Oral History Number: 167-002  
Interviewee: Phillip "Bud" Bisnett  
Interviewer: David Louter  
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David Louter: This is an interview with Philip “Bud” Bisnett, at his home in Augusta, Montana, September 20, 1986. The interviewer is David Louter, the Old North Trail Oral History Project. I’m interested in what you can tell me about the Old North Trail. Having lived in this area most of your life, you’ve been aware of the trail’s existence. Could you retell your first experience with the Old North Trail?

Phillip “Bud” Bisnett: Yes, I can. I was raised at Dupuyer, and at the age of 12 or 14, I suppose, I was riding with this old neighbor friend up against the mountains. He had land against the mountains where we didn’t, and in passing through an area there, he mentioned that this was the Old North-South Trail. I think that was probably my first contact with the name, and the old travois trail. He showed a pair of ruts that didn’t look much different than wagon ruts, or at that time would have been pretty much wagon ruts. I’m speaking of the mid-1930s. As I recall later that it seemed rather appropriate...or inappropriate to wagon travel, with the team on horses, which would have been the main rut makers of that age. It seemed that it was different, the road of then, which was, I take it, the old wagon road, kind of contoured around a slope that would just be probably a little too steep to comfortably climb with a team and horses. Yet there was a pair of ruts that did go up at a much steeper angle than the then-current road, which was wagon road. That was my initial meeting with what was supposed to be the Old North-South Road. I’ve since been north of there—that happened to be on Sheep Creek, southwest of Dupuyer. I seen what was called that, to the north and west of Babb, Montana. However, I couldn’t tell the difference between that and car roads or wagon roads, in most cases, that dug those old ruts—all sodded in. They would have had to been mainly wagon, team and wagon roads.

DL: Going back to that first time in Dupuyer, do you remember exactly where that area was? How close to the mountains was that ranch, or how far from Dupuyer, maybe? Do you recall any of that?

PB: Yes, it would be as close to the mountains as would be feasible to travel with wheeled vehicles. In other words, it was on the bottom reaches, just before the steepest but still down in the productive land.

DL: Is that near those, what they call, Birch Creek?

PB: No, this was on the south side of Sheep Creek.

DL: Sheep Creek?
PB: Yes.

DL: Do you remember the rancher’s name who brought you out there?

PB: Yeah, it was John [unintelligible].

DL: What did you think about all that time? You were 12, I mean.

PB: I was just early in my interest in anthropology life, as I'm an ardent Indian artifact collector. I suppose the bug was just about to bite me. It nevertheless impressed me, and I did a lot of thinking on it since. It seems a very appropriate an area, a spot, to go through, for the people. Assuming they had to go north to south, as we understand the original migrations of people came over from Asia to Alaska. They came down, well, the mountains are a bold up-thrust here for a hundred miles, very precipitous out of the prairie, and it just seems like a natural landmark to travel. If they were going north and going south-north, it just seems very natural for them to pick some route close to those mountains, maybe for escape route for protection or whatever. They would likely pick certain, well, landmarks, and they would, logically it seems like, pick a line of least resistance in the topography, to maintain a general north-south route.

DL: Did you ever go back? After that one time?

PB: I was back a time or two, but not for any purpose. Of course, it wasn't there for that purpose then. I went through there hauling timber from the mountains three or four times after that, and I rode through there, I'm sure, I know a couple of times after that.

DL: It wasn't too long after that, was it, that...well, you were 12, you went through the 8th grade, right?

PB: Yes.

DL: And then, after that, you just worked the ranch with your father.

PB: Yes, yes, but my family ranch was, oh, about ten miles to the northeast of there. Nevertheless, I rode with the neighbors a little, helping them.

DL: Well, given the years that have passed, obviously you didn’t spend all your time coming across travois tracks for anything, now. But today, how would you define what do you think the Old North Trail is, or what we call the Old North-South travois trail, or anything. Do you have any thoughts on how you’d describe that?

