



Official Publication of The Yellowstone Trail Association

A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound



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Code with the following purposes:

- 1) Public Education: to increase public knowledge of  
the Trail and its importance in both local and national  
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- 2) Historical Research: to acquire information and  
stories about the Trail and its historical context,
- 3) Historical Preservation: to promote the preserva-  
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- 5) Heritage Tourism: to promote heritage tourism  
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- 6) Related Events: to sponsor or support various  
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above purposes.

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Here is a fine idea for your holiday season plans: Give a copy of the great new book by John and Alice Ridge, *A Good Road From Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound* with a subtitle of *A Modern Guide to Driving the Historic Yellowstone Trail, 1912-1930*. If you let us know the recipient's name and email address, we will provide a year's free membership in the YT Association which includes receiving each issue of the *Arrow*. [As a matter of fact, the free year's membership applies to any new member buying the book! Just ask for it.]

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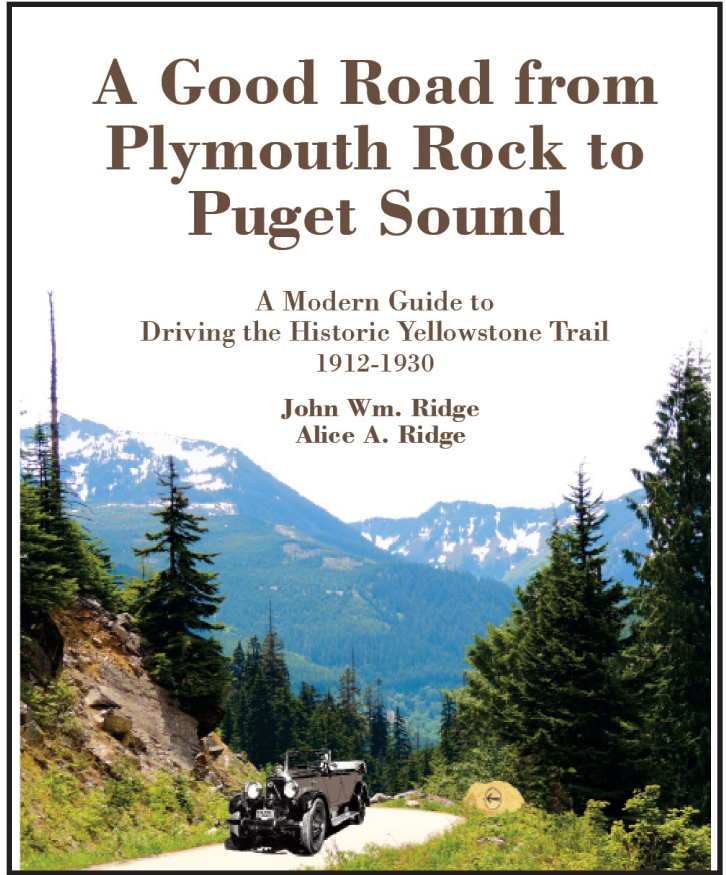
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Driving the Historic Yellowstone Trail  
1912-1930

John Wm. Ridge  
Alice A. Ridge

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# Driving the Yellowstone Trail in 2021

By  
Denny  
Gibson

The Yellowstone Trail went onto my “to drive” list near the start of the century, then just sat there for the longest time. Driving from edge to edge near the USA's widest point takes time and, even after I retired, sufficiently large clumps of open time were not all that common. Such a clump did eventually appear, however, and I got serious about plotting my route. But it was 2020 and a clump of time wasn't all that appeared. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Yellowstone Trail outing to be shelved along with several others.

Things are not yet entirely clear, and they certainly weren't in June of 2021, but they were better. Something that figured significantly in my decision to set out on the Trail at that time was the fact that I was vaccinated against COVID but not against cabin fever. On June 11, I left Plymouth Rock on a good road to Puget Sound.

To state the obvious, the Yellowstone Trail is an east-west route. Its end points are separated by less than six



degrees of latitude. I anticipated a steady climate along the route, and there is not the glacier-to-coral range of some north-south routes. But the temperature range was hardly as limited as I expected, due, in part, to an unusual heat wave in the northwest. I saw temperatures from the low 40s F to 115° F for an impressive range of 70 degrees or so.

I knew I would see terrain and foliage changes as I traveled. On southern routes to the west coast there is a nearly steady transition from green to brown. The YT's northern route deviates from this with a return to green at its western end. Variations in population density were pretty much as expected. Where the Yellowstone Trail really did surprise me was in the variety of road surfaces and degree of isolation. I'm probably not saying that quite right. The original routes of most named auto trails of any length now include both multi-lane

expressways and poorly maintained dirt roads, congested cities and lonely seldom-traveled stretches. I guess it wasn't really the variety of surfaces or the degree of isolation that surprised me but the amount of primitive roadway in remote areas that is still used by someone.

