

# *Welcome To The Last Crossing*



Casper, Wyoming  
August 15 – 18 2001

Trail Tour Booklet

## TREK TIPS

We all want you to enjoy your Wyoming experience during this convention. To this end we make the following suggestions:

Altitudes may be higher than you are used to, causing you to breathe deeper and wear out faster. Casper is 5100 feet above sea level, Independence Rock is 6028 ft, Rocky Ridge is 7215 ft. Don't try to do too much. This altitude causes rapid sunburn if you do not use sunblock and hats.

Your tour guide will give you an idea of how long we will stay at the various out of bus presentations. Please do not stray too far from the bus so when the horns blare you can reboard and keep us on our tight schedule.

Smoking permitted only at out- of- bus stops and then only if dry grass is not in the vicinity. Make sure your smoking materials are OUT.

Climbing Independence Rock can be dangerous if you slip. Wear rubber gripping shoes if possible. People have been killed or seriously hurt falling from this rock.

Watch where you step. Please don't scare our rattlesnakes. Walkers in any rocky area should take precautions. There is also poison ivy in some of the crevices of Independence Rock.

Restrooms are located at Ayre's Natural Bridge and Independence Rock. This means that there are restrooms at lunchtime only. All busses have restrooms on board.

Don't be bashful in asking questions. If your tour guide can not answer your particular question he or she can probably find the answer. Enjoy!

## THE WEST TOUR

The Platte/North Platte River has been used as an East-West travel corridor since people first arrived in North America over 10,000 years ago. Our interest is in the trail describing only 30 years of its 10,000 year existence. We will follow a break in the waterway from the North Platte to the Sweetwater. It will be the longest, driest, and most feared portion of the trail since the emigrants left the Missouri.

The trail system through what will become Casper consists of two trails coming in and three trails going out. The trails from the east are along both sides of the North Platte River and converge at Richard or Reshaw Bridge or in an area to the west of downtown Casper.

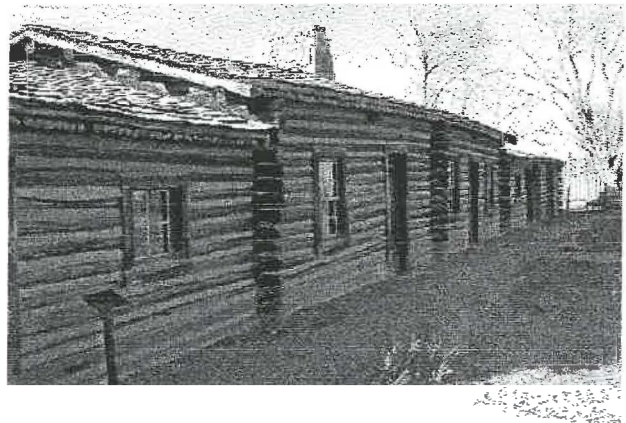
The earliest trail out of Casper was the route south of the river to today's Bessemer Bend. This was the route most used before ferries and bridges (1840-1847). The trail is near or under the highway as we approach Casper Mountain.

The second trail out of Casper is probably the oldest if you consider the 10,000 year history of the trail, but for us it is the second oldest. This is the trail on the north side of the river joined after crossing on ferries or bridges. This trail ends up at Bessemer Bend like the earlier south trail.

The third trail is the Emigrant Gap Route used after 1847 and especially during the gold rush years. This trail leads almost due west of our city to the Poison Spider area, about ten miles, before it turns south to eventually join up with the other trail coming from the Bessemer Bend area. It was once thought that the Emigrant Gap route was the most heavily traveled but recent diaries indicate that the second or north of the river route may have seen more emigrant usage.

As in all history you have to keep in mind the year and time we are explaining. The "last crossing" of the river could have been at Bessemer Bend, at Richard Bridge, at the location of today's Fort Caspar, or anywhere from Casper to Glenrock, depending on the year involved.

We start today by going by **Platte Bridge Station** or today's **Fort Caspar** which played a part in the trails later history. Do not confuse this site with the Richard Bridge site which was also mentioned as Camp at Platte Bridge or Post at Platte Bridge. Before 1859 any reference in diaries to military presence here was at the Richard Bridge site.



Mountain men of the 1820's and 1830's knew that this was a good place to cross the river, especially at low water. Probably this crossing was in favor because the North Platte now is coming from the south and this is the most westerly convenient point on the river in this area to cross.

As the Mormon Pioneer Party approached the "Upper Crossing" of the North Platte, **Brigham Young** sent ahead a detachment of 40 men to secure a boat and prepare a way to ferry the wagons across the river. A Missouri company had preceded them and arranged a contract with the Mormon ferry-builders to carry their wagons across for \$1.50 per load in the "Revenue Cutter" — a leather boat which also



served as a butcher wagon and a pulpit - which the pioneers had the foresight to bring from Winter Quarters. It had the capacity to carry cargoes weighing 1,500-1,800 pounds. Fees were paid in flour at the rate of \$2.50 per hundred pounds when the going rate was \$10 per hundred pounds elsewhere. Though they got 24 wagons across and earned \$34 in this endeavor, they found that the wagons often rolled over in the currents, and the horses risked drowning. It was clear a more efficient and reliable strategy for crossing these swollen currents had to be found.

Brigham Young arrived at this location with the rest of his 72 wagon company of 143 men, three women and two children on June 12, 1847. His party had to wait for the Missouri group to finish crossing. Then the Mormons ferried their emptied wagons while displaced provisions and personal belongings were carried across on the Revenue Cutter. Strong winds and high water made the crossing difficult and extremely dangerous. After a long day, only 23 wagons rested safely on the other side of the river.

Frustrated by this slow progress, Brigham Young commissioned the construction of a larger ferry boat. Men were sent to locate two 23 foot cottonwood trees, which were hollowed out like canoes to serve as the base. Cross timbers were obtained from the mountain and slabbing for the floor from other cottonwoods. After three days, the ferry was complete and had been provided as well with two oars and a rudder for control. Brigham Young realized that subsequent Mormon companies would require the ferry to cross the North Platte, and he also appreciated the revenue generating potential of helping other pioneers cross the river.

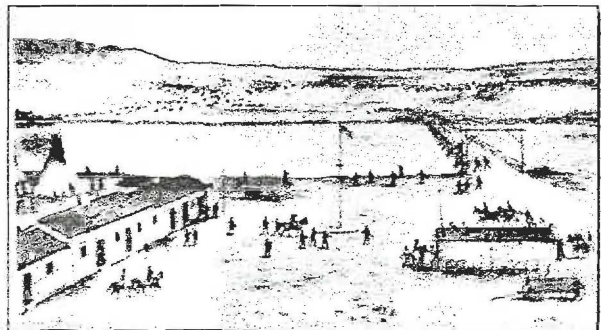
After the Mormons had completed the crossing, other small wagon trains bound for Oregon contracted with the ferrymen to carry them across. On June 19, 1847, one week after their arrival, Brigham Young named nine men to remain and operate the ferry while he and the others pushed

on to their new home in present day Utah. A tenth man elected himself to stay behind with the ferrymen.

The original ferry was located near the present site of Fort Caspar, but a few days after Brigham Young's departure, in response to temporary competition, it was moved downstream several miles. A sign post advising of the ferry service here was placed at Deer Creek 28 miles downriver and was probably the first advertising sign in Wyoming.

The Mormon ferry operated every summer between 1847 and 1852. When the gold rush began, numerous ferries were in operation to compete with the enterprising Mormons.

*Source: Mormon Trail Sites in the Casper Area, Casper Stake LDS church, text by Tom Empey*



*Guinard Bridge by W.H. Jackson*

In 1859 an enterprising man by the name of **Louis Guinard** decided to build a **bridge** across the river here. Guinard was not new to bridge building in the area for in 1857 he built one across the Sweetwater near Independence Rock. This bridge was to be a substantial one and it was! 1035 feet in length with a floor three inches thick, eighteen feet in width, spanning twenty eight rock filled cribs. The construction cost was said to be \$40,000.

Guinard's bridge put an end to Richard's monopoly although they both were in operation at the same time until 1866 when Richard's was dismantled. Richard Burton in 1860 drank whiskey with ice at Reshaw's trading post but he crossed the river on the Guinard.



The Guinard operation and its adjoining buildings therefore became a competitor to Richard and his establishment. In 1861 it became the place where the Pony Express set up a station. This was followed by the Pacific Telegraph Line office as a main relay station.

Indian raids on the telegraph line and the few emigrant complaints of Indian harassment caused the government to station troops here and began what was to be **Platte Bridge Station** in 1862, later renamed Fort Caspar in 1865.

On the morning of **July 26, 1865** Sgt. Amos Custard and his supply train, returning from Sweetwater Station, broke camp at Red Buttes. There were others at Red Buttes that morning that warned the sergeant to remain there because of the large number of Indians observed around Platte Bridge Station. Sgt. Custard disregarded the warnings and pushed toward the station.

Meanwhile, at Platte Bridge Station, commander Major Martin Anderson was persuaded by his junior officers to organize a relief party to escort the Custard wagons. He ordered the command of this unit to 21 year old **Lt. Caspar Collins**. Young Collins was merely passing through the post and could have denied the order for he was not even under Major Anderson's command. Fellow officers urged him not to do so, but Collins was fearful of being accused a coward by some.

Caspar Collins was the son of Colonel William Collins, for whom the City of Fort Collins, Colorado is named. Caspar was not a greenhorn to the west because his father had brought him along when he was 18. His present duty was the command of Sweetwater, Three Crossings, St. Marys, and South Pass stations. He was reportedly fairly well liked, a good rider, fine hunter, and he spoke the Sioux language to some de-

At 7:30 on the morning of July 26th, Caspar Collins led 20 to 25 men across the bridge to escort the Custard train. Many of those in the post felt that this was a suicidal mission. Caspar was ordered to go north to the ridge top and then turn west so he could be seen from the fort.

After crossing the bridge the Collins party leisurely rode across the bottomland, ascending the bluff and turned west. In the meantime ten troops crossed the bridge to observe the Indian action and prevent the Indians from cutting off a retreat to the bridge.

When about one half mile from the post, Collins turned north and disappeared from sight. Some reports claim he was chasing a few Indians that were observed cutting the telegraph wires. The Cheyenne charged from the south. Collins wheeled his men but because of the lay of the land he could not see the Sioux coming out of the ravines and over the hills to the north.

When he did see the Indians were coming from all sides, he ordered retreat. The soldiers rode pell-mell into the mass of Cheyenne. They had already fired their single shot rifles so now relied on revolvers. The Indians, coming from all sides were exposed to their own fire, so they relied on spears, tomahawks and sabers.

The soldiers rode desperately toward the bridge. One of them had his horse shot out from under him and yelled for help. Lt. Collins, already wounded in the hip, heeded the cry and rode to the fallen man. George Bent and others with the Indians said that Caspar Collins's horse spooked and bolted away. At this point an arrow struck Collins in the head and immediately the Indians finished the job.

Most of the retreating soldiers reached the bridge due to the protective fire of the men stationed at the north end of the bridge.

Lt. Caspar Collins and four men were killed, eight were wounded in a fight that only lasted about ten minutes.

A situation that saved so many of the soldiers was the manner in which the Indians attacked. In fact, this may have saved Platte Bridge Station, for the Cheyenne and Sioux got into a dispute over further attack. They actually killed or wounded many of their own in their crossfire.

There were estimates of 1300 to 3000 Indians involved in the battles of July 26, 1865. The body of Lt. Collins was found along what is now Casper Creek, north of the battle site. Caspar was stripped naked, with twenty four arrows in his body, the back portion of his head was knocked off, brains, heart and bowels taken out, hands and feet cut off and the torso tied up with telegraph wire. The remains were buried at Platte Bridge Station. Caspar Collins was later reinterred in his home town of Hillsboro, Ohio.

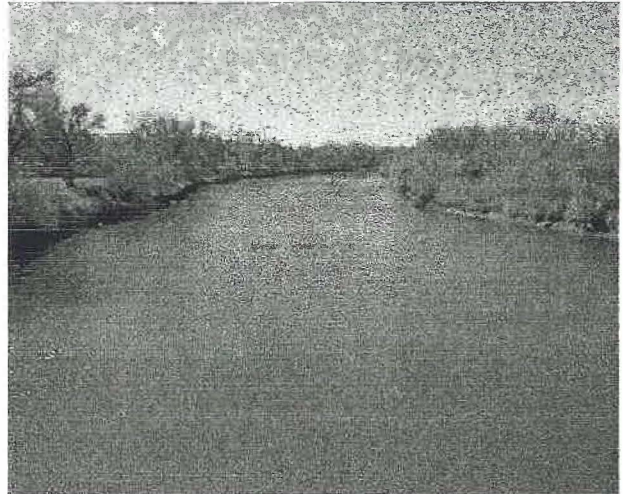
The City of Casper, Casper Mountain, Casper Creek, and Fort Caspar were all named for brave Caspar Collins.

Soldiers at the Station could see the **Custard train** approaching and witnessed from afar what was going on. Sgt. Custard and his three wagon train had just cleared the brow of a hill when they saw what they were getting into. The wagons were set in a defensive position and the soldiers prepared to defend themselves.

The engagement lasted about four hours. The Custard men had rifles that could fire up to fourteen rounds per minute, which kept a large number of Indians patient. The Indians had a few single shot rifles but their main weapon was the bow and arrow.

The Custard train had 24 soldiers, of which five were in the lead. When the attack began these five attempted to cross the river. Two were

killed in doing so and three escaped to the Post. The 19 men left with Custard were all killed. Indian losses were estimated to be heavy, but we will never know. It is possible that up to one hundred persons were killed or wounded that day. Sgt. Amos Custard like Captain William Fetterman, Lieutenant John Grattan, and General George Custer, all learned that the Indian was a formidable foe.



The Bureau of Land Management interpretive center at **Bessemer Bend** points out much of the history of the area. It is also one of Wyoming's beauty spots. If you follow emigrant diaries this place was sometimes called Red Buttes crossing, or (again) The Last Crossing, or The Upper Crossing of the North Platte. The emigrants and mountain men crossed here because the river upstream flows through a narrow canyon where travel, especially in wagons, was impossible. And normally the further you can go up a river the narrower it becomes.

Remember that the North Platte river in front of you is not the same as in emigrant times. There are five dams upstream from here so the river is pretty well controlled today. In emigrant times the flow in the spring, when the pioneers got here, could be rapid and dangerous. Diaries indicate that there were drownings here.

The mountain to the east is Casper Mountain. The first canyon to the south on Casper Mountain is named **Jackson Canyon** for the famous photographer, William Henry Jackson, who made many famous photos of the area. The mountain to the south of Casper Mountain is called Coal Mountain. To the south is Bessemer Mountain which is 6,371 feet above sea level. The smaller little red knobs are actually the Red Buttes according to BLM maps. In emigrant times the entire area was called Red Buttes.

William Henry Jackson photographed this canyon while with the Hayden Expedition in 1870. A quote in the book *Time Exposure* states that he said: *I had certainly never experienced the proud satisfaction of having a place named for me. That came after I discovered a little canyon near Casper. (When permanent settlers moved in they gave "my" canyon another name. In 1925, however, the citizens of Casper restored the honor of which I had been unintentionally deprived and Jackson Canyon is now marked on the maps.*

The **Robert Stuart** cabin was located northeast of this spot on the far side of the river, almost opposite where Poison Spider Creek enters the river. This was the cabin the returning Astorians built in the winter of 1812. Fear of the nearby Indians made them move on a few days after the cabin was finished. This was the first cabin in Wyoming built by white men.

Robert Stuart and his men had a difficult time with Wyoming. They entered what is now our state near the Bear River. Then they made the mistake of following the Bear south or upstream instead of downstream. They found the Salt and Grey rivers and followed them clear back into Idaho near Twin Falls. Realizing their mistake they retraced the Snake to the Hoback and followed it. They crossed South Pass but did not follow the Sweetwater. They traveled the mountain range behind Oregon Buttes,

Green and Crooks Mountain and discovered the Sweetwater by coming through Muddy Gap. The party found the Sweetwater in the area of the Sun Ranch. After leaving Bessemer Bend Stuart traveled to the Scottsbluff area. Winter has now descended and Scottsbluff had no trees or game. As we all know, Wyoming is more hospitable than Nebraska, so Stuart decided to retrace his path back to Torrington where they built their second winter cabin. Stuart's party traveled approximately 500 miles across our state which is 365 miles wide in a straight line. Young Robert Stuart sure saw a lot of Wyoming - and he surely discovered South Pass in an odd way.

To the west, on the rise of land where the power lines are, was the location of **mail station #28** used in the 1859 Hockaday mail contract. It later became a **Pony Express station**. Its location is marked with an L. C. Bishop stake. This is also the location of the old **Goose Egg ranch house** made famous in Owen Wister's novel *The Virginian*. In this novel the Goose Egg ranch house was where the cowboys switched the babies and some of the participants took home the wrong baby.

It is from this Pony Express Station that **Buffalo Bill** was supposed to have ridden 76 miles to Three Crossings station only to find that the next relay rider had been killed. Cody agreed to ride the next 85 miles to Rocky Ridge. The trip from Red Buttes to Rocky Ridge and return, 322 miles in 21 hours was one of the longest rides in Pony Express history. (Actual length is closer to 220 miles.) Today, even the Pony Express Association does not agree with this story that conveniently came to light after Buffalo Bill began his wild west show. He would have been 14 at the time and most actual records put him in school, where he should have been. The story has been told and printed so often that the legend has become a fact. This is not to belittle this great showman.



It is from this location where the story of the **Martin Handcart Company** is best told. The greatest tragedy to occur in Natrona County happened while the Mormon handcart company was crossing the area we travel today.

As most of you know, the early years of the Mormon church were ones of strife. The church was founded in New York by its leader, Joseph Smith. The location as a gathering place for the faithful, Zion, was proclaimed from the very first. Initially Joseph Smith thought Illinois would be the location of Zion, but the Mormons were driven from Illinois to Missouri. In Missouri the saints were expelled back to another area of Illinois.

The problem with the Mormons in Illinois and Missouri was not over polygamy but with their successful communal type of living that controlled land and votes. It soon became evident that Illinois did not want Mormons anywhere in the State, so the quest for Zion turned to the Rocky Mountains with Brigham Young's party of 1847.

The Mormons from their founding in 1830 have always been a missionary religion. After the arrival in Utah the Mormons settled and again sent out missionaries. The missionary efforts in Europe, especially Britain, turned out too successful. By 1856 unemployment and hard times in Europe produced ready ears for a gospel that promised both material and spiritual salvation. The missionaries had thousands ready to emigrate to the United States and Utah.

Brigham Young started the Perpetual Emigration Fund to aid some of the poor across the ocean. But there were so many that the church did not have the funds. This lack of money is what started a remarkable travel experiment - the migration of the ten Mormon handcart companies.

Today the thought of pulling or pushing a handcart full of food and clothing from Iowa City, Iowa, to Salt Lake City, Utah, seems unthinkable if not impossible. From 1856 through 1860 ten Mormon handcart companies with a total of 2962 persons attempted such an impossible task.

Franklin Richards, President of the European Mission, was the ultimate optimist when he told the new converts in England about the handcart plan. He said: *"Look, you will get up in the morning and you won't have to hunt for your oxen that have strayed during the night. You won't have to spend all the time yoking up the team. You can get up and start right out and be miles down the road by the time wagons get ready - and besides - early morning is the best time of day to get out and travel"*.

Brigham Young encouraged the experiment by stating that if you travel 15 miles a day you should get through in 70 days and after you get accustomed to it, you will travel 20, 25, and even 30 miles per day with ease. Five handcart companies left Iowa City in 1856. The first three companies did make the trip in remarkably good shape. 815 persons were in these three companies and only 27 died enroute. Some did travel 30 miles in a day.

In this section of Wyoming what happened to the 4th handcart company under James Willie and the 5th handcart company under Edward Martin is our concern.

These were the largest companies. The Willie Company had 500 people and the Martin Company had 576 persons. Both companies started late from Liverpool, England. Part of the delay was due to the missionaries converting more persons to Mormonism than expected. Ships for this many proved slow to come by and on their arrival by train in Iowa City there was a shortage of handcarts and provisions. The Mormons in Iowa City had already provisioned and built handcarts for the first three companies and they were just not ready for 1076 more persons.

Both companies left Iowa City in July - and left the Florence, Nebraska jump-off to the wilderness point, in middle and late August. They knew they were late but they decided to disregard warnings and chance the trip anyway.

They were not the only companies to leave late, for behind them were to travel two ox trains - Captain W. B. Hodgett's 33 wagon train with 185 passengers and Captain John Hunt's train with 50 wagons with 200 emigrants.

Let's first look at the fourth handcart company under Willie. Member Levi Savage warned this group that it was too late to start from Florence, but by popular demand his warning was disregarded. This company had six wagons with it hauling tents and food. But even with the six wagons there was not enough room to haul flour for the 500 in the party to reach Utah. Therefore each handcart was loaded with a 98 pound sack of flour. Each individual was allowed 17 pounds of bedding and clothing. A large family could have 200 pounds or more on their handcart. The flour ration was one pound per person per day.