PB: With a qualifying factor there, as to the cause, what means or what beasts of burden was involved with this, you can't consider the trail without realizing that, at one time, it was all dog
travois. At some point, when they—the Northern Plains people—acquired horses, then it became horse travois. It would naturally be much different spread, distance, between the tracks on the drag marks—between the drag marks, between dogs and horses. I don't really have any idea how much difference, or how wide either one are in actual, measurable distance. I'm fairly sure, from having seen travois in parades and things like that that the drag polls on a horse travois would be some wider than the lumber wagons or the team and wagon days.

DL: Do you recall any times when you could tell what dog travois tracks would look like versus horse travois?

PB: I couldn't make much more than a guess at it.

DL: Nonetheless, you researched the topic enough to know that the Indians, at one time, did use dog travois to migrate from one place to the other.

PB: I understand they've been in use for a long time, pre-horse days—the dog travois. It must have been quite a job moving one of those buffalo skin lodges. At the very lightest, it had to weigh, I don't know, but 100, 2, 300 pounds or something. I don't know, but it had to weigh considerable, made of the lightest, finest buffalo hides. They probably had some way of attaching it together, maybe had two sections to it or even three. They had real need for...If they were going to move camp at all, and had any possessions, they had real need for something besides the back of people to carry it.

DL: Those poles are probably pretty heavy then, with the loads on to leave a good scar in some places.

PB: Yeah, they would have...I suppose, maybe a dog would drag as much as a man could carry on his back. I don't know, maybe a big dog. A horse certainly could carry 200, 300 pounds, that would certainly be able to haul something like that. That would give them quite an advantage in moving the heavier parts, or maybe the old people, the crippled, the infirm. According to history, a lot of them, they just...when they got to a certain stage, they understood that in the interest of the survival of people they had to just be left to die. I understand that was a common thing in the early people.

DL: Where do you think people were going when they used the trail? If, indeed, there was a lot of use of the trail?

PB: I wonder if they had just kind of an itchy foot like people today have. Always looking for a little better climate, maybe a little more productive food-wise—productive climate—or just wondering what was over the hill. I presume they did have kind of in a certain area, that they felt more at home and safer in, but there appears to be no doubt by just about all of the scientists that they did travel from there clear to Central America or so.
DL: That was the Bering Land Bridge?

PB: From the Bering Strait, yes.

DL: Seeing as that there was traveling going on, on the trail, there was certainly enough teepee rings and whatnot along the mountains here to support quite a few people, or tribes, or different stages of peoples. You’ve come across some.

PB: Oh yes, yeah. I found a scatterment of teepee rings, not particularly up that close to the mountains in large groups, but there’s just a scattering of them. Oddly enough, generally up on the first terrace up out of the creek bottom, for what reason I don’t know. I have a kind of a pet theory that, from having been around the Blackfeet a little, when they had a canvas teepee, in those years—like in the ‘30s and ‘40s—and they just had one, maybe, for the overflow of visitors in the summer. It wasn’t set up, no stove or anything in it, it was just sleeping quarters. From observing the way they used it, I wonder if these teepee rings weren’t more of a winter camp that required the tying down of the skirts to keep the weather out. Whereas the Indians that I saw up there, they might have staked the squared skirts a little, but in the summer with any shelter at all—timber or such shelter—why, they preferred to leave them loose, and in real hot weather, roll them up the height of maybe two or three feet and it developed just a real fine draft through there in the hottest of weather. So I don’t know about the teepee rings. I may have an idea, or I may not, that they were more the winter camp site.

DL: So down along the creek bottom, say around the Sun River area, up near [unintelligible]? 

PB: On all of these drainages or close to them. Those right down in the creek bottom, there’s what makes my theory doubtful on the winter camp—the teepee ring—is that they’re generally in high, exposed places, up out of the way from the creek bottom. The brush and timber that, for shelter, usually grows along there. So, I mean, it’s just guesswork.

