

III. APPEGATE TRAIL: December 11, 2005

Cultural routes represent historic roads that evolved through necessity or tradition. While it is possible some cultural routes may have a documented rationale, they will not have the design and construction legacy of an aesthetic or engineered route. It is possible, and likely, later additions or alterations may be well documented. These may be roads that evolved from Native American, pioneer or animal trails, or simply logical connections between villages or through difficult terrain. Roads through mountain passes (i.e., Sexton Mountain Pass) or water gaps, paralleling the foot of mountains or following a line of stable soils or river courses are typical of cultural routes. Additional types of cultural routes may include a footpath between farms or to a resource site (sand, clay, timber or stone) that ultimately became roads.

Cultural routes, in use as roads today, generally exhibit the greatest number of historic periods or layers. Beneath the modern pavement are potentially rich archaeological sites representing not only people and cultures over the years, but also the history of the very route—evidence of a cut bank to avoid sidling in the 1850s, remnants of an old *macadam road* from ca., 1910 - 1920, and other early highway improvements such as the 1922 paving at Sexton Mountain (i.e., *5-inch bituminous pavement 13 feet in width, with 7-inch concrete shoulders 2½ feet in width on each side*). For cultural routes it is important to understand these layers as you make a determination as to the period or periods of significance that are worthy of preservation. Remember too, subsequent layers of the road may embody the characteristics of aesthetic or engineered routes.

A. Legislative Recognition

The Oregon and the Mormon Pioneer Trails were authorized as national historic trails (NHTs) by Congress in 1978 (National Trails System Act, sections 5(a)(3) and (4)).¹ In 1992 Congress established the California and Pony Express National Historic Trails (National Trails System Act), section 5(a)(18) and (19)).²³ The 1992 legislation amending the National Trails System Act (NTSA) directs the Secretary of the Interior to:

- provide for the development and maintenance of these trails within federally administered areas.

**National Trails System Act:
Public Law 90-543**

The legislation also directs the Secretary to:

- cooperate with and encourage those states through which the trails pass to operate, develop, and maintain any portions of these trails which are located outside the boundaries of federally administered areas.

THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT
(P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 108-342, October 18, 2004)
(also found in *United States Code, Volume 16, Sections 1241-1251*)
<http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/nts/legislation.html>

The NTSA also authorizes the Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements with states, local governments, landowners, and private organizations or individuals to help operate, develop, and maintain trail portions outside federal jurisdiction. These cooperative agreements can include provisions for limited financial or technical assistance to encourage participation in trail management activities.²

The NHTs did not follow single routes, rather numerous branches and cutoffs were used by the emigrants heading west. As designated by Congress in the NTSA, the Applegate Trail was the Southern Road to Oregon and is a branch of the California National Historic Trail.³

SEC. 5. [16USC1244] “(18) The California National Historic Trail, a route of approximately five thousand seven hundred miles, including all routes and cutoffs, extending from Independence and Saint Joseph, Missouri, and Council Bluffs, Iowa, to various points in California and Oregon, as generally described in the report of the Department of the Interior prepared pursuant to subsection (b) of this section entitled "California and Pony Express Trails, Eligibility/Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment" and dated September 1987. A map generally depicting the route shall be on file and available for public inspection in the Office of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The trail shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior. No lands or interests therein outside the exterior boundaries of any federally administered area may be acquired by the United States for the California National Historic Trail except with the consent of the owner thereof.”¹

California National Historic Trail

<http://www.nps.gov/cali/cali/cali%20home.htm>



Hugo is blessed with a rich heritage of historic roads, rough though they were. The *Hugo Emigrant Trails Committee (Trails Committee)* was formed to bring together all those who want to learn more about the early transportation in the area, from the casual admirer to the dedicated researcher.

National Historic Trails recognize diverse facets of history such as prominent past routes of exploration, migration, trade, communication and military action. The historic trails generally consist of remnant sites and trail segments, and thus are not necessarily contiguous. Although National Historic Trails are administered by federal agencies, land ownership may be in public or private hands. Of the 11 National Historic Trails, nine are administered by the National Park Service, one by the USDA Forest Service and one by the Bureau of Land Management. The California National Historic Trail and its Applegate Trail branch are administered by the National Park Service.

