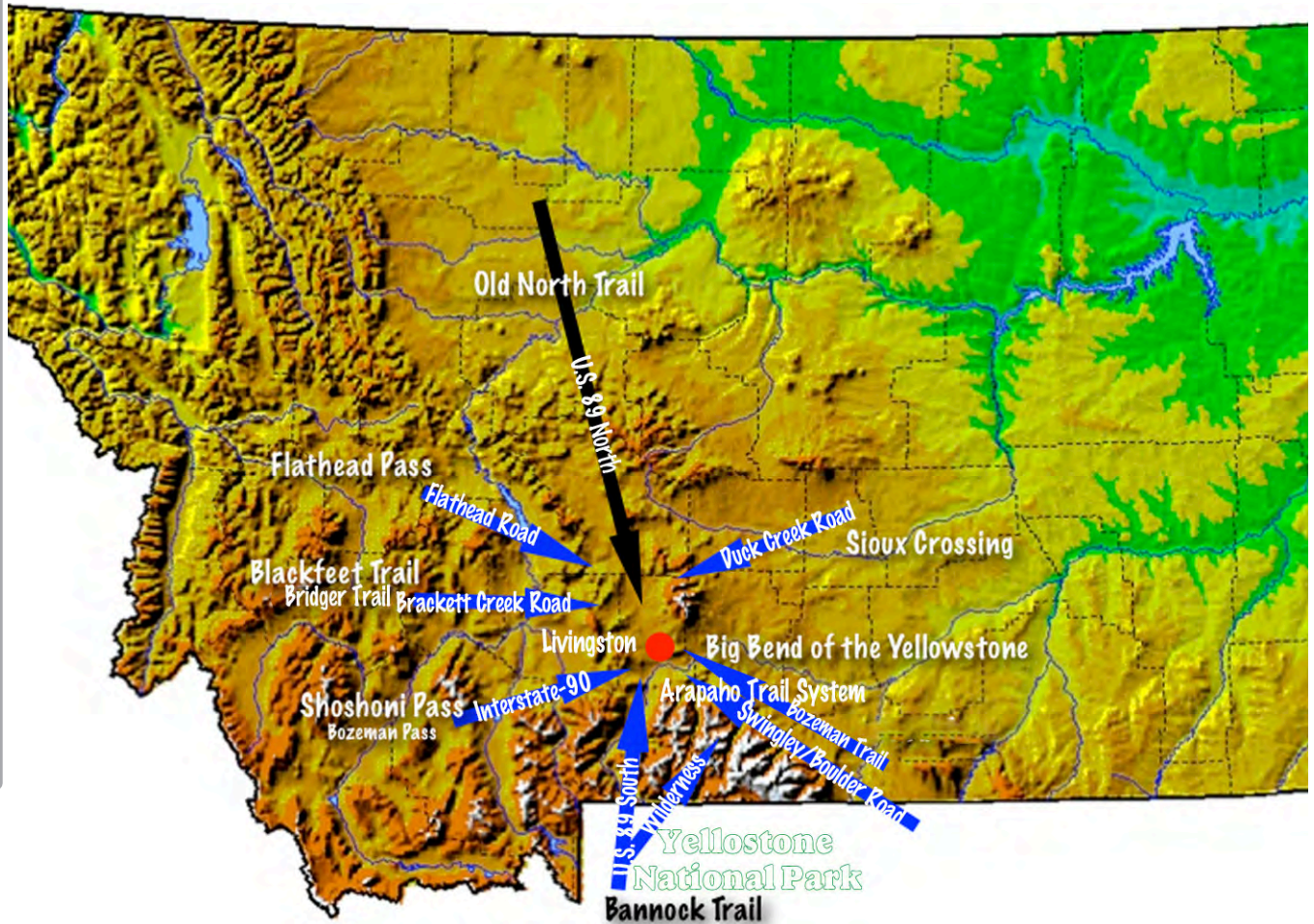


# Getting From Here to There In Park County, Montana

Trails, Roads, and By-ways



by

Jerry Brekke, Park County Historian

April 2014

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## Abstract

Based on historic literature, the purpose of this overview is to provide a context of travel corridors in and through Park County, Montana within a model of cultural, environmental and technological change over time. This discussion is prepared for Yellowstone Gateway Museum and is intended to conform with plans for a Park County, Montana transportation history exhibit being prepared by museum personnel.

## Introduction

A March 2014 assessment from the University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation reported that some 11 million travelers (about ten times the state's resident population) visited or passed through Montana in 2013 (Missoulain, March 16, 2014). More specifically, a 2013 research report identifying Montana's travel corridors indicates that Interstate 90 is, hands down, the most used route in the state, and based on state entry points, Livingston ranks consistently among the 41-100 percentile of communities visited — regardless of state point of entry (Oschell, 2013).

For those fond of numbers, there are additional recent statistics. Half of the some 1.6 million commercial airline travelers to the state in 2013 disembarked at Billings, Bozeman, or West Yellowstone (USDOT, Bureau of Travel Statistics, 2014). And, in 2013, nearly 320,000 vehicles carrying somewhat more than 812,000 passengers entered Yellowstone National Park traveling Park County, Montana highways (Yellowstone Park Specific Reports) — which doesn't account for northbound travelers *entering* Park County at Gardiner, Montana.

These data document impressive numbers which serve to quantify contemporary travel in Park County, Montana and, to some extent, discuss Point A to Point B destination patterns. But the numbers do very little to qualify the travel corridors themselves — their origin, their character, and their evolution to the highways, roads, rails and byways traveled today.

## Culture, Environment, and Technology

*“If you want to know the history of a place, follow the roads.”* — Warren McGee, 1995

The creation, and more so the development, of Park County, Montana travel corridors is best discussed within the interrelated model of culture, environment and technology. Cultural evidence in our area dates to North America's earliest, pedestrian hunters and gatherers. Driven by technology and environment, cultures underwent dramatic change — especially in the past 270 years. Rapid life-style and economic adaptation is mirrored in the introduction on the Northern Plains of the horse, wheeled vehicles, railroads, automobiles, construction equipment and aircraft.

Environment is perhaps the most physical limiting and consistent influence on the region's travel corridors. Mountain ranges and the river valleys associated with them can be viewed as travel obstacles, but should mostly be considered in terms of natural resource, sustenance, and development. The locations of food, watersheds, quarries, fuels, precious minerals, and tillable soil became destination points. How one got to them in the most expedient and repeatable manner became time-tested travel corridors.

