natural meadow. Associated with the Government Camp segment is a series of unlined open pits, possibly dug by emigrants to cache belongings while hurrying to complete the difficult trip before snowfall.

### River Segment

A long segment of the Barlow Road follows the Zigzag and Sandy rivers. Debates have been lively through the years over the importance of the road following the south banks of the rivers as opposed to north bank routes. The results of this study alter the conclusions previously reached by Stephen Beckham concerning the location of the road between Rhododendron and Sandy.<sup>14</sup> Commonly, the road following the north bank of the Zigzag and Sandy rivers from Rhododendron to Sandy has been considered the primary route and the corresponding south bank route the "south alternate." The north bank course clearly was the original road blazed by Barlow and others in 1845 and used by emigrants during 1846. Joel Palmer noted on October 27, 1845, joining an existing trail on the north bank of the Sandy River "which starting from the Dalles, runs north of Mount Hood, and until this season was the only trail traveled by the whites." Palmer further stated that "the trail is sometimes very difficult to follow, on account of the brush and logs."<sup>15</sup> Research in emigrant diaries indicates that parts of the north bank road quickly fell into disfavor, and by late summer of 1847 emigrant parties were using the south bank from Rhododendron downstream to near present Brightwood. There they recrossed the Sandy River and followed the original 1845 north bank route on west across Devils Backbone. GLO records show the north bank road between Rhododendron and Brightwood was labeled "Old Toll Road across Cascade Mountains" in the 1882 surveyors' notes, and the corresponding south bank route was labeled "Old Barlow Toll Road," indicating both had been in existence for some time. By 1898, GLO surveyors' notes for the immediate Rhododendron area identified only the south bank route, labeled "Mount Hood Toll Road." It is likely the north bank route above Brightwood continued in use after 1846, even by some emigrant parties, but its use was light and primarily by local persons journeying seasonally to Lolo Pass or to early residences and establishments along the north bank of the Sandy River. In 1910, county road surveyors noted following the old emigrant route "as closely as possible" in establishing the more recent county road alignment along the north bank of the Sandy River near Rhododendron. Apparently, this effort was one of the first at improving the lightly used wagon road in this stream area. This correspondence of route alignment is further borne out by the 1882 GLO survey observations conforming precisely to the present location of the county road.

Regarding the segment below Brightwood, Philip Foster and others petitioned in 1862 for a south bank road to be developed through the area as an alternative to the Devils Backbone segment north of the river. The route was surveyed that year and again in 1874, but no through road was successfully constructed after either survey. Other county road records refer to the Barlow Road east from Sandy as still crossing the river near Sandy and passing over Devils Backbone until 1884-1885 when references change to a south bank

road east of Sandy. Similarly, the 1872 GLO survey notes for the segment downstream from Brightwood to Devils Backbone identified only a north bank road labeled "Wagon road from Portland to the Dalles."

The river segment presented somewhat of a reprieve to the emigrants from the steep hills and rocky, sandy soils encountered in the previous days through Government Camp and along the upper Zigzag River. On September 7, 1849, William Watson noted that "going down it [the south bank of the Sandy River] seven miles is the most level road between St. Joseph and Oregon City."<sup>16</sup> There still persisted the accounts of soft soils and large river cobbles in the path and lack of forage for the livestock. Benjamin Cleaver, on September 13, 1848, wrote, "the Road runs down Sandy. the road today is tolerable level but Rocky & sandy."<sup>17</sup> Crossing the Sandy River was not easy. On September 6, 1851, Rev. Neil Johnson "found it about waist deep and very cold and swift, and if I had not caught hold of his wagon body, I should certainly been carried down stream and probably been drowned."<sup>18</sup> On September 15 of the following year, Esther Hanna also noted that the Sandy was "a very hard stream to Cross, as the current is very rapid and the bed of the stream full of large smooth rocks and very deep."<sup>19</sup>

The approximately six mile north bank segment west of the Sandy River crossing at Brightwood presented the most problems for this study. The original road closely followed the north bank of the Sandy River, primarily using the lower river terrace as indicated by the 1874 GLO survey notes. This segment of the road was a problem to the emigrants as well. On September 8, 1849, William Watson wrote, "after crossing the river we had some very rough road; with several short, bad hills, at one of which we had to double team." Watson further noted that grass was scarce and timber was very heavy.<sup>20</sup> Expansive, level pastureland at Mensinger's Bottom is deceiving to one retracing the Barlow Road route today, the broad terrace having been logged and cleared earlier this century.

Several sections of road are still recognizable along the river segment. The condition of the Barlow Road through the Rhododendron community as it follows the Zigzag River is much like the Government Camp segment. The three-fourths mile long segment has visible remains east and west of Rhododendron but has been substantially impacted by highway construction and commercial development through the town center. A short but excellent section of wagon ruts lies in a residential area of east Rhododendron, crossing an undeveloped wooded area near the north shoulder of Oregon 26 and a small parcel of USFS land. Although situated in dense vegetation, it is readily visible because of the narrow treeless corridor with deeply worn ruts and distinct earthen berms. Boulders, possibly rolled aside by early road users, constitute part of the shoulder berms. Through this area on September 18, 1851, P.V. Crawford noted they traveled "through thickets and over stones and boulders of all sizes."<sup>21</sup> Even later in 1866, S.B. Eakin, Jr., described this segment as "awful rough and rocky."<sup>22</sup>

The Barlow Road passes westward through the town center, probably following the present state highway alignment with no distinctive remains apparent. Of interest, though, is an open, wet meadow situated only a few hundred feet north of the town center. It apparently was one of the few areas of



*(Above) Looking east along Barlow Road in an undeveloped area west of Government Camp. The low understory growth of this high mountain setting allows road remains to be visible. No trees have been able to take root in the compacted roadbed even though it has long been abandoned. (Below) Looking east along the road in undeveloped lots on the east side of Rhododendron. As in the photograph above, there is no tree growth in the compacted roadbed. However, road remains are less visible than those above because this lower altitude allows increased vegetation to partially obscure the road remains. Note boulders that have been rolled to the side of the road. This section of the road is now used as a local footpath from nearby residences to the commercial area of the town. (Photographs by Richard C. Hanes)*



forage available to emigrants in the area and was mentioned in emigrant diaries. On September 7, 1848, William Anderson noted that, "we came to some grass on the wright of the road we stoped turned our cattle out and let them graze awhile then started on again."<sup>23</sup> Only a few days later, on September 12, Benjamin Cleaver noted "our grass lay off to our Right hand side of the Road some 3 hundred from the Road in marshy land on little Branches. plenty of wild fruit such as Red & purple Huckle berries."<sup>24</sup>

Just west of town the road becomes visible again, now serving as a driveway for several residences. This section was formerly labeled Chinook Lane on local maps, but the public road has since been abandoned. The narrow course is deeply worn, with boulders rolled to the shoulders. It winds through a timbered residential area of west Rhododendron north of the state highway and descends two river terrace bluffs before terminating at a small open meadow, known locally as "Pioneer Meadow." The meadow, located on the east bank of the Zigzag River, apparently was much larger but has been diminished by various episodes of highway construction during the past seventy years. In 1898, GLO surveyors noted the "Mount Hood Toll Road" in the meadow area. Here the surveyors' observations mark the emigrant crossings of the Zigzag River and Still Creek. Due to recent use, the condition of the road varies greatly in integrity but does include an excellent section which is narrow and has pronounced shoulder berms of earth and displaced boulders. The meadow likely corresponds to the "glade" mentioned by Frank Stevens on July 5, 1881, that upon passing the tollgate, the emigrants "came down into a little glade, where we found some grass and camped for dinner. Here we found...all growing."<sup>25</sup> (It should be noted that of the more than thirty diaries used for this project, this is the sole reference to a tollgate facility.)

The other road alternative identified by local residents that extends to the northwest from Rhododendron is likely the original 1845-1846 Barlow Road as it continued to follow the north bank of the Zigzag River.

From the Zigzag River crossing at Rhododendron the road traversed the broad river terraces along the south bank of the Zigzag and Sandy rivers for more than four miles. Because of the level character of the terraces, drainage is poor and many wet areas are present along the route. Vegetation is dense, making visibility of road remains poor even in winter when foliage is least. Despite increased development in recent years along the state highway, residential development away from the immediate highway shoulders has progressed more slowly, and so some early road remains persist largely unaffected. Two major sections of early road remains were identified in this south bank area. The first was found just west of the Zigzag River crossing. An approximately one-half mile long roadbed courses through an undeveloped densely wooded area south of Oregon 26 and through a residential area on the former James Creighton homestead. Three primary structures constitute the homestead complex: the residence, a barn/garage and a lodge building, all believed to date from around 1912. Now serving as a driveway east of the building complex, farther west the narrow and compacted road is maintained as a hiking trail in a thickly wooded area. The 1898 GLO plat map shows the "Mt. Hood & Barlow wagon road" well back from the Zigzag River's south bank

against the base of the bordering mountain ridges, just where the road course observed in 1991 is located.

Farther west, after merging with Faubion Loop Road and Oregon 26 for more than a mile along the south bank of the Sandy River, another section of wagon road remains appears along the west side of the Wemme community. It proceeds westward intermittently for approximately two miles to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Wildwood Park, largely in undeveloped, densely wooded areas behind residential and commercial developments that front the state highway. The 1882 GLO survey notes referring to "Mt. Hood wagon road" correspond to the visible road remains today. The road retains a primitive character, being a treeless, narrow, and shallow linear swale, barely visible in several locations even in midwinter vegetation. Surface water commonly pools in the depressed roadbed, supporting the growth of "bear grass" and other wet plant species. One portion of the old road was used as Chinquepin Road during early settlement days prior to its ultimate abandonment.

At other locations along the river segment the road has been impacted by logging and residential development but is still evident in one recent clear-cut area. In another it is shown on the Clackamas County property map as an abandoned road way still labeled "Barlow Road."

Just west of Wildwood Park the old route apparently crosses to the north of the state highway and conforms with Wemme Trail Road, identified on the Clackamas County property map as the former Barlow Road. Some isolated shallow swales are apparent in a narrow strip of woodland between the two modern roads, but their association with the Barlow Road is inconclusive. The Barlow Road along this section of the state highway has been greatly impacted by highway construction and other development in the area. Notes by land surveyors in 1882 place the "Barlow toll road" at the present intersection of Oregon 26 and Brightwood Loop Road, part of the previous Mt. Hood Loop Highway. From that point the Barlow Road apparently descends the river terrace bluff to the lower terrace of the Sandy River, approaching its first Sandy River crossing. It is possible that a narrow graveled single lane road straight down the bluff at this location is the old Barlow Road, but the association is not confirmed. According to local property owners, this segment has existed for many years and led down to a homestead, the remains of which have only recently been demolished. No road remains are apparent on the lower river terrace. At this point the Sandy River corridor area was affected by the December 1964 flood. The precise location of the first Sandy River crossing used by most emigrants is unknown, as any actual remains would have been erased by the flood, if not by later development along the river. The approximate crossing has been projected from evidence gathered from emigrant diary entries and early land survey information.

Much of the north bank route below Brightwood was also severely impacted by the December 1964 flood and subsequent river stabilization activities by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In some areas, major portions of the terrace itself disappeared in the flood, and considerable residential development has occurred immediately along the now stabilized river course. Additionally, the present county road likely follows some of the same alignment as the earlier emigrant road that was not washed away, so road remains in

this area are few. A narrow, shallow swale was observed through a residential area near the north shoulder of the county road at one location near Brightwood. A short, but more distinct, rut was found on public lands near the confluence of the Salmon and Sandy rivers. This section, located near the south shoulder of the county road, was truncated by 1964 flood damage at its east end and merges with the county road at the west end.

The longest Barlow Road section identified in the six mile north bank segment is located in what is commonly known as the Rock Corral area. This one-half mile section, located on a high river terrace, is still used, serving as driveways to various residences. One portion has been graveled and another asphalted, though both are maintained as privately-used single lane thoroughfares. Much of the route was also used to skid logs during logging activities years ago. Short "pristine" subsegments may be found at property boundaries. Though the roadbed has been largely altered, the rural woodland setting maintains the historic landscape since most residences are located at a distance from the road. Local folklore has identified the Rock Corral pioneer campsite near a large boulder, but there are no references to support this in more than thirty emigrant diaries reviewed. The 1872 GLO survey wagon road reference point corresponds with the road remains near the large rock but makes no mention of a campground or of the rock. Recent archaeological excavations funded by the BLM further dispute emigrant use of the area to any significant degree.

The western end of the river segment traverses the large Mensinger's Bottom terrace, presently a large, cleared pasture used for livestock grazing. No early road remains were identified on the terrace, and 1872 GLO survey notes locate the "Wagon road from Portland to the Dalles" on the present county road alignment. Local informants also have noted that the present county road likely follows the emigrant road alignment. A pioneer gravesite has been identified on the terrace near the county road by more than one informant, but the exact location has been obscured because of the removal of a protective fence and subsequent clearing and plowing of the land.

### Devils Backbone Segment

This eleven mile segment, which also includes the second Sandy River crossing, contains several sections of early road remains, including two of substantial length. In 1860, the GLO survey identified the "Road from Willamette Valley to the Dalles" along the Devils Backbone ridgetop. At that time it was the only road east of Sandy following the Sandy River drainage. The prominent ridgeline is fairly dry, and vegetation does not hinder visibility of road remains to the degree of the previous river segment. Most of this segment is now rural farmland, except for the immediate river crossing area which has more residential development.

Though hilly, Devils Backbone brought some relief from the thickets, sandy soils, wet boggy areas, and large river cobbles hindering travel along the previous fifteen miles of river terraces. An early description of this segment is provided by Joel Palmer who, on October 29, 1845, wrote,

We soon ascended a ridge which we followed for seven or eight miles, alternately prairie and fern openings. In these openings the timber is not large, but grows rather scrubby. There are numerous groves of beautiful pine timber, tall and straight. The soil is of a reddish cast, and very mellow, and I think would produce well.<sup>26</sup>

On September 10, 1848, Riley Root wrote, "15 miles, most of the way over a good road, especially on the ridge, called by some, 'Devils' Back-bone."<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Cleaver, on September 15, 1848, described this segment as "a fine Ridge Road mostly timber with some barren openings."<sup>28</sup> On August 14, 1852, Jared Fox wrote, "Had some very good road and some very hard hills both up & down."<sup>29</sup> On September 12, 1853, Amelia Knight wrote,

...ascended thru very steep hills, passed over the devils back bone, they call it here—We also passed over some very pretty country to day, we stoped to noon at a beautiful spot, it was prairie interspersed with strips of pretty fir timber, with their branches sweeping the ground, to the left was a deep ravine [Sandy River canyon], with a clear stream of water meandering through it, (this pretty place was along towards the end of the old fellows back bone).<sup>30</sup>

Settlement came later to the section of road above the second Sandy River crossing than to the valley bottomlands between Sandy and Oregon City. Consequently, the first survey of the Barlow Road in this area was not until 1873 when settlers petitioned for establishment of County Road No. 68, identified as the "Portland & Cascade Road." This occurred eight years after the tollgate was moved eastward from Francis Revenue's land claim to Summit Meadow. The spread of settlement along Devils Backbone made the feasibility of operating a toll road in the area untenable. The route surveyed ascended Devils Backbone west of the emigrant road before the joining the "Old Road" alignment on top of Devils Backbone. From there the survey notes indicate the "Old Emigrant" road was followed to a location on the north bank of the Sandy River. Several establishments were noted alongside the Barlow Road section of the route. A segment of the Barlow Road, from its intersection with the Portland & Cascade Road southwest to Revenue's bridge, was formally reestablished six years later in 1879 as County Road No. 155. Apparently some minor deviations from the emigrant route were made as indicated by the survey notes which stated,

To grant a change of road. Said change commencing at the end of the Bridge on north side of Sandy river running on the best and most practiceable rout to the top of the Bluff near Bacon's Black Smith Shop thence the nearest best and most practiceable rout to the East line of George Hoffman's land claim where the County road (No. 68) crosses it.<sup>31</sup>

By 1880, surveys for County Road Nos. 68 and 155 had incorporated the old Barlow Road into the county road system along Devils Backbone with only minimal alterations.