That description may sound really uninviting to some so I'll quickly point out that the more rugged sections are easily avoided. I was attempting to follow the earliest alignment shown in the Yellowstone Trail Association online maps. Later alignments presumably contain less unpaved roadway, plus, bypasses of questionable bits are always available. In addition, having decided it was the amount of remote primitive roads that surprised me and not their existence, I should note that a 3,700 mile route has a lot of room for a lot of everything.

There were definitely a lot of highlights in driving that 3,700 mile route, and I'm about to describe a few of them. Some of the things I thought most memorable won't mean much at all to others when they drive the YT. Instead, they will be deeply impressed by things that I missed or barely noted. That's part of the beauty of road trips. No two are alike.

I became rather excited when I came upon a reproduction Yellowstone Trail sign by the side of an Indiana two-lane. It was in Hamlet, a few miles west of Plymouth and I'm fairly certain that there were signs in the town itself that I just didn't see. Like other historic roads, signing the Yellowstone Trail is essentially a local function and varies wildly from area to area. Hamlet has a very active YT group and even has an annual festival. My excitement came from this being the first such sign I'd seen “in the wild” and an indicator that I would be traveling roads less and less familiar to me.

In Wisconsin, I stopped in to see YTA founders John and Alice Ridge. I had used the online maps they created for plotting my route and had been treated to a preview of a chapter of their forthcoming book. That excellent book, which has since been published, was in the final stages and the Ridges sent me on my way with the near final markups of the chapters on the states still in front of me. The real-world value of these was demonstrated the very next day when they led me to a true highlight of the trip and one I would have otherwise missed. In Hector, MN, Hill's Unique Gifts is a place that certainly deserves the word “unique” in its name. Teri, the owner, is rather unique herself and cheerfully shares stories about the store's history and (Need I say it?) unique inventory.



Lake vs. the Yellowstone Trail

Driving the route near Waubay, SD, made quite an impression on me. Water has been rising in the region and there are places where it is nearly even with the unpaved roadway. The sound of small waves lapping at the road was quite unusual, and I imagine could be rather unnerving in any sort of decent wind. It's impossible not to wonder what the future holds for this part of the Trail.

There was another spot in South Dakota that I had been looking forward to reaching. Ipswich, SD, is known as the home of the Yellowstone Trail by virtue of being the home of the founder of the original YTA, J.W. Parmley. My lack of any real schedule for the trip contributed to a minor disappointment in Ipswich. Parmley's former home is open for tours just one day a week. That day is Sunday; I was there on a Monday.

There are only about a hundred miles of Yellowstone Trail in North Dakota but it was here that the openness I associate with the west initially registered. It was fully established by the time I reached Montana. That makes perfect sense as Montana's eastern border is aligned with Wyoming's and I have felt like I had entered the west whenever I've crossed into Wyoming from Nebraska.

Montana contains more of the Yellowstone Trail than any another state. The path I followed was nearly 800 miles long. It's natural that it contains more unpaved YT than any other state and the longest single unpaved stretch on the entire Trail. There might be a little



Miles of gravel roads (but few dirt roads) are available on the Yellowstone Trail

pavement in Ismay or Mildred but those communities otherwise sit on a segment of dirt and gravel road about forty-five miles long. It is usually fairly close to the BNSF Railroad and often runs right beside it. This helps keep it from feeling even farther from civilization than it does.

Montana isn't all open space and dirt roads. I spent a night at the historic Olive Hotel in Miles City and while there walked down to the equally historic Montana Bar for a beer. In Livingston, I checked out the Murray Hotel but did not stay there. The official reason is that it was completely booked when I called a few days before but the place was basically out of my price range anyway.



The fine Olive Hotel Lobby

I got a kick out of crossing the Idaho state line in the middle of a clearing reachable by only a couple gravel roads and some hiking trails. I enjoyed the gravel roads in Washington's Blewett Pass much less. I set via points on both sides of the pass and let my routing software fill the space between them. It apparently never occurred to me that there was more than one path through the pass, and I had not compared details of the plotted path with the YTA maps. As a result, I spent most of my time in the pass, not on the paved Old Blewett Pass Highway but on some rather scary jeep trails. I'd call it a lesson learned but it was a lesson I'd already been taught and simply failed to apply.

I spent my last night on the Trail at the Summit Inn in Snoqualmie Pass, WA. In the morning, I followed the Trail to its terminus at Pioneer Park, Seattle, and snapped an "I made it" picture through the passenger side window. Then I parked and treated myself to some of Ivar's clam chowder while sitting beside Puget Sound some 3,500 crow miles from Plymouth Rock.