National Park Service/ U.S. Department of Interior

Web: <http://www.nps.gov/oreg/oreg/home.htm>

The State of Oregon recognizes the value and significance of its historic trails, including the Applegate Trail.

ORS 358.057(3)
The Applegate National Historic Trail

B. Historic Trail

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the only non-native peoples in the Oregon Territory were explorers, fur trappers and missionaries. The Hudson Bay Company had a string of forts or trading posts along the Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri west to Ft. Vancouver on the Columbia River. The Oregon Territory included all of the current states of Oregon and Washington, and parts of Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

The trials and tribulations, which the emigrants experienced coming west on the Oregon Trail, are well documented. The three Applegate brothers, Jesse, Lindsay and Charles along with their extended families, came to the Willamette Valley in 1843 via the Oregon Trail. After traveling over 2,000 miles, they came to the last obstacle in their journey, the Columbia River.

While rafting down this turbulent river, three lives were lost. Jesse and Lindsay Applegate both lost their 9 year old sons, Edward and Warren, respectively to this river when their raft capsized. Also killed was 70 year old Alexander Mac (Uncle Mac).

For many years, the new American arrivals to the Oregon Territory were suspicious of the British. The British and the American governments had proposed different northern boundaries for the Oregon Territory but nothing was as yet decided. Both entities co-occupied this region.

In 1846, it became apparent that a new non-British southern route out of the Oregon Territory was needed. The Applegate brothers were not only convinced that an escape route to the south was necessary in case war broke out with the British but they longed to find an alternative southern route which would avoid the life threatening Columbia River. Several expeditions were organized but were unsuccessful due to impassable rivers and creeks which forced the men to return to their homes.



Graphic III-1. Oregon-California Trails Association Map

On June 20, 1846, The South Road Company organized again to explore and find a trail from the Willamette Valley over the Cascade Mountains to near Ft. Hall on the Snake River, which was suitable for covered wagons. The South Road Company included Jesse and Lindsey Applegate,

along with Levi Scott and others from previous expeditions. The plan was for the South Road Company to locate the best southern route and solicit the traveling emigrant trains to provide at least 30 good-outfitted men to build the road ahead of their wagon train.

On August 9, 1846, a large group of wagons set out west from Fort Hall to follow the new Applegate Trail for the first time to the Willamette Valley. By mid-October, 1846 the emigrants were traveling up the south rugged mountainous terrain on the Trappers' Trail toward the unnamed Mt. Sexton Pass.



In the year 1853 over 3,500 men, women and children took this route which today is the basis for the state's major transportation routes.

C. Historic Trail Use

The following information was taken from Applegate Trail.⁴ The assumption used was that there were an average of five persons per wagon. Another assumption was that most westward bound trains seemed to have eventually organized in groups of about 15 wagons.

- 1846 Parts were laid out from west to east, by the road-hunting of 15 men.
- 1846 Then in late August the first was west bound travelers, again the road-hunting party, but this time consisting of approximately 20 men, followed at intervals by some 90 to 100 wagons, of 450 to 500 persons, made up that year's emigration.
- 1847 Levi Scott and a party of about thirty young men made there eastward over the trail.
- 1847 It seems likely that 45 wagons took the trail in 1847.
- 1848 The Isaac Pettijohn saddle and pack-horse party of 23 men made their way east along the trail.
- 1848 Peter Lassen led a small train estimated at from 11 to 14 wagons (another view was 10).
- 1848 Meanwhile news of the discovery of gold in California reached Oregon late in July. Practically every able bodied man in the territory left for California, by boat or by the old Oregon-California trappers trail down the Sacramento River.
- 1848 Another group of 150 men with 46 wagons left Oregon City September 10th.
- 1849 This year saw the greatest use in any year of the Applegate Trail, at least that portion from the Humboldt River to Pitt River, outlet of Goose Lake.
First came a group of 30 men from the Willamette Valley with supplies for the Mounted Riflemen under Col. Loring from Missouri, headed for the Oregon country. This party was under the command of a Lt. Hawkins, guided by Joel Plamer, with Levi Scott as scout.
Of the 21,000 coming into California over the three emigrant trails then in existence, it was estimated that 7,000 to 9,000 traveled the Lassen Trail.
With few women and children accompanying the 49'ers, the average persons per wagon dropped from the customary five to four to even less. We therefore find approximately