With establishment of the "new" Barlow Road on the south bank of the Sandy River from Sandy to the Salmon River by 1885, further improvements to the north bank route

of the original Barlow Road were sought in 1886. It is likely the improvements were to enhance access to the settlements at the east end of Devils Backbone and from the north bank of the Sandy River to the new south bank route. Survey No. 259, titled "Road Resurvey of Old Barlow Road," began on the top of the Devils Backbone in the "Old Barlow Road" roadbed and extended eastward, deviating in places from the old road "on account of steep grades and washouts." This survey established much more closely the present Marmot Road alignment, and deviations from the old road were isolated. At the east end of Devils Backbone, the county surveyors followed the "present travelled road, down grade on S. hillside" where it again left the old road to the south downslope to the base of Devils Backbone. From there the road survey basically followed the old roadbed. The Devils Backbone route's place in history was noted in a resurvey of a road extending west of the emigrant route in 1890 which referred to the old ridgetop route as the "Sandy Bridge and Backbone Road known as the old Barlow Road."

Formal survey and improvements of the north bank route east of Marmot Bridge, including the original 1845-1846 route following the north bank of the Sandy River from near the mouth of the Zigzag River to the Brightwood area, did not occur until much later. A county road survey in 1910 noted following the "emigrant road" as closely as possible from the original first crossing. The south bank route from Brightwood east to Government Camp received its major revisions in 1919 with the survey of the Mt. Hood Loop Highway and its construction in the next two years.<sup>32</sup>

A short section of road is still evident on the east slope of the Devils Backbone segment. Immediately after crossing a small stream, the road climbs straight up the toe of the ridge to a flat terrace above. This path through the trees has been used by tractors in recent times, but the lower portion of hillside slope still retains the original earthen berms along the shoulders of the compacted roadbed and a slight break in the natural hillside contour. The location of the ruts corresponds to 1872 GLO survey notes for the "Wagon road from Portland to The Dalles." On September 8, 1849, William Watson referred to the stream at the base of the hill by writing, "we crossed another branch, where we filled our water casks, it being nine miles to the river [the next crossing near Sandy]."<sup>33</sup>

Farther up Devils Backbone to the west is another, longer section of intermittent road remains. Almost three and one-half miles long, this section begins at the former townsite of Marmot and extends along the narrow ridgetop. In 1860 and 1872, the GLO survey noted "a wagon road from Willamette Valley to Dalles" at a location corresponding to the road identified in the field. One of the better segments of preserved road is a section extending up a very narrow, steep ridgeline from the former Marmot townsite. The old road first parallels the south shoulder of a county road in a woodland setting before crossing to the north side. It then follows the narrow ridgeline to the ridgetop and disappears into a pasture. This section has pronounced earthen berms as the wagons eroded substantial ruts in the soft soil. Few trees are growing in the road, but there is much brush. This subsection of the road is clearly described by William Watson who wrote on September 9, 1849, "This morning we ascended...by a narrow ridge; we had a very heavy road to the top of the first hill, which was very steep."<sup>34</sup>

Other road remains were observed along the next three miles. For example, a deep but short rut is located at the west side of an old orchard, an excellent roadbed runs for several hundred feet through a remaining stand of trees, another short rut is on the north shoulder of the county road, and a very short swale is still visible in a recent clear-cut area. Two other sections have been used for skidding logs, including a lengthy segment on the top of a narrow, level ridge. Historic sites associated with this section, besides Marmot which served travelers along the road from the 1880s to the 1910s, are an unmarked pioneer grave, a possible emigrant campsite according to emigrant diaries, and several early homesteads. Residences, field clearing, and agricultural development have obscured traces in other areas on top of the ridge.

Following the passage over Devils Backbone, the emigrants descended and traversed two river terraces to the second crossing of the Sandy River and then ascended three bluffs to the ridge where the town of Sandy is located.

There are no apparent road remains of the descent down the long, steep, southwest facing slope of Devils Backbone, probably because of logging in the 1950s. Oral histories taken from area residents indicate that rope-scarred trees, used to ease wagons down the slope, remained in the area until recent years. Emigrant diaries mention the difficult descent. One of the more dramatic entries is by William Anderson who wrote on September 9, 1848,

we traveled 5 miles over some verry steep hills we had a shower of rain this morning which caused the mountains to be verry slippy my waggon slide around at one hill and got before the team and crippled the off lead ox we got them stoped chained the waggon to a tree and took the cattle loose unloaded the waggon and then let it down with chains and ropes.<sup>35</sup>

On September 1, 1850, Samuel James wrote, "Last crossing of Sandy. Went over Devils Backbone and let the wagons down by ropes, have the cattle all taken off."<sup>36</sup> P.V. Crawford noted on September 20, 1851, "First we ascended a long hill onto a long ridge, which we followed several miles, at the end of which we descended a very steep hill, to the creek bottom."<sup>37</sup> The Rev. Jesse Moreland wrote on October 2, 1852, "we had verry Bad hills to come down we let down by Rope."<sup>38</sup> Reputation of the descent was well established early as reflected by George Taylor's entry on October 7, 1853, "the Backbone Is the most difficult hill to Descend In A wet time that there is in the Mountain we got down In Safety As the hill went dry We got down without difficulty."<sup>39</sup> Of particular note regarding the appearance of the area to emigrants is Joel Palmer's entry of October 29, 1845, "We came to the termination of this ridge and descended to the bottom, which has been covered with heavy timber, but which has been killed by fire."<sup>40</sup>

After crossing the Sandy River, emigrants described a series of hills to climb from the stream. In preparation for the difficult ascent, the emigrants rested near the banks of Cedar Creek, a substantial stream, before climbing the series of hills to the present townsite of Sandy. The third hill was clearly the most difficult, particularly in wet weather. On September 16, 1848, Benjamin Cleaver wrote, "we had several Bad hills to go up which we had to double team at."<sup>41</sup> William Watson,



on September 9, 1849, wrote after crossing the Sandy, "a mile farther, having three steep hills, here we nooned."<sup>42</sup> Samuel James in 1850 simply noted, "Bad hills" after crossing the river.<sup>43</sup> P.V. Crawford was somewhat more descriptive the following year: "The road from here [river crossing] was good, except two short, steep pitches we had to climb and one tolerably long and very steep hill."<sup>44</sup> On October 9, 1853, George Taylor wrote, "Hill Very Bad Wet and Slippery we took Part of the Tings out of the Wagons and Carried them up the hill then By hitching nine yoke of Cattle to A Wagon we got up the hill."<sup>45</sup> In 1881, Frank Stevens noted pulling "up a long, steep hill and found a store on top."<sup>46</sup>

John Kerns summarizes the travails suffered while crossing both the Sandy River and Devils Backbone on October 1, 1852:

Started early and drove six miles, then descended a steep, long spur of the mountain, went one and one-half miles and crossed Sandy again, then ascended a spur of the mountain and traveled four miles and encamped after one of the most laborious day's travel we have had.<sup>47</sup>

The segment of the Barlow Road between the town of Sandy and the Sandy Bridge at the Revenue land claim apparently was not established by resurvey until County Road No. 79 was surveyed in 1874. The segment identified as "Road Survey of the Sandy Bridge and Portland Road" revised the earlier Territorial Road X-56 from Portland to Sandy and included a rough sketch of the "Barlow Road" extending down the ridge to the north from Sandy to the Revenue claim. This survey further indicates that the Barlow Road was still located on the north back of the Sandy River.

Like the top of Devils Backbone, much of this segment is relatively dry compared with the upstream river segment. On the north bank of the Sandy a lengthy, stretch of discontinuous road remains extend from the base of the Devils Backbone westward to the actual river crossing, generally following the present Marmot Road. Benjamin Cleaver, writing on September 15, 1848, refers to a small unnamed stream at the base of Devils Backbone. "We traveled to the first edge of Sandy Bottom - had to go down a steep hill & Camped on a small branch at the foot of the hill. grazing poor & Camping places Bushy as is Common in these Mountains."<sup>48</sup> From that stream crossing, the route today disappears through an agricultural field before merging with the county road where a very short rut is still evident. The old road then diverges from the county road a short distance west where a short section of remains is still visible next to extensive residential development. The route merges again with the county road before diverging once more, this time to the north where again some road remains are still visible. These remains have been cut by county road construction but still leaving more than half the width of the wagon roadbed and the north shoulder berm. These sections have occasional earthen berms and are free of trees and boulders.

The descent of the emigrant road from the upper river terrace to the lower terrace in this vicinity is not clearly evident because of county road construction but is projected to be at the intersection of Marmot Road and Ten Eyck Road. Emigrant diaries indicate difficulty in descending this area. On September 16, 1848, Benjamin Cleaver wrote, "we left

our Camp on the East side of Sandy Bottom, went down one bad steep hill between here and the Creek."<sup>49</sup>

From that point the road follows the north bank of the Sandy River downstream past the present bridge where road remains are well preserved, including two alternate river crossings. The narrow, compacted roadbed is deeply worn into the surface at the two descents down the river bank. The easternmost crossing is located at a large gravel bar exposed at low water episodes, and the second, farther west, crosses at a broad riverbed location which is quite shallow in the late summer months. The stream crossing was well described by Enoch W. Conyers in 1852. "This crossing we found was very hard to make on account of the many big boulders to be found in the stream. To get across safely we were obliged to travel a zig-zag course."<sup>50</sup> Several local residents are aware of the old road remains along the river course. Intervening portions of the road between these north bank remains have been impacted by residential development along the river.

Another major section of road remains occurs on the steep north-facing slope up to present Sandy. The eastern portion of this lengthy segment was bladed during recent logging activity, but the western portion remains in excellent condition. The road segment begins at the base of a steep hill which rises to a broad ridgetop bench. A deep swale extends first to the south into a clear-cut area before curving west. This initial section of the segment has been greatly affected by logging and erosion. As the road curves to the west it starts up the hillslope and appears more as a narrow, compacted roadbed. It then enters a woodland at the township line between R4E and R5E, still maintaining the westward orientation. At the transection of the township line, land surveyors in 1855 noted, "Cross immigrant road, course E & S70W."<sup>51</sup> The road at this point also begins gaining greater elevation as it continues to traverse the increasingly steep hillside. This section was reportedly used for logging activity earlier this century but suffered considerably less damage than more recent logging caused to segments to the east. Consequently, this section of the road retains primitive road characteristics including narrow width, few and only small uphill shoulder cuts, and less consistency of road grade. The setting of the western portion of this segment has been little altered by development and conveys an excellent historic character of traversing a difficult hillside in western Oregon terrain. After gaining considerable elevation, the road begins to turn more directly uphill to the southwest and becomes obscure it nears the top of the steep bluff.

Historic sites associated with this segment include the marked Cliffside and Revenue pioneer cemeteries, one unmarked gravesite, a millsite on Cedar Creek, and three early homestead locations. The Francis Revenue land claim was noted by Amelia Knight on September 12, 1853. "...passed one new claim this evening, and have encamp near a small stream [Cedar Creek] of clear water."<sup>52</sup> The following year Revenue's farmstead was established, and Philip Condit described it on September 15, 1854, "camped near the first dwelling house we found in the Cascades."<sup>53</sup> Located on the top of Devils Backbone, the unmarked gravesite is known to many local residents. It reportedly contains graves of members of the pioneer Sievers family members and emigrants. Its location is presently distinguished by a small stand of fir trees isolated in a pasture a short distance north of the

*The Barlow Road on Devils Backbone: (Right) This photo shows the ongoing use that the old roadbed receives at some locations. Here, on private land atop Devils Backbone, it was used recently by a small tractor to skid logs. The general historic character remains largely intact with deep berms on each side of the road. (Below) The road follows along a narrow ridgetop of Devils Backbone. The modern paved country road in the left of photograph was cut into the side of the ridge, fortuitously avoiding this section of wagon road remains. (Photographs by Richard C. Hanes)*



emigrant road. The trees in the stand are likely between 100 and 150 years of age which suggests the small parcel has been left undisturbed since early pioneer days. Cliffside Cemetery is a maintained active cemetery on the Barlow Road near the second Sandy River crossing. It contains the graves of several individuals prominent in early settlement of the Devils Backbone and Sandy area. Still visible is a mostly dry mill race.

### **Sandy to Eagle Creek Segment**

Until possibly as late as 1853 this eight-mile segment constituted the emigrants' final day's journey before their first encounter with civilization in the Willamette Valley, the Foster farm near Eagle Creek. Several emigrants referred to this segment that generally passes through rolling farmland with two deeply entrenched streams to cross. As Joel Palmer noted on October 29, 1845, "After crossing the Sandy our course was south-west, over a rolling and prairie country. The prairie, as well as the timber land, was covered with fern."<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Cleaver, who, unlike Palmer, was pulling a wagon, was somewhat more descriptive on September 17, 1848. "...had some steep little hills & some swampy Rooty Road some very good road on the latter part of the Road."<sup>55</sup> Similarly, on September 16, 1852, Esther Hanna wrote, "Part of our road this day was good and part very bad, having some steep

ascents and descents to make."<sup>56</sup> Jared Fox provided a somewhat confusing entry on August 15, 1852, by describing the following incident. "At a sharp little hill between the garden & house Jerry['s] horse fell down & I thought it was his last but we got him up & got up the hill. One mile from here we came to Foster's, heretofore known as the first house...."<sup>57</sup> The hill they were apparently ascending was likely out of Deep Creek, but to whose house and garden the reference is made on Deep Creek in 1852 is unknown. This entry is especially perplexing since several weeks later on October 2, 1852, John Kerns noted, "After driving eight miles over a hilly, mountainous road through cloudy, cool weather, we reached Foster's, the first house in the Willamette Valley, after getting out of the Cascade Mountains..."<sup>58</sup> The fall of 1853 was very wet as reflected in Amelia Knight's entry for September 13. "...drove over some muddy miry ground, and through mud holes..."<sup>59</sup> Obviously, this stretch of road presented familiar hardships but to a much lesser degree than most of the route since passing through the Government Camp area. Most of this segment south of Sandy is now in agricultural use and has been since the 1860s.

According to the 1855 GLO survey east of the Clackamas River, road development appears less advanced in this region than the Springwater area where the Barlow Road is the only road identified by the surveyors. The surveyors noted "Im-

migrant Road." The major road from Foster's northward toward Milwaukie and Portland is not shown on the 1855 map.

In the continuing effort to establish a profitable toll road across the Cascades to the Willamette Valley settlements, Philip Foster petitioned in 1861 for an improved emigrant road from his farm eastward through Sandy to the Salmon River. Based on the field notes of the 1862 survey of Territorial Road X-9 that resulted from Foster's petition, the segment from Foster's to Sandy closely followed the emigrant road. At Sandy, the proposed course followed the south bank of the Sandy River, joining the "old emigrant" route near the mouth of the Salmon River close to the upper Sandy River crossing established in 1847. No mention of a preexisting road is noted by the surveyors east of Sandy, and the petition states,

Being no permanently located road through this district of country, and knowing it to be of great importance to the traveling community as well as to ourselves...and we would further say, as the Road now runs it crosses the Sandy River twice making it very difficult even at a low stage of water, and entirely impassible through the Spring and a portion of the summer months as we now propose to locate the Road it does not cross any large streams and passes upon much better ground and much shorter in distance.<sup>60</sup>

According to the petition, costs of locating the new road would be borne by Foster. Apparently capital was insufficient to develop the road east of Sandy, as the proposed south bank route does not appear on the 1872 plat for T2S, R6E. Settlements noted by the 1862 survey along the lower segment from Foster's to Sandy include St. Johns, J. Wilson, and Wm. Johnston. Unfortunately, the half of the map from Tickle Creek south of Sandy to the Salmon River is missing from the county files.

