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Significance of the Lolo Trail in early western travel

Mark Pershing Hite

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THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE LOLO TRAIL
IN EARLY WESTERN TRAVEL.

by

Mark P. Hite
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Approved:

Paul C. Phillips
Chairman of Board of Examiners

W.P. Clark
Dean, Graduate School
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The Lolo trail which crosses the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana and northern Idaho has had an interesting and varied history. The characters who have used this trail in the past have contributed a great deal to the growth and settlement of the west. The movements that these people have figured in have been of great significance to the states of Montana and Idaho as well as the northwest.

In order then, that the part played by the Lolo trail in early western history may be better understood, and its great importance recognized, it is the purpose of this paper to compile a general history of the Lolo trail from its inception as an Indian thoroughfare to the present, and to dwell especially on the journals and accounts of the early westerners who have had occasion to use the trail in their travels during early western times.

It is the hope of the writer that this paper will give to the reader a deeper appreciation of the role of the Lolo trail in the exploration and settlement of western Montana and northern Idaho.
Chapter I

PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE BITTERROOT MOUNTAINS

The Bitterroot Mountains which are an important part of the Rocky Mountain system are part of the compact mountain mass of Idaho mountains and inseparable from the Clearwater, but being a linear range, in some ways distinct in character, it requires separate description. The Mountains between Lolo Pass on the north and Nez Perce Pass on the south rise rather abruptly from 1,000 to 3,000 feet above the Bitterroot Valley on the east. An altitude of about 9,000 feet above sea level is fairly constant among the higher peaks and crests. However, the height increases towards the south where Trapper Peak rises to 10,175, the "saddles" or passes between these peaks are generally between 7,000 and 7,500 feet high.

These mountains while not remarkable for great heights, are among the most characteristically Alpine of the United States. Everywhere the effects of Alpine glaciation are prominent. What with precipitous cirque and valley walls at high levels, swamps in U-shaped valleys and a close-set jungle of pine and underbrush in the gorges, the region is all but impassable.

In fact this terrain was so rugged that there were only four main Indian trails that crossed this range which stretched a distance of over two hundred miles. These trails were the only feasible passageways from the headwaters of the Columbia River to the upper Clarksfork

River valley, which in turn provided an easy route to the foothills of the continental divide and the numerous passes that led to the headwaters of the Missouri River and the eastern plains. From south to north these passageways were known in the early days as the Nez Perce, Lolo, St. Regis Borgia and Flathead roads.

The Nez Perce, South or Elk City trail, as it was later known, had its western beginning at Harpster, a small town about eighty miles east of Lewiston, Idaho. To reach this trail from Lewiston, the route was east to Lapwai by way of Soldiers Canyon; up Lapwai Creek to Culdesac, up the Reubens Grade and across the prairie by Cold Springs, over Lawyer's Canyon at the lower Cottonwood crossing; thence by way of Grangeville and on to Harpster. After leaving Harpster the trail climbed to the ridge between the south and middle fork of the Clearwater River, and followed the highest country until a descent was made into Newsome Creek; then the way led over the Elk Summit and down into the Elk City Valley or basin. From there it ascended the main divide of the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers to the Nez Perce Pass where it left Idaho and dropped down into the head of the Bitterroot Valley, in Montana. Here the trail split into two divisions, one led south to what is now the Lemhi Country; another went north down the Bitterroot Valley to Missoula and the Flathead Country.

This Nez Perce trail was the route followed in the sixties when the placers of Elk City were discovered, and it was the favorite route of the white man in his travels to the rich diggings of Bannack, Alder Gulch and other early Montana mining camps. It was also the route

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followed by the Indians from Oregon points, for the Salmon River dwellers, and for those Indians who resided on Camas Prairie when they traveled to the buffalo country in Montana, or went to visit the Indians of the upper Salmon River country around Salmon City.

Fifty miles north of where the Nez Perce Trail strikes the Bitterroot valley, the Lolo trail crossed the Bitterroot range in the same general east and west direction as the Nez Perce trail. The Lolo trail like the Nez Perce trail had as its western terminal Lewiston, Idaho. The trail followed up the Clearwater River some sixty miles to the Kamiah Valley. At Kamiah the trail left the river and climbed to the main ridge between the north fork of the Clearwater and its other northern branch, the Lochsa. The road lay from this point, in an easterly direction for about a hundred miles, until it crossed into Montana by way of Lolo Pass. After reaching the Pass, the trail followed down Lolo Creek until the main Indian road was encountered where Lolo Creek empties into the Bitterroot River.

At first the western beginning of the Lolo trail was not at Lewiston, but at old Fort Nez Perce on the Columbia River near the little town now known as Wallula, Washington. Goods would be shipped up the Columbia to the Fort; then unloaded and hauled over land by horseback. Later on boats went up the Snake River as far as Lewiston, where they were unloaded and their goods taken up the Clearwater via the Lolo trail by

The origin of the word Lolo seems to be a controversial subject. One theory is that the term Lolo was the corruption of the name Lawrence by the Flatheads who had no R in their language; hence the word Lawrence would appear as Lolo in the Flathead tongue. An old trapper by the name of Lawrence was said to reside up the Lolo near Graves Creek and it might be he, who the Creek is named after. Paul C. Phillips says more than likely the term Lolo was derived from the French term Le Louis, or Lewis Creek named after the leader of the Lewis and Clark expedition.
means of horses.

The third trail over the Bitterroot mountains was the St. Regis Borgia route which paralleled the Lolo trail from twenty to a hundred miles to the north. This trail was primarily an Indian trail and hardly had any white traffic over its length, until Captain Mullan, of the Army Engineers, cut a military road through that area in 1869. Even after this road was constructed, the territory was so difficult of travel that the road was abandoned and the area virtually deserted until the opening of the Coeur d' Alene mines in the 1890's. The western beginning of the St. Regis Borgia Trail was at the Spokane Prairies about two hundred miles north of Lewiston, where the Nez Perce and Lolo Trails started. The road followed eastward along the Coeur d' Alene River until reaching Coeur d' Alene Lake. The trail then skirted the northern edge of the lake and crossed again to the Coeur d' Alene River by way of Wolf Prairie Creek and Fourth of July Canyon. The road then followed up this river to its headwaters and crossed a lateral ridge of the Bitterroots to the source of the St. Regis Borgia River; thence down this river to its junction with the Clarksfork River at present day St. Regis, Montana. From this point the trail crossed the Clarksfork at Bitterroot Crossing and continued up that river to Missoula.

The fourth and easiest route through the Bitterroots was known as the Clarksfork River Valley road or the Flathead trail. This road like 4. Coeur d' Alene. French term meaning heart of an owl. This term was applied to the Indians around the lake of that same name by the early fur traders. It was supposedly used to designate these Indians who were considered sharp traders by the French. It could have been the reverse however, as the Indians probably had more occasion to use this description about French trading practices.
the St. Regis Borgia Trail had as its western terminal the Spokane Prairie country. From this prairie, the trail turned northeast by way of Spirit Lake and reached the Clarksfork at Sineacateen Crossing, an early Indian ferry located near present day Laclede, Idaho. After crossing the Clarksfork, the trail turned almost directly east and followed the north bank to Pend d' Oreille Lake. The trail bordered along the northern edge of the lake and rejoined the banks of the Clarksfork River at the eastern end of the lake. From this point the trail entered the narrow Clarksfork River valley between the Cabinet and Bitterroot Mountains; followed the river for over a hundred miles until the mouth of the Flathead River was encountered where it joined the Clarksfork. The trail then continued up the Flathead River to where Jocko Creek joined the stream; and up this meandering brook to its headwaters and over a mountain ridge to once again join the main Clarksfork in a large natural amphitheatre known as the Hellgate Ronde. At this point the main Flathead and St. Regis Borgia came together, as well as the northern branches of the Nez Perce and Lolo Trails. From Hellgate the combined trails followed eastwardly up the Clarksfork River and crossed the Continental Divide to the buffalo country located near the three forks of the Missouri River.

The routes just described are, as has been said, the only practical

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5. Pend d' Oreille. Another French term applied to the Indian of northern Idaho. The term meant Ear Pendant and was probably used because some of the Indians of that area were in the habit of wearing earrings of bone or shell.

6. The early French fur traders called this natural basin, formed by the junction of five valleys, Porte de Enfer or Gates of Hell, because of the sanguinary battles between the Blackfoot and Flathead Indians that often occurred in the narrow valley, which was the eastern exit of the bowl.
ways to cross the Bitterroot mountains. The Nez Perce, Lolo and St. Regis Borgia routes were very rugged and steep and as a consequence were not as heavily traveled as the longer Clarksfork River route. Then too, the Clarksfork route or Flathead Trail, even though it was from two hundred to sixty miles farther north than any of the other routes, enjoyed a moderate winter climate. This road was open most of the winter from the deep snow and ice which closed the other three trails almost eight months out of the year. This factor also explains the greater traffic over the Clarksfork River route. Another explanation for the popularity of the Flathead trail was the location of fur posts and pasture grounds at frequent intervals over its course. Pasturage was at a minimum on the other three trails and there were no way stations or posts until a much later period. In view of the advantages of travel over the Clarksfork trail, it is surprising that the other roads were used as much as they were. The part that the Nez Perce, St. Regis Borgia and particularly the Lolo Trail played in early western travel has been over-looked by most students of Northwest history. It will be the object of this thesis to discuss the significance of the the Lolo trail in early western travel and its relations to the other routes over the Bitterroot mountains.

POLITICAL GROWTH OF THE LOLO TRAIL AREA

The Lolo Trail lies in the heart of a country which has been the subject of much international controversy. Five nations have at varied times indicated their intentions of owning it, Spain, France, England, Russia and the United States. Spain laid claim to this section on the basis that a Spaniard had been the first man to lay eyes on the Pacific and that it, the Pacific, had been granted to her as a gift by the Pope,
thus giving her exclusive right to the territory washed by it. England likewise based her claims on early exploration of the Pacific Coast, namely the expeditions of Cook and Vancouver, but in this matter she stressed her policy that a country must be occupied and developed by a nation before she can lay claim to it, substantiating this statement by drawing attention to the fact that not only had British navigators explored the coast but British fur traders had pushed from Canada into the region beyond the Rocky Mountains.

The struggle between Spain and England reached its height over the Nootka Sound, a controversy settled in 1790 by Spain giving up all exclusive rights to this territory. It was also decided that all parts of the northwest coast of America not already occupied at that time by either of the contracting parties should thenceforth be equally open to subjects of both "for all purposes of commerce and settlement, the sovereignty remaining in abeyance."

The Oregon country became of interest to Americans at an early date. Jefferson's desire to learn something of this vast region antedated the purchase of Louisiana. As early as 1782 he had endeavored to gather some material concerning the flora and fauna of this section. Again in 1785 he showed his keen interest by persuading John Ledyard to attempt the experiment of visiting the western side of America, having first traversed Siberia. After the purchase of Louisiana from France in 1803, interest in the Oregon country further increased until the expedition of Lewis and

and Clark resulted. This expedition became the basis for later American claims of the Oregon country. In 1819 Spain transferred to the United States her claims to the Pacific territory north of the forty second parallel; in 1824 an agreement was reached between the American nation and Russia by which the latter agreed not to form any establishments south of 54° 40' in return for the promise of the United States that she would form none north of that line.

In 1818 a policy of joint-occupation was decided on by England and the United States to cover a period of ten years, and so matters stood until the time rolled around for a termination of the 1818 agreement. When this time approached, American interest in the Oregon territory revived somewhat, but the two parties decided to extend the joint occupancy agreement for an indefinite time. In 1844 Polk was elected on the platform "54° 40' or fight" but in 1845 Buchanan diplomatically managed to make the resultant compromise of the 49th parallel acceptable to the majority of the American people. By this time, however, American settlers in Oregon had taken matters in their own hands and in 1843 had established a provisional government at Champoeg, and in 1849 Oregon territory was organized by Congress and for the first time in history the Lolo trail was governed by an American Administration. In 1853 Washington territory was founded and western Montana was divided between it and Oregon and the region containing the Lolo trail was transferred to Washington territory. In 1863 Idaho territory was established and included all of Montana west to the Rocky Mountains.

In 1889 Idaho became a state, completing the political growth of the Northwest and making permanent the territory and state which most of the Lolo trail runs its course through.

The counties which the Lolo trail passes through have been under the control of many different counties as well as the different territories. The first county that the Lolo trail came under was Walla Walla, which was established in 1854 by the Washington legislature in an act that follows:

AN ACT TO CREATE AND ORGANIZE THE COUNTY OF WALLA WALLA

Sec. 1- be it enacted by the legislative assemble of the territory of Washington; that all that portion of Skamania county within the following described boundaries, to wit; commencing at a point opposite the Deschutes river, thence running north to the 49th parallel; thence east along said summit of Rocky Mountains, thence south along summit of Rocky Mountains to 46th degree of parallel; thence west along said 46th parallel to where it crosses the Columbia river; thence along said Columbia river to place of beginning, be and the same is hereby constituted and organized into a separate county to be known and called Walla Walla county.

This county contained all of northern Idaho and the other huge county of Skamania contained the rest of that state. This division existed until the discoveries of placer gold were made at Orofino and other tributaries of the Clearwater river. In 1861 the legislature of Washington territory passed an act as follows, creating Nez Percé county.

AN ACT CREATING AND ORGANIZING THE COUNTY OF NEZ PERCE

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the legislative assemble of the territory of Washington; that all that portion of Washington territory lying within the following boundaries be organized into a county called Nez Percé, to wit; Beginning at the mouth of the Clearwater, thence up the same to the south fork of the Clearwater; thence with the south fork to the Lolo creek; thence with the southern boundaries of Shoshone county to the summit of the Bitterroot mountains; thence south to the main divide between the waters of the salmon river and the South Fork

II. Session Laws, Washington Territory 1854.
of the Clearwater to the Snake river west to the mouth of the Clearwater, to the place of beginning....12

Those boundary lines continued until 1911 when Clearwater county was created by the Idaho legislature, from the eastern half of Kootenai county. Orofino was given the honor of being the county seat.

At present the Lolo trail runs most of its course in the state of Idaho and that portion of the trail that is in Idaho is embraced in the county of Clearwater.

Chapter 2

THE INDIAN AND THE LOLO TRAIL

Just when the first Indian penetrated the barriers of the mountains that surrounded the upper Clearwater and found himself in the land of the Flatheads and near the buffalo country no one will ever know. We are fairly certain, however, that it was either a Nez Perce or a Flathead, more than likely the former. We say this because the Flathead Indian, found on the eastern side of the Bitterroot Mountains, never had much occasion to travel to the west. His source of food and shelter was the buffalo to the east, so we can surmise that the Nez Perces must have been the first Indians over the Lolo trail. There was more occasion for the Nez Perce of the western side of the Lolo trail to move eastward, than for the Flatheads on the east side to move to the west. The Nez Perces depended on annual hunts in the buffalo country to supply them with food and robes. It was probably the desire to find a direct route to the hunting grounds to the east that the first Indians moved eastward over the Bitterroot mountains via a series of ridgetops which we now call the Lolo trail. This trail was probably in existence some time before the arrival of Lewis and Clark. They remarked several times in their journals, that in favorable locations the trail was deep and well-defined. During the time of Lewis and Clark the Nez Perces had horses in uncounted numbers, but prior to the advent of the horses it is highly improbable that the Lolo trail saw much travel. There are traditions that before the horse came the Nez Perces used the dog as a beast of burden. But these animals were too small for mountain packing or hitching to the travois and if the Indians had gone to the buffalo ranges to hunt they could have brought back very little of
the jerked meat with dogs. We know the horse was introduced into America by Cortes in 1520. From that time onward this animal gradually worked northward; but it was a slow process. It is improbable that the first horse reached the Northwest much before the seventeenth century and some estimate that it might have been even as late as the beginning of the eighteenth. Travel over the Lolo trail must have been rather light before the advent of the horse, and we could probably say that the greatest Indian traffic over the trail did not occur until the use of the horse became fairly common among the Nez Percé and Flatheads. We could probably say then, in light of the information above, that the Lolo trail was in existence as an important Indian highway only one or two centuries before the explorations of Lewis and Clark in 1805.

If we are to take the premise that the Nez Percé Indians were the first to use the Lolo trail, then perhaps we had better discuss them at greater length in regard to their history, habitat and customs.

There seems to be no information as to where the Nez Percé Indian originated. We know, however, that they called themselves Lumipor, but this name seems never to have acquired a hold in the usage of outsiders. They apply this term to the tribe as a whole, having other names for the geographical division. The name, however, is in no sense a stock name and does not include the neighboring tribes which speak a related language. There is apparently no native term that embraces the whole stock. The word Sheaptin, which now supplies this need, is of Salish origin, and was used by the earliest fur traders as the name for both the Nez Percé nation and the Snake River. It is the name given the Nez Percé by the Spokane Indians. The word takes different forms, such as Saptin, Sapetens, Shawpetins, Chohoptins, Shaw-haptins, etc.
The word Choptamiah, much used by Lewis and Clark, may have been obtained from the eastern Salish or corrupted from the Indian word T-supmitpelum. The word Choptamiah seems not to have been used after Lewis and Clark except on their authority. The name Nez Perce is a translation into French of a Stouan designation said to be tsupmitpelum. This referred to an early custom of wearing a dentalium shell through the septum of the nose. Lewis and Clark sometimes called the tribe Pierced Noses, and mention explicitly the occasional wearing of the shell. Ross said the people are called Pierced Noses from the custom "of having their noses bored to hold a certain white shell like the fluke of an anchor". This matter of the name of the Nez Perces appears to be a very controversial question. The name Pierced Nose seems to be a misnomer as the Nez Perce Indians themselves have denied ever piercing their noses. It is true, the lower Columbia Indians pierced their noses and it might have been that Lewis and Clark observed a lower Columbia Indian with this ornament, visiting the Nez Perce and so applied the term to the tribe in general, or another explanation which seems logical could be as R. G. Bailey of Lewiston explains:

When the expedition (Lewis and Clark) reached the Nez Perce country they had interpreters from the Shoshones who could readily converse with the Nez Perces and understood perfectly the western Indian sign language. Frequently the Nez Perces in conversing would close the right hand leaving the index finger extended. The hand would then be shoved across the face with the index finger underneath the nose. This was the sign for their name, but had no reference to piercing of the noses, as was easy to assume was the case.

The Missionaries and the Indians concerned say that the name is a

15. Bailey, R. G., op. cit., page 152
mismomer because they have never known a Nez Perce to pierce his nose. However, the fact remains that they are still called Nez Perces, whatever explanation is correct.

Linguistically the Nez Perces are connected with several important tribes living west of them. The best known of these related tribes are the Palouse, Walla Walla, Yakima, Klikitat, and Tenaono. The relationship is clear and is seen in social intercourse and similarity in culture as well as in language.

AREA OCCUPIED

The range of the Nez Perces extended from the Bitterroot Mountains on the east to the Blue Mountains on the west, between latitude 45 and 47. Thus while mostly in Idaho, they extended a considerable distance into Oregon and Washington, the exact boundaries are in many places difficult to determine, since the area actually inhabited was only a small part of the territory under Nez Perce control. The permanent settlements were situated only along the rivers. In the south the villages extended a considerable distance up Salmon River, at least as far as Slate Creek and in all probability as far as the western line of Lemhi county. On the Snake River the mouth of the Imnaha seems to have marked the southern limits. On the southwest the boundary line of the Nez Perce area circled the drainage basins of the Imnaha and Willowa Rivers and crossing Grande Ronde river above the mouth of Willowa, ran north along the crest of the Blue mountains to a point on the Snake river near the mouth of Tucannon Creek. On the north it followed the divides at the heads of the short streams flowing into the Snake and Clearwater Rivers till it reached the Bitterroot mountains, thence southward; these high ridges formed an effective barrier boundary on
These then were the Indians who were the first to use the Lolo trail. The usage of the trail was primarily to go to the buffalo country. All the Nez Perces did not make the annual excursion over the trail to the buffalo, only the upper Nez Perces who inhabited the headwaters of the Clearwater as far west as Lapwai. Indians below this locality hardly ever went to the buffalo country and were known as the Lower Nez Perces. These excursions over the Lolo trail occurred every spring and returned after one year, two parties, one going and one returning, usually meeting on the way. The Braves who were going for buffalo would gather their women and children together along with a substantial supply of Camas and Kouse roots, smoked Salmon and perhaps some dried meat from the deer or bear. Tepee lodges were folded and taken along with the group. The Indian group would start out early in the morning, traveling leisurely up the Clearwater. The valley at Kamiah was the taking-off place for the Lolo trail, so some time would be spent there repacking and putting everything in order for the ascent of the ridge after fording the Clearwater. On the point of departure the next morning the Brave would be mounted on his favorite war horse, usually all white for this type of horse was in greatest demand. Next in line were the white speckled, the pinto, and at last the solid color sorrel or roan. The Brave had many other horses besides his war horse; these preceded the caravan and were herded in a group by young men and women. The squaws brought up the rear; they usually walked but often rode as most of the supplies were carried on the back of the horses.

