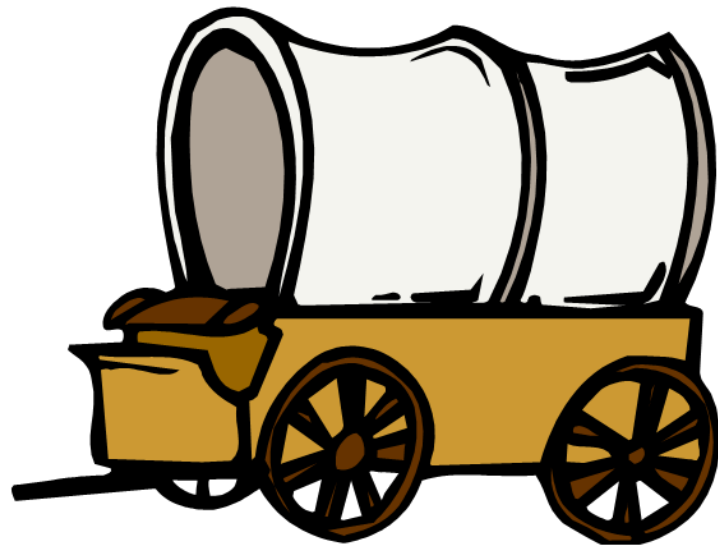


The Oregon Trail



Independence, Missouri to Oregon City, Oregon

Independence Landing, Missouri



Many pioneers arrived by boat at Independence Landing on the Missouri River and began gathering supplies for their journey in the town of Independence, Missouri.

Jim Bridger's Grave, Independence, Missouri



Famous mountain man, James “Jim” Bridger, or “Old Gabe” as some called him, was a great explorer and fur trapper of the west. He founded Ft. Bridger in southwestern Wyoming in 1843 to help pioneers on their journey. He could speak English, French, Spanish, and could track any trail. However, he could not read or write a word of any language.

Bridger had once been shot in the back with two Indian arrows. One arrow was removed years later by Dr. Marcus Whitman.

Kansas Parks



Many towns have put up artwork, statues, or historical markers to commemorate the pioneers' journey West.

Scott Spring, Kansas



Some wagon swales (ground depressions) were visible at this park beside Scott Spring.



Pioneer's Grave, Kansas



“Here lies an early traveler, N.G. Lust. His life in quest of riches in the west.”

Alcove Spring - Blue Rapids, Kansas



Alcove Spring has never dried up, even in the most severe Kansas droughts.

Alcove Spring - Blue Rapids, Kansas



A pioneer scratched "Alcove Spring" into a large rock. Other names and dates are seen on nearby rocks.

Sarah Keyes Grave - Alcove Spring, Kansas



This is the grave of Sarah Keyes, the first member of the Donner party to die along the journey in 1846. Most of her party later froze to death in the Sierra Mountains of California later that winter.

Rope Ferry replica, Kansas



Ft. Kearny, Nebraska



The interior of Ft. Kearny
(CAR-nee) and a replica
Blacksmith Shop and wagons.

Ft. Kearny, Nebraska



Ft. Kearny's "Powder Magazine" was built into a hill. Ammunition and weapons were stored here.



Sod House – near Ogallala, Nebraska



A signed warned visitors to close the wagon wheel gate or nearby cows could get in and rub on the sod house, knocking it down.



Windlass Hill, Nebraska



“I cannot say at what angle we descend, but it is so great that some go so far as to say, ‘the road hangs a little past the perpendicular.’”