Another major resurvey of the "Foster County Road" between Foster's and Sandy was performed in 1884 establishing County Road No. 241. This appears to be the first survey of this major Barlow Road route segment since the 1862 survey petitioned by Foster. Surveyor John Meldrum mentions in his 1884 notes that, "The field notes of the original survey of the Foster road are so obscure that it is almost impossible to identify any portion of said survey and it would seem that but a small portion of the road was often upon the original survey."<sup>61</sup> This statement brings into question the accuracy of the 1862 survey records in depicting the actually traveled course. It may be that the traveled routes did not always follow the surveyed alignments, particularly when little development was employed. The first portion of the Foster's to Sandy segment contains only isolated short road remains. The road passes in a southwesterly direction from Sandy toward Tupper Road, a remaining segment of the 1920s market road which followed much of the previously used wagon road in this area. At one point the old road deviates from the market road, leaving a trace up a hillside east of Tupper Road through a wooded northfacing hillside and disappearing at the top of the hill at the edge of a residential development. More wagon road remains are visible south of Tickle Creek ascending a steep hillside, first in the form of a present residential drive and then as an

abandoned roadbed near the top of the hill. The road again disappears at the top of the hill where it apparently turned back in a southwest orientation, traversing level fields before joining the present state highway. Road remains in this section are shown in an early aerial photo taken around 1950 and are still dramatically indicated by the orientation of a remaining 1880s residence.

The wagon road then generally follows the present state highway for some distance, deviating briefly in several locations with isolated road remains still visible. As the Barlow Road approaches Deep Creek it begins more substantial deviations from the present highway.

The Deep Creek drainage displays three generations of road: remains of the original Barlow wagon road; the 1920s market road; and the present state highway. On the descent to Deep Creek the wagon road is evidenced by a linear, shallow straight swale and treeless corridor through an undeveloped woodland area near the west shoulder of the highway. The swale disappears at the boundary of an adjoining residential development and apparently crossed Deep Creek a short distance downstream from the present highway crossing.

Near the south bank of Deep Creek, the market road and wagon road become clearly evident near the east shoulder of the present highway. Wagon road remains are a deep, narrow swale, enhanced by erosion, extending directly up a low hillside from the west shoulder of the abandoned 1920s market roadbed. It quickly disappears at the top of the hill into a dense undeveloped woodland next to the base of state highway fill. Remains of the market road are distinct as they wind gradually up the north facing slope through an undeveloped woodland area. Upon reaching the top of the hill, the market road again turns back to the southwest, generally joining the highway alignment.

The older Barlow Road remains follow a different route than the market road and the highway; however, the remains are much less distinct. In addition, the older road conforms more closely to the present highway than the market road and so was more impacted by highway construction than the market road. Nonetheless, several ruts and roadbeds are still recognizable: a short, deep, highly eroded swale near the creek bank; a relatively short, shallow linear swale that parallels the west shoulder of the highway farther upslope; and very distinct road remains as it climbs a steep hillside immediately below the market roadbed described above. This last section is compacted and narrow with a slightly uneven road grade as it ascends the bluff. The road is mostly clear of brush and other vegetative growth, owing to the compaction. The remains are intersected by market road remains at the top of the bluff and are visible as a swale for only a few feet after passing under the market road.

The Barlow Road closely follows the highway before descending toward the historic Foster farmsite. A deep, winding swale meanders downhill on a southfacing hillside to the north shoulder of State Highway 211 along a treeless corridor in a southerly direction through an undeveloped portion of an agricultural area. Upon crossing Highway 211 the swale passes through some blackberries and disappears into agricultural fields.

Closer to the Foster farm a long, shallow swale is again visible through a level woodland near residences. There are



*(Above) Barlow Road remains descend a hillside while following the Clackamas River in the Springwater area east of Oregon City. Note that trees are growing out from the berms but none have taken root in the compacted road bed. (Below) Road remains descend to the north bank of the Sandy River which is visible in the background. The road leads to a river crossing that was favored by the emigrants. (Photographs by Richard C. Hanes)*



no visible road remains as this segment approaches Foster's and passes through cleared pastureland to descend the final slope in front of the present Eagle Creek School. This segment contains three marked pioneer cemeteries. Forrester Cemetery is located one mile east of the Foster farmstead and contains the graves of a number of families prominent in the early settlement of the Eagle Creek area. The Foster Cemetery is located on the edge of a bluff overlooking the Foster farmstead from the east. It is a marked and maintained cemetery containing more than seventy graves including Philip (1805-1884) and Mary C. (1811-1880) Foster; the Burnett family including Josiah (1828-1875); two nine year-old emigrant girls, Mary Condit and Nancy Black, buried in 1853; and a number of other early area families.

### Eagle Creek to Oregon City Segment

Philip Foster's farmstead has major historical significance for two reasons. For the first eight years of Barlow Road use, 1846-1853, it marked the reemergence into civilization for the emigrants after their 2,000 mile journey. Second, in the early years it marked the primary point of dispersal of the emigrants upon their arrival, with some continuing westward to Oregon City and others turning either south toward the upper Willamette Valley or north to Milwaukie and, later, Portland. The emigrants proceeding on to Oregon City also had the option of either following the north bank of the Clackamas River for some distance from Foster's before crossing it or following the route described below. That this dispersal pattern was established early is reflected by Mark Hatton, an 1846 traveler, who later recalled, "When they reached Jackknife most of the wagons separated..."<sup>62</sup> On September 17, 1848, Benjamin Cleaver wrote, "we landed at the settlement [Foster's] about 3 o'clock P.M. we then traveled about 1-1/2 miles to a Eagle Creek—having taken the left Hand road & camped on Said Creek."<sup>63</sup> On September 22, 1851, P.V. Crawford wrote from Foster's, "This day our company separated."<sup>64</sup> That the upper Willamette Valley was a choice of many is reflected by Esther Hanna who wrote on September 16, 1852, "Nearly everyone stops a few days to recruit [at Foster's] before going farther up the valley."<sup>65</sup> On August 22, 1853, Orange Gaylord wrote, "Drove to Foster's. Arrived just before 12 o'clock pm. Drove to the forks of the Oregon City and Salem roads and camped."<sup>66</sup> Many other diary entries make specific reference to Milwaukie, Portland, Mollala, or "upper valley" as they left the Foster farmstead area. As late as 1866, S.B. Eakin wrote, "Today our traveling companions took to the right, for Portland; we took past Foster's, or a little to the left....We are now north of Eugene. The farmers say for us to keep to the mountain road [through Mollala]. They say it is better than the River Road [Oregon City to Salem]."<sup>67</sup>

Upon arriving at the Foster farmstead, some emigrants apparently continued a short distance farther to camp along Eagle Creek where water was readily available and only a short walk to the amenities offered at Foster's. Apparently either these emigrants favored continued camping out rather than staying in some of Foster's shelters or the shelters were full. This campsite location most likely lies on a high stream terrace along the Barlow Road between Eagle Creek and the

Clackamas River. From this location it was less than fifteen miles to Oregon City.

A description of the crossing of Eagle Creek is provided by Benjamin Cleaver on September 18, 1848, "This day we crossed Eagle Creek on which we were Camped & traveled about 3/4 of a mile & up a tolerable hill & Camped on a Branch at the side of a small buggy Prairie near a farm [George Weston's land claim, first settled in 1847]...we can see Mount Hood from this place."<sup>68</sup> The crossing of the Clackamas River at Feldheimers Ford was described by William Anderson on September 11, 1848, who stated upon leaving Foster's, "we started on & crossed the Clackamas River at a verry shallow Place where the fall Salmon were verry Plenty going up stream & we kiled all we wanted with sticks & Clubs this stream I afterwards learnt eptied into the Willamette River below oragon City."<sup>69</sup> Benjamin Cleaver wrote on September 20, 1848, "traveled over some good Road. we then came to hills & from that to the Clacamas River this is a beautiful stream about 100 yards wide & from 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 feet Deep very Clear. Salmon plenty. after crossing a small Branch about 1/4 of a mile from the Clackamas River we then Rise a long hill not very steep."<sup>70</sup> On October 14, 1852, Samuel Francis wrote, "Decended a rather bad hill to the Clackamas, forded it, a fine stream, clear water, stoney bottom."<sup>71</sup>

The route from Foster's to Oregon City is depicted on various early maps, including GLO plats and an 1859 regional map of Warm Springs. Two roads leading east from Oregon City are identified by the 1852 GLO survey, the "Oregon City to Foster's" road representing the emigrant route and the "Oregon City to Mattoon's Mills" road, located less than one-half mile to the south linking Oregon City to farms and mills to the southeast. A portion of the latter road closely approximates the present Holcomb Road. An 1852 territorial road survey (X-88) realigned the Mattoon's Mills road, in essence more fully creating Holcomb Road and supplanting the Barlow Road west of Clear Creek. As a result, most of the original Barlow Road between Clear Creek and Oregon City likely saw use by emigrant traffic only between 1846 and 1852 before being abandoned. It also is likely that the emigrant road served as a road for only a very brief time before 1846 since settlement did not begin to spread eastward from Oregon City until about the time the Barlow Road was established. The original road probably followed previous American Indian and pioneer trails through the hilly and wooded area. By the 1855 GLO survey of the Springwater area between Clear Creek and the Clackamas River crossing, a number of roads serving the early settlements had been established. Besides the Barlow Road, there existed precursors to the present Springwater Road, a portion of Hattan Road, and a number of roads leading to the south.

As early as April, 1851, settlers east of Oregon City began petitioning for improved roads to their farms and mills. On April 4, Almond Holcomb and a number of other settlers petitioned for a newly aligned road from Abernethy Bridge in Oregon City to a Clackamas River crossing at "Joseph Church's mill" a short distance downstream from the original emigrant crossing at Feldheimers Ford. From the river it was to continue toward Foster's and an intersection with the "Mounthood road." In response to the petition, a survey (Territorial Road X-88) was performed in February, 1852.

The 1852 plat map for the township indicates the new road apparently was not established until after that summer. Based on the survey notes for X-88, this route established the present Holcomb Road alignment, essentially realigning the Barlow Road to the south as much as one-half mile in some locations. The survey established Holcomb Road eastward to near Clear Creek with a now abandoned but still identifiable early roadbed segment that follows a densely wooded ravine. Apparently this ravine was avoided by the earliest emigrants because of its wet and narrow character. As evidenced by several bank cuts along the lower ravine segment, some degree of construction activity was necessary to extend the road directly down the ravine to Clear Creek, eliminating the original route over a hill to the north. This realignment of the Barlow Road was still shown on a 1934 Metsker map for the area. Today, longtime residents in the Clear Creek and Springwater area recall traveling to Oregon City earlier in this century by the now-abandoned realigned Barlow Road, known today as Holcomb Road. Unfortunately, the very brief territorial road survey notes do not refer to existing Barlow Road developments along the route. Apparently, this early survey did establish a new Clackamas River crossing.

Other early road concerns by the settlers are reflected by the 1853 petition for Territorial Road X-57 from the "Springwater Settlement area" to Oregon City. There are no maps or field notes in county files, indicating no action was taken at that time. Other improvements in the area were petitioned in the 1860s leading to further creation of today's rural road network. More substantial surveys were performed in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1900, the present road network was essentially established, and the original Barlow Road was largely abandoned in this region.

The last several hundred feet of the Barlow Road, located along the north bank of Abernethy Creek, is present today with only minor alterations since 1852 but is now known as Abernethy Road.

Beginning in 1867, attention began to be paid to the portion of the original Barlow Road between Foster's and the Clackamas River crossing. The segment was reestablished as part of the County Road No. 18 survey. In June 1867, residents requested a "good" road commencing at Cutting's Mill south of the Barlow Road, extending northward to the "Oald Emigrant Road," and following the old road crossing of the Clackamas River onto Foster's. After crossing the river to the east the surveyed road generally follows the present winding Doty Road across Eagle Creek to Foster's.

Several sections of road remains were identified in this segment. One represents the descent to and ascent from Eagle Creek. The descent began at the sharp turn of Doty Road at the top of a steep bluff above Eagle Creek bottomland. A very short, shallow swale is visible in a densely wooded area on the inside of a sharp hairpin curve in Doty Road. The lower end of the swale is abruptly truncated by a roadbank cut. Evidence for this swale being the old road is further enhanced by the presence of a very old rock barrier placed across the swale at the top of the bluff to impede further use of the old roadbed. From that point Doty Road apparently follows the old road until it reaches a curve to the south toward the present bridge location. The old road from the curve probably corresponds to a deeply entrenched driveway used by several residents near Eagle Creek. There is a shallow swale down a

low talus slope to the lowest Eagle Creek stream terrace in alignment with the driveway, the last evidence of the road before it crossed Eagle Creek below the present bridge. This corresponds with the 1855 GLO survey notes. No road remains are evident on the lowest terrace, approaching the north bank of Eagle Creek. Damage from past flooding and residential development have no doubt acted to obscure road remains.

Upon crossing Eagle Creek the road passes through a recently logged area, appearing again as a distinct deep, narrow swale paralleling below Doty Road from the base of a steep bluff to the upper stream terrace. The two roads ascend the bluff toward a natural notch that has been further enhanced by subsequent road construction.

At the top of the bluff, the old road diverges to the east of Doty Road through a woodland parcel where it is visible as a narrow, treeless corridor parallel to Doty Road. In 1855 GLO surveyors noted a road oriented in a north/south direction near the south end of this road section. According to the early GLO surveyor notes, the past and present roads then merge for the remainder of the distance to the descent to the Clackamas River. This section of the road passes several springs, no doubt referenced in Benjamin Cleaver's diary as the "small grubby Prairie."<sup>72</sup>

The next visible road remains mark the descent to the Clackamas River. A very distinct, narrow compacted earthen roadbed is evident from the top to near the base of the bluff. This section likely corresponds to Samuel Francis' 1852 diary entry of descending "a rather bad hill to the Clackamas...."<sup>73</sup> Some minor road work is evident, but improvements likely were early for this segment of the Barlow Road since it provided access to Waldrip's sawmill by the early 1850s. In 1861 land surveyors noted the location of a road corresponding to the location of this segment near the bottom of the bluff while establishing donation land claim boundaries. There is no visible evidence of the road across an agricultural field on the lower terrace of the Clackamas River.

Upon crossing the river, no evidence of the road is visible for some distance owing to recent logging activities, possible flood damage near the stream bank, and conformance at places with present Feldheimer Road. A distinctive unimproved, narrow road occurs farther up the ascent toward Springwater Road. That road begins in a stand of trees within which logging had been limited. According to early GLO surveyor observations, the road continues uphill in a southwesterly direction before disappearing where the old road crosses present Feldheimer Road. The old road apparently enters a recent clear-cut area where no remains are evident up to the top of the hill.

Historic sites at the river crossing include a small old barn, constructed with square nails and pegs, on the west bank of the Clackamas River and an 1890s Victorian house and outbuilding on the east bank.

For the next eight miles, the road traverses fairly level farm land before coming to the deeply entrenched Clear Creek. Much of the area is wet with a high water table and apparently was heavily logged in the 1920s. This segment is often confused with Springwater and Bakers Ferry roads.

Apparently confusion in routes extends to emigrant times as well. Maggie Scott wrote on September 29, 1852, "We traveled twelve miles this day without accident, but did not

*On the cover...*

Point of Rocks in El Paso County, Colorado, a famous camping place and landmark along the Cherokee Trail. (Photograph by Lee Whiteley)

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# The Barlow Road: An Archaeological Survey

*Richard C. Hanes and Stephen Dow Beckham*

## INTRODUCTION

The Barlow Road is the last overland segment of the Oregon Trail. Opened in 1845, just two years after the first major emigration in 1843, this route served emigrants and other travelers in western Oregon for seven decades. Clackamas County with financial support from the State of Oregon sponsored this study, *The Barlow Road Inventory Project*, of the road's last forty-four miles. During the course of the study, from 1990 to 1992, 375 individual properties of the 400 transected by the road were field inspected, including nineteen substantial segments of road remains and several other identified associated historic sites. Many traces of the early road were erased quickly by settlement of what emigrants called "Eden at the End of the Trail," but information concerning the road was preserved in public records, emigrant diaries, and oral history.

One earlier study provides considerable background information on the establishment of the Barlow Road with detailed information on the segment across U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands between Tygh Valley and Zigzag.<sup>1</sup> Other earlier studies include publications by historical societies, the state highway department, and the Oregon Trail Advisory Council.<sup>2</sup> The stretch of Barlow Road of interest here begins at Summit Meadow high in the Cascades and ends near sea level at the townsite of Oregon City, excluding USFS land as mentioned above. The route passes through the communities of Government Camp, Rhododendron, Wemme, Sandy, Eagle Creek, and Oregon City.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The long course of the Oregon Trail brought emigrants to their final challenge—the transit of the treacherous Columbia River Gorge. Travel through the Gorge was perilous for multiple reasons: stiff head winds, freezing rain with the onset of winter, dangerous rapids at the Cascades of the Columbia, a miserable portage for five miles through the mud, rocks, and forest on the north side of the rapids, and, of course, the possibility of mishap anywhere along the way. Benumbed by the death of friends and loved ones in mishaps along the way and mindful of the prospect of risking lives and property floating by log rafts for nearly sixty-five miles down the Columbia River, some emigrants decided there had to be a land route into the Willamette Valley.