The hunting departure was a merry time. Instead of the dignified

taciturn manner that was his characteristic around the white-man, the Indian when with his tribe was loquacious, merry and very playful. He would dash ahead at a mad gallop in a race with some other Brave or play tricks on the riders in front or back of him. He was constantly laughing, chattering, and boasting which made the caravan appear as a very jovial and happy pilgrimage.

The first camp after leaving Kamiah was Weippe Prairie where grass and water were found in abundance. Game and Camas were plentiful and a large open meadow made a good camping spot. The next morning the group would be up early and on their way; their camping spot that evening would probably be near the forks of Collins or Lolo Creek.

The next day's journey would find the party near Weitas meadow where camp would be made for the third night. After leaving Weitas meadows the trail became very steep and difficult because of fallen timber and precipitous slopes. The Indians would camp the next day near Bald Mountain or perhaps if they had pressed their horses hard they would make Howard's Camp. Here again water and grass were plentiful and a goodly space was available for the lodges and fires of the Indians. Early the next morning the party would set out, a short time later they would pass over a high mountain where perhaps a message would be left in a pyramid of rocks for a following tribe or party. This spot was known as the "Indian Post Office" by the whites later on for the apparent reason listed. The next day's camp would be at the western extremity of Glade Creek or Packers Meadow as it is known at present. The day following the Indians turned in a general northerly direction, ascended Camp Creek and crossed

17. This creek is on the eastern slope of Lolo Pass; it is to be differentiated from Travelers Rest or Lolo Creek, on the western side of the pass, that drains into the Bitterroot river.
18. So named later when O. O. Howard used it as a camp when he was pursuing Chief Joseph over this trail in 1877.
the Lolo Pass and found themselves on the headwaters of the Lolo Creek. A short distance north of the pass they reached the warm springs where everyone dismounted and plunged into the hot water for a very welcome sweat bath. Camp would be made at this point and the rest of the day spent in bathing and preparing food. A new attitude would be noticed among the Indians now. They would be alert and watchful; conversation and merrymaking would be at a minimum; scouts would travel ahead of the main party; the horses were herded close together and sentries would watch throughout the night, for the Indians were approaching close to the buffalo country and the dreaded Blackfeet might steal their horses or make a surprise attack on the party. The camp would be broken early next morning and the party descended Lolo Creek to its junction with the Bitterroot River. Perhaps at this point the Nez Perces would meet their allies, the Flatheads, and a council would be held, where the pipe of peace would be passed from hand to hand, each Brave taking a puff, then handing it to the next man in the circle. The Flatheads might join the party at this point and accompany them to the buffalo country or else they might tell the Nez Perces that a large force of Blackfeet were lying in ambush where the Clarksfork River enters Hell-gate from the east. If this were so the Indians would turn to the right and ascend the Bitterroot River to its headwaters at Sula or Ross Hole; then cross the divide over Gibbon's Pass and follow down Big Hole River to its junction with the Jefferson River. This river was in turn descended until it joins with Ruby Creek to form the main Jefferson River. The Indians at that point found themselves at the edge of the buffalo country and when the three forks of the Missouri were reached the hunt commenced.

Another way to reach the buffalo country without risking a battle
with Blackfoot Indians who frequented the Hellgate, was for the Indians to turn south up the Bitterroot River a distance of about fifteen miles, then turn east up Three Mile Creek near present day Stevensville and cross the Sapphire Mountains until Flint Creek was reached. Here they would follow the creek to its mouth and rejoin the main trail near what is now known as Drummond, Montana. Still another way over the Continental Divide and to the buffalo country was to continue east from the headwaters of Flint Creek and over the divide by either Anaconda or Deer Lodge Pass.

When at the junction of Lolo Creek with the Bitterroot River the Indian had no reason to suspect hostile Blackfeet or other Indians in the Hellgate; they would have turned left, descended the Bitterroot to its junction with the Clarksfork; cross that river and continue east on the north bank until the Big Blackfoot River was encountered; then follow up that stream to its headwaters and cross the Continental Divide by either Lewis and Clark or Cadettes Pass. After the divide was crossed they would find themselves on the headwaters of the Dearborn River.

Down this river to the buffalo country was only a day's journey. This latter road we are describing was known to the Indians as Cokala-hish-kit or the "Road to Buffalo".

After spending the spring and summer in the buffalo country, the Indians would begin the long trip back to the Clearwater in the fall. By that time, if the hunt had been successful, the horses were loaded to capacity with the more tender portion of the buffalo, such as the tongue and rump. This meat was dried and smoked by the squaws during the summer while the men-folks were hunting. If the party had not been molested or the horses stolen by the Blackfeet the caravan returned
to the Clearwater exulting in a successful hunt. Sometimes, however, these hunting expeditions met with tragedy. Quite frequently the Blackfeet would steal all their horses and put the Nez Perce to death.

The Nez Perce and particularly the Flathead were courageous and powerful warriors but the Blackfeet had access to guns from the trappers and fur traders and the consequent superiority in arms nullified the fighting prowess of the Nez Perce.

The Columbia plain Indian and particularly the Shastapian used the Lolo trail on his annual hunting expeditions to the buffalo country; it is safe to assume, then, that considerable of the good and bad traits and influences of the white man and the Indians to the east could have reached the Nez Perce Indians through the Lolo, or its neighbor the Nez Perce trail. Due to the contacts of these annual hunting parties, probably the first guns reached the Nez Perce over the Lolo Trail, and it would be safe to conjecture that the Nez Perce received his first horse from the plains Indians on one of these hunting trips. No one knows for certain how the first horses reached the Nez Perces. They could have obtained them from the Columbia River Indians. The writer thinks the more plausible theory is that the plains Indians had horses before the Columbia River tribes, and as the Nez Perceas were in contact with the Indians of the plains on a yearly basis they would be more apt to observe and obtain their first horses on the plains of eastern Montana.

We know for certain that the first white man in the persons of Lewis and Clark came to the Nez Perces over the Lolo Trail.

The Indians of the upper Clearwater considered the Lolo Trail as a direct route leading to the buffalo country. It must have been quite significant in their culture because it was their medium for contact with the plains Indians, who could have supplied them with their first horses
and perhaps their first guns. These things could have come to the Nez Perces over the Nez Perce trail farther south, but geographical directness must have made the Lolo Trail more popular with these Indians, and explained why in 1805 the Indians led Lewis and Clark over the Lolo Trail rather than the more convenient Nez Perce route.

The Indian hunting excursions over the Lolo Trail continued on until about 1875. By this date the Bison had largely disappeared from the plains of the Missouri and the majority of the Nez Perces had been forced to remain on their reservation at Lapwai.
Chapter 3

THE LOLO TRAIL OF LEWIS AND CLARK

The Lolo trail first became known and traveled by the white man when Lewis and Clark camped at the mouth of Travelers Rest or Lolo Creek on September 9, 1805. The captains had left St. Louis on the 14th of May in 1804 with 45 men, and credits and equipment to the amount of $2,500.00. They spent their first winter of the journey in the Mandan Indian villages near the city of Bismarok, North Dakota. In the spring they left the Mandans and ascended the Missouri River to the forks at Three Forks, Montana. From there they followed the Jefferson river to its right hand fork, ascended this fork to the junction of Horse Prairie Creek, then followed Horse Prairie Creek to its headwaters and crossed the continental divide at Lemhi Pass. Captain Clark made a reconnaissance down the Salmon river but gave the route up as impractical and dangerous. The main party then went down the Salmon as far as Boyles Creek, cut across the ridge to the north fork of the Salmon, followed up that stream to its source and crossed the continental divide once more and found themselves at the head of the Bitterroot River, until they reached the mouth of Lolo creek or Travelers Rest creek as they so aptly called it on September 9, 1805, where we will follow them across the Bitterroots by way of the Lolo trail.

It was inevitable they would appear at the Lolo trail, considering the route they used to travel to the west. The Missouri River was and still is, one of the favorite routes for overland travel to the Northwest. Anyone traveling up the Missouri before the modern roads and byways of today would naturally follow the course of the Missouri River to its headwaters. At Three Forks the Missouri branches into three streams. The principal stream of the three’s the Jefferson River whose course
takes one to the top of the Continental Divide, once across the divide via Gibbon's Pass the traveler would be at the headwaters of the Bitterroot. Following down the Bitterroot valley the traveler finds himself at the mouth of Lolo creek. The route is natural and is probably the most direct way to the headwaters of the Columbia and the Pacific ocean. There has been some question as to why Lewis and Clark had not taken the southern Nez Perce trail or the route of the Clarksfork River after they crossed the continental divide. The answer to that is simple. The Lolo trail was the best known to the Indians they were in contact with, and of course that would be the one they would recommend when the explorers asked them how to get to the great river of the west that flowed into the Pacific ocean. As to the easiest of the three routes, the Clarksfork River route would have qualified unreservedly, although it would have proven more circuitous than the other two. But the important fact remains that the old Shoshone Indian that Lewis encountered on the Beaverhead River and hired as his guide was familiar with the Lolo trail and thus led the explorers to the Columbia over that route. R. G. Bailey, the author of The River of No Return, says he cannot figure out why Lewis and Clark did not take the Nez Perce Pass. Surely if this pass were as important as Bailey thinks, some of the Shoshone Indians that Lewis met on the Beaverhead would have recommended it to the explorers. Nowhere in their journals is anything mentioned about the Nez Perce Pass or any hint given as to its existence. Granted the Nez Perce Pass was a fairly direct route to the Snake River Plain, still the Lolo Trail was the main Indian highway and consequently was more familiar to the Indians of that area. That was why Lewis and Clark were at the junction of Lolo Creek and the Bitterroot Rivers on the 9th day of September in 1805 instead of on the Nez Perce or Clarksfork routes.
The expedition camped at the mouth of Lolo creek for a day and prepared to cross the Bitterroots by ascending the stream to its source.

On the afternoon of September 11th, the party started what was to prove the most difficult part of their journey to the west coast. The journal entry for that day is as follows:

Sept. 11th Wed. 1805

A fair morning wind from the N. W. we set out at 3:00 o'clock preceded up on the travelers Best Creek accompanied by the Flathead (or Tushapaws) Indians. About seven miles below this creek a large fork comes in from the right and heads up against the waters of the Missouri below the three forks. This river has extensive vallies of open leave land, and passes in its whole course through a vallie, they call it Valie Plain River (Chicarlusket we call it the East Fork of Clarks River) our guide tells us a fine large roade passes up this river to the Missouri. The loss of 2 of our horses detained us until 3 o'clock p.m. and Flathead Indian being restless thought proper to leave us and proceed on alone, sent out the hunters to hunt in advance as usual. We have selected four of the best hunters to go in advance to hunt for the party. This arrangement has been made long since. We proceeded on up the creek on the right side thro a narrow valie and good road for seven miles and Encamped at some old Indian lodges, nothing killed this evening, hills on the right high and rugged, the mountains on the left high and covered with snow. The day very warm.19

The travelers were up at dawn the next morning and continued their journey up the creek at seven o'clock in the morning. Clark records in his journal of September 12th the following:

A white frost set out a 7 O'clock and proceeded on up the creek, passed a Fork on the right 20 on which I saw near an old Indian encampment a Swet house covered with earth at 2 miles assended a high hill and proceeded through a villey and thickly timbered country for 8 miles and on the right of the creek, passing several branches from the right of five clear water and stuck at a fork21 at which place the road forks, one passing up each fork. The timber is short and long leaf Pine, Spruce

20. Present day Woodstead Creek about 8 miles up Lolo creek.
21. Present day Grave Creek. The road to Alberton and the Clerksfork River crosses the ridge at this point at right angles to the trail.
Pine and Fir. The road through this hilly country is very bad passing over hills and through steep hollows, over falling timber and etc. Continued on and passed some most intolerable road on the sides of the Steep Stoney Mountains, which might be avoided by keeping up the creek which is thickly covered with under growth and falling timber, crossed a mountain 8 miles without water and encamped on a hill side on the creek after descending a long steep mountain. Some of our party did not get up until 10 o'clock P.M. I made camp at 8 on this road and particularly on this creek the Indians have peeled a number of Pine for the under bark which they eat at certain Seasons of the year, I am told in the spring they make use of this bark, our hunters killed only one Pheasant this afternoon. Party and horses much fatigued.22

Early on the 13th the party reached the Hot Springs, a determinable point of great importance in their route across the range. There are two sets of Hot Springs here and it is only in the record of the compass courses of the party on the return, in 1806, that anything is said that makes it unmistakably clear which springs were visited.

Less than two miles above the explorer's camp of the 12th Travelers Rest Creek forks, the northern branch bearing the name of Granite Creek. Just above the forks, on the latter creek, among a maze of huge granite boulders, the Granite Hot Springs pour forth. On the other fork, the Travelers Rest, or Lolo Creek proper, half a mile perhaps by the trail across the hill and somewhat farther as the creek and road run, are what are known as Boylea Springs and these are they to which the journals of the explorers allude to when Clark says in his entry of the 13th---

I find this water nearly boiling hot at the places it spouted from the rocks (which are a hard coarse grit and of great size the rocks on the side of the mountain of the same texture). I put my finger in the water, at first could not bear it in a second....23

After leaving the warm springs the travelers reached the head of Lolo Creek, crossed the Lolo Pass and proceeded down Pack River and camped at the lower end of the meadows.

23. Ibid., page 64.
24. Lewis and Clark called this creek Glade Creek, which the writer thinks is much more appropriate name than Pack Creek. Although the road runs through the middle of the glades now, one can still see why Lewis
Lewis and Clark now are on the source of the Lochsa river; it is the second time they have reached Columbia waters. The journey the next day is very puzzling to people who know the Lolo trail. Evidently the Shoshone guide was not too familiar with the trail as he turned almost at right angles to the trail and plunged south down the canyon of the Lochsa. They crossed the Lochsa after following it for about two miles and took to the south ridge, finally returning to the Lochsa or Kooskoeskee as they called it at the forks of that creek and Whitesand Creek. They continued down the Lochsa for two miles farther and camped opposite a small island, at the mouth of a branch which fell in on the right side of the Lochsa. The Indian guide rectified his error of the 14th by taking the party on down the Lochsa for four miles, then left the creek, climbed the steep ridge west of Wendover creek, now called Wendover ridge, and rejoined the Lolo trail proper at the top of the divide between the Lochsa and the north fork of the Clearwater. They continued along this ridge four more miles and camped for the night a little east of Canyon junction.

On September 16th the journey was resumed and seemed to be one of the most miserable days of the entire journey to the coast. The journal of that day reads as follows:

Began to snow about 3 hours before day and continued all day the snow in the morning 4 inches deep on the old snow and by night we found it from 6 to 8 inches deep. I walked in front to keep the road and found great difficulty in keeping it as in many places the snow had entirely filled up the track. At 12 o'clock we halted on top of a mountain to warm and dry ourselves a little as well as to let our horses rest and graze a little on some long grass which I observed (on) the (south)

25. The first time was after they crossed Lemhi Pass.
26. Lewis and Clark called it Colt Killed Creek because it was necessary to kill a colt to feed the party as game was quite scarce.
27. Powell Ranger station is on this precise spot.
knobs steep hills sides and falling timber continue today, and a thickly timbered country of 8 different kinds of pines which are so covered with snow, that in passing thro' them we are continually covered with snow, I have been wet and as cold in every part as I ever was in my life. Indeed I was at one time fearfull my feet would freeze in the thick Mockisons which I wore. After a short delay in the middle of the day28 I took one man and proceeded on as fast as I could about 6 miles to a small branch passing to the right, halted and built fires for the party against their arrival which was at dusk very cold and much fatigued we encamped at this branch in a thickly timbered bottom29 which was scarcely large enough for us to lie leavel, men all wet, cold and hungary. Killed a second colt which we all suped hartily on and thought it a fine meat.

I saw 4 deer today and what is singular snapped 7 times at a large buck. It is singular as my gun has a steel fugee and never snapped 7 times before, in ex mining her found the flint loade. To describe the road of this day would be a repetition of yesterday except the snow which made it much worse...30

The miles traveled on the 17th were few but rough. Lewis and Clark must have wondered to themselves what would happen to the party if much more country such as they had been passing through remained. Provisions were at a low ebb and the morale of the party had sunk to a new low. There was nothing else to do, however, but to push on as rapidly as possible so as to reach the headwaters of the Columbia.

Cloudy morning our horses much scattered which detained us until one o'clock p.m., at which time we set out snow falling from the trees which kept us wet all the afternoon. Passed over several high rugged knobs and several dreans and springs passing to the right and passing on the ridge dividing the waters of two small rivers. Road excessively bad, snow on the Knobs, no snow in the vallies killed a few pheasents which was not sufficient for our supper which compelled us to kill something, a colt being the most useless part of our stock he fell a prey to our appetites. The after part of the day fare, we made only ten miles today two horses fell and hurt themselves very much we encamped on the top of a high knob of the mountain 31 at a run passing

28. This camp is at the Indian Post Office but Lewis and Clark probably did not observe the mounds due to a peculiarity of the trail.
29. This passage had led to much confusion in interpreting the journey of the expedition along the trail. The expedition at this point is away from the main Kooskooskee altogether, a mountain intervening and has struck on a creek flowing northwest. Therefore they are on a separate watershed from that as the main Kooskooskee basin.
31. Not Bald Mountain as Wheeler and C. V. Piper suggest, this camp was probably about 9 miles east of Bald Mountain just east of
to the left. 32

During the camp of the night of the 17th the two captains realizing that their plight was serious, spent the better part of the night talking over what could be done to insure the success of the mission and provide provision for the men who were becoming ill and weak with the reduced fare.

Ever since leaving the Bitterroot River game had been exceedingly scarce. Many people wonder how such a primitive area should have such a dearth of game. The explanation is simple to one who has lived in the mountains for any length of time. When the first snow falls in the autumn the game moves off the high mountains to the creek bottoms and lowlands; as Lewis and Clark for the most part follow the ridge tops it is not surprising that game was scarce. In the summer the game returns to the mountain slopes and ridges to the same place where there was no game in the winter one might find plentiful game in the summer months.

After the long talk of the seventeenth, the Captains decided to divide their forces. Captain Clark with six men was to push on ahead as rapidly as possible to the level country ahead and hunt provisions to send back to the main party. Lewis with the remainder of the party was to follow Clark in easy stages to conserve the strength of the men and horses. From now on the journals use parallel accounts, Clark who precedes and Lewis who follows. Clark’s entry for the 18th reads:

A fair morning cold I proceeded on in advance with six hunters... We passed over a country similar to the one of yesterday more fallen timber passed several runs and springs passing to the right, from the

32. Thwaites op. cit., page 70.
top of a high part of the mountains at 20 miles I had a view of an immense plain and level country to the S. W. and west at a great distance a high mountain in advance beyond the Plain. Saw but little sign of deer and nothing else, much fallen timber, made 32 miles and encamped on a bold running creek passing to the left which I call Hungary creek as at that place we had nothing to eat. I halted only one hour today to let our horses feed and rest.

The main party under Lewis followed behind more slowly and at 18 miles made a dry camp on the ridge, where they had to procure water with difficulty in a deep ravine at a distance of half mile. This camp is placed on the ridge about two miles east of Bald Mountain.

