

NACHES PASS TRAIL MORE ACCT.

Robert S. More, "The Naches Pass Trail," in Robert Montgomery, History of the Puyallup.

No immigrant wagons had yet penetrated to the rich bottom lands of the Puget Sound basin as people had to come in by way of The Dalles and then penetrate north from the Cowlitz. When a party was formed to cut a trail across the Natchez Pass, I immediately joined it and on June 10, 1853, I was on my way with nineteen other men to execute the arduous undertaking.

ROSTER OF TRAILMAKERS

The party consisted of R.J. Allen, the foreman, Robert Patterson, two brothers named Louis, and a man named Smith of Olympia; James Meeks, John Mills and James Barron of Steilacoom; A.J. Burge, the packer, Ephraim Allen and Henry Allen Thomas Dickson, W.D. Van Buren, Edward Croft, Mr. Frazier, John Walker, James Boise, and myself. Only a few members of this party still survive.

We camped the first night at Henry Murray's ranch on Muck Creek and next where D.E. Louis' donation land claim is now situated. We then traveled down to where the N.P. Railroad bridge is now, and then on to where the old military road crossed the Puyallup river at Van Ogle's farm.

Next we went by the Kelly place at South Prairie and then on through Connell Prairie to where the road crosses the White River near the present town of Buckley. We commenced work at Boise Creek--named after a member of our party and first cut the way to John Montgomery's place.

PROVISIONS ARE EXHAUSTED

We were three and one half long hard months cutting the trail to the summit of the Natchez Pass. On reaching LeTete Mountain our provisions ran short and Burge, the packer, was dispatched back to procure some supplies we had cached in a hollow log east of Boise creek. He found the cache in a sorry condition, as bear had discovered it and scattered the beans and rice in all directions to get at the sugar and bacon which they devoured.

There was no other way out of the difficulty but to get supplies at Fort Steilacoom, so Burge turned his mules out on the White River Prairie, intending to pick them up in passing by on the way with two lame animals he had left in camp.

The mules strayed and Burge lost two days in recovering them, so that before he could make the round trip everyone one in our party had to draw up his belt several holes on account of hunger. Everything in the way of grub was gone and though we were becoming extremely weak for the want of it, it was harder to lie around and brood over our situation than to partially forget it by arduous labor. So we cut farther and father into the somber depths of the forest.

WERE WELL NIGH FAMISHED.

When Burge arrived we were well nigh famished, and did ample justice to the provisions you may be sure. Burge was a drool sort of fellow, and had a way of giving a touch of humor to the most commonplace incidents. That night he told us his experiences in hunting for his lost mules,

which was sufficiently interesting to restore us all to ourselves again. When Burge talked he always had an attentive audience.

ALL BADLY DEMORALIZED

At the time Burge returned we had been several days without other sustenance than the berries that grew in the brush. The farther we cut the road from the South the longer it took Burge to make the round trip to Steilacoom, so that there was nearly always a hungry interval between his departure and return.

When we reached a point about half way between the Greenwater river and the divide we again ran short of provisions, and were three days without anything to eat but berries. On the fourth day I managed to kill three little pine squirrels with my rifle, which with scrapings from our flour sack and a few cast-away bacon rinds, made our last meal preceding a resolution to return to Steilacoom if supplies were not brought to camp by next day at noon.

We were all badly demoralized. Lack of food, and unremitting hard labor, combined with the gloomy silence of the primeval forest, made us all feel abandoned. We lost hope. It seemed impossible to drag ourselves back to Steilacoom over the long, winding, weary way in our weak and starving condition.

FOOD ARRIVES IN TIME

At the appointed time we prepared to start, but just as we did so the welcome bray of Burge's lead mule, which had scented the camp, rang out clear and sonorous amid the first. Never did I hear sweeter music. We were soon gladdened by the sight of the pack train, and in a few minutes were regaled with a feast that tasted better than any banquet Lucullus or Vitellius ever enjoyed.

While working our way up from LaTete mountain to the summit, J.E. Williams, and O. Connell passed us on their way across the range. They had taken up claims on what is now called Connell Prairie and were going to the Yakima country to get horses for plowing their land.

Soon afterward the gang of men who had cut a trail on the east side of the range, under the supervision of A.W. More of Olympia passed us on their return home having completed their part of the road. As I never met any of the party since, except John J. Perkins and Mr. More, I cannot recall their names.

FIRST IMMIGRANTS CROSS

While working on the summit of the Natchez Pass on September 1, 1853, snow fell to the depth of a foot, but soon melted away. From the summit we returned to Boise creek and finished cutting the road to John Montgomery's ranch, along practically the same route as the highway traveled today.

About midnight on the 4th or 5th of October, while we were encamped on the Puyallup River, opposite the present Van Ogle place, we were somewhat startled to hear a genuine American "Hello!" from the other side. On answering, we were informed that a train of seventy wagons had just arrived across the pass and was waiting for dawn to ford the river.

Our informant told us that many other wagons were straggling along behind them. When we were further informed that they were out of grub we assisted them across the river, that they might share our scanty supplies.

The trials of the early settlers made them communistic to a great degree, and it seemed to be the inalienable right of those who had not to share with those who had. Were it not for this spirit of brotherly amity, the early immigrants would have fared vastly harder than they did. They knew they could depend upon one another, however, and thus managed to get along.

Our entire camp turned out and shook hands with the driver of the lead team--the first man who ever drove a wagon over the Natchez Trail. He was of James B. Byle's party. but all I can remember of him was that his name was Aiken.

Of the immigrants of 1853. I can only recall the following names: James B. Byle and his brother, George Byle; the Sargent family , now residing in Thurston County; Van Ogle, Henry Whitesell and family, John Carson and family. A Woolery, S. Woolery, W.N. Kincaid, Rev. George Whitworth, Abial Morrison, D. E. Lain, Widow Burr, I.H. Wright; Thomas Wright, Thomas Hadley and family; Byrd Wright, Holmes, William Mitchell, George Chad, John Fawcett, the John family, now of King County; Whitemore and Wooden, now of King county; Joseph Brannen, killed by Indians in November, 1855, E. Livingston, several families of Wards now residing in Thurston County; J. R. Meeker, James Bell, Sam Bell, E. A. Light and family, Boy Lain, E. Hadley, J. R. Dorning and family, Wilson Buess, and James Longmire.

At the dawning of day we moved camp further on dispatching Burge ahead with a load of potatoes stolen from an Indian garden patch. These potatoes, together with dog salmon made up our bill of fare until the trail was finished down the valley. Now, after the lapse of fifty-one years it is hard to convey to newcomers the almost insuperable difficulties of the task we accomplished.

We knew nothing of the country through which we had to go, and we had none of the convenient equipment mountaineering parties are provided with at the present day. It was grim, uncompromising hard work and privation, undertaken without pay or the hope of the ultimate reward.