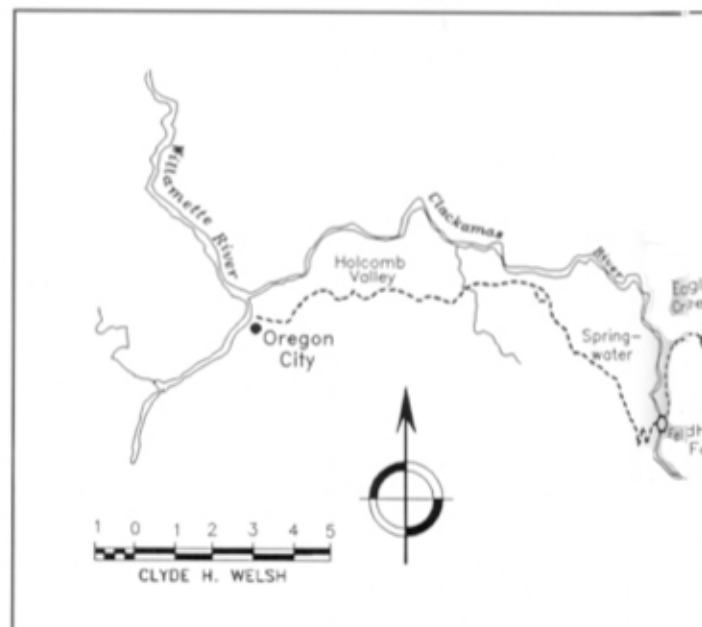
In 1845, Samuel K. Barlow, Joel Palmer, William Rector, and others concluded that rather than face the Gorge they would take on the task of exploring, blazing, and opening a land route across the Cascade Mountains. Perseverance and luck were on their side.

These would-be road builders moved their wagons nearly thirty-five miles south of the Columbia River to Tygh Valley

and set up a base camp near the margin of the forest where their livestock could graze and rest before they resumed their journey. The men then plunged into the hills. The course they selected led west across the flanks of the Cascades to the north side of the White River. Each hour they ascended in elevation. They marked their way through the forest of pines, firs, and hardwoods, and approximately seventeen miles west of their camp they descended to the White River. They followed its sandy bed for several miles to the mouth of what would later be called Barlow Creek. They followed the creek northwesterly toward the summit of the range at present Barlow Pass.

The explorers spent days felling trees and clearing a trace. Palmer ascended far up the slopes of Mount Hood, passing above the tree line so that he could ascertain a route via the canyon of Camp Creek and the Zigzag River west to the Sandy River. Unable to drag their wagons beyond the pass, the explorers cached their supplies and wagons at a place they dubbed Fort Deposit, a temporary camp in the mountains, and proceeded in single file with their livestock to the settlements in the Willamette Valley.

Barlow secured a franchise from the Oregon Provisional Legislature to open and maintain this road, and the following summer axemen completed opening a rugged trace. That fall Barlow was at Gate Creek in the Tygh Valley to charge a toll to those brave enough to take his road. Thus, the farthest western portion of the Oregon Trail became a toll road. Henceforth, emigrants arriving on the Columbia River Plateau had the choice of two ways to the Willamette Valley:



the water route via the Gorge or the overland route via the toll road. Thousands elected to go each way. Several road companies succeeded Barlow in operating this road; and each established its toll stations to exact payment for each person, wagon, and head of livestock passing by. The toll station locations changed through time, leaving little trace of their years of service. From 1846 until its passing by gift to the State of Oregon in 1919 the Barlow Road served as Oregon's longest operating toll facility.

By the early 1850s growth in the Oregon economy demanded an improved transportation system. The matter of grading and surfacing trails became a new priority. This "surfacing" was especially important on routes like the Barlow Road where travel in inclement weather often was impossible. Corduroyed roads (wooden planks, often of cedar, placed in the roadbed mostly in very wet areas) proved of only temporary value, however, since soil washed out from underneath.<sup>3</sup> For the most part, therefore, roads in the 1850s, including the Barlow Road, remained impassable during the rainy season.<sup>4</sup>

By 1855, the U.S. Topographical Engineers had surveyed and constructed the Military Portage Road between Fort Vancouver and the Upper Cascades along the north bank of the Columbia River. This route improved transportation through the Columbia River Gorge and helped link the Walla Walla area to the region west of the Cascade Mountains. These improvements plus the development of routes across passes in the Cascade Range in Washington Territory began to diminish use of the Barlow Road. Also during the 1850s, the development of steamboat and portage services in the Gorge of the Columbia River had important impact on use of the Barlow Road by creating relatively safe, efficient, and speedy but expensive connections for both passengers and freight.<sup>5</sup>

In 1860, the California Stage Company, part of the Butterfield system between California and the East Coast, extended its service through northern California and the Willamette Valley to Portland. This line avoided the Gorge, the Cascade Mountains, and offered, at least for passengers, a through

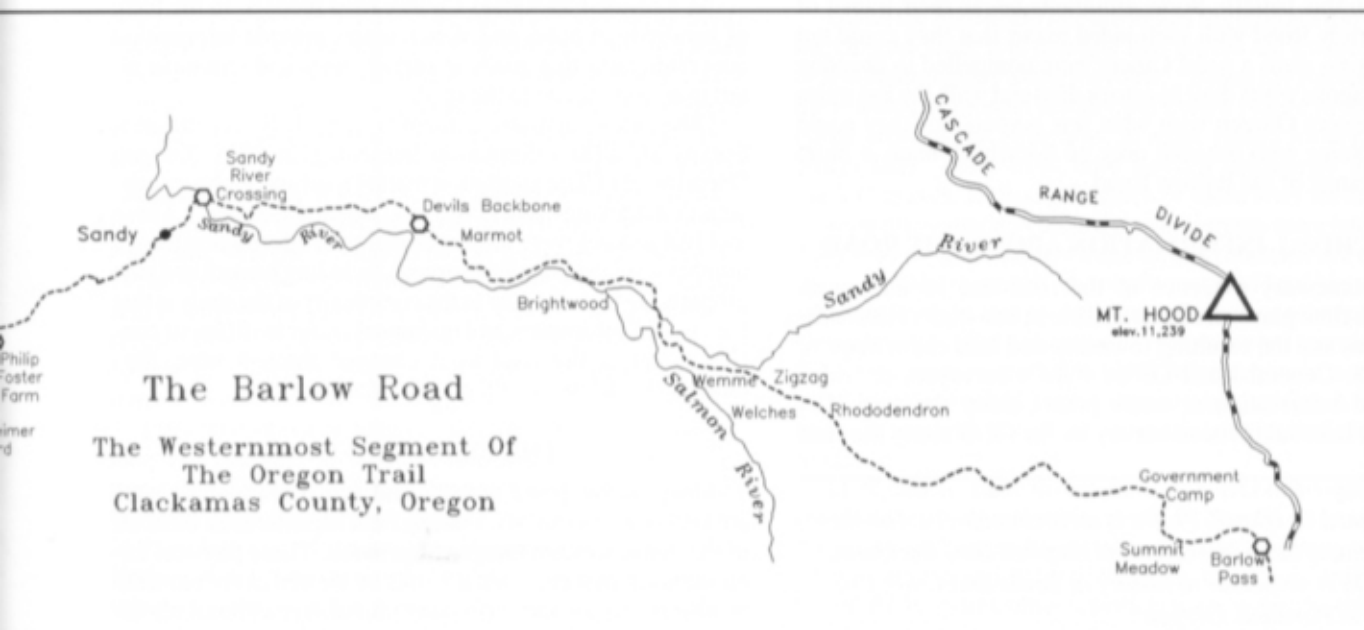
connection across the continent.<sup>6</sup> By the time of the Civil War the Barlow Road became the "poor man's" route or trace, perhaps more useful for livestock drovers than for wagons.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1880s settlers were on the eastern end of the Devils Backbone and taking lands along the Sandy River. In the 1890s claims were being filed farther up the Sandy River above its confluence with the Salmon River. Between 1890 and 1905 a few selected lands along the Zigzag River were claimed. Some settlers even decided to try the high country at Summit Meadow and Government Camp. For these people the Barlow Road became a market road. Even when the Barlow Road moved fully to its location on the south bank of the Sandy River, settlers on the north bank in the Devils Backbone area continued to use the old trace for travel to and from the settlements. Despite the primitive nature of the Barlow Road it served the people of Oregon for more than a half century and was hailed by contemporaries for its historic role in the settlement of the state.<sup>8</sup>

### EMIGRANT EXPERIENCES ALONG THE ROAD

Hundreds of emigrants along the Oregon Trail seemed to sense that they were participating in a major historical event and recorded their experiences in diaries or journals. Others, after the fact, felt that their transit of the continent was sufficiently significant for them to dictate or write reminiscences of their travel experience. These firsthand accounts, supplemented by a few letters, serve as a time machine to describe the route, conditions, time, and trials of travel on the Barlow Road. A review of libraries specializing in western American history and of bibliographies indicates that approximately ninety-five percent of these primary accounts are concentrated in the years 1845 through 1854.

Joel Palmer published his detailed diary as *Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains*. In it he recounted the frustrations he and Samuel Barlow and their companies had in exploring the road in 1845. He described the hard labor necessary to drag wagons to the Barlow Creek watershed and the decision to cache possessions and proceed by horseback



and on foot to the Willamette Valley until axemen could open a trace through the Zigzag and Sandy watersheds the following year.

Once the Barlow Road was open, most travelers over it had similar travel experiences. If possible, they camped overnight at Gate Creek in Tygh Valley to rest their livestock and lighten their loads by abandoning what few unneeded items they still had. Early the next day they set out for the long drive up the eastern slopes of the Cascades to reach the White River where they camped along its western bank below the mouth of Barlow Creek. The next day they advanced to the upper reaches of Barlow Creek and camped in the deep forest east of Barlow Pass. After about 1860 a forest fire in that area created what emigrants called "The Deadening," a site subsequently known as Devils Half Acre. On the third day travelers pressed over Barlow Pass and descended to Summit Meadow. The fourth day presented the difficult transit of the boggy lower slopes of Mount Hood where, in 1849, the U.S. Army's Mounted Riflemen were compelled to abandon their heavily loaded wagons and cache military supplies at what later became known as Government Camp. If a slow wagon got in the way or if oxen died, as was sometimes the case, travelers might be caught on the steep one-way trace down Laurel Hill and have to spend the night literally in the middle of the road. If lucky, however, they made this difficult descent and passed down the Zigzag drainage to camp at a small clearing near present Rhododendron, or, by the 1870s, near the tollgate just east of that community. The fifth day involved a long drive but on usually good road. By 1848, just two years after the road was opened, most travelers abandoned the north bank route, passing down the south bank of the Sandy River to above its confluence with the Salmon River. There they returned to the north bank, passed through heavily forested Mensinger Bottom, ascended the Devils Backbone, and pushed on to the second crossing of the Sandy River. On day six—provided all had gone well—they ascended the hillside to present Sandy and drove on to Philip Foster's farm at Eagle Creek.

The diaries of these travelers confirm a number of variations on this pattern. Some emigrants began their transit of the Barlow Road with such jaded teams that they could not keep up so swift a pace. Others were compelled to abandon their wagons when their livestock died and walk the last miles into western Oregon with what few possessions they could carry. Some who traveled only on horseback made a more rapid transit of the Barlow Road.

#### ARCHIVAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROAD

Documentary evidence of the road and its alterations through time plays an important role in our study. Handwritten notes and the resulting township and land claim maps of the U.S. General Land Office (GLO) surveyors provided detailed information at many points along the road. The earliest land subdivision survey by the GLO along the road

was in 1852 for the township (T2S, R2E) containing Oregon City. The region from Clear Creek eastward to Sandy (T2S, R3 & 4E; T3S, R3 & 4S) was soon surveyed by Lafayette Cartee in 1855.<sup>10</sup> East of Sandy, the initial cadastral surveys (performed for taxing purposes) occurred gradually as settlement slowly progressed eastward up the Sandy River drainage. In 1860, the GLO surveyed the Devils Backbone area (T2S, R5E) and in 1872 farther east toward Brightwood (T2S, R6E). The initial GLO survey in the Welches area (T2S, R7E) was not until 1882 and until 1898 above Rhododendron.

Since the surveyors normally identified noteworthy natural and cultural features, including transections by wagon roads, this source of information is considered of paramount importance in determining the location of the Barlow Road. Distances from section corners to wagon roads were transcribed, and key environmental features were noted, the latter including the top or foot of bluffs/hills and stream courses. This information not only identifies distances from cadastral markers; but, more importantly, it also identifies distances between a point on the wagon road and a natural feature, the latter of which has normally maintained a greater consistency of location and is easier to identify in the field than surveyors' corner markers. This information denotes the location of the route and the direction of travel at that point. Also marked on topographical quadrangle maps were intersection points for noteworthy natural features. Today this information serves two purposes: it enhances the possibility of identifying the road course in the field, and it serves as a quality control check in plotting road information by assuring that feature locations on the topo quads conform to the surveyors' measurements.

With the settlement of the Willamette Valley in the 1840s and the continued movement of settlers east into the surrounding woodland areas during the next few decades, the importance of road development and maintenance became paramount for farmers wishing to transport goods to market. Therefore, the settlers petitioned for formal survey and public recognition of roads to facilitate the use of public funds and/or public labor for road maintenance.

As a result, Clackamas County road records, in the form of handwritten notes and sketch maps, provide information concerning existing roads at certain dates and chronicle alterations introduced to the road.

Other archival sources include early U.S. Government Survey (USGS) information beginning in 1911, Oregon Department of Transportation market road and highway construction drawings, and USFS road construction maps. These archival sources were supplemented with information from a number of knowledgeable persons including present and past property owners. Adding to the complexity of the study is that the various informants and documents refer to different configurations of the road as it changed through time, thus fanning the debate over the "true" Barlow Road.

#### THE FIELD SURVEY

Most Barlow Road remains and associated historic sites are very low in visibility, making field identification difficult in the dense western Oregon vegetation. These physical expressions of past emigrant use may be viewed as components of historic landscapes reflecting cumulative cultural altera-

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*This weathered iron kettle, one of the few artifacts found along the Barlow Road, was buried in the bottom of a swale near the north bank of the Sandy River. The road yielded few items lost or discarded by emigrants. It was traveled by so many people, first emigrants and then settlers, that artifacts have largely disappeared. (Photograph by Richard C. Hanes).*



tions to the natural landscape. This study is essentially a study of historic vernacular landscapes, recording the distribution of roads, farms, cemeteries, and campsites used by the folk of early Oregon in their daily lives.

It should be noted that questions concerning the route of the Barlow Road have persisted since at least 1919, when the state accepted the donation of the road franchise from private interests. County road survey records suggest uncertainty was apparent by at least the 1890s. Even in the 1850s emigrant diaries reflected uncertainties, particularly near Oregon City as other settlement roads began to appear.

Wagon road remains associated with the primary emigrant period (1845-1865) constitute a structure built with minimal tools and by substantial use. Key characteristics of wagon ruts in western Oregon today include: *narrow treeless corridors through woodland settings, linear areas of compacted soil often creating visible breaks in the natural contour of traversed landforms, linear swales and ruts within the soil surface, linear earthen berms along old road shoulders, and linear discontinuous boulder alignment* in rocky areas where boulders were rolled aside as they surfaced and impeded traffic. Many segments of the route in western Oregon were corduroyed, and remains of planking and occasionally square nails may still be found today preserved in boggy areas. These segments often retain the visual appearance of a primitive road such as being the width of a wagon, appearing to have been cleared by hand tool methods, and having road segments traversing straight up slopes since wagons could not readily avoid the slopes. The route in this generally mountainous region is predominantly on stream terraces and the top of ridges. From Sandy to Oregon City, "high ground" was sought across flat terraces and through hilly areas, avoiding narrow stream bottoms and boggy areas.