This day's journey with discrepancies in distances and bearing has caused more difficulty than any other part of the route. By checking back on the records of the return journey and on the country itself, the route seems unmistakable. Clark continued on the main divide, past Bald Mountain to Sherman Peak where he got his view of the open prairie. He then continued down Sherman Saddle, up the top of the next mountain, and at this point left the Lolo trail and plunged down the mountain southwesterly into Hungary Creek. Lewis, following him the next day, took the same route. "At a distance of six miles from camp the ridge terminated and to our inexpressible joy discovered a large track of prairie country." Six miles beyond this point he reached Hungary Creek.

It is not clear why the Indian trail now led them to depart from the Lolo trail. Either the old guide had given them instructions that carried them down to the creek, because the old Shoshones had taken that route to fish, or else the Indians wanted to avoid dropping 1,200 feet

33. Sherman Peak.
34. Thwaites op. cit., page 70.
into Deep Saddle, which here breaks the continuity of the ridge, and takes a straight course towards the open country. Whatever the reason, both Lewis and Clark left the main Lolo trail at this point and dropped down the mountain to Hungary Creek. Hungary Creek is the creek formed by the confluence of Obia Creek and Fish Creek which flows into the Lochsa River. The expedition struck it above the forks of Obia Creek and then crossed some of the upper branches of Fish Creek, but apparently used the term Hungary Creek to apply to both forks. The Lewis and Clark map of this portion of the route, which is remarkably accurate, clearly shows the two forks of Hungary Creek with their route up the north fork of Obia Creek.

Following Clark's tracks of September 19th the main party followed along the ridge until they reached the spot where they could see the open prairie to the south. They then turned south, hit Obia Creek at the junction of Doubt Creek and continued up the stream for about six miles. Clark in the meantime proceeded up Hungary Creek and at six miles reached a small plain which is located at the forks of Obia Creek. Here he discovered a horse grazing, on which his men made their breakfast, leaving the remainder hung in a tree for the main party. Two miles beyond this he left the creek, crossed the ridge between Obia and Fish Creek just west of Boundary Peak, cut across some of the upper branches of Fish Creek, a Lolo creek tributary, which they subsequently named Fish Creek. He followed down this four miles; Lewis following it, said two and one half miles, then left it, crossed a mountain, and camped on a small stream running to his left which was doubtless Cedar Creek, a tributary of Eldorado Creek. September 20th, Clark on ahead, the next morning, Clark and his six hunters crossed another divide and at four miles
arrived at the forks of Lolo and Eldorado Creek. He continued down Lolo Creek for two miles, then left it and turned to the westward crossing over the shoulder of Brown's Ridge and came out on Weippe Prairie, a large area of open grass country near what is now Weippe, Idaho. He probably entered Weippe Prairie at its southeastern edge, about three miles south of Weippe. Here he found two Nez Perce Indian villages, where he was received with great kindness. The main party followed Clark's trail up Obia Creek and at the forks found the horse that Clark had so prudently left behind. After lunching on the horse they proceeded 15 miles and made camp on a ridge between Fish and Eldorado Creek. Water and grass were scarce. The main party continued on the next day (September 21) and early reached Eldorado Creek after one and a half miles and followed it down two and a half miles. They then turned westward through thick timber and across ridges to the junction of Lolo and Eldorado Creek.

Two years ago the writer was at Weippe, Idaho trying to find some traces of the old trail south of the town but to my knowledge all traces of the trail have disappeared. Recent burns and new timber cover have precluded finding any trace of this old Indian road. The road evidently was not used very much anyhow, as the main trail swings around to the north of the route taken by Lewis and Clark.

The afternoon of September 21st the party continued down Lolo Creek for a mile below the forks and camped at a small meadow. September 22nd the main party after ten miles traveling reached a Nez Perce village on Weippe Prairie or Quamish Flats as it is known now. Lewis records in

36. Ibid., page 10.
his journal for September 22nd the following account of his happiness in reaching the level country of the lowlands:

...The pleasure I now felt in having triumphed over the Rocky Mountains and descending once more to a level and fertile country where there was every rational hope of finding a comfortable subsistence for myself and party can be more readily conceived than expressed, nor was the flattering prospect of the final success of the expedition less pleasing.37

While Lewis and his party had slowly trailed over the mountains, Captain Clark had cultivated the Chopunnish Indians. These people had not seen a white man before and they were in a state of intense excitement. The Indians received the main party as warmly as the Shoshone and Ootlashoots had before. Captain Clark, after spending a day in the village of the Chopunnish, had proceeded to the main Clearwater or Kooskooskee and established relations with Twisted Hair, the chief of these Indians. On September 22, Clark and Twisted Hair returned to the Weippe village in time to attend the arrival of Lewis and the main party.

The next day the Indians were all assembled and the two officers told them why they had come to their country, where they were bound and that they wished to spread peace and goodwill between the red and white man. Medals and presents were given to the Indians. Twisted Hair invited Lewis and Clark to his lodge that evening and gave the explorers boiled salmon to eat. The next morning Twisted Hair and his followers accompanied the explorers down Jim Ford Creek to Twisted Hair's camp on the Kooskooskee or Clearwater.

37. Thwaites, op. cit., page 85, vol. 3.
38. In her book, The Nez Perce Indians Since Lewis and Clark, Kate McBeth says that when the white men appeared the Nez Perces were going to kill them without further ado. However, there was lying ill in one of the lodges of the Indians a squaw who had been captured by the plain Indians some years before and taken to the Red River country in Canada. There she saw the white men and learned to like them. She called them the "Say-Poo" or "crowned ones". When she heard of the Indian plan she warned them to treat the whitemen kindly and not to harm them.
September 25th Captain Clark and a young man went down the river past the junction of the North Fork with the main stream for the purpose of finding suitable timber for canoes that were to be constructed at that point to float the party on down the Kooskooskee. The spot finally decided on was on the south side of the Clearwater opposite the town of Ahsaka.

Two years ago the writer stood on the narrow neck of land which separates the north fork and the main Clearwater and tried to visualize the camp on the opposite side with all its bustle and industry in the making of canoes one hundred and forty years ago. For several years the stumps of the trees that Lewis and Clark cut down for canoes were still standing but when the Northern Pacific laid its branch line up the Clearwater the last of the stumps was obliterated.

The land opposite Canoe Camp is now used for the storage of telephone poles that the Potlatch Lumber Company brings down from the North Fork each spring. The state of Idaho has a marker at Canoe Camp which reminds the interested passer-by that the first white men in that area camped there on September 26th to October 7th, 1805.

Ever since that day that Lewis and Clark had reached Weippe Prairie and for many days afterwards all of the expedition had been very ill as the result of the change of diet. The roots of the Camas and Kouse did not digest very well in their stomachs after the days of famine on the Lolo trail. Clark kept busy giving the men Rushes Pills, Tarter emetic, jalop, etc.

It is not the scope of this paper to trace Lewis and Clark’s route from this point to the Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. We know that they
embarked on their handmade canoes on the 7th of October and descended the Clearwater to the Snake, which in turn was navigated to the junction of the Columbia near Pasco, Washington. From this point they followed the Columbia to the sea and arrived there on November 7, 1805.

In September of 1945 the writer visited the Sacajawea Museum which is run by a Mrs. Evans, who has collected a great amount of historical objects and artifacts near the old Spalding Mission near Lapwai, Idaho. Mrs. Evans and was talking about the Lewis and Clark Expedition while at her museum. She showed me a canoe which she swears is one of the canoes built by Lewis and Clark. I am inclined to doubt that story as there are no records of the expedition abandoning any canoes in that vicinity. She showed me a canteen that she said belonged to the party. This could be genuine as it does have the clasped hands and tomahawk insignia on it that we know were imprinted on the medals that Lewis and Clark gave to the Indians. There was also a pipe tomahawk which she said belonged to Twisted Hair, the chief we have mentioned before. This, too, could be authentic as the Journals mention on October 7th as they were leaving canoe camp, the following:

I continued very unwell but obliged to attend every thing all the canoes put into the water and loaded, fixed our canoes as well as possible as we were about to set out we missed both of the chiefs who promise to accompany us. I also missed my Pipe Tomahawk which could not be found.

We have followed the first white men over the Lolo trail. The next spring they return up the Clearwater on their way back to civilization. They have spent the winter at Fort Clatsop at the mouth of the Columbia River and in the spring they return by way of the Clearwater River. Their trail is somewhat different on the return journey; they ascend the Clearwater as far as Kamiah valley; there they established what they called Camp
Chopunnish and remained there from May 13th to June 10th as it was useless to attempt to reacross the Bitterroots until the snow had melted and the streams had passed their flood waters. The camp was located less than two miles below Kamiah, Idaho and on the opposite side of the Kooskooskee River. The railway now cuts across the old village flat and the railway bridge crosses the Kooskooskee at the same point.

The explorers had a wonderful time at Camp Chopunnish. The Indians were hospitable, game and water were abundant and the valley itself is a beauty to behold. The men enjoyed this welcome rest along the Chopunnish but when the month of June had rolled around they were impatient to be gone. The Indians warned them not to start too early but they were anxious to start. On June 9th the Captains observed that the rivers are lower and so they decided to set out.

On June 10th they collected their horses and set out for "Quamish Flats" or Weippe. Ascending the river hills they crossed the divide, descended to Collins or Lolo Creek which was swollen and difficult to ford; they then crossed the stream again, climbed the mountain and going northward reached the prairie and camped on the banks of a small creek in a point of the woods bordering the level and beautiful prairie. The expedition remained at this camp from June 10th to 15th. Meanwhile they sent the hunters, Fields and Hillard, forward eight miles to a prairie on this side of Collins Creek with orders to hunt until they caught up. On June 15th the party followed their old trail to Musselshell Creek, but leaving the old trail at that point they reached Collins Creek at a point south from the forks where they overtook Fields and
Willard. Then crossing the stream and the mountains which lie south of the eastern branch at a point about ten miles above the main forks where they camped in a little bottom. On the 16th and 17th they virtually retraced their old trail crossing Hungary Creek twice as they state. In climbing the spur of the mountains leading from Hungary Creek northeast to the main divide between the north or Chopunnish, Fork and the Lochsa Fork of the Kooskooskee, they found themselves.

Enveloped in snow from twelve to fifteen feet in depth, even on the south side of the mountains with the fullest exposure to the sun, winter now presented itself in all its rigor, the air was keen and our hands and feet benumbed...

To proceed therefore under such circumstances would be hazardous or being bewildered in the mountains, and to insure the loss of our horses and even should we be so fortunate as to escape with our lives, we might be obliged to abandon all our papers and collections. It was therefore decided that to venture any farther......... our baggage was placed on scaffolds and carefully covered, as were also the instruments and papers which we thought it safer to leave than to risk them over the roads and creeks by which we came.

Having completed this operation we set out at one o'clock and treading back our steps, reached Hungary Creek which we ascending for two miles till, finding some scanty grass, we encamped. The rain fell during the greater part of the evening and as this was the first time we had even been compelled to make any retrograde movement, we feared that it might depress the spirits of the men; but though they were somewhat dejected at the circumstances, the obvious necessity precluded all repining.

It was a serious and gloomy time but they bore themselves nobly in their disappointments. Again they learned by hard, bitter experience that the Indians knew prevailing conditions better than they, and had spoken the truth to them.

The expedition now retreated to the camp on Quamish flats and sent Drewyer and Shannon to the Kamas Prairie to engage an Indian guide.

41. Ibid, page 282.
The expedition then remained in camp until the 24th of June when again they set forth upon their journey. The journal account of the trip back to Travelers Rest Creek is as follows:

Set out on a second attempt to cross the mountains. On reaching Collins Creek we found only one of our men (Frazier) who informed us that a short time before he arrived there yesterday, the two Indians tired of waiting had set out, and the other four of our men (Gass, Wiser and R. and J. Fields) and accompanied them as they were directed. After halting, we went on to Fish Creek the branch of Hungary Creek where we had slept on the 19th inst. Here we overtook two (Gass and Wiser) of the party who had gone on with the Indians and had been fortunate enough to persuade them to wait for us. During our stay at Collins Creek, they (R. and J. Fields) had killed only a single deer and of this they had been very liberal to the Indians whom they had been prevailing upon to remain; so that they were without provisions and two (R. and J. Fields) of them had set out for another branch of Hungary Creek, where we shall meet them tomorrow. In the evening the Indians, in order, as they said, to bring fair weather for our journey set fire to the woods. As these consisted chiefly of tall fir trees with very numerous dried branches the blaze was almost instantaneous; and as the flame mounted to the highest trees, it resembled a splendid display of fireworks. June 25th one of our guides complained of being sick a symptom by no means pleasant, for sickness is generally with an Indian. The pretext for abandoning an enterprise which he dislikes. He promised, however, to overtake us; we therefore left him with his two companions and set out at an early hour. At eleven o'clock we halted for dinner at the fork of Hungary Creek, where we found our two men (R. and J. Fields) who had killed nothing. Here too we were joined rather unexpectedly by our two guides who now appeared disposed to be faithful to their engagements....In the evening we arrived at Hungary Creek and halted for the night about a mile and a half below our camp of the 16th inst.

June 26th having collected our horses and taken breakfast, we set out at six o'clock; and pursuing our former route (June 17th) at length began to ascend for the second time the ridge of the mountains...on reaching the top of the mountains we found our deposit42 untouched...

It required two hours to arrange our baggage and prepare a hasty meal, after which the guides urged us to set off, as we had a long ride to make before reaching a spot where there was grass for our horses. We mounted and following their steps sometimes crossed abruptly steep hills then wound along their sides near tremendous precipices, where had our horses slipped we would have been lost irrecoverably. Our route lay on the ridgy mountains which separate the waters of the Kooskooskee and Chopunnish, above the heads of all the streams so that we met no running waters. The whole country was completely covered with

42. Cache made on first attempt to travel east on June 17th.
snow, except that occasionally we saw a few square feet of earth, at the roots of some trees around which the snow had dissolved.\textsuperscript{43}

The next day they broke camp early and traveled almost identical country as the day before; on this day the travelers stop at the Indian Post Office which they mention briefly in their journals, as follows:

At eight miles distance we reached an eminence where the Indians have raised a conic mound of stone six or eight feet high on which is fixed a pole made of pine about fifteen feet long. Here we sat and smoked for some time at the request of the Indians...\textsuperscript{44}

On this day the travelers remarked on the wonderful capacity of their guides to remain on the trail although covered for long stretches with snow.

But our guides traverse this trackless region with kind of instinctive sagacity; they never hesitate they are never embarrassed; and so undeviating is their steps that whenever the snow has disappeared for even a hundred paces we find the summer road...\textsuperscript{45}

After some time at the Indian Post Office the travelers resumed their route and at a distance of about ten miles they reached their old camp of September 16, 1805 and continued on for nine miles, covering a total distance of twenty eight miles without taking the packs off their horses’ backs, or giving them anything to eat. The horses the next morning presented a rather gaunt appearance when they were collected and packed to resume the journey. The Indians had promised however, that they would reach grass around noon and so an early start was made. In about six miles the travelers passed the site of their camp on September 15, 1805; a mile and a half further on they passed the point where they had rejoined the Lolo trail at the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. , page 507.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., page 509.
top of Wendover ridge on the western journey, but this time they
remained on the main trail so that the descent down to the vicinity
of Powell Ranger Station they had made on the 14th of September on
their western journey was not repeated. The travelers moved on
another thirteen miles and found themselves on the ridge above the
fisheries. As the mountains here were on a southern exposure, the
snow had disappeared and grass was to be found so camp was made for
the night. The next day, July 29, they continued along the ridge
until at a distance of five miles the ridge terminated and they
ascended to the main branch of the Kooskooskee near where they pre­
sent day Camp Creek joins the main stream. They then forded the
creek and ascended for two miles the steep ascivities of a mount­
ain, on the summit of which they found their old road of the follow­
ing spring coming in. Twelve miles from camp they reached present
day Camp Creek and grazed their horses in the wide meadows found
there. Continuing on their journey seven miles farther until they
reached the hot springs of the fall before. Drewyer had been success­
ful with his rifle and the party was cheered by the pleasing prospect
of venison for supper.

The next morning a deer came to the springs for salt and was
killed by the party before mounting their horses for the journey of
June 30th. The travelers now followed down Travelers Rest or Lolo
Creek on its north side until at a distance of thirteen miles they
stopped on the same creek, at which they had noon camp on September

46. Weirs they had found on their detour on their way to the west
coast.
47. This is Graves Creek.
12th of last year. The road here forks, one branch going north to the Clarksfork and the other continuing eastwardly towards the Bitterroot River.

From Travelers Rest Creek, Clark went south over Gibbon's Pass to the Beaverhead and over Bozeman Pass and up the Yellowstone River where he met Captain Lewis at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri. Captain Lewis went north to the Hellgate and up the Big Blackfoot River and over the Continental Divide, at present day Lewis and Clark Pass. On the eastern side of the mountain he explored the Sun and Marias Rivers and marked the way for future travelers to come on their way to the Pacific.

This closes a very important chapter of the Lolo trail. Lewis and Clark have conquered and mapped it for the others who will come later. They are the first white men to travel the Lolo Trail.

Chapter 4

THE FUR TRADER AND THE LOLO TRAIL

Following Lewis and Clark, the Northwest region was frequented for years only by the traders and trappers, and so thorough were their explorations that no portion of the country remained to be explored after 1840. In their search for beaver these hardy mountain men had covered practically every route nowadays converted into main highways. The Flathead country was no exception to the general rule; in fact, since it was a region rich in furs during the forty years which spanned the height of the fur trade it was frequented at various times by the majority of those whose names have gone down in the annals of the fur trade.

Even though the Lolo Trail was one of the primary entrances to the Flathead country from the headwaters of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, it played a negligible role in providing a thoroughfare for the fur traders. There are several explanations for these hardy individuals avoiding the Lolo trail as a means of access to the Flathead country. One explanation, and perhaps the paramount one was the Lolo trail's reputation for being extremely rugged and difficult to travel. Even the Indians who were generally indifferent to trail conditions were not too happy to act as guides, when anyone suggested the Lolo as a route over the mountains to the Flathead country. The early brigade leaders must have been aware of its barrenness of beaver and its extremely fatiguing course, from the

descriptions found in the different editions of the Lewis and Clark journals which we know was familiar to some of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Company brigade leaders. That Lewis and Clark information was available can be seen when David Thompson remarks in his journals that he had a copy of the Lewis and Clark journals with him for reference when he was exploring the Clarksfork River Valley just five years after the expedition of those intrepid explorers.

Another explanation why the fur traders avoided the Lolo trail was the fact that there had been established at early dates trading posts along the Clarksfork River Valley that made convenient stopping places for the big brigades that trapped for pelts in the Flathead country. Spokane House and Salish or Flathead posts were two of these early way stations that had considerable influence in wooing travel away from the Lolo as well as the St. Regis Borgia and Nez Perce routes. Spokane House was located near present day Spokane, Washington, at the junction of the Little Spokane and Spokane Rivers. David Thompson established Spokane House in 1810 and the year before had constructed Salish House just east of present day Thompson Falls, Montana. Thompson not only had constructed these posts, but had thoroughly mapped and explored most of the length of the Clarksfork River from its junction with the Columbia to the Hellgate Ronde. It is small wonder then, that the fur traders would prefer the Clarksfork route to any of the others. With accurate maps and posts at strategic intervals, thanks to David Thompson, the Clarksfork River route was a favorite with the fur traders.

As has been mentioned before, the Clarksfork route could be used a good share of the winter season because of a more moderate climate
than any of the other more southern routes over the Bitterroots.

Captain Mullan some years after selecting the St. Regis Borgia route in preference to the Clarksfork Valley trail, because he thought the more southern route would naturally have a milder climate, had this to say:

...I would state that had I known in 1864 what I did not learn until 1869, I should have recommended that the section road, from Antoine Plants' to the Hell's gate should have followed, at any cost of construction it called for, the Clark's route instead of the section via the Coeur d' Alene mission. But it was not until a later date, when we had made snow profiles by measuring its depths every ten miles during the winter months, and made a record of the readings of the thermometer on both sides, that we were enabled to form a just comparative judgement of each. I can only trust that the developments taking place so rapidly in that region will yet demand that the Clark's Fork be opened...50

Captain Mullan's observations certainly proved to be correct and his hope that that route be opened was fulfilled when the Northern Pacific railroad used the Clarksfork Valley for their main line to the Pacific coast.

