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Henry Pittock, Overseer/Authenticator
Hugo Applegate Trail Marking Project
NWOCTA

Reference: **Historical Passage Through Mt. Sexton Pass; Authentication of 1060' segment of the Applegate Trail/road at North Sexton Mt. Sexton Pass As OCTA Trail Classification of Class 1/Class 2**

Dear Henry:

HISTORICAL PASSAGE THROUGH MT. SEXTON PASS

Members of the Hugo Emigrant Trails Committee (HETC) have been working to establish the location of the Applegate Trail in the Mt Sexton pass using maps, surveys, diaries and other sources of information. Our goal is to preserve the trail through physical preservation and through documentation. In this case we expected the evolution of the trail to follow a transition from Indian trail to trapper trail to wagon road to stagecoach road and finally to automobile road. It was also expected the precise location of the road would vary over time. In the case of Sexton Pass, there is little room for much variation. Therefore, it was assumed that trails and roads would be on top of each other, overlapping or adjacent to each other.

Our 1060 ft. segment is an example of this. The Ethnologist, John Peabody Harrington, interviewed Frances Johnson as to her recollections about various features in this area. Frances Johnson was a Takelma Indian who was born north of the pass along Graves Creek in 1835. She was removed in 1856 to the Siletz Reservation. It is important to note that Frances Johnson was an information source for Linguists Edward Sapir, Archeologist Dennis Gray, and Historian and Anthropologist Stephen Dow Beckham. Frances Johnson indicated to Harrington that the Indian trail

was in the location of the “old road”. The indicated location is at the beginning of HETC’s 1060' segment. (Ref 1). Peter Skene Ogden in 1827 and other Hudson Bay trappers followed this trail. (Ref 2). The 1834 stock drive by Ewing Young most likely made use of this trail.

In 1846 the first wagons crossed the pass creating what would be known as the Applegate Trail. It can be assumed that the wagons followed the Indian/trapper trail that already existed. The original trail was especially difficult traveling in the areas of the current Mt. Sexton Pass, Smith Hill Pass and Canyon Creek Canyon.

In 1853 congress charged the military to improve the road between Myrtle Creek and Camp Stuart. Brevet Major Benjamin Alvord was placed in charge of this project. Jesse Applegate made a survey for the endeavor in 1853. His survey lacked station points, so it is difficult to use it to locate the Applegate Trail. (Ref. 3). In 1864 the Collins Telegraph Line was built adjacent to the existing Applegate Trail. This means that the Collins Telegraph Line can be used to locate the Applegate Trail. (Ref. 4). The foot prints of the telegraph line are recorded on Oregon Department of Transportation maps O3V-165 and O5B-28-0011, which were drawn in 1940 (Ref 5). These maps laid out the road cuts needed for the construction of a new Hwy 99.

In addition Josephine County Board of Commissioners called for a survey in 1874 to create a county road (County Road 12). This road was generated by largely using segments of existing roads. The Applegate Military/Stage Road was the only existing road in the Mt. Sexton Pass at this time. The survey followed the Applegate Road with some deviation. (Ref. 6). The 1874 County Road 12 on the North side of Mt. Sexton Pass curves westward towards Rat Creek and followed the creek towards Graves Creek. At this time the road was used for stage coach travel and became known later as Old Stage Road. A segment of this road located on the West facing slope of Mt. Sexton is known to HETC as the 1060 ft. segment. This segment includes 326 ft. of the westward curve of the Applegate Road and extends 734 ft. to the south for a total of 1060 ft.

In 1911 the Josephine County Board of Commissioners called for a new road to relocate the portion of the Applegate Road that was adjacent to Rat Creek. (Ref 7). This new road started at the curve and extended northward to rejoin the Applegate Road on the Light property. The addition of the 1911 road repositioning formed a fork that HETC has designated as Y2. The north end of the 1911 survey was set by placing an iron pipe in the middle of the Applegate/Old Stage Road.

The ODOT map O5V-28-0011 shows a right of way for an access road to the top of Mt. Sexton. The indicated right of way does not match what exists on the ground. The exact location of this access road has been determined by HETC, to have been built on top of the existing 1987/1911 road way. We used the distance indicated on ODOT Map O5B-28-0011 to locate the point at which the access road joined the highway cut. In doing this we located two other westward forks in the road; Y3 and Y4. These features are indicated on the attached labeled enlargement of a section 23 portion of the ODOT map. Y4 is the point at which the access road joined the highway cut. This conclusion is supported by ODOT Aerial Photograph 4-11-58, JOAK 2, 2-9. A labeled copy of this photograph will be attached. The photograph shows several features. Among these is (1) A gravel storage site across the highway from the access road/highway junction, (2) A trace of the Oregon California Wagon Road/Applegate Trail behind the gravel storage site which leads down towards Rat Creek, (3) The westward road was curved and banked, (5) The surface condition of the 1911 road north of Y4 was more degraded and eroded was in much worse condition than that to the south, and (6) The approximate locations of Y2, Y3, and Y4. ODOT Map O5B-28-0011 indicates the location of poles from the Collins Telegraph Line and the Postal telephone and Telegraph line. The Collins telegraph line poles continued along the north side of

the Applegate Trail as it followed Rat Creek. A fence line is indicated to the south of the Applegate Trail. These two factors fit with the indicated location of the Applegate Trail.

This complex of trails and roads in the 1060 ft. segment has been difficult to sort out, but we are confident we have arrived at solid conclusions. We are sure that portions of the Applegate Trail are visible. A line of rocks is a major determinative factor. The eastern portion of the 1060' consists of the 1874 county road and the post 1940 access road to the top of Mt. Sexton. Immediately to the west of this road is the Applegate Trail. These portions are separated by a berm which was formed by the construction of the 1874/1911 county road/access road and a line of rocks. We also have found possible wagon traces west of the line of rocks. The ruts are about 54 inches apart. This is the type of traces left by covered wagons.

When the Oregon-California Trail Association system of trail classification is used, we believe portions of the 1060 ft. segment can be classified as Class 1 and others as Class 2. This would make the 1060 ft. segment eligible for preservation. We also encourage this action.

/s/ Jim Ford

Jim Ford, Co-Project Leader
Hugo Applegate Trail Mapping and Marking Project
Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society

Member: Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council (Individual Action)
Member: NW Oregon-California Trails Association
Member: Hugo Emigrant Trails Committee

/s/Rene Ford

Rene Ford: Co-Project Leader
Hugo Applegate Trail Mapping and Marking Project
Hugo Neighborhood Association and Historical Society

Member: NW Oregon-California Trails Association
Member: Hugo Emigrant Trails Association

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4. Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historic Society and Josephine County Historical Society. February 22, 2012. Telegraph Lines & Applegate Trail at Smith Hill Pass. Hugo, OR

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