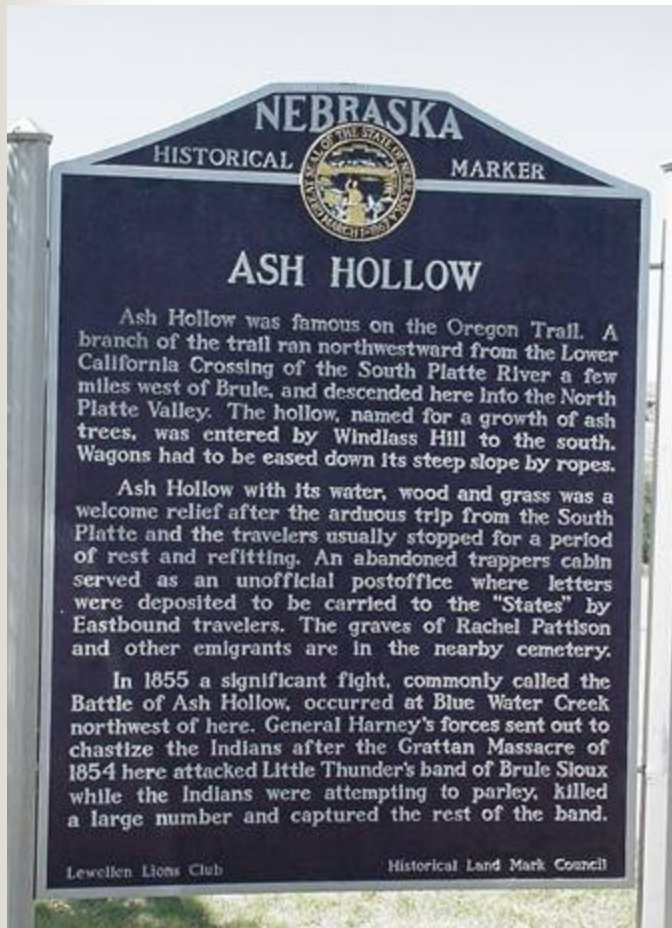
Here, covered wagon travelers faced the most difficult terrain since their departure from Missouri. One man said:



Oregon Trail Ruts on Windlass Hill



Ash Hollow, Nebraska



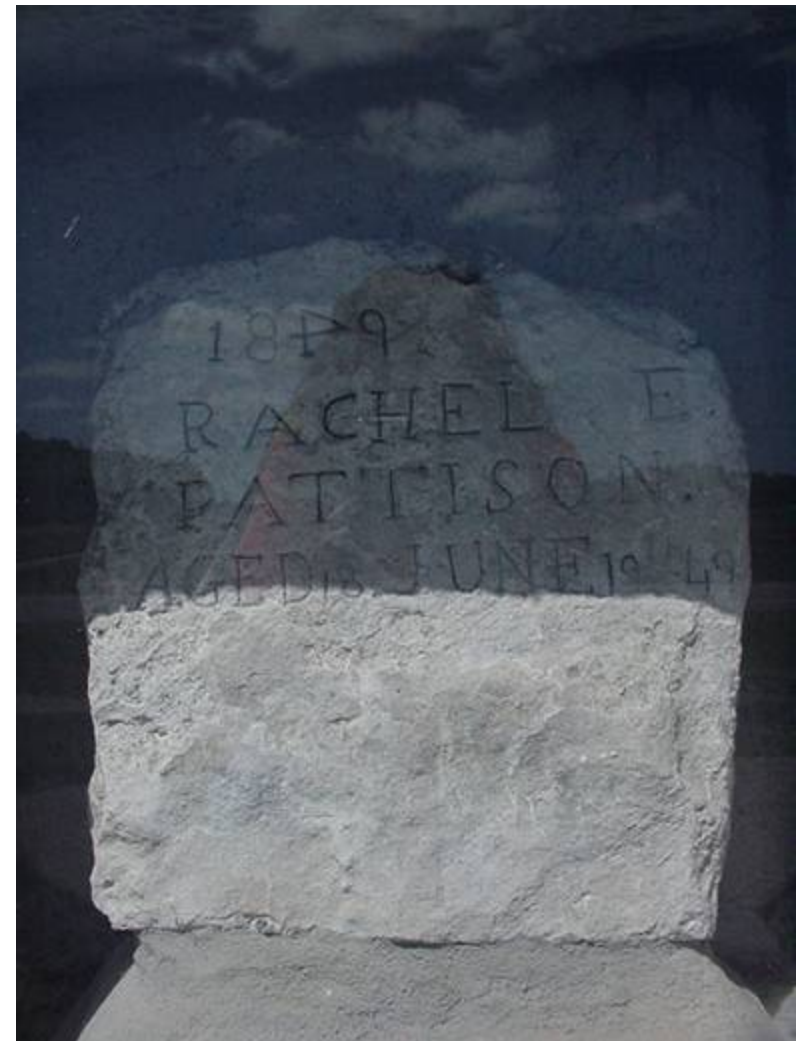
A nice resting spot for tired travelers after descending Windlass Hill.