## Park County, Montana Trails

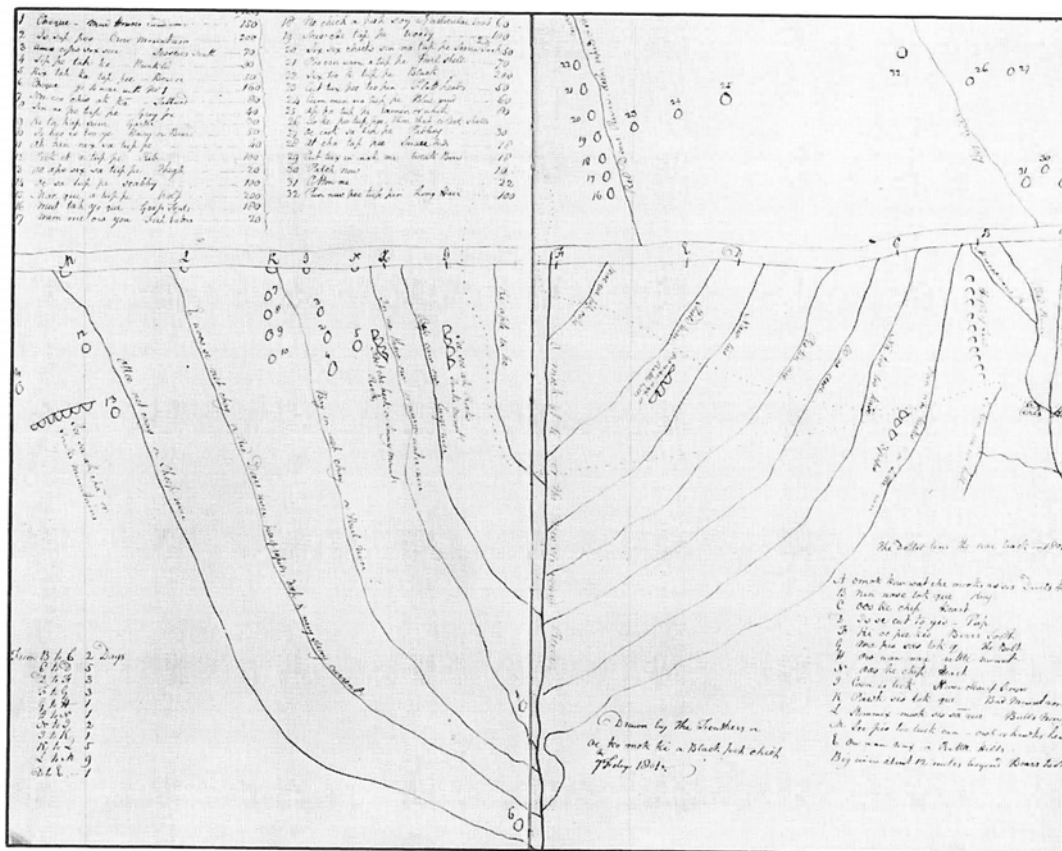
*“we collected our horses and after an early brackft at 8 A M Set out and proceeded up the branch to the head thence over a low gap in the mountain thence across the heads of the N E. branch of the fork of Gallitins river which we Camped near last night passing over a low dividing ridge to*

*the head of a water Course which runs into the Rochejhone, prosueing an old buffalow road which enlargenes by one which joins it from the most Easterly branch of the Gallatin River East fork of Galetins R. proceeding down the branch a little to the N. of East keeping on the North Side of the branch to the River rochejhone at which place I arrived at 2 P M.” — Journal of Capt. William Clark, July 15, 1806 (Moulton, v.8, 1993)*

People have been traveling from here to there in what is now Park County, Montana for at least 11,000 years before present. For the greater amount of that time, the mode of travel was pedestrian. It has been only in the past 270 years, with the arrival of the horse on the Northern Plains, that travel technology dramatically changed. Until the beginning of the 19th century, all but those who lived here were destitute of geographical knowledge of the area.

A map drawn in the snow by Siska Blackfeet leader Ac ko mok ki (Old Swan) in 1801 provided a native spatial perspective of area unknown by Hudson Bay Company cartographer Peter Fidler; which was translated and published by Aaron Arrowsmith and carried by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1803. But so little was known at the time that:

*“As conceived by the historical geographer John Logan Allen, the general American view of ‘the trans-Missouri region on the eve of Lewis’s and Clark’s trek could best be described as a basin, surrounded by ridges of better knowledge and grading into a vast, flat surface of pure conjecture, broken here and there by a peak of better understanding.” (Library of Congress: 2007)*

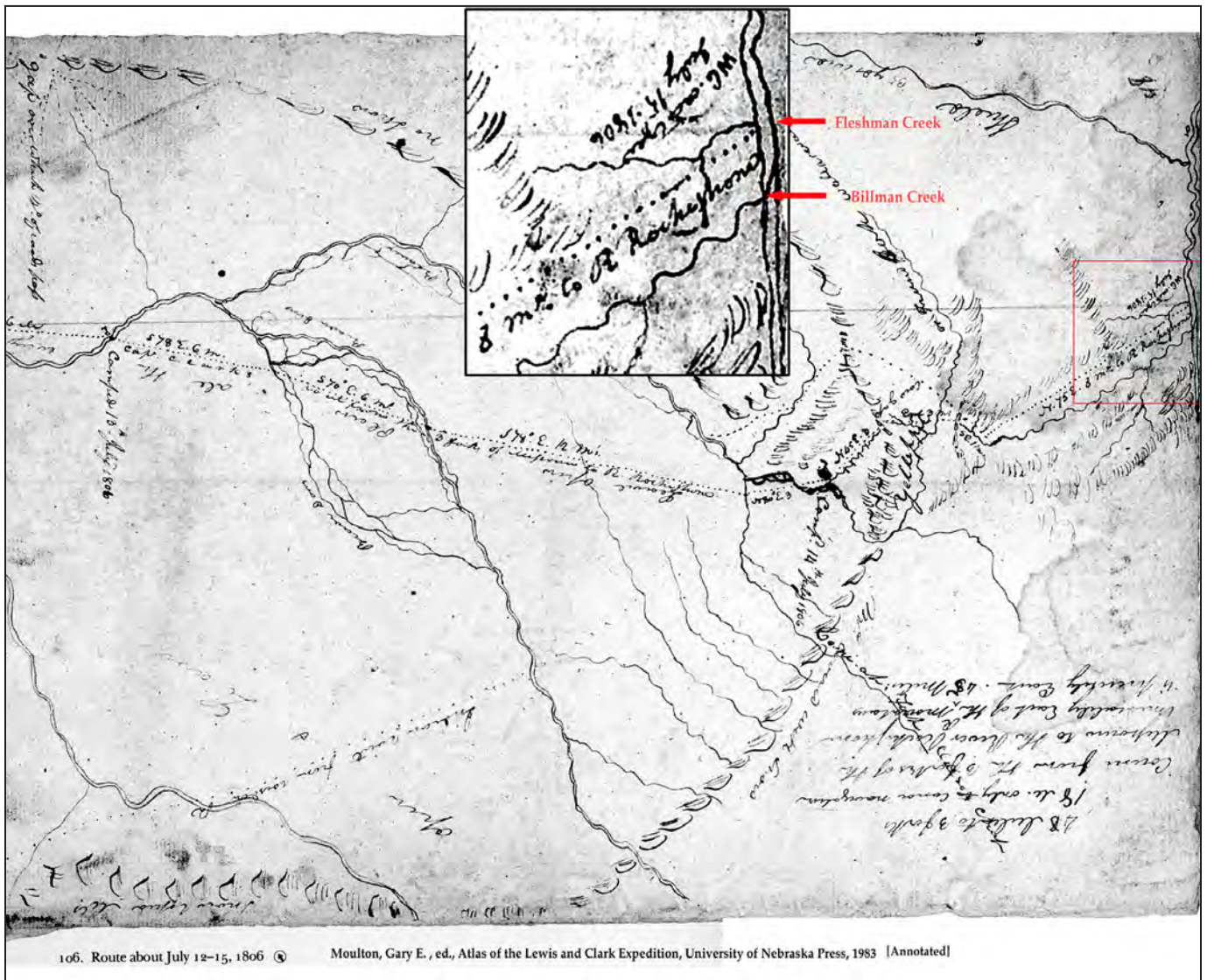


Ac ko mok ki map, 1801. HBCA, PAM: E.3/2 fos. 106d-107. Courtesy: HBCA, PAM, 4365.(Beattie:1985:169)

**Figure 1** Ac ko mok ki’s (Old Swan) spatial perspective of the Upper Missouri, 1801. West is at the top of the map, the horizontal double line represents the Rocky Mountains and the vertical double line, the Missouri River. Seventeen rivers flow east and two rivers, west. The map represents an area of about 200,000 square miles.