Fresh beef was issued occasionally and each 100 persons had three or four cows to provide milk. The heavy loads took their toll of strength - and the handcarts broke down often.

At Wood River, Nebraska, the cattle stampeded into a herd of buffalo. Thirty cattle and oxen were lost. This left only two oxen per wagon so milk cows and beef cattle were hitched to the wagons. These animals proved to be poor substitutes for oxen so again, a 98 pound sack of flour was loaded on many handcarts. Beef rations were stopped and milk production fell because these animals were being used to haul the wagons.

The company expected provisions to be at Fort Laramie, but there were little, so the one pound flour ration was cut to 3/4 pound. At Independence Rock Captain Willie received word that the expected provisions would probably meet them at South Pass. The flour ration was cut to ten ounces per day.

The farther they traveled up the Sweetwater the colder it got. The 17 pounds of clothing was not enough for severe high altitude cold. Cold weather, shortened rations, the fatigue from overexertion soon produced effects. The older persons started dying. Soon even the young began dying. Chislett's narrative stated the grim fact: *"many a father pulled his cart, with his little children on it, until the day preceding his death. I have seen some pull their carts in the morning, give out during the day, and die before the next morning."*

Then came the October snow, in a raging blizzard that left eight to ten inches of snow on the ground. It started 16 miles from wood or water, between the fifth and sixth crossing of the Sweetwater. Only a barrel or two of hard bread was left so the cattle were killed for the beef.

It was decided that to go any farther in the now foot of snow would be impossible, so camp was made among the willows of the sixth crossing of the Sweetwater. Captain Willie set out to find the rescue party. He was gone three days - three days of terrible suffering among the group. The bread was gone the first day and the meat that was left was causing dysentery.

Even after the rescue party arrived the suffering continued. The group continued on up Rocky Ridge, which even today is a tough, four wheel drive climb in the summertime. They crossed Rocky Ridge during the day and camped along Rock Creek which is south of today's Atlantic City. Thirteen died that night and were buried in

the snow in a mass grave. Before the grave was covered two more died.

Out of 500 in the Willie Company - 67 died in their quest for Zion. Now back to the fifth handcart company under the leadership of Edward Martin. This company was even bigger with 576 persons. The same storm that hit the Willie Company along the upper Sweetwater now hit the Martin Company.

The company had just passed the Reshaw (Richard) Bridge at today's Evansville when they decided to ford the river. The handcart companies did not have money for tolls charged at the bridge and in October the river was fordable. The various remembrances put this crossing at the 1849 Mormon ferry site near the north Casper baseball park or in the Fort Caspar area. The intense cold hit just as the river was being crossed on October 19, 1856. Blocks of mushy snow and ice had to be avoided when wading across. The group had just crossed the North Platte when a tremendous storm of snow, hail, sand and fierce winds came up.

Back at Deer Creek, where Glenrock is today, two days before, because of growing weakness of man and animal, the individual clothing and bedding allowance was reduced from 17 pounds to 10 pounds per person. Now this clothing was direly needed. We residents of Wyoming know what this is like in October. It can be extremely hot one day and cold as can be two days later.

The company pushed a little farther from the river and set up camp. This camp is thought to be where Mills, Wyoming is today. On the 20th they traveled, or almost wallowed, for about three miles through the snow. We think this camp was on the Rim Rock Ranch near the river. On October 23 they traveled another five miles and made camp. We think that this spot

was at the south end of the river canyon on the Eagle Ridge Ranch. This is within sight of the Red Buttes and opposite where the Stuart cabin is thought to have been. This would be along the river opposite the hog back ridge that you can see from highway 220.

The dying began. The snow fell for three days. The active male members of the camp were reduced by sickness and death to where there were not enough able bodied to put up the tents at night. Here, Joseph Young, Brigham's son, the advance scout of the rescue party, found the suffering masses. He reported that *"here some died sitting by the fire, some were singing hymns or eating crusts of bread"*. Joseph Young reported that 56 had died since crossing the North Platte 9 days and about 8 miles before. (40% of the deaths were in this area)

John Jaques reported that on the 29th the Martin Company left the river and camped at Rock Avenue. We do not know whether this meant Devil's Backbone or Prospect Hill for both were called Rock Avenue in various accounts. We believe on the 30th they struggled up Prospect Hill. At Greasewood Creek on the 31st they met six rescue wagons laden with flour, clothing and other goods.

This was the same rescue party that helped the Willie Company so there were nowhere enough provisions to help this many suffering. The men of the rescue party did help considerably because they still had strength. There were reports that the snow was 8" deep and some of the rescue party used ropes to help some of the handcarts along.

On November 1 camp was made, amid falling snow, near Independence Rock. There was a foot to eighteen inches of snow on the ground. The next day the company arrived at Devil's Gate. It was decided at that point to



seek shelter in the Sweetwater Rocks, at a place now known as Martin's Cove and wait for the rescue supplies.

To reach this place the Sweetwater River, filled with ice, had to be crossed. Some pushed across but others could not. Three 18 year old boys belonging to the relief party carried nearly every member across the stream. The exposure was so great that in later years all the three were reported to have died early from the effect of such cold.

The company found some shelter in the cove. On November 6 the temperature reached 11 degrees below zero. The handcarts were abandoned and used as firewood. By this time the Hodgett and Hunt wagon trains had caught up with the group, but they also were out of rations and suffering effects of the same storm. The freight from the wagons was stored in some abandoned buildings at Devil's Gate. Men were left here to guard the goods through the winter with much suffering reported.

With the wagon trains, the rescue party, and the Martin Company there were over 1000 persons at Martin's Cove in the freezing cold on November 8, 1856. On November 9 the weather broke slightly. It is estimated that only one third of those left could walk, and they did. The other two-thirds were loaded in the now empty wagons and the trek to Salt Lake City, 335 miles away, continued. They now made decent time for the ground was frozen hard enough to support the wagons.

The main relief trains began reaching the emigrants at Three Crossings on November 12, near today's Jeffery City. From there all made their way to Salt Lake City arriving on November 30.

The Martin Handcart Company of 576 had lost 135 to 150 dead during their ordeal - one out of four did not make it. The tragic experiences of the 4th and 5th companies turned many against

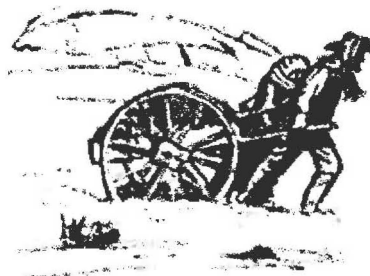
handcart travel. But the church persisted that such travel was safe and five more companies made the trip from 1857 to 1860.

Many in the ill-fated 4th and 5th handcart companies had frozen hands and feet that had to be amputated. Many had lives that were shortened even though they completed the ordeal. The building of the Union Pacific Railroad eliminated the need for this extraordinary means of travel.

We doubt that the Martin Company had any strength to sing a handcart song while in our county. The chorus of the most famous Mormon handcart song goes:

*Some must push and some must pull  
As we go marching up the hill  
As merrily on the way we go  
Until we reach the valley, oh*

*Sources: Handcarts to Zion, Leroy and Ann Hafen, Arthur Clark Co. Glendale 1976  
Great Basin Kingdom, Leonard Arrington Univ. of Nebr. Press 1964  
The Gathering of Zion, Wallace Stegner Westwater Press, Salt Lake 1964  
History of Natrona County, Alfred Mokler 1923  
Emigrating Journals of the Willie & Martin Handcart Companies, Lynne Turner, 1996*



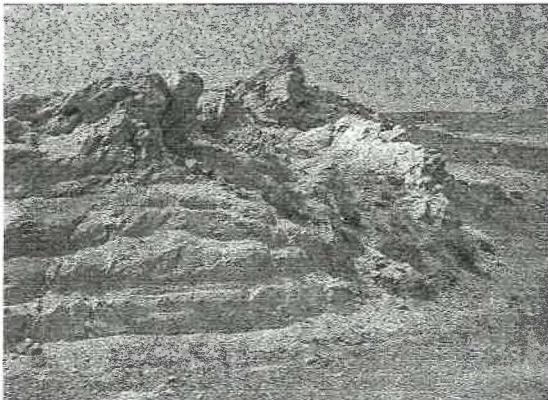
*Illustration by Linda Turner-Vincent  
and Joseph Ostraff*

In 1933 a grave was discovered by a cowboy on the Eagle Rock Ranch containing one woman, one small child, and seven men. All were unclothed. This is in the area where the three advance scouts met the Martin Company. We suspect that this was one of the many handcart graves.

In the late 1950s the Bureau of Land Management and the Wyoming State Historical Society cooperated on a project to mark the historic trails through the middle of Wyoming. This has resulted in an ongoing project with what we now call **BLM markers**. At one time there were 35 markers between Casper and the Sun Ranch. Nearly all the original ones with a bronze medallion are gone due to vandalism. This marker usually indicates that you are on land controlled by the BLM and not private land.

Now we start the stretch that Richard Burton described as *All is dry, dreary and desolate waste*. It is in this general area where Mormon Mary Fielding's ox fell and appeared to be dying. The brothers and sisters gathered about her ox and prayed, and the ox recovered and made it to Salt Lake City.

The marker at **Iron Creek** is especially important because it marks the place where the Bessemer Bend route and the Emigrant Gap route join to form one trail for the next 70 miles. Unless they took the ocean route or the Santa Fe trail, the majority of those who went west, the mountain men, the missionaries, the emigrants, the pony express riders, the stagecoaches, traveled this one path. If your western hero went west on the trail he probably was here at one time.



*The Devils Backbone*

It was called **Rock Avenue** or **The Devil's Backbone** or **Avenue of the Rocks** and you can see why. Almost all diaries mention this place because of the rock formation. Although this spot is a short days trip from the last good water, many groups camped here, evidently having adequate stored water supply.

William Clayton, with the Brigham Young pioneer party, wrote on June 19, 1847: *"A steep descent from a bluff and at the foot there is a high ridge of pointed rocks running parallel with the road for nearly a quarter of a mile, leaving only sufficient space for wagons to pass. At the south point there is a very large rock lying close to where the road makes a bend, making it somewhat difficult to get by without striking it. The road is also very rough with cobblestones"*.

Unfortunately, William Clayton's road got straightened out and widened by the Natrona County Road Dept. quite a few years ago. At one time there were emigrant names carved and painted on the rocks. Most of these were destroyed when the road was blasted. Those names not destroyed were done in by mother nature during a wet spring in 1995.

You can picture in your mind what William Clayton was describing by walking to the foot of the formation where you will find trail ruts and trail swales marked with an OCTA marker.

One of the inscriptions lost to mother nature was believed to be that of Randall Fuller. The town of Fullerton, Nebraska was named for this enthusiastic traveler. Randall Fuller went by these rocks on five different occasions, leading people to California. He carved his name here in 1854 which was the third time he passed by these rocks.

Keep in mind that the trail here was a two way street with travel both coming and going. The Mormons used this trail for their Down and Back wagon trains that brought many of the faithful to Zion.

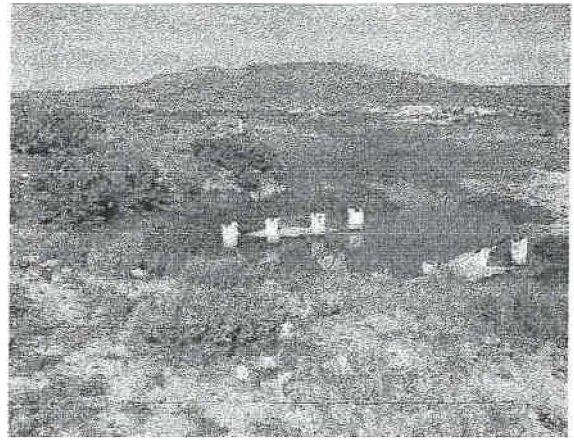
After passing Devils Backbone we come to a place where us locals have changed the name from Unknown Alkali Slough to **William Clayton's Slough**. This is because Clayton described this campground of the Mormon Pioneer Party so eloquently.

Notice the stream bed here - in June and early July this is nothing but alkali and mud and water. Great care had to be taken here to keep thirsty animals from drinking the poisonous water that pooled up in the alkali.

On June 18, 1849, B.C. Clark described this country as the most barren he had ever seen. About five weeks later Stansbury came through and reported that he had seen eight oxen lying in a heap by the roadside. Later in the same day he saw relics of 17 wagons and carcasses of 27 more dead oxen.

But William Clayton on June 19, 1847 really tells it like it was: *"At 7:40 we formed our encampment in a small spot surrounded by high bluffs, having traveled 21 1/2 miles which is the longest distance we have traveled since we left winterquarters and this is considered by all to be the worst camping ground we have had on our journey, but we were obliged to take it for there is not wood, grass or water."*

*There are two small streams of water, one appears to come from the northwest and is not very bad water, the other is from the southwest and is so bad that cattle will not drink it. This is one of the most horrid, swampy, stinking places I ever saw. The mosquitoes are very bad indeed at this place, which adds to the loathsome, solitary scenery around. Its banks are so perfectly soft that a horse or ox cannot go down to drink without sinking immediately nearly overhead in thick, filthy mud. It was found necessary to keep a guard out to prevent the cattle from getting into it, and orders were given to drive them down a little east where feed is pretty good and miring is not such a danger".*



*Clayton's Slough*

J. Goldsborough Bruff states that the water is the color of coffee. Piled around were hundreds of dead animals, chiefly oxen. Saw 5 yoke of oxen, all fallen together and still in gear - was told that lightning killed them all during a great hail storm.

There is no doubt that the alkali water along this stretch of the trail killed many animals. You can see cattle in the area now but they don't gorge themselves on the water and are probably selective when it comes to drinking

As we leave Clayton's Slough you can notice the alkali to the west. You can also notice deep trail ruts to the right of the road and see where the trail crosses the road on the south skyline. For quite a distance now you can follow the trail to the left by spotting white OCTA markers. This is undisturbed virgin trail in this area. The trail will again cross the road and be right under the road that follows the ridgeline.

Today's cattle grazing here undoubtedly use some of this brackish water as well as water provided. They are not driven with thirst as oxen, mules, and horses would be after the long drive from the river. The gorging of this poor water is what led to so many animal fatalities.



The source of Willow Springs is up the various draws at the foot of Prospect Hill. The major spring is to the right of the present road under the large cottonwood tree. Again, nearly all diaries mention this spring. They also mention how the grass had been overgrazed by earlier trains.

Henry S. Bloom, who was traveling the north side of the river, in his diary of 1850 gives this description of the area from the river: *"Saturday 22 (June) - Left camp at six this morning: crossed a deep, dry creek, and passed the upper ferry early; 5 boats, rope ferry, \$5 a team for ferrying. We are now on the big road and such another road I never saw. It is from 20 to 60 feet wide and as hard and smooth as a pavement. the road is full of teams, and a perfect jam. Passed in sight of the Red Buttes this forenoon; the country getting hilly. Encamped at the Willow Springs; traveled 30 miles; our horses are very tired tonight and getting poor. No signs of grass today whatever; a perfectly desolate and barren region. Went about a quarter of a mile from camp to find grass for our horses; found a small patch of about half an acre of tolerably good grass in the midst of the alkali country. Saw several springs this evening about which had formed a hard crust of saleratus which was very strong. Nothing grows here but the wild sage. Saw dead horses and oxen, lots of them today. A majority of the teams look miserable. I have seen in the last few days lots and lots of homesick chaps, many of them nearly discouraged; a fretful time in which men begin to show their real character; a discouraging prospect truly. We have passed at least 1,000 teams since leaving Fort Laramie.*

Indians used this spot extensively and the early French trappers knew of it. It was probably James Clyman in 1824 who was the first emigrant-explorer to see this place. In 1827 Ashley led a fur brigade into the mountains trailing a cannon. It's possible that those cannon wheels left a track for the Smith, Jackson & Sublette expedition of 1830. The first covered wagon train of emigrants

to pass here was on July 4, 1841 with the Bidwell-Bartleson Company.

As we leave Willow Springs we start the long climb up **Prospect Hill**, or sometimes referred to as Avenue Hill, and now called Ryan Hill. To the west notice the double set of swales climbing to the top. These are swales that make one appreciate how difficult it would be to pull a wagon, or better yet, pull a handcart in the snow up this long grade.

At the top of the hill one can see why they called this Prospect Hill. Look at the fine prospect you see before you. From left to right are The Pedro Mountains (Pathfinder lake named for Fremont is right below this range) then the Shirley Mountain Range, then the Seminoe Mountains, The Ferris Range, and finally the Sweetwater Rocks.

At the top of Prospect Hill the Bureau of Land Management has constructed an interpretive turnout. This was dedicated during the first Casper OCTA convention in 1987. This is a good place for an easy hike that takes you back to the main road. The trail swales continue on the right hand side.

We now enter an area that we are now calling **Irene Paden's Slough** because of her vivid description of it in the 1930s. Evidently this area appeared much differently in pioneer times. The stock reservoir now dams up water that contributed to the slough. This spot was mentioned in diaries as a very dangerous area of the trail. Stock frequently mired in the alkali slough that crossed this area and the areas in the next few miles.

William J. Scott, on August 14, 1846 said *Look out a few miles the other side of Willow Springs - The Soap Factory - It looks like soil on top and if you step on it you will*

*go under head and ears, and if not washed off, it will take your hair off.*

Byron McKinstry in 1850 *"Started on our journey at 1:00 am and drove to the bad slough by daybreak. Finding grass, we turned out our teams but were soon informed that the grass as well as the water was poisonous, and the dead carcasses confirming this, we drove on without letting the cattle eat"*.

Lydia Waters in 1855 relates she saw a young pup wade into the alkaline pool in search of coolness. The pup all of a sudden jumped as if a bee had stung him. He fled, yelping with pain from the biting alkali.

But Irene Payden describes these places perfectly: *"Steaming marshes, alternated with pestilent pits of semifluid that shook and smelled like spoiled meat jelly"*.

The trail now crosses down through what is now McClary reservoir. The road now leaves the trail for a time and joins it on the other side of the Rattlesnake Grazing Association main ranch buildings. When the trail joins the road it is very evident first on the east side and then on the west.

Soon we enter the Murphy ranch which we will be on until we come to Wyoming highway 220. The trail at this point is close to the road to the east. In some areas here the trail has been destroyed by pipeline construction. Generally the trail is following Fish Creek which does not flow with much intensity.

We soon come to a junction in the road and if your eyesight is sharp you can spot an L. C. Bishop stake that indicates the location of the **Horse Creek Pony Express Station**. Immediately after this is the junction of Fish Creek and Horse Creek.

In emigrant times Horse Creek was called Sage Creek, or **Greasewood Creek**. This is where the first wagon relief party from Utah met the beleaguered Martin Handcart Company. The water in this creek is excellent, giving the pioneer much relief from the last difficult miles. Since the water was so good, this again became a popular nooning or overnight stop on the trail. And, of course it happened with such regularity, there was usually little to feed the livestock because the area had been grazed so extensively.

Note the high sagebrush here. Angelina Farley, August 27, 1850 wrote: *"Camped by the side of a small running brook. The smell of the so called sage is almost intolerable to me"*. We know Angelina would never have made a good Wyomingite because we think that one of the finest scents is the smell of sagebrush, especially after a good rainstorm.

The trail now crosses Greasewood Creek and heads off to the west of the road we are on. When we reach highway 220 we again cross Horse Creek. The Mormon Pioneer Company camped along Horse Creek about a mile upstream. Just past Horse Creek is the entrance of the Pathfinder Ranch. Here you can see the trail coming off the side of the hill to the right, and crossing the highway just past the ranch entrance. It now heads directly to the Sweetwater and Independence Rock.

Mary McDougall Gordon's book *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line, The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid* is an exceptional story. Since some of the interesting parts happened here we relate the story.

By the fall of 1848 there were only rumors of a gold strike in California. But as these rumors grew the news media actually broke the story of John Marshall's discovery of gold. All you had to do to become rich was to get to the diggings in California. In 1849 over 30,000 did make it to

the gold fields. This is the story about how one group of men attempted the journey.

If you lived on the East Coast in 1849 and had lots of money you probably sailed to California around Cape Horn. Some sailed to Panama where they crossed overland to board another sailing ship on the Pacific side that took them to California.

The gold seekers were generally young men, most in their healthy twenties. The fastest way to get there was by mule pack train. This was expensive, so most men traveled to California in the standard ox-powered wagon train. A few that could not even afford this back packed or used wheel barrows.

In 1849 promoters were coming up with all sorts of ideas. Sails work on ships, surely they would work on wagons and decrease or eliminate the use of oxen. Special wagons were built to accommodate sails and they worked for a few miles of relative flat land. But the experiment ended quickly.

An even quicker demise was the steam engine people mover. It could not climb a hill and there wasn't enough water available for the steam.

One of the more ingenious ideas was Rufus Porters "aerial locomotive". This was advertised in many papers as being "The best route to California". The aerial locomotive was to be an airship balloon driven by steam powered propellers that would transport 50 to 100 passengers at a speed of 60 to 100 miles per hour. The advertising circulars stated: *"Maiden voyage would be April 1, 1849 and carry a limited number of passengers for \$50 including board. We expect to make the trip to California in seven days. The price of passage after the inaugural trip is fixed at \$200. Upwards of 200 passenger tickets have been engaged prior to February 15th. Book: open for subscribers as above"*.