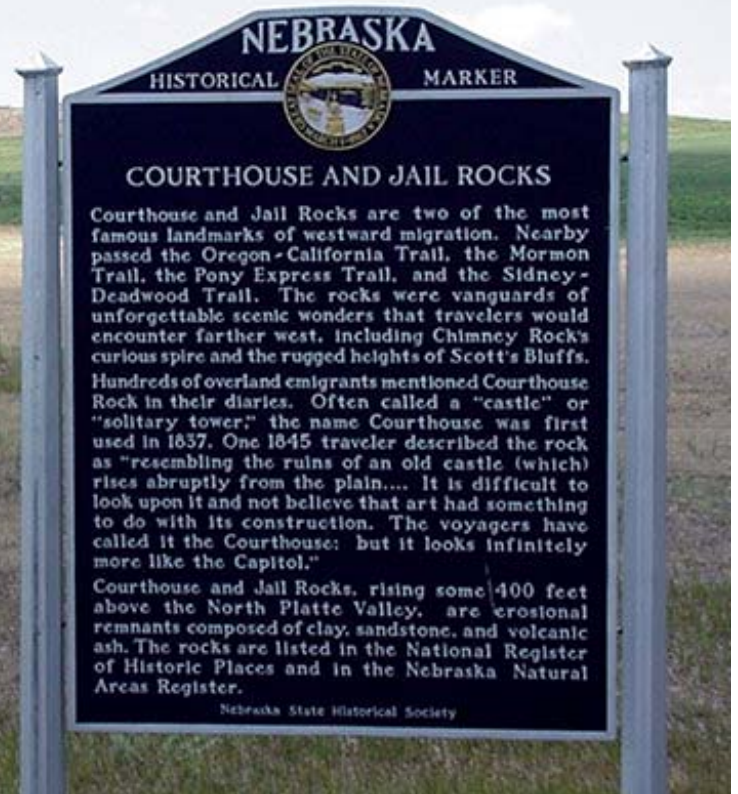
Pioneer Grave – Ash Hollow Cemetery



Nathan Pattison, 23, and Rachel Pattison, 18, had only been married 2 months when Nathan wrote in his journal, “Rachel taken sick in the morning, died in the night.” She died of cholera. Nathan never remarried and died at 67 years old.



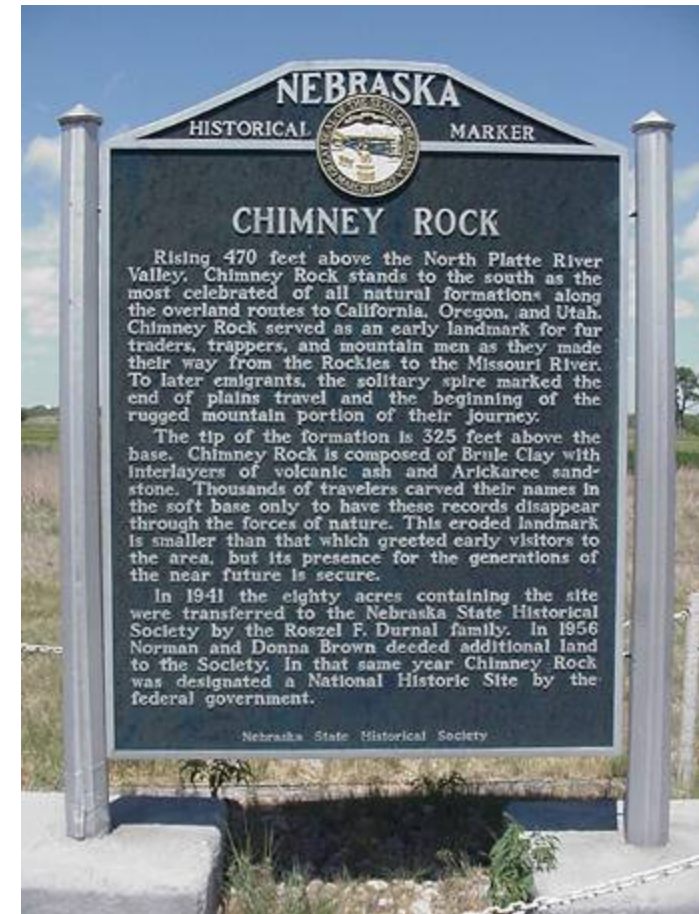
Courthouse and Jail Rocks, Nebraska



Chimney Rock, Nebraska



The chimney is eroding over time. Several feet were knocked off the top by lightning in 1995.