When one considered the fact that from roughly the first of December to the first of July the Lolo and Nez Perce Passes were snowbound, and that the St. Regis Borgia was snowfree only a month earlier than these trails, it is easily understood why the traders and trappers used the Flathead trail in preference to these other three.

Another reason for the popularity of the Flathead Route with these hardy traders, was its geographical relationships to the main supply posts of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies.

The Northwest Company was organized soon after the American

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Revolutionary war by a number of Montreal merchants. This new company had immediately penetrated into southwestern Canada, and with the discovery of Athabsca Pass and the Kootenae River by David Thompson, their proclivities extended southward over the present border into the region of northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. During the early years of the fur trade, furs were sent to Fort William by way of the Pack and Kootanae Rivers. Since Pack River, the start of the trail, was right on the Clarksfork route it was quite important to the traders in that respect. The later fur trade saw Fort Vancouver, on the lower Columbia, becoming the main supply route, and goods were sent over the short-cut across the Spokane Plains to the Company Post at Fort Nez Perce. Even using this route there was a direct connection with the Flathead trail via Spokane House and the Spirit Lake cut-off. This relationship of the Flathead trail in the matter of direct connection with Fort William, Nez Perce and Vancouver also explains why the fur trade used the Clarksfork route in preference to any of the other three.

One cannot say, however, that none of the fur traders used the Lolo trail. John Work, who headed the Snake River Brigade in 1831, unlike most of the fur traders, kept a journal and in it gives an interesting account of travel over the Lolo trail during the time of the fur trade. A good description of fall traveling conditions over the trail can be gleaned from quoting extensively from his journals. On August 18, 1831, Work left Fort Vancouver for a great trading and trapping expedition to the Flathead and Blackfoot country. The expedition

consisted of over forty men in four boats; they reached Fort Nez Perce on August 30th and remained at the fort for some days awaiting recruits and horses from Fort Colville. On September 11th the party left Fort Nez Perce; they proceeded east along the northern edge of the Blue Mountains by an old Indian trail, until they reached the Snake River; they then traveled up the Snake to its junction with the Clearwater and at the confluence of the north and south forks ascended the ridge to Weippe prairie. Works description of his journey over the Lolo trail is as follows:

Sat., Sept. 24. Cold in the morning but fine weather afterwards. Continued our journey one and one-half hours, five miles up the river to a fork which falls in from the northward, where we encamped with some Indians as it would have been too long to go to another good encampment. There is plenty of grass for the horses.

Sunday Sept. 25th continued our journey up the river to where the road leaves the river to strike into the country to Camass Plain. The country hilly and partially wooded. Monday Sept. 26th fine weather but cooler in the morning. Quit the river and proceeded across the country twenty miles E.N.E. to Camass Plains. The road through a woody country, very hilly in the morning but pretty level afterwards. Found some Indians here. It is a great place for collecting Camass.

Tuesday Sept. 27th sharp frost in the night, and cooler in the morning, fine weather during the day. Did not raise camp in order to allow the horses to feed before taking the summit. Some horses were traded from the Indians and some exchanged. It is very difficult to effect any bargains with them.

Wednesday Sept. 28th Sharp frost in the night fine weather afterwards. Proceeded on our journey five and one half hours eighteen miles N.N.E. to a little plain, the greater part of the way through very thick woods and difficult road though well frequented.

Thursday, Sept. 29th frost in the morning fine weather afterwards. Did not raise camp due to one of Satrux children, a little girl who had been some time ailing, dying this morning.

Friday Sept. 30th fog and frost in the morning fine weather

52. Chopunnish or north fork of the Clearwater.
afterwards. Proceeded on our journey eight hours, twenty four miles N.N.E. through continued thick woods and up several steep hills and encamped in a valley where ther is very little grass for the horses and very little water.

Friday Sept. 3oth began to rain a little before daylight and rained all day. In the evening a great deal of thunder with very heavy rain and hail. Raised camp and moved one and one-half hours, four miles N.N.E. to a little valley, where there is a little grass for the horses. The country here has been burnt and is pretty bare of wood.

Sat. Oct. 1st. began to snow in the night, and snowed all day. The bad weather deterred us from raising camp. M. Plante lost a colt yesterday.

Sunday Oct. 2nd. Some snow in the morning cold weather the snow thawing continued our journey eight and one-half hours, twenty four miles N.N.E. over very steep hills and through thick wood and encamped later in the evening in a deep valley with little or no grass and nothing but brambles and briars for our horses to feed upon. We let them loose in the night and expect we will be able to find them in the morning as they cannot travel in the snow. Our Indian guide returned for us this morning; we have now fallen on the great road. There is a better place for encamping on the hill behind us, but we did not know it. Two horses gave up on the way. The snow on the hills is about nine inches deep. Both people and horses much fatigued and completely drenched on arrival at camp. The soft melting snow falling off the trees wets everything.

Monday Oct. 3rd. Fair weather till towards evening when it began to snow. Continued our journey four and one half hours N.N.E. seventeen miles over steep hills, through thick woods and encamped later in the evening in a hill the side of which was clear of woods and where we had the satisfaction of finding a good deal of grass for our horses though it was covered with snow. By daylight all hands were seeking the horses, most of them were found sooner than expected, some of them could not be found during the day the people went in search of them till late, but the one trusted to the other and I think did not seek effectually for them.

Tuesday Oct. 4th snowed thick nearly all day the snow melting a little. Did not raise camp on account of the bad weather and to allow the people to seek the stray horses, they were off in quest of them all day, three of them were found, there are still missing seven...

53. On Musselshell Creek.
54. Deep saddle on Weitas Creek.
55. The Lolo trail as used by the Indians.
56. Present day Bald Mountain.
Wednesday Oct. 5th Snowing most part of the day, the snow melting as it falls.

Continued our route five hours fifteen miles N. N. E. through thick woods and over some hills, one very steep and encamped later in a small swamp with scarcely any grass and that little covered with snow so that the poor starving horses could not get at it. Owing to the soft snow falling and the bad weather the people, and horses much fatigued, a dismal encampment.

Thursday Oct. 6th. Snowed the most of the day. It was late before the horses were found and some of them not till the evening. We nevertheless raised camp and marched four and one-half hours, twelve miles N. N. E. over hilly country thickly wooded and encamped in the evening on the side of a hill clear of woods and very little snow with a little grass, and herbage scattered thickly over it. Our poor horses will be able to feed a little. A few lodges of the people remained behind to seek the stray horses... A horse belonging to L. Paus died in the encampment. Some more horses gave up on the way.

Friday, Oct. 7th. Snowed thick, and cold weather the most of the day.

Proceeded on our journey five and one-half hours, fifteen miles, and encamped where there is a little feeding for the horses on the declivity of a hill where there is a little snow and pretty clear of wood. The people who remained behind came up with the camp. They found all the horses that were astray yesterday, but two cannot be found today. Two of the men, J. Louis and T. Rayburn who went back to a station of the first in quest of the stray horses, but saw nothing of them. The snow on the mountains there is nearly six feet deep, it was with difficulty they could keep the track. We have not yet had the snow a foot deep. The road today lay over hills, one of them very steep, and the road embarrassed with fallen wood.

Saturday Oct. 8th Air weather.

Continued our journey five and one-half hours, fifteen miles over a succession of hills and down a very steep bank to the river, which we left on the 25th of September. Here we stopped for the night though we are among the woods, and scarcely any grass for the horses but we apprehend several of the horses would not be able to get to a little station ahead, but we do not know how far. Here we have no snow...

Sunday Oct. 9th. Rained in the night and forepart of the day.

Raised camp and marched two and one-half hours, a eight miles

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57. Indian Grave Camp.
58. Indian Post Office. Work doesn't mention the pyramid of stones because the trail contours the mountain on the north side.
59. Kooskooskee or Lochsa.
up a steep long hill to a small creek60 with some swampy clear ground. On its banks where ther is a good deal of good grass for the horses, of which they are in much needs. Some of the people remained behind to allow the horses to feed and repose. They said they found a little grass among the hills.

Monday Oct. 10th. Rained and a little snow fell in the night and forepart of the day.

The bad weather detered us from raising camp, morever, our horses are in much need of feeding. This is a good place. Some of the people who were behind camp up, some remain behind still.

Tuesday, Oct. 11th. Very heavy rain all day.
On account of the bad weather we did not raise camp. Though the horses have a good feeding this continued rain is much against them, and a great many of them are very lean.

Wednesday, Oct. 12th. Continual rain and sleet in the night and all day.

Did not raise camp the rest of the people who remained behind came up, they are completely drenched.

Thursday, Oct. 13th. Overcast, fair weather forepart of the day rain in the evening.

Raised camp and proceeded three and one-half hours, eleven miles north to a small plain at hot springs on Saloas River 61 the road today not hilly but very much embarrassed with fallen wood, and fatiguing on the horses. Three gave up by the way and three were lost at the encampment and could not be found, and one lost in the wood. The people who are ahead killed fourteen beaver.

Friday October 14th Light rain in the morning, it then fairied a little, but the rain soon came on again and continued all day.

Raised camp and marched five and one-half hours, fifteen miles north to a little fork which falls in from the westward. 62 The road very hilly and slippery and miry and exceeding fatiguing both on the horses and the people. Some of the horses gave up on the way owing to the bad road and the bad weather. This was a most harassing day both on the men and horses. Some of the people were out hunting but

60. The Glade Creek of Lewis and Clark or present day Pack Creek.
61. Graves Creek, the creek which the road to Clarksford river follows at present.
62. Saloas River, Travelers Rest Creek or present day Lolo Creek draining into the Bitterroot.
Friday, Oct. 15th. Overcast, showery weather. Did not raise camp in order to allow the horses to repose a little and feed after the hard day's work yesterday, they are much fatigued. Those that were left behind yesterday were brought up to the camp this morning. Several of the people out hunting. Satoux killed two keet, Godif one, I. Smith two and Charlie one sheep.

Saturday, Oct. 16th. Overcast, showery weather. Did not raise camp in order to allow the horses to repose a little and feed after the hard day's work yesterday, they are much fatigued. Those that were left behind yesterday were brought up to the camp this morning. Several of the people out hunting. Satoux killed two keet, Godif one, I. Smith two and Charlie one sheep.

Sunday, Oct. 16th. clear, fine, showery weather. Did not raise camp in order to allow the horses to repose a little and feed as there is pretty good grass here, and as we must soon begin night guard. It was moreover, necessary to dry out things, they are nearly rotten. Some of the horses which were left behind were brought up. A part of the people raised camp and moved to a short encampment farther on. Some of the people are out hunting.

Monday, Oct. 17th. cloudy, showery weather. Raised camp and proceeded three hours, nine miles E.N.E. to a nice plain where there is a good feeding for the horses. The men ahead killed beaver and one elk and two beaver.

Tuesday, Oct. 18th. cloudy, showery in the afternoon.

Continued our journey six hours, E.N.E. twelve miles down the river to Bitterroot River. The road good. Here we commenced night guard on our horses. Some of the people were hunting but with little success.

After reaching the Bitterroot River, Work followed Captain Lewis' trail up the Blackfoot River and over Lewis and Clark Pass to the Sun River and the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. His trading party was not successful because of the hostility of the Blackfoot Indians.

Work never used the Lolo trail again nor do we have any record of any of his successors using this route. Work was quite discouraged with the trail and in all probability warned others of its extreme ruggedness.

63. Chiveraux - French for dear.
64. Near Woodman.
There probably were some free trappers and traders who used this rugged road, but as the fraternity of the fur trade was not much interested in letters, no record that we know of exists of any other of the brigade leaders, or any others using this thoroughfare to reach the Flathead Country.
Chapter 5

THE MISSIONARIES

Religion came to the vicinity of the Lolo trail during the era of the fur trader but unlike the fur trade it became a permanent rather than a transitory institution. A desire for religious learning communicated itself to the Flathead Indians due to their contacts with bands of Catholic Iroquois Indians that were sent to the Flathead country by the Hudson's Bay Company. These Iroquois had come in contact with the Jesuits of upper Canada and most of them had become converts to the Catholic religion. In the early 1830's Hudson's Bay Company sent the Iroquois to the Flathead country because of their skill as trappers. These Iroquois told the Flatheads of the Blackrobes who wore a black gown, carried a book, and never married. From these wandering Iroquois the Flatheads received their first conception of Christianity. The Flatheads were converted to the Black Robes religion through the efforts of Ignace LaMousse, usually called Old Ignace to distinguish him from his son, young Ignace. Old Ignace worked hard, trying to impart what information he had at his disposal to the Flatheads. After much effort he decided that they needed the help of a Catholic Father.

During a period of twenty years, four separate pilgrimages were made by the Indians to St. Louis to obtain Blackrobes as teachers. In 1838 their persistence was rewarded when permission was given to Father De Smet to accompany them back to the Flathead country to establish a mission. Ten Flatheads were at Green River to meet him, and the combined party passed through Jackson
Hole, across the Teton range to Pierre's Hole where sixteen hundred Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles were there to meet him. Things looked so promising to De Smet at that point that he decided to return to St. Louis that same season to find means to found a permanent mission. Funds were not available at St. Louis and so De Smet raised the funds himself in New Orleans. On April 30, 1841 De Smet left St. Louis for the Indian country, accompanied by Father Nicholas and Gregory Mengarini and three lay brothers. Some Flatheads met the party at Fort Hall and escorted the Blackrobes up the Snake River. Winding their way over the Continental Divide they reached the waters of the Beaverhead where they met the main body of the Flathead Indians. After a few days rejoicing the combined party ascended the slopes of the mountains, recrossed the Continental Divide and found themselves at the headwaters of the Clarksfork River. They passed through Deer Lodge valley and following the Clarksfork they finally arrived at the present day city of Missoula, then turned southwest and entered the Bitterroot Valley. About twenty eight miles up this valley they halted and made preparations for the establishing of a mission. To commemorate the Blessed Virgin, Father De Smet named the mission St. Mary's, also calling the valley, the river, and the rugged peak to the west in her honor. Only the peak and the mission retain their original designation.

The next year was a busy one for Father De Smet; the mission was constructed of cottonwood logs, and shakes made of cedar served for

shingles. Most of the Flathead Indians were baptized and educated in the ritual of the Catholic Faith. In 1845 De Smet returned from a trip to Europe, bringing with him Father Ravalli. It was Father Ravalli who constructed a small saw mill from the metal tires of wagon wheels in order to cut the posts and lumber that were necessary for the erection and maintaining of supplementary mission buildings. Father Ravalli also sent to Europe for two small millstones and constructed from odds and ends a gristmill that could grind in a day a dozen bushels of grain into flour. Various vegetables and grains were planted and thrived under the watchful care of Father Ravalli and his Flathead helpers. A start was made in the domestic breeding of cattle, hogs, and other domestic animals. The influence of the missionaries steadily grew during the short period mentioned, and Indians constantly visited the mission from all the neighboring red nations. Even the hostile Blackfeet came to St. Mary's Mission.

There are three good reasons why the Lolo trail was not used much by the missionaries; the first and most important reason being that on the western end of the Lolo trail the Reverend Spalding had founded a mission on the banks of the Clearwater at the mouth of Lapwai Creek. This mission had been founded by the American Board for Foreign Missions, a Protestant organization; consequently there was no desire on the part of the Catholic Fathers located at St. Mary's in the Bitterroot, or the Reverend Spalding to communicate with one another. Even though the trail was the most direct route between these two localities because of difference of religion there

was no traffic on the trail by either De Smet or Spalding.

Another reason for ignoring the Lolo trail by the Jesuits was the fact that the new route to the Spokane Plains by the Clarksfork River had been discovered as an easier way by the fur traders. Most of the Missionary travel from the Bitterroot was for the purpose of procuring supplies at Vancouver and the Jesuits found that the Clarksfork River was a much easier route than the Lolo trail.

In 1853 the Pend d'Oreille mission was founded at the head of navigation on the Coeur d'Alene River by Fathers Point and Huet. The Catholic Fathers when traveling used the Coeur d'Alene mission as a resting place or way station so that necessarily routed the Jesuits up the Coeur d'Alene River to its headwaters over Sohon's or present day Lookout Pass. Once over the pass they followed the St. Regis Borgia to its junction with the Clarksfork. At that point the Clarksfork was forded and the trail traveled up the north bank to Hellgate and from Hellgate southwest up the Bitterroot valley to St. Mary's Mission.

The third reason why the Clarksfork route was used instead of the Lolo trail was that the Flathead Indians used the valley of the Clarksfork as their tribal grounds and as the missionaries at St. Mary's were concerned about the spiritual welfare of their wards, they made it a point to stop at the different villages on their way to and from the headwaters of the Columbia.

The influence of St. Mary's Mission on later travel over the Lolo trail cannot be minimized, however. The establishing of a permanent outpost that would give shelter and aid to the travelers, attracted many to that vicinity that otherwise would have probably taken another route. Then, too, the Christian behavior of the Indians that occupied
the territory served by the fort tended to lure the traveler who might otherwise have detoured the area if the Indians were hostile. We know that the settlement and exploration of north central Montana was held up almost twenty years by the hostility of the Blackfeet. The friendly Flatheads had just the opposite effect as far as the Bitterroot and Clarksfork valleys were concerned. White travelers and settlers knew that they would not be molested by the Flatheads or Nez Percés. As a consequence the region attracted fur traders, surveyors, gold-seekers, road agents and other travelers who knew that the doors of St. Mary's mission would be open to them for comfort and shelter on their journey and that the Indians would be friendly and help guide them to their destination. It was these factors that lured Major John Owen to settle in the Bitterroot. It was these considerations that attracted I. I. Stevens and John Mullan to the vicinity of the mission to establish their surveying parties. It was an important factor that convinced Higgins and Worden that Hellgate would be a favorable place to construct a store and later on the first commercial flour mill in Montana.
Chapter 6

MAJOR JOHN OWEN TRAVELS OVER THE LOLO TRAIL

The first permanent white settler in the Bitterroot Valley was Major John Owen. He appeared at St. Mary's Mission in 1850 and as Father Joset was in the process of closing the mission and disposing of the property, the good Father decided to lease the mission and all its improvements to Mr. Owen. The bill of sale dated November 5, 1850 that transferred the property to Major John Owen is the earliest known record of such a transaction in that area. The Bill of Sale contained an agreement that Owen should return a part of his purchase to the missionaries in case they returned to the mission before January 1, 1852. The missionaries did not return in the stipulated time and so Owen became the outright owner on that date.

Little was known about Owen's early life; however we glean the fact that when he arrived at St. Mary's Mission in 1850 he was thirty one years of age and that he had been born in Pennsylvania on June 27th, 1819. Presumably he had served in the Mexican War but exhaustive searches in the War Department records show no mention of his name. How he received the title of Major is also unknown. He probably came to the northwest as a sutler with the troops marching to Oregon under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Loring. These troops spent the winter of 1849-50 at Cantonment Loring near Fort Hall on the Oregon Trail. During the winter or early spring Owen left the troops and began a desultory trade with the Indians,

trappers and immigrants who were on their way to Oregon and California. In the spring or early summer of 1850 Owen appeared in the Bitterroot valley with his wife, Nancy, who was a Snake Indian woman.

Owen's Journal entries of 1850 fail to show with certainty whether or not he had ended his duties with Loring's Column before the purchase of the mission. Some of them indicate that he was already selling staple provisions to white men in small amounts, after the manner of a frontier trader. Others such as those relating to the issuance of rations to the Indians and concerning military drafts and cash transactions strongly suggest that he maintained his military status until the end of the year.