DL: When did you first come to Augusta? Settle down this area and maybe get an interest in the archeological finds?

PB: I was here first, and really for a considerable period of time, in the hunting camps, packing for the hunters for outfitters.

DL: What years?

PB: In ’48, ’49, ’50, ’51, and ’52, I was just kind of in and out of the area here. Following that work and contract horseshoeing—mule shoeing—and it all kind of fit into the same line of business, and quite a lot of it in this area. Then, after ’53, why, I took roots here, and I’ve been here ever since. I had a resurgence of my anthropology hobby in the late ’50s then, and at that time and the next 10 to 12 years, I accumulated the most of my Indian artifacts.
DL What was going on before you had your resurgence? Was that your younger days?

PB: My dad died when I was 15, and I had to turn into a rancher, which I did. I knew I didn’t have time for anything but ranching, though I had followed archeology a little before that. There for a period of years, and then in 1946 when I left the ranch, why, I was drifting and seeing the country. I treasured all what artifacts I had and the histories on them. The bug then didn't really bite me again until about ’59.

DL: That’s when you started some of your real excavating or just going around the hills? How did you find yourself out in the hills then in those earlier days?

PB: I know where buffalo runs were, and then I’d go there and screen the buffalo run material for the arrowheads. I was always looking for surface finds, and there were several spots in the area in the course of my ranch work, packing in the mountains, and dude work like that, where there was enough surface hunting to be worthwhile.

DL: So the anthropology interest was an offshoot to the other jobs you had, say, in working in the hills and ranching? Would you come across areas that you’d decide to go back to look at?

PB: Oh yes, many times. A combination of gainful employment and a hobby. You could kind of mix in a small way.

DL: Would you ever ask people where they knew places to go?

PB: Yes, and then my...oh, I guess a common word is my lifestyle was that I did, starting in 1953, I spent three months in the mountains for the association with cattle, handling their cattle, with some shoeing, meanwhile. After my riding season—association riding season—I was free for two or three weeks, which was just nothing but horseshoeing, mule shoeing. Then the regular hunting season, I’d come along in mid- or late October and I was tied up with it, but always in an area that there was some opportunity to indulge in anthropology—my artifact collection.

DL: We’re going to take a pause right here. So how would you summarize your jobs in the past, what, 33 years that you’ve lived here? You were an association rider?

PB: Yes, they were all about a series of four wage-type jobs in a year. Periodical like three months with the association, a little month or so break, and then I’d be back in the hunting camps for the hunting season. Then a month or two break after that, and it’d be calving time, and two or three months of that, and then I’d be back to my shoeing season. It was in between some of these jobs too, but mainly in May and June. All of these lapses in work, in between jobs, why, it give me a little time to pursue my Indian artifact collection and anthropology.

DL: Going back to when you first heard about the trail, and what you thought then, in the years subsequently since you’ve worked in ranches and have been around the area, were there times
when you also heard of the trail mentioned to you? Or were you just maybe thinking about it on and off during those times?

PB: It would come up in conversation every once in a while. Pretty much around bunkhouses and things and around...I probably more gravitated to older people all my life.

DL: So it was a common subject amongst people you knew?

PB: Yeah, yeah. Every once in a while it’d crop up, especially when they knew I was an artifact collector, then someone would bring up this subject of the Old North-South Trail. Some people had ideas on it and—

DL: What were some of those ideas? Do you remember any of those? Any of the more famous ones you might think?

PB: Well, maybe not ideas. They probably didn’t think into it deep enough to even make a guess as to how old it may have been when it was first used, say. As thinly populated as the country was, in prehistoric times and early prehistory, why, there probably wasn’t as much traffic on it as we might think this day and age with the amount of people we have. Due to its location, of the need for a north-south route through the country, that it would kind of concentrate travel through that one band of convenience against the mountains.

DL: You mentioned prehistory. What do you think about prehistory? Before the horse?