Written history of the Upper Yellowstone River area began on Tuesday, July 15, 1806 with the arrival of Captain William Clark and a contingent of the Corps of Discovery. In terms of homeland use of the area, however, Clark’s “pathfinders” were late-comers. By 1806, the general area was both common and contested ground as a part of the cultural diaspora created by European technology and trade systems and related settlements — the British and French to the north, the Spanish to the south, and the Americans in the middle, along with the various native groups, including the commingled Indian/European/African Métis.

Clark arrived at a point where the Yellowstone River, flowing north from its headwaters in today’s Yellowstone National Park, emitted from a narrow valley confined by the Absaroka and Gallatin mountain ranges and turned east along the southern flanks of the Crazy Mountains — a place that became known as the Big Bend (or Great Bend) of the Yellowstone River and a place where ancient trails came together.



**Figure 2 Annotated map of Capt. William Clark’s route about July 12-15, 1806 depicting the Corps of Discovery arrival at the Yellowstone River trail nexus in present-day Livingston, Montana. (Moulton, 1983).**

In order to provide an understanding of the significant trail nexus located at the Big Bend of the Yellowstone River, Lahren (2006) outlines the following options available to the Corp of Discovery in July 1806:

*“If Clark had turned south when he reached the Yellowstone River at present day Livingston, Montana, he could have followed the cairn-marked aboriginal trail along the west side of the valley to the Yellowstone plateau, where he could have connected to the extensive Bannock trail system. If he would have crossed at the Seibeck [present-day Ninth Street] island ford, he could have followed the Arapaho or Mountain Trail into what is now Wyoming.*

*“Clark also had some other trail options.... If he had followed the aboriginal trail along the west side of the Shields River, to the north, he could have followed the Blackfeet Trail (along Brackett Creek) or the further north Flathead Pass Trail, west to the Gallatin Valley. If he would have continued north along the Shields River (along the Old North Trail), he could have arrived on the Missouri River at the mouth of the Smith River west of Big Falls, Montana. And had Clark turned north and east after crossing the Shields River, he could have followed the aboriginal trail along the east side of the Crazy Mountains through Sioux Crossing to the Musselshell River, Judith Basin and ultimately the Missouri River in the Big Dry area.” (Lahren:2006:191)*

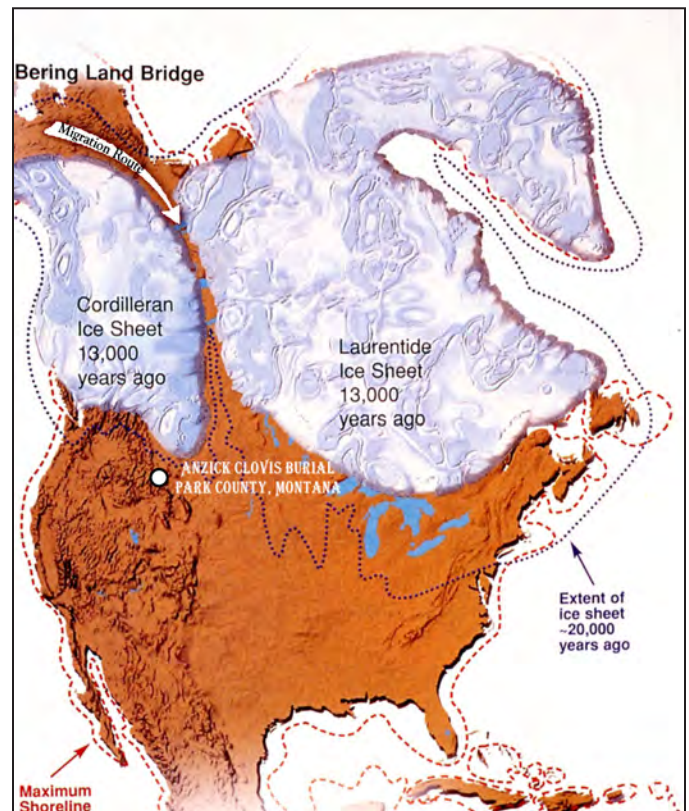
The quintessential trail nexus, now the town site of Livingston, Montana, offers today’s travelers the same options Clark had. Now described as federal, state, county, private roads, and railways, cultural and technological change has defined specific routes and altered the character of the byways, but the fundamental travel corridors remain the same.

## Trail Evolution

*“Rather than a ragged native, with spear in hand, racing down the ‘Old North Trail’ to warmer climes, many of these Early Hunters may have remained in the intermountain region of what is now Montana. With Early Man occupying the high plains, the high mountain valleys, and the mountain tops, it may also be that seasonal migration patterns became established in this region during the Early Prehistoric Period.” — George Arthur, 1966*

The “Old North Trail,” considered the most ancient of Park County trails, bears north to south through the Shields River Valley and continues south along the eastern flank of the Rocky Mountains into Mexico. Its route is based on lithic evidence of the Clovis culture, so-called because of a distinctive, fluted stone projectile point first found near Clovis, New Mexico. Today, U.S. Highway 89 occupies its approximate route.

The antiquity of the trail was theorized and hotly debated for decades as the route Clovis people, North America’s earliest known culture, entered North America across the Bering Land Bridge near the end of the last Ice Age. The accidental



**Clovis, North America’s earliest known culture, arrived in present-day Park County, Montana at least 11,000 years before present. The trail they followed along the east side of the Rocky Mountains has come to be known as the Old North Trail.**

discovery in 1968 near Wilsall, Montana of a Clovis burial of a 2-year-old child with over 100 red-ochre covered Clovis artifacts revealed the largest and most complete assemblage of Clovis artifacts in the Western Hemisphere. The burial represents the earliest culturally-affiliated skeletal remains, and the earliest evidence of religion in the Western Hemisphere. Now known as the Anzick site, the burial is within the Old North Trail corridor. It consistently dates to  $\pm 11,000$  radiocarbon years before present (Lahren, 2014). DNA analysis of the child's remains, reported in February (Rasmussen, et al., 2014), ended the land bridge debate by determining the child's Asian ancestry and confirming George Arthur's 1966 hypothesis of homeland occupation. The recent genome study found that the Clovis child's genetics are present in 80% of today's native population in North and South America.

Lithic analysis of the Clovis funerary goods indicates that a fairly extensive trail system was in use by the time the child was ceremoniously laid to rest:

*“At least five separate chert sources and one porcellanite source are represented in the Anzick artifacts. Material sources such as a moss agate variety of chert occurs 60 kilometers north of the site and a prolific source of multicolored chert is located 90 kilometers north of the Anzick site. The nearest porcellanite source is 125 kilometers to the east. The Pryor-Big Horn mountain chert sources are located 150-200 kilometers to the southeast.” (Lahren:2006:89)*

An obsidian Clovis projectile point found by Otho Mack during the construction of the Gardiner, Montana post office in 1959 is evidence that Park County's earliest people were traveling to the Yellowstone Plateau to make a living. Considering their hunter-gatherer occupations, they couldn't have found a better place:

*“When they reached the area where the Missouri River leaves the mountains between Great Falls and Helena, Montana they found one of the first best places in North America. In addition to the plentiful and diverse late Ice Age life forms, they found numerous, extensive chert sources for the manufacture of stone tools. Interconnected, well-watered, grassland basins and valleys surrounded by natural barriers in the form of mountains offered good hunting opportunities and locations for camp sites.” (Lahren:2006:85)*

Pedestrian hunters and gatherers, traveling in small, extended-family groups initially followed game trails that developed into complex trail systems which interlaced destinations — such as seasonal hunting and foraging grounds, shelter, and communal interchange locations for all-important intermarriage and trade. They chose to live in a rugged environment, but as Dr. Earl H. Swanson noted in 1966:

*“If we assume that the Rocky Mountains was a homeland instead of a barrier between cultures and peoples, we arrive at a new understanding of culture relations in parts of western North America.” (Earl H. Swanson, 1966; cited Lahren 2006:39)*

Prehistoric evidence in a number of archaeological sites within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem provides insight into just how extensive trail systems and trade became. Pacific coast dentalia and Dakota Knife River flint found their way to Montana. A spectacular example of trade, dating to at least 1,500 years before Lewis and Clark arrived, is a quantity of Yellowstone obsidian found in the Ohio Valley, and about 1,000 years ago, Numic peoples and their traditions arrived from the southwest.