After the mission property was leased to him, John Owen commenced work on the construction of a fort to be called Fort Owen after his name. Stanley, an artist, employed in the Stevens survey of 1853 that headquarterd near Fort Owen drew a pencil sketch of the Fort which seems to be the only drawing of the fort in its first stage of construction. Owen constructed the fort along the lines of the fur trading company forts, i.e. cutting poles to a height of twelve feet, sharpen the ends, then driving them in the ground side by side to form a sort of palisade. Living quarters, blacksmith shops and storage bins were constructed inside the walls and attached thereto. A well was in the middle of the stockade to insure a permanent water supply. Several structures of wood were constructed haphazardly around the outside of the fort, according to the sketch of Stanley. Two blockhouses or bastions were located at each southern corner of the palisade.

sades. In the south wall there was a strong arched gate which was the principle entrance to the fort. There was a smaller gate on the north side which was used occasionally. In 1852 Owen employed some Mexicans to fashion adobe bricks for the walls of the fort and by 1860 the pallsades had disappeared to be replaced by a strong adobe wall from eight to ten inches thick. The interior of the walls were lined with hewed lath and plaster. All the buildings were floored with heavy planks and nearly every room had a large fireplace.

From such headquarters as this Major Owen issued on lengthy trading trips extending from Fort Benton to the east and The Dalles on the west and southward to Fort Hall.

Between the era of the fur trader and the goldseeker Owen was, next to the missionaries, the only civilizing influence in the Bitterroot Valley and western Montana. Owen was not content to ply a transitory trade business; he was going to make Fort Owen his permanent home. Thinking along these lines Owen brought to the Bitterroot valley agriculture and machinery and built a gristmill that was of extreme importance and value to the later settlers. He introduced better qualities of livestock and finer seed. He planted an orchard. He sought for and helped to create better overland roads. He strove to protect the Indians; to alter their earlier methods of living; and to turn them to a settled life as agriculturists.

Considering the fact the Lolo trail was only seventeen miles north of Fort Owen and that it was the most direct route from the Fort to the Columbia River settlements; it is not surprising that Owen used this

70. Ibid, page 10.
route on most of his trips to Walla Walla, the Dalles and Vancouver.
Another reason why the Lolo trail was used frequently by Owen was the fact that the Lolo trail joined the main Indian trail that paralleled the Bitterroot River for most of its length. This Indian trail passed through the land surrounding the Fort, and John Owen utilized this trail almost exclusively when moving either north or south. When Owen was appointed special agent to the Flatheads in 1856, he used the Clarksfork River trail somewhat, because a considerable portion of the Flatheads used that country for hunting and fishing grounds. Then to, Owen had a small agency located near present day Ravalli, Montana that was on the old Flathead or Clarksfork trail. The Nez Perce trail was forty miles to the south of Fort Owen and did not take such a direct course to the headwaters of the Clearwater as did the Lolo. Probably because of these two considerations Owen never used the Nez Perce trail much although he did use this route once or twice that we know of.

As has been remarked before, Owen was an inveterate traveler. He leaves us in his journals an account of his travels over the Lolo trail on a journey to the Dalles in the fall of 1852.

Tuesday, Sept. 21/52 Left Fort Owen for the Dalles party Robinson Crusoe, Nancy, Madam Harris and 2 children and Indian boy nine pack animals. Made a late start the morning being unfavorable orest St. Mary's close to fort and continued down west bank some 12 miles and left trail and turned into the left and a few miles stuck Lolo trail and camped. Packs wet and heavy.71

The next day Owen went up Lolo creek on his journey to the Dalles. He crossed to the north bank of Lolo creek and continued up that stream some eleven miles, then took to the mountains which were covered with snow due to a storm of the night before. After crossing ridge tops for

71. Ibid, page 53.
about eight miles he reached Lolo Fork and there encamped at the small prairie found at that point. He estimates his journey at about eighteen or twenty miles for that day and remarks that the only comfort they have that night is a large log fire.

On Thursday, the 22nd, Owen mentions in his journal that he traveled about 20 miles and camped at a warm springs. This undoubtedly was Boyles Springs. But if he traveled twenty miles the first day and twenty miles the second day he should have been well over the Lolo Pass instead of at the warm springs. These springs are just twenty six miles from the mouth of Lolo creek. Either Owen makes a bad error in his mileage judgements or he was lost a considerable portion of the day. This latter reason is probably correct. Owen never was a good mountaineer and was lost a good portion of the time he was on these trips. He was lost the next day, also, because he relates in his journal that he traveled fifteen miles and camped on Glade Creek. This camping spot isn't over ten miles from the hot springs so Owen must have covered a lot of extra miles in this day's journey. He is confused on his Saturday route because he mentions crossing Lolo fork again; this obviously must be the Kooskooskee or Lochsa, not the Lolo creek. Sunday he seemed to get along a little better, although he complained of the steep climbs, lack of water, and fallen timber which impeded his way. His journal entry for Monday reads as follows:

After traveling some six miles, we reach a very small spring on side of mountain, but not sufficient for stock. Some eleven miles further travel we came down on to a creek branch which we followed down a short distance and camped. There is some grass this is the first water I have seen sufficient for stock in the travel since crossing the river the 25th, excepting a spring on side of mountain some two or three miles this side of creek the trail has been more open
today but very hilly, some rock and but little fallen timber there is but little grass on the route so far not adopted for stock by any means. Coming down one of the backbones today could see a small stream over to the right with small strip of prairie, some 6 or 8 miles off the trail.72

Tuesday Owen was in the saddle about six and a half hours. The road was very rugged and travel was quite slow. Owen estimates his distance traveled at about fifteen miles. A Madam Harris who had accompanied Owen is forced to leave one of her horses behind as he has become winded and exhausted. The next day the party is moving slowly in the vicinity of Sherman Peak, and probably crossed the headwaters of Obia or Fish Creek on that day. The distance would conform and also the distance in his entry which mentions crossing the heads of two fair sized streams. On Thursday, snow that had fallen in the night obscured their trail in the morning and so for fear of losing the trail the party waited until afternoon when the snow had melted to begin the day's journey. The trail became better during the day and the party made fair time considering the few hours they traveled on this day. Friday was a repetition of Thursday, the only exception being that it snowed during the day instead of the night. Owen at this point found the trail very exhausting. He is somewhere west of Sherman saddle, probably on the ridge between Fish and Eldorado Creek. Water is very scarce on the ridge top and Owen is becoming impatient to reach the prairie land of lower Clearwater. A short march was made the next day and Owen felt that he must be near the end of the mountains. His journal in part reads for this day:

...Traveled some 3 hours today to morrow I hope to get out of the mountains as it seems to do nothing else but snow on them.

72. Looksa.
73. Madam Harris must be an Indian woman. No mention of white women at Fort Owen this early.
Trail not good today some fallen timber and plenty of snow. 74

The next day Owen left the rest of the party behind and pushed on rapidly in hope of reaching the foothills. His camp that night is on a tributary of Lolo Creek, probably Cedar Creek; after making camp he sent one of the Indian boys back to search for the women, but it was too dark to find them. Owen estimated his travel at about nine miles that day. His journal for the next day, Monday-, October 4th, records his arriving at Weitus Meadows.

Oct. 4th. Started without waiting for the women and traveled some 5 hours and came down onto small prairie which we followed up. Passed through strip timber and came out on to a much larger prairie75 and camped. Sent Boy back to see after women. Was gone hour came back not finding them. Traveled 6 hours today - grass fine tonight.

Tuesday Oct. 5th. Sent boy back again this morning and after an absence of four hours came up with women. Made a late start followed up several strips of prairie crossed a small mountain and came down to a fine prairie that lets us out on to Clearwater valley.76 Made a horse camp.

Owen was now in the Kamiah valley which is the he- of Lawyers band of upper Nez Perces. Owen mentions stopping at the Indian village and having a pipe of peace with them as well as a feast. He remarked about the presence of agriculture which had been encouraged among the Nez Perces by the Reverend Spalding who had established a mission in 1836 at the junction of Lapwai Creek with the Clearwater.

Owen spent a couple of days in the Indian camp resting and reorganizing this retinue for the trip across the prairie to the head of Lapwai Creek.

From the above account in Owen's journal of the trip over the Lolo

trail, one can see that Owen had as bad a time negotiating the Lolo
trail as Lewis and Clark. After striking the Clearwater River, Owen's
party cut across the Kamas country and arrived at the homestead of Col.
Craig at the foot of Craig Mountain near Cul-de-Sac, Idaho. He then
followed Lapwai Creek down to its junction with the Clearwater which
he followed down the south bank to present day Lewiston, Idaho. He
crossed the Snake at the point where the present day bridge is between
Lewiston and Clarkston, then followed down the Snake about five miles
and crossed the Snake again at Red Wolf Crossing, then took Red Wolf
Creek up to the plain and continued to Tucannon River; then he cut
over prairie to Touchet River and down this river till he hit the
Whitman Mission at Walla Walla about eighteen miles from the Columbia.
At the mouth of the Walla Walla River he reached old Fort Nez Perce
and followed down the Columbia to The Dalles.

The next spring he left The Dalles for Fort Owen on April 28, 1854.
He retraced his western route to the Sierra, and from there crossed the
prairie to the Clearwater. He was admonished by the Nez Perces not to
try the Lolo trail as the snow is still too deep. He tried the ascent
however, crossed the Kooskooskee at Kamiah and climbed the hills to
Weippe prairie where camp was made. The next day which is Tuesday,
23rd of June, 1854, his journals reads as follows:

On the move early and a few miles after making a long and rocky
ascent brought us to the foot of the Mt. (trail). We have had some
trouble from fallen timber which had completely barricaded the road
in many places which we could only move by using the axe. Latter
part of the day (the) snow banks which are not strong enough to bear
the animals so I concluded to camp and tie up to night as there is
neither grass nor water....77

The records of the next day's journey show his running into deep
snow and coming to the conclusion that he will have to retrace his
steps to the Snake and climb the mountains until he reached the
Spokane Plains; there he traveled to the Bitterroot by way of Sohons Pass and the Clarksfork River.

His journal on this day records the following:

Wednesday 24th. In the saddle before sunrise and soon struck the snow.... We camp up on another long drift some two miles in length and about five or six feet deep and not hard enough to bear the horses....78

On Thursday, June 26th, Owen still thought he could find a way to circumvent the snow, and made a brief reconnaissance to find a way around the snow. After several hours fruitless search he reached the conclusion that all he could do was to use another route.

I think there is nothing left for us but a retreat to take the road to the Spokane river, but I fear we will have much trouble from water but to lay idle here for two more weeks would be too much for endurance.79

Owen then, we find, had been in an identical situation that Lewis and Clark were in when they tried to use the Lolo trail in early June. The snow does not disappear from the heights until late June or the first week in July. The Indians knew this but when they gave Lewis and Clark this advice the travelers had to give it a try, anyhow. The Indians had given Owen the same advice and, like Lewis and Clark, Owen had to see for himself. Both parties found that the Indians were right in this respect. The only difference being in the two cases that Lewis and Clark remained until the snow had melted while Owen detoured the snow by using the Coeur d'Alene and Clarksfork River route.

The fort was finally reached on June 22, after incredible hardships over the more northern route. We would presume after all the tremendous hardships of the journey of 1853, and 54, that the Major would

78. Ibid, page 61.
79. Ibid, page 68.
be content to remain at the fort and conducting his trading locally.

But the indefatigable Owen in August of 1857 is saddling up for a
trip to Vancouver and evidently his trip over the Lolo trail to the
Dalles in 1852 had not discouraged him from using that route. Evi-
dently the novelty of the trail had worn off because his journal
entries are very brief:

24th, Monday. Made a start for Vancouver accompanied by Mr. C.
E. Irvine and my two Indian voyageurs Antoine and Charles. Camped on
Lolo Fork some six miles above where it comes out into the Bitterroot
valley.

25th, Tuesday. Road mountaineous with fallen timber traveling
bad. Made five and one half hours and camped on Lolo Fork, 80 again.
Flushed a covey of Blue Grouse, got two shots but bagged none.

26th, Wednesday. Road bad for some eight miles mountaineous
and fallen timber. Traveled five and one half hours, camped at Warm
Springs.81

27th Thursday. Off early in four hours travel we reached quite
a good sized prairie,82 on the divide which after leaving we had a long
tedious and sharp descent on to Clearwater 83 which we crossed and had
a tedious ascent up the mountain again. Our descent after reaching
the highest point had been gradual - most of the way along the backbone
of the mountain after a tedious march of six hours from the prairie
we found what appeared to be an old camping ground. Mr. Irvin soon
found a cold spring some one hundred fifty yards from the trail and we
were glad to camp for the night in the saddle 10 hours.

28th Friday. Road rocky and mountainous some four miles to a
small spring made a tedious ascent down and descent down on to a small
stream in a densely timbered bottom. Came to a small lake crossed a
small stream, found we had missed the trail and stopped early. Five
and one-half hours.

From the foregoing account there is no doubt that Owens had been
lost most of the time since leaving the Lochsa. The small lake he men-
tions must be the "Sinque Hole" that appears in Sergeant Whitehouse's journal

80. This is the fork about 23 miles above the confluence of the Lolo
Creek with the Bitterroot.
81. Boyles Hot Springs now.
82. Present day Packer Meadows are the quamish flats of Lewis and Clark
located at the southern extremity of Glade Creek.
83. Not Clearwater, but Lochsa.
of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

29th Saturday. We soon found the trail we left last evening and we have had a hard day's march making some six sharp and tedious ascents and descents in the saddle eight hours. Camped in a small opening on the mountain. Met some Indians today enroute for buffalo.

30th Sunday. Moved in fair time had a tedious day in the saddle eleven hours. Crossed several tedious ridges in fact it has been mountain ridges after mountain ridges. Met some Flathead Indians returning home camped in a small prairie in the mountain.

31st Monday. Traveling bad bushes wet road hilly with plenty of fallen timber. A very tedious day in the saddle eleven and one-half hours. Passed two creeks some ten miles back. Came out into a good sized prairie and camped all of us quite tired.

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1st Tuesday. Off in fair time made a mistake in the trail soon discovered it four hours travel brought us out to Camish prairie road fair through small prairie openings and along the mountain slopes. We had one long and tedious ascent and descent some ten miles after passing Camish prairie. Camped early on Clearwater. Met the Nez Perce camp. Their crops looked well. In the saddle eight hours.

This is the second trip over the Lolo trail made by Major Owen.

We know that he made a trip to the Dalles shortly after arriving in the Bitterroot in the year 1851 but there are no records in his journal of what route he took. I doubt whether he used the Lolo trail as his journal shows a great deal of bewilderment with the trail on his trip in 1852. Of course Owen did not seem to have an instinctive nose for direction. Even after he had made several trips over the Lolo trail he still loses his way on frequent occasions.

In 1863 Owen used the Lolo trail again on a homeward journey from Fort Walla Walla. On this journey his account is even more brief than the preceding trip. Owen’s travel journals became briefer and briefer as he became more acquainted with his route. There are probably two reasons for this brevity. One reason being that as Owen became more

accompanied to the trail he was able to make the trip in less time. The second reason is that when Owen was drinking (which he did frequently) he was careless in his writings and tended to telescope his days by using a sentence or two for each day. A typical example of this is the following account of his trip over the Lolo trail in 1863 returning to Fort Owen from Walla Walla.

Tuesday 14th. Moved to crossing of Clearwater... Wednesday 15th. Four hours travel from Clearwater Ferry brought us to French Prairie® visited until five o’clock and then traveled three hours to a small prairie in the mountains.® The last three miles of the road obstructed with fallen timber. Mosquitos bad, day very warm, mercury 101 in shade.

Thursday 16th. Traveled ten hours and camped at Saddle® of mountain. The trail today mountainous and much obstructed with fallen timber.

Friday 17th. Eight hours to a spring, halted some two and half hours. After which two and a half hours further travel to the Mountain side Indian camp.

Saturday 18th traveled ten and one half hours and camped on spring on side the mountain. The road today very mountainous.

Sunday 19th. Four hours travel breakfasted halted two hours. Eight hours further travel to a small stream which empties into Lolo Fort. The road today mountainous and fallen timber. Clear hills (Lolo hills) very heavy, animals tired.

Monday 20th. Three hours to Hot Spring. Breakfasted halted two hours, eight hours further travel to small prairie opening® camped met two miners bound for Oro Fino.®

All in all Major Owen covered about 23,000 miles by horseback and foot in his trading trips to the west and east. About five hund-

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85. Ferry was located at Kamiah, Idaho.
86. French Prairie is present day Weippe Prairie.
87. Neitus Meadows probably.
88. Sherman Saddle.
89. Woodman Flats.
90. Gold had been discovered at Pearsor City on the Lolo trail in 1861.
red of these miles were spent on the Lolo trail. From Owen's graphic
descriptions we are once more reminded of the difficulties and hard-
ships of travel over the Lolo trail.

In 1856 Owen was appointed special agent of the Flatheads. He
continued to act in this capacity for six years and from time to time
his responsibility was increased until it included the Flatheads, Upper
Pend d'Oreille, mountain Snake and Bannock tribes.

Owen never approved of the Indian policy of the government and
was frequently outspokenly critical of the Government and its handling
of Indian affairs. Even so, Owen enjoyed the trust and confidence of
the government and was just and sympathetic to the Indians under his
charge.

In 1867 the first immigrants arrived in the Bitterroot valley.
Major Owen had been the first; he had resisted the lures of the gold
camp and remained at his fort, encouraging agriculture and frequently
predicted that the Bitterroot would in time be a valuable agricultural
settlement in the northwest. We know that his prophecy has come true.
The Bitterroot valley is one of the more important agricultural units
in the Pacific northwest at the present time.

Soon after 1871 Owen's mental powers began to fade and he was
brought to the St. John's hospital in Helena. He stayed here several
years and was finally taken to his home in Pennsylvania in 1877. On
July 12, 1889 the Fort builder died, far away from the scene of his
labors. John Owen was a credit to the west and to the nation; due to
his efforts the way of the settler to western Montana was opened.
Fort Owen will be long remembered in Montana and Washington territory
history as an outpost that was a beacon to the immigrant, the gold
seeker, and the traveler.
John Owen's name has been added to the illustrious procession of travelers who have used the Lolo trail in their journeys to the west.
In 1853 the thirty-second Congress of the United States Government passed a law that had tremendous effect on the northwest and the nation as a whole. This law was an act giving the Secretary of War authority to explore the mountains of the west for a practical railroad route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. Section 10 of the Law explains its purpose, as follows:

Sec. 10. And be it further enacted that the secretary of War be, and he is hereby authorized, under the direction of the President of the United States to employ such portions of the Corps of Topographical Engineers, and such other persons as he deems necessary, to make such explorations and surveys as he may deem advisable, to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, and that the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars or so much thereof as may be necessary, be, and the same is hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, to defray the expense of such explorations and surveys.

This authorization was completed on March 3rd, 1853 and Jefferson Davis, who was the Secretary of War at that time immediately made arrangements for personnel to carry out the survey.

Mr. Davis entrusted the expedition to the territorial Governor of Washington, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who was formerly an assistant in charge of the Coast Survey Office. On April 8, 1853 Stevens received his formal orders. These orders for the most part embody his own suggestions, much of them in the very language of his letters and memoirs to Secretary Davis. In fact, he really prepared his own in-

91. Congressional Records 32nd Congress, Second Session, pp. 999-1002.
struct!ons. The following wordings of the original orders show the
magnitude of the task Governor Stevens was entrusted with:

War Department
Washington, April 8, 1853

The War Department being directed by a recent act of Congress
to survey the Several routes of a railroad from the Mississippi River
to the Pacific Ocean, it has been determined to explore and survey a
route from the sources of the Mississippi river to Puget Sound, and
the following instructions are given in relation to it; and for the
information and direction of several branches of the service.

1st. The exploration and survey is placed in charge of Isaac
I. Stevens, governor of the territory of Washington, to whom all
officers detailed to the same will report for instruction.

2nd. The general prospect of the operation, subject to such
modifications as circumstances may direct, is to operate from St.
Paul or some eligible point on the upper Mississippi towards the
great bend of the Missouri river and thence on the table-land be­
tween the tributaries of the Missouri and those of the Saskatchewan to
some eligible pass in the Rocky Mountains.

3rd. As in the prosecution of this exploration and survey, it
will be necessary to explore the passes of the Cascade range and of
the Rocky Mountains from the 49th parallel to the headwaters of the
Missouri river.... Great attention will be given to the geography and
meteorology generally of the whole intermediate region.