The trip was everything I'd hoped for. The variety of surroundings encountered when crossing this continent is astounding. Of course, just like every other road trip,



I can look back on this one and see things I missed. The two biggest are the southern route from Spokane through Yakima and the Old Blewett Pass Highway. I considered trying to cover both Washington state routes but in the end decided it would be too much, and I earlier confessed to my Blewett Pass goof. I mention these not because I am lamenting the past but because I am planning the future. ❁

Follow Denny Gibson's travel blog at [www.dennygibson.com/blog](http://www.dennygibson.com/blog)



The small park at the end.

## Murder on the Yellowstone Trail Coming to Owen, Wisconsin

by Travis Rogers, Jr.

No, you are not allowed to choose who gets murdered but somebody in town is definitely gonna get it.

On Friday and Saturday, January 14 and 15, 2022, Owen's Downtown Revitalization Committee and the Owen-Withee Area Chamber of Commerce will host Murder on the Yellowstone Trail, presented by Murders 4 Fun International and written/directed by Paul Warshauer.

Part of the fun will be a different plot line (and murder!) every night. Come both nights to see who bites the dust on the different nights.

It all begins each night with a social hour at 5 p.m. with Munson Bridge Wine featured at the Wine/Beer/Soda cash bar. The social will be followed by a delicious dinner at 6 p.m. The dinner will be buffet style with ham, beef tips, mashed potatoes, au gratin potatoes, corn, salad, dinner roll, a brownie Sundae, with coffee, milk, and water. The performance will follow the dinner, beginning at 7 p.m.



Murder in the Old School Gym

The event will be held, start to finish, at the Old School Gymnasium in Owen. Early bird tickets will be available for \$35 per person before January 1, 2022. Tickets are available in Owen at O-W Sports & Liquor, Red Daisy Girl, Owen City Hall and in Withee at IGYS Bar and Forward Bank. After January 1, tickets will go for \$40 per person. If you are not from the area and wish to purchase tickets, please contact Tim Swiggum at (715)613-1422 to make an arrangement. There will be a limit of 150 tickets per show and it is advisable to get them early.

About Murders 4 Fun International

For over 30 years, Murders 4 Fun has been performing live interactive murder mysteries. They are the only company in the world that writes and hosts original events that are made specifically for each client. The groups of professional, improv actors (or your local stars) have entertained thousands in 400-plus shows performed in all 50 states, Europe, and even on cruise ships. ❁



### Something Else is Going on in Owen

We have spoken before of the historic Woodland Hotel. It is 116 years old and was the historic focal point of Owen. In Yellowstone Trail days the hotel hosted lumber industry brokers and barons. And YT travelers. Mid-20th century saw famed buffet-style dinners

on Sunday nights which drew folks from 100 miles. Then it stood idle or partially idle. But not for long. Tim Swiggum of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, together with the owners and community support are gradually revitalizing this historic piece of downtown Owen. We join them in rising the cry, "The Woodland shall rise again" and we shall report its progress. And you can visit it when you attend the Murder on the Yellowstone Trail!



# The MULLAN CHRONICLES



Annually, since 1989, local and professional historians and some "just interested folks" have held a conference centered on the Mullan Military Road, parts of which became the Yellowstone Trail. A quarterly journal/newsletter, the *Mullan Chronicles*, was published from 1989 into 2007. The 2022 Mullan Conference will be held in Fort Benton, Montana. Two good sources to explore:  
[www.bonnermilltownhistory.org/the-mullan-road](http://www.bonnermilltownhistory.org/the-mullan-road)  
[www.bonnermilltownhistory.org/mullan-chronicles](http://www.bonnermilltownhistory.org/mullan-chronicles)



## Introduction to the following article: *A Severe Piece of Work*

The founders of the Yellowstone Trail had to find auto roads through the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains in far western Montana and Idaho. In 1914 there was no adequate auto road. But with the desire both for local travel and the impending transcontinental highway, sufficient improvements were made locally to claim a usable auto road through the mountains to meet the just developing Washington system of roads starting in the 1915 travel season.