By 1740, this same trail/trade network introduced the Spanish horse to the Northern Plains and a cultural and technological revolution was at hand. People adapted quickly to the equestrian way of life. Horses enabled faster and far-reaching travel. Hunting and roaming territories expanded, enabling larger groups to assemble villages which were transportable to traditional hunting grounds and beyond. Former pedestrian, game and trade routes became “lodge or travois trails” as horse drawn implements were added to the travel equation.

With equestrian mobility, conflict between cultural groups increased, warrior societies became part of the social structure, and a diaspora of different linguistic groups made their way onto the Northern Plains to become the historic tribes we are most familiar with today. During this time, and continuing through the 19th century, the trails and byways of Park County added the dimension of militaristic strategy to their attributes of sustenance and trade.

United States acquisition of Louisiana Territory in 1803 and Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery expedition became the catalyst for dramatic and rapid change in the region. Historically documented as one of the most remarkable, successful and intellectual explorations of unknown lands, it must also be remembered that the expedition was very much a military operation. U.S. Army personnel Americanized the names of watersheds and geographical features, and claimed some 828 million square miles of "public domain" — and its inhabitants.



**"Rendezvous on the Green River"** is artist Alfred Jacob Miller's 1837 depiction of fur trade in the Teton/Yellowstone area. (*National Park Service - Public Domain*)

Fur trade competition immediately followed the footsteps of Lewis and Clark; a trade pursued by men who lived and traveled little differently than the native peoples they dealt with. But large, well-organized corporations employed the "mountain men." Specific destinations in the form of trading posts and forts began to appear on the Yellowstone — such as Manuel's Fort at the mouth the Big Horn River in 1807. These destinations defined road routes and waterways essential to the shipment of large amounts of goods.

During the fur trade era, steamboats plied the waters of the Upper Missouri River and wheeled vehicles appeared on western trails.

By the time fur trade waned in the 1830s, wagon travel across the Continental Divide via the Oregon Trail/South Pass route was well established — just in time for an east to west, mass migration kicked off by the discovery of gold in California and the lush agricultural possibilities in Oregon Territory.

The sudden, "Go West Young Man" immigration driven by a Manifest Destiny philosophy added to the already strained cultural mix on the Northern Plains and by the 1850s the federal government stepped in to determine political "ownership" boundaries and land use policies on the vast public domain.

## Changing Times

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 became the largest, peaceful assemblage on record of Indian groups and U.S. government officials. Ostensibly, the gathering was to determine and assign loosely defined "tribal territories" to ease intertribal conflict, but in reality the goal was to halt escalating conflict with wagon trains on the Oregon Trail. The assigned hunting and roaming territories lay in present-day Wyoming, the Dakotas, and Montana — an area that was still considered to be remote and rugged wilderness, unfit for any practical settlement. But, while no interest was evident in settling in Montana, a wagon road, or perhaps even a railroad across the northern tier was very much of interest to the newly formed Washington Territory and its governor, Issac Stevens.



Among other impacts, the first Fort Laramie Treaty launched efforts to identify travel corridors and, more importantly, to map them. By 1859, construction of the Mullan Wagon Road, to connect the Upper Missouri River steamboat port of Fort Benton to the Pacific Coast was underway and orders were issued to Captain W. F. Reynolds and Lieutenant H.E. Maynadier, U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, to conduct a military reconnaissance of the “...head waters of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, and of the mountains in which they rise.” The purpose of the exploration was to determine “Indian numbers and their disposition,” as well as to report on topography, minerals, flora, fauna, agricultural possibilities, and:

*“Particular attention should be given to determining the most direct and feasible routes:*

- 1. From the neighborhood of Fort Laramie to the Yellowstone, in the direction of Fort Union, on the Missouri.*
- 2. From the neighborhood of Fort Laramie northwesterly, along the base of the Big Horn mountains, towards Fort Benton and the Bitter Root valley. [later to become the infamous Bozeman Trail]*
- 3. From the Yellowstone to the South pass, and to ascertaining the practicability of a route from the sources of Wind river to those of the Missouri.”* (Raynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:4)

The value of the Raynold/Maynadier report of the Yellowstone and Shields area is twofold; it is the most detailed, overall record of aboriginal trail systems and geography in the area, and their travel took place on the threshold of chaotic cultural change. The exploration, conducted during two Spring-Autumn seasons in 1859 and 1860, compiled critical intelligence regarding travel through the Yellowstone and Gallatin river valleys, and became a watershed event in Montana history. Unfortunately, the conclusion of the field work coincided with the beginning of the Civil War. Both Raynolds and Maynadier were called to wartime duty and their report wasn't filed until 1867. By that time, Montana's gold rush era was well underway. Nonetheless, the expedition's provided baseline information used by the military through the Plains Indian Wars.

As the exploratory corps assembled in 1859, Raynolds summarized what was known of their study area:

*“Its dimensions are thus 650 miles east and west measurement, and nearly 400 north and south, while its area is about 250,000 square miles, nearly one-fourth larger than all of France, or than the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, and more than double the area of Great Britain. Previous explorations in this region were confined almost exclusively to the immediate vicinity of the great rivers, or penetrated only to the borders of the district named. Lewis and Clarke in 1804'-5-'6 ascended the Missouri, crossed the continent, and returned by the Yellowstone. I can testify to the wonderful accuracy of their descriptions of localities, but their geographical positions are not always reliable. Nicollet in 1839 reached Fort Pierre [SD]. His investigations and determinations of positions were such as characterize all the labors of that eminent savant. Governor Stevens in 1852, in his railroad expedition, confined his explorations mainly to the Missouri river, or to the country north of that stream, above the mouth of the Yellowstone. Lieutenant Warren, topographical engineers, explored the Black Hills in 1855, and ascended the Yellowstone, as far as the mouth of Powder river, in 1856, determining accurately his positions and adding greatly to previous knowledge of these localities. ‘Bonnevilles Adventures’ and ‘Astoria,’ two of Irving's delightful sketches, are accounts of adventures, many of which were located in this district, but it is difficult to trace the routes travelled, and no reliable data are given for geographical positions. Several other expeditions were conducted along the Missouri, mainly with the view of determining the geological features; but none of these added much to our geographical knowledge. The fur Companies in their dealings with the Indians have for years had their agents travelling in all parts of this country, but their journeyings have had no scientific character or value. All preliminary information in regard to the interior of this vast region was thus exceedingly vague and unsatisfactory...”* (Raynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:6).