4th. Brevet Captain George B. McClellan, already under orders
to report to Governor Stevens, is assigned to duty on this survey,
according to his brevet rank.

5th. Brevet Second Lieutenant John Mullan, Jr., first artil­
Iary, is assigned to duty on this survey and will report to Governor
Stevens for instructions.

11th. The sum of forty thousand dollars (40,000) is set apart
from the appropriation for the survey thus entrusted to Governor
Stevens.93

It is difficult to realize the enormity of the task that con­
fronted Stevens; in effect his instructions told him to traverse and

92. Saskatchewan River would be considerable north of the 49th
parallel. This shows indefiniteness of the War department
concerning Canadian and Northwest geography.
93. Hazard Stevens, The Life of General Stevens, (Boston and New
explore a domain two thousand miles in length by two hundred and fifty in breadth, stretching from the Mississippi river to the Pacific coast, across a thousand miles of arid plains and two great mountain ranges, a region almost unexplored and infested by powerful tribes of predatory and warlike savages; to determine the navigability of two great rivers, the Missouri and Columbia that intersect this region; to locate by reconnaissance and to survey a practicable railroad route; to examine the mountain passes and determine the depths of the winter snows in them; to collect all possible information on the geology, climate, flora and fauna, as well as the topography of the region traversed; and finally to treat with the Indians on the route, cultivate their friendship and collect information as to their languages, numbers, customs, traditions and history; and all these including the work of preparation and organization, to be accomplished in a single season.

Governor Stevens proposed to effect this task by operating two different expeditions in the field. One under his own command was to operate the eastern side of the territory out of St. Paul; another under McClellan was to handle the western end and the Cascade range in particular. The two were to meet on the Columbia plains at the termination of the work. Two subsidiary parties, one under Lieutenant Donelson, to ascend the Missouri with a stock of supplies, and there await the coming of the main party; and the other under Lieutenant Saxton, to proceed from the lower Columbia to the Bitterroot valley with an additional stock of supplies for the main party. In Lieutenant Donelson's party was a young second lieutenant by the name of John Mullan. Mullan was the son of a native of Ireland and was born in Norfolk,
Virginia in 1830. Mullan had entered the United States Military Academy in 1848 and in 1852 had graduated and been assigned first to the Topographical Engineers and later to the artillery. In 1853 this young lieutenant had been assigned to General I. I. Stevens survey by orders from the war department.

By the 30th of September 1863 Lieutenant Donelson by the Blackfoot trail and Lieutenant Mullan by the Hellgate route rendezvoused at St. Mary's village. The headquarters of the survey party was established at Cantonment Stevens; exploring parties under Donelson, Tinkham, Saxton, Lander and John Mullan spread in all directions. Tinkham explored the Nez Perce Pass and trail in November of 1863. Tinkham stated that the trail was "steep and laborious, wholly impracticable for wagons." On the 27th of November, Tinkham was snowed in by six feet of snow. Deciding the trail would be impossible to traverse with horses, he sent his horses back to the Bitterroot while he and the rest of his party pushed on. After a fatiguing journey of eighty-nine miles and fifteen days, the exhausted little band reached the Camas Prairie country and after a brief rest pushed on to Walla Walla. Needless to say after this discouraging trip and the resultant unfavorable report the Nez Perce route was abandoned as a feasible roadway over the Bitterroots. While Tinkham was struggling over the Nez Perce trail other members of Steven's Survey were exploring the Clarksfork River route, Cadottes, Lewis and Clark and Marias passes as well as several other minor trails and passes.

94. Cantonment Stevens was located about fourteen miles south of Fort Owen on Willow Creek. About where Corvallis, Montana is now located.

In 1854, Lieutenant Mullan started on his reconnaissance of the Lolo trail. It was the only pass left by this time and, as Mullan was desirous of investigating all possible routes for a railroad, he decided to transverse the Bitterroots by the Lolo Pass route although the trail was steep, rugged and very long.

On the 19th of September both Mullan and Doty left cantonment Stevens for the Columbia plains. Doty took the Coeur d'Alene route and Mullan the Lolo trail.

The following description of the beginning of the journey is taken from Mr. Mullan's report of I. I. Stevens, headed Fort Vancouver, November 12, 1854.

...I therefore decided that, as Mr. Doty was to take the route by the Coeur d'Alene country, I would examine the Lolo Pass and meet him at Fort Wallah-Wallah. Accordingly we left the Bitterroot together on the 19th of September, encamping at the crossing of the river after a march of twenty miles but owing to the straying away of one of my animals, we remained in camp on the next day, but resumed our march on the 21st. which commenced clear bright and pleasant...

The day, after a few miles travel, Doty continued down the Bitterroot to Hellgate and Mullan turned off the main trail at Lolo creek. There he halted a few minutes to make a sketch of the entrance to Lolo canyon then crossed to the left bank and prepared to ascend the stream. Mullan's description of the creek and canyon doesn't differ materially from Lewis and Clark's "Bold Running Stream" only Mullan was more descriptive.

The stream at the crossing, is well timbered with the cottonwood and poplar, and is fifteen yards wide with good banks on either side and channel water two feet deep.

96. Near Florence-Carleton.
98. Ibid p. 529.
As for the mountains and canyon itself the description is as true today as it was then.

The mountains on each side of its valley, which here is five hundred yards wide, are quite high, and well timbered with the pine and cedar.99

The party, as did Lewis and Clark, followed the stream up the left bank for about six miles. At that point they crossed over to the right bank where a good road through the pines continued. A short distance farther they crossed the stream a third time when their trail ascended the ridge—this was presumably the trail of Lewis and Clark—then they passed over a series of side hills that Mullan mentions as steep and fatiguing, seemingly meeting the same difficulty as Lewis and Clark. 100

Mullan traveled that day about 20 3/4 miles. Their first day's camp was about 6 miles from the Hot Springs. Mullan who is constantly seeking a route for the railroad has this to say concerning the country, he has just covered.

A better road could be made by following the valley of the Lolo's Fork. Of course many crossings of the stream would be inevitable; but as the water here is very shallow the crossings would be of minor importance, considering the advantages to be gained by a level road.101

The next day the group remained in camp as their horses had strayed back along the trail. On September 3rd they resumed the journey. Their road followed up and along the ridges for seven miles; much fallen timber was encountered and the horses and men were very fatigued from the constant hurling of the windfalls. After seven miles the explorers reached Lolo Forks and took advantage of the meadow at that point to rest their animals.

99. Ibid. p. 529.
100. Camp is a present day Graves Creek.
They continued their journey after a brief respite. Their trail lay along the south fork of the creek which they crossed several times. At a distance of two miles from the forks they reached a range of Hot Springs flowing from a bed of light, coarse-grained sandstone.

These springs are highly impregnated with sulphur and are of the same degree of heat as those I found at "Big Hole" the temperature of which was 132° F. Here occurs a small prairie, with very good grass affording an excellent camp. The rock in the vicinity of these springs being easily disentregated by the weather presents a quite wild and picturesque appearance, being worn and rounded in every possible conceivable shape. They formed truly a relief to the eye from the monotonous character of the country through which we had been traveling...102

After everyone had taken a bath, the party commenced its journey by ascending the dividing ridge of mountains which separate the waters of the Bitterroot from the waters of the North Fork of the Clearwater. At a distance of seven miles they reached the "Glade Creek" of Lewis and Clark and camped for the night.

Early next morning (Sept. 24) the march was resumed. The weary travelers crossed Glade Creek three times; then began the ascent of a high mountain about nine miles across, the trail rendered difficult by fallen timber, rocks and stones. At the end of this distance they reached and crossed the Lochsa and ascended another steep mountain which put them on the divide between the Lochsa and the North Fork of the Clearwater. The party traveled altogether this day about twenty five miles. Towards evening the guide became embarrassed as to what fork to take but finally chose the right or north fork of the trail which turned out to be the best way. Lewis and Clark had taken the left fork which was a very difficult trail because it descended to the creek bottom then made a tremendous ascent in order to regain the ridge trail. At noon, the next day, the surveyors continued the monotonous

102. Ibid, p. 530.
course of the day before and after two miles they reached a good camp-
ing spot in a little hollow.

Sept. 26th the party resumed its journey at an early hour and in
the afternoon the trail became perceptibly better and the mountains
less rugged.

Sept. 27th. Mullan and his men on this day reached Bald Mount-
ain and were greatly struck with the beauty of the high mountains
seemingly swimming in a lake of mist which had collected in the can-
yons during the early morning. On the 28th the expedition continued
along the ridge line, alternately descending and ascending the crests
of the ridges. Giant cedars and mountain balsam now take the place
of the pine and the mountain cover begins to take on a less depressing
aspect.

During the journey of the 29th the party reached Sherman Peak
where they obtain their first view of the prairie country to the south-
west. They descended Sherman saddle still keeping on the ridge line.
Later in the afternoon they crossed Lolo Creek above its forks and
camped that night on Weitus meadows. The next day the traveling was
much easier. The little group realizing the last of the rugged
Bitterroots were in sight, pushed eagerly forward. In the afternoon
they came out of the Indian trail on Weippe Prairie. That evening the
party reached the main Clearwater and their hard journey over the Lolo
trail was over. The party reached the Clearwater at the end of the
Lolo trail at Kamiah where several encampments of Nez Perce Indians
were observed. Mullan camped with the Indians the next day but on

103. Howards Camp.
the following afternoon set out over the prairie country; his party started at Lawyer Creek and followed to its source, then they continued over the pine covered prairie until reaching a tributary of Lapwai Creek, which they followed until reaching the main stream. This they followed for about six miles when they reached Col. Craig's homestead near present day Cul-de-sac, Idaho.

On Oct. 4 the party continued down Lapwai Creek to its junction with the Clearwater.

The party had traversed the Lolo trail and on the 9th of October 1854 arrived at Fort Walla Walla.

Mullan wrote a very discouraging report on the Lolo trail as a possible route for a railroad. An excerpt from his report to Governor Stevens gives his opinion of the Lolo trail and the country it crosses:

"Taking a retrospective view of the country passed over from the Bitterroot Valley to the Nez Perce camp I can arrive at but one conclusion— that the route is thoroughly and utterly impracticable for a railroad route.

From the head of Lolo's fork to the Clearwater, the country is one immense bed of rugged, difficult, pineclad mountains, that can never be converted to any purpose for the use of man.

This is the route followed by Messrs. Lewis and Clark in 1804 (1805) and by Dr. Evans the United States geologist, for Oregon in 1850. In a conversation with the latter named gentleman, he told me that it is by far the most difficult and uninviting that he had ever examined in all his tours through the Rocky Mountains; and I am compelled to say that in all my explorations in that region I have never met with a more uninviting and rugged bed of mountains. The whole country is densely timbered, save at a few points where small patches of prairie occur sufficiently large to afford camping grounds; but beyond this it cannot be converted to any useful purpose.

Having examined three routes across the Bitterroot Mountains, I pronounce the one by the Coeur d'Alene country to be the most feasible and practicable...104"

This report was sent to Governor Stevens and was incorporated into the final report given to Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis. The

reports make up two large volumes and are painstaking in detail not only as to routes and passes but to Flora, Fauna, Indian tribes and other phases of western travel in the years 1853 to 1860.

The information in the report on the practicability of a railroad to the Pacific utilizing the northern route met with an unsympathetic reception by Secretary Davis. The secretary, who was a southerner and sympathetic towards the South, was more favorable to a railroad to the Pacific using the southern route. Davis belittled Steven's report and cited the findings of McClelland who had conducted some very superficial explorations in the Cascades and pronounced the passes over that range as not feasible because of the heavy snows. That his judgement was in error can be readily seen when we know two railroads now that use the same passes the McClelland said would never be suitable for a railroad grade.

Captain Mullan selected the St. Regis Borgia route as the most feasible for his military road through that area. He gave as his reasons "its direction and short distances and the connection with the Spokane on one side and with the Bitterroot on the other as recommendations in its favor that caused it to occupy in his judgement, a higher place than a line by the Clarksfork".

Because of these considerations and the fact that the Lolo trail was so rugged and adverse to travel, the St. Regis Borgia route was given preference over the Lolo trail and even the better Clarksfork river route.
Chapter 7
THE GOLD SEEKER AND ROAD AGENT ON THE LOLO TRAIL

The first record of a white man finding gold in northern Idaho was the discovery of gold on the Pend O' Reille river by a French Canadian in 1852. The discovery didn't amount to much and consequently attracted very little attention.

Two years later gold was discovered in this vicinity by General Lauder while he was exploring a route for a military road from the Columbia river to Fort Bridger.

From 1852 onward, placer mining was conducted in a desultory manner on various streams in what is now Shoshone county, Idaho. But it was not until the discovery of gold in 1860, by a party under the leadership of Captain E. D. Pierce that a great mining boom began to assume proportions large enough to attract attention. This discovery was made on what was afterwards known as "Canal Gulch", a tributary of Orofino Creek which in turn empties into the Clearwater River.

During the winter of 1860-61, the accounts of the strikes thus made were published in the Walla Walla and Portland papers causing a stampede the following spring to the new Eldorado. The summer of '61 found the banks of Orofino Creek and its branches lined with tents, which were occupied by thousands of miners and prospectors. The mining city that was founded on Canal Gulch was known as Pierce City after E. D. Pierce the discoverer of the gold in that locality. This city was in existence only a short time until the gold fields became exhausted and the prospectors and camp followers moved across the Clearwater to the new Florence diggings. Pierce City, because of its location at the western end of the Lolo trail, became an important part of the history of the trail. When the gold seekers in Montana
heard of the strike at this locality, they left whatever jobs they were doing at the time and rushed for the new diggings. Most of the travelers from Montana came from the headwaters of the Missouri and places along the Clarksfork or "Hellgate River. As the Lolo trail was the most direct route to Pierce City from these localities, the travel over the trail in 1860 and 61 was particularly heavy. The goldseeker as in the case of the fur trader wasn't usually a literary man nor did he have time or patience to bother about writing a journal of his wanderings. As a consequence we have few journals of the goldseekers describing the traffic or conditions of the Lolo trail during these years. We do know however, that traffic was fairly heavy by the references to mining parties and prospectors who were using the Lolo trail in the journals of Major John Owen and Granville Stuart.

John Owen, who was an inveterate traveler, had his headquarters at Fort Owen about eighteen miles above the east entrance of the Lolo trail. As a result much of the travel was observed and remarked by him in his journals.

Granville and James Stuart were homesteading at American Forks on present day Gold Creek and observed the passage of the miners both coming and going from the diggings who used the Hellgate river route to the east or west. On the 17th of August 1861 Stuart's journals mention the following:

Prospected, washed seven pans of dirt and got six cents. Adams returned from above. He saw two men from the Nez Perce mines in route for the states.105

Those men probably traveled the Lolo trail. If they had used the southern Nez Perce trail they would have gone south over Gibbons pass.

and followed the Beaverhead valley to the Missouri.

In June of the next year the Journal has this to say:

June 29th, Mr. Lauther, S. T. Houser, John Auert, Dr. McKellops and Jake Mantle arrived here from St. Louis having come up the river on one of the steamboats. They are enroute for the Salmon river gold mines, never having heard of this place.106

Major John Owen mentions frequently meeting with these miners on the Lolo trail and also mentions their presence in the Hellgate Ronde and at the mouth of Lolo Creek.

Monday 20th (1863) three hours to hot springs, breakfasted halted two hours, 8 hours further travel to small prairie opening. Camped met two miners bound for Orofino.107

The Lolo trail during the years 1860-62, was well traveled by gold seekers. In 1863, most of the miners at Pierce City were south of the Clearwater to new diggings at Florence and Elk City. As the southern Nez Perce trail was more convenient from that point, travel over the Lolo trail fell off and the Nez Perce trail bore most of the gold seekers.

THE ROG AGENTS

The discovery of gold at Pierce City in 1861 attracted to that region another class of person besides the gold seeker. This class was the lawless group who were ever in attendance at any gold strike. The presence of great amounts of gold and the absence of law and order was the magnet that attracted these desperadoes. In the spring of 1861, there appeared in Lewiston, Idaho a man of gentlemanly bearing and quiet demeanor. He was accompanied by his wife, a quiet, gentle-appearing woman. This couple registered at the Luna House, Lewis-

106. Stuart, op. cit., page 211.
ton's leading hotel at that time, and appeared as though they were going to settle down in that locality. A few days attendance in the gambling halls of Lewiston branded the gentleman for what he was, a gambler. This man was Henry Plummer. Being a gambler his profession brought him in contact with the rough and dissolute characters. As they arrived in Lewiston, these characters began to recognize in Plummer a leader and flocked to his standard. Being a keen judge of character, he was able to choose from the common herd or "would be" desperadoes, the most reckless and daring, the ones who combined with these traits the greatest skill in the use of firearms. These he organized into a band of choice cut-throats, governed by iron-clad rules, the enforcement of which was left to a committee, Plummer being its chairman or head; in fact he was chief of the outlaws.

Plummer remained in Lewiston during the summer of 1862 following his profession. He began to see possibilities of fattening his pockets by preying on the travelers to the gold fields. To accomplish this purpose Plummer made several nocturnal visits to the interior to set up his band on the favorite trails of the goldseekers. His establishments were ostensibly road houses on Pahata Creek and up the Clearwater near Crofton. Although these resorts which they termed "shebanzas" were supposedly managed by two men, the travelers might observe several other hangers-on who were supposed to be guests, but who were actually silent partners holding themselves ready for action.

As Lewiston was the main point of divergence to the gold fields in the Clearwater and Salmon river country during 1861 and 1862, it was the habit of Plummer's henchmen to size up any stranger, arriving
or leaving town as to his probable wealth. This information was immediately dispatched to the "shebangs" and by the time the stranger arrived at their hospitable portals, a bill of sale had already been made out for his property. On arriving at the "shebang" he was confronted with the sight of two or three grim-visage hombres looking at him with gimlet eyes over the sights of a shotgun or derringer. The stranger was told to dismount on pain of sudden death. The prudent wayfarer complied with these demands with alacrity, or found himself inhabiting a shallow grave in a specially prepared clearing in the vicinity of the roadhouse. After the traveler was presented with the bill of sale his only recourse was to continue his journey on foot. This business proved quite profitable to Plummer but soon he found it necessary to base his operations at the gold fields. He moved his headquarters from Lewiston to Elk City where with a new coterie of henchmen he plied his nefarious trade with vigor and zeal. Something happened in Elk City that made Plummer drop his old pals and the next time he is heard of he is in the Deer Lodge valley. He had crossed the Bitterroots with an old friend, Cleveland.

Granville Stuart records in his journals for Sept. 18, the following information:

On our way to Hellgate at Beaver Dam Hill we met two fine looking young men. One of them said his name was Henry Plummer, the other was Charles Heavus, Woody and I told them who we were, they were from Elk City on the Clearwater and inquired about the mines at Gold Creek and at Beaverhead. They rode two good horses and had another packed with their blankets and provisions. We liked their looks and told them we were only going down to Hellgate and would return to Gold Creek in a few days and asked them to return to Hellgate with us and then we could all go up the Canyon together. They accepted our invitation and in a few days we all went up to Gold Creek together...108

It is probable that Plummer had crossed the Bitterroot by the way of Nez Perce Pass but then it is quite possible he had used the Lolo trail. The Lolo trail was quite popular with the road agents, especially after the formation of the vigilantes because of its isolation and unlimited area to hide in.

We know that in January of 1864 Whisky Bill Graves was apprehended at Fort Owen by the vigilantes and hanged. Thomas W. Harris, who was in control of the fort during Owen's absence in the east leaves us this account of the end of Whisky Bill, in his journals:

Mon 25th... Three men got in from the mines in search of road agents or highwaymen. Found and arrested Bill Graves and have him in custody at the fort tonight. They say they have hung four at Hell Gate and were after the 5th one. Say they feel sure he was caught and hung this morning. The names of the men hung are as follows: Skinner, John Cooper, Alec Carter and George Sheens, the fifth one not yet caught is Robert Zachary.

