

Why The Oxbow?

There is no doubt the Oxbow trail characteristic shown on the 1856 General Land Office (GLO) map on the title panel is part of the Applegate Trail in Hugo, Oregon even though it defies modern reasoning.¹ We speak of the 180-degree switch-back curve on the trail as an oxbow because it has a shape similar to a U-shaped frame forming a collar about an ox's neck and supporting the yoke. Years later, post 1904², the oxbow in the road was shorted by going straight up the draw in the location of today's Hasis Drive and Maple Creek, and the switchback was not used anymore by through traffic. A comparison is the creation and disappearance of an oxbow lake which is a small lake



located in a former meander loop of a river.

In June 1846 the South Road Expedition

traveling on horses left the Willamette Valley exploring a new route to Oregon.³ There was an old Indian trail over the unnamed Mt. Sexton Pass which had been periodically used by travelers, especially trappers. The expedition used this Indian trail south over the pass until the trail's course was southwest instead of south (1856 GLO map).

1. 1856 General Land Office (GLO) field notes and map; 1894 GLO map; 1895 Official Map of Josephine County by Joseph Koch, Draughtsman; 1904 Foster & Gunnel Mining Mpa of Southern Oregon; Davis, Charles. 1995. *Scott-Applegate Trail 1846 - 1847 Atlas & Gazetteer*. page 60.
2. Foster & Gunnel Mining Mpa of Southern Oregon: 1904, 1924 USGS map, and 1932 Metsker map.
3. Hugo Neighborhood. 2005. Applegate Trail. Brochure 6. Hugo, OR.; Emerson, William. 1996. *The Applegate Trail of 1846*. page 78. Ashland, OR.
4. Klamath County Historical Society. 1976. *Applegate Trail II, "West of the Cascades"*. Klamath Echoes. Pringle - page 23, Hulin - page 25, Thornton - page 29. Klamath Falls, OR.

Using Indian & Trappers' Trail Less Work Than Cutting A New One

By October emigrants were traveling north up the rugged mountainous terrain on the trail toward Mt. Sexton Pass. Walking in single file on a horse trail that had to be widened was identified.^{3&4}

"From here the emigrants had to cross Sexton Mountain. The road builders traveling before them had done little to cut a road for the wagons. The wagons could not go any further without doing more to provide a road. Virgil Pringle, Levi Scott and others had to take their axes and cut through the undergrowth to clear a way for the wagons to cross ...They edged their way along in single file as Levi Scott and others cleared a path for the wagons to follow."

1846 Pioneer Virgil Pringle recorded a good camp at Jumpoff Joe Creek (i.e., Pleasant Valley).⁴ The bad road was the oxbow and trail route over the mountain pass.

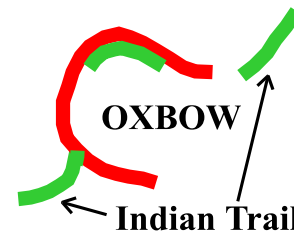
*"Saturday, October 17 – Travel 8 miles, road good and a good camp which is not common, the country being mostly burnt. 8 – 2,218 miles.
Sunday, October 18 – Have some bad road that takes till after dark to go 6 miles. 6 miles.
Monday, October 19 – Move one mile to a camp, having none last night, and spent the day burying Mr. Crowley's daughter, who died yesterday evening, age about 14 years. 1 mile."*

1846 Pioneer Quinn Thornton's Reminiscences.⁴

"After crossing the Rogue River, the emigrants came to a stretch of country before reaching Louse Creek, where the road-workers had done nothing so were brought to a halt. The horse trail being too rough for wagons. Levi Scott went ahead and eventually found a place that by cutting through thick brush for about 200 yards they could pass the wagons. The same situation also faced the emigrants reaching Jump Off Joe Creek and after pass over Sexton Mount to descend to Rat Creek."

Emigrant Practice Avoiding Lowland & Sideling Or Side Hilling

The oxbow trail characteristic was a result of trappers blazing wider an existing trace (Indian trail for humans) whose course was east and west up and down the Jumpoff Joe Creek drainage to the Rogue River. Part of this Indian trail became the Trappers' Trail for horses except when the trappers needed to travel southeast and the southern portion of the oxbow was created. A major effort was expended in energy and time by the 1846 emigrants to widen the Trapper's Trail, but not as much as if the emigrants had hacked a brand new trail in the brush and trees.



Also, the emigrants' normal practice of following ridges or higher elevations and traveling directly up or down grades to avoid side hilling on steep slopes fits the topography for the south and west portions of the oxbow.⁵ The northern portion of the oxbow does not fit these guidelines as the route to the mountain pass included side hilling, and the upper draw of Maple Creek. 1847 Pioneer Lester Hulin's diary identified the sideling.⁴ The fine creek was Jumpoff Joe Creek and the valley with good camping ground was Grave Creek.

"W. 20th. Upon leaving camp we soon came to a fine creek. Then bad roads ensued (rough hilly and sideling) but by night we were in a valley with good camping ground at hand. Distance 8 Ms."

5. Hugo Neighborhood. 2005. Guidelines For Locating Wagon Trails. Brochure 12. Hugo, OR.; Office of National Trails Preservation & Oregon-California Trails Association (P.O. box 1019, Independence, MO, 64051-0519, 816-252-2276, octa@indepmo.org). July 2002, 4th edition. *Mapping Emigrants Trails MET Field Manual*.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Make checks to the *Hugo Neighborhood* and send them to our Treasurer. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

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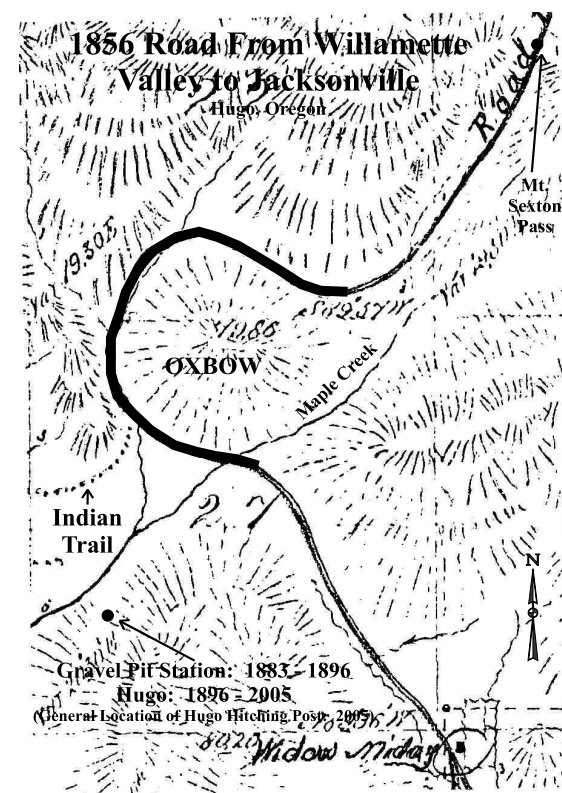
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OXBOW OF APPLEGATE TRAIL

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