Scotts Bluff, Nebraska



Scotts Bluff, Nebraska

Views from the summit of
Scotts Bluff – named in
memory of Hiram Scott,
employee of the Rocky
Mountain Fur Company.



Scott was deserted by his
companions and left to die in
1828. His bleached bones were
found a year later. He had
crawled 60 miles before dying.

Fort Laramie, Wyoming



“Old Bedlam,” the oldest military building in Wyoming, was built in 1849 and later restored. It housed unmarried officers who were stationed at Fort Laramie to protect the emigrants.

These ruins are the cavalry quarters for the soldiers who patrolled by horseback. Fort Laramie began as a log fort in 1834, built by William Sublette. It then became a fur trading post in 1836 until the army took over in the 1840s.



Deep Rut Hill - Guernsey, Wyoming



These wagon ruts were formed when wagons followed single file through this area, wearing away the soft rock.



Register Cliff - Guernsey, Wyoming

Many pioneers carved their names on Register Cliff as they passed by.

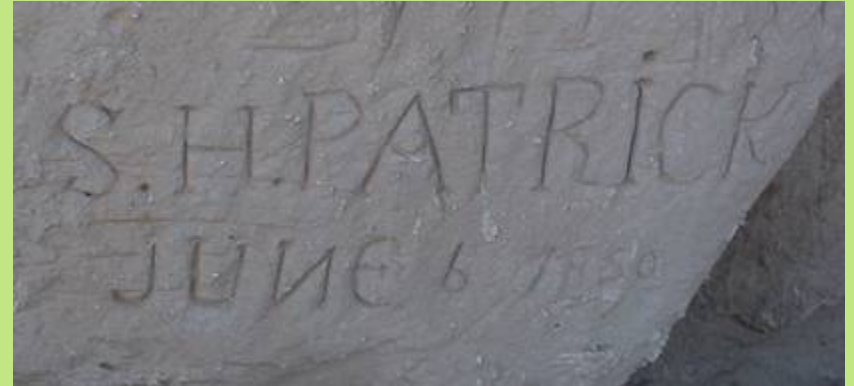


The swallows had built mud nests in the cracks of the cliff. There were many insects buzzing around for them to eat.