PB: Yes, that’s definitely prehistory, then. You may go further than that and then call it prehistory too, or more recent than that and call it prehistory, because it was very, very sketchy until Lewis and Clark. In other words, the pre-horse days of 1730 or so—250 years ago—that’s definitely prehistory in my estimation, at least.

DL: Who was here around that time, the 1730s?

PB: Probably the Shoshones or Flathead were the Plains people then.

[Telephone rings; break in audio]

PB: The people that were probably here pre-horse days, were not the Blackfeet of the historic days.

DL: Who would they be?

PB: Probably the most likely guess is the Shoshone people. As the Blackfeet moved south along the mountains, why, they as stronger nation or whatever, they pushed the Shoshones ahead of them, and they eventually went through the mountains to their historic reservation at Fort Hall,
Idaho. But some of that is guesswork, but it is well pretty well established that the Blackfeet didn't arrive into east of the mountains here, say across the Canadian border from Canada, until the late 1700s. Shortly before Lewis and Clark, in other words, maybe.

DL: So what were we saying before, that in your years of working in the same area around here, that you may have come across the trail hundreds of times?

PB: I certainly had to have crossed it hundreds of times. It was between Augusta and the mountain, because my mountain jobs—the packing and the association riding—was back in the mountains and all the roads go that direction. I was from Augusta and home here into my job and back out, I certainly had to have crossed it.

DL: What parts of the hills in there did the association riding take you, specifically, do you remember?

PB: Right west of Augusta here, the face of the mountains is, you could say, the line between the surveyed, patented, private land and the national forest. The bold up-thrust of the mountains—it's somewhere right on that edge, and my job with the association was all behind that line. I found considerable artifacts there. In fact, I concluded that almost every one of these streams that came out of the mountains, that had a little grazing, a little flat area, almost all of them do show some...have turned up some artifacts that proved considerable living there. Another feature is the incidence in these larger, that I know of...two large springs, one of them just barely back in the mountains and one several miles back in. The incidence of large springs of the right temperature and all to have grown watercress. That was no doubt a big drawing card for any of the people—the travois people or anyone else—because they must have had that just a physiological hunger for green food in the offseason, which is six-eight months of the year that we don't have much greenery or vegetation that is edible—berries and roots and that sort of thing. Those large springs, without exception, have a concentration of artifacts. Though the areas around them are pretty well sodded in, there's still enough things...enough stuff has been found there around them to realize that they're very much a focal point of their existence.

DL: Can you describe in general location where those springs are?

PB: Yes. The one by Ford Creek Resort, just a mile in from the forest boundary, and Scattering Springs up back up along Gibson Reservoir.

DL: Are they too far west for the direct crossing of the trail?

PB: The Scattering Springs one would be, yes, out of contact with it thought, I think. But I just hazard a guess that people leisurely traveling through—they didn't have to meet a train or plane anywhere—would probably go out of their way, a long ways, to get some green feed, some green foods like watercress.
DL: Were there any other time in those years riding that you came across anything that caught your interest, where you thought it might be something to do with the trail?

PB: Yes, there's one spot up under...in particular under the [unintelligible], on a long north-south draw that looks like probably a natural way for the people to go through [unintelligible].

DL: How did you come across that?

PB: I was told about it and went out of my way. It was just off of Blondie Slater’s (?) land, had to go through his land to get there. It was a rock approximately six- or eight-feet square, quite level and flat on top, that had several...i’d say when I first seen it, two or three large wheelbarrows loads of rather small, fist-sized—large as my head, probably the largest—and it was also...the main rock was probably five, six feet high or more. Probably five or six originally. But it appears that there’d been a big pile of rock on top of it, very carefully stacked, because there’s dozens of wheelbarrow loads around on three sides of that large rock, around the base of it, that may have fallen off the top. That's a cairn or a ceremonial or whatever it might be. It's prehistoric, that's definite.

DL: So it looked old?