Important sites associated with Barlow Road emigrant use also are present, including *campsites, cache sites, and gravesites*. Campsites, though frequently depleted of naturally sparse grass for livestock grazing, provided a brief respite in these last days of the journey. It appears that much of the Barlow Road was used for camping in various levels of intensity. This pattern of overnight camping is in contrast to

much of Oregon Trail use to the east in drier parts of Oregon where specific campsite locations were regularly used by the majority of emigrant parties. Factors influencing this more dispersed camping behavior include the rigorousness of the Barlow Road, the depleted condition of stock and emigrants, varying weather conditions month-to-month and year-to-year, the more continuous availability of water for camping over much of the western Oregon route, and the likely decreased formality of camps with supplies depleted and the conclusion of the trip at hand.

The caching of household goods and other items, particularly along the last stretches of emigrant roads, was a common activity during the migration west. Caching provided an alternative to simply dumping without intent or hope of retrieving the belongings. The decision to cache was usually associated with either the desire to speed up travel or the inability of deteriorating vehicles and fatigued animals to continue carrying heavy loads.

Given the high death rate attributed to emigrant travel over the Oregon Trail, it is possible that graves are situated more or less continuously along the route.<sup>11</sup> Along the Barlow Road the remains of pioneer settlers were often placed in the same burial areas as the emigrants, in some places sooner and in others later. There exist both marked cemeteries and unmarked graves. Defining features of these sites include one or more grave markers identifying emigrants associated with early Barlow Road use, rock cairns, a perimeter fence erected more recently, or simply an unused parcel of land historically set aside, as indicated by vegetation growth or other physical characteristics, for protection of the reported graves. Oral history or some form of archival information is needed to attribute an unmarked grave to this last kind of site. A number of emigrant and early settler cemeteries are located along the road.

In regard to field investigations, a reconnaissance was conducted driving on public roads as closely as possible to the perceived Barlow Road course to gain familiarity with the general terrain and natural obstacles that likely influenced travel. At this point, other historical maps were identified and

take exactly the right road, and did not get to Oregon city as we intended."<sup>74</sup> Mention of the Springwater area in emigrant diaries is remarkably underrepresented. The most prominent is by Samuel Barlow in his 1845 petition for a toll road to the Provisional Government in which he mentions following an existing road, no doubt primitive, from Foster's to Oregon City. The lack of descriptions likely owe to three factors:

1. Many of the emigrants either turned off the Barlow Road at Foster's farm or upon crossing the Clackamas River. Therefore, a large percentage of the emigrants did not actually traverse the last thirteen miles of Barlow Road.

2. The Springwater area was largely settled by 1846, hence the emigrants' hardships of being on their own in a foreign land had substantially ended upon arrival at Foster's. The remainder of their journey was through land claims held primarily by Oregon Trail veterans.

3. The Springwater segment was probably often crossed on the last full day of the journey to Oregon City. The several month journey was essentially over, and preparations were made to arrive in Oregon City the following day. Visiting with local residents in the evening may have superceded the time usually taken to write and reflect on the day's events. The time had come to prepare and plan for the immediate future in their new land rather than look back.

The Barlow Road first follows Springwater Road at the top of a prominent bluff until Springwater Road curves to the west away from the bluff edge overlooking the Clackamas River lowlands. The Barlow Road, according to GLO survey notes, continues following the bluff edge to the northwest, crossing several present rural roads before descending to the next lower river terrace. The bluff edge was likely favored for primitive travel conditions because it forms a low, narrow ridge with the steep, high hillside to the east and slightly lower, but generally level, naturally boggy lands to the west. The road then descends a more gently sloping and lower portion of the bluff. This descent area has visible remains. Angling down the hill is a narrow, very distinctive old abandoned roadbed. The narrow and compacted road has a berm on the downhill shoulder and is several hundred feet long traversing down a northfacing hillside.

It is likely this road constituted a realignment of Barlow Road prior to 1855 when improved ability to perform road construction allowed establishment of a more gradual ascent of the bluff. The location of this section of road remains corresponds with the location and orientation identified by land surveyors in 1855 who noted, "Cross road to Oregon City, S80W."

Upon descending the bluff, the road disappears into agricultural fields, blackberries, tree farms, and residential development as it courses west, eventually converging with the Bakers Ferry Road. After joining Bakers Ferry Road for a short distance, the Barlow Road then likely crosses several cleared pastures before descending to Clear Creek. A residential drive to private park facilities now descends the sharp bluff to Clear Creek where the original descent probably occurred. Some short segments of the ascent of the Barlow Road away from Clear Creek appear now as part of a residential drive and a short, shallow swale in dense vegetation. The road then crosses more cleared pasture westward.

From Clear Creek, another six miles of travel remained to Oregon City. The entire route is through hilly, timbered

terrain settled shortly after the Springwater area. Some of this stretch has now been developed with only a little for agricultural use, but much of it remains timbered. Little description is provided of this segment in emigrant diaries. Obviously, confusion with the early road network persisted through this segment as with the Springwater segment. On October 14, 1852, Samuel Francis wrote after crossing the Clackamas River at Feldheimers, "Past on twelve miles or more, took the rong road and arrived at the Willammett bottoms about dark a little below the City."<sup>75</sup> Joel Palmer's words written on November 1, 1845, best represent this concluding segment. "Passing through the timber that lies to the east of the city, we beheld Oregon City and the Falls of the Willamette at the same moment."<sup>76</sup> The only other clear reference comes from Cornelia Sharp who wrote on October 13, 1853, "This evening we camped about one mile east of Oregon City."<sup>77</sup>

The ascent of Moss Hill west of Clear Creek is marked by excellent wagon ruts as they follow a minor stream up the hill, passing through a wooded area before disappearing across a major pipeline right-of-way and into a residential area. The remains consist of a distinct, narrow swale and compacted, treeless roadbed winding through the woods.

The road descends Moss Hill to the south, crossing a stream then turning west in an area recently clear-cut. A short narrow, compacted linear roadbed situated in a densely vegetated lot immediately north of a residence is located on the hillside. According to 1852 territorial road records, Barlow Road was realigned to follow this drainage downstream eastward to Clear Creek. This abandoned, narrow, compacted road is in excellent condition and is labeled as the old Barlow Road on present county maps. However, it does not fully represent the original route used from 1846 to 1852. As the Barlow Road reaches the present east end of Holcomb Road, it diverges to the north away from Holcomb Road as it climbs directly up a wooded hillside, passes over the top, and descends through present pasture to Holcomb Valley. Only a short, faint, winding swale is suggestive of road remains along this ascent route.

Upon entering the Holcomb Valley floor the emigrant road skirts the northern perimeter of the very wet, boggy valley bottom. Some narrow, compacted, and treeless roadbed is still visible for a short distance along the base of the southfacing hill. In 1852 a GLO surveyor noted the location of the wagon road in an east/west orientation, and today the road has a distinctive berm on the downhill shoulder and a slight worn cut into the uphill shoulder. This section is largely overgrown with blackberry bushes and terminates at a tree farm. Just where the 1852 land surveyors observed the wagon road, more distinct road remains appear farther west as the road begins an ascent out of the valley bottom. These remains are represented by a narrow but distinct swale in a woodland setting along the valley bottom perimeter and then by a narrow, compacted road ascending an eastfacing, wooded hillside. The road then disappears into a powerline right-of-way. Above the right-of-way the old road probably is now the access road to the powerline. It is likely that this segment of the Barlow Road was abandoned by 1852 when a drier route to the south of Holcomb Valley was established and which is now Holcomb Road. These are the road remains closest to Oregon City.

The old road leaves no visible traces as it crosses what are now agricultural areas, residential and public school developments, and a housing project. According to 1852 GLO survey notes, the Barlow Road apparently converges with present Holcomb Road and more or less follows Holcomb and Abernethy roads to near the mouth of Abernethy Creek on the banks of the Willamette River.

Only a few historic buildings are located along this last segment, and a possible unmarked early pioneer gravesite has been identified by residents in a wooded area near some faint road remains. This segment also includes Logan Pleasantview Cemetery. Located immediately east of Clear Creek and west of Springwater Road, this marked and maintained cemetery contains graves of many individuals prominent in the early settlement of the Springwater and Holcomb area. The cemetery is situated on a small hilltop overlooking the former Barlow Road a short distance to the north. An early residential structure, built in 1883, remains on the Foster property as well as plants dating to the emigrant period, but an earlier residence dating to the emigrant period no longer exists. The rural community of Eagle Creek has grown around the Foster property, and the old farmstead now includes an 1860 barn and the ca. 1860 Burnett residence.

### CONCLUSION

Thus ends the Barlow Road. Perhaps the feelings of the emigrants can best be summed up by two emigrant diary entries. On Sunday, August 15, 1852, Jared Fox wrote the following prayer,

...so after 4 months & 3 days wandering we (Charles & myself) have reached settlement with our horses, 3 in number, & dog all alive, for which we ought & I trust are thankful to kind Providence. We have not been laid up a day by sickness or lameness, either ourselves or horses. Our fellow travellers have lost their horses & oxen by accidents, by drowning, by sickness, by poverty, by thieves &c, and their own lives by Fevers, by Cholera, by Small pox, by measles, by Indians, by other emigrants, by drowning & various other accidents. O how thankfull ought we to be, and others now are sick & starving and have lost their teams or far from being through. Lord help us to be thankfull & bless us still.<sup>78</sup>

The following month, on September 16, Esther Hanna wrote another prayer.

My heart arose in gratitude to God that we had been spared to reach this land! Six long months have elapsed since we left our native land, and now after having passed through dangers seen and unseen, sickness, trial and difficulty, toil and fatigue, we are safely landed on the Pacific shores! Thus far the Lord has led us on. "Hitherto He has helped us. What shall we render unto His name for his goodness unto us?"<sup>79</sup>

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# The Cherokee Trail

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*Photographs and Trail Mapping by Lee Whiteley*

*The following paper is a modification and enlargement of Patricia K.A. Fletcher's presentation, "Salt Lake City and Terminus of the Cherokee Trail," delivered at the 1994 annual convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association in Salt Lake City. The article is based not only on the study of letters and diaries but also on extensive field work by the authors and their associate, Lee Whiteley. Four diaries, which form the nucleus of the Fletchers' study, will be published in toto in their forthcoming book, Cherokee Trail(s): Routes to the California Gold Rush. The book will also contain detailed documentation of trails traveled by the Cherokee in both 1849 and 1850.*

—The Editor

## INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1849 members of the Cherokee nation joined forces with a group of whites, most of whom came from Washington County, Arkansas, to form the "Washington County Emmigrating Company." Their point of rendezvous was near present Saline, Oklahoma. The company consisted of "...123 men able to bair armes 3 weman 2 boys and one old man...."<sup>1</sup>

From the Grand (Neosho) River Saline, they blazed a new wagon road in a north-northwesterly direction through present northeastern Oklahoma into southeastern Kansas, striking the Santa Fe Trail near present McPherson, Kansas. Following the Santa Fe Trail to Bent's Old Fort, they continued west along the Arkansas River to Pueblo, Colorado. They traveled north along the front range of the Rocky Mountains through present Colorado and Wyoming. Passing northwest over the Laramie Plains, they turned west near Medicine Bow Butte (Elk Mountain), cutting a new wagon road across Wyoming roughly paralleling present I-80.

Four 1850 companies followed basically the same route with the major exception of turning west when first arriving upon the Laramie Plains. They blazed a wagon route across Wyoming, in general just north of the Colorado-Wyoming border where only pack trains had gone before. These two trails, one paralleling I-80 and the other along the Colorado-Wyoming border, became intermixed in the literature and known as "the" Cherokee Trail.<sup>2</sup> Their exact and separate locations remained a mystery until 1994 when a diary from the 1849 "Washington County Emmigrating Company" was found in the possession of descendants of one of the

emigrants. From the same company letters from two separate families were also discovered.

During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, historians such as Grant Foreman, Leroy Hafen, Muriel Wright, and Margaret Long did little to further research on this trail. In fact, partially because they described it as a minor trail, it virtually dropped from the literature after 1934. Other factors that may have contributed to its neglect are the shortage of primary materials on this trail as opposed to other emigrant trails, and the critical fact that the trails through Wyoming were not accurately mapped or described.

The authors are not the only persons to note these problems. In 1981, Dudley Gardner of Wyoming wrote: "...As an alternate emigrant road, the Cherokee Trail that passes through extreme southern Wyoming provides numerous problems to the historian. First there is a paucity of written documentation concerning the Cherokee Trail in this area. Second, secondary sources have tended to muddy the water....Conflicting reports, numerous conjectures...compound this problem....Currently, the best evidence we have regarding the Cherokee Trail are the G.L.O. maps...."<sup>3</sup>

Numerous historians stated that the overland stage trail "dropped down" from the northern or Oregon Trail onto the Cherokee Trail during the 1860s when Indian trouble erupted during the Civil War. Although the overland stage ran less than a decade, its route became synonymous in the literature with the Cherokee Trail, which had preceded it by more than ten years. There were some overlapping sections of the two trails, the main one being Denver to the North Platte Crossing at Sage Creek on the 1849 Evans/Cherokee route.

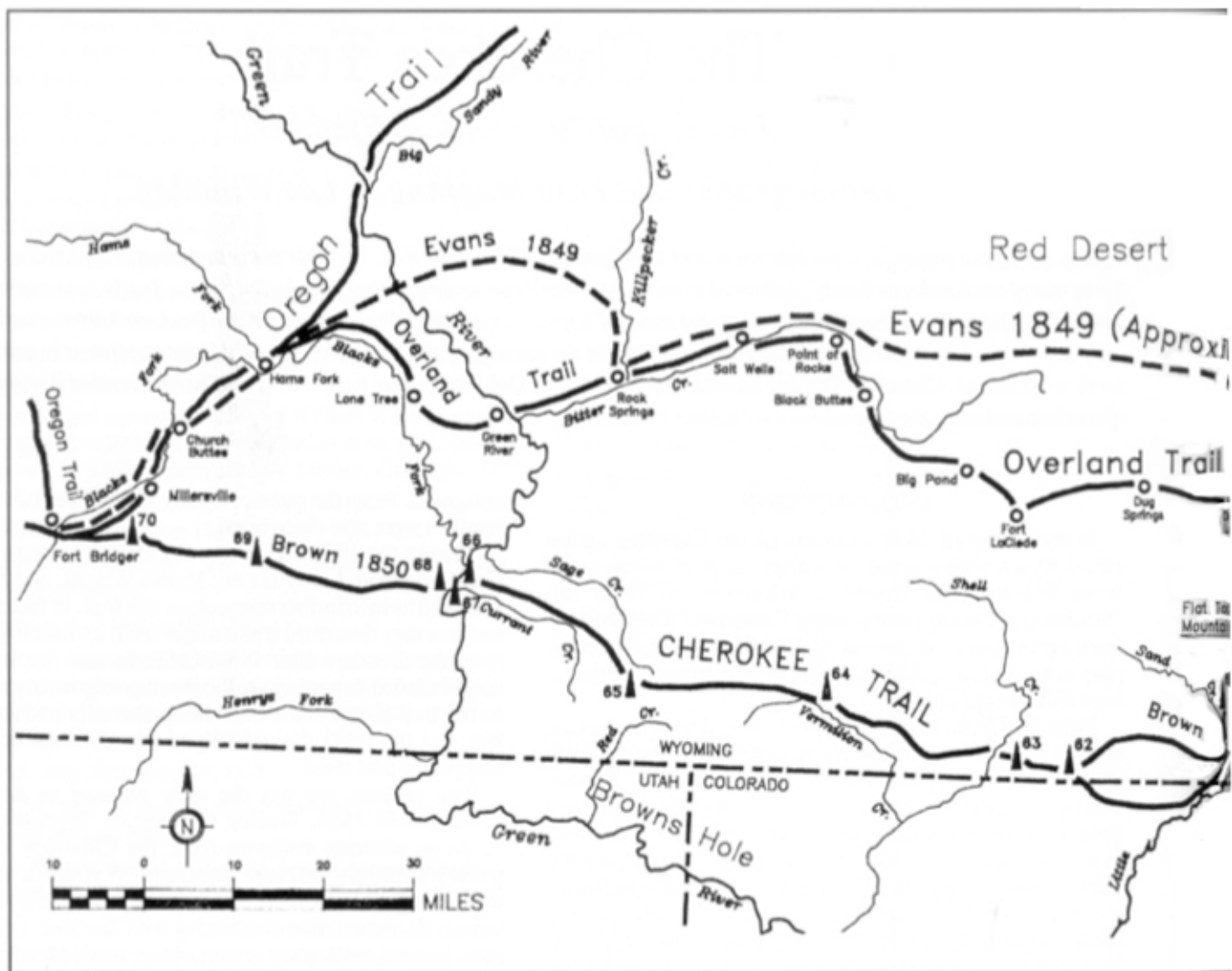
## CHEROKEE EAST

William Bartram, a noted botanist, traveled in the 1770s from Savannah, Georgia, to the Tennessee (or Cherokee) River mostly alone although recent conflicts between Virginians and Cherokee had rendered the countryside hostile.<sup>4</sup> Bartram was a keen observer, noting details of many aspects of Cherokee life. He listed forty-three inhabited Cherokee towns, most on the Tennessee River. He also set down observations about dress, demeanor, and agriculture. Crop plantings by individuals were contiguous to their settlements; plantation-type common ground, where planting and harvest-

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ing were done by the entire group, was located in fertile areas away from the settlement. Out of the common ground harvest came not only each individual family's share but also a share for the common good which Bartram called "...a public treasury" out of which could be taken supplies for journeys, feeding of travelers, and crop failures.