Signatures on Register Cliff



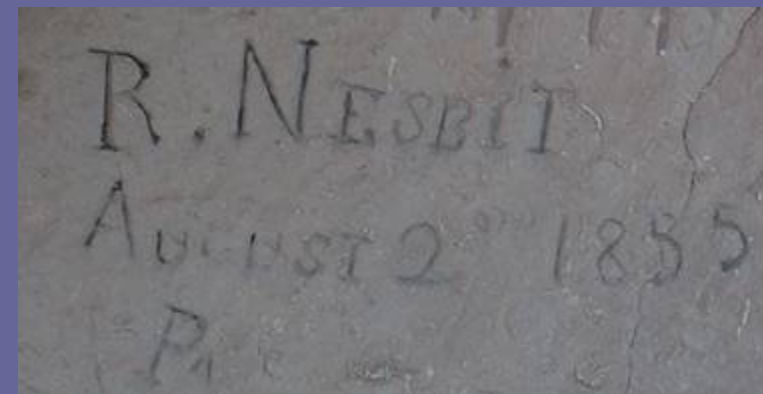
H. BOLES
1859



S. H. PATRICK
JUNE 6 1850

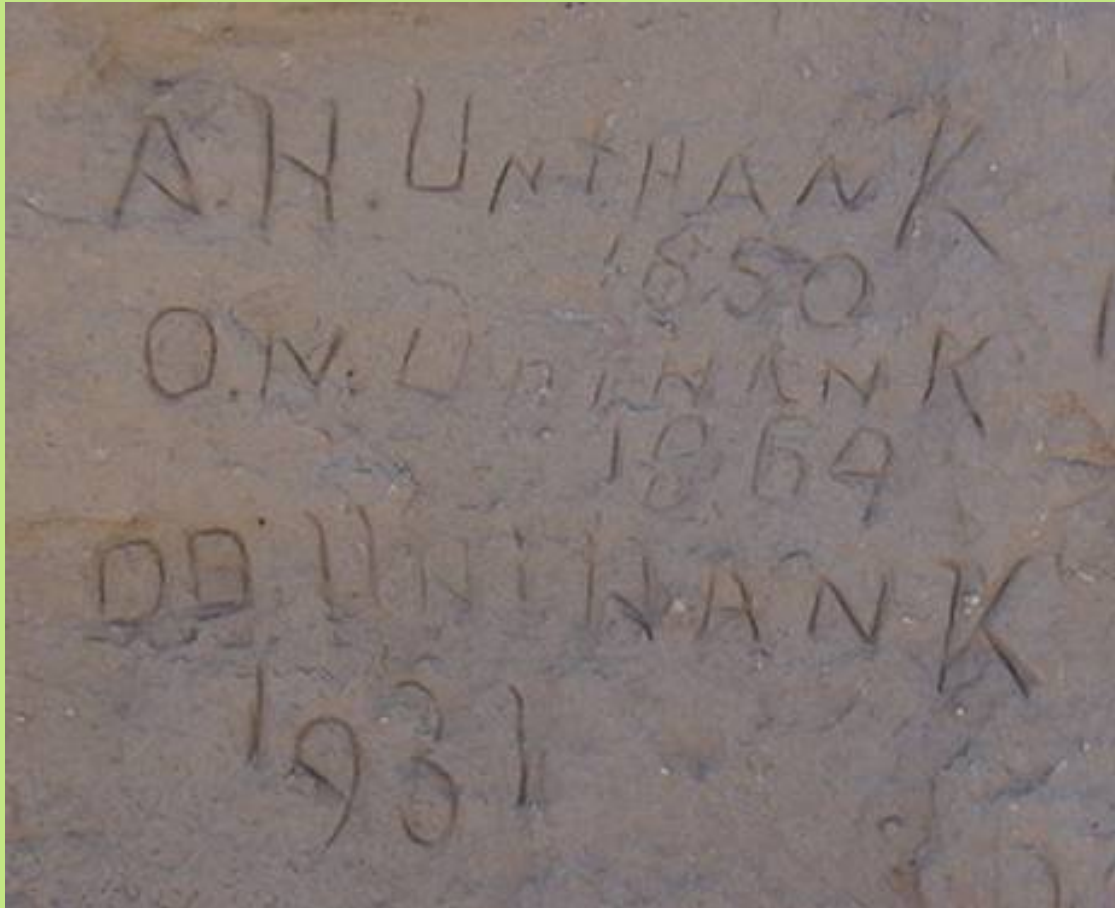


G. O. WILLARD
Boston 1855



R. NESBITT
AUGUST 2 1855

Signatures on Register Cliff

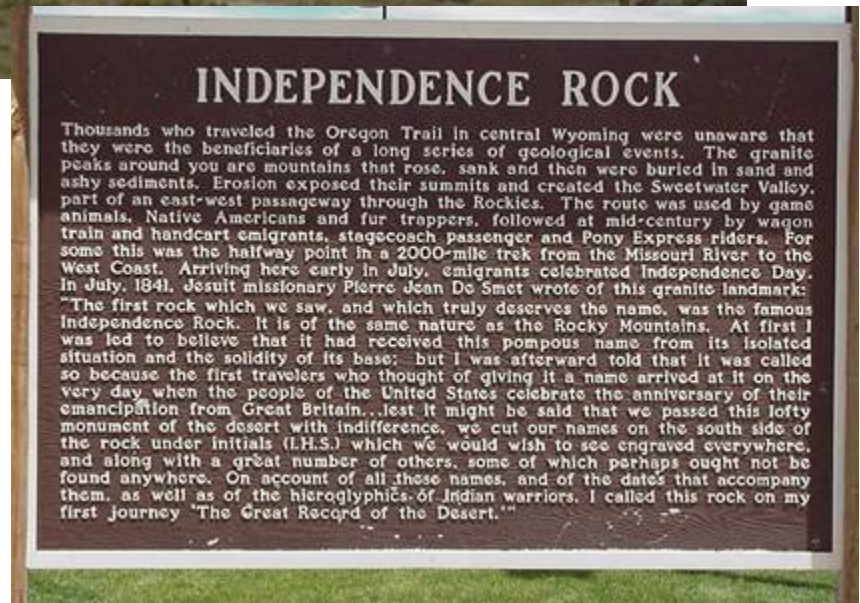


Three generations of the Unthank family passed by the cliff. A.H. Unthank is buried 50 miles down the trail where he died of cholera.

Independence Rock, Wyoming



Independence Rock was usually reached around the 4th of July. Emigrants would picnic, celebrate, and carve their names here. The rock takes up over 24 acres of land!