Tuesday 26th, this morning the vigilance party left with their prisoner, went about two miles below the fort and left him swinging to a pine limb. This they say is the 20th man they have hung within the last two months and if Zachary is caught he is twenty one.

Bill Graves was hiding out at Fort Owen; we have no record of him contemplating a trip over the Lolo trail, probably he was going west in the spring either over Lolo or Nez Perce trail. It is very unlikely he would be heading over Gibbons Pass as that would put him near Virginia City and the vigilantes which were the last two objects whisky Bill was desirous of seeing.

History has lost much because none of these desperadoes left a journal of their travels or depredations. Most of them at one time or another used the Lolo trail to travel to and from the gold fields on the Clearwater and Beaverhead, but we have no first hand account of such journals. If these road agents had kept journals a lot of mysterious

disappearances would have come to light and more complete pictures of their evil would be drawn.

By 1870 the prosperity of the placer mines began to decrease and most of the booming mining towns in northern Idaho and western Montana became deserted. The movements of the prospector and goldseeker took them to other localities and travel over the Lolo trail by the goldseeker was limited to an occasional prospector who was hopeful of finding color in its remote fastness.

The road agent had disappeared from the gold fields in 1865. The activities of the vigilantes had resulted in the hanging of the most obnoxious members while the lesser fry were either banished or scared out of circulation.

Henry Flummer, and two of his lieutenants, Ned Roy, and Buck Stimson were hanged in Bannack City January 10, 1864. This broke up the gang but the real end came when the vigilantes made their tour of western Montana in the winter of 1864. During the month of January twenty two road agents were put to death by the vigilantes and from that time on Montana and Idaho were comparatively free of this lawless element.

The road agent had played his part in travel on the Lolo trail but like the fur trader and goldseeker he was not prone to write journals. From the journals of their contemporaries, though, we can fairly well piece together the story of the road agent and arrive at a definite conclusion that the Lolo trail was used somewhat by these desperadoes between the years 1860 and 1865.
Chapter 9

THE NEZ PERCE WAR OF 1877

The year 1877 was the date of the beginning of a great drama which was to make one of its scenes on the Lolo trail.

The Nez Perce Indians, formerly traditional friends of the white man, were now at war with their fairskinned brothers. The reasons for this unexpected outbreak of war were varied, but can be blamed on one particular factor and that was the policy of the Federal Government in negotiating treaties with the Indians.

The treaty idea itself was not bad but the deceit and indifference of the government in living up to the word of the treaties was a cause of great dissatisfaction to the Indian.

The Nez Perce Indian had always been a friend of the white man; he had welcomed Lewis and Clark to his territory in 1805 and 1806. The missionaries found the Nez Perces very hospitable and kind. The fur trader always breathed a sigh of relief when he left the Blackfoot country and found himself in the lands of the Flatheads and Nez Perces. Even when the Indians saw their land overrun in 1860-61 with goldseekers in violation of government treaties they still refrained from going on the war-path. But in 1877 the Nez Perces went to war with the white man.

The cause of the outbreak of hostilities had been smoldering for several years. The reason for the final blow-off was the removal of Chief Joseph and his band from their hereditary hunting lands, the Wallowa valley.

The government had been trying for several years to get all the Nez Perces to settle on a reservation which was located in the valley
of the Clearwater river, and the prairies to the south.

The first stage in the movement to put the Nez Perces on a reservation occurred in 1855, when Governor I. I. Stevens and General Joel Palmer, Indian agents, for Washington and Oregon respectively, called all of the Columbia plain Indians to a grand council at Walla Walla. The council was set for May 20th at the ancient council grounds in Walla Walla valley and all the tribes signified their willingness to meet. Governor Stevens and General Palmer were there to discuss a treaty.

The gist of the council was that the U.S. Government wanted the Indians to cede to it, most of their lands and what the tribes wished to keep would be set off in reservations. After several days of fruitless discussion the Indian chiefs signed the treaty which would put them upon reservations and leave most of their lands open to white settlement. Lawyer signed for the Nez Perces as well as old Joseph and Looking Glass. Old Joseph had signed only because he still had his beloved Wallowa valley according to the terms of the treaty.

Following the ratification of the 1855 treaty in 1856, the Government disregarded its treaty obligations to the upper Nez Perces. Indian agents and superintendents made bitter complaints in their annual reports to the commissioners of Indian affairs. Hills and other buildings promised by the treaty, they pointed out, had not been constructed; Lawyer's salary as head chief was in arrears; work done on the required church was not paid for, nor were the several thousands dollars worth of horses furnished by the Nez Perces for the Yakima War of 1856-58.

These conditions continued year after year, the agents complained, while settlers were gradually encroaching on Nez Perce land. The Indian's land was overrun by miners, traders, stockmen, and farmers who disregarded reservation boundaries and the rights of the red men. White men took Indian wives then deserted them and left their half breed children as a burden on the tribe. All of these things made more and more of the Indians dissatisfied with the broken pledges and vacillations of the white men.

In 1863 the government decided to negotiate a new treaty with the Indians. Accordingly a meeting was arranged to be held at Lapwai the latter part of May. Lawyer represented the treaty Indians while Tu-ake-kes, Earle from the light, Three Feathers, Big Thunder and Cooloolosalina were present to protect the interests of the non-treaty tribes. The government representatives asked the Indians to cede more land to the government. The proposed cession comprised about 10,000 square miles and included mines and rich agricultural lands in Oregon and Washington and large areas in Idaho; this would have reduced the reservation to five or six hundred square miles in the vicinity of the south fork of the Clearwater. The non-treaty Indians refused to consider such an arrangement and so the boundaries were slightly enlarged. This did not appease the discontented Indians much and negotiations became tense. The result of this dissatisfaction was the dissolving of the Indian confederacy, which took place on June 7, 1863.

The commissioners realized that a treaty would have to be arrived at soon and so they continued to deal with Lawyer. On June 9 Lawyer and Big Thunder signed the treaty which reduced the reservation to a sixth of its former size and ceded the Hallowa valley to the government.
As old Joseph had departed he considered this session of his tribal lands as null and void. He is reported to have said to young Joseph:

"...I have taken no pay from the United States, I have never sold our land".

The government didn't seem to realize that according to Indian ethics a chief only spoke for his followers and his band, if the other bands didn't recognize him as their spokesman they considered themselves outside his authority. According to Indian thinking then, lawyer had no right or legal standing in signing the treaty that ceded the Wallowa country to the white man.

After the Lapwai council of 1863 the two factions of the Nez Perces went their separate ways, Old Joseph and his band continued to winter in the Imnaha valley and spend his summers in Wallowa, as their ancestors had been accustomed to do for generations. The government continued to procrastinate about the treaty of 1863 and dissatisfaction against the government was spreading amongst the most loyal of the treaty Indians.

The conflict between the settlers and the Indians culminated when Nells McNeill, a settler in Wallowa valley shot one of young Joseph's band in an argument over a horse. The Indians were ready to take the war path but Joseph prevailed upon them to settle the matter peaceably.

In 1877 General Howard called the non-treaty Indians to Lapwai to tell them they must move to the reservation or that he (General Howard) would make them move. Joseph and the other chiefs seemed to have accepted the inevitable and made up their minds to move to the reservation.

On May 8th, Joseph, Whitebird and Looking Glass accompanied General Howard and his aids on a reconnaissance of the reservation. All three

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chiefs pointed out land they wished to have when they arrived at the reservation and it appeared as though the problem of the Nez Perce would be settled at that point. General Howard gave the Indians but thirty days to settle their affairs at Wallowa and be back to Lapwai. Joseph protested this, saying that the time was too short for him and his band to roundup and collect all their horses. Howard was adamant however, and the Indians returned to their home to begin preparations for the move to the reservation. Eleven days before the expiration of their time limit the band appeared near the southwestern boundary of the Lapwai reservation. Here they joined up with the bands of White Bird and Tubulhusats and a big council was held. The young men of the tribes inflamed the Indians against the whites, Joseph and Looking Glass attempted to restrain them and tried to allay their hate for the white men. But White Bird and his band seemed more inflamed against the whites than the other Indians and it was finally three drunken Indians youths from his band that killed some settlers on Slate Creek and started the Nez Perce war.

Chief Joseph decided to remain with White Bird and his band because he felt the white men would blame him and punish the tribe anyway.

Captain David Perry was immediately detailed by General Howard to pursue the Indians and bring them to the reservation. Meanwhile the hostiles had gone on a campaign of revenge and bloodshed. Many people on the upper prairie were killed and their dwellings burned. Captain Perry was defeated in the battle of White Bird Canyon and suffered severe losses. Joseph and his Indians began a leisurely

retreat towards Cottonwood where a minor skirmish took place that resulted in a draw. Joseph then made a cirular movement that put Howard at his rear, and put him on a route to the Clearwater to join Looking Glass and his band who had now joined the hostiles.

Another battle was fought at the mouth of Cottonwood Creek on the Clearwater. The Indians were repulsed but managed to retreat in good order. On July 13 the day after the battle Joseph crossed his forces about a mile above the Kamiah ferry to the east bank of the Clearwater and after a minor skirmish decided to gain the Lolo trail. The Indians then left the river and marched in good order to Neippe prairie where in a grand council it was decided to cross the Bitterroots and try to enlist the Crows to their cause. Joseph didn't want to leave the Clearwater but he was overruled in council and the Indians began their retreat over the Lolo trail in earnest.

The 14th of July was spent by Howard's troops in a general reconnaissance. Then on the 15th a column was sent eastwardly down the Clearwater, as though returning to Lapwai but actually to cross the Clearwater at Dunwells Ferry some twenty miles below Kamiah in an attempt to cut off Joseph in the rear. Joseph quickly divined this ruse and immediately ordered his band to move.

Howard had to reorganize his troops and evolve a plan of campaign that would assure him of a chance to catch up with his quarry and break their military power. Howard now knew that he was face to face with a soldier that was equal in military esume with Howard who was the sixth ranking general in the Civil War. Howard in summing up Joseph's leadership had this to say

The Indians had been well led and well fought. They had defeated two companies in a pitched battle. They had eluded pursuit, and crossed
The General took time after the battle of the Clearwater to collect his forces and map a plan of strategy to bring the Indians to bay. This reorganization and planning took some time. Soon mutterings began to be heard from the surrounding locations accusing Howard of cowardice and of vacillation. The truth of the matter was that the Lolo trail was an obstacle of forbidding propensities. The Indians were mounted on fleet horses that were used to traveling Indian trails, also the Indians had enough spare mounts so that they could push their horses till they dropped, then mount fresh ones. Howard was not so well equipped in horses and besides he wanted to conserve his men and animals for an emergency. Thus it was that the Indians seemed to so easily elude all pursuit and that Howard was inactive and dilatory.

After selecting several plans Howard finally mapped out a plan that seemed reasonable of success. He formed two columns and a reserve. One was to command the right column, Sheaton the left, and the reserve to stay at Camas Prairie under Crier. The right column was to pursue Joseph directly over the Lolo trail while the left column was to go eastward by the Mullan road to keep peace among the Columbia river Indians, and to set out for a rendezvous at Missoula. The Reserve was to watch all trails, keep inter-communications, be ready for hostile Indians and by

its presence keep the settlers, miners, friendly Indians and etc, in good heart.

Meanwhile the Indians were pushing their way over the steep Lolo trail covered with rock slides, choked with fallen timber, and washed out in many places by the freshlets of bygone years. At night they camped by swampy lakes where their ponies grazed on grass, the women dug edible roots and the men fished for salmon in the tributaries of the Clearwater. The Indians cut temporary lodgepoles of spruce, hemlock, and white pine trees. Although it was July they kept fires burning all night to temper the chill of these high altitudes; where rain fell daily and frosts lingered on the mountain slopes. As the Indians climbed towards the pass on the Montana border the trail became steeper and rougher, and wound around the ridges. Trees appeared stunted as compared to those growing at the lower elevations. Jagged boulders lacerated the horses’ feet. Rains made the narrow trail slippery to man and animals, a misplaced step would hurl a pony or a person over the brink to a quick death in yawning chasms far below. Near the summit at Packers Meadow the Indians turned their horses loose to graze. The next day they crossed the summit and followed down the course of the Lolo Creek, at a short distance they reached the Hot Springs, almost all the Indians stopped and took a thorough bath in the hot sulphuric waters. The sick and the wounded found relief in the healing properties of the "medicine" waters. The next day the journey was resumed and the Indians made their way leisurely down Lolo Creek. After descending the stream to the vicinity of Woodmans Flats the Indian scouts returned with a report that the white men had thrown up a barricade and meant to oppose their passage to the Bitter-
roots. The Indians camped about two miles from the fort on July 28th.

That same day far to the westward, the Column under Howard began the pursuit of Joseph over the Lolo trail. The first stage was a march of sixteen miles to Kamiah, on July 27th the Infantry, artillery, and a company of Cavalry crossed the Clearwater. This movement was a slow one and so it was not until the 30th of July before the ascent of the trail began in earnest. The weather this day was rainy and the horses and men slipped and slithered as they laborously surmounted the first ridge beyond the Clearwater. The descent to Lolo forks was as abrupt as the ascent out of the Clearwater and so the forces had a more slippery time going down than up. That evening the first camp was made on the Weippe Prairie after a journey of about sixteen miles. Howard on this day remarked about the number of fallen trees over the trail.

It is wonderful what vast numbers of trees of all sizes and descriptions were uprooted by the winds; and they had fallen in every possible troublesome way, so that matted together even when small it was very perplexing to get them out of the path.114

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The first camp was called "Camp Sanford". Howard was anxiously waiting on about forty or fifty "pioneers" or axemen who were coming from Lewiston to meet him and clear the trail ahead of the force of fallen logs. These sappers were under the command of Captain Spurgin and did not reach the party until August 2nd. Howard's description of camp life in his journal gives the reader a picture of military camp in the middle of an Indian War.

The camp was generally rectangular in form, one Battalion covered the front, usually encamping in line and sending guards and pickets well out. A second covered the sides or rear and a third the rear. The battery took its place at will, selection as good a position as the nature of the ground afforded. For Headquarters, a place was sought

114. Howard, Ibid., page 176.
115. Major Sanford was in command of the Cavalry.
of easy communications and having a neat plot of ground; with wood and water convenient...116

The enlisted men slept under pup tents or shelter-halves within the battalion enclosure. A large tent was available for the kitchen which was usually set up some distance from the enclosure. Food was served buffet style, the soldiers filing by a set up table where their outstretched mess kits were filled with the daily fare.

The Indians by pushing their horses to the utmost were able to far outdistance the men of Howard's command. Many of their horses were left behind with broken legs or complete exhaustion. These horses that were suffering were shot by Howard's men along the wayside.

The next day the army detachment moved to the vicinity of Weitus Meadows where camp was set up. This camp was known as Camp Hinters. On the 2nd of August the march was continued over some of the worst stretches of the Lolo trail.

The trail led through woods of same general character as before; rather a "slow trail" due to mountainous country and fallen timber. The summits of the hills were covered with rough granite boulders making the path quite difficult... Poor grazing indeed here, the only food consists of wild dwarf lupine and wire grass.117

The expedition continued along the "hog backs" and saddles, the travel being over the same monotonous country day after day. On August 6th the expedition had crossed the summit over Lolo pass and encamped on the hot springs on the south fork of Lolo Creek. It was here that Howard learned from a courier that Gibbons had left Helena in forced marches but did not find the trail of the Indians until after they had started up the Bitterroot valley. Gibbons had only about two hundred men and had sent the messenger to Howard asking for a hundred

more reinforcements. Howard decided to lead these reinforcements himself and the whole force made a laborious march of twenty-two miles, down Lolo creek before they camped for the night. The next morning the cavalcade set out early and by nine o'clock had reached the confluence of Lolo creek with the Bitterroot river.

THE AFFAIR AT FORT FIZZLE

When it was apparent after the battle of the Clearwater that Joseph intended to cross the Bitterroot by the Lolo trail, General Howard had wired via Chicago the military command at Missoula the following:

All reports seem to indicate that...the hostile Indians...have escaped by the Lolo trail and may reach you before this dispatch. I shall start...the 30th inst... If you could move your forces this way as far as Lolo fork...you could prevent their escape...If you simply bother them and keep them back until I can close in, their destruction or surrender will be sure.118

The telegram reached General Gibbon at Fort Shaw on the Sun River. He immediately sent riders to Fort Benton and Camp Baker, ordering troops for his post with all possible speed, while he mustered in every available man at Fort Shaw. At the arrival of reinforcements Gibbon set on July 27th with all speed for Fort Missoula carrying along limited supplies on pack mules.

On July 25th word reached Fort Missoula that Chief Joseph's band had reached Lolo. About one hundred citizens from the valley together with forty men and officers from Fort Missoula and about three hundred and fifty men from other parts of the state, marched up the Lolo about eight miles where Captain Rawn called a halt and set all hands to throwing up a fortification. In a letter to Burnett, district adjutant at

Fort Shaw Rawn sent this information:

Am entrenching twenty-five regulars and about fifty volunteers in Lou Lou Canyon. Have promises of more volunteers but am not certain of them. Please send me along more troops. Will go up and see them (the Indians) tomorrow and inform them that unless they disarm and dismount, will give them a fight. Whitebird says he will go through peaceable if he can but will go through. This news is entirely reliable.

Meanwhile the Nez Perce scouts had approached close to the barricade. Joseph was informed of the fort erected in the front of them so the Indians encamped well back on the trail and far from the breast-works.

A captive Nez Perce told Rawn of the approach of the Indians and arranged a meeting for the following noon halfway between the two camps. At noon July 27th the parties gathered flying flags of truce. The pipe was passed from Indian to White and back again. Rawn spoke to Looking Glass who had been sent as Joseph's representative. Rawn told Looking Glass that the Indians would have to lay down their arms or fight. Looking Glass replied that they were merely going to the Buffalo country and did not intend to harm anyone. Rawn was taken aback at this and in order to better understand Looking Glass's reply postponed a decision until the next day. This was fine for the Nez Perces as they wanted time to find a method of flanking the fort without a bloody frontal encounter. The Nez Perces could not count on the Flatheads to attack Rawn in the rear as Charlot, the Flathead chief, had told the hostiles at the beginning of the war that if they harmed any white men in the Bitterroot the Flatheads would join the soldiers.

Rawn in his report of the encounter with Looking Glass had this to say:

119. A. B. Rothermich. Early days at Fort Missoula. (Missoula, Mont.) (Historical reprints edited by Paul C. Phillips, Montana State
Had a talk with Joseph and Looking Glass this afternoon and told them they had to surrender arms and ammunition or fight. They are to consider tonight. I think that for want of ammunition or Charlo's threat, they are wavering. Charlo has sent them word that if they come into the Bitterroot he will fight them. He has already sent me some of his warriors.120

Rawn returned to camp with the proposal of Looking Glass and talked with his men about it. The regular officers were for refusing; they had to carry out their duty. The volunteers, many of whom knew Looking Glass to be trustworthy, saw no reason for exposing their families and property to destruction by not accepting a truce. They wanted to let the Indians pass.

The next day Rawn again met Joseph and Looking Glass and said that his decision was the same as yesterday. The Indians refused to lay down their arms but another meeting was arranged for noon the next day.

Joseph and Looking Glass met Rawn the next day at noon. The pipes were smoked. "Are the terms still the same?" Looking Glass asked. Rawn replied that they were and insisted that the Indians lay down their arms. Joseph told him that tomorrow they would pass by him and that they would never surrender. Rawn knew there was nothing more to be said and returned to the fort expecting an attack at any moment. He talked the situation over with the regulars and volunteer officers. The volunteers insisted he was wrong in attacking but Rawn knew there was nothing for him to do but attack. The next morning all was to be in readiness for an assault but during the night several volunteers had returned to their homes and those that were left the next morning refused to fight. By the time some of the volunteers had been pursuaded to do battle the opportunity for attack had ended.