PB: Yes, it’s old. Before there were sheep herders. We have to recognize the markers like sheep herders’ monuments, and realize that quite a few of them, or lot of those cairns we see on prominent points are just pastime for the sheep herders. Some people probably think that, maybe they're correct, I don't know which are and which aren't.

DL: Okay, we're going to stop here in this tape.

[Break in audio]

DL: So you know don't think that boulder was any kind of a sheepherder’s monument at all?

PB: Oh, no. No, it was altogether different in location, and in the fact that sheep were very rare. I don’t know if there was ever any large sheep out around there. The location is down in a draw, rather than the shepherders’ monuments, which were always on a high point that I've ever seen. It's just much too large. It was too much of a cairn at one time. Too high and large and of chosen rock in size. Where the sheepherder, he’d have used anything in sight, including big, flat rocks, anything he could handle, maybe up to 50 or 100 pounds, and there didn't appear to be any rocks of that size, or anywheres near that size.

DL: So those stones around it, or rocks around, were they were all similar in size or all different?

PB: In a glacial country like this, or like that, you find a great variety of sizes, from gravel to hundreds of pounds. The glacier sorted things out, and they dropped where they would. It
wasn't a stream bed that had the grating and sizing effect of anything like that, or even near to one, near a stream bed. Somebody just very much sorted rocks, to come up with that many of that kind of rock around.

DL: Were you able to tell all that all if those stones came from that general area? Was there a [unintelligible] or flint or something that came from a specific area that could have been carried there and left if people were trapping along the way?

PB: No, the glacier has a mysterious way of accumulating rocks from a lot of places, but it will be primarily of one type of that area all right. Where you’re right close to the mountain front, here. Variety-wise, I’d say they were all very native in appearance, right? Local.

DL: What about any other size over near that boulder? That was, what, 20 years ago when you first came across it?

PB: Oh, yeah, 30.

DL: Thirty years ago. Were there tracks or ruts or anything that you saw? Did you look?

PB: It’s in a natural north-south route, through some rather rough, difficult terrain, with many large boulders. Naturally there was wagon tracks—wagon ruts, car ruts, whatever you want to call them. Wheeled vehicle ruts. Prehistoric underneath, probably. But you have no way of sorting them out, and one would’ve defaced the other. There’s also enough...it’s steep enough that there could have been some washing to deface anything like that. It just is one of those natural north-south access routes.

DL: Do you remember anyone, in those says when you worked for people who may have told you that they followed, some of those roads followed the old prehistoric tracks or anything?

PB: I’ve never heard of a tie-in.

DL: So basically it was, maybe, homesteaders before they were running cattle up there, who may have used it for a wagon road or some such.

PB: I never heard of anyone making the connection.

DL: What was that other area you mentioned that one time, that you were shown not too far from where that boulder is? Across the Sun River near the game range?

PB: However, I have been told that to the east, not likely connecting onto this north-south route with the cairn of rock, I have heard that there was a crossing down there, what they call the black butte, black [unintelligible], about a mile, two miles south and a mile east of this rock cairn in this natural route through, or what looked natural to me. As far as crossings on the
north fork of Sun River is concerned, either one would lead into an area that was better for crossing access to the river bottom than either upstream or downstream for quite a ways. Anything almost had to go through there, it seems like.

DL: Why do you say that? Just the topography of the area?

PB: That’s right. The logistics, practical reasons.

DL: How does the country come down there to the river? Is it rough?

PB: Well, comparative to, say, a mile or two west or a mile or two east, it is easy. It’s an easy access route.

DL: Is that anywhere near a coulee or something?

PB: Yes. I mean you can approach the river from either side without any great difficulty with wagons, or with travois, certainly would be no problem at all. Where a mile or two to the west, and that much to the east, it was difficult.

DL: You said, at one time, that you and Burt Goodman (?) had been taken to a spot just north of the game range.

PB: We agreed on it. We agreed that that was the spot, but we were not there at the same time, no. He’d heard it, and I’d heard it.