INDEPENDENCE ROCK

Thousands who traveled the Oregon Trail in central Wyoming were unaware that they were the beneficiaries of a long series of geological events. The granite peaks around you are mountains that rose, sank and then were buried in sand and ashy sediments. Erosion exposed their summits and created the Sweetwater Valley, part of an east-west passageway through the Rockies. The route was used by game animals, Native Americans and fur trappers, followed at mid-century by wagon train and handcart emigrants, stagecoach passenger and Pony Express riders. For some this was the halfway point in a 2000-mile trek from the Missouri River to the West Coast. Arriving here early in July, emigrants celebrated Independence Day. In July, 1841, Jesuit missionary Pierre Jean De Smet wrote of this granite landmark:

"The first rock which we saw, and which truly deserves the name, was the famous Independence Rock. It is of the same nature as the Rocky Mountains. At first I was led to believe that it had received this pompous name from its isolated situation and the solidity of its base; but I was afterward told that it was called so because the first travelers who thought of giving it a name arrived at it on the very day when the people of the United States celebrate the anniversary of their emancipation from Great Britain...lest it might be said that we passed this lofty monument of the desert with indifference, we cut our names on the south side of the rock under initials (I.H.S.) which we would wish to see engraved everywhere, and along with a great number of others, some of which perhaps ought not be found anywhere. On account of all these names, and of the dates that accompany them, as well as of the hieroglyphics of Indian warriors, I called this rock on my first journey 'The Great Record of the Desert.'"

Independence Rock, Wyoming

William Sublette
named
Independence
Rock on July 4,
1830.



Nicknamed “The
Register of the
Desert.”

Ezra Meeker traveled the Oregon Trail as a child, then returned as an adult to help save the trail. He carved and painted the words above, “Old Oregon Trail.”

Devil's Gate, Wyoming



The Sweetwater River cut this path through the rock at Devil's Gate.

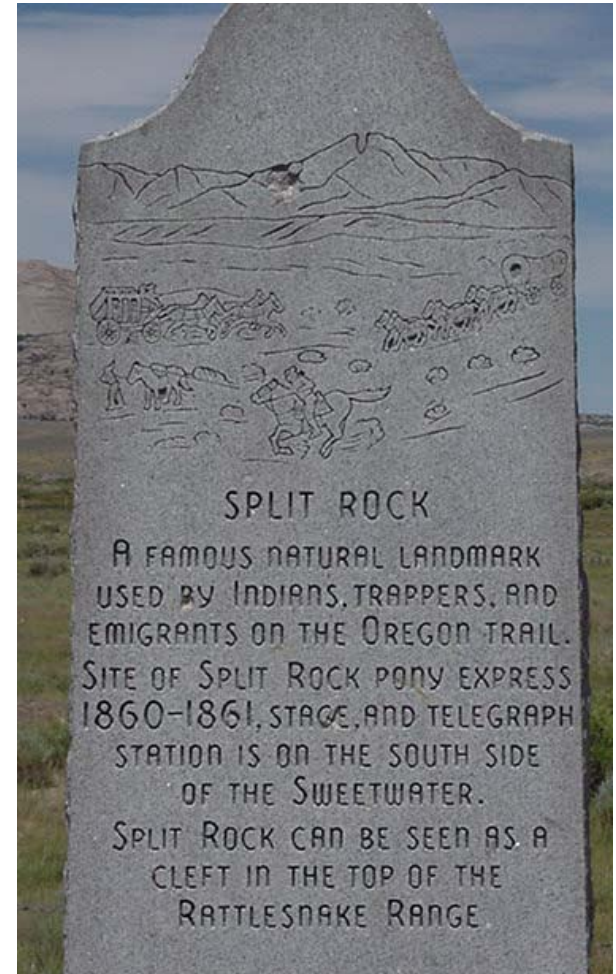
The “gate” is 400 feet wide at the top, but only 30 feet wide at the bottom.