During the American Revolutionary War, the English accepted the aid of the Cherokee warriors as comrades in arms. The British had had traders among the Cherokee for a fairly long period of time and even encouraged intermarriage as an objective helpful in keeping that trade.<sup>5</sup> The Cherokee had another reason to help the British. They believed that if the colonists were successful in revolution, they would surely want to expand into the lands occupied by the Cherokee. They were right. The diminishing of their land titles began in earnest immediately following the Revolutionary War.

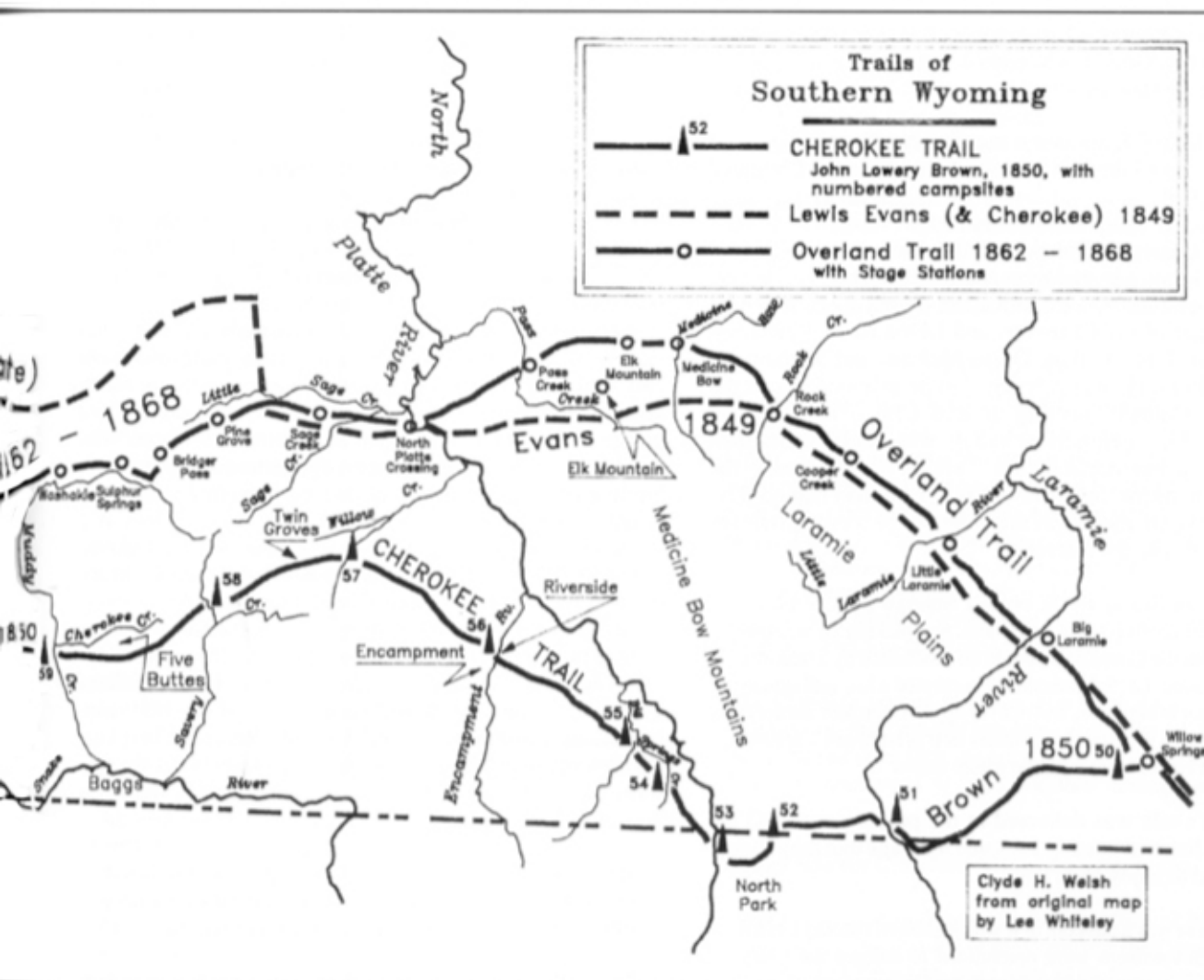
Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) remembered the Cherokee in a letter to John Adams in 1812:

I knew much of the great Ontassette, the warrior and orator of the Cherokees. He was always the guest of my father on his journeys to and from Williamsburg. I was in his camp when he made his great farewell oration to his people the evening before he departed for England....His sounding

voice, distinct articulation, animated action, and the solemn silence of his people...filled me with awe and veneration, although I did not understand a word he uttered.<sup>6</sup>

In 1796 and 1797 twenty-four year old Louis-Philippe, future king of France, traveled to America. He noted:

...the Cherokees have a governing council, this council being composed of chiefs. In this nation the number of chiefs is not fixed. The council sees to its own successors and usually chooses them from the same families....This council can make war and peace, conclude treaties, and pass laws. As there is no written language, the laws...are enforced with great rigor until they are forgotten....Some tell me that the Cherokees were so depleted by the last war that they would have trouble raising 500 warriors....Ownership of the land is in common among all Indians, but they acknowledge the individual ownership of crafted things and movable goods like corn, beans, horses, bulls, cows, etc. They even recognize the ownership of Negroes and their descendants. Many of them own slaves, which they buy and sell as is done in Virginia and Carolina....Among the Cherokees...the family is reckoned around women rather than around men....They claim that only motherhood is sure. In consequence, the children of white



men and Indian women are Indians like the others....<sup>7</sup>

Though treated well by the Cherokee, Louis-Philippe found it difficult to communicate with them as they did not, in general, speak English, and interpreters were few.

Several changes came for the Cherokee with the turn of the century. In the early 1800s missionaries were sent to work among the various tribes of Native Americans.<sup>8</sup> With the Bible came the printing press and necessarily a printed language. A Cherokee, Sequoyah, developed a Cherokee syllabary which was presented to tribal leaders in 1821 and quickly thereafter came into general use by virtually the entire Cherokee nation. The tribe's first newspaper, *Cherokee Phoenix*, was established in 1828 at New Echota, capital of the Cherokee Nation near Calhoun, Georgia, and originally was printed in both Cherokee and English. A boarding school in Cornwall, Connecticut, had been established in 1817 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to which young Cherokee men were sent. By 1827, the Cherokee had adopted a constitution based on the United States government model.

The lands of the Cherokee, before their forced removal in 1828, encompassed parts of North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. By 1835, when George W. Featherstonhaugh, an English geologist, traveled through

Cherokee country, changes were very evident. At Gunter's Landing, Alabama, he entered a hut where he found a family:

[The woman]...asked me civilly, and in good English, to sit down....They said there were a great many Indians within two miles of the place, but that the whites had got possession of the country, and they all expected to be driven out of it....For the sake of tranquillity, they had not only in various treaties with the United States surrendered, as the Creeks had before done, important portions of their territory to the State of Georgia, but had, upon the urgent recommendation of the whites, abandoned the savage life, had successfully entered upon agriculture, and universally adopted the Christian religion. A remarkable man, who had appeared amongst them, had invented alphabetical characters to express every separate sound in their language, and books of prayers, psalms and hymns, with the gospels, had been printed...in the familiar knowledge of which the whole Cherokee nation had been instructed...and [they] were most exemplary in the performances of their religious duties....<sup>9</sup>

Featherstonhaugh noted that the Cherokee assumed other Christians would behave as they themselves did, but

The discovery...of several alluvial deposits of native gold in

the Cherokee lands had removed the last moral restraint from the people of Georgia, who entered, without leave or license, upon the best possessions of the Indians....<sup>10</sup>

The militia of Tennessee was called out to occupy the area in order to avoid the inevitable collision between Cherokee and Georgians.

During his tour, Featherstonhaugh visited with missionaries Daniel S. Buttrick at the Moravian Mission at Brainerd, Tennessee, and Evan Jones at Red Clay, Tennessee. He also met many Cherokee leaders—John Ross, longtime elected chief of the Cherokee, and Lewis Ross; Rev. Jesse Bushyhead; John A. Bell, David McNair, and William (or Elijah?) Hicks. He was privileged to be in attendance at the Cherokee Council meeting at Red Clay, Tennessee, in August, 1835. Featherstonhaugh was told by Stephen Foreman, the interpreter for the “Talk” to be delivered by the government agent, John Mason, Jr., that a man named Rev. John F. Schermerhorn was appointed to be a commissioner to negotiate with the Cherokee.<sup>11</sup>

...a year or two ago....On coming amongst the Cherokees, instead of dealing fairly with them, and making an arrangement with the Council that could be sanctioned by a majority of the nation, he [Schermerhorn] corrupted a few individuals to consent to emigrate, and deliver up the Cherokee territory; and reported it to the Government as if it had been a solemn contract entered into with the whole nation....<sup>12</sup>

Mason’s talk was delivered in the pouring rain, and the Cherokee listened intently for some message that they should be allowed to enjoy their land.

...but there was a passage in it which showed that the United States Government were determined to enforce the treaty which the minority had made with the Government....<sup>13</sup>

## WESTWARD MOVEMENT

The Cherokee had been moving west in small groups since 1795, immediately after the American Revolution. Some were residing in the area of present New Madrid, Missouri, when in 1811 an earthquake caused by the New Madrid fault changed the course of the Mississippi River. The group petitioned the federal government for permission to move farther west. One group, under Chief Bowl, had moved to Mexican Territory in what is now Texas. Others in Arkansas had been in place since at least 1819 and were afterward referred to by the federal government as “Old Settlers.”

What transpired after 1835 was the forced removal to the West of the remaining Eastern Cherokee, all but a few who turned back and were allowed to remain in North Carolina. Though many went willingly, in groups of about 1,000 captained by their own Cherokee leaders, the resistant remainder were to follow land and water routes which became collectively known as the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory in present Oklahoma. From 1835 to 1838, “Removal,” the federal government’s term, took place. The Cherokee were encouraged, urged, mandated, and finally forced to move, the last groups delaying so long that winter travel was necessary, contributing to a significant number of deaths.

These “Removal” trails from the eastern United States to Oklahoma have often been confused with the western Cherokee trails to California. The name “Trail of Tears” was included, for instance, on a new map of Wyoming denoting a southern trail through that state. The newly published map was seen in a Wyoming public library in the 1980s.

In their western home, the Cherokee were responsible for bringing the institutions of civilization to the frontier: missions, schools and academies, courts and courthouses, newspapers, businesses, professionals, skills and methods of successful farming, transportation, and trade.

But all was not solved. By 1839 there had been assassinations of the signers of the 1835 Removal treaty and discontent and animosity between the “Old Settlers” and those lately arrived from the East who were themselves divided into two groups: those who signed the 1835 treaty and those who would not. Although representative government was in place, burning of property and ambushes between and among the groups continued.

In 1845, a group of fifty-four whites and Cherokees, primarily some of those who had arrived in Indian Territory in 1838 as a result of removal, went deep into the heart of Texas looking for possible settling places. Among them were some who would later trek to California in 1849 and 1850. This 1845-1846 journey to Texas was chronicled by William Quesenbury who also would keep a diary of his 1850 trip. Immediately following the burial of a Mr. Reese, a Cherokee, Quesenbury noted the feelings which existed between the two former Eastern Cherokee groups as exemplified by the utterings of Mr. Reese:

He was the most ardent lover of liberty and has often declared on the way that he would rather die over here than remain a subject under [Chief John] Ross’ government at home.<sup>14</sup>

The bulk of the Texas Cherokee party returned to Indian Territory (Oklahoma) near the Arkansas border in early 1846.

In 1846, the year of the war with Mexico, the Eastern and Western Cherokee signed a treaty which intent was to finally solve their differences.<sup>15</sup>

## PREPARATION FOR EMIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA

Early in 1849, area newspapers including the Cherokee Advocate at Tahlequah, I.T., carried news about California and gold.<sup>16</sup> The January 22 edition reprinted an article from the *Louisville Courier* of an interview with Edwin Bryant, whose writings about California had become widely known. Bryant had “lately returned from California, for information relative to the outfit, journey and route overland to San Francisco.”<sup>17</sup> There followed detailed instructions from Bryant. In the same edition of the *Cherokee Advocate* editor James Vann wrote:

...it has been suggested to us by some of those who design going to California that there ought be an independent company formed in the nation. The suggestion may be a very good one, as there will be some who desire to go that will not be able to obtain waggons to transport their necessary provisions, and will be compelled to pack. We have been

authorized to say that there will be a public meeting at the Court House in Tah-le-quah on Saturday, the 3rd of Febury, to take into consideration the expediencey of forming an independent company; and also to come to some definite conclusion, what shall be the necessary equipment, amount of provision, requisite for the journey and the best manner of transporting the same. All persons in the nation and parts of companies formed, are especially envited to attend.<sup>18</sup>

In the February 12 edition of the *Cherokee Advocate* there was a report of the February 3 meeting. Editor James Vann was called to be chairman. A committee of five immediately was appointed to draft a preamble and resolutions for consideration. They soon reported back:

...Whereas the intelligence which has reached us of the California Gold mines, is corroborated by official reports, which render it certain that there is sufficient for all who wish to avail themselves of the opportunity of improving their fortunes. And Whereas it is imperatively necessary that persons, going should form themselves into a company, and remain united throughout the journey, in order to repel attacks, to afford mutal succor, and ensure success of the enterprise, Therefor. We a portion of the Cherokee people, designing to avail ourselves of the inducements held out for betering our condition by emigrating thither. And wishing to organize ourselves into a company to proceed in such manner as shall ensure our safety, our comfort, and success,...<sup>19</sup>

And again from the editor, in the same edition of the *Advocate*,

We refer to all those who have any disposition to go to California....The company will leave the first of April, if the grass will justify a company starting so early, if not, just as soon as possible.

All persons or parts of companies forming at the following places, Fayetteville and Bentonville Ark., Sarcoxie, Cowskin Prairie, Springfield Mo., are cordially invited to join with us.

There is one very great advantage in going with the Cherokee company. The Cherokees are on the most friendly terms with all the indian tribes of the prairie—consequently there will be no real danger of attacks from our red brethren.<sup>20</sup>

Almost immediately advertisements began appearing in the *Cherokee Advocate* of houses, lands, and even racehorses being sold in preparation for the California journey. "California Ho" and "For California" headed column and page. Each issue was, like other newspapers all over the country, full of news, advice, and admonition regarding California.

Many Cherokee-white companies were formed and various routes taken. The Cherokee and Mississippi Company, a pack company, took the Gila River route with little or no major difficulties. The Jeter Thompson group took the northern California route along the Platte River and were struck by cholera, which took the lives of eight of the company.<sup>21</sup>

Each of these routes had advantages and disadvantages. Fear of Comanches kept many Cherokees and Arkansans

from considering southern routes, already built and mapped. For others the growing incidence of cholera along the rivers and trails caused great concern. The biggest attraction for a new wagon road was the absence of both of the above. Though no wagon road existed across what is now northeast Oklahoma and southeast Kansas, traveling in a generally northwestern direction to meet the Santa Fe Trail, the Washington County Emmigrating Company, composed of Cherokees and whites, decided to go this way and to build a road if necessary. Meeting at the Grand Saline, or the saltworks on the Grand River, they departed on April 24.