DL: Do you remember at all whom you heard it from?

PB: [pauses] Well, I believe it was one of the Click (?) boys, the generation...or some of their help, that they’d heard was up that draw and pointed it up from the road there as we drove by in a car. That just seems like what had happened, and I don’t remember who it was.

DL: But that also was around the same time period as when you came across the [unintelligible]?

PB: Yeah, we’re going back in the late ‘40s or so.

DL: You went up there to look around?

PB: I did not, at that time, no.

DL: It seems interesting, this past hour or so, that the trail seems to remain more in the oral tradition, doesn’t it?
PB: Strictly, yes.

DL: Have you ever come across any written material on it that seems specific enough, even a map or anything, in all the years you’ve lived out here?

PB: The closest I’ve seen to that is the hit-and-miss signs of it that Art Pearson (?) put on his topographic map. You noticed it, didn’t you? He suggested where it went through, didn’t he? There were rock cairns in this place or that place, he mentioned that a little. Beyond that, I know of really nothing. Now, did Art just show where he’d hit and missed, or did he just kind of theorize as to where they went from one to another, across the north fork? Maybe that shouldn’t be on there.

DL: Yeah, he basically said what you’ve said. Did you, at one time, ever work with Art Pearson on that?

PB: No, he asked me a lot of questions, two different times, knowing that I knew… He was getting out to the edge of his project, and beyond area that he could reach. He wanted to finish some of the country and that particular case was the head of Fairview Drainage toward Patrick’s Basin, a few miles back in the mountains. He knew I was well acquainted with it, and he asked me some basic questions, but nothing that he would build, I don’t think, build his super accurate map off of—the topographic.

DL: So he never really consulted you for anything on the trail, the North Trail itself?

PB: No, passing mention was all. When I went down to visit him, when he had it set up in his home, he pointed it out.

DL: I’m really interested in, after listening to this in how would you say that, with your interest in anthropology and geology there, that the presence of the North Trail has influenced you over the years of going out in the hills and looking for artifacts and whatnot?

PB: Maybe not so much, except you can’t help—a person that studies any subject like that—can’t help but meditate on how they lived, how they travelled, what times of year, and what was available to them in food resources. You can’t help but think about that, make some guesses of it.

DL: You think that the trail may have been just a piece of all that interest you’ve had in the prehistoric Indians, historic Indians that we’ve known?

PB: Yeah, it’s an offshoot all tied into the same fabric, kind of, of interest to anyone that’s inclined that way in this country and anthropology.

DL: So, in some regards to the trail exists today, would you say it exists in memory?

Phillip "Bud" Bisnett Interview, OH 167-002, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
PB: Oh yes, that’s what it is. I feel it’s a memory that’s very logical to believe and almost impossible to prove. It’s logical to believe because, as I’ve stated before, you just can’t help but realize those people travelled in a direct line, I imagine, wasted as little time and energy and travel as necessary. And that there would be a reason where they were in almost foreign country, those people who were coming through, didn’t even have an idea of what they were getting into. If they found a trail following through the country, and it would be concentrated on one side because of the steepness of the mountain, would kind of funnel or concentrate their travels in one area. Just seems so logical to me that I believe in the trail, though I can’t prove it.

DL: In those years, have you come across anything that you think is the physical existence of the trail?

PB: Without some doubts in my mind, no, I haven’t.

DL: Would you say that there are many people who still remember the trail, such as yourself, or do you know of anyone?

PB: If I could’ve talked to the earliest-timers that I knew when I was a boy, I think that they could’ve, by just simply the fact that it was sodded over or wasn’t sodded over, and wasn’t of any particular use then as a wagon route through the country.

DL: Do you remember—

PB: Like I was talking to...like I’d be talking to an old neighbor there, that hit the country in the ‘80s [1880s], now I think he could’ve proven by just looking at the ground. This country up here in thinly sodded, glaciated, not particularly rich on the ridges, and slow to revegetate. Certainly, anyone in the ‘80s could’ve made a damn good guess that it was prehistoric or it wasn’t. If they found some ruts that were totally sodded in, you knew they had to have been travois trail.