Split Rock, Wyoming



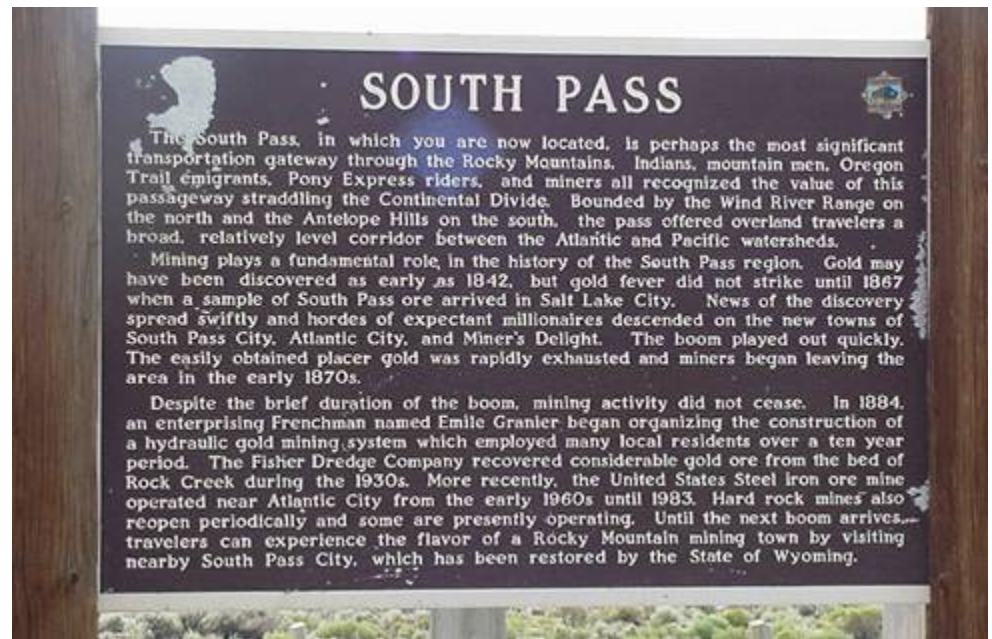
Split Rock is named for the notch at the top that resembles a gun sight.



The Continental Divide



This sign told about South Pass, where pioneers were able to easily cross the Continental Divide.



Many pronghorn antelope can be seen in Wyoming.

Parting of the Ways, Wyoming



This marker tells of the “Parting of the Ways,” where travelers chose to go to California or Oregon. Some say that those who could read, went right to Oregon. Those who could not, went left to California.



Fort Bridger, Wyoming



In 1843, mountain man Jim Bridger and Louis Vasquez established Fort Bridger in southwestern Wyoming. This model shows what it looked like back then. It had a small blacksmith shop and other supplies they sold at high prices.

Fort Bridger, Wyoming



This replica shows Fort Bridger today. Bridger sold it to the Mormons in 1858. The military took over the fort from 1858-1890.



Soda Springs, Idaho



Hooper Spring (left) and Octagon Spring (below) are two springs that bubble with naturally carbonated water from the ground. Pioneers enjoyed a tasty drink by sweetening it with sugar!



Fort Hall, Idaho



Ft. Hall along the Snake River was a welcome sight to many travelers.

Fort Hall, Idaho



Just outside Ft. Hall is a small zoo of animals. Pioneers would have seen wild buffalo, elk, and deer in that area during the time of the Oregon Trail journeys.

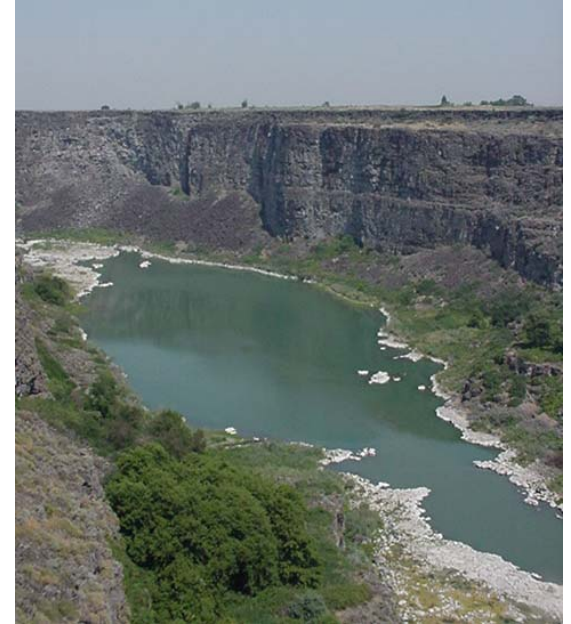


Massacre Rocks, Idaho



In 1862, a band of Shoshone Indians resisted the wagon train traffic through their territory and killed several pioneers. Future emigrants regarded this small canyon along the Snake River as their most dangerous exposure to Indians. They named it Massacre Rocks.