During the 1860 season, Reynolds, with the venerable Jim Bridger as his guide, planned to approach the headwaters of the Yellowstone River via the Wind River range. His plans went awry:

*“Beyond... is the valley of the upper Yellowstone, which is, as yet, a **terra incognita** [original emphasis]. My expedition passed entirely around, but could not penetrate it. My intention was to enter it from the head of Wind river, but the basaltic ridge previously spoken of intercepted our route and prohibited the attempt. After this obstacle had thus forced us over on the western slope of the Rocky mountains, an effort was made to recross and reach the district in question; but, although it was June, the immense body of snow baffled all our exertions, and we were compelled to content ourselves with listening to marvellous tales of burning plains, immense lakes, and boiling springs, without being able to verify these wonders. I know of but two white men who claim to have ever visited this part of the Yellowstone valley — James Bridger and Robert Meldrum. The narratives of both these men are very remarkable, and Bridger, in one of his recitals, described an immense boiling spring that is a perfect counterpart of the Geysers of Iceland. As he is uneducated, and had probably never heard of the existence of such natural marvels elsewhere, I have little doubt that he spoke of that which he had actually seen. The burning plains described by these men may be volcanic, or more probably burning beds of lignite, similar to those on Powder river, which are known to be in a state of ignition. Bridger also insisted that immediately west of the point at which we made our final effort to penetrate this singular valley, there is a stream of considerable size, which divides and flows down either side of the water-shed, thus discharging its waters into both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Having seen this phenomenon on a small scale in the highlands of Maine, where a rivulet discharges a portion of its waters into the Atlantic and the remainder into the St. Lawrence, I am prepared to concede that Bridger’s ‘Two Ocean river’ **may** [original emphasis] be a verity.”* (Reynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:10-11)

It is noteworthy that Reynolds, a professional topographer who had a year’s reconnaissance experience in this area and stood at the very gate of Yellowstone Country, continued to be skeptical about Jim Bridger’s geographical and geological accounts, however embellished they may be. His skepticism might well reflect national opinion regarding this strange land — or simply a scientific care of reporting what he suspected of being true.

Maynadier parted company with Reynolds at the junction of Wind River and the Big Horn River in early June 1860. He descended the latter stream to a point above the mouth of “Gray Bull creek,” then turned northwest following a “lodge trail” to ford “Stinking creek” (Shoshone River), where Maynadier learned a lesson and paid the price of underestimating the country’s natural challenges. Equipped with a wagon, two light ambulances and an odometer cart, the company spent three days trying to find a place to ford the snow-melt-engorged stream. On June 11th, they built a boat out of the wagon, filled one of the ambulances with rifles and equipment and proceeded into the raging stream:

Lieutenant Henry E. Maynadier graduated from West Point in 1851. Soon after the Reynolds/Maynadier Yellowstone Expedition, the War of the Rebellion began. Maynadier served in command positions in several of the major battles and rose to the rank of Colonel with Bvt. General distinction.

Assigned to the West as Red Cloud’s War began over the Bozeman Trail, Maynadier took command of Fort Laramie, Wyoming in March 1866. Despite ongoing hostilities, he displayed extreme compassion in honoring the dying request of Ah-ho-ap-pa, 17, daughter of Brule Sioux leader Spotted Tail, to be buried at Fort Laramie.

Maynadier selected a prominent point near the fort and provided for a traditional Sioux scaffold burial. His actions earned him Bvt. Major General recognition for “accomplishing much toward bringing about peace with the late hostile tribes.”

Maynadier retired from the military in August, 1866 due to illness and died in 1868. He was 38 years old.

The affinity between the Spotted Tail and Maynadier families endured. In 2007, the ancestors of both families were successful in having a marker installed on Ah-ho-ap-pa’s Fort Laramie grave.

*“I will not attempt to describe the swiftness of the current, for what I shall say of its effects will abundantly show its power and force.... Finding that the animals could keep their footing, I determined to bring the chronometers and instruments across in the ambulance so as to prevent wetting them by the water.... I had the instruments and some other light articles placed in the ambulance on the seats elevated entirely above the water. Four strong mules were attached, and two men detailed to ride along on the down-stream side of the mules to force them to keep up against the current.... Through the shallow part there was no difficulty, except that it was as much as the mules could do to draw the wagon through the roaring current; but when the deep part was reached, and the wheels were more than half submerged, nothing could resist the force of the water. The hind wheels were washed down, without being lifted from the bottom, until the fore wheels were locked under the side of the body. It was necessary to turn the leaders to get the wheels loose, and in doing it they slacked the traces, the hind wheels could not hold the carriage, and in a moment it was swept into deep water. The mules, being entangled in the harness, were soon drowned, and finding them dead, I let go and my horse swam ashore..... The man in the ambulance jumped out when it filled and swam to a shallow part of the reef, from which he was rescued and brought on shore on horseback. As soon as I ascertained that the men were safe I crossed The stream and followed it down at a fast gallop. At about two miles I saw the wreck lodged on an island, the top of the ambulance broken off and everything out of the body. A little further down I found the top washed ashore, and got the odometer, which had been fastened to it. Returning to camp I found that only a box of stationery, which had floated, had been recovered; everything else must have sunk.... We returned to camp wet, cold, hungry, and dispirited, and I passed the most wretched night it has ever been my lot to encounter.... It is a matter of congratulation and thanks to Heaven that no human life was lost... there were several Maynard rifles in the ambulance, with other articles and weapons habitually carried on the person. There were also a sextant and horizon, three chronometers, and three barometers, which were all lost.*

*“June 12*

*The remaining ambulance was on the other side of the stream and in a very weak condition; besides, there was no harness to suit, and after yesterday’s experience I had no desire to attempt to get it across the stream; but, as we had the odometer, I sent three men to bring over the wheels and an axle, which they succeeded in doing with some difficulty.... This cart shared the fortunes and dangers of all the rest of the journey and played no unimportant part in our labors, as it enabled us to keep up a continual odometer measurement.” (Raynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:136-137)*

Ironically, Maynadier had spotted a small group of native travelers on the lodge trail a few days before. Their campfires indicated they had crossed the stream successfully. Travois routes, it appears, were not ready to accept the new technology of four-wheeled vehicles. In coming days, the party would ford the Clark’s Fork River and the Rosebud (Stillwater) with difficulty, but not disaster. The Rosebud crossing forced them to ascend the river.

*“The mountains were now only four miles off and we had a share of their snow, which fell for some time during the afternoon; at night there was a heavy frost and ice.” (Raynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:139)*

At that point, had it been just a few weeks later, Maynadier could have picked up the Arapaho Trail and followed it west and north to the Big Bend of the Yellowstone trail nexus where Livingston now stands. Instead, the party turned north to cross into the Yellowstone Valley via the Bridger Creek divide.