But Rufus Porter abandoned his scheme. In order, as he announced, "to prepare for the second coming of Christ". If he had sold 200 tickets as his advertisement claimed, he was probably forced to prepare for the second coming of Christ.

There had to be a way to get to California without too much labor, especially if you had money. This type of person was what started the idea of **The Pioneer Line**. The rich would pay for easy transportation.

Thomas Turner and a man who's first name has been lost - last name Allen, were the originators and owners of the Pioneer Line. Both men had been transporting army supplies to Santa Fe and Chihuahua during the Mexican War. They evidently made quite a bit of money doing this because they had money to immediately purchase wagons, mules, provisions and advertising after conceiving the idea of the Pioneer Line.

They announced in their advertising that the train consisted of specially built carriages, each drawn by four mules and providing sleeping quarters for three of the six passengers who formed a mess. The other three passengers would sleep in tents provided by The Pioneer Line. Heavier wagons, some equipped with pontoons for fording rivers, would carry baggage and supplies.

Each passenger could take 100# of baggage, which was double the weight recommended by veteran overlanders. If they had excess baggage they could add it at \$20 per pound. Most passengers had excess baggage. This 100 pound allowance did not include weapons, bedding and ammunition which the Pioneer Line carried free.

The fare from Independence, Mo. to San Francisco was \$200 and Turner estimated the trip would take 55 to 60 days instead of the usual four months. Provisions for 100 days were loaded.



The initial assembly of the Pioneer Line was indeed impressive. It consisted of an enormous herd of remarkably fine mules, twenty two massive freight wagons, twenty handsome carriages with the name Pioneer Line painted on the sides of the vehicles. Each freight wagon had its own name painted on - like *Prairie Bird*, *Tempest*, *Albatross* and one named *Have You Seen The Elephant?*

Thomas Turner headed a small personal staff and a crew of 40 teamsters and herders. An experienced overland guide Moses 'Black' Harris was added to the train.

Many emigrants sold their wagons and oxen to join the Pioneer Line where skillful valets would attend the 'gay and festive' passengers. The passenger list ended up at 119, all men, from 15 to 65 years of age. All expected something like a stagecoach ride to California. Now do you think these people are going to have troubles?

The noted mountain man guide, Black Harris died of cholera even before the train left Independence. In fact, three persons who signed on died before departure.

The start itself was a six ring circus. Not one of the 300 fine mules, except the bell mule leader of the herd, had ever had a bit in its mouth or a collar on its neck. This means one hell of a kicking wrestling job for both man and mule. They began hitching up on May 9th but it was the 15th of May before the train actually moved. The first day the Pioneer Line logged one mile to the next campground. Each morning's circus became milder.

The Pioneer Line started with sickness and it continued. On June 13th, just past Ft. Kearny, it was voted that healthy men could not ride in the wagons. They had to walk so the sick could ride. All were giving Captain Turner hell because of the slow progress so he resolved to lighten the

wagons by destroying everything not essential to the passenger comfort. Liquors to a large extent were turned out, extra articles of various kinds were broken up.

Ten days ahead on the trail, on June 12th, a diarist Ansal McCall wrote in his diary: *"For the last three weeks we have been waiting anxiously for the grand Pioneer Line of fast coaches to dash by us. Some grand stage men of St. Louis had organized this line of coaches. Their passengers were all to be first class: grass widowers, gamblers, bankers, brokers, and men of fashion. They were to be attended by skillful valets"*.

The Pioneer Line reached Ft. Laramie on June 26th, one day after the U.S. government had purchased the private trading post. Turner's massive freight wagons were traded for lighter ones and provisions were disposed of keeping enough for only 60 days.

Nine men had died so far and many were seriously ill from cholera. The passengers were becoming increasingly disillusioned about the progress and management of the train. On June 28th the wagons were again 'lightened up'. Baggage of various kinds was destroyed and additional mules were hitched to some of the carriages in hopes of moving along at a faster pace.

Now the train moves west from Ft. Laramie entering the Black Hills. This is the roughest terrain they have encountered. Turner decided to cross the North Platte at Deer Creek on July 4th.

Diarist Bernard Reid writes on Monday July 9th, just west of Casper near the Poison Spider School: *'Keep up the valley, sometimes broken and irregular. Dead oxen strewn along every half mile. Sloughs of bad water. Rock Avenue-mules greatly exhausted.*

*Ours gave out with the others. Camped at noon at a little swampy run of sulphurous water, all trampled up by oxen and mules. Poor grass. Went three miles farther and camped for the night at Willow Springs at the head of the valley. Total today 12 miles.*

On July 12th, two miles from Independence Rock, the Pioneer Line had a mutiny. It was decided to again lighten the load by making the maximum 75# per person. Captain Turner was against the plan, for lo and behold, he wasn't dumping his goods as others were. During the lightening an entire wagon of liquors belonging to Captain Turner was discovered. The kegs were unceremoniously cracked and dumped.

Trunks, bags, and boxes were brought out, opened and ransacked. In the evening the prairie looked like a whirlwind had scattered the wares of several hardware, clothing and variety stores. Deaths and desertion had rendered four or five carriages unnecessary, so they were left. It was estimated that 23,000# were dumped at Independence Rock.

The Pioneer Line moved on up the Sweetwater to South Pass, taking the Sublette Cutoff and in Idaho taking the recently opened Hudspeth's Cutoff to the City of the Rocks area. Here the food began to run out and the mules faltered badly.

They followed the Humboldt whose water got progressively filthier and alkaloid as it moves to the sink where it disappeared in the sand. The August days on the desert are blistering and the nights are cold. Passengers of the Pioneer Line begin to develop scurvy, since flour is now all that is left to eat. Deep gloom prevails.

The next elephant ahead of the struggling train was the dreaded forty mile desert. Halfway across the desert the wagon train breaks down and the unharnessed mules are driven across the

waterless stretch to get water in the Carson River. When all get to the Carson many desert and go on by themselves. On Sept. 23rd, what is left of the skeleton train sets out for Weberville arriving on October 10th.

Thirteen men had died by the time the train got to the Humboldt Sink. Nine more die of scurvy before reaching Weberville.

The determined Pioneer Line sets out for Sacramento on Oct. 12th. In Sacramento only 8 persons out of 115 are left as passengers to San Francisco, the destination of the Pioneer Line tickets. On Oct. 21, 1849, 160 days after leaving Independence the Pioneer Line landed its passengers and disbanded. There was no easy way to California even for the rich of the time!

Source: *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line, the Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid* edited by Mary McDougall Gordon  
Stanford University Press, 1983

Now a little history that has little to do with trail days but a lot to do with Wyoming History. We tell it here because this is the area where it happened.

The winters of 1886 and 1888 were terrible, killing large numbers of cattle and wiping out many ranches in Wyoming. Cowboys and ranch hands were out of work and cattle rustling became a way of life just to exist.

The Homestead Act of 1862 allowed ownership of 160 acres of land in the west by paying a small fee and then living and improving the homestead for a certain number of years. In this area homesteaders filed on land that the cattlemen had been using for years, land the cattlemen considered theirs. The squatters and homesteaders thought differently. The law favored the homesteader so the cattlemen organized.

On July 20, 1889, the first case of the cattleman's self preservation occurred. Local ranchers hanged Bothwell, Wyoming citizens, **Jim Averell** and 28 year old **Ella 'Kate' Watson**. They had homesteaded on Horse Creek right where the water was the best.

Kate's homestead was about a mile northwest from Averell's near Steamboat Rock. This is today's Pathfinder Ranch. In just a few months Kate built a cabin and fenced a pasture which rapidly accumulated a nice herd of newly branded cattle. When asked how she got such a herd so fast and quietly she stated she bought them and no one came forth to disprove this. (the cattle were purchased from those traveling the trail)

Averell and Watson were avowed enemies of the cattlemen and on April 7, 1889, Averell wrote a letter to the editor of *The Casper Weekly Mail* condemning the cattlemen of the Sweetwater valley as being land barons and grabbers. Averell and Watson were so open in their actions and beliefs that most local ranchers hated them.

The coroners jury decided that the two met their deaths by hanging at the hands of A. J. Bothwell, Tom Sun, John Durbin, R. M. Galbraith, Bob Conner, E. McLain and probably one other who was rumored to be George Henderson. The six were arrested and posted bond.

In October a Carbon County grand jury found an 'incomplete indictment' against the ranchers, but ruled that a higher court could be convened later. Frank Buchanan, John DeCory, Ralph Cole and Gene Crowder were prosecution witnesses at the trial.

Frank Buchanan supposedly saw the incident and thus became the chief prosecution witness.

After the coroners jury Buchanan disappeared or was induced to leave the country.

Gene Crowder, a 14 year old boy, was at Ella's place when the cattlemen came to get her. Gene died a few weeks before the scheduled grand jury trial.

John DeCory and Ralph Cole also mysteriously disappeared. One story claimed George Henderson trailed Cole and did him in. George Henderson was shot to death in a gunfight a few months later. Guess what? No witnesses left, the six defendants were never brought to trial.

This hanging, the only hanging of a woman in Wyoming, occurred in the range of hills to the east of our road. The larger mountain near is named Averell Mountain.

After their demise the Averell estate owed \$12.44 in back taxes. The Ella Watson estate owed \$2.49 in back taxes. A man named Henry Wilson contested the homestead filings and paid the taxes and sold the land to none other than one of the lynchmen, A. J. Bothwell.





The small lake that we passed on the Pathfinder Ranch is called Steamboat Lake. To the east the Sweetwater River flows into Pathfinder reservoir. About 3 1/2 miles from this highway under Pathfinder Lake is one of our counties mysteries.

In 1931 when the water level was down, debris from a number of **burned wagons** was discovered in a defined oval 300 feet by 400 feet. The spot was marked with a stake and marked on a map by Paul Henderson and others. When the lake was down in later years the stake was found again. In recent years we have not found any evidence at the spot marked on the map and we have not found the stake.

Stories circulated among the emigrants in 1862 about an entire wagon train being wiped out along the Sweetwater. But no trains were missing and there was enough travel on the trail in this year to have noticed an entire wagon train burn.

This location is far to the east of the main trail but deviation from the trail for grazing and water was not uncommon. Maybe this was the remains of the wagons left by the Pioneer Party of 1849. It evidently will remain our mystery.

The lakes in this area are mainly soda lakes. Often called saleratus they have shores of a boggy deposit of alkali and soda. The Mormons reported gathering some of the soda to use in the baking of bread. Only problem was that the bread turned green and numerous stomach aches occurred not too much farther along the trail.

In the early 1870s The Dupont Company staked claims to the lakes to mine soda. A proposed railroad was to be built in the Sweetwater valley to haul the soda. The freight rates of the time soon proved that soda mining would be unprofitable and the plans died.

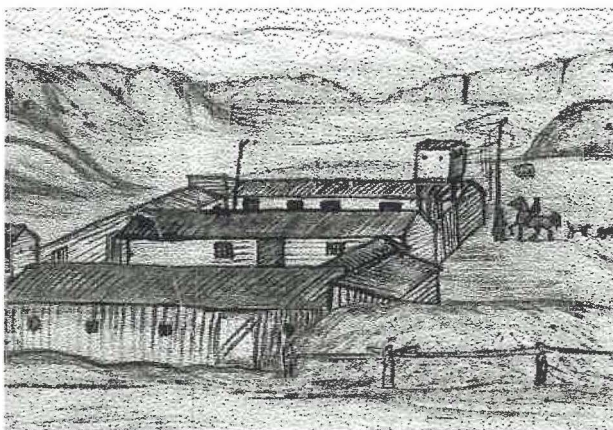
To the left along the Sweetwater river was a one company fortified military post established in 1862 by Company A of the 6th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. **Sweetwater Station** was a post of 40 men to protect a bridge for passing emigrants, the telegraph, and the stagecoach station.

The bridge they were protecting was probably the one built by Louis Guinard in 1857. There was also a bridge built in 1853 by Alfred A. Archambault who had a trading post associated with it. Archambault's bridge was abandoned in 1856 because of Indian troubles.

There were two notable inhabitants at Sweetwater Station. One was Corporal Hervey Johnson in 1864-5. Hervey wrote numerous letters from here to his sister describing life at the post. These letters are now in the book *Tending the Talking Wire* by William E. Unrau. and they provide an excellent on the spot history of this area.

The other famous person stationed here was the Station Commander, Lt. Caspar Collins.

Young Hervey was typical of the soldier at that time. He hated politicians, he hated Mormons, he hated the emigrants, and he hated all officers. In fact, he thought that Commander Lt. Caspar Collins was entirely incapable of command and was like talking to "a hunk of dead wood".





There were numerous skirmishes with Indians about the post in 1864-5 but the post itself was never attacked. Hervey's description of Indians coming from the hills in front of you brings the view to life. The post was abandoned in 1866.

Today there are depressions where buildings used to be and there is still evidence of the bridge abutments.

According to our late Merrill Mattes, **Independence Rock** was the second most described landmark on the trails. Since he was a Nebraskan he claims Chimney Rock as being the most important. Whatever the argument, Independence Rock is to the trails as soap is to water.

It looks like a turtle - 1,900 feet long, 700 feet wide and 128 feet high. It was Father DeSmet that named it 'The Great Register of the Desert'. It was probably Thomas Fitzpatrick and his fur trading party who camped here July 4, 1824 that named the rock.

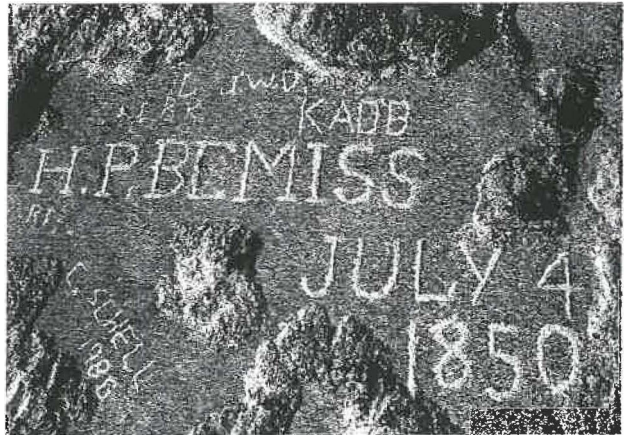
The first white traveler to pass the rock was Robert Stuart on his return from Oregon in 1812. Since he made no mention of it in his narratives, he must not have been impressed. Even Wakeman Bryarly was *"much disappointed when it was first pointed out to us, for we expected to see a spire, pyramid, or shot tower looking object"*.

The main trail is at the far side of the rock following a 50 foot wide lane between the rock and the Sweetwater River. The view from the top is truly inspiring. From the northeast corner you can still view the clearly visible trail swales coming along the river. The entire area in sight once contained large numbers of wagons camped on the flats beside the Rock. Grass and good water were available here after traveling the last fifty miles in alkali, mud and poison springs. This place offered the perfect layover camp or at least a good place to noon.

It is odd that after many of the pioneers had already walked the 815 miles from the Missouri river that their relaxation would be climbing to the top and painting or chiseling their names. This is what they did. Richard Burton in 1860 guessed that 40,000 to 50,000 names were inscribed or painted on the rock.

The ideal time to arrive here was July 4th. By doing so the trains still had time to cross the Sierras or the Blues before the snows came. In 1850, 55,000 persons passed here, almost within three weeks either way from July 4th.

One of the few areas that still provide inscriptions of tar, grease or paint combinations is the Cave on the south side of the rock. About 50 feet above the trail is a long open crevice covered by large boulders forming a well lit cave. Here 1846 inscriptions have survived the weather and vandalism for all these years. William Clayton with Brigham Young describes the cave of 1847 so he must have been one that found the entrance.



John C. Fremont left a large cross engraved then filled with tar on the rock in 1842. He meant it to be a memorial or headstone marker to those who died on the trails. The media at the time reported that the cross was placed as a sure sign of Catholicism. John was running as the first Republican Presidential candidate in 1856. It was hard for a Catholic to be elected

to anything in that year and the cross carved here was thought to be a cause of his defeat. Wyoming historian Coutant claims that the celebrants of July 4, 1857 filled wagon hubs with gunpowder and exploded them in the crevices destroying the cross. On this same day emigrants towed a canon to the top, fired it and planted a flag.

Oregon bound Masons held a lodge meeting on top of the rock July 4, 1862. This was the first Masonic lodge meeting in what is now Wyoming. The on-top-of-the rock meeting is recreated by local Masonic lodges every ten years. This explains why so many Masonic inscriptions are on the top center of the rock.

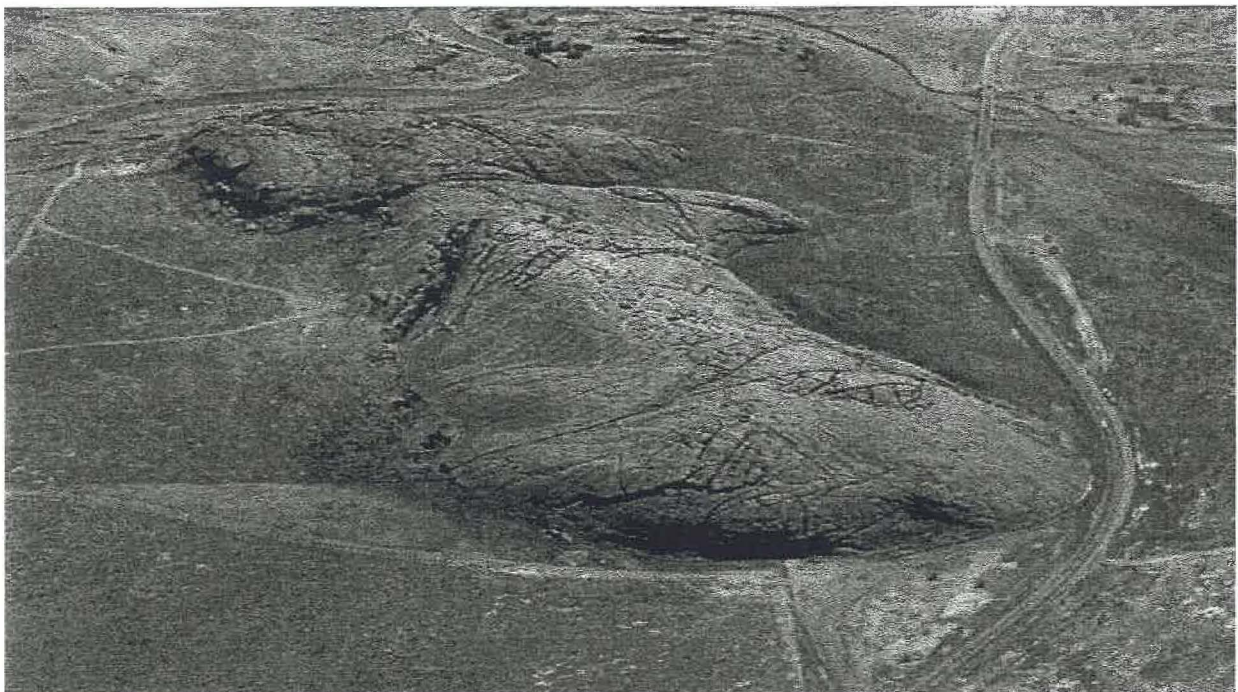
In 1930 a nationwide observance **The Covered Wagon Centennial** was held here to commemorate the 100th year since the first wagon of the Smith-Jackson-Sublette party passed. This event was in part sponsored by OCTA's predecessor, The Oregon Trail Memorial Association. The event included the first national Boy Scout rendezvous. Over 800 Boy Scouts from 15 different states celebrated Independence Day with 6000 other participants.

One Eagle Scout from each of New York City's five boroughs arrived with Ezra Meeker's second ox-mobile, sponsored by Henry Ford.

Notables such as Dr. Howard Driggs, George Pratt, James E. West, William H. Jackson, Wyoming Governors Emerson and Brooks, Robert Ellison, Andrew Jenson, George Albert Smith, Finn Burnett, Malcolm Campbell, Ed Farlow, James H. Cook and William Hooker attended.

During this celebration Mrs. Tom Sun gave the Boy Scouts of America the land at the base of the rock where most celebrations are held. Most of the markers here and at the Sun Ranch were erected during this event.

A neat little booklet by Robert Ellison written in 1930 entitled *Independence Rock* lists names, dates, and locations of many of the inscriptions. This publication has been updated since many of the names were missed by Ellison and his Natrona County Historical Society volunteers. The latest up-date is Randy Brown's list of over 1400 names.





The fact that there were so many deaths along the trails is known by everyone. That an unusual amount of these deaths occurred in Natrona County is not so well known. Diarists of the trails wrote of seeing many graves at Willow Springs and near Devil's Gate. The largest loss of life in our county occurred with the 1856 Martin handcart company, who buried approximately 150 emigrants in the October snow.

In the summer of 1974 the grave site of emigrant **Quintina Snodderly** was discovered on the north side of the North Platte. The tombstone was uncovered when workmen widened a road. It was still readable so the landowners of the time, Katherine and Bill Fritts, who took it upon themselves to find what they could about Quintina. Eventually they found Quintina's 85 year old grandson in Scio, Oregon. He was able to fill in the story of Quintina's unfortunate demise in an accident where she was run over by a wagon. OCTA's Randy Brown and his students buried her remains and fenced the grave in 1988.