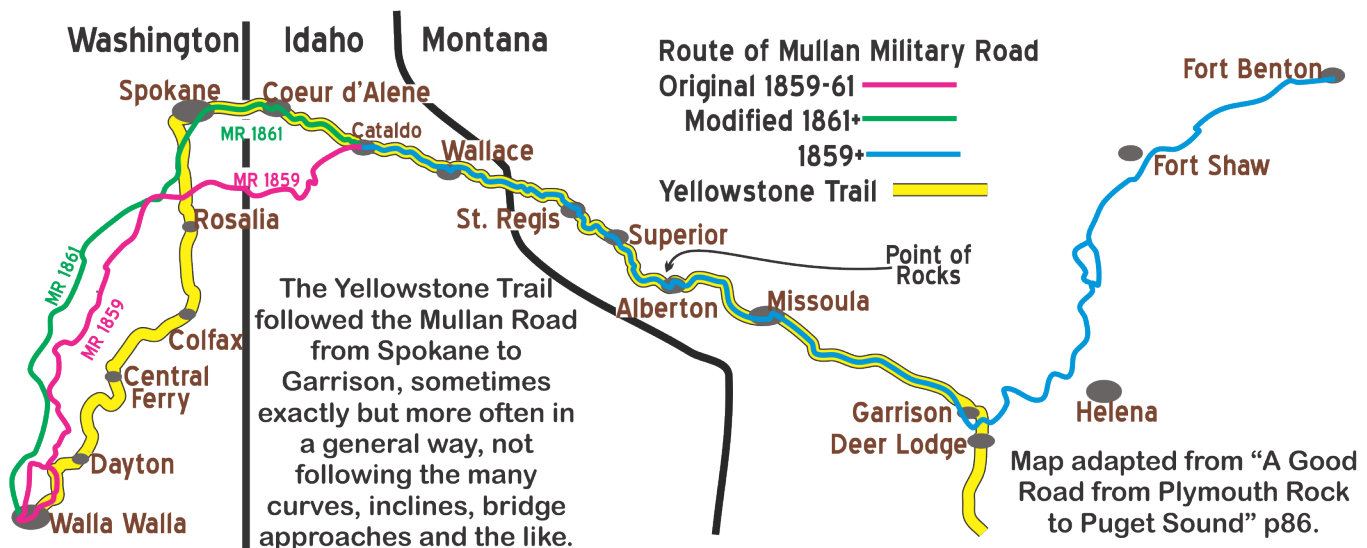
It followed part of the same route as the old Mullan Military Road.

Joel Overholser, author and former editor of *The River Press* in Fort Benton, wrote about the Mullan Military Road in one of his editorials in later-20th century:

The Mullan Road faded into historical oblivion, and indeed its somewhat visionary purpose was largely nullified with the opening of the first transcontinental railway in 1869. Yet hundreds of its 624 miles are today retraced by modern highways and railroads, so the route can be credited a pioneer forerunner, and one of the great historic trails of America ... a few traces and ruts even remain here and there.

In turn, the Yellowstone Trail section of the route was named US10 in 1926 and then in the 1960s and 1970s was re-designated in various sections as I-90

Today, Jon Axline, friend of the Yellowstone Trail and historian at the Montana Department of Transportation, reflects upon the relationship between that segment of the Mullan Road and the Yellowstone Trail in the following article, adapted for this *Arrow* from his recent book: *Montana Highway Tales: Curious Characters, Historic Sites and Peculiar Attractions*.





# A Severe Piece of Work: The Point of Rocks Segment of the Mullan Road

by Jon Axline

Many of Montana's territorial and early auto roads still exist if you know where to look for them. Traces of the Frenchwoman's toll road, the Bozeman Trail, Custer Battlefield Highway, and Yellowstone Trail can be easily seen and accessed by even the most amateur historic road enthusiast. The history of Montana's old roads has gained steadily in popularity and there are many Internet sites for those interested in learning more about the subject. One route with a Yellowstone Trail connection has devotees from all over the United States: the Mullan Road. Built from 1859 to 1860, the Mullan Road was the first engineered road in the Pacific Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains. It connected Walla Walla, Washington and Fort Benton on the upper Missouri River in Montana. Long segments of the road are easily accessible, including the Point of Rocks segment in Mineral County.

The idea of a wagon road between the head of navigation on the Missouri River and the Pacific Northwest had its genesis in the winter of 1853, when Isaac Stevens instructed Lieutenant John Mullan to seek "routes practicable for a . . . wagon road" across the northern Rocky Mountains. Stevens and Mullan were involved in surveying a northern route for a transcontinental railroad at the time. Congress eventually funded the construction of a 624-mile military wagon road from Walla Walla to Fort Benton and Mullan began work on it in July 1859. The 270-man road crew (including forty soldiers) made good time through the difficult terrain of northern Idaho and had completed a little less than half the road by the time winter shut the work down in the St. Regis Borgia Valley near present Henderson, Montana in December 1859.