### NEW ROUTE

The first letter back to the *Advocate*, dated April 29, 1849, from the "Grand Pririe," ninety miles out, sent news of the company. In his letter to the newspaper Cherokee Oo-cha-loo-ta described its organization. Lewis Evans of Evansville, Arkansas, former sheriff, postmaster, and trader, was elected captain. Thomas Tyner and Peter Mankin of Washington County, Arkansas, were elected lieutenants; James Vann, Cherokee, recently resigned editor of the *Cherokee Advocate*, secretary; and Martin Scrimpsheer, Cherokee, commissary. Further, Oo-cha-loo-ta wrote in his letter:

The Cherokee portion of the company are thrown into a Division together, and that hereditary disposition of clanishness, derived from their ancestry is distinctly shown now. They are determined to "stick together" through weal or woe.<sup>22</sup>

James Sawyer Crawford wrote in a letter home:

I have been appointed to the honorable office of Waggon master of the 2nd division of the Company; the Company is laid off into 4 Divisions; and I have all the Cherokees in my division, they are all verry Smart men...we have in our company 129 persons, 40 waggons, 304 oxen, 41 mules, 65 horses and 31 cows, making in all the stock 441 head....<sup>23</sup>

The only major obstacle had been the Verdigris River. Crawford, keeper of the sole diary yet unearthed of this 1849 trip, continued:

...we got to the Virdigree last night, and it took us all this day till late this evening to dig down the Banks and cross over...<sup>24</sup>

John Rankin Pyeatt wrote to his wife from the same spot:

We had a good deal of work to do on the banks of the Virdigre, also on some of the branches in the prairie. We have now got into hier and drier prairie....<sup>25</sup>

The route continued along the divide between the Verdigris and Caney rivers in a northwest direction through Oklahoma and into Kansas, striking the Santa Fe Trail at Turkey Creek east of present McPherson.

At this junction with the Santa Fe Trail, the company left evidence of their passage. Judge Hiram Davis, a member of the company, wrote in a letter to a St. Louis paper describing that physical evidence, a carved stone:

Cap' Evans' company of 40 wagons and 130 persons...set out for California...and took a route never before traveled. The company crossed the Neosho at the Grand Saline, Cherokee nation, and proceeded up between the two Verdigris, almost a due northwest course, until it struck the great road from Independence to Santa Fe; the estimated distance being about 300 miles. No wagon had ever traveled this route before, and it was considered impracticable by some; but a better wagon road than we have made, I will venture to say, cannot be found west of the Mississippi river. The travel was on the divide between the Verdigris and what some call the West Fork, which we found to be exclusively of high, dry, rolling prairie slopes, offering no obstacles whatever to any number of wagons...here we obtained a large stone...one of our cunning workmen cut..."To Fayetteville, Ark., 300 miles—Capt. Evans' Cal.' Com'y, May 12, 1849" to apprise the prairie traveler of a new road....<sup>26</sup>

Davis went on to describe the grass, wood, water, game, and then

We had thought of continuing our route and course, and strike the Oregon road at the forks of the Platte, but find the grass will not justify it, consequently we go directly to Bent's Fort....<sup>27</sup>

Davis put his letter, folded and wrapped, under the carved stone. Other companies which came along immediately added their letters to that of Hiram Davis and noted the existence of the carved stone. All letters were picked up and posted by an east-bound train from Santa Fe. On June 6, Capt. Abraham Buford left Santa Fe with the mail. When he arrived at Evans' new trail on June 23:

Arrived at Turkey Creek on the trace...and followed the trail made by Capt. Evans' company of California emigrants, down between the Verdigris and Arkansas rivers....Emigrating parties leaving Arkansas, from the neighborhood of Fayetteville, would do well to follow this trail of Captain Evans. It is a good and plain way to the old Santa Fe trace from Independence; from Big Island on the Verdigris river, to Turkey creek, where this trail strikes the trace is about 175 miles....Emigrating parties leaving Fort Smith should not, on any account whatever, go by way of Santa Fe...<sup>28</sup>

Surveys of southeast Kansas were begun in the late 1850s, and several of the original township survey maps have bits and pieces of the trail labeled "Fayetteville to California," "Road to California," "Fort Smith, Arkansas to California Road" on them. In the northeast corner of Meridian township in McPherson County "Cherokee Trail" appears on the original survey map. All are names given to the road blazed by the Evans-Cherokee party in 1849.

Searches of the McPherson area in the 1980s and 1990s did not yield any information about the company's carved stone, but little in the way of large stones are in the area. It is possible that the buildings erected at Fuller's Ranch on Turkey Creek some six years after the stone was carved might have contained the stone as foundation and when these same buildings were moved to Galva, Kansas, with the coming of the railroad in the 1870s the stone may have gone also. The

search continues.

## SANTA FE TRAIL

Along the Santa Fe Trail the Washington County Emigrating Company met many parties from Santa Fe. Most of these meetings were documented in Louise Barry's *The Beginning of the West*.<sup>29</sup> Military parties and small and large trader companies from Mexico, Bent's Fort, St. Louis, and Independence were all traveling the Santa Fe Trail. O.W. Lipe, a Cherokee member of the company, wrote *The Advocate*:

...we are now on a great highway...prairie on each side without any timber or brush and with banks from two to four feet high, we make use of Buffalo chips for fuel, we were obliged to use such fuel two night before we reach [sic] the Santa Fe road and several nights since....<sup>30</sup>

Diarist Crawford's partial list of the company's campsites as they named them along the way is somewhat descriptive of their journey: Osage Camp, bank of Arkansas; Elk Camp, bank of Arkansas; Island Camp; Camp Joy; Terapin Camp; Lower Chalybeate wells; Hail Camp; Camp Decision; Camp Fitzpatrick; and Long Cane Camp.

From Pueblo, a Pyeatt letter:

We have traveled about from 100 to 120 miles a week....We are hear repairing some of the wagons that the dry weather has shrunk up so the tire had to be cut and welded....<sup>31</sup>

Pyeatt was a blacksmith and had all of his equipment with him in his "big wagon." He recorded several places along the trail where he unloaded and set up his outfit to repair wagons.

At Pueblo, a major split occurred in the company, and in the end there were two separate parties. One group was composed of those who exchanged their wagons for pack animals and hired mountain man Dick Owens, who had been on two explorations with John C. Fremont, to lead them through the Rocky Mountains. They arrived at Salt Lake on July 24. The other group, composed of those who remained with Captain Evans and the wagons, took a much longer route and arrived in Salt Lake on August 15, 1849.

## FRONT RANGE OF THE COLORADO ROCKIES

From Pueblo, the wagon group turned north along Fountain Creek past Jimmy's Spring, and traversed the 7,500 foot divide between the watersheds of the Arkansas and the Platte rivers. They traveled down Cherry Creek to the South Platte River, following it downstream to the confluence with the Cache la Poudre River east of present Greeley, Colorado. They turned west along the north side of the Poudre River until reaching the mountains near present LaPorte, west of Ft. Collins, Colorado. Then the wagons turned north along the front range of the Rockies. Pyeatt wrote:

From Pueblo to St. Vrain on the south fork of the Platte, a distance of 140 miles, we had good road and down the Platte to the mouth of another stream that runs in on the other side of the Platte 17 miles, we had a old trail....<sup>32</sup>



*Pass Creek, looking east-northeast five miles to Elk Mountain, twelve miles northeast of Saratoga, Wyoming. Pass Creek flowing south of Elk Mountain, is on the 1849 Lewis Evans route. The overland stage route went north of Elk Mountain.*

Then Pyeatt refutes the statement often repeated by historians that the company hired a guide at Pueblo:

We souted from this place [Cache la Poudre River] without road, trail or guide through the plains and hills. We succeeded well, from 15 to 20 miles a day, for sometime until we got within some 40 or 50 miles of the North Fork of the Platte when the hills became worse and we had to detain more times hunting out the rout and working it...<sup>33</sup>

#### 1849 WYOMING ROUTE

On entering the Laramie Plains the 1849 wagon company traveled northwest around the north end of the Medicine Bow Mountains, then south of Elk Mountain, and west to the North Platte River. At the junction of Sage Creek and the North Platte the Evans/Cherokee party crossed their wagons at what became known as the North Platte Crossing. Pyeatt wrote that the party arrived on Saturday evening and that some wanted

...to spend the Sabbath here but owing to heavy clouds that lay up the river we became afraid the river would rise and it being scarcely fordeable we hitched up and crossed the river....<sup>34</sup>

All documentation found to date indicates that they did not cross Bridger's Pass as has been reported by many authors;

instead, they proceeded north and then west across the Red Desert as noted by Capt. Howard Stansbury of the Corps of Topographical Engineers.<sup>35</sup>

On July 16 the wagon company started from the North Platte and reached the Green River on August 2 after a harrowing traverse of the Red Desert. Monday, August 6, they struck the Salt Lake Road east of "Bridgger's Fort." Here the company split again; one group arriving at Salt Lake on August 13 while diarist Crawford's group arrived August 15.

#### THE 1850 EMIGRATION

The following spring four separate companies of both whites and Cherokees were formed while at rendezvous at the Grand Saline in present Oklahoma. Three of these companies, captained by Edmonson, Holmes, and Oliver, (first names unknown for certain) were ox trains. The fourth was a horse-mule train captained by a Cherokee named Clement Vann McNair. In McNair's company was a Cherokee diarist, John Lowery Brown.<sup>36</sup> The four groups followed basically the same route as the 1849 migration: from Grand Saline (but crossing the Verdigris River at a point farther upstream) to Turkey Creek and then to the Santa Fe Trail; along the Santa Fe Trail to Bent's Fort and along the Arkansas River to Pueblo. There, as in 1849, dissension split the company into packers and wagon groups.



*This swale crosses the extreme north tip of Bolder Ridge, near Sportsman Lake in the Laramie Plains.*

North of Pueblo, the 1850 travelers encountered a rather common phenomenon along "The Divide," a 7,500 foot ridge between the waters of the Arkansas and the South Platte rivers. "The Divide" between present Denver and Colorado Springs was and still is noted for sudden and violent weather throughout the year. James Mitchell, an 1850 diarist traveling due east of Pikes Peak, noted on June 4:

...it was so dark all day that the mountains could not be seen....5th Wednesday....the mountain plain to be seen and white with Snow to the base....it [was] well for us that we did not travel yesterday as there had been a great hale storm before us....we found patches...yet not melted more than a foot deep although the day is very warm....we found rats dead that burrow in the ground and had been forced from their dens by the immense rain and killed by the hail....we found also a drowned prairie dog and lots of birds killed by the hail....we got to an extensive pinery after crossing a ridge....<sup>37</sup>

The grave of one Mr. Fagan, employee of the Randolph Marcy party of May, 1858, that was caught in another violent snowstorm, is at the foot of "Point of Rocks," a famous camping place and landmark along the trail. The landmark is on private property where it and the trail are well preserved. The Cherokee Trail is visible in swales and ruts through portions of the Divide although subdivisions and rural housing are presently encroaching.

At the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte

River, near present Denver, the wagon companies separated. Oliver's ox team followed the 1849 Evans route northeast down the east bank of the Platte to the confluence of the Cache la Poudre; then west along the north side of the river, striking the mountains near LaPorte.

The other three wagon companies followed one another crossing the Platte near present Denver and traveling north close along the front range of the Rockies. The crossing of the Cache la Poudre was near LaPorte west of present Ft. Collins, where the four companies rejoined.

The 1850 Cherokee Trail from the South Platte crossing (Denver) to the Wyoming border has been researched thoroughly by Marty Schloo and Glenn Scott.<sup>38</sup> Their research documents that this portion of the trail in fact became the Overland Stage route of the early 1860s.

The Virginia Dale Stage Station built on this section of the Overland Stage route was made famous by Jack Slade and Louis L'Amour: one a real-live character of the Overland Stage days and one the author of *The Cherokee Trail*, a fictional account of activities on the trail. The stage building remains today off of Highway 287 near the Colorado/Wyoming border.<sup>39</sup>

#### 1850 WYOMING ROUTE

The 1850 Wyoming route has always been the most elusive route to map. Cherokee place names are scattered throughout southern Wyoming, but until recently little or no



View southwest from the top of Point of Rocks, elevation 7,000 feet, in El Paso County, Colorado. Pikes Peak can be seen in the distance.

primary material could be found to substantiate these routes. An example of this new documentation comes from James Mitchell, one of the three 1850 diarists:

June 21 Fryday...we got over the hills into the Laramie plains...we pased a waggon trail Supposed to be Evans trail made last year our gide would not travel it far because he thought he could go a nearer way....<sup>40</sup>

John Lowery Brown refers to this turnoff:

July 1 ...Entered the Larrima Plain. Left Evans Trace & followed the Trace made by Edmonsons Co. which runs to the left of Evans...[Edmonson's oxtrain is in the lead by some ten days at this point. Diarist Mitchell is with the Edmonson company.] passed a large Lake, full of fish...<sup>41</sup>

Plat maps of the area indicate the trail as "Road to North Park" and the lake as "Sportsman Lake."

Mitchell wrote on June 22:

...we camped on north bank of the Lareme in the mountains near the snow.<sup>42</sup>

Brown on July 2:

...Crossed Larrima River. Struck into the hills. Pine & better

Cottonwood timber. the Road had been opened by Edmonsons Co....<sup>43</sup>

At the Colorado/Wyoming border the 1850 trail dips south into Colorado and the extreme north end of North Park. Near the North Fork of the Platte, Mitchell noted on July 25:

...we...wound about on an old indian Trail pasing in Sight of the white clay a noted place among indians in the east rim of the north park of Buffalow pen the indians calls it....Several hundred heads of buffalows are here piled in one pile, a pile of bones on one Side of it and a pile of horns on the other side....

we got to the north platt at the upper enterence of the great canion 40 miles in length we comenced geting timber for a raft to cross next day.<sup>44</sup>

Brown's entry on July 3:

...Entered a plain & turned to the Right down the North fork of the Platt. Came to the crossing at noon. found 2 small rafts which had been left by Edmonsons Co. & the Pack Co....[pack company which had left the wagon trains at Pueblo]<sup>45</sup>

The groups proceeded past present Cherokee Creek, camped, and crossed the Encampment River at Riverside,



Wyoming. The companies then traveled westerly via Twin Groves using Five Buttes as a pilot. They crossed Muddy Creek fourteen miles north of Baggs, Wyoming, at the junction of Cherokee Creek (second one so named).

At Flat Top M

ountain, sixteen miles north-northwest of Baggs, the trail stayed to the left (south) of the ravine. Brown July 11:

...very good Road for a few miles and then...the worst Road that we have traveled over since we left home. No water or Grass or Timber...no game...<sup>46</sup>

"Cherokee Trail to California" appears on the Colorado G.L.O. land plat map thirty miles west of Baggs.

The next prominent features noted by Brown were the bluffs at Green River. After crossing the Green on July 23 he noted:

...The Country along the Banks of the River is very rugged, looks Dreary & Desolate, with high Bold Bluffs on the west bank...<sup>47</sup>

Many years later, old-time Wyoming resident M. Wilson Rankin wrote:

...Sixteen miles south of Sulphur Springs, the agency [White

River Ute] road crossed the old Cherokee Trail...The trail at this point, and for many miles, is plainly visible and can be traced in many places across southern Wyoming at the present time, although it is three-quarters of a century since it was traveled.<sup>48</sup>

Although Rankin was incorrect about the trail's last use, he did note the visibility due to its earlier use. Rankin also stated:

...The Cherokee Indians, on their way to California, with their caravan of large proportions, entered Brown's Hole by an extremely hazardous route over Cold Spring Mountain. The Rider, [presumably Rankin is referring to himself] when engaged in range work many years later, passed over the Cherokee's old trail at this point, and was forced to lead his saddle horse over many rocky ledges for safety. The Cherokees made camp in the Hole for several months to rest and recuperate their stock.<sup>49</sup>

Although there are several area stories about Cherokees and stock in Brown's Hole, there is as yet no primary evidence that this occurred in either 1849 or 1850.