With all this death along the trail, it is unusual that until 1974 we knew of only one marked grave. Neighboring Converse County is said to have more marked and identified trail grave sites than any other county along the trail system. The only identified grave site in our county was thought to be that of **T. P. Baker**, whose remains were thought to lie at what we now call Rattlesnake Pass, near Devil's Gate and the Sun Ranch.

Randy had often wondered why T. P. Baker's name and the date 64 were inscribed so low and to one side of the large headstone. Something seemed wrong because when pioneers had time to carve a headstone inscription they usually put the date of death along with the name. They also centered the inscription near the top of the stone.

In 1849 J. Goldsborough Bruff traveled through Rattlesnake Pass and made a detailed drawing of

the site. His drawing indicated a grave site with a very large stone with the painted inscription "Frederic Richard, son of James M. & Mary Fulkerson, died July 1, 1847, Age 18 years" This drawing of Bruff's bothered Mr. Brown because the rock was the same size and shape, and in the same location as our present day T. P. Baker inscription.



Bruff's diary mentions that J. M. Fulkerson painted his name on the rocks above the grave with the date June 26, 1847. The family must have waited for their sick son to recover or die. Bruff's diary also reports a grave 195 miles further along the trail above Names Hill near LeBarge, Wyoming. Its inscription was engraved "Mary, consort of J. M. Fulkerson, Died July 14th, 1847". So the mother and son both perished in the trip west.

Now we have a suspicious inscription on a grave where someone else should be. But how can this be proved? Our detective, Randy, discovers a letter in the *Overland Journal* that tells about Jim McClain of Nevada City, California. McClain noticed a set of inscriptions near the upper end of Devil's Gate.

On the rock, fairly high above the river, he stated that he had found another T. P. Baker inscription. Brown was suspicious of how a dead man could have carved his name at a point further along the trail than his grave.

The indication that T. P. Baker was a healthy inscriber in 1864 would be more logical if the second inscription could be verified. After an hour's search Randy found the second inscription "T. P. Baker 64". The style and the size were exactly the same as that on the grave. The three parts of the puzzle were now complete.

Mr. Brown concluded that the paint on Richard Fulkerson's grave had worn off enough in seventeen years, that T. P. Baker just thought it would be a good place to carve his name. It is more than probable that he was not buried before or after his second inscription at this location.

When the find was reported to the landowners of the time, Noleen and Bernard Sun, we recalled how earlier photographs of the grave had much fainter letters. Bernard replied *"now you are wrecking all the history of the T. P. Baker grave; besides I've spent a lot of time up there deepening the inscription on the grave so it will last"*. This proves that there is a love of history in more persons than we suspect.

Now that we are convinced that T. P. Baker is not in his supposed grave, a mystery still exists. Who was inscription carver T. P. Baker, and where does he finally rest? The year '64 gives a clue that he might have been headed for the Montana gold fields.

While you are in Rattlesnake Pass notice the excellent inscriptions on the rocks to the north.

A walk around the **BLM interpretive site** near Devil's Gate describes the trail and the history of the area. Here is a brief mention of the handcart companies. For many years various local historical groups had hoped to tell the Martin Handcart Company ordeal at a highway pullout. After all, only the coal mine disaster at Hanna, Wyoming had more deaths than the Martin Company.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints certainly rectified the omission by dedicating **The Mormon Handcart Visitors Center** on May 3, 1997. Over 3000 persons were in attendance hearing President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicate the Martin's Cove Monument. The visitors center is open to all and there is no charge for admission.

A walk through the converted original Sun Ranch house will give you an excellent idea of the trials of the handcart companies. The entrance to the building makes many of us trail buffs happy because we will always know the place as the Sun Ranch, which the entrance room acknowledges.

Martin's Cove is located about three miles west of the visitors center. The walk can be exhausting on a hot summer day. At the cove signs explain the shelter that the many used for those cold days in November 1856.

From here you can now get the best view of Devil's Gate. You can walk right to the entrance of the 'gate' on new pathways constructed by the church.

Devil's Gate is 370 ft. high, 1500 ft. long and as narrow as 50 ft. at its base. This was a major camp site of the trails and one of Wyoming's beauty spots. Since this was such a rest stop many emigrants climbed to the top. An old story is that in the early 1860s four women members



of a train camped here and climbed to the top. One of them, 18 year old Carolyn Todd, ventured too close to the edge, fell and was killed. She was buried in the gorge, so the story goes, with this inscription painted on her headstone:

*Here lies the bones of Carolyn Todd, Whose soul has lately gone to God, Ere redemption was too late, She was redeemed at Devil's Gate.*

Mrs. LeMasurier was not hurt in the crash but her husband was and he died five days after the accident. Before his death, the couple had salvaged all the clothing and a parachute that had blown from the explosion. They had three chocolate bars and a bottle of 150 vitamin pills. Mrs. LeMasurier wrapped herself in the parachute and the clothing near the airplane.

Devil's Gate stage station was located here and Plants Pony Express Station was located upstream on the Sweetwater a few miles. This entire area has many unmarked graves. The BLM estimates that 20 are around the hill where their interpretive walkway is located.

She thought about trying to come down off the mountain because she could see the cars' headlights on Highway 220, the highway we are on now. But the snow was four feet deep and she knew that when crashing you should stay near the airplane.

The Fulkerson grave has piled rocks on it which were carried from the other side of the road by Boy Scouts quite some years ago. Unfortunately these rocks were graves that will forever go unmarked.

Nineteen days later, on May 29, 1957, Jack Putnam, foreman for the Buzzard Ranch, was scanning the mountain and noticed a reflection in the early morning sun from near the top. He alerted the search parties and they found Mrs. LeMasurier and rushed her to the hospital in Rawlins.

History doesn't have to be stories of old.

It was a beautiful day in the Southwest when Dalton and Dorothy LeMasurier took off in their twin engine airplane on May 11, 1957. As they progressed in their flight over Wyoming enroute to their home in Duluth, Minnesota the weather got worse. They were flying into a Wyoming spring snow storm.

Forty-six year old Dorothy LeMasurier's survival was a miracle. She weighed only 120 pounds, but she was in excellent shape. She had snow for water and the vitamin pills. A *Readers Digest* story of the incident said that doctors believed that she actually went into a state similar to hibernation with her heart rate and blood pressure being extremely low. She certainly had a remarkable constitution and a will to live.

They crashed near the top of 9500 foot Ferris Mountain. (the large mountain directly south) On crashing they were able to get clear of the plane before gasoline exploded, blowing their belongings outward into the snow.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour of an area of Wyoming's trails. Come back again, we have plenty more.

The Wyoming weather was terrible that spring. Cloud cover was low with rain and snow, so search planes had problems even getting into the air.

**California Trail**

**Emigrant Trail**

**Poison Spring**

## Poison Spring

"Rain fell in a pattering sheet, blinding and appealing lightning, and crashing thunder. In a few seconds from the commencement of this tempest, the hail suddenly descended, like gravel in immense quantities, brown down upon us—then hail-stones of extraordinary size, not only cut and bruised the men, whose faces and hands were bleeding, but it also cut the mules."

21. Goldsborough Bruff, 1848.

EMIGRA...  
Pony Express

● **Bersemmer Bend/ Red Buttes Crossing**

Oregon Trail

## Emigrant Gap

# California Trail

## Fort Caspar Platte Bridge

**Joins Map C38**

"The road is very sandy & grass scarce. We pass the bridge over the Platte this afternoon it being a toll bridge. There is quite a large trading Station on the opposite bank of the river."

Mary C. Fish, 1860

-Mary C. Fish, 1860

039

Casper, Wyo.

R85W

R84W

56

R83W

R82W

Casper, Wyo

C40

T30N

T31N  
Page 25

T32N Joins Map 39

"Passed over a fine smooth road. Rattlesnakes quite numerous, occasionally amuse myself by putting my foot on one, while I deprive him of his rattles; have a pocket-full."

J. Goldsborough Bruft, 1849

Horse Creek Pony Express Station

California Trail  
Oregon Trail  
Mormon Trail

Prospect Hill

Willow Spring

Pony Express

"traveled thirty miles and passed Polson Springs and camped at Willow Springs; wood and grass very scarce; a little small sage brush and box chips constituted our fire wood. The latter was very scarce for the feed was too scarce to manufacture it in large quantities."

Wm. Casper, 1858

Flat Top

Tree

Gulch

Clareson Hill

Willow

Park

Draw

Horse Heaven

52



"Independence Rock. This rock is situated about three hundred yards from the right bank of the Sweetwater & is a solid mass of naked Granite rising to a height of three hundred feet & covers a large area of land. The form of it is an oval with the exception of a slight hollow in its summit where a scanty soil supports a few shrubs & a solitary dwarf pine. The surface of the rock is covered with the names of travellers."

Mary C. Fish, 1860

"Independence Rock at a distance looks like a huge whale. It is painted & marked every way, all over, with names, dates, initials, &c--so that it is with difficulty I could find a place to inscribe on it--The Washington City Compy July 26, 1849."

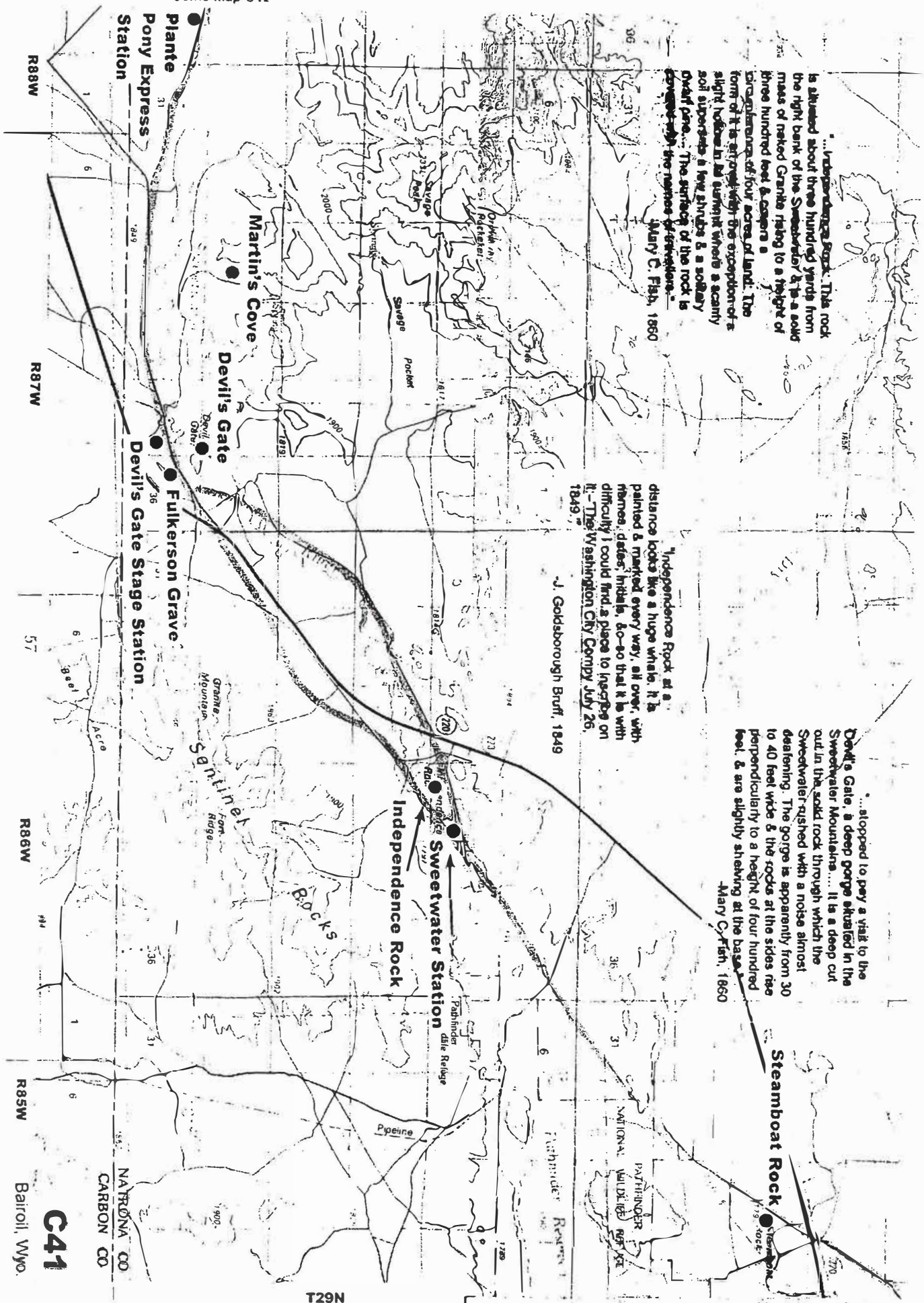
**-J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849**

...stopped to pay a visit to the Devil's Gate, a deep gorge situated in the Sweetwater Mountains.... It is a deep cut out in the solid rock through which the Sweetwater rushed with a noise almost deafening. The gorge is apparently from 30 to 40 feet wide & the rocks at the sides rise perpendicularly to a height of four hundred feet, & are slightly shewing at the base.

-Mary Cyfish, 1860

## Steamboat Rock

## Rattlesnake Hills, Wyo Joins Map C40



**C41**  
Bairoll, Wyo

Na <sup>+</sup> FeO <sup>2-</sup> Na <sup>+</sup>	CO
CARBON	CO



## THE EAST TOUR

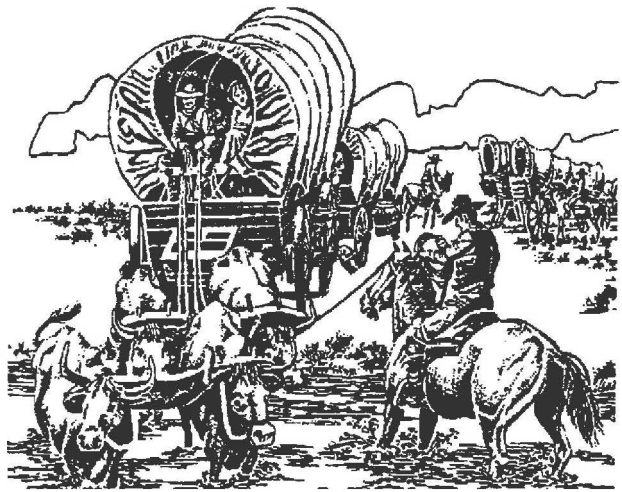
Generally, the emigrants were following a well worn trail as they approached where Casper is today. But now there was a formidable task ahead of them, the **CROSSING OF THE NORTH PLATTE**. In the earlier days of the trail from 1841 through 1847 the idea was to go as far up the river's source to cross because that is where it was usually the shallowest. In these years the south side river road was the only one to see much travel. In our area this meant crossing at Red Buttes or Bessemer Bend, as it is now called.

**The Red Buttes Crossing** is documented by diaries that indicate fording as the main method of crossing. The crossing was necessary here because the river is flowing out of a canyon from territory that was impassable for wagons. Very little mention is made, and some of it is suspect, about there being a ferry at the site. This crossing was used by Indians, mountain men, explorers and trappers. In some cases it was used after the ferries and bridges were in operation. The bulk of emigrant travel crossed before this last place where the road leaves the river. The location "upper crossing" used in many diaries causes confusion unless you know the years involved and then it is sometimes difficult to determine what location the diarist is talking about.

In 1847 things began to change. **The Brigham Young Pioneer Party** constructed a raft to cross and in doing so found that it would be profitable to leave men behind to ferry other parties. This began the first successful business endeavor in Central Wyoming.

The Mormon ferry immediately drew competition. To stay ahead of other operators it moved almost immediately downstream and was located from today's Ft. Caspar to the future site of the Reshaw bridge.

The popularity of the Mormon Ferry was so great that in June of 1849 it was not unusual to find 200 to 300 wagons waiting their turn to cross. Feeding the waiting animals became a problem because the grass was eaten bare for miles around. Oncoming emigrants learned this and the entire stretch of the North Platte between what is now Casper and Glenrock became a ferry crossing. Emigrants crossed wherever they could find logs for a raft, and here is where drowning became common. Stansbury stated in his diary of July 25, 1849 that 28 persons had drowned in this 30 mile stretch of the river.



One of the more interesting stories of a North Platte River crossing occurred the second week of June 1849. It was normal after a group constructed their own ferry to sell it or give it to the next caravan to come along.

A letter from Salt Lake City, written by a John Haslip, got quite a bit of publicity up and down the trail. *It stated that in June a caravan, headed by Captain William Findley, built a raft and crossed the North Platte. Upcoming emigrants offered \$50 for the raft, to which Captain Findley said "Go to Hell", and chopped up the raft before their very eyes. Captain Findley should be hissed at and despised by all along the trail for his ungracious deed!*

But there is another side of his story. Captain Findley was an experienced traveler of the trail,

Remember that the well operated Mormon Ferry had 200 to 300 wagons backed up, waiting their turn. Remember also that forage for the animals was almost impossible to find.

The Captain of any wagon train was to put that train's needs before all others. On seeing the crowded Mormon Ferry, Captain Findley set his men to constructing their own raft.

While crossing the river two of Findley's men were almost drowned. They were crossing on horseback when the swift current swept men and horses under the water. Another group of emigrants from Ohio noticed the pending tragedy and plunged into the river and succeeded in rescuing the Findley men. The Findley party was so grateful for this deed, they offered their raft to the Ohio party, with the condition that they destroy the raft after they had crossed.

Remember that this was a great race to the next place with water and feed for hungry, overworked, undernourished animals. By crossing on his own Captain Findley had put his 30 man party ahead of 300 other wagons. By crossing themselves they even saved time for someone else waiting to cross on the Mormon Ferry.

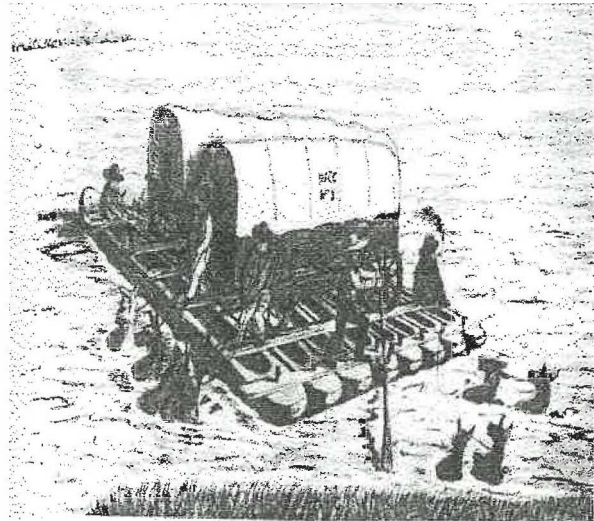
The Findley group turned over their raft to the Ohio party and left the North Platte, only to hear that the craft was not destroyed because of other travelers' protests. Captain Findley immediately turned some of his men around, returned to the river, and destroyed the raft.

Who was right? A captain's duty is to protect and lead his group to the best of his ability. Or was this a dirty deed of the trail?

Diaries report that when Captain Findley reached the Green River he again built his own raft, but by then the ferries of the Green were not so crowded, so he turned his raft over to the next party to cross the raging stream.

If you or I were in Captain Findley's party, less than half way to California, we might know who was right, no matter what others thought.

*Findley story source: Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 31-2, 1959, Dale Morgan*



The Mormon Ferry was definitely not the only one in the next few years. In 1850 David H. Hickman, a Missouri businessman, established a sizeable ferry business here. R.R.P. wrote in a letter home on June 25 from the Upper Ferry: "*Messrs. Hickman & Co. have three good flat boats which carry two wagons at a time, each, and make the trip in from six to ten minutes...The Mormons have a ferry here also but a single boat, and are not able to compete (with Hickman)*". Madison Moorman wrote on June 29: "*There were four boats belonging to two parties: one called the 'Missouri Ferry' & the other called the 'Mormon Ferry'. The latter had but one boat & the former three all Buoy-boats.*"



**Hickman's Ferry.** When Dr. J. S. Shepherd arrived at the Upper Platte Ferry site in present Casper on June 11, 1850, he was surprised to see so much activity: *"instead of being a lonely place in the wilderness, [it] appears like a bustling market town."* Here was the final crossing of the North Platte River located in 1850 near the future site of Fort Caspar. This site was known as the Upper Ferry, to distinguish it from the ferries further down the river, the most important of which were located near present Glenrock. Now usually called the Mormon Ferry, this term is a misnomer for the Casper area ferry operations in 1850, at the peak of the California gold rush. The principal ferry operators were not Mormons but the employees of an enterprise known as **Hickman & Company** from Boone County, Missouri.

David Hickman was a Missouri businessman engaged primarily in the Santa Fe trade. Hickman and crew left Missouri early in the 1850 season to get ahead of the main migration which was unusually early that year. Hickman & Co. reached the Upper Ferry site in late May, behind the early birds but ahead of the great crowd that began arriving in June.