Work resumed on the road in mid-March 1860. By late April 1860, the company had reached a mountain spur that extended down to the edge of the Clark Fork, making a road along the riverbank impossible. Called the Big Side Cut and Point of Rocks segments, Mullan detailed 150 men to work on the six-mile-long detour across the mountain side. Construction of the segments began in May 1860 and continued for the next six weeks. Because of the rocks along the planned route, the work crew was forced to use black powder to blast passages through some of the stone outcrops to maintain Mullan's alignment. It was slow going and the segments proved the most difficult to construct for the

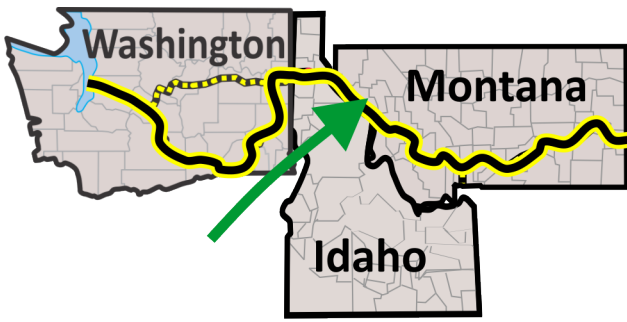
small work detail along the entire 624-mile length of the road. Although Mullan later claimed the rock cuts along this segment of the road were between fifteen to twenty feet wide, they, in fact, average from seven to fourteen feet in width. In 1862, Randall Hewitt reported that "not an inch more rock was removed than apparently necessary" and the cuts were so narrow that one could not walk next to a wagon passing through them.

Once the road builders had carved the road out of the mountainside, construction to Fort Benton progressed rapidly. On August 1st, 1860, the expedition arrived in Fort Benton, where they were met by a detachment from Captain William F. Raynold's expedition under the command of George Blake. Raynold detailed him to travel over the newly completed road to Walla Walla. Mullan organized a second work party to backtrack over the road in advance of the troops to repair damaged bridges and make improvements to the roadway. Blake's 292-man military contingent left the steamboat port four days later. With Mullan's men working in advance, the soldiers traversed the road to Walla Walla in fifty-seven days. The Blake Expedition proved the only instance where the military used the road for the purpose for which it was intended - to facilitate the movement of troops and supplies between the head of navigation on the Missouri River to the Pacific Northwest.

In 1906, Randall Hewitt, published *Across the Plains and Over the Divide*, an account of his journey on the Mullan Road west of Missoula, Montana. Like many travelers do today, Hewitt commented primarily on the bad sections of the road. He wrote of the Point of Rocks segment,

Soon after our march began this morning the trail passed through a strip of pine forest and over a smooth level road until the foot of the mountains was reached; then we entered the Bitter Root range in earnest, and the road led a very winding zig-zag course, rough, rocky and in places exceedingly steep. The spurs and peaks of the mountains were thrown up in the utmost confusion, and it seemed as though the trail avoided none of them.

The Point of Rocks proved to be an introduction to the more difficult Big Side Cut segment just to the west, which the party reached the following day. After



The green arrow indicates the Point of Rocks area.

an ordeal that took nearly a week, Randall concluded, echoing other traveler's sentiments, that when later asked the way across the mountains, he would answer "Take either road and before you are half way through you'll wish you had taken the other. It was hilly and rough; it was abominable ...."

After 1864, the segment west of Missoula was, according to historian Michael Malone, "no more than a pack trail." Because of the lack of bridges (all had washed out by the spring of 1861), fallen timber, rock falls, wagons couldn't travel this rugged section of the Mullan Road. It was, however, perfectly suitable for mule and occasional camel trains. The route's rough nature made it economically unattractive to freighters. The road's unsuitability for commercial transportation made it difficult for traders in Oregon to compete with the Utah companies in the territory. They had access to the mining camps in southwestern Montana over what must have seemed the late nineteenth century equivalent of an Interstate highway in comparison to the Mullan Road. By 1868, the western section's difficulty sealed its fate and it was only infrequently used by occasional pack trains. Instead, the travelers chose a much easier route that closely follows today's I-90 to St. Regis, then north along the St. Regis cut-off highway to Montana Highway 200, thence easterly to the Jocko Valley and then south to the Missoula valley. One of Montana's most widely-traveled nineteenth century sojourners, Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, reported many trips along this route, but never on the Mullan Road between Missoula and St. Regis.

General William Tecumseh Sherman inspected western Montana Territory shortly after the 1877 Nez Perce War. After touring Yellowstone National Park, Sherman endeavored to travel to Walla Walla over the Mullan Road. He felt that it was in the best interests of the United

States to develop a closer relationship between the people of Montana and the Pacific Northwest, particularly Oregon. Although he initially planned to negotiate the road on horseback with pack trains, Sherman decided instead to attempt the journey with wagons. He planned to prove that the road still had potential as a major freight, immigrant, and stagecoach route. Sherman was fully aware of the poor condition of the road west of Missoula. The locals were somewhat doubtful about his plans. Always the adventurer, Sherman looked forward to the next leg of his journey, boasting that the poor condition of the road west of Missoula would add "zest" to an already eventful journey.