120. Rothermich, Ibid., page 4.
Suddenly a force of Indians appeared in front of the barricade. The whites shot at them but they drew off a distance without firing a shot. Seemingly they were waiting for a larger group before attacking. Rawi waited, firing off and on as the morning passed. Finally Rawi formed the troops in skirmish lines and moved out. The Indians vanished in the woods. Rawi pursued, suddenly singing was heard from the mountain-side above the barricade. Rawi looked up. The last of Joseph's column was passing out of sight into a rocky canyon. Rawi had been out-flanked by wily Chief Joseph. Rawi knew that with his small force he had no chance risking an engagement with Joseph.

W. R. Logan who was present at that time with his father Captain William Logan and Captain Rawi has written an eyewitness description of the exodus of the Nez Perces;

About ten o'clock we heard singing apparently above our heads. Upon looking up we discovered the Indians passing along the side of the cleft, where we thought a goat could not pass, much less and entire tribe of Indians with all their impediments. The entire band dropped into the valley beyond us and then proceeded up the Bitterroot. Two civilians and I rode from our camp and followed the Indians for a mile or more. They were good natured cracked jokes, and seemed very much amused at the way they had fooled Rawi and Logan.

After the Indians had completed their flanking movement Rawi prudently retired to Fort Missoula with his small force. In his report to the adjutant General of the Department of the Columbia appears the following:

I. .. I met them in the Canyon (Lolo) interviewed them twice, informed them they must disarm and dismount, White Bird and Looking Glass present. They showed disposition to fight, but after making a few demonstrations in front, exchanging a few shots passed me on flank, and got in valley. Had 25 regulars and about 150 volunteers from Bitterroot. Latter left after they understood that the Indians would let them alone in the valley. Have now 3 companies, 70 men.

Start tomorrow to try and delay them, as per your letter, and General Gibbons order. Will get volunteers if I can. 122

The barricade that the Indians so cleverly out flanked has become known as "Fort Fizzle". The Kiwanis Club of Missoula has erected a large wooden sign at the site of the breastworks where the driver can see it on the road leading up Lolo Canyon.

While Rawns had been negotiating with the Indians, Howard had left Kamiah. It wasn't until August 8th that Howard with a reconnaissance force reached the site of Rawns Fort. As the excellent barricade of logs appeared ahead of them their disappointment was keen. The men could not understand how the Indians had been able to outflank this seemingly impregnable barricade.

"How could the Indians get by?" All eyes were turned to the high hills on the right and on the left. "Why did not Rawns and the volunteers stop them here?" "Joseph was too smart for them". "Looking Glass is always a good Indian here, in the Bitterroot country." Such were the remarks I heard from one and another as we worked our way crookedly past their obstruction in this famous Lolo Pass. 123

Howard and his troops reached the mouth of Lolo Creek a short time after this ending their journey over the Lolo trail.

From the time Howard left Kamiah the settlers in that region had lived in constant fear that the Indians would return with the intention of burning property and killing the white people. In the Bitterroot valley and Missoula the same fear was felt when they heard that the Indians were headed in their direction over the Lolo trail.

The following newspaper account seems to sum up very well the attitude of the settlers:

The news of an Indian outbreak in Idaho territory which reached

122. Rothermich, op. cit., page 5.
here by wire Tuesday nights mail of last week, has spread terror and
alarm among the people of the Bitterroot valley, and produced no little
nervousness among the citizens of our own town and immediate vicinity...

To the people of the Bitterroot valley, we would say, do not aban-
don your homes too precipitately, organize as well as you can for self-
protection, the government can not and will not leave you linger with­
out that military protection that you are entitled to as an American
citizen.

The settlers had no need to worry for the Nez Perces traveled
through the Bitterroot without molesting a single individual. Supplies
were paid for in money and some of the more unscrupulous traders made
a lucrative business in selling whiskey and other supplies to the Indians. Chief Joseph and his band left the Lolo trail and moved up the
Bitterroot with General Gibbon in close pursuit. At the Bighole a
battle was fought but the Nez Perces continued their retreat south.
They went through Yellowstone Park, turned northeast to reach Canada;
they were intercepted at the Bear Paw mountains by Colonel Nelson A.
Miles and the forces of O. C. Howard. The Indians were sent to the
reservation in Oklahoma where many of them died in the hot climate of
the Indian territory. In 1866, 268 of the original 800 returned to
the northwest; some went to the reservation at Lapwai and about one
hundred and eighty went with Chief Joseph to the Colville Reservation.
On Sept. 21, 1904 Joseph died near Nespele, Washington and was buried
there.

The flight of the Nez Perces and the pursuit of General Howard
over the Lolo trail was the last dramatic act in its long and turbulent
history.

From the years 1877 up to comparatively recent times the Lolo trail
was traveled very infrequently, occasional hunter, Indians, historians,
and survey parties traversed its length but the modern age was setting in. Most of the course of the trail was converted into wagon roads, then to the roads of the automobile.
Before the time of General Howard's pursuit of the Nez Perces over the Lolo trail, there had been no attempts on the part of either the Indian or white man to cut a way through the labyrinth of trees and underbrush that made the trail so difficult to travel.

The Indians never had the inclination or the equipment to clear their trails of obstacles. Indian trails followed the ridges in most cases because ridges were less cluttered with the underbrush and windfalls that made the creek bottoms impassable. When the Indian encountered a rock or windfall on his trail he either went around the obstacle or jumped his horse over it. This explains the difficulty of travel over this trail by the white men who used it later. One would think that a trail traveled as often as the Lolo trail by numerous Indian families with their horses and other accouterments, would be fairly easy to travel. Such was not the case, however, the trail remained year after year in the same condition the Indian found it. All this was changed however, in 1877 when General Howard employed between forty and fifty "pioneers" or axemen to precede his column and clear the trail of the rocks; do rude grading; construct temporary bridges, and generally clear the way for the wagons and howitzers that accompanied his column over the Bitterroots. This was the first time any great effort was made to clear the trail for overland travel.

By 1877 though, at each end of the Lolo trail roads had been constructed or were in use by wagons and coaches. On the western side a fairly well defined roadway was used from Lewiston to the Orofino mines in the early sixties. Wagons from Lewiston went up the
north side of the Clearwater as far as Lapwai Creek where the Clearwater was forded, then the road continued up the north side of Lapwai Creek for about three miles then changed to the south side. Colonel Craig's homestead at the head of Lapwai Creek was one of the way stations on this road. After leaving Craig's place the road crossed the prairie until reaching the source of Lawyer Creek. This creek was followed then, till the road came out on the Clearwater a little east of Kamiah. A branch led off this road near the center of the prairie close to the present day city of Cottonwood and followed along the east bank of Cottonwood Creek until it reached the Clearwater, about eight miles east of Kamiah. This latter branch was not used much after the placer discoveries were exhausted in the Orofino district and the miners and prospectors shifted their search to the headwaters of the south fork of the Clearwater river. After the mining camps of the Orofino district had been well established, a road way was out from the junction of the Clearwater River and Lapwai Creek to Orofino using the right hand side of the Clearwater river.

Near Orofino Creek an enterprising individual by the name of Dunwell constructed a ferry across the Clearwater which afforded a lucrative income for the owner by transporting the gold miners across the river. Once across the river the road twisted up the steep north side of the Clearwater to Neippe and Pierce City. As Pierce City was located on the western terminal of the Lolo trail this road to Lewiston was used by travelers over the trail after reaching this city.

On the eastern end of the Lolo trail a fairly well defined wagon road, prior to 1877, extended from Missoula up the Bitterroot valley to Gibbon Pass. At Lolo Creek, where the trail takes off on its
course over the Bitterroot, a rude road about four miles from the mouth was in existence. We know the road was that far in 1877 because General Howard in his journal mentions the following:

Our camp was so good a one, and so fine a wagon trail here began, on hard level ground, that, coupling our good luck with Sherman's welcome name, we designated the field of this one nights sojourn as Camp Sherman.126

After Captain Spurgis and his pioneers had cut and graded a reasonable route from the Hot Springs to this road ending, the settlers in lower Lolo Canyon and the lower Bitterroot used "Howard's Road" as they called it for many years. During this time more bridges were added and better grades leveled. In 1899 when Olin D. Wheeler, a member of the Minnesota Historical Society, was retracing the Lewis and Clark route over the Bitterroots he mentioned that the road was in use as far as both Hot Springs.

This "Good road" crossed the creek about forty times between the mouth of Lolo Creek and the hot springs.

In 1907, the people of Missoula were rejoicing over the decision of the Northern Pacific Railroad to lay a railroad grade up Lolo Creek to connect with Genesee, Idaho. The Northern Pacific thought that a line connecting with the Clearwater country would be profitable by serving the wheat and fruit farmers that had sprung up in that area. Another reason for the line up the Lolo creek was the surveys that had been completed which showed that a grade could be run.

125. Sherman was passing through Missoula on a visit to the Northwest at that time.
126. There is now a good road up Lolo Creek to both springs and a stage coach runs daily during the season to and from Missoula.
over the Lolo Pass with a one per cent grade. The Northern Pacific at that time had just the one way out of Missoula over Evaro hill, but this was a two per cent grade. The railroad officials reasoned then that a one per cent grade up Lolo would expedite the movement of freight west and also tap the rich agricultural possibilities of the Palouse country. Crews were sent to Lolo station in the spring of 1907 and the work of clearing the right-of-way up the creek was pushed with dispatch. After the right-of-way had been cleared several crews commenced grading and by late summer a standard railroad embankment was twenty miles up the creek. At this point the chief engineer of the Northern Pacific, Darling, rechecked the original surveys and found that it would take a two per cent grade to cross Lolo Pass, and as they had already a two per cent grade over Evaro hill, work was stopped and the grade abandoned. Thus ended the dream of a transcontinental railroad over the Lolo Pass. In the Daily Missoulian of August 5, 1919 appeared this retrospective account of the railroad dream of 1907.

It's not a freak of nature that the stranger traveling along the road to Lolo Hot Springs sees — that wide, well banked, grass grown, and level embankment that runs west from the town of Lolo more than 20 miles into the hills.

It's the ghost of a great transcontinental railway — that was to be — but is not.

Twelve years ago the Northern Pacific had crews working busily, pushing the project of the new line over the Lolo pass, down to Genesee, Idaho, and the Palouse country, hoping to eliminate the high and hard grades of the present line, for the freight service at least.

Then came Chief Engineer Darling. His keen eyes surveyed the job, he scanned the mass of figures prepared by his subordinates — then he held up a checking hand — and the Lolo pass railway was a dead issue. Twenty miles of right-of-way, built in the most approved and skilled manner of the engineers of a decade ago, lie moss-grown along the highway to Lolo Hot Springs, a monument to the efforts of the Northern Pacific's engineers to construct another line.
A two per cent grade proved the fatal blow——

By 1920 a road on the eastern end of the Lolo trail extended to the hot springs a distance of about twenty six miles. On the western end the road extended from Lewiston to Kooskooskee, Idaho a distance of about seventy-five miles. All the distance between was practically the way it had been when Lewis and Clark first used the trail in 1805. Elers Koch, a forest service official, wrote the following account of the trail in 1921:

...The old trail which saw these picturesque and stirring scenes is still about as it was a hundred years ago. The Forest Rangers have cut the logs, they have strung a telephone wire along it, and marked it with mile boards, but it still meanders around the open ridges and loops around the summit from saddle to saddle much as it did in the old days when Lewis and Clark traveled it. There are no houses along it or farms. It still serves as a way through one of the last outposts of the wilderness.

In the late summer of 1921, twenty-two miles of road had been constructed east of Kooskooskee at a cost of $252,000. Citizens of Missoula and Lewiston began to organize to push the completion of the road to link Montana and Idaho by a Lewis and Clark Highway over Lolo Pass. On September 1, 1921, E. H. Roos, advertising manager for the Missoula Mercantile, brought a report from the coast that Seattle and Walla Walla business men were eager for a highway from Missoula through Lolo Pass to Lewiston, Idaho and on to Walla Walla. On September 10, 1921, B. F. Savage, a prominent business man of Lewiston, discussed before a banquet of Missoula business men, the Lolo Pass road and the benefits which would accrue to both communities if they were linked by the Lewis and Clark Highway. Enthusiasm for the highway continued at white heat through 1921, with almost every civic

127. Daily Missoulian, August 21, 1921.
agency and club in both cities, pledged to the support of the road. In the spring of 1922, it appeared as though the wishes of the two cities might come true when work was authorized on the Lolo Pass road by the Secretary of Agriculture. That same month of May in 1922, the Lewiston Tribune had the following article on the Lewis and Clark Highway:

T. W. Norcross, chief Engineer for the United States Forest Service at the Washington Department reports that $475,000 has been appropriated to construct the Lewis and Clark Highway between Lewiston, Idaho and Missoula, Montana...128

On the same date the Daily Missoulian ran the following: 129

Notification that Secretary of Agriculture, Wallace, had approved the project was conveyed by the Department of Agriculture to Senator H. L. Meyers of Montana this afternoon... all that is left on the Montana side is a stretch of seven miles from the Hot Springs to the summit.130

In June of 1922, $175,000 was appropriated for work on the Highway from Lowell, Idaho to a point twenty-four miles up the Lochsa. In the same appropriation $100,000 was given to Montana to complete the section from the Hot Springs to the summit. By August surveying parties under the Bureau of Public Roads had arrived at the Hot Springs to make surveys for the right of way to Powell Ranger station. In three months the crews had surveyed a distance of fifteen and one-half miles from the Pass to two miles beyond Powell Ranger Station. This section was cleared for a right-of-way and the road pushed that far by the fall of 1923, by the Seims-Carlson Company of Spokane, who had been awarded the contract. During the time construction was going on between the summit and Powell Ranger Station, the road had progressed farther up the Lochsa from Lowell.

128. Lewiston Tribune, May 21, 1922.
129. This was Henry Wallace's father
130. Daily Missoulian, May 21, 1922.
From 1923-1926 work had progressed intermittently until at that date there was only sixty miles of road to be completed to link up both ends of the highway. To show the interest that had been developed in the completion of this road, the Idaho State Republican Committee adopted the plank in their platform of 1924, the following resolution:

We advocate that the state of Idaho cooperate in every way possible with the construction of the Lolo Pass highway. 131

During the years 1926 and 1928 construction bounded ahead until only 25.5 miles of road needed to be constructed for the joining of both ends of the road. The worst section of road to be built was the notorious Black Canyon between Powell Ranger station and Lowell, Idaho. This road surveyed down the canyon would be a three per cent grade but the work of blasting a way through the precipitous rock walls of the canyon would be an arduous and costly project. To understand some of the difficulties of this canyon it took a survey party three months and ten days to survey sixteen and five tenths miles of this rugged gorge. About half way through the canyon a 220 foot steel bridge would have to be constructed. A tentative cost per mile was set at $52,000 which was a tremendous sum in 1926.

In September of 1926, the Clearwater country and Bitterroot had been linked haphazardly by a forest service road that followed the general direction of the old Lolo trail.

In 1927, the Sunday Missoulian ran a long article about the approaching completion of the Lewis and Clark Highway as follows:

Sometime within the next ten years an explosion will occur in the heart of the Bitterroot mountains, southwest of Missoula. Rocky Canyon walls will be moved by the concussion and the earth thus disturbed will be pushed aside leaving a surface as smooth as the macadam

131. Lewiston Tribune, July 10, 1926.
of South Higgins Avenue. A high powered automobile will glide down
the way and the Garden City will be from 70 to 75 miles near Portland
and other Pacific coast points that it is today...133

This article went on to say that the benefits northern Idaho and
western Montana would reap from this road would be very valuable. It
was estimated that $5,000,000 would be a conservative estimate of the
timber and grazing values in this region alone. At that time the for-
est service estimated that there was a stand of three and one-half
million board feet of merchantable timber which would be made access-
ible by the new highway. A profitable and huge woodpulp industry would
be able to exist because of the bountiful supply of wood, water power,
and limestone found in that area. It was felt also, that the road would
encourage truck gardening and grain growing in the fertile lands of the
middle fork of the Clearwater. The melon, cherries and other products
that could grow there because of the earlier growing season could be
transported to the markets at Missoula in one day instead of the two
or three days spent when routed by Spokane.

The United States Department of Agriculture estimated that 150,000
acres of choice grazing range would be made accessible by the completion
of the road.

The value of the mineral deposits in that area have never been
accurately estimated but most people acquainted with the area figured
that there might be quite valuable mineral deposits tapped in the can-
yons of the Bitterroots. Another benefit of the highway, would be the
great recreational possibilities latent in this area. Several hot

132. Many people of Missoula sincerely hope that the Highway will be
much smoother than present day South Higgins Avenue.
133. Sunday Missoulian, Nov. 18, 1927.
springs possessing medicinal powers are encountered in this region which could be utilized for sanitarium and rest lodges. Beautiful scenery mountain lakes, trout streams, glaciers, wild animals and unsurpassing panoramic mountain views would be encountered on the course of the Lolo Pass Highway. Another tremendous asset of this highway would be the amount of timber saved from forest fires because fire fighters and other forest service personnel could be transported rapidly to any part of the area.

After the stock market crash of 1929 little work was done on the roads in the Bitterroots. In 1934, however, the Civilian Conservation Corp engaged in an ambitious program of road building for the forest service. While very little was done on the highway, many feeder roads were built to the lookouts and fire protection points of the Forest Service. Not all the delay in the construction of the highway was due to the depression of 1929. In 1933 Mr. and Mrs. Herman Gerber and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Gerber protested the appraisal of their land in the vicinity of the hot springs for the highway right-of-way. The protest was brought into court and after nine months delay the affair was straightened out to the mutual satisfaction of the Gerbers and the State Highway Commission.

On June 18, 1933, $4,652,000, was allocated to construction on the Lewis and Clark Highway and it appeared as though the highway would be completed in a short time. A large percent of the appropriation was transferred to other highways purposes and projects, so the highway was never completed.

At the present time there still remain approximately twenty-five miles of road to be cut in Black Canyon before the highway becomes a
reality. Recently however, an appropriation was set aside for the surfacing of twelve miles of the road from highway 93 to a point above Woodmans Flats. The rest of the surfacing to the Montana line is expected to take place in the spring of 1951. The Lewis and Clark Highway is expected to be a reality by 1958, when a surfaced all season road will stretch from Missoula to Lewiston, Idaho.
A. BOOKS


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B. GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS


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Reports of Explorations and Surveys from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean (Washington, D. C. Government Printing Office.) 12 volumes.


C. NEWSPAPERS

Daily Missoulian, August 21, 1921.

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The Missoulian, June 29, 1877.

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Lewiston Tribune, July 10, 1926.
Bibliographical Essay

The greatest source of information for this thesis, was derived from Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Early Western Travels 1748-1846*, in thirty-two volumes. This work is indebted particularly to Thwaites accounts of the travels of Father De Smet. Information gleaned from this source appeared in the chapter on the Fur Traders and Missionaries. The chapter on Lewis and Clark is indebted primarily to Thwaites again, in his work in eight volumes *The Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition 1804-1806*.

Paul C. Phillips and Seymour Dunbar's *Journals of Major John Owen* was the main source for the chapter concerned with Major John Owen's travels over the Bitterroots. Another work excellently annotated and edited by Phillips is the *Journal of John Work*, which was of great value in the chapter on the Fur Traders. Another valuable source for this chapter was *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* by Alexander Ross. Ross is an authority on this phase of western life, as he was an employee both of the Pacific and Northwest Fur Companies during the years covered by this thesis.

The best source of information on the Nez Perce and Flathead Indians is *Hodge's Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. This was published as a bulletin from the United States Ethnological Bureau and is considered the "gospel" on the Indians of North America. Charles J. Koppler's *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, was a valuable source on the treaties made with the Nez Perces by the United States Government.

O. O. Howard's book *Nez Perce Joseph* was also used extensively in the chapter on the pursuit and capture of Chief Joseph. This is
General Howard's own personal account of his running battle with Joseph over the Lolo Trail.

The government printed volumes on The reports of the Secretary of War on the Several Pacific Railroad Explorations 1855-1861 for the chapter on the Surveys of Stevens and Mullan over the Lolo trail. Captain Mullan's Report on the Construction of a Military road from Fort Walla-Walla to Fort Benton was used most in the writing of this chapter.

The Lewiston Tribune and Missoulian were the newspapers used to find the material on road construction over the Lolo Pass in comparatively recent times.