An early reference to the ferry crossing is that of John McGlashan on May 20: *"Reached the ferry after traveling 25 miles. A crowd is waiting to get across. An American came on here early in the season and built a scow with which he takes wagons across. The charge is \$5 and each one is taken over in the order in which they arrive."*

For a few days Hickman & Co. had a monopoly at the Upper Platte crossing, but on May 20 Captain Andrew Lytle arrived from Salt Lake City to once again establish the Mormon Ferry at the site. He and his crew began operations on May 28. The two companies, Missouri and Mormon, must have operated as friendly rivals for there were no reports of conflict among them.

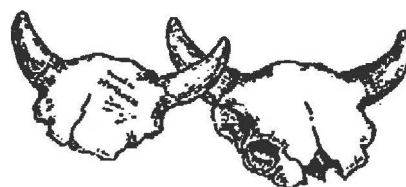
Despite the presence of the Mormon Company, the ferrying operations were dominated at the Upper crossing in 1850 by Hickman's company. Though accounts vary, most diarists report four to six ferry boats being used in the crossings, only one or two of which belonged to the Mormons. Lorenzo Sawyer wrote on June 3: *"There are four boats in operation one of which belonged to the Mormons"*.

On that day according to Appleton Harmon, the Mormon company launched a second boat, larger than their hastily constructed first one, *"and commenced ferrying with it."*

Diarist C. W. Smith on June 6 left a description of what "Bouy Boats" are. *"The boats are run on a very simple principle and a very good one. A long line is stretched across the river, secured at each end. To this are placed two pulley wheels, which are fastened to ropes attached to the boat at each end, and the forward rope being the shortest, the side of the boat is brought to the force of the current and forced across. Two wagons are placed in a boat each trip, which is made in about ten minutes"*.

When the tide of the emigration reached its peak in mid-June the price charged at the ferry was \$5 per wagon and \$.50 for horses and mules. When emigrants were permitted to ferry oxen, the charge was \$1 per head. Even at these prices most of the emigrants did not complain. The river was described as from 150 to 200 yards wide with a very swift current. Moorman wrote, *"it runs like a mill race"*

Research by Randy Brown  
Wyoming Chapter Newsletter  
Vol. 8, No.3 1996





Remember that the years make a difference in looking at our area. During the time of the ferries of the North Platte, Fort Caspar was not in existence. Now comes the Gold Rush to California in full force...hence the new bridge builders.

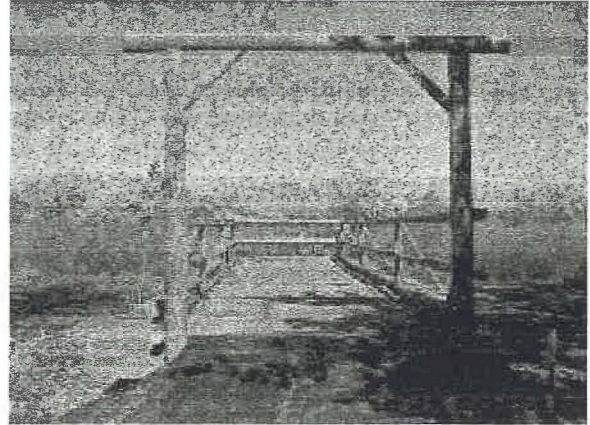
One site on the Oregon-California-Mormon trail that has not had the importance noted to it in history today is the **John Richard (Reshaw) Bridge** at today's Evansville. We hear much about the Upper Platte River Bridge and always assume that this is the Guinard Bridge at Fort Caspar. This is what leads to the confusion for the Upper Platte River Bridge is just that, a different bridge in different years.

An ad in the St. Joseph, Missouri newspaper dated February 23, 1851 entitled *To Emigrants* stated: *"I have very nearly completed a bridge across the North Fork of the Platte River at Deer Creek, had there been a good bridge there last year a large number of lives would have been saved. It is also my intention to bridge all the more difficult streams on the route as far as Fort Bridger, beyond which no bridges are necessary". Signed J. Richards.*

This is our bridge builder John Baptiste Richard, Sr. who did build a bridge at Deer Creek in 1851. But our bridge builder had not yet learned how to build a bridge according to the diaries that claim one would risk his life crossing on such a rickety bridge. The Richard bridge at Deer Creek was washed out within a year.

This did not deter Richard for in 1852 he was again building a bridge further up the river at today's Evansville. This time he built a real bridge. Joseph Knight states: *"A permanent bridge structure about 835 feet long; 18 feet wide; built over and across the North Platte River. The floor of which was about ten feet above the high water mark made of timbers three inches thick and 18 feet long, sawn by hand with a whip saw. The heavy timbers were*

*hewn and hauled from 6 to 10 miles from the mountains. The timbers were braced, stayed and bolted with substantial iron bolts and in a workman-like manner. The bridge was built on 23 piers or cribs of hewn timbers filled with stone hauled at least five miles for the purpose".*



The substantial bridge was probably built during the winter and spring of 1852-3. It was in use until 1865. Richard's bridge drastically decreased use of the ferries. The Guinard bridge (1859-1867) was purchased by Richard shortly after it was built. This means that for the years 1853 to 1859, six years, the Richard was the only bridge crossing in our area. To the emigration that meant that over 100,000 emigrants passed by or used the bridge.

Sir Richard Burton in 1860 passed the Richard bridge site and drank whiskey with ice at the traders store. He indicates in his writing that by this time the bridge must have seen the wear and tear of the emigration for he chose to cross on Guinard's bridge. Burton also states, of the Guinard Bridge, that *"the usual toll is \$0.50, but from trains, especially of Mormons, the owner will claim \$5; in fact. as much as he can get without driving them to the opposition lower bridge, or to the ferry boat".* So in the year 1860 both bridges and the ferry must have still been in use. To put it more in perspective the Richard Bridge was the Bridge of the Emigration.



More likely than not, the Platte River Bridge or the Upper River Bridge, used in numerous diaries, referred to the Richard and not the Guinard bridge. The Richard Bridge served the peak of emigration and does not get recognition today for the important part it played in the westward movement.

For more reading on the Richard (Reshaw) bridge see:

Murray, Robert A. *Trading Posts and Bridges of the Casper Area*, *Annals of Wyoming* Vol. 47 #1 1975

Gove, Jesse A. *The Utah Expedition*. New Hampshire Hist. Soc. 1928  
*Frontier Times*, Vol. 1, No 1, Evansville WY publication 1966

John D. McDermott, *Frontier Crossings*, City of Casper Publication

At the Hat Six interchange is a curious rock photographed by that famous photographer and painter William Henry Jackson. Jackson probably photographed this in the early 1870's. Someone in the Wyoming Highway Department must have seen Jackson's photo to have saved the rock during construction of the interstate.



The following story has nothing to do with the trail or trail times. It occurred about ten miles south of the Hat Six interchange and it is indicative of early Wyoming times. It is called the **SAM BEACH STORY**.

In 1890, Sam Beach and his brother homesteaded land upstream from the old B.B. Brooks ranch. (The B.B. Brooks ranch is located near the mountains to the south and was a famous Wyoming ranch. B. B. Brooks became the seventh governor of Wyoming.) A not too bright cowboy was living with the Beaches. It seems that he quarreled with the Beaches, and they, probably not too politely, asked the cow-

boy to leave and never come back. The cowboy left and spent the night at the neighboring B. B. Brooks ranch. While at the Brooks ranch he was overheard making a statement that he thought there were getting to be too damn many people in Wyoming and the best thing to do was to kill off some of them.

The following week the cowboy decided to go back to the Beach ranch. Sam saw the man riding up the lane and demanded that he stop. The cowboy did not stop, so Sam shot him dead, right in the cowboy's horse's tracks.

Sam immediately went to see B. B. Brooks and it was decided to call the coroner from Fort Fetterman. In about three days the coroner came, with three men, picked as jurors, with B. B. Brooks following along.

They found the cowboy frozen stiff right where he fell in heavy snow. The boys stood the six-foot frozen body up, holding him on each side by one hand, as they went through his pockets to see what they could find.

The first thing they found was a package of Bull Durham tobacco and some cigarette paper, which they immediately appropriated. There they stood; rolling cigarettes with one hand, and holding up the body with the other, discussing the case.

The cowboy had a six-shooter, but it was still in his holster. Apparently he was shot before he had time to draw his weapon. So, according to the three coroner's jurors, Sam Beach was arrested, transported to the prison in Rawlins where he stayed all summer.

When the trial came up, B. B. Brooks was the only witness. All he could testify to was

the cowboy's statement about there being too damn many people in Wyoming and some should be killed off. The jury thereby acquitted Sam Beach of all wrongdoing.

There are some Wyoming residents today that agree with the cowboy! In some places of our State there are just too damned many outsiders moving in!

*Source: Memoirs of B. B. Brooks, Arthur Clark Co. 1939*

At County Line Road where we cross into neighboring Converse County you can see cliffs to the left. The south side trail is to the left just beyond the rocks you see. In places you can still see the trail swales, but unfortunately most of the original trail has been destroyed by pipeline construction. There are a few emigrant inscriptions on the cliffs.

Next we cross **Big Muddy Creek** which was named by the emigrants for, obviously, the big amounts of mud encountered while attempting to cross it. It has been said that Big Muddy Creek was also a boundary line - that after you crossed, you could relax a little, since the emigrants who died from here on west seldom became infected and died of cholera.

We now enter what was once Continental Oil Company's Big Muddy oil field which over the years has produced over 300 million barrels of oil.

The first well was completed in the Shannon sands at 985 feet in August of 1915 and produced 40 barrels per day. The population of the next town of Glenrock was 200 at that time. In 1916 the Wall Creek sands were reached at 3,000 feet producing over 300 barrels per day. Maximum production of this field was in 1919 from the Dakota sands at 4,000 feet where over 200 wells produced over 8,000 barrels of oil per day.

In 1923 the entire area was settled with the oil company camps which together had a population of over 2,500. This oil field was considered dead until the advent of secondary recovery techniques came. Water is now pumped down to force more oil up. We are even beginning an era when carbon dioxide might be forced into the wells to bring more production. This old Big Muddy field has now been producing for 86 years.

The first marked grave we encounter is that of little **ADA MCGILL**, who died July 3, 1864. She was three and a half years old. The McGill family were traveling ahead of Indian trouble that resulted in the deaths of Mary Hurley and Martin Ringo a few weeks later.

Little Ada became ill of dysentery while camped at Deer Creek. Here the family decided to continue their journey which began in Eastern Kansas and was to go on to Oregon, since dropping out of a wagon train was normally dangerous and ill advised. She died at this point, and her family buried her in a little box and walled the grave with rocks. The grave is inscribed:

*Ada*

*Daughter of CM and MC McGill*

*Died July 3, 1864*

The grief stricken McGills were later to suffer another tragedy as little Ada's brother died after eating poison weeds.

Almost as important as the grave itself is the care it has received to still be here today. Jim Fenix described finding the grave in 1905 on a knoll just north of the trail. When the highway was planned in 1912, it was to pass right over the grave. Maud Dawes, L. Clark Bishop and Jim Fenix were instrumental in moving the grave 30 feet north of where it was originally located.



Howard Jackson, a deputy sheriff in the late 1890's and early 1900's built the first crude wooden fence around the original gravesite, as he did on the next two gravesites we will visit. W. W. Morrison and his daughter Wanda, early trail buffs, planted lilies on the grave in 1946. Casper Boy Scout Troop 48 erected the present fence.

The Burlington tracks, one mile north across the river, were laid in 1912. Unlike other railroads in our area, the Burlington was built from West to East. These tracks were laid in 1887 by the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad.

**The Parker-Ringo graves** are on private land. We don't know anything about the southernmost grave of J.P. Parker grave other than the fact that he died July 1, 1860, age 41, and was from Iowa. The northernmost stone is inscribed M. Ringo and up until 1986 little was known about it. Today, due in part to Randy Brown of Douglas, we know a lot about the Ringos.

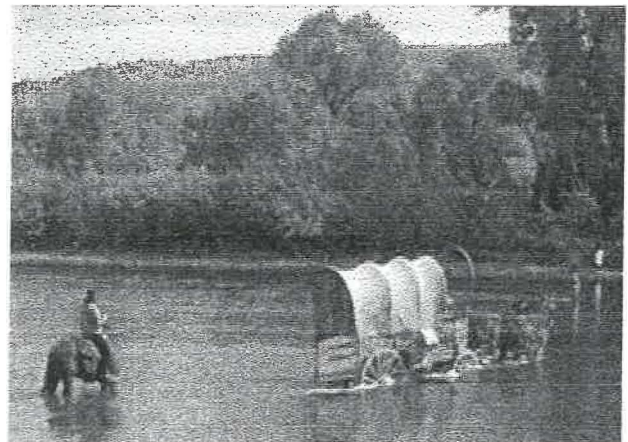
Martin Ringo was born October 1, 1819 in Kentucky. His family moved to Wayne County, Indiana, where Martin grew up. This links him with Alvah Unthank who is buried about seven miles east of here who was also a native of Wayne County. The parents of these two men are buried in that county nearly as close to one another as the sons out here over a thousand miles from home.

Martin Ringo enlisted in Colonel Doniphan's Missouri Mounted Infantry at the outbreak of the Mexican War. He was discharged in 1847 and married Mary Peters of Clay County, Missouri.

In May 1864 Martin and Mary, with five children, left their home in Gallatin, Missouri for California. A journal was kept by Mary Ringo which describes Martin's unfortunate death:

July 30 - Saturday - *"And now Oh God comes the saddest record of my life for this day my husband accidentally shot himself and was buried by the wayside and oh, my heart is breaking, if I had no children how gladly would I lay me down with my dead - but now Oh God I pray for strength to raise our precious children and oh - may no one ever suffer the anguish that is breaking my heart, my little children are crying all the time and I - oh what am I to do. Every one in camp is kind to us but God alone can heal the breaking heart. After burying my darling husband we hitch and drive some 5 miles. Mr. Davenport drove my mules for me and Oh, the agony of parting from that grave, to go and leave him on the hillside where I shall never see it more but thank God tis only the body lying there and may we meet in Heaven where there is no more death but only life eternally.*

Martin Ringo was removing a shotgun from the back of the wagon when it caught on the tarp and discharged blowing Martin's hat some thirty feet into the air. His 14 year old son helped bury him. Perhaps the loss of his dad proved to be his undoing, for Martin's son Johnny reportedly grew up to be the notorious outlaw of the southwest, Johnny Ringo. Historians still argue whether Johnny's reputation was good or really bad.



**The Mormon Heritage of Glenrock** began when Brigham Young camped at Deer Creek on June 10th 1847. The Mormons quickly noted that, after what they had been through, this was an oasis. There was plenty of lush, good grass, excellent fishing in Deer Creek, wild choke cherries, large cottonwoods, game of all kinds and coal.

In fact, Deer Creek looked so good that plans were set to make it a future settlement of the Mormon Church. This was the place to refurbish and supply others on their way to Zion — especially those that had to walk all the way, like the handcart companies.

Nothing happened for the next eight years, until the Mormon Brigham Young Express and Carrying Company was formed in 1855. The “YX Line”, as it was known, was to haul freight, passengers and mail between Missouri and Salt Lake.

The Mormons knew that the U. S. Government would not give the mail contract to the Church, so they had Hiram Kimball apply for it. Kimball was awarded the contract for the low bid of \$23,000. This made Mormon way stations necessary, so construction of the Mormon Mail Station began in 1857, under the direction of Nathaniel V. Jones, three and one half miles up Deer Creek to the south of the main trail.

Elder John Taylor reported in July of 1857 that fifteen acres had been planted with irrigated crops. These were the first irrigation ditches in Wyoming, and can still be faintly seen today. A fort measuring 320 square feet had been constructed and enclosed, a large corral built, and 42 buildings erected. The construction crew consisted of 76 Mormons.

All was going well when the so-called “Mormon

War” broke out in the same year. Acting on rumors of a Mormon insurrection, the U. S. Government ordered federal troops to march against Utah. Upon learning that Colonel Albert Johnson’s army was on the way, the Mormons hastily withdrew from Deer Creek, returning to help protect Salt Lake. This location is in a field to the south of the Interstate on the way to the headquarters of today’s True VR ranch.

A major influence in starting the Mormon War was a letter written by Major Thomas S. Twiss, Indian Agent for the Upper Platte at the **Twiss Indian Agency**. It read:

*“On the 25th day of May (1857), a large Mormon colony took possession of the Valley of Deer Creek and drove away a band of Sioux Indians I had settled there in April”*

He estimated that the Mormon settlement contained: *“houses sufficient for the accommodation of five hundred persons”* He summed up by saying: *“I am powerless to control the matter, for the Mormons obey no laws enacted by Congress”*

No sooner had the Mormons left, Agent Twiss penned a letter to Washington, dated November 7, 1857, showing the return address as *“Indian Agency on the Upper Platte, Re: Deer Creek.”* It read: *“I have the honor to report that I arrived at this post on the 29th and shall remain here at present”*.

Remain he did, for the next several years. The spot became a place for the yearly distribution of annuities to the various Indian tribes. In fact, the area was recommended by Twiss to be an Indian reservation, but Congress did not concur.



Sharing the Twiss Indian Agency were several Lutheran missionaries who established the **Lutheran Indian Mission** within the stockade. The job of these Bavarian emigrant missionaries was exceptionally tough because they spoke neither English nor Indian - only German. History records that these missionaries conducted the first Christmas ceremony in Wyoming, complete with a lighted Christmas tree, on December 25th, 1859. The mission was closed in 1867.



Many emigrant diaries mention catching **trout in the North Platte**. This is especially true at the mouth of Deer Creek. Well, those travelers evidently did not know what a trout were, because before the year 1880 there were no trout in the entire North Platte river drainage. Back then there were no cutthroats, no rainbows, no browns, or no brookies in the entire drainage. There were none in the Laramie River, nowhere in the Snowy Mountains, nowhere on the east side of the Sierra Madres, not even in the highest headwaters of the North Platte in Colorado

In 1880 both rainbow and brook trout were introduced in the North Platte drainage, followed in 1881 with the stocking of carp, which we now poison to kill. Before then an angler would find sauger, which is a close relative to the walleye, a few channel catfish and shovelnose sturgeon. The saugers and sturgeon were eliminated when the dams

were constructed along the river. The catfish are still caught below Casper on the river. In the 1960's and 1970's walleye would make their way from Colorado into Wyoming where they now thrive in reservoirs created by the dams of the North Platte.

Those pioneer fishermen were probably catching saugers which old timers around Casper say were plentiful. Today's fishing regulation booklet has over 30 pages of rules. In 1869 the Wyoming territorial legislature passed its first fishing regulation. It was simple enough - anglers were restricted to using a hook and a line.

*Source: Casper Star Tribune Dec. 12, 1996*

Glenrock is now named for the familiar outcropping of rock on the west side of town. In the frenzied years of the forty-niners it is said that one could stand on top of the rock in the glen and observe an almost endless line of wagon trains passing. There are still a few inscriptions left on the south side of the rock.

**The Hayden Pioneer Monument** in Glenrock is the only known monument to Dr. Ferdinand Hayden. The marker is inscribed as follows: *To All Pioneers Who Passed This Way And In Memory of Pioneer Geologist Ferdinand V. Hayden Chief U.S. Geological Survey Of the Territories 1867-78 Born at Westfield, Mass., 1829*

Dr. Hayden first came to Deer Creek in 1859-60 while attached to an operation called the "Expedition of the Yellowstone". As a doctor, he looked after medical needs of troops wintering at the Twiss Indian Agency in these years. He did some of the first geological work for the government and is credited with the founding of the U. S. Geological Survey. The beautiful Hayden Valley in Yellowstone is named for him.

Dr. Hayden, on a second trip to the area in 1870-71, observed that the coal bed that was on fire in the winter of 1859-60 was still on fire and had baked the earth to a brick red color.

Accompanying Hayden on the latter trip was William Henry Jackson, the famous pioneer artist and photographer. In 1870 Jackson made the first photograph of Natural Bridge. More importantly, the next year he made the trip with Dr. Hayden to Yellowstone and his photographs and paintings were the instrumental part of convincing Congress to establish the first national park, Yellowstone, in March of 1872.