- 2,000 wagons turning into the Applegate-Lassen Trail, but far below that number actually made it through, many being abandoned along the way.
- 1849 As of now, no record of any emigrants traveling the Applegate Trail to Oregon in 1849 has been found.
- 1850 Evidently no wagon train traveled westward into Oregon over the Applegate Trail in 1850.
- 1851 The 1851 records, as of now, have left very little to indicate that any parties traveled east over the Applegate Trail and but few emigrants entered California over it and the Lassen Trail.
- 1851 Where the Applegate Trail is concerned, the year 1851 is more or less a mystery.
- 1851 The Hills-Riddle train of 12 wagons with 20 men capable of bearing arms and probably 30 women and children turned onto the Applegate Trail in August and arrived at present Canyonville, Oregon September 20th.
- 1851 A party of 700 emigrants just from the plains were met a few days ago on the Oregon (Applegate?) Trail bound for Shasta (Shasta Valley?).
- 1851 The immigration of 1851 was been attacked at Bloody Point.
- 1851 Gold was discovered by two packers in Rick Gulch at Jacksonville, Oregon in December 1851, and thus another “gold rush” was touched off.
- 1851 Apparently the discovery of gold at Yreka and Jacksonville in 1851, more than any other reason, brought about or hastened the first change in the Applegate Trail. During that year it ceased to operate as a one-way north-bound emigrant trail to become a two-way pioneer road from the Rogue River Valley north. Most of the traffic transported by pack trains, at first from Portland, Oregon, then later from Scottsburg, near the mouth of the Umpqua River. The destination of those pack trains was Southern Oregon and Northern California.
- 1851 No emigrant trains traveling north from the Rogue River Valley after the Hills-Riddle train have been found to date, although some may have done so. After arriving in the Rogue River Valley, emigrants found it unnecessary to proceed farther, fertile farm lands and nearby rich mining districts offered everything desired. Why travel further?
- 1852 Our scanty but only available historical records for those times, have always indicated 1852 as the year of the first Modoc massacres of emigrants.
- 1852 It was in that year that the tide of humanity, previously setting for the Willamette Valley and mine of California was, in some measure diverted to the Rogue River Valley, whereby many settlers were added to those who came from other portions of the Pacific slope.
- 1852 Leading that year’s emigration over the Applegate Trail were 60 men, presumably packers, who arrived at Jacksonville unmolested. They reported, however, many trains in the rear, containing families who would be in need of supplies and assistance. A party of 30 men, under the command of Charles McDermitt, was organized and headed eastward to meet the emigrants.
- 1852 McDermitt’s party met a company of men at Tule Lake, 8 packers between Tule and Clear Lakes, the Toman train of 10 wagons with 20 men at Goose Lake, two small trains

at Black Rock, and further east the largest emigrant train. The Tolman train arrived in the Rogue River Valley late August. **Lots more to type.**

- 1853 The total emigration arriving in the Rogue River Valley was 159 wagons, 400 men, 120 women, 170 children, 2,600 loose cattle, 1,300 sheep, 140 loose horses and 40 mules.
- 1854 McDermitt's

1 THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 107-325, December 4, 2002)

(also found in *United States Code*, Volume 16, Sections 1241-1251)

2. National Park Service. Comprehensive Management and Use Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, California National Historic Trail, Pony Express National Historic Trail. Page 4.

3. Ibid., pages: 9 (map of Applegate Trail in Oregon), 36 (California National Historic Trail), and 40 (text describing Applegate Trail Southern Road to Oregon: 1846).
4. 3. Klamath Echoes. 1971. *Applegate Trail*. Chapter I — When, Where, Why, Who and How; Chapter II — Travelers Over the Applegate Trail.