

Old Oregon Trail Has Romantic History; Is Route Chosen by Ox Team Tourists of Long Ago When They Sought Homes in West

(Continued from page 12.)

Wallah village for mutual protection from the thieving band at Wislram.

John Day, the veteran hunter, who accompanied the expedition from St. Louis and who underwent great hardships at the hands of the Indians, became deranged from the suffering he had endured and was sent back to Astoria under the care of friendly Indians. Within a year he died and thus passed out a frontiersman for whom later on four rivers were named.

At the village of the Wallah-Wallahs, Mr. Stuart secured horses for his little band which was to bear the dispatches to St. Louis. With him were Ben Jones, Andri Vallar, Francis Clerc, McLennan and Crooks.

Crossing the Blue Mountains the party came upon a great sulphur spring and lake around which were great numbers of antlers which had been shed by the elk which frequented the region. On this site is now located Hot Lake, Oregon, a great health resort.

Find Caches Plundered.

On August 12th, the Snake river was reached and on August 20th, the party encountered Hobach, Miller, Reznor and Robinson, who had left the Hunt party at the Henry Post to trap and hunt. They reported that they had been robbed of their furs and clothing by a band of Arapahays and had barely escaped with their lives and had wandered among the hills, barely existing on fish and berries.

The augmented party now continued on their way up the river and finally reached the Calderon Linn where they found that six of the caches made by Mr. Hunt had been found and ransacked by the Indians. Before reaching the Calderon Linn, however, they came upon some Shoshones busily engaged in spearing salmon at a place which they named Salmon Falls.

Here Robinson, Reznor and Hobach were outfitted and remained to trap and hunt. On September 19, Mr. Stuart and his little party reached the head waters of the Snake where their horses were stolen by a rascally band of Crow Indians and they proceeded on their way on foot. The winter was spent in camp on the banks of the Platte river and in the spring the march to St. Louis was renewed. Finally on April 20, 1813, the party reached St. Louis and the dispatches were sent to Mr. Astor in New York City. The journey had taken ten months of time and incredible hardships and the news of the establishment of Astoria his party and the return trip created a great sensation, and was the first news of the establishment of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia.

Massacre on the Snake

During the summer of 1812, John Reed, Iles LeClerc, Francois Landry, Jean Baptiste Turcot, Andre Chapelle, Pierre Dorion and family and Pierre Delaunay established a camp on the Snake river to hunt and trap and to search for Robinson, Hobach and Reznor.

During the autumn, Landry died and Delaunay deserted, but a little lat-

er on Robinson, Hobach and Reznor joined the party.

Reznor, MeClerc and Dorion and his family made a camp five days journey from the main camp in a well stocked beaver country.

One evening while Dorion's wife was preparing supper, LeClerc staggered into camp pale and bleeding. He informed her that the Indians had killed her husband and Reznor. She immediately caught two of the horses, loaded LeClerc and some provisions on one of them and herself and the two children on the other and fled.

On the third night LeClerc died of his wounds and exposure as they dared not build a fire. On the fourth day the main camp was reached and the Indian woman found it deserted with signs of a great struggle having taken place and she surmised that the entire party had been wiped out by the Indians.

She and her children wintered near the Wallah-Wallah river in a wild and lonely canyon, subsisting on the flesh of the two horses and such other food as could be procured. In the spring she struck out across the hills and finally arrived at a village of the Wallah-Wallahs. Thus passed out many of the brave spirits who helped blaze the Trail to "Oregon" when it was a vast wilderness, and thus was lost to view the brave, patient, resourceful little Indian woman who endured so much.

First Wagon Train to Reach Columbia

In the year 1813, the first wagon train to reach the Willamette valley left Fort Hall, in the vicinity of Pocatello, Idaho, under the command of Dr. Marcus Whitman. This was called at the time, the "Great Emigration" because there were 1000 people in the party. Eut nine and ten years later, the real "migration" took place when 300,000 people swept in a vast tidal wave of humanity from the Middle West to the Pacific Coast.

Under the guidance of Dr. Whitman the party passed through the great Snake River valley past the present site of Huntington and on September 28th, reached the Powder river valley in Baker county, Oregon.