In September 1877, Sherman, his Aide-de-Camp Colonel O. M. Poe and a military escort from the First Cavalry Regiment set out from Missoula for Walla Walla. The first miles on the road were relatively easy, but when they reached the Point of Rocks segment, the route became substantially more difficult. In a characteristic understatement, Sherman later reported that, with the exception of two heavy grades, the road was "plain, comparatively good, needing little repairs to make it practicable." Colonel Poe disagreed. He wrote that beginning at the Point of Rocks segment the road was "very bad" as it ascended up the side of the mountain, forcing the soldiers to double-team the wagons. The descent was even worse as they had to rope the wagons to trees adjacent to the road and lower them down the mountainside. After fifteen days of hard work, the expedition finally reached Walla Walla.

Despite the abysmal condition of the Mullan Road west of Missoula, Sherman and Poe were both convinced of the practicality of the road for light wagons. Eventually,





in 1879, Sherman convinced the War Department to allocate \$20,000 for the repair of the Mullan Road west of Missoula. Two military detachments worked east from Coeur d'Alene and one worked west from Fort Missoula. The soldiers cleared the road sufficiently so that "lightly laden vehicles could once more negotiate this portion of the old trail." Unfortunately, the repairs to the western section failed to reinvigorate it as a major transportation route and it quickly fell back into disrepair.

By 1890, the Point of Rocks segment was under the control of the county and functioned as a public thoroughfare and postal route for the next seventy-three years. For a time just before the First World War, it was a component of the coast-to-coast Yellowstone Trail.



The segment was bypassed in 1919 with the reconstruction of the highway on the opposite side of the Clark Fork River. Despite the relocation of the main route, the Point of Rocks segment continued to provide local access for residents living in the area for years afterwards.

In 1908, the Milwaukee Road realigned a 250-foot section of the Point of Rocks segment to avoid conflicts with the railroad's new main line. Engineers for the transcontinental railroad chose a route on the north side of the Clark Fork River just below the old Mullan Road. The proposed route, however, conflicted with the Mullan Road at the point of Rocks segment. To maintain it as a county road, railroad construction crews bypassed segments of the old road. Fortunately, the 1908 realignment ultimately preserved sections of the old road. Like the Mullan Road, the realignment included blasted rock cuts, dry-laid fieldstone retaining walls, and the average fourteen-foot width of the older route.

Mineral County abandoned the Point of Rocks road in 1963 when the construction of Interstate 90 terminated access to it.

The Point of Rocks segment of the Mullan is largely intact today. The narrow, winding, and rugged segment makes one wonder why Mullan ever thought it could be an important military wagon route over the Rocky Mountains. From the very beginning in 1860, the road from the Idaho border to the Missoula Valley was difficult to maintain and was only widely used during the 1869 Cedar Creek gold rush. There were better and easier ways to get to Montana than the Mullan Road west of Missoula. Although the most direct route to the settlements and mining camps in northern Idaho, the road was impossible to maintain and totally unsuited to anything but pack trains. Still, the Point of Rocks segment is part of a historically significant travel corridor that has its origins in prehistory. From one point on the trail, one can look out over what is, essentially, a cross-section of the transportation history of Montana and the Pacific Northwest over the past 150 years. At your feet lies the Mullan Road. In addition to the wagon road two transcontinental railroads, the Yellowstone Trail, old U.S. Highway 10 and Interstate 90 occupy the narrow river canyon. For old road buffs, you can't get much better than that. The Point of Rocks segment of the Mullan Road is an unimproved hiking trail that is open to the public. You can access it off the I-90 frontage road about two miles west of Alberton. Just follow the signs from West Mountain Creek Road through an old gravel pit to the trailhead. ❁

## Incident on the YT

The following tale appeared in the magazine *The Antique Motorcycle*, Summer 1999. The late author Allen W. Cooper, who wrote this article in the 1970s, was an ardent motorcyclist and wrote of his 1922 trip along the Yellowstone Trail as he saw it from his Harley. This slightly excerpted article appears with the permission of the magazine editor and Cooper's son, Robert, who wrote a warmly informative letter to us, indicating that his father lived to be 91 years of age, eventually trading his motorcycles in for a car which he drove until he was 90.

In the slump following the first World War, there was great unrest and much unemployment, and for those who had work, wages were low. One of my cousins had gone to Rosebud County, Montana, a few years previous, and he had asked me to come out and visit him; perhaps work could be found there.

Accordingly, in May of 1922, it was my lot to leave my home in Wisconsin and set out for the West astride my 61-inch Harley-Davidson, taking with me extra clothing and kit of tools.

The second night out found me staying at a small hotel in Glenham, South Dakota. After breakfast the next morning, half an hour's drive brought me to the ferry on the Missouri River at Mobridge.

There was no highway bridge there at the time and the ferry did not start trips until 8 o'clock. An hour's wait was in order until the ferry arrived from the far side. Toll for a car was \$1.00, a bike 50 cents.

