

Lindsay Applegate, an explorer of Southern Route in 1846
Brother of Jessie and Charles Applegate

June 26, 1846

“On the morning of the 26th, we divided our forces, part going back to explore the canyon, while the remainder stayed to guard the camp and horses. The exploring party went back to where we left the canyon on a little trail the day before, and returning through the canyon, came into camp after night, reporting that wagons could be taken through.”

“We found everything all right on the morning of the 27th, although the Indians had hovered around us all night, frightening our horses a number of times. From the tracks we could see that they approached very closely to our encampment. Making an early start we moved on very cautiously. Whenever the trail passed though the cuts we dismounted and led our horses, having our guns in hand ready at any moment to use them in self-defense, for we had adopted this rule, never to be the aggressor. Traveling through a very broken country the sharp hills separated by little streams upon which there were small openings, we came out at about noon into a large creek, a branch of Rogue river, now call Grave creek, on which we rested about two hours. During the afternoon our course was over a more open country—through scattering pine and oak timber. Towards evening, we saw a good many Indians posted along the mountain side and then running ahead of us. About an hour by sun we reached a prairie of several hundred acres, which extends down to very near the bank of Rogue river. As we advanced towards the river, the Indians in large numbers occupied the riverbank near where the trail crossed. Having understood that this crossing was a favorite place of attack, we decided as it was growing late, to pass the night in the prairie. Selecting a place as far from the brush as possible, we made every preparation for a night attack.”

“In selecting our camp on Rogue River, we observed the greatest caution. Cutting stakes from the limbs of an old oak that stood in the open ground, we picketed our horses with double stakes as firmly as possible. The horses were picketed in the form of a hollow square, outside of which we took up our positions, knowing that in case of an attack there would be a chance of losing our horses and that would be a complete defeat. We keep vigilant guard during the night, and the next morning could see the Indians occupying the same position as at dark. After an early breakfast we began to make preparations for moving forward. There had been a heavy dew, and fearing the effects of the dampness upon our fire-arms, which were muzzle-loaders, of course, and some of them with flint-locks, we fired them off and reloaded. In moving forward, we formed two divisions, with the pack horses behind. On reaching the river bank the front division fell behind the pack horses and drove them over, while the rear division faced the brush, with gun in hand, until the front division was safely over. Then they turned about, and the rear division passed over under the protection of their rifles. The Indians watched the performance from their places of concealment, but there was no chance for them to make an attack

without exposing themselves to our fire. The river was deep and rapid, and for a short distance some of the smaller animals had to swim. Had we rushed pell mell in the stream, as parties sometimes do under such circumstances, our expedition would probably have come to an end there.”

After crossing, we turned up the river, and the Indians in large numbers came out of the thickets on the opposite side and tried in every way to provoke us. Our course was for some distance southeast along the bank of the river, and the Indians, some mounted and some on foot, passed on rapidly on the other side. There appeared to be a great commotion amount them. A party had left the French settlement in the Willamette some three or four weeks before us, consisting of French, half-breeds, Columbia Indians and a few Americans; probably about eighty in all. Passing one of their encampments we could see by the signs that they were only a short distance ahead of us. We afterwards learned that the Rogue Rivers had stolen some of their horses, and that an effort to recover them had caused the delay. At about three o’clock, we left the river and bore southward up a little stream for four or five miles and encamped. From our camp we could see numerous signal fires on the mountains to the eastward. We saw no Indians in the vicinity of our camp, and no evidence of their having been there lately. They had evidently given up, and followed the other company which the same night encamped in the main valley above. Under the circumstances, we enjoyed a good night’s sleep, keeping only two guards at a time.

On the morning of June 29th, we passed over a low range of hills, from the summit of which we had a splendid view of the Rogue River valley. It seemed like a great meadow, interspersed with groves of oaks which appeared like vast orchards. All day long we traveled over rich black soil covered with rank grass, clover and pea vine, and at night encamped near the other party on the stream now known as Emigrant creek, near the foot of the Siskiyou mountains. This night, the Indians having gone to the mountains to ambush the French party as we afterwards learned, we were not disturbed. Here our course diverged from that of the other company, they following the old California trail across the Siskiyou, while our route was eastward through an unexplored region several hundred miles in extent.”

Applegate, Lindsay, *Notes and Reminiscences of Laying Out and Establishing the Old Emigrant Road into Southern Oregon in The Year 1846.* Oregon Historical Quarterly , Vol. 22, No. 1, March, 1921.