Register Rock, Idaho



Register Rock, near the Snake River canyon, was one more place for pioneers to carve their names into rocks.

Near Register Rock



When his wagon train passed by around 1866, 7 year old J.J. Hansen carved a preacher and an Indian on this rock. In Oregon, he became a sculptor when he grew up. Hansen returned in 1906 to sign and date his carving again.

Three Island Crossing

Glenns Ferry, Idaho



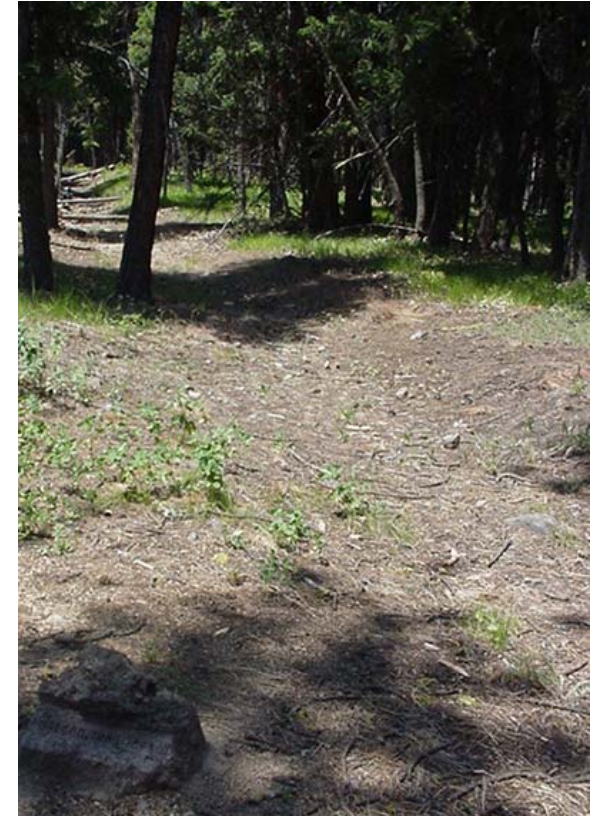
You can still see the wagon ruts where the pioneers came down to the Snake River to cross. Three small islands in the river provided a safer crossing. To stay on the south side of the river was a harder route for travelers.

Three Island Crossing



These oxen, horses, and wagon teams were practicing for a yearly reenactment of the pioneers fording the river at Three Island Crossing. Even today, river crossings can be dangerous.

Blue Mountain Crossing, Oregon



The wooded Blue Mountains were the last mountain crossing pioneers had to endure. You can still see a wagon swale (above right) from the Oregon Trail.

By Land or By Water?



Soon, pioneers had to make a choice. Continue overland and go around Mt. Hood on the difficult Barlow Road, or raft down the dangerous Columbia River with all of their belongings.

Barlow Road



About two out of three pioneer families trying to reach Oregon City chose to take the Barlow Road, even though they had to pay a toll to travel it.



The toll was \$5 per wagon and 10¢ per animal.

Laurel Hill

The most difficult part of the Barlow Road was descending Laurel Hill.



The tree stump in the center-right is probably what is left of a “snag” tree. Pioneers used to secure ropes to these trees like pulleys in order to lower the wagon down the hill slowly. This view only shows from the middle of the hill up to the top.

Rock Wall



This wall of rocks was made by emigrants after crossing the Salmon River. As they came out of the riverbed, they tossed the rocks aside so the path was clear for the oxen and wagon. These rocks gradually built up into a rock wall.

Graves of Barlow Road



Pioneer
Woman's
Grave



Baby
Morgan's
Grave



A grave
marked with
a wagon
tongue.



A small
pioneer
cemetery.

West Tollgate



This is a replica of the last tollgate along the Barlow Road. The tollgate keeper would live in a house by the gate and collect the tolls as the wagons came by.

Foster Farm

Near Oregon City



This lilac was brought to Oregon by Mrs. Foster when she and her husband sailed around Cape Horn to reach the northwest territory. The lilac has continued to grow since 1843.

Phillip Foster was the first provisional governor of Oregon. He was a partner of Sam Barlow and helped fund and build the Barlow Road.



Oregon City, Oregon



A plaque in stone marks the official End of the Oregon Trail at Abernethy Green in Oregon City. These large covered wagons are 3 learning centers you can visit.





The End



Maybe one day you, too, can
explore the Oregon Trail!