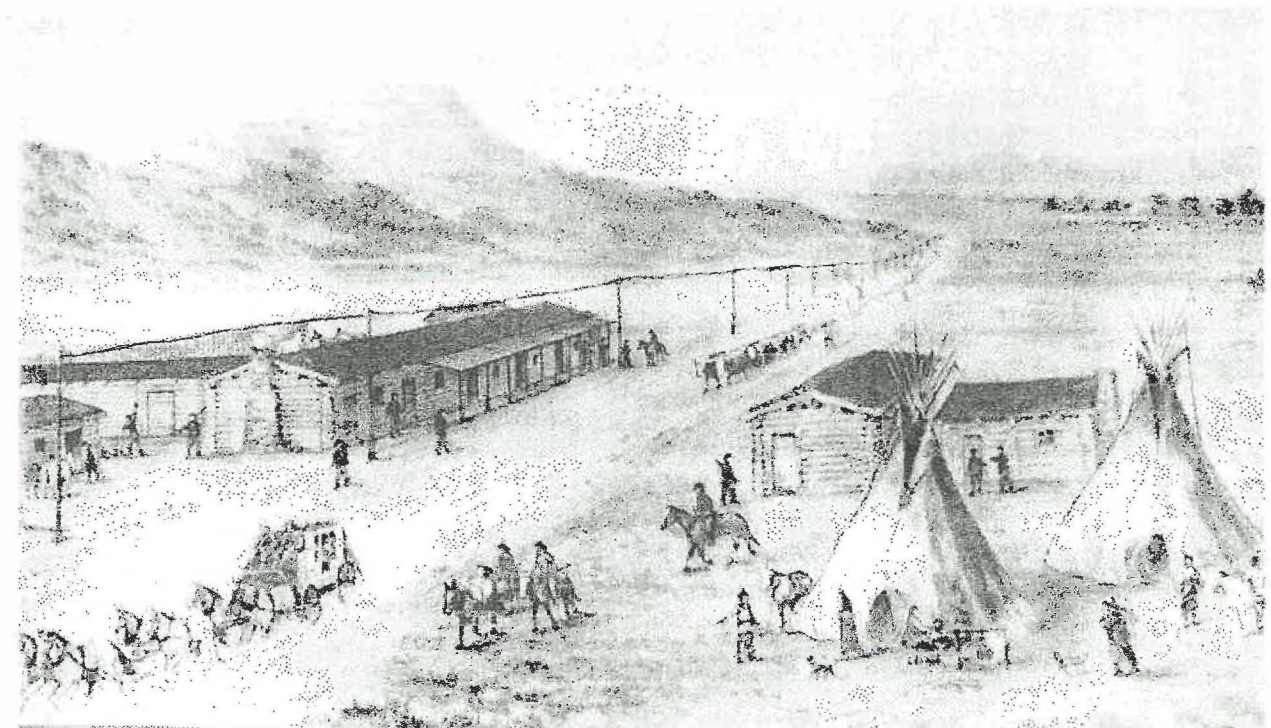
This monument was erected in 1931 with William H. Jackson, then 88 years old, as the dedicator. Citizens of Westfield, Massachusetts paid for the monument. The monument has the bronze Oregon Trail Memorial emblem imbedded in it.

*Source: Deer Creek: Frontiers Crossroad in Pre-Territorial Wyoming, Glenrock Historical Commission, 1990*

The Joe Keenan 1961 monument marks the location of Deer Creek Pony Express Station and The Bisonette Trading Post. The exact date of the beginning of dwellings here has been disputed. We do know that Joseph Bisonette had a trading post here in 1857. This was a very important campground on the trail but there were no buildings during its most used emigrant years.

John C. Fremont, with Kit Carson as a guide, camped here July 26th, 1842. Bonneville, Brigham Young, the Subletts, Greenwood, Robert Stewart, Caspar Collins, Donner, Sitting Bull, Man Afraid of His Horses, Bidwell, Crazy Horse and almost anyone connected with the fur trade or Oregon-California-Mormon trails camped here.

The Pony Express Station was located here but disappeared when the telegraph was completed in October of 1861. At that time there were 18 buildings, six owned by Bisonette and the balance by the government. The buildings were burned by the Sioux on August 17-18, 1866.



One of the first telegraph operators here was 100 pound Oscar Collister. Just as he was about to be fired for apparently being so weak, he undertook repairing lines that the Indians had cut by traveling past Boxelder Creek to the east, in the dead of night. His bravery insured his job. William E. Unrau's book *Tending the Talking Wire* is excellent for research of this place and time.

The monument here is inscribed: *Site of Deer Creek Stage and Telegraph Station. Built in 1857 by Hiram Kimball, mail carrier for Fort Laramie to Salt Lake City. telegraph in operation 1861 to 1867, when it was abandoned and immediately destroyed by Indians.*

This monument is in error because Hiram Kimball was instrumental in the Mormon colony three miles south of this location. Bisonette probably built the first buildings here.

The Glenrock area was also the site of The **Bisonette Ferry and Richard's Bridge (Reshaw's)**. As you cross the bridge in north Glenrock you can notice a large island that was a popular Indian ford. The Bisonette ferry operated just to the north end of the island. This was a primitive ferry made from six or eight dugout canoes, floored with timbers. It was made to carry wagons and was propelled by oars according to Mr. Gould while Stansbury said it was pulled with a line. The ferry was operated in 1849-50 during the gold rush. The charge was usually two dollars and the animals were swum over.

Here is where Howard Stansbury reported that an emigrant had been drowned the day before, making this the 28th victim that season. The well-to-do trains went on, for this was a rickety ferry. It was operated by three to four men.

Here is where John Richard's 1851 rickety, bridge washed out in 1852. Diarists claim their lives were in peril when crossing this bridge. The bridge was called an engineering failure but the financial success of its short life encouraged the builder to go further up the river and construct the Reshaw (Richard) bridge at Evansville.

One of the most famous graves along the trail is that of 19 year old **Alvah Unthank** who was heading to California with the Newport Mining Company.

Alvah became sick at Fort Laramie but soon seemed better. At Register Cliff he carved his name A. H. Unthank 1850. In 1869 Alvah's cousin O. N. Unthank, a telegraph operator at Fort Laramie, carved his name below Alvah's. In 1930 O. N. Unthank's son, O. B. Unthank added his name to the other two.

Water dripping from an overhanging ledge almost destroyed the three names of this famous trail inscription. Randy Brown of Douglas, with encouragement from Greg Franzwa, recarved the names using an older photograph to make sure the carving would be authentic.

Between Box Elder Creek and the grave site the company ran into a severe hail storm. This exposure may have led to the relapse that Alvah was suddenly and severely taken with. Alvah died July 2, 1850 probably from dysentery.

Diarist and friend Pusey Graves noted: *July 1st, Alvah is rapidly sinking. Lying by with heavy hearts today. Three of the wagons which we had taken into our company and had traveled with us for 200 miles drove off and left us because of our detention with Alvah, but the true hearted remained.*

This grave site, like Parker's is unusual because it has both a footstone and a headstone. It is also unusual that the grave is on private land in sight of the road, with strict landowner instructions to keep out!

Because of the no trespassing instructions the OCTA sign was constructed by the roadside. Chapter member Gene Potter of Casper installed the marker and Converse County made the small roadside pull out.

**Fort Fetterman** was constructed in 1867 and abandoned in 1882. If you are expecting another Fort Laramie, don't, because only two buildings have been restored. To picture Fort Fetterman in your mind you have to walk on the parade field, view the existing foundations and imagine what it must have looked like.

Fetterman was built because the fast moving railroad construction along with its telegraph line would soon make the northern route through Wyoming obsolete. The army had given up its Powder River forts and travel over this portion of the trail was rapidly decreasing. There was now little need for Fort Sedgewick, Fort Mitchell, Fort Caspar, and even Fort Laramie's importance decreased. For the outpost near Indian territory, Fort Fetterman was selected. Its importance was as a later supply post when full scale warfare against the Sioux was resumed in 1876. This was General Crook's assembly point and supply base.

Fort Fetterman is a State of Wyoming historic park. There is something that may not appear in detail at the interpretive center. Fort Fetterman was a hardship post. It seems that anyone in the army at that time who was to be demoted or punished was sent to this fort. It was a very disagreeable assignment to be stationed here. Therefore, any account you read of life at this army post is dismal.

Sickness was common and the post hospital was usually full. Those in the hospital got little care. There were not enough blankets and clothing to keep a soldier warm in Wyoming's harsh winters. Many times food was scarce and poor. The recreation was booze, gambling and shady ladies.

The hardships of Fetterman caused desertion in droves. Most of the deserters made it, but those that did not were dealt with harshly. It was a usual sight to see soldiers and even civilians with heavy ball and chain fastened to their leg, and sometimes a heavy, flat bar attached to their arms.

It was not uncommon to see a soldier tied up by his thumbs until they had torn from their sockets. Frequently, a soldier was spreadeagled, meaning tied naked between four stakes driven into the ground and left to be tortured by the burning sun and bitten by ants and flies.

Men's heads were shaved and burned with hot irons. Some were taken miles from the post and left to themselves and the Indians. Whip lashings were common, or being placed in a hole for days. Buck and gagging was a way to completely immobilize a man. To buck a man his wrists were firmly bound together. He then was placed in a sitting position with his knees between his arms. A stick was then put between the bend of his legs and the bend of his arms. He was unable to move without tumbling onto his back. Gagging meant a stick was put into his mouth and fastened with strings behind his head. Sometimes a bayonet was used instead of the stick.

To desert here at Fort Fetterman, you had better well weigh your chances of escape.



**After Fort Fetterman** was abandoned in 1878, the Government sold the property to private citizens. This continued Fetterman as a town for a few years, which became a stopping place for freighters carrying goods from the Union Pacific at Rock Creek to Fort McKinney of Buffalo. In 1886 there were 300 people at Fetterman. All the new settlers came here, for there was no Douglas, Glenrock or Casper.

The railroad was what brought settlers to our area. Towns sprung up along the new railroad, the Fremont-Elkhorn-and Missouri Valley railroad reached Douglas in 1886, Glenrock in 1887, and Casper in 1888.

The Government located a land office in Douglas in 1900, and homesteading began. Nearly all the land along streams was homesteaded. The first homesteads were 160 acres at \$1.25 per acre, and you had to live on it for five years to complete your claim. Then in 1909 this was enlarged to 320 acres and three years to complete your claim. In 1916 the "Stock Raising Act" allowed for the filing of 640 acres.

Usually, 40 acres per cow are needed in Wyoming, since grass is sparse, so 640 acres meant only sixteen cattle could be sustained. Therefore, it was very common for the richer ranchers, who staked some of their claims before homesteading began, to set up their cowboys on adjoining homesteads. The rancher provided a job as long as the cowboy agreed to live on the homestead the five years or three years, at which time the rancher got the homestead. Small homesteads grew to huge ranches in this manner.

The south trail is approximately ten miles south of Douglas. The trail left the North Platte in the area of Glendo and cut across an area that had water about every ten miles. The

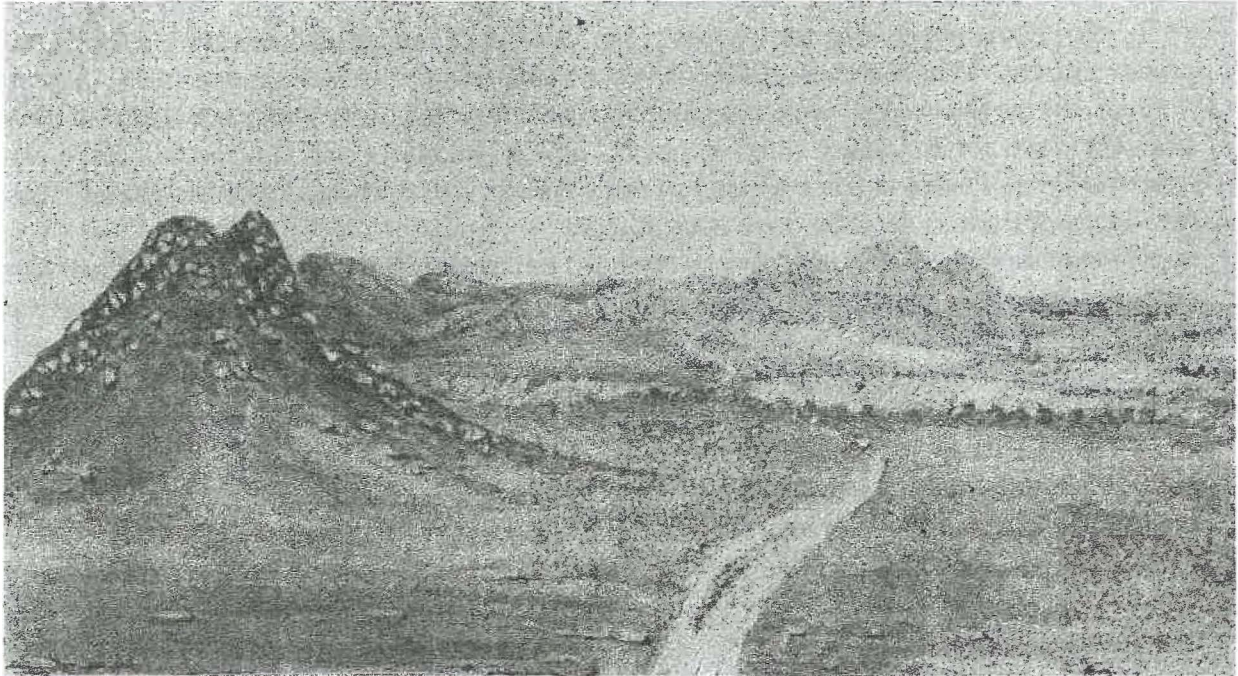
fact that the North Platte runs from north to south in Douglas. and the more difficult terrain made this direct route more popular than trying to follow the river. The south side trail traveled across Elkhorn Creek, LaBonte Creek, LaPrelle Creek , Boxelder and Little Boxelder Creek.

Ferdinand Hayden in 1869 described **Ayre's Natural Bridge**: *It is certainly as perfect a natural bridge as could be desired* The trail is a few miles to the north of Ayre's bridge but many emigrants took the time to leave the trail just to see the bridge. The spot is one of Wyoming's beauty places. Alva Ayers purchased the land including the bridge in 1881. In 1953 his son, Clement Ayres, donated the land around the bridge to Converse County. Today Ayers Natural Bridge Park is preserved and maintained by Converse County.

Legend has it that an Indian was hit by lightning and killed instantly. His people believed an evil spirit, a king of beasts, living beneath the bridge had swallowed the life of this warrior. From that time the Indians would not go near the bridge which made it a sanctuary for a white man on the run.

About ten miles south of Douglas, WY is a beautiful little stream called **La Bonte Creek**, named for an early trapper of the area. This was a popular spot in trail times because it was good water again after ten or more miles of no water. The creek could easily be forded and there was plenty of timber. J. Goldsborough Bruff on July 14, 1849 wrote: *to La Bonte Creek, good water, but rather low. Plenty of timber and brush in the bottom. Close by the Camp lay a large trunk of a Cotton-wood tree: inscribed all over with names, initials, dates, & as usual.*

La Bonte was the site of a pony express station and mail station #26. Camp Marshall was established here from 1864 through 1866. It was another post to protect the telegraph and passing wagon trains.



On our tour we will climb a short hill to observe deep swales made by wagons coming up out of LaBonte creek and moving into the Red Hills. When on top of the hill you will observe the scene captured above by emigrant artist James F. Wilkins June 30, 1849. From this point Randy Brown has accumulated numerous diary descriptions of the Trail between LaBonte and LaPrele:

**Simon Doyle, June 23, 1849:** *Drove 21 miles to 1 miles west of (LaPrelle) - river, a small stream 16 feet wide, 18 inches deep. Rapid current & cold water. Plenty of timber & little grass. In 5 miles (from LaBonte) we crossed a small stream (Wagonhound) with Red Bands & nooned in Red Basin in the center of which is a pyramid of soap stone some 200 feet high (Knob Hill). The hills around this basin is from 200 to 600 ft. high, and are said to contain (?) and marble of superior quality. (Wagonhound was sometimes called Marble Creek) Down a ravine to the N.E. is a spring & good grass. For the next 3 1/2 miles the road lay over Red Clay Bluffs, red sand and granite & very hilly. In three miles further the road ran into & down the channel of a*

*small stream (Sand Creek on the Richard Cross ranch) for 200 yds. Decent bad. 1 1/2 further brought us to the river (LaPrele Creek). Tonight our cattle again have no grass.*

**Geiger and Bryarly, June 18, 1849:** *Started before day, intending to go to La Bonta River to breakfast, which we supposed 8 miles off, but missing the road, we traveled for 15 miles before striking it. The road has been over high hills & through deep hollows. The hills hard, but very sandy in the bottoms. Nooned on La Bonta River, a stream of clear water, but not very cool - about 30 feet wide & shallow. After crossing this stream we continued to ascend & descend high bluffs & in five miles crossed a small stream, an affluent of the LaBonta, (Wagonhound) where we got wood & water and then drove into camp 2 miles west.*

*Today we have been among the red hills, with very short grass. On the hills we noticed hundreds & thousands of large crickets or grass-hoppers of every color and hue. They*

were called by some Buffalo Grass-hoppers. Marble Creek (Wagonhound) is the name of the stream we just passed. Here we found a beautiful specimen of variegated marble, also soda & salaratus. Hearing that liquor was for sale - went back. \$12 per Gal.

**June 19:** Very early this morning we started, but unfortunately broke a bolt pin, and was thus detained. Passed a large conical hill, 200 feet high and of nearly solid rock. (Probably Knob Hill which, however, is about 70 feet high)

**William Woodhams, May 29, 1854:** This is the roughest days traveling we have had yet. Many of the hills where they are washed are of a deep red like the old fashioned Dutch brick. Many of them resembled enormous clumps of brick ready to be burned. In one ravine we passed a pile of rocks in the shape of a sugar loaf 70 to 80 feet looking precisely as though human agency had been employed to raise the pile, but the hills of the most extraordinary shape are to be seen at every turn of the road along these black hills.

**Israel Lord, July 1, 1849:** Move off west, up hill, and down, the road as red as rose pink. Indeed, everything is more or less so. Some of the hills look like a mine of Spanish brown, others rose pink, others salmon, chocolate, flesh color, cream. The north sides of the Black hills are purple, and even the wild sage and grass is colored with the all pervading pigment, which pulverized under the wagon wheels, rises in clouds and settles again upon everything for a mile or more, on either side of the road. Crossed a ravine in which on the left, three small pyramids, and a large one (Knob Hill) 100 feet high, close to the road, with a small projection on the road side, between which and the base is a large rock nine feet high.

**Israel Hale, June 19, 1849:** In the afternoon we drove five miles to Little Labonte (Wagonhound Creek). The first object of note was a ridge of mounds entirely of rock that extended to all appearances across our road, except a narrow gap which we expected the road ran through, but was not the case, The road went to the right. I had the curiosity to look through the gap. I there saw mountains of various kinds. I also discovered that our road wound round, and that a gully was the cause of it not running through the gap. (The gap now has the Esterbrook road running through it) When we go round the mound the earth was red almost as blood. I soon saw a place that was white. I went to it and found it sounded hollow as I stepped on it. I also discovered that it was kind of a rock. I pulled up a piece of it and found it was white almost as snow and as light as a cork and some parts as open as a honey comb. It had the appearance of a volcanic eruption. I afterwards saw several places similar to it. I notice also that many of the sides of the mountains were of different colors, mostly red. We are now past Laramie's Peak and we saw the snow on the top for several days. I must have seen it for two hundred miles. (from Robidoux Pass where the mountain can first be viewed to Wagonhound Creek is about 120 miles) The grass through here is bad. There is plenty of wild sage but that is bad food for the cattle.

You can see that all these quotes are in a short period of 1849. Each diarist notes different things about the surroundings. One mentions the large number of grasshoppers but the rest do not. Nearly all mention the red earth and most mention Knob Hill or Grindstone Peak. We often wonder, when we travel the same area what they are talking about until we really stop and study the terrain. Maybe our emigrants of 1849 were really better than we are today when it comes to *stopping and really smelling the roses.*



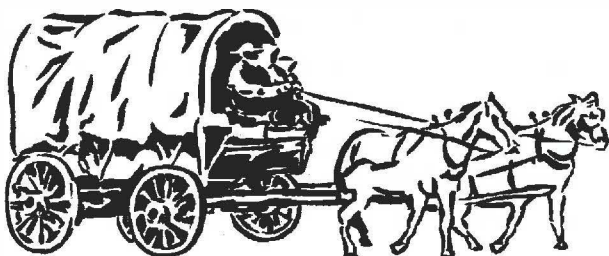
The beauty of the swales left by wagons is evident in this area of the red earth. Most diarists make note of the iron red brick dust earth of the La Bonte and Wagonhound area.

Mother nature comes up with another oddity in the red earth country by serving up Knob Hill or Brigham's Peak, or **Grindstone Peak** which is grey sandstone and limestone. It has the appearance of piled up boulders.

Oxen suffered with hoof damage through here. Amateur blacksmiths had their work cut out for them. They dug a trench the length of the animal and the width of a shovel. The ox was then turned over, with much difficulty, so its backbone lay in the trench with all four legs in the air. In this position it was helpless and shoes were nailed on. In bad cases of hoof wear buffalo hides were tied over the hooves like bags. Even some of the dogs in the trains were fitted with leather moccasins.

Some diarists mention crickets and grasshoppers in huge quantities here. The name Grindstone Butte came from emigrants using the rock as whetstones to sharpen their knives and axes.

This is where Vincent Geiger's 1849 gold rush train stopped - a rare stop- because they heard through the trail grapevine that liquor was for sale back at La Bonte for \$12 per gallon.



**LaPrele Pony Express Station** was in existence at least from 1860 to 1861. LaPrele is a French word for horsetail grass. Indications are that there was a single building, a well, and probably a cellar here. The station site, 50 feet north of the well, was 24 feet by 42 feet. The hole 10 feet outside the northwest corner of the station was probably the cellar. The well was cleaned out by Randy Brown who also built the fence around the nearby Hembree grave.

At the LaPrele Station is an excellent example of an **L. C. Bishop Stake**. Loren Clark Bishop was one dedicated to an ideal. He was born at Fort Fetterman in 1885. In this area young Clark Bishop caught the spirit and atmosphere of the early west. The love of Wyoming history dominated his life, especially in later years. He and Paul Henderson worked on many projects together. In fact, L. C. was to Wyoming as Paul was to Nebraska.