At Fort Bridger in western Wyoming all parties from both 1849 and 1850 joined the California/Mormon Trail and proceeded to Salt Lake City through Emigrant Canyon.

*Cherokee Trail ruts near Twin Groves, seventeen miles west of Saratoga, Wyoming. The photograph looks west toward the Continental Divide three miles distant.*



George W. Keys, a member of the pack train, wrote to his brother, L.H. Keys, from Salt Lake City on July 15.\* The following portion of that letter was published in *The Advocate*:

Dear Brother:—I avail myself of the present opportunity of writing you a few lines to let you know that we are all well at present, we got here yesterday about 10 o'clock where we found five or six thousand Mormon inhabitants assembled at a feast or celebration, where they had met to celebrate the day of their arrival in the valley of the great Salt Lake two years ago. This performance was very much like one of our temperance meetings. They marched around their shed several times—the land [band?] of music in front then 24 young men in white uniform with swords, in their hands, then came 44 young ladies in white, followed by 12 old men bearing [bearing?] flags or banner. After speaking, singing, and parading round firing cannon &c. they sat down to as fine a dinner as you would find any where—which to us was not bad to take....We have been about one month coming from Pueblo to this place...<sup>50</sup>

\*NOTE: The date of this letter, July 15, is incorrect. In order to be present at the described event, which was the first Mormon celebration of their arrival in the Salt Lake valley in 1847, and which took place on July 24, 1849, Cherokee George W. Keys and his pack party, led by Dick Owens, would have had to arrive on July 24. The date on the letter should be July 25. Possibly a typeset error in the newspaper, this has been copied and re-copied.

### SALT LAKE TO CALIFORNIA

From Salt Lake City the route to California varied. The 1849 group used the Hastings Cutoff, leaving a number of their wagons in the desert. The owner of the large blacksmith wagon, John Rankin Pyeatt, in a letter home stated:

We left the Mormon town on the 17th of August and got to the desert on the 23th...having cut grass...and supplied ourselves with water. We started through the desert, 67 miles through the desert on the 24th and got a part of our wagons through on the 25th, leaving the rest of them in the desert, 21 miles from water and grass, our teams giving out from the hard pulling in the mud. We were obliged to double team and go out with half of our wagons. After gitting our teams to the grass and resting a day, we again cut grass and took one wagon back to haul the grass and water. This was the Carnahan's boys wagon. We having made arrangements with them to join with them and leave our big wagon in the desert. This we done putting the load in their wagon and come out in two days more....we had left everything that we thought we could do without after we got through the big desert and put oxen to the little wagon, the horses having given out....<sup>51</sup>

From the letters and the Crawford diary we know that in 1849 the bulk of the wagons from the Evans company took the Hastings Cutoff. Crawford used names of places from the T.H. Jefferson map, made by Jefferson during an 1846 journey west from Salt Lake. Technically, it was "Map of the Emigrant Road from Independence, Mo. to San Francisco,

Part III."<sup>52</sup>

In 1994, Robert Hoshide discovered a letter published in *The Salt Lake Tribune* May 11, 1902, from one of the members of the Washington County Emmigrating Company, James Pierce.<sup>53</sup> He remembered the company's ordeal crossing the Salt Lake Desert and mentioned that ten wagons had been left in the desert.

What became of the 1849 wagon or wagons left on the Salt Desert may have been unknowingly a subject of controversy for many years. Many previously published reports have assumed that only wagons from the Donner-Reed party of 1846 were left on the Hastings Cutoff. Robert Hoshide presents some very interesting insights, new information, and controversial interpretation of facts, which may substantiate that these wagons were from the Evans-Cherokee party. Literature searches of such categories as Abandoned Wagons, Other 1849 Accounts, Archaeological Records of Salt Desert sites, Physical Evidence, Geological Samples, and Tracks and Ruts were all investigated. The conclusions were that all information "...fits much better with the Arkansas parties than with the Donner-Reed party."<sup>54</sup>

In Nevada, at Lassen's Meadows, most of the 1849 Cherokee emigrants took the Lassen Cutoff and became a part of the forty-niners who were snowed in in the Sierra Nevada as described by J. Goldsborough Bruff.<sup>55</sup>

Brev. Maj. Daniel H. Rucker, who had previously been stationed at Fort Gibson in the Cherokee nation and had married a Cherokee woman, was in command of the several 1849 emigrant rescue parties. One of the men he sent with notices to the beleaguered emigrants on the Lassen Cutoff was Senora Hicks, a Cherokee, and a survivor of the ill-fated Jeter Lynch Thompson company which had been decimated by cholera earlier that year. Hicks had arrived earlier in 1849 via the Platte River route, the Hastings Cutoff, and the Lassen Cutoff from the Cherokee Nation.<sup>56</sup>

The 1850 parties also went their diverse ways from Salt Lake City, with two of the diarists taking the Hensley Route north by way of the City of Rocks and entering California via the Carson River route. The remaining 1850 parties traveled over the Hastings Cutoff and entered California by way of both the Carson and Truckee river routes.

Cherokees traveled every one of the routes to California, and their impact on the state was significant. They brought to California editors of two of the early California newspapers, a poet, an early sheriff, cattle ranchers, and traders. They left in California many Cherokee place names: Cherokee Bar, Cherokee Creek, and Cherokee Bridge in Yuba County; Cherokee Crossing in Sierra County; Cherokee Camp in Tuolumne County; Cherokee Gravel Mine, Cherokee Flat, and Cherokee Ravine in Butte County; Cherokee House, Cherokee Creek, and Cherokee Flat in Calaveras County; and Cherokee Mine in Mariposa County.<sup>57</sup>

### CATTLE DRIVES, MORMONS, AND EMIGRANTS

These 1849 and 1850 emigrant companies were the first to establish wagon routes through northeast Oklahoma and southeast Kansas to connect with the Santa Fe Trail and then from the Santa Fe Trail north through Colorado and west through Wyoming. Following close behind in this corridor which ran east/west but also provided a north/south avenue

were annual migrations to California and Oregon which continued into the late 1860s. Cattle drives continued yearly to the California ranches which were established by members of the 1849-1850 companies and others. Stock driven to California was later driven back over the same Cherokee Trails to populate the grasslands of Wyoming and nearby states.

Not all emigrants traveling the Cherokee Trails were California or Oregon bound. Salt Lake City was both a terminus and a starting point for Mormon Missionary Expeditions. The 1858 argonauts to the Colorado goldfields and later to Idaho and Montana used portions of the Cherokee Trail, and by the time the Overland Stage began following the route the Cherokee Trail had become a road.

The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 signalled the beginning of the end of through wagon traffic on the Cherokee Trail. Fewer and fewer wagon trains traveled west, and local use of portions of the trail by settlers and ranchers and later developers increased until the Cherokee Trail joined all of the western emigrant trails in becoming partly paved and partly ghostly remnants.

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The *Cherokee Advocate*, July 30, 1849, also printed the Davis letter.
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# REVIEWS

## Trailing the Pioneers: a Guide to Utah's Emigrant Trails, 1829-1869

Peter H. DeLafosse, editor (Logan: Utah State University Press and Utah Crossroads Chapter, Oregon-California Trails Association, 1994), 126 pages, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, \$9.95 paperback.

*Reviewed by Merle Wells, founding member, Oregon-California Trails Association; Idaho State Historical Society, Boise.*

Designed to serve modern travelers along emigrant roads in Utah, this volume is a model of success. Specialists thoroughly familiar with each trail include accurate descriptions and travel directions, along with appropriate warnings, for motorists who wish to follow important nineteenth century wagon roads. Where appropriate, some of these emigrant trail connections are traced into adjacent Idaho and Wyoming.

Coverage of all Utah regions runs from Spanish discoveries through fur trade exploration that provides an adequate context for origins of wagon roads there. Commencing with Utah's Spanish Trail that Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Francisco Velez de Escalante investigated, a set of four more emigrant roads completes a sequence of chapters. John Bidwell and John Bartleson added a California Trail wagon road from Soda Springs to Bonneville salt flat, much of it in

Idaho; Mormon pioneers contributed several variants from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake, with substantial portions in Wyoming; Lansford Hastings made another less than successful Bonneville salt flat attempt; and Samuel J. Hensley, aware that Hastings' salt flat road could not gain acceptance, identified a California Trail cutoff from City of Rocks in southern Idaho to Salt Lake that saved him from having to go far out of his ways to Fort Hall before turning toward his destination.

As happens with nearly any trail publication, an occasional slip-up got by. For example, Michel Bourdon, who explored lower Bear River for Donald Mackenzie in 1818, survived for four years past 1819, when this volume represents him as a victim of Blackfoot warriors. Bourdon actually led a major Hudson's Bay Company Snake River expedition back toward Utah in 1822; he had his fatal Blackfoot encounter farther north a year

later. But this kind of detail does not disrupt primary features of a Utah trail guide.

Maps, pictures, and descriptions of surviving trail remnants are presented clearly and effectively. Brief historical summaries and some quotations from a vast Utah emigrant trail literature provide concise information about all of these routes. In fact, this entire publication emphasizes brevity and careful selection of unusually good trail examples, rather than comprehensive information about every bit of emigrant route. By employing such an approach, this Utah guide offers a good sample of trail experience for modern motorists in a way that encourages an appreciation of migration life.

Steven K. Madsen, Roy D. Tea, Jack B. Tykal, Rush Spedden, and Will Bagley each prepared a chapter; and Howard Schindler contributed a carefully selected list of publications that deal with these features.

## Journal of a Trip to California, April—September, 1856

J.A. Butler, edited by Marlin L. Heckman (LaVerne, CA: University of LaVerne Press, 1993), 55 pages, bibliography, index; \$8.95 paperback.

*Reviewed by Merrill J. Mattes, co-founder and director emeritus, Oregon-California Trails Association; author of Great Platte River Road and Platte River Road Narratives; recipient of the Distinguished Service Award, U.S. Department of the Interior.*

J. A. Butler was one of a company of thirty-five souls (more than half children) who left the vicinity of

Springfield, Missouri, to improve their fortunes in the Far West. Their jumping-off point was Westport, now part

of Kansas City, Missouri, but adjoining the state of Kansas which, in 1856,

was still wide-open Kansas Territory.

Crossing the Kansas or Kaw River at the site of present Topeka and heading north, the emigrants were besieged by rainstorms that assaulted their ears with great thunderclaps which, complains our hero, left him with "teeth chattering like an Episcopalian Methodist." However, on the upper Blue River the storms abated and Butler was charmed by the abundance of grass and the beauty of prairie flowers.

He was awed by the great Platte River in flood stage, which he said resembled an ocean rather than a mere river. He would be shocked if he knew that 100 years later the mighty Platte, even in spring flood, would become a comparative trickle as a result of divergence of its headwaters for agriculture. From Fort Kearny to the South Platte crossing, the party was assaulted by dust storms.

Butler found Ash Hollow, gateway

to the North Platte, "transcendantly picturesque." Unlike most diarists, he does not describe famous Chimney Rock, but he is quite impressed with "Scotts Bluffs" which he identifies as "Spurs of the Rocky Mountains." Oddly enough, the Butler company went right past Fort Laramie without stopping for a moment at this famous outpost of civilization. Later, however, a bit of melodrama is hinted at when the emigrants are passed by sixty mounted Fort Laramie soldiers "out to chastise the Cheyenne Indians."

Butler's impatient band was also unusual in that it went right past famous Independence Rock, to which most emigrants of record paid tribute by stopping to climb to the top of this giant curiosity and chisel their names. Even famous South Pass is dismissed by Butler as "more common-place than I expected to see," ignoring or perhaps simply not understanding the

fact that South Pass itself was the geographical key that made possible the only viable crossing of the Rocky Mountain cordillera by wheeled vehicles. Butler's company used the Kinney Cutoff approach to Green River, which his party crossed by paying for the use of a cable ferry. He observes, "The men who keep the ferry are Canadian French living with Indian Wives." Speaking of Indians, Butler should get credit for describing two Indian "tree burials" along the route and scolding a fellow traveler for desecrating one of them.

The unappreciative Butler calls the Humboldt River "a fake." Along here one wretched man was run over by wagon wheels but "they could not stop to bury him." Napa Valley, California, was the apparent destination of young Butler, whose ultimate fate is unrecorded.

#### ALSO OF INTEREST

*Mormon Odyssey: The Story of Ida Hunt Udall, Plural Wife* by Ida Hunt Udall, edited by Maria S. Ellsworth (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), \$29.95 hardbound.

*Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* by Erich Robert Paul (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), \$29.95 hardbound.

*Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* by B. Carmon Hardy (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992), \$34.95 hardbound.

*Last Stand! Famous Battles Against the Odds* by Bryan Perrett (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1992).

*The Overland Diary of James Godfrey*, edited by Peter van der Pas.

*Part I in Nevada County Historical Society Bulletin*, Vol. 44, No. 2-3, April - July 1990.

*Part II in Nevada County Historical Society Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 3-4, July - October 1992.

*Apache Wars: An Illustrated Battle History* by Ernest Lisle Reedstrom (New York: Sterling Publishing Co.), \$16.95 paper.

*Tragedy at the Little Blue: The Oak Grove Massacre and the Captivity of Lucinda Eubank and Laura Roper* by John G. Ellenbecker (revised second edition, Niwot, CO: Prairie Lark Publications, 1993), \$10.95 paper.

*Pioneering the Washington Territory: Reminiscences of Willis and Mary Ann Boatman, with a Review of Historical Events of Early Territorial Days* by Weldon W. Rau (Tacoma, WA: Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, 1993), \$11.00 paper.

*Magic in the Mountains, The Yakima Shaman: Power and Practice* by Donald M. Hines (Issaquah, WA: Great Eagle Publishing, Inc., 1993), \$17.95 paper.

*Dangerous Duty: A History of Frontier Forts in Fremont County, Wyoming* by John D. McDermott (Lander, WY: Fremont County Historic Preservation Commission, 1993), \$6.95 paper.

*Juggernaut: The Whitman Massacre Trial, 1850* by Ronald B. Lansing (Pasadena, CA: Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, 1993), \$15.95 paper.

*Oregon's Fading Past* by Lawrence E. Nielsen and Donald S. Galbreath (Bend, OR: Maverick Publications, 1993).

## Statement of Purpose of the Oregon-California Trails Association

The purposes for which the Association is organized are as follows:

1. To initiate and coordinate activities relating to the identification, preservation, interpretation and improved accessibility of extant rut segments, trail remains, graves and associated historic trail sites, landmarks, artifacts and objects along the overland western historic trails, roads, routes, branches and cutoffs of the trans-Mississippi region.
2. To prevent further deterioration of the foregoing and to take or pursue whatever measures are necessary or advisable to cause more of the same to become accessible or more so to the general public.
3. To implement these purposes by acquiring either alone or through or jointly with others—federal, state, local or

private—title to the land or lands on which any of the same is located or a preservation or other easements with regard to the same—by purchase, gift, or otherwise—and by cooperating with or initiating, coordinating and assisting the efforts of such others to do so.

4. To publicize and seek public exposure of the goals and activities of the Association so as to create popular awareness of and concern for the necessity of preserving the foregoing.

5. To facilitate research projects about the aforesaid and to publish a journal as a forum for scholarly articles adding to the sum of knowledge about the same.

It shall be the further purpose of the Association to be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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#### *National Trails Liaison:*

Jeanne & William Watson

#### *Nominating & Leadership:*

Jacqueline Lewin

#### *OCTA History & Archives:*

Ruth Anderson

#### *Publications:*

Peter DeLafosse

#### *Public Relations:*

Lesley Wischmann

#### *Trail Mapping:*

David Johnson

#### *Trail Marking:*

Randy Brown

### Chapter Presidents

#### *CA-NV:*

George Hesse

#### *CO:*

Ward Crowley

#### *Gateway—St. Joseph:*

Darlene Peniston

#### *ID-MT:*

Ralph Thornton

#### *NE:*

Helen E. Sundell

#### *Northwest—OR-WA-Wstn.*

#### *Canada:*

James Renner

#### *Southwest:*

Sheri Lee

#### *Trails Head:*

Ross Marshall

#### *Utah Crossroads:*

George Ivory

#### *WY:*

Levida Hileman