The road traveled was the old Yellowstone Trail. None of it was paved; all was poorly marked. In many places, the only markings were smears of yellow paint on fence or telephone posts. The road west from Mobridge rises rapidly, winding up over the hills, there being a rise in elevation of over 500 feet in the 50-odd miles up to McIntosh, across an Indian Reservation. The day was perfect, sunny and warm, the smell of spring and the song of larks were in the air, all adding to the beauty of the swiftly changing scenery.

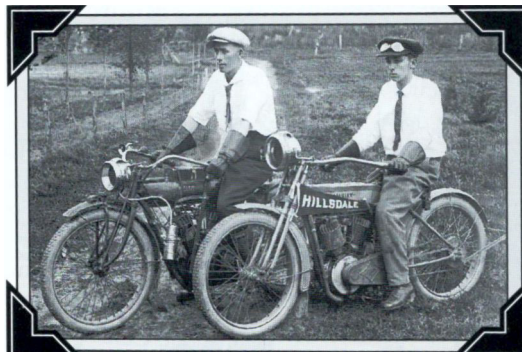
Who can imagine anything finer than being young footloose and fancy-free, heading out across the wide prairie in search of more to find, astride a powerful cycle, loaded with gas at 16 cents a gallon? The balmy days

of youth, how the tide of the years sweeps them away! There were, at that time, few habitations and fewer gas pumps in the stretch between the river and McIntosh. Miles out on this barren and deserted road a parked car showed up. Four men in work clothes flagged me down. Their old Chevrolet touring car bore Pennsylvania license plates. The men told me their car had quit on them suddenly "just like we had turned off the switch." They were coal miners who had been laid off in Pennsylvania, and they were on their way to Butte, Montana to try and find work in mines there. It was plain they were on a close budget and perhaps short rations, and feeling pretty low. None of them seemed to know anything about a car except to drive it. What with the prospect of a big towing or repair bill and another 500 miles to go, the crack of doom could not have depressed them much more. They wanted me to stop in the next town and have help sent back. By consulting a map, we found it would be a long way, even if help could come. Having had some experience with cars, I asked if they would mind my taking a look, on the outside chance the trouble might be found. They readily agreed. This car had a battery ignition system but no starter; it had to be "stemwound." They had a half tank of gas.

The lights would burn, so it looked to me like ignition failure. Tracing the ignition circuit, it developed that a wire had broken off from vibration, right next to the battery. A few minutes' work stripping off some insulation and clamping the bare wire under the cable clamp completed the circuit. One of the men gave the crank a flip and it started immediately, running good as ever. It has never been my fortune to see four happier fellows. All their immediate troubles had vanished almost as quickly as they had appeared. They insisted they owed me something, but my reply was perhaps they could pass on the favor to someone in trouble

and that I was happy to be of help, so then they wanted to share their lunch of cold cuts and buns, which I did accept. We wished each other "Good Luck," and with a wave, me and my trusty two wheeler left them in a cloud of dust, vanishing over the horizon.

Through more than half a century, I've often wished I could know what the future held for those poor jobless miners. Who would know? And who knows what the future holds for any of us? ❁



Allen Cooper (left) with his friend Carl Sands. Taken before his Montana adventure.



# Yellowstone Trail Alliance of Western Minnesota

The **Yellowstone Trail Alliance of Western Minnesota** is made up of volunteers of all the communities along the Yellowstone Trail in the western part of the state. The YTAWMN promotes its communities through the celebration, revitalization, and development of arts, culture, historic, and recreation assets. They use the Yellowstone Trail both as a brand and as a deep source of attracting history and event ideas.



We reported the good news about a \$53,686 grant to be awarded the Alliance in our last Arrow. The award comes from the Minnesota Historical Society's Cultural Heritage Partnership program. Since then they have taken step one: they have contracted with the Jim Roe Museum Planning Company of St. Paul, MN to help develop a master plan to guide their promotion efforts. Each individual community has assets to offer the tourist, but working together with an expert will provide a united approach to promotion, they believe. It appears that there is interest from communities beyond the current towns in the YTAWMN. The group expects to have a master plan in place next year. We will stay tuned!

People say that “It takes a village to raise a child.” We say that “It takes an interested group to accomplish significant goals.” In Minnesota it was an Alliance. In little Hamlet, Indiana, Hudson, Wisconsin, Hettinger, North Dakota, West Richland, Washington, it was groups accomplishing their Trail-related goals through volunteerism, donations, city/county help, and by joining with Chambers of Commerce. The YTAWMN looks to the future with their grant might well serve as a model for others in the Yellowstone Trail Association. How can you and your community help promote the Trail –and use the Yellowstone Trail to promote your community?