Mr. Bishop was the State of Wyoming engineer. In 1952 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Wyoming. He was a charter member of the Wyoming State Historical Society, who to this day present an annual award dedicated in his name. His skill in historical map drawing is attested to by many. He was instrumental in identifying old emigrant trails, stage and pony express stations. In 1958 and 1959 he spent much of his time locating the thirty-eight Pony Express Stations in Wyoming for the 1960 Pony Express Centennial. You will notice that he used a punch to inscribe the posts to identify the spot. His main tool was the use of the metal detector. From square nails to spent cartridges he found the spot. He located the exact location of the Fetterman fight this way. Because of this man's work we are now able to find those places with much more certainty and ease.

In 1961, the following eulogy was given to L. C. Bishop on a trek such as ours.: *In future years, as the people traverse the old pioneer trails of our beloved State, Wyoming, we will find the name of L. C. Bishop written in indelible letters, as one who, more than any other person, retraced and mapped that history making route of our pioneer forebears across the prairies and mountain passes of Wonderful Wyoming. As one of the good and honorable men of the earth, Mr. Bishop has left to posterity a heritage of integrity and uprightness.*

There are three marked graves on the knoll to the south of the station. One is that of Private Ralston Baker, Company E, 2nd U.S. Cavalry, who died May 1, 1867, during the many Indian skirmishes of the time.

There seems to be nothing in Wyoming history about Pvt. Ralston Baker. Until recently we knew little about the soldier in the remote grave. Then in John D. McDermott's 1997 book *Frontier Crossroads*, there is a reference to a William Baker who was killed near Dry Creek. It took OCTA's Randy Brown, chairman of our graves and sites committee, three years to figure out that William Baker was indeed, the Ralston Baker we had known nothing about.

Civil war veteran Ralston Baker reinlisted after the war in the famous 2nd Cavalry, which was shortly to leave for service on the frontier. Baker's enlistment papers reveal that he was then 19 years old, five feet 6 and one half inches tall, with gray eyes, light hair, and fair complexion. He gave as his occupation "soldier".

Presumably Ralston Baker served with his regiment at Fort Laramie and vicinity for about a year. He was called Bill by his messmates and was nicknamed "the philosopher" because of his thoughtful and cheerful nature. Late in 1866

Baker's Company E was ordered to Fort Caspar.

A primary duty of the soldiers was to escort the mail between posts, considered hazardous duty with the army in midst of Red Cloud's war then being waged against the forts on the Bozeman Trail. April 30, 1867, saw Private Baker serving escort duty accompanying the mail wagon to the post at Bridger's Ferry about eighty miles east. The escort consisted of eight members of company E and six doughboys, infantrymen of the 18th Regiment, a company of which was stationed at Fort Caspar. The mail wagon was drawn by a six mule team.

The normal and most direct route to Bridger's Ferry at that time would have been along the north side of the river, but this time the detachment elected to use the old Oregon Trail on the south side of the river. A spring storm had left six inches of wet snow on the ground, so it must have been a miserable trip along a very muddy trail. They camped at LaPrele Creek the first night out. After a late start the next morning they traveled about three miles and reached a place where the road was intersected by two ravines, one on each side of the road. Without warning they were attacked by about one hundred Indians from both sides. Baker was with the wagon, while the rest of the troopers were about two hundred yards in advance. Impulsively, Baker bolted from the wagon intending to join the other cavalrymen but had not gone far when he received a shot through the neck killing him instantly.

The soldiers scattered in all directions climbing the hills that surrounded the road while firing back at the Indians and dropping several. Armed with antique weapons, the Indians soon gave up the chase, returned to the

wagon, unloaded it, cut the mules loose and set fire to the wagon. The soldiers left after dark and proceeded to Bridger's Ferry.

A detachment of Company E from Fort Caspar went to Sand Creek to collect the body of Baker. He was brought back to LaPrele and was buried in a coffin made of cracker boxes on a hill next to the road with rocks placed on the grave to prevent the body being disturbed by wolves.

Baker's effects were searched to identify the next of kin, and it was discovered that he had enlisted under an alias, his true name being Salter. So with the name William or Bill or Ralston, or Baker or Salter it is understandable why it took so long to find the true story

The largest tombstone is that of Al Meyers, a former owner of the ranch who was always gracious when we asked to visit the area. Al was one of those good guys who was called before his time.

The third stone is that belonging to little six year old **Joel Hembree**. This is one of the most important grave-sites along the trail because it is the oldest marked grave of emigrant times. It is also the oldest marked grave in Wyoming.

Joel Hembree and his family were in what is now called The *Jesse Applegate Cow Column* of 1843. This is the first large company heading for Oregon, and has been credited as the real start of Oregon settlement via the trail. It is estimated that one thousand people came by here in 1843. The Applegate party had over five hundred in it, and was called the cow column because they trailed up to five thousand cattle with them to start the Oregon herds.

Among this well-managed company was the famous Dr. Marcus Whitman. Of course the big problem was the slowness of travel due to the large number of people and animals. This was one company that always stopped to observe the Sabbath.

The road through these Black Hills was rocky and bad. Remember, that in oxen powered wagons, the driver always walked. On July 18, little Joel was riding on the oxen tongue when he fell and both wheels passed over him. Dr. Whitman tended the boy as the train continued to this spot where, the next day, Joel Hembree died. The company stayed here all day the 19th and William Newby inscribed this headstone, which they erected over the grave on the morning of the 20th before pushing on.

Many diaries of trains following mention this grave. This was one of the first graves of Oregon Trail history, so the grave was more of a special reminder than in later years when hundreds of graves had been passed by the time the emigrants arrived here.

The finding of the Joel Hembree gravesite is as interesting as the story of the boy's death. This is not the original gravesite, which is 1,625 feet to the east. This is the old George Powell homestead ranch. In December of 1971, Mr. Glen Edwards, the owner at the time, was leveling some land in the meadow when he and his helper discovered a pile of stones under the earth near the north bank of La Puelle Creek. When Glen turned over one of the larger stones he found the inscription Mr. Newby had carved in it 118 years prior. Mr Edwards had the good sense to realize that he had found a grave of historical significance. He then spoke to neighbors and friends about moving the grave.

Lyle Hildebrand and Loren Clark Bishop of Douglas, both very famous trail buffs of that time, told the story of the discovery to the





newspaper *The Douglas Budget*, hoping that the Associated Press would pick up the story and maybe someone could identify the grave. This clipping from the *Budget* was sent to Paul Henderson of Bridgeport, Nebraska, who was the ultimate trail buff of his time. Paul immediately identified the grave and the circumstances of the death from his acquaintance with the 1843 diaries.

On Sunday, March 24, 1962, a group of interested neighbors and trail buffs moved the grave to this location next to Private Baker. The Chamberlains who live on the next ranch west helped. Mr. Chamberlain states there was no doubt how the little boy died for there were metal ring wagon wheel marks across the skull. One of the ranchers built a coffin and Joel was reinterred with the original headstone.

Source: Oregon Trail Revisited, Greg Franzwa  
 Sites Along the Oregon Trail, Aubrey Haines  
 Annals of Wyoming, Vol. 35, #3 by Paul Henderson Oct 1963

On July 12, 1864, a four wagon train with eleven persons crossed Little Box Elder Creek and began to climb up to a ridge. The party consisted of: **Josiah Kelly**, his wife **Fanny** and adopted daughter **Mary Hurley**; W. J. Larimer, his wife Sarah, and 8 year old son Frank, Mr. Sharp, a Methodist minister; Gardner Wakefield, a Mr. Taylor, a Mr. Franklin, a colored servant; and Andy, another Negro servant.

The Kelly party was heading from Kansas to the Montana gold fields. About an hour before sundown, a party of apparently friendly Sioux

Indians rode up, shook hands and rode along with the wagon train. About sundown, when the wagons had reached the crossing of Little Box Elder Creek, the Indians, numbering about 75 to 100, requested that the wagon train halt, and that supper be prepared. Complying with the request, a halt was made and preparations were made to start a meal.

William Larimer was making a fire, Josiah Kelly, Andy, and Franklin were collecting wood. Gardner Wakefield and Noah Taylor were busy with the teams, and old Mr. Sharp was distributing his store of sugar to the Indians when suddenly the Indians attacked. Mr. Sharp, Noah Taylor and Franklin were immediately killed. William Larimer and Gardner Wakefield were both badly wounded but managed to run and hide along the creek. Josiah Kelly and Andy, who were some distance away gathering firewood, also were able to run and hide.

About this time a man on horseback, followed at a distance behind by a lone wagon, came into view down the slope approaching Little Box Elder Creek crossing. A number of Indians went to the attack. The horseman was quickly overtaken and killed, but the wagon driver was able to turn around and retreated eastward and escaped.

As night was approaching, the Indians returned to finish searching the wagons for loot. They quickly opened flour sacks and feather beds, broke open boxes, and what they could not carry off they destroyed. Their prisoners, Fanny Kelly and Mary were put on one pony and Sarah Larimer and little Frank on another pony, and then all started north.

Under the cover of darkness, both Josiah Kelly and Andy worked their way east where they found a large wagon train encamped. The occupants of the lone wagon had also arrived.

The next day (July 13th) this wagon train proceeded carefully ahead. About noon they reached the body of the lone horseman. It was loaded in a wagon and they moved on to Little Box Elder Creek where the bodies of Mr. Sharp, Noah Taylor and Franklin still lay on the ground. Soon after, William Larimer hobbled up with a deep arrow wound in his thigh. Sharp, Taylor, Franklin and the lone horseman were buried in a wide grave on the west side of the creek, and then the train headed west to Deer Creek Station.

Meanwhile the Indians retreated north with their captives. After having traveled about five miles in the darkness of the night, Fanny Kelly slipped Mary off the pony with instructions to follow back to the road. Mary did just what Fanny told her to do. She hid during the night, and at dawn started walking back to Little Box Elder Creek. Sometime in the afternoon of July 13th she reached the bluffs overlooking the creek, probably just missing the wagon train that Josiah Kelly, Andy, William Larimer and Gardner Wakefield were now with. But she did see three soldiers coming up the road heading west. The soldiers saw Mary, but as they went toward her, they saw Indians. Fearing a trap, they withdrew to Deer Creek Station.

A few days later, Josiah Kelly and a detachment of soldiers went back to Little Box Elder Creek and came upon a group of emigrants who had found the body of Mary and were burying it. There are several reports of the finding and burying of Mary's body, each approximately the same but still somewhat different. Here they are:

Corporal Hervey Johnson in his letter home July 18th wrote: *A part of our company were out yesterday and found the body of the little girl with several arrows sticking in it. a large grey wolf was eating the child when they found it. Some tools were procured of a train and the body was buried.*

Julius Merrill was in a wagon train that crossed Little Box Elder Creek on July 17th. He wrote: *One of our train, being behind, had taken the road to the left instead of the right. He soon saw his mistake and started across to the road we were upon. About midway he discovered the body of a child which had been murdered by the Indians. The body was that of a little girl about six years of age. It was lying on its face, both arms thrown forward as if to prevent falling. One arrow had entered the left hip and splitting the bone, the point of the arrow curled and could not be withdrawn. Another had entered the side near the heart and clear through the body—someone had taken hold of the point and drawing it through. Across the top of her head was the gash of death, a tomahawk, about four inches in length and it must have been at least two inches in depth. Not yet content, the fiend must scalp it - the harmless child. To make the site still more horrible, the wolves had gnawed the flesh from one of its legs.*

Garland Mahan and George Forman of other trains also describe their rendition of finding little Mary.

In time the graves of the four men and that of little Mary were forgotten. In the 1940's Mr. W. W. Morrison of Cheyenne had read about the massacre and started searching. He located the graves and he marked each place with wooded markers. In 1954, when a dam was to be built across the Little Box Elder Creek that would back water over the mass grave of the four men, Mr. L. C. Bishop, Wyoming State Engineer, arranged for the removal of the remains. They were then buried next to the grave of Mary Hurley.

This grave site has been called the Mary Kelly grave. OCTA's Randy Brown did extensive research on the family and found the child's name to be Mary Hurley.

What happened to the Indian captives, Sarah Larimer and her son Frank, and Mary's foster mother, Fanny Kelly? Two nights after the capture, Sarah Larimer and her son Frank escaped from the Indians and after traveling several days, finally arrived at Deer Creek Station. Fanny Kelly was a captive of the Indians for five months until December. She was released to the army in the Dakota Territory. She finally was reunited with her husband, Josiah, on February 9th 1865 at Fort Sully.

In 1867 Josiah Kelly died. Fanny was ill, but revived to give birth to a son. She had no means of support so *a rainbow out of the clouds of despair* arrived with invitation of the Larimer's to live with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Larimer prospered somewhat in a photographic studio in Sherman, Wyoming, which is now a ghost town between Cheyenne and Laramie. In 1868 the Larimers invited Mrs. Kelly to come to Sherman and live in their home.

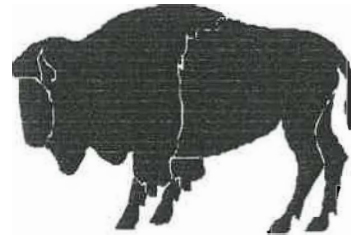
The real reason for the Larimer's invitation was to urge Fanny, on behalf of her newborn son, to present a claim to the federal government for losses incurred on the Kelly wagon train of 1864. The Kellys' had been comfortably endowed with worldly goods back then, and lost it all on the Little Box Elder. This must have not been true for the Kelly's had previously purchased a hotel in Kansas. Anyway, sue the government and get money!. In 1869, Fanny Kelly journeyed to Washington D. C., for an audience with President Grant to make her claim.

While she was still in Washington in 1870, a little book came out entitled *The Capture And Escape, or Life Among The Sioux*, written by—guess who?—her good friend, Sarah Larimer. All of it was copied from a manuscript Fanny had been writing entitled *My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians*.

Fanny Kelly filed suit against the Larimers, and related that Mrs. Larimer had taken the manuscript to a publisher in Philadelphia and had it published in Mrs. Larimer's name. The publisher, having a court case on its hands, ceased production of the book. Fanny's own version finally was published and she lived the rest of her life in Washington. On the insistence of Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, Swift Bear, Fast Bear and Yellow Hair, all Sioux chieftains, Fanny Kelly was paid from tribal allotments for property loss and personal deprivation;

Fanny's book was a financial success, she invested the money and died a rich woman. The town of Sherman died and the Larimer's were not heard from afterwards.

Source: *Attack on the Kelly Larimer Wagon Train:*  
*Overland Journal*, Vol. 5 No. 1 by Randy Brown  
*My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians:*  
Fanny Kelly, Mutual Publishing 1872





The grave of **QUINTINA SNODDERLY** is only one of two marked and identified grave sites in Natrona County. This is truly amazing when we think of the number of emigrants, including the Martin Company, that perished here.

Quintina died near here on June 25, 1852.

The skeleton of Quintina was discovered during construction work on the adjacent ranch road in 1974. An examination of the skeleton revealed that most of her ribs had been crushed, giving speculation that she was run over by wagon wheels. Around her neck were fragments of a green ribbon bow. The important item to discovery was the headstone which was plainly read.

The landowners at the time were Kathy and Bill Fritts who lived for a time in the Seattle area. They made it a point to look for persons named Snodderly in every town they visited in Oregon and Washington. Eventually they made the acquaintance of one of Quintina's grandsons, aged 85, living in Scio, Oregon. The grandson had the family Bible and other papers that told some of the history of the family.

Quintina, with her husband, Jacob; and their eight children left Clarinda County, Iowa in the spring of 1852. They joined a wagon train leaving St. Joseph, Missouri captained by Reverend Joab Powell.

The Powell wagon train probably crossed the North Platte River at this point, and the accident may have occurred as the wagons climbed the river bluffs to enter the north bank trail.

Now we know who is in the grave, probably what happened, and some of the history of the Snodderly family.

Of course that is not the end of the story because reintering Quintina's skeleton proved

to be a task. When the grave was discovered the bones were taken to Casper College for examination. It was even planned to exhibit the skeleton at Fort Caspar but these plans were scrapped.

The bones did get to travel, most of them back to the Fritts to be stored in a box for 12 years. The skull traveled to Fort Collins, CO for study by a pathologist at Colorado State University. It took Randy Brown to finally obtain the skeleton and bones for reinterment June 16, 1988.

An addendum to the Richard Bridge story on page 30: **Richard and the Mormon Rifles.** *November 13, 1857 New York Herald* Colonel A. S. Johnson ordered Major J. Lynde, commander at Fort Laramie, to search Richard's Bridge for arms and ammunition supposedly left at the bridge by a man named Grosbeck in charge of a Mormon supply train. Lieutenant John S. Marmaduke received an order on December 3 to proceed to Richard's trading posts at the Platte Bridge and Deer Creek and search for arms over and beyond what would be sufficient for the Indian trade. Marmaduke subsequently seized approximately 30 rifles from Richard's store at the Platte Bridge and returned with them to Fort Laramie. Richard protested that the rifles were his property, being supported by Indian agent Twiss, who claimed that they could not have belonged to the Mormons. After considerable controversy, the rifles were released to Richard.

The above story occurred during the so called Utah war as the Mormons were hauling supplies to Salt Lake City. At Fort Laramie permission to pass was granted to the train by Col. Albert Sidney Johnson. But then the Mormons, under Lot Smith, burned the army supply trains at what is now Simpson's Hollow. The Mormon train captain knew he was

the target for retribution so he left his wagons with John Richard at the bridge site at Evansville, going on with packed mules. To lessen the risk of losing rifles to the army, the Mormon captain talked John Richard into storing the rifles until they could be obtained later.

Trader John Richard, in declaring that the rifles were his, even demanded to be paid for them in the amount of \$3000. Instead the army said that the danger had passed and he could have the rifles back. Old John stated that this would not do because he had been deprived of them and he suffered damages. He even started to appeal to Congress for indemnity of his loss but later cooled down and the rifles were returned to their rightful owners.

### **JUST WHAT IS CHOLERA?**

We hear so much about Cholera, and yet we hear so little. The number one killer of emigrants on the trail was mentioned often but rarely described in detail (because it wasn't nice to talk about diarrhea). So we are often left wondering just what is this dreaded disease? Here is a brief medical account.

Cholera is a disease that produces severe diarrhea. It periodically spreads over the earth in world-wide pandemics. Several such pandemics have hit the United States, but the pandemics most remembered by trail historians were in 1832 and 1849-50. The disease seems to have started in India (hence the name "Asiatic Cholera"), and the causative organism, *Vibrio comma*, was discovered by German pathologist, Robert Koch, in Calcutta in 1884.

This discovery occurred more than thirty years after the peak emigration on the trails, and the cause of the illness was not known to the emigrants, although in London in 1849, John

Snow had shown beyond doubt that the disease was usually spread by polluted water. Even this information did not become known in the U.S. for several more years.

We now know that cholera is contracted by ingesting (taking into the mouth) quantities of the cholera germ. It is not spread by casual contact with nor by simply being near another victim. It is not caused by filth per se, nor by "bad air", nor by alkali, nor by phase of the moon, nor by supernatural demons.

Once enough of the germs are ingested, a growing colony is set up in the intestine and these germs release a poison (an enterotoxin) which causes a great outpouring of water into the gut. This water is accompanied by salts or electrolytes (mainly sodium, potassium, chlorides, and bicarbonates). This fluid produces a huge "enema from within" and results in diarrhea that initially is fecal, but then becomes like "rice water". The diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting of fluid, as well. The enormous fluid losses result in marked dehydration, and 50% of cholera patients die of this dehydration and electrolyte loss. A variety of additional symptoms are related to this fluid loss (muscle cramps, heart irregularities and kidney shutdown). Effective treatment of an individual is to replace the lost fluids and salts and then to get rid of the residual germs with antibiotics. Clean water supplies without fecal contamination prevent the spread of the disease within populations.

About half of the trail victims survived, and these survivors acquired a fairly good immunity to the disease for about 6 months. Some, who never got the disease during the prevailing epidemic, already had some resistance. Thus a community population would begin to develop which was resistant to the disease, and the epidemic would start to fade

out. This effect is a reason that the disease was more common early on the trail, when trail population was susceptible and was less common as the trail population became more resistant.