The Grand Ronde valley was reached October 1st, and crossing the Blue mountains, his party reached Walla Walla valley the latter part of the month. Continuing on to the Columbia river, the party embarked on boats and reached the Willamette valley the latter part of November, 1813.

The Champocog Convention

At this time it is proper to digress for a moment and take note of the Champocog convention at Champocog, Willamette valley, May 2, 1843. At this meeting 102 men gathered. The proposition of forming a Provisional government was put to a vote and it appeared to be a tie until a Frenchman, Francois, XXavier, Matthieu, walked over to the American side and the great Oregon country, which at that time included all of Oregon, Montana, Washington, Idaho and part of Wyoming was saved to the United States.

After the migration of 1843, only scattering parties wended their way to the Oregon country until the year 1852

when the greatest rush of home seekers the world has ever seen took place.

The Great Migration

Whole families left their comfortable homes and friends, family ties were broken and business connections severed, for the purpose of joining in that mad rush for the mysterious land across the mountains where homes might be secured for the taking.

Perils were considered as nothing, but with faces set resolutely toward the setting sun, the pioneers of the great Northwest set out to subdue the wilderness and establish homes where rolls the "Oregon." The Old Oregon Trail proper began at Independence, Missouri, as did the Santa Fe trails. For 41 miles the two trails pursued the same course, then they forked, the Santa Fe heading southwest and the Oregon Trail to the northwest.

Road to Oregon

At the forks of the road was a simple sign reading, "Road to Oregon." That sign would be worth its weight in gold today to any historical society. The Old Oregon Trail ran to the northwest along the Little Blue river until it struck the valley of the Platte about 300 miles from Independence.

The route then lay up the Platte to a point near the forks of the Platte where there were two routes. The Oregon Trail followed the south fork for a short distance then turned northwest and reached the north fork, past what is now Cheyenne, reaching Laramie, Wyoming, which was the last post on the eastern side of the Rockies. The famous Independence Rock, 83 miles from Independence, was one of the most noteworthy and well known features on the trail. The route lay through what is now Rock Springs and Green River, Wyoming. At what is now Granger, the route lay across the mountains to what was called the South Pass, elevation 7,450 feet. Fort Bridger, Wyoming, was the first resting place west of the Rockies, 1000 miles from the Missouri.

The route now lay northwest to Soda Springs, on the big Bend of Bear river in the southwest corner of Idaho, thence across the divide between the Bear and the Port Neuf rivers, thence on to Fort Hall near the site of the what is now Pocatello, Idaho.

Fort Hall was a famous outpost in the early days and for a long time was the farthest outpost of civilization.

The Trail followed the Snake river for a long distance passing what is now American Falls, Burley, Twin Falls, Shoshone Falls, Salmon Falls, and then across the river to what is now Boise, Idaho. The Trail crossed the Snake river near the mouth of the Boise river, at what is now Parma, Idaho, past the towns of Vale and Ontario and on to Burnt River canyon, which was considered one of the worst pieces of road on the entire trail, but while his now a scenic highway. The Trail took a canyon a little south of what is now called Pleasant valley and wended its way across the low foothills to what is now called the Virtue Flat, coming into the Powder river valley at the pass near the old Flagstaff mine about six miles east of Baker. A well was dug at this point where the thirsty travelers slaked the thirst of themselves and their cattle. The Trail traversed the valley, coming out at the present site of North Powder. The Grand Ronde valley was reached by way of Ladd's canyon, the way leading past the present site of La Grande and on over the Blue mountains, past Meacham, on to the Umatilla, near the present site of Pendleton, the Round-Up city.

The road over the Blue mountains saw little change since the days of 1852 until the last year when much of it was graded and this year will see the completion of the road. What was once the worst piece of road on the route will soon be one of the best and most picturesque.

From Pendleton, the Trail led to The Dalles on the Columbia river where the pioneers either embarked on boats and barges or took the Barlow road across the Cascades and finally arrived in the Willamette valley, the goal of their ambitious dreams. The wagon train of the great migration of 1852 was 500 miles in length and several wagons in width.