From June 24, 1860 to July 2, 1860 Maynadier followed what he termed a “lodge trail,” but in fact was the northern part of ancient trail system in present-day Park and Sweet Grass counties. Maynadier recorded:

*“On the 24th of June we commenced a journey up the Yellowstone in a fine level valley on the south side of the stream. After crossing two small streams we came to a large and very rapid creek, called the Rocky,[Boulder River] and camped on it to reconnoitre and consider the best plan of crossing it.*

*“June 25 — Finding no ford, we moved about a mile down Rocky, and camped at its mouth on the Yellowstone.*

*“June 26 — The camp was at a place favorable for a passage, the river being only 507 feet wide and running in one channel. The bank on each side was low and the water deep from bank to bank, the current was rapid but smooth and I entertained no doubt of our ability to make a safe passage even with the limited means at command. The boat skins, by this time hard and dry, were put to soak, and timber selected for a boat frame; during the 27th the boat was completed, and by 1 p. m. on the 28th the last man was crossed. Having no other large streams to cross I determined to leave the boat here, and had it placed on a scaffold high enough to be out of the reach of wolves. At 2 we started and followed a lodge trail running along the river bank. At first the road was level, but at one place, where a spur reached down to the river, there was a very ugly hill to descend. We camped at dark on the bank of the river.*

*June 29 — Leaving camp early and following the lodge trail, we left the river and struck off northwest over rolling hills gradually ascending and increasing in height. These were the foot slopes of a snowy pile about 15 miles distant which we called the Short mountain. For two or three miles the route lay on a stream [West Fork Duck Creek] filled with beaver dams and spread out by them into quite a lake. After making 22 miles we came to a stream called Twenty-five Yard river,[near present-day Clyde Park] the same I think that Captain Clark calls Shield’s river; it is a narrow, shallow stream flowing from the Belt mountains into the Yellowstone. The dividing range between the Yellowstone and Missouri was in plain sight, and only about 10 miles distant; and the lodge trail which we had been following led toward a well defined gap [Flathead Pass. Maynadier referred to it as the Blackfoot Pass].*

*June 30 — Travelled up the Twenty-five Yard river, crossing two forks coming in on the right, we then crossed the main stream and, leaving it, went towards the gap. Camped about five miles from the foot of the mountain on a small spring.*

*July 1 — Following the lodge trail we entered the pass by a well-defined road with evident marks of the recent passage of a large band of Indians, probably the Flatheads on their hunt. The pass followed the winding of a small stream, and gradually ascended by its crooked course until it was lost in a dark narrow canyon. Then turning abruptly the trail led up a very steep hill through a dense pine forest, and in about half a mile the divide was reached. Notwithstanding this was higher than the limit of snow, the surrounding peaks towered loftily*



**The “lodge trail” Lt. Maynadier refers to is also known as a “travois trail” for the horse drawn implement shown here. Travois served the same purpose as later-day wheeled wagons — to transport heavy loads. (Library of Congress, Edward Curtis Photograph Collection)**

above us; the white snow glistening through the pine trees, and the wind keeping up a monotonous roar, as it swayed the myriads of pine boughs to its course. A halt was called on the summit to allow all bands to breathe, and to prepare for the descent, which bade fair to be worse than the ascent. I was surprised to find the mosquitos very troublesome at this great elevation, and while I was eating a piece of snow held in one hand, the other was kept busy brushing them away. The descent was very steep and rocky, and there were many places where the mules had great difficulty in keeping on their feet. At one point, near the bottom, the gorge opened and presented a charming view of the broad plain in which the three fork of the Missouri unite, and soon after we came to a beautiful mountain stream which provided an easy road into a fine valley, where we camped on the ground of some deserted Indian lodges, which promised a plentiful supply of wood.” (Raynolds & Maynadier, et al, 1867:140-141)

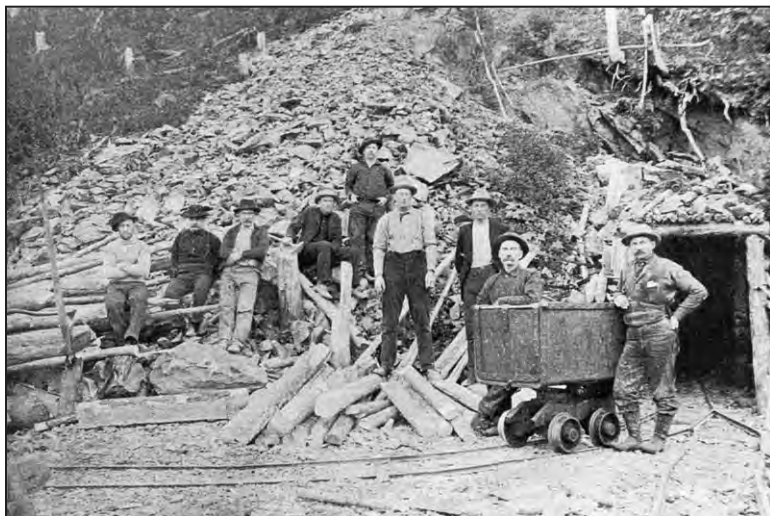
Within a year, gold was discovered in Montana, the nation was torn by Civil War, the aftermath of which sent a jaded military complex West. What had existed in our homeland for over 600 generations ended forever.

## Following the Roads

*“The Northern Plain and Rockies saw a phenomenal change too fast paced to be called an evolution.... The Indian, the trader, the prospector, the pioneer stockman, the soldier and other government personnel moved in kaleidoscopic fashion to open the region in a changing pattern of interaction and policy.” (Topping:1968:i)*

It was a strange and heady time. The “kaleidoscopic” analog describing Montana Territory’s first 25 years (Topping, 1968) can be extended well into the 20th century. Every component of the kaleidoscope was represented in Park County. Back to back change in culture, technology, and environment included:

- the influx gold rush miners and colonial settlers;
- the adaptation of equestrian trails to wagon roads and, for the first time, qualifying and quantifying them in terms of right-of-way widths, public and military roads;



**Mines such as this one on Contact Mountain in southern Park County changed cultures, economy, and trail names. The mining camp of Contact lay on the ancient “Arapaho trail,” renamed the “Mountain Trail,” the “Skookum Joe” Trail, and most recently the Boulder [River] County Road (Henry and Geiger, 1902).**

- the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 reserving large (and subsequently ever-shrinking) portions of the public domain as Indian Reservations — the beginning of the end of the hunting and roaming way of life;
- creation of new, engineered roads and infrastructure linking mining camps, town sites, and agricultural and timber resources;
- a 25-year long military intervention on the Northern Plains, peaking in 1876 with the Custer Battle and ending with the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890;
- creation in 1872 of Yellowstone National Park, the nation’s first and crown jewel of national parks;
- the arrival on the Big Bend of the Yellowstone of the land grant Northern Pacific Railroad in 1882 and the ceding of Crow Reservation lands in Park County;
- a national craze in 1897 that coalesced into a love affair with bicycles, represented by



"Dog Days" by Melissa Branson © Anthro Research



Jerry Brekke Collection

*"...too fast paced to be called an evolution."*



Bess Erskine/Jerry Brekke Collection

Nebraska bound c.a. 1890



Warren R. McGee Photo

Steam Locomotive leaving Livingston



Doris Withorn Collection

Airport Hill, Livingston, Montana



Livingston Outing Club • Shields River • 1897



Yellowstone Trail 1914 Yearbook

local clubs which initiated a call for better roads, a mantra embraced by turn-of-the-century automobile enthusiasts as the first motorized vehicles appeared in Park County;

- introduction of motorized equipment capable of engineered, cut and fill road construction
- the 1909-1912 homesteading era, which brought a 60% increase in Park County's population and filled the public domain with 160 acre farms and residents. At it's peak, nearly a thousand miles of roadways, altered to follow section lines, were added to the county road system.
- a grass-roots effort promoted by the Twin Cities-Aberdeen Yellowstone Trail Association which, by largely by volunteer community labor, built "a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound," with the only official lateral being the namesake route from Livingston to Yellowstone National Park, where, in 1915, automobiles were first allowed;
- drought of 1919 which bankrupted the majority of homesteaders and set in motion a two-decade-long economic depression that ended in World War II;
- the establishment, after 1930, of state and federal highway systems that constructed and regulated intra-state and interstate travel.