If you are not now receiving the printed version of the *Arrow* and you would like a printed booklet-style copy of this *Arrow* send \$5 to YT Publishers, 7000 S Shore Dr, Altoona, WI 54720. Mail check or use your credit card by paying through PayPal, directing it to [jridge@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:jridge@yellowstonetrail.org)

## Help the YTA without it costing you anything!

If you place any orders with Amazon, please help the Yellowstone Trail Association a bit by taking advantage of the AmazonSmile program. After you have signed up at Amazon, simply shop by going to AmazonSmile rather than to Amazon. Other than the name, it is the same place. Then the YTA gets a small donation from Amazon proportional to the amount you spend.

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To shop, go to “smile.amazon.com” rather than the usual “Amazon.com”

If you have problems, ask a teenager to help. That worked for me! ✨

The original Yellowstone Trail Association produced an unknown number of Trail-O-Grams, newsletters designed to keep its members informed about matters related to the Trail. For our younger readers, note that *telegrams* were a common means of fast, long-distance communication.

## Trail-O-Grams

**1. The power of the press** is demonstrated once again. The Appleton, Wisconsin, *Post Crescent* ran a nice little article about the Yellowstone Trail in their area which produced a gaggle of new and renewed members. We have member Amos Ihde to thank for marking the Trail near his property. That raised questions which caused reporter Duke Behnke to corral Amos for an interview. Good for you, Amos!

**2. The Trail enjoyed a bit of publicity** through a radio interview with the Ridges over a Neillsville, WI station. Simultaneously, the magazine, *Our Wisconsin*, featured the Trail in its fall issue. The Ridges served as consultant for the article and received a pecan pie for their services! The magazine is very "homesy," with recipes, warm memories, puzzles, and great pictures. That article netted a long phone call from a long-lost cousin! ⇨

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## YT Association Notes

Winter is settling in, the travel season is gone, the Association has a new membership management service, and it is quiet and calm in the YT Board members' offices, right? Yah, sure.

First, our long-standing Board treasurer, Sara Brish, resigned. Her office had to downsize because of the "Virus Problem" giving her way too much work to do. For the YTA, she had charge of recording all those members' dues payments and balancing the books as well as doing her bit for the Board of Directors; tasks now executed by the President John Ridge and Association Secretary Alice Ridge---as a side line.

Next, the new membership management service (from Club Express) is a mighty but extensive operation. We are learning our way to accruing its many advantages. And how to correct our mistakes. And how to retain the information from the old (1998?) program without conflicting with the new. And, frankly, it is a bit tough.

And then there is establishing the procedures for relating to the new Administrator for the Association-Kathy Cooper. We have kept her busy. Too bad we are but one of her responsibilities!

**3. Remember the Red Brick Road** of Redmond, WA? It is the last remaining bit of the original Trail paving in Washington. You can see about two minutes of a video of it by keying in Western Washington's Most Unusual Mile.

**4. We've lost another Trail friend.** Milton Klammer of Buffalo Lake, MN died September 17. He was 102 years old. We remember him fondly because we met him early in our Trail research, around 1996. His remembrances gave the Trail some "color and life" for us.

**5. An apology.** We called Denny Gibson, "Danny" in the last Arrow. Ride with him in this issue with his great travelogue on page three.

**6. Kay Strombo, active organizer/worker for the annual Mullan Road conferences,** reported that this fall's conference was great, with speakers being informative and interesting as always. Keith Peterson, author of *John Mullan, The Tumultuous Life of a Western Road Builder*, was a guest speaker. YT Association members are encouraged to attend the 2022 conference in Fort Benton, Montana.

**7. Curt Cunningham, a treasured member of the YTA,** has created an incredible collection of pictures and maps of the Yellowstone Trail (and the other routes that shared the same road) in the state of Washington. Find them at [www.sunset-hwy.com](http://www.sunset-hwy.com) ✨

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The Vice President, Sheila Nyberg, is often the deciding voice in Association matters and is active in "spreading the word" about the Trail. She is a vital cog in establishing the first of the new series of "Murder on the Yellowstone Trail" dinner-theaters.

**Notice:** Several years ago the distribution of the digital *Arrow* was expanded from members only to everyone on the extensive contact list. That expansion was done to attract new members. The Board has now decided that only members will be notified when new *Arrows* are available, making only the first two pages available to non-members. In essence, non-members will be invited to join.

Now, we rather urgently need your help to keep the Association on its present upward path! Think deeply about who you might nominate (maybe yourself) for a position within the Yellowstone Trail Association. Who might help as *Arrow* editor, producer, nag? Who has ideas about steering the Association into a great future as a Board member? Who is great with member communications and Facebook monitoring? How about enjoying the power of monitoring a Forum for members? Not to mention updating the web site! Email us at [jridge@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:jridge@yellowstonetrail.org)