*Dr. Ronald R. Lund*

Oscar Hyde May 2, 1850

*Counted as many as five hundred graves along the North Platte, Cholera lasted usually but a day. Many with beds and blankets were abandoned by the roadside. No man dare touch them, for fear of the unknown, unseen destroyer.*

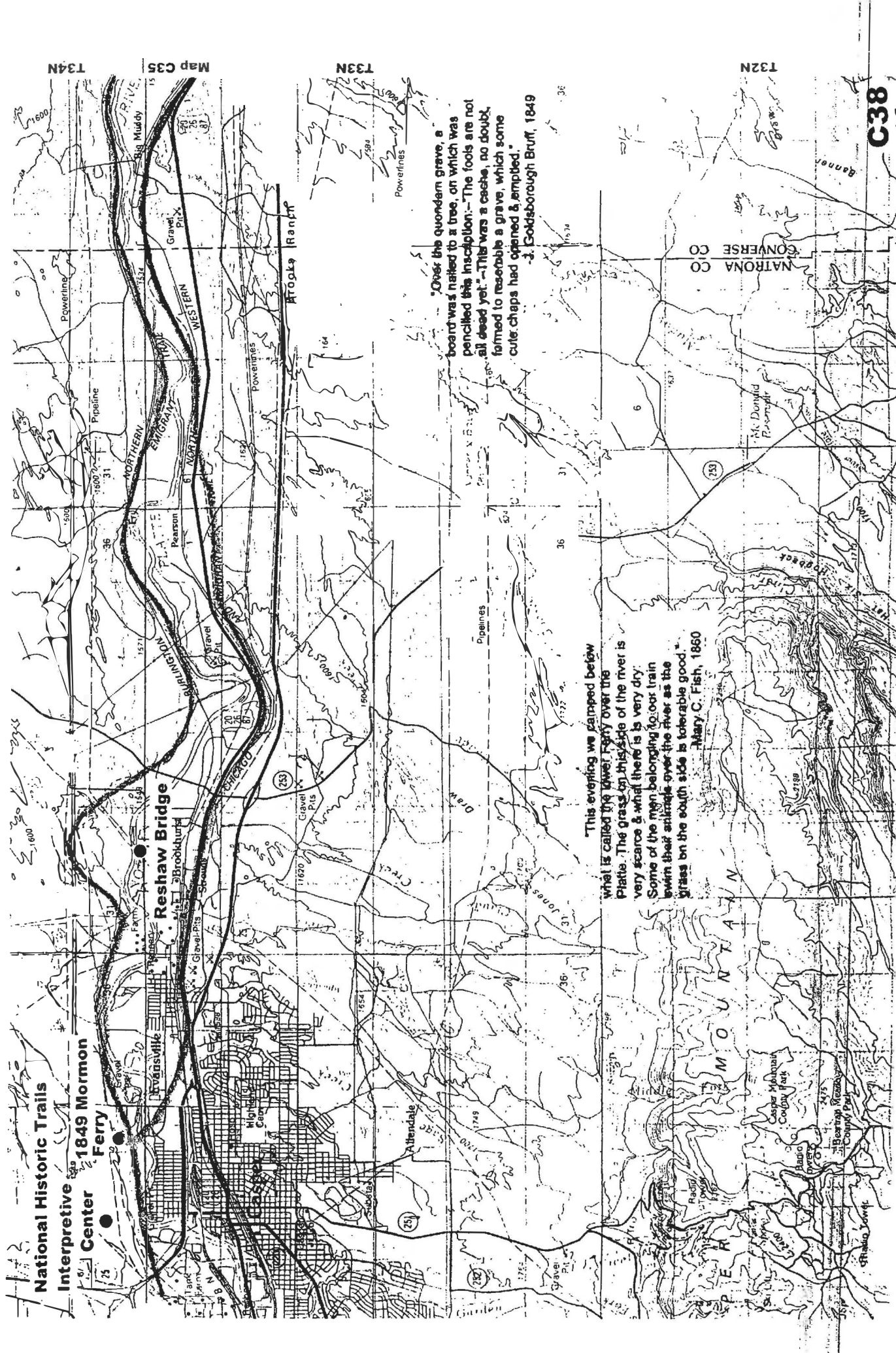


This guide compiled by Lee Underbrink and is intended for OCTA's 2001 Casper, Wyoming convention use. All errors are Lee's

Thanks to the many of you that helped with the stories, maps and production of this guide.

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National Historic Trails  
Interpretive Center  
1849 Mormon Ferry

Reshaw Bridge

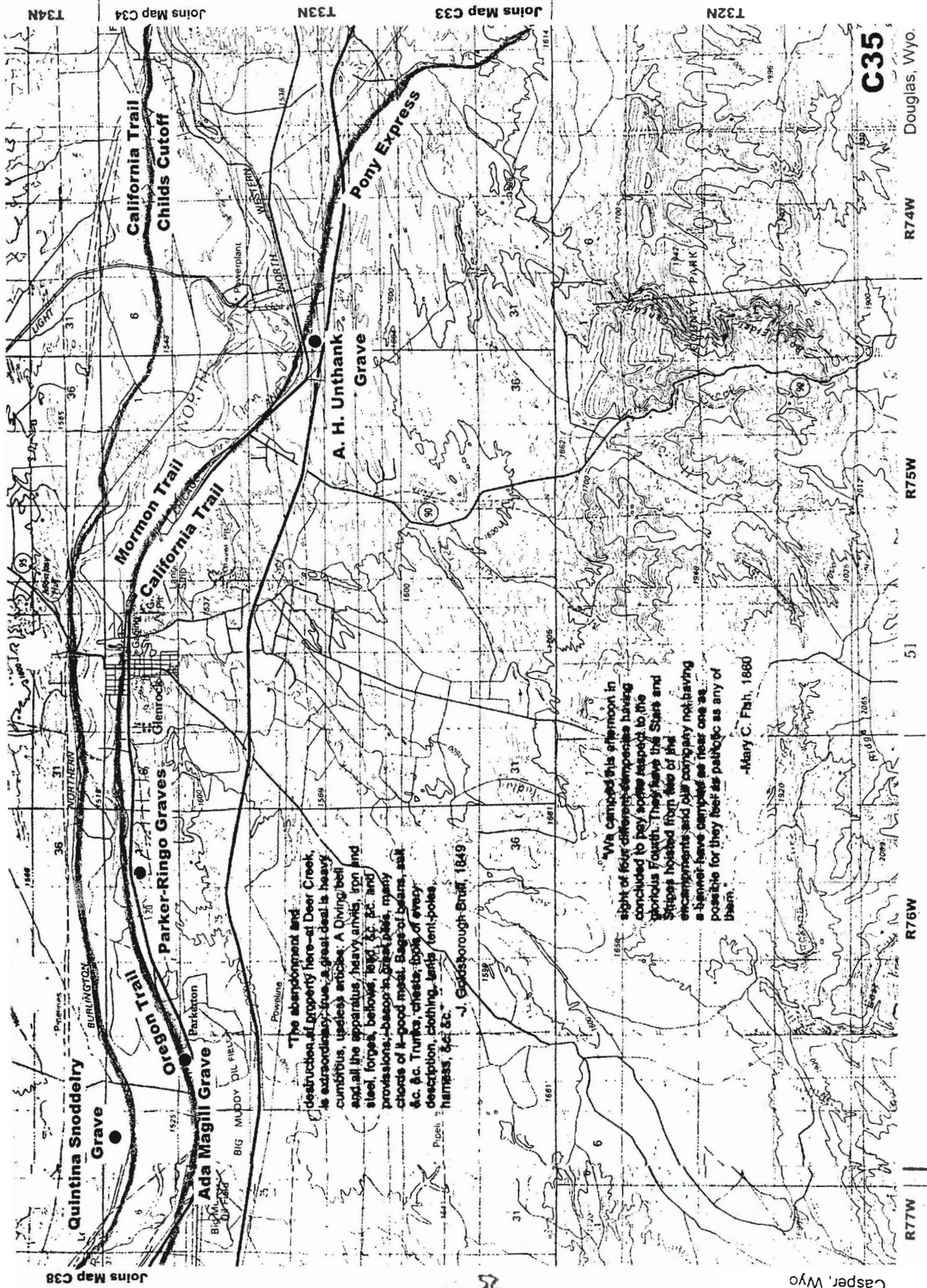
Atoka Ranch

"This evening we camped below  
what is called the lower ferry over the  
plate. The grass on this side of the river is  
very scarce & what there is is very dry.  
Some of the men belonging to our train  
swim their animals over the river as the  
grass on the south side is tolerable good."  
Mary C. Fish, 1860

"Over the quoniam grave, a  
board was nailed to a tree, on which was  
pencilled this inscription: "The fools are not  
all dead yet." "This was a cache, no doubt,  
formed to resemble a grave, which some  
cute chaps had opened & emptied."

- J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849





The abandonment and destruction of property here at Deer Creek, is extraordinary, true, a great deal is heavy, cumbersome, useless articles: A diving bell and all the apparatus, heavy arms, iron and steel, forges, bellows, tools, etc. etc. and provisions, basins, in great piles, many chords of it good meat. Bags of beans, salt etc. etc. Trunks, chests, boxes of every description, clothing, tents, tent-poles, harness, etc. etc.

J. Goldsborough Brail, 1849

"We camped this afternoon in sight of four different companies having concluded to pay some respect to the glorious Fourth. They have the Stars and Stripes hoisted from two of the encampments and our company not having a banner have carried as near one as possible for they feel as pathetic as any of them."

Mary C. Fish, 1880

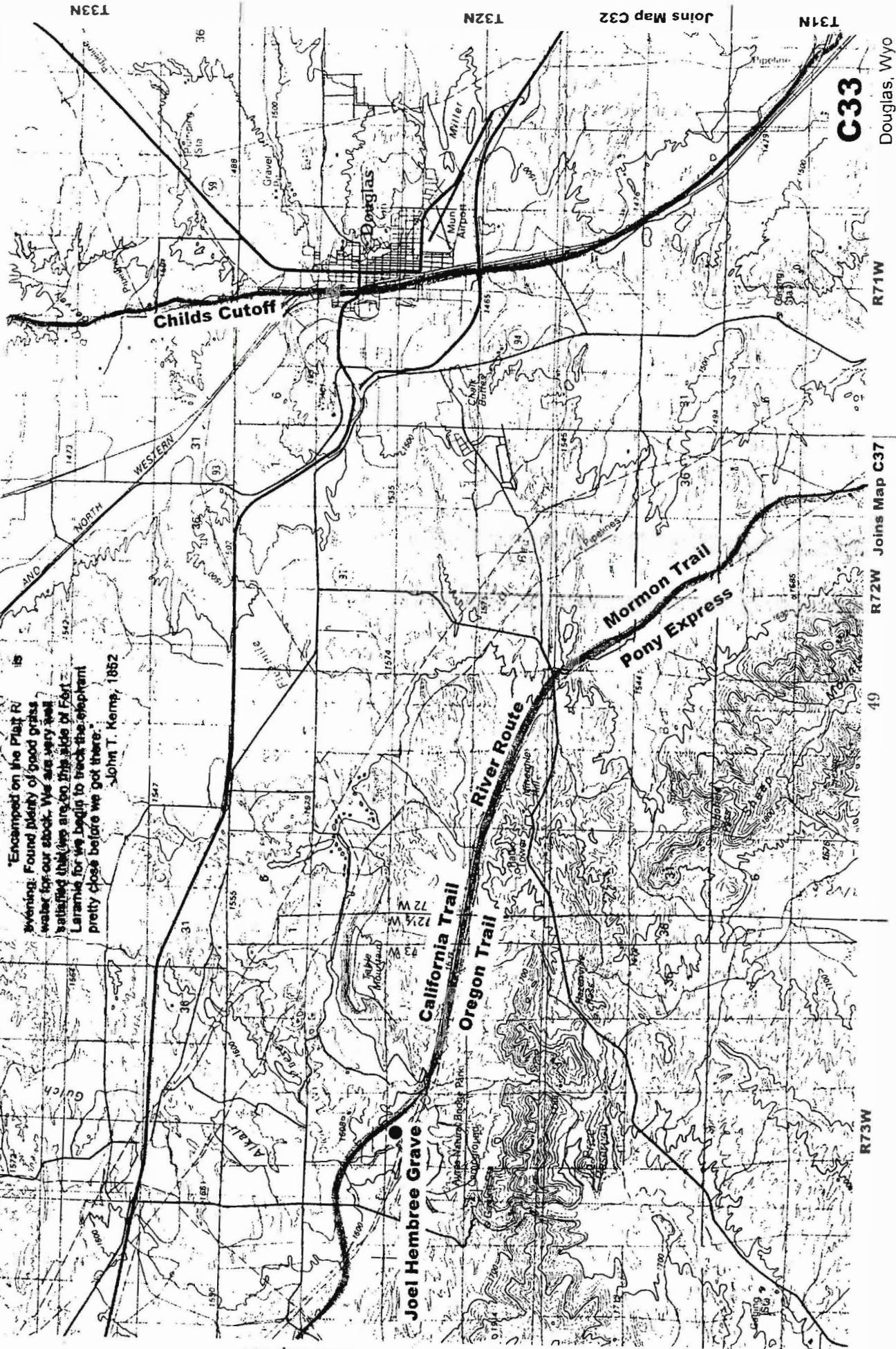






"Encamped on the Flat R is evening. Found plenty of good grass water for our stock. We are very well satisfied that we are on the side of Fort Laramie for we begin to track the elephant pretty close before we get there."

John T. Kerna, 1862



**C33**

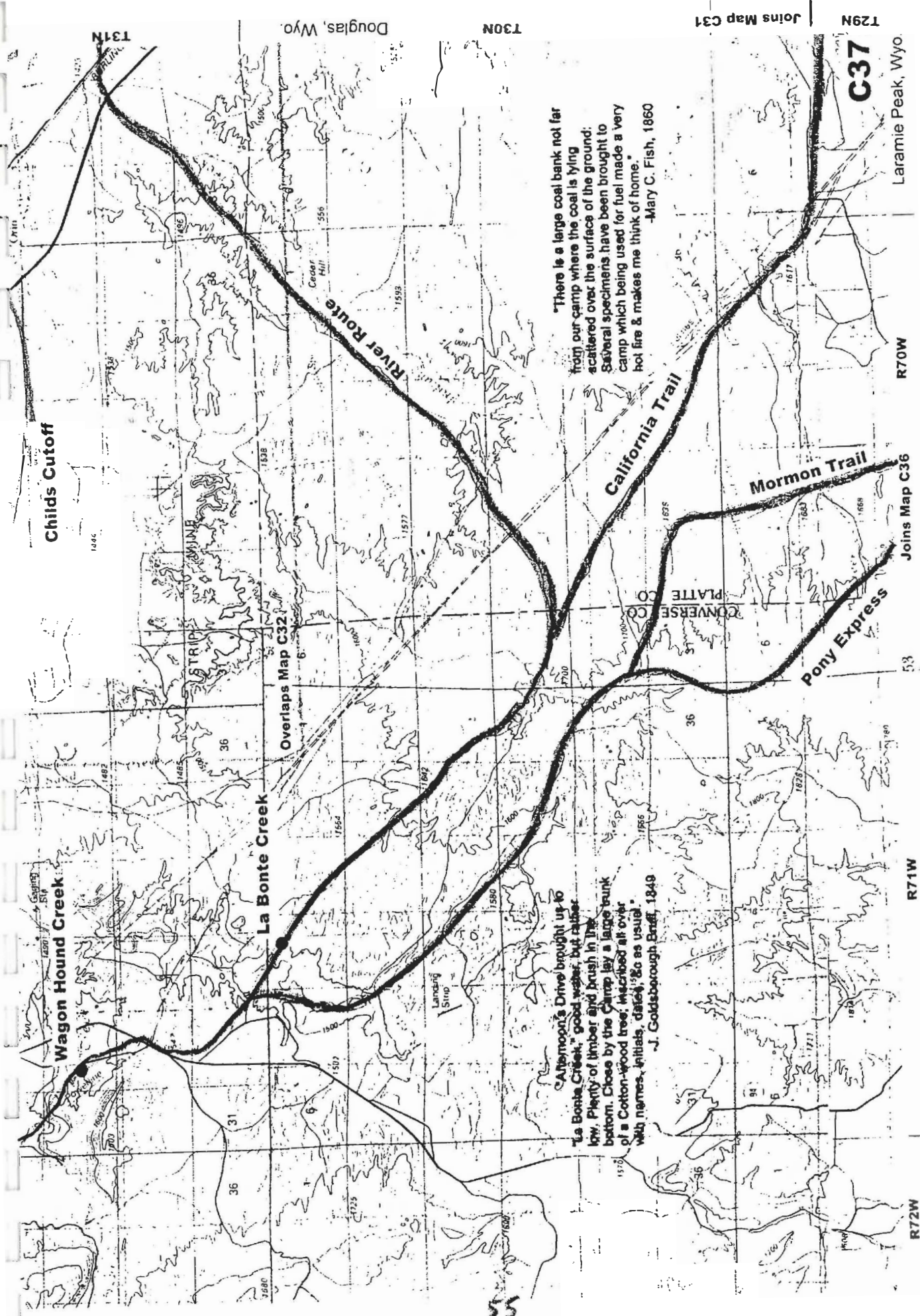
Douglas, Wyo

Joins Map C34

R72W Joins Map C37

R71W





Childs Cutoff

Wagon Hound Creek

La Bonte Creek

River Route

California Trail

Mormon Trail

Pony Express

Overlaps Map C32

Joins Map C31

C37

Laramie Peak, Wyo.

R70W

53

R71W

R72W

T30N

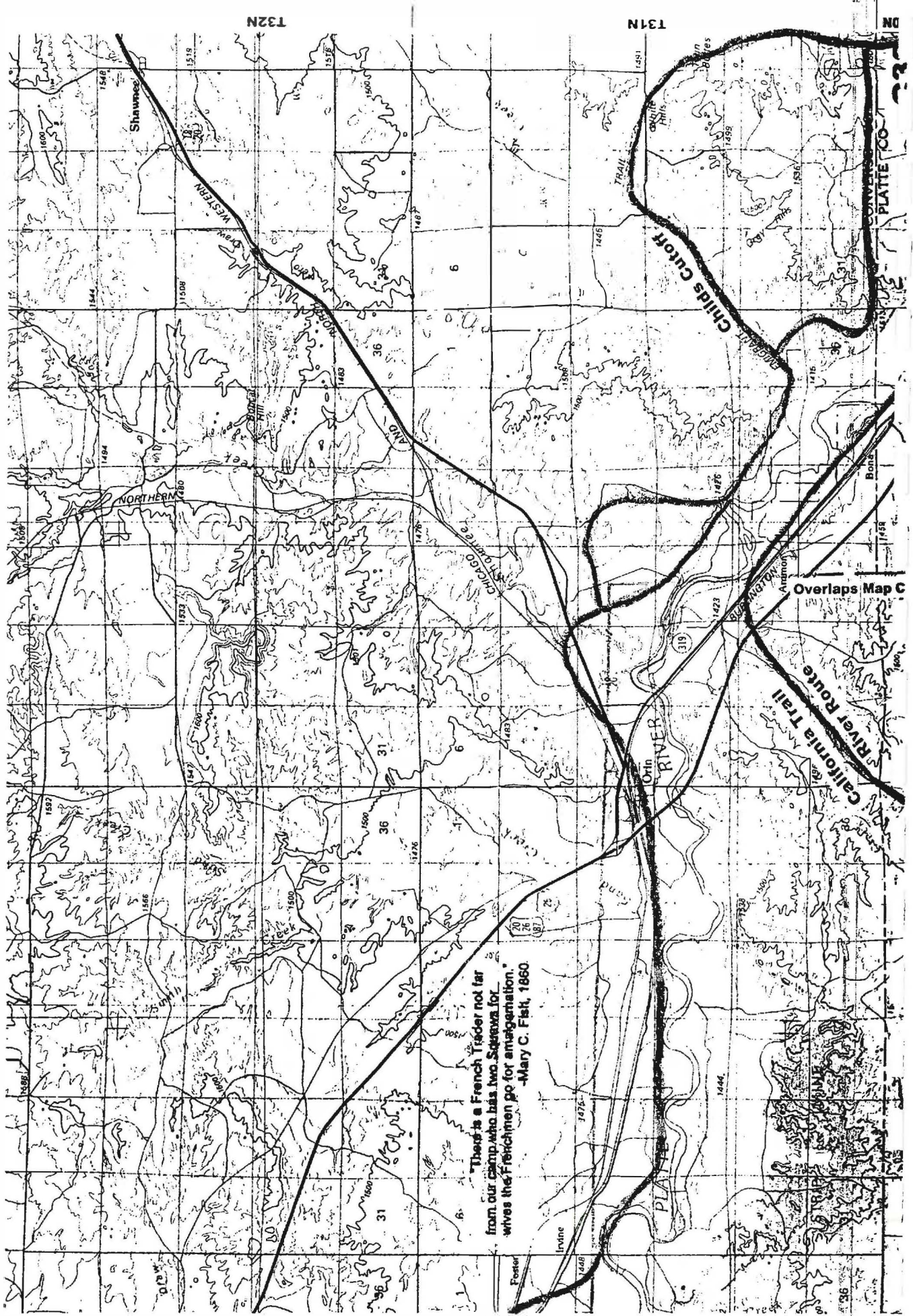
T29N

T31N

"There is a large coal bank not far from our camp where the coal is lying scattered over the surface of the ground: Several specimens have been brought to camp which being used for fuel made a very hot fire & makes me think of home."  
-Mary C. Fish, 1860

"Afternoon's Drive brought us to La Bonte Creek, good water, but rather low. Plenty of timber and brush in the bottom. Close by the Camp lay a large trunk of a Cotton-wood tree, described all over with names, initials, dates, &c as usual."  
-J. Goldsborough Briff, 1849





There is a French Trader not far  
from our camp who has two Squaw for  
wives the Frenchmen go for amalgamation.  
-Mary C. Fish, 1860

Joins Map C33