DL: Up to those times in the ‘80s, how long do you think it had been since the trail had been used frequently?

PB: It wouldn’t be surprise if it was used very frequently, like all through the 1800s to 1850 or something. I think at some point there, they probably got enough horses and took to packing their stuff. But there was always use for a travois for a sick person and heavy belongings. If they didn’t want to travel fast, the travois, you could still move more stuff easier on a travois behind a horse than you could packing it on a saddle on his back.

DL: Do you remember when Choteau was the head Indian agency for the Blackfeet?
PB: Oh no. No. Even when I was a lad, no one really knew Choteau as a fort, as a trading post, the outer edges. You see, those things went out in...The Blackfeet were put north of Birch Creek. What you had was progressive transgression and stealing of land from the Blackfeet from the south, not from the west because it's against the mountains, but from the south. At one time, an early treaty in the, I don’t know, in the 1840s, one of the first treaties...The Blackfeet weren’t too much for treaties. But it was something to the effect that the Missouri river was henceforth and forever the Blackfoot country north of that. Then they had another treaty or two and just, by virtue of the fact that it was damn dangerous to go very far into their land, why, people just kept on the fringe, but moving. Kind of leap-frogging, homesteading, and all. Then, at some point there then, the government saw that, well, they were losing this battle and they advanced into the Tetons and eventually to Birch Creek. That didn’t happen until in the ‘70s, I think, ‘80s maybe. No, I don’t think—

DL: They just would’ve seen that type of progression, would have lessened the use that they may have had on the trail at all, you know?

PB: It would’ve almost...Well, it would’ve stopped it, probably, travois-wise. By the time it got to Birch Creek, I don’t imagine there was any travois movement. By then, they were getting concentrated in a small enough area that they didn’t make these long treks. They were kind of already becoming sedentary people, instead of followers of the buffalo.

DL: Do you remember, perhaps, when the last uses of the Augusta area may have been, or to make it a little more easy, when the areas around here may have been damaged so you wouldn’t be able to tell if there was any tracks going through this part of the country?

PB: Well, the homestead days started in the ‘60s, way east, in ‘64. 1964. But that applied way east of here. There actually was very, very little true homesteading or colonizing in this country against the mountains here until ‘80. There was a little, like there were some so-called squaw men, that married the Indian women, and there was a colony up against the mountains. Well, Buddy Cobb’s (?) home ranch was the headquarters, and there were two or three brothers or related people in that vicinity that were French and married Indian women. Some had large families. Now, that was taking place in the late ‘60s or something. But very hit and miss sort of thing. Really, the colonizing through homesteading didn’t start in this foothills country in a meaningful way until, gosh I don’t know, ‘80, I suppose.

DL: So what we’re really looking at, those people who lived here at that time, most of them are dead or gone. If they would’ve known anything about the trail, we wouldn’t know anything now.

PB: Long gone. When I was a kid, I’m sure there were guys who could’ve...Oh yeah, I know they could’ve told me.
DL: Well, one last thought here. Does the presence of what we call the Old North Trail, does that add any sense of place for you having lived here such a long period of time?

PB: Oh, kind of in the background, I realize that there must’ve been...If there was a north-south trail at all, it had to be against the mountains. In other words, it wouldn’t be 25 or 50 miles east. A continuously-used thing from era to era, for hundreds of years or anything like that, it just don’t seem logical that it would’ve gone through a country where they could just go here and go there and everywhere. It just seems natural to have followed that bold over-thrust area.

DL: So you would think of it as a landmark maybe?

PB: Yeah, of course. It is that, a mountain front.

DL: A place that you called home for most of your life.

PB: Yeah.

DL: Thanks a lot, Bud. That’s all we’ll do for today.

[End of Interview]