The wagons were of the Prairie Schooner type, wide and deep and bowed at both ends and were used as boats in crossing some of the deep wide streams encountered in the journey.

Each wagon generally had two or more yoke of oxen, horses or mules, a milk cow or two and carried an average of five people.

Conservatively, the number of people on this great migration was 200,000 and the number of cattle greater.

Cholera Takes Toll

As the party progressed, many of the teams gave out and died and the household effects and some of the provisions of the party were left by the wayside in order to lighten the loads. Then the cholera hit the caravan and in 1852 over 5000 human beings died by the way. Shallow graves were made and the expedition moved on. The sufferings of the party were shared by all alike, the women and children not being exempt.

When they left the Missouri river they were beyond the pale of the civil law and crude justice was meted out by the organized court which attended to infractions of the law in a manner all its own. The company being so numerous, it suffered little from Indian depredations. The Columbia Gorge was also a terror to the traveler, but now it is traversed by the Columbia River Highway one of the scenic wonders of the world.

In 1858 J. P. Olds established "Olds Ferry" on the Snake river between what are now Ontario and Huntington, which diverted considerable travel by way of what are now Fayette and Weiser.

With the finishing of the Old Oregon Trail on the Oregon side of the Snake river this historic ferry will soon be but a memory. Now the tourist has his choice of going through Weiser and Fayette or by way of Ontario and Nyssa.

Marking of the "Trail"

The marking of the Old Oregon Trail by Ezra Meeker in 1896 is almost as full of interest, hardship and adventure as was the journey of 1852-3. Feeling that the Old Oregon

Trail should be preserved to the history, Mr. Meeker, set out from his home in Puyallup, Washington with a Graire Schooner and an ox team to traverse and mark the route which he had traveled as a young man over 50 years before. Quoting Mr. Meeker:

"The purpose of this expedition is to perpetuate the memory of the Old Oregon Trail and to honor the intrepid pioneers who made it and saved this great region the "Old Oregon Country" for American rule."

Mr. Meeker reached The Dalles where the real start was made on March 10, 1896. Here he erected the first stone monument, March 15th. Then he traveled on his slow, tiresome way through Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, erecting markers on the way and on to Indianapolis, Indiana, which he reached January 5, 1907. On March 1st he started for Washington, D. C. with his ox team and after a diversity of experiences on the way reached the White House and interviewed Teddy Roosevelt, then president of United States who was greatly interested in the venture and promised his aid in securing government recognition of the Old Oregon Trail.

Mr. Meeker's big idea of the trip was to mark the route and to create an interest in the building of a national highway across the continent in commemoration of the Old Oregon Trail.

Mr. Meeker found to his astonishment that many of the places prominently identified with the early history of the Oregon Trail knew nothing of it, owing to the erosions of time and the influx of new people.

Mr. Meeker made a second trip by ox team, starting from The Dalles, March 16, 1910, and ending at Puyallup, Washington, August 20, 1912.

The outfit of Ezra Meeker is now a permanent exhibit in the State Historical building of the state of Washington, the taxidermist's skill making the oxen look as natural as life, leaning against the yoke, and the old prairie schooner looking fit for another trip across the continent. The oxen and wagon, being under a glass case 14 by 18 feet.

Pioneer Women Courageous.

A word regarding the pioneer women is appropriate at this time. Mr. Meeker recounts that on the west bound trip in 1852 they met nine wagon going back east, all driven by women, the men having died of cholera on the way west. The pioneer women went into the wilderness, sharing the same dangers and undergoing the same privations as the men, as the population grew, it was through her efforts that churches and school houses were erected and the cause of civilization advanced.

Northwest Saved to U. S.

Had it not been for the migration of 1843, it is doubtful if American control would have continued over the Oregon country and to the Old Oregon Trail must be given the honor of being the pioneer way over which the future citizens of this great northwest came and dominated its future.

The pioneers of 1843-57 were necessarily brave and hardy for if they had not been they could not have faced the dangers of the journey or have withstood the rigors of the trip.

It was a case of the weak perishing and the strong and brave surviving. There were no such word as "fall" in

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