Throughout this transition, watershed transportation events are represented by the brief and bloody Boze-man Trail, the life-changing arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the introduction of motorized travel — all following in the travel corridor footsteps of those who had gone before.

## The Spirit of the Road

The technological advancement of modes of conveyance that punctuate changing times is reflected, not just in how we use our roads, but in how we perceive them. Few human attributes are as stubbornly unchanging as are religion and roads. Religion, is the last thing to change in a society and has its own set of circumstances. But, once established, road routes come in a close second. People like to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before and a well-worn trail implies safety, wisdom and success. It's not surprising, then, that over time spiritual significance became attached to travel corridor attributes — significance that is expressed in ethnohistoric accounts and dialogues of the travelers attempting to tell the story of their travel experience and the impact it had on their lives.

One remarkable example took place on July 13 and 14, 1806, when Sacajawea convinced William Clark to abandon efforts that had the party mired in Gallatin River beaver dams and to follow the "buffalow road" known today as Bozeman Pass. Taken from her homeland at age 11 and held as a slave in North Dakota, Sacajawea remembered details of the trail from her youth and, for the only the second (and final) time during the expedition, asserted the "guide and pathfinder" role history assigns her.

For the purposes of this overview, the following is a selection of citations conveying the spirit of the road.

*"It is curious to notice with what tenacity an Indian clings to a trail; a path which has been followed by his forefathers is sacred to him, and though in the constant and rapid erosion of the gulches and sides of the hills and mountains these trails have become very difficult yet he never abandons them when they can by any possibility be followed, even though a shorter and better road is very perceptible." (Fowler and Fowler, 1971 [citing John Wesley Powell observation]; Lahren:2006:157)*

The same level of trail reverence was noted by Lt. James Bradley, the Seventh Infantry officer in charge of Crow scouts during the 1876 campaign march to the Little Bighorn:

*"Today we passed a pile of small stones situated on the ground overlooking the Yellowstone, just below the Place of Skulls. I noticed that some of my Indian scouts paused there, picked up a stone,*



**Aboriginal trail cairns mark the way across high plateau country.** © Jeff Henry

*spit upon it, and cast in upon the pile. Upon inquiry, I found that this was done as an act of devotion which they believed would insure them good fortune in their enterprise. They say they have made it a custom for many years and that the pile of stones was mainly formed in this way. It was however, according to their traditions, originally built as a landmark when they first arrived in this country many generations ago. The same tradition asserts that the Crows left such piles scattered all along the route by which they migrated from the southeast, so that they could find their way back if they ever desired to do so. They assert that even now they can follow these piles all the way from the upper Yellowstone to the Arkansas River, and some of my scouts pointed out a knoll to the southeast where they said the next pile was to be found. I had no opportunity to confirm the truth of this statement, but have been told by white men familiar with the country that to all appearances such a line of stone piles does exist, though in some cases the stones are now dispersed and in others wholly or partially buried in the soil deposited over them by the wind."*

— Lieutenant James Bradley, April 15, 1876 (1961:52-53)

Similar attributes typify other major trail systems within Montana:

*In 1958, William Mulloy recorded stone trail markers in Park County, Montana [on the prehistoric Bannock Trail, now U.S. 89 South] and also recorded a series of sixty-four cairns at Pryor Gap, Montana. The cairns were one-half to two meters in diameter. The second cairn on the southern end was full of small incised rocks, bison bones, and other offerings which reflects the spiritual nature of aboriginal trail systems. (Lahren 2006:192)*

*"...heaps of stones three feet high and eight feet to twelve feet in diameter in Trail Pass between Ft. Ellis and the Upper Yellowstone, between Emigrant Gulch and Dome Mountain, and elsewhere [Park and Gallatin Counties, Montana]." (Norris, 1882)*

*"Five miles south of Livingston, Montana the first canyon of the Yellowstone River is a narrow defile which Apsáalooke (Crow) Indians called "the place where the Spaniards camped." Pictographs on the canyon walls represent, according to Crow historian Dale Old Horn, a dire warning to trespassers and an account of the lethal consequences suffered by some who failed to heed the warning." (Lahren and Brekke, et.al, 2009)*

Stone trail cairns and pictographs began a tradition continued today with highway and road signs. And comparisons might be made to aboriginal trail reverence and spirituality of modern roadside, historical signs, highway fatality markers, and shrines



During the fur trade era, Osborne Russell described the camaraderie of the trail as he and a small group of trappers traveled between Yellowstone Lake and the Lamar Valley in July 1836:

*“... we fell into a broken tract of country which seemed to be all on fire at some distance below the surface.... Shortly after leaving this resemblance of the infernal regions we killed a fat buck Elk and camped at Sunset in a smooth grassy spot between two high shaggy ridges watered by a small stream which came tumbling down the gorge behind us. As we had passed the infernal regions we thought as a matter of course these must be a commencement of the Elysian fields and accordingly commenced preparing a feast. A large fire was soon blazing encircled with sides of Elk ribs and meat cut in slices supported on sticks down which the grease ran in torrents The repast being over the jovial tale goes round the circle the peals of loud laughter break upon the stillness of the night which after being mimicked in the echo from rock to rock it dies away in the solitary.” (Russell: electronic source)*

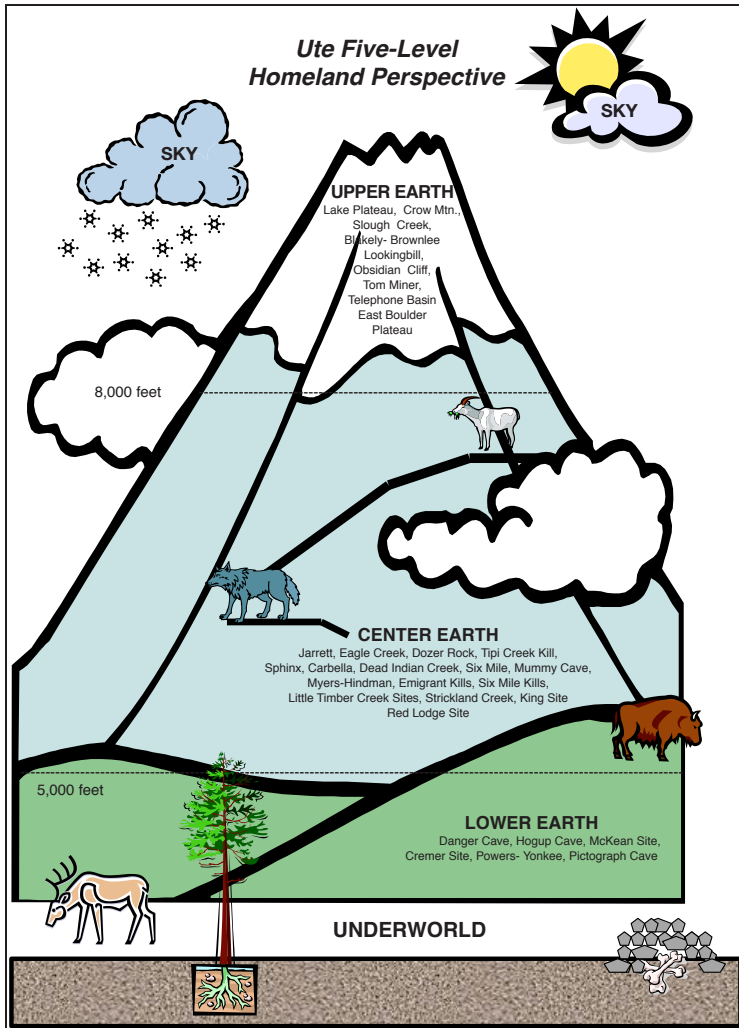
Thirty-six years later, the Hayden Expedition, accompanied by Army topographical engineers Barlow and Heaps, approached Yellowstone Park from the north. Negotiating today’s Yankee Jim Canyon, Barlow wrote a similar account of trail travails and day’s end:

*“The trail now enters the second or middle canon of the Yellowstone, and becomes very rough, obstructed by masses of volcanic rock, in some places rendering the footing of the animals very insecure. One pack-animal, belonging to the general escort, made a misstep and rolled down the hill-side a distance of some 50 feet, completely demoralizing his pack, but without serious injury to himself .... I was told by one of my packers that another valley, similar to this, with better grazing, would be found a mile and a half farther on. This information led me to proceed to that spot. A still more difficult and rocky pass than the one we had just encountered led to this valley, and I was therefore desirous to get through it while the animals were in good marching condition, and less restive than on first starting out in the morning.*

*“Here we found a valley as beautiful as the other, giving abundant pasturage for the animals, while a growth of cottonwood on the river’s bank afforded a pleasant camping spot. The surrounding mountains shot up almost perpendicularly to the height of from two to three thousand feet; their lower slopes being wooded, while their peaks were usually bare. The formation here is principally granite rock, with a preponderance of feldspar. Here we caught trout by dozens and found them of excellent flavor and very large, they would bite at almost anything, taking the artificial fly with great activity. I enjoyed a bath in the river, but found the current so swift that I could make no headway against it in swimming, while in standing upright it would almost sweep me off my feet. There are no practicable fords along this portion of the river except during seasons of low water, in the fall. The night passed at this camp was very refreshing; no mosquitoes nor other troublesome insects disturbed us, though a large rattlesnake was killed in camp soon after our arrival...” (Barlow:1972:8).*

Interestingly, but perhaps not coincidentally, the camp Barlow found so appealing was years later documented as a traditional prehistoric campsite chosen by many generations of homeland travelers.

Perhaps the most singular illustration of land use change at this time is the philosophical and practical disparity between Native Americans’ holistic, circular view of land, water, air, and resource and the U.S. government’s, Jeffersonian Public Land Survey System (PLSS), still in use today. The system of Townships, Ranges, and Sections overlaid a square grid on a contoured, undulating world full of mountains, valleys, streams, deserts — and trails, laid out for a topographical advantage that rarely fits nicely into squares.



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One of the fundamental contrasts between aboriginal and colonial cultures is a matter of circles and squares. The encompassing spiritual and physical interrelationship of the land and its resources is summed up in one Shoshoni word – Tebiwa – “the land we belong to.”

Colonial settlement of Montana, as illustrated by the compartmentalized, Public Land Survey System grid, altered that view to “the land that belongs to me.”

**SECTION OF LAND—640 ACRES**

Chains—320 Rods—5280 Feet

	20 CHAINS	10 CHAINS	5 Chains	5 Chains
			5 Acres	5 Acres
	(20 ACRES)		20 Rods or 330 ft.	20 Rods or 330 ft.
			(10 ACRES)	
	(80 ACRES)		40 Rods or 660 Ft.	40 Rods or 660 Ft.
			(40 ACRES)	
	80 Rods or 1320 Feet	80 Rods—20 Chains or 1320 Ft.		

An acre contains 160 square rods.  
 An acre is 208.7 [plus] feet square.  
 An acre is 8 rods wide by 20 rods long, or any two numbers [of rods] whose product is 160.  
 Square feet × .000023 = acres.  
 Square chains × 0.10 = acres.  
 40 chains equals 160 rods or 2640 feet.

36	31	32	33	34	35	36	31	NW NW (Lot 4) 40 Acres	NE NW (Lot 3) 40 Acres	NW NE (Lot 2) 40 Acres	NE NE (Lot 1)* 40 Acres
1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	SW NW (Lot 5) 40 Acres	SE NW 40 Acres	SW NE 40 Acres	SE NE 40 Acres
12	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	NW SW (Lot 6) 40 Acres	NE SW 40 Acres	NW SE 40 Acres	NE SE 40 Acres
13	18	17	16	15	14	13	18	SW SW (Lot 7) 40 Acres	SE SW 40 Acres	SW SE 40 Acres	SE SE 40 Acres
24	19	20	21	22	23	24	19				
25	30	29	28	27	26	25	30				
36	31	32	33	34	35	36	31				
1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6				

Sectional Map of Township with Adjoining Sections      Subdivisions of a Section  
 \* Standard lots are usually in the north and west sections of a township and the acreage may be more or less than 40.

## Tally Ho

Stagecoach travel introduced a type of mixed spirituality, inspiring poetic song in some and in others, not so much.

*“I sing to everybody in the country and the town,  
A song, upon a subject that’s worthy of renown;  
I haven’t got a story of Fairyland to broach,  
But plead the cause of sticking to the box seat of a coach.*

*“Statesmen and warriors, traders and the rest,  
May boast of their professions and think it is the best;  
Their state I’ll never envy, I’ll have you understand,  
Long as I can be a driver on the jolly Overland....”*  
(Nat Stein, 1865 in Howard:1950:450)

But a contrasting view comes from Frances M.A. Roe, an army wife who journeyed by stage from Helena to Fort Benton in 1878:

*“Very soon those men fell asleep and rolled off their seats to the floor, where they snored and had bad dreams. I was jammed in a corner without mercy, and of course did not sleep one second during the long wretched night. Twice we stopped for fresh horses, and at both places I walked about a little to rest my cramped feet and limbs. At breakfast the next morning I asked the driver to let me ride on top with him, which he consented to, and...I had peace and fresh air—the glorious air of Montana.... I was positively ill from the awful shaking up, mental as well as physical.”*  
(Howard:1950:453)

Livingston, Montana is first and historically foremost a company town. Conceived and built by the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1882-83, the Big Bend nexus stepped up once more to provide a strategic transportation locale, mid-line and home to their running repair shops. There is no shortage of railroad history available to all who inquire and thus no need in this overview to generalize it. But one little known perspective of trains that is worthy of mention is that of Crow tribal leaders making a long over-due visit to Washington D.C., departing Butte on the Montana Railroad:

*“Plenty Coups had not seen a train but a Bannock tribesman they encountered on the stagecoach trip to the train station told them the ‘Fast Wagon was a big black horse with his belly nearly touching the ground. This horse had a big bell on his back. He ran so fast that every time he stopped, he puffed.’ Plenty Coups observed that ‘the black horse was panting so hard that the bell on his neck was ringing.’ (Lahren:2006:218)*

There are those who will argue that the railroad is not Livingston’s biggest claim to fame. Rather, Livingston is the gateway to Yellowstone Park, America’s most popular destination. Not so, the debater points out. During Yellowstone Park’s first decade the first canyon’s nearly impassable defile, the one Crow posted with petroglyph warnings, prevented easy travel. Instead, the Trail Creek route from Bozeman was the way — or better yet, through West Yellowstone. Not until the railroad arrived with construction capabilities did the gateway to the Upper Yellowstone open.

The argument is thankless. The truth is the Northern Pacific Railroad and Yellowstone Park had a profitable, symbiotic relationship — skewed toward the railroad until automobiles arrived on the scene. America’s love affair with automobiles advanced from “*Don’t foot it — Ford it.*” (1912) to “*See the USA in your Chevrolet*” (1950). And in between came a most remarkable transportation achievement :



**Musical Chairs** — The original Yellowstone Trail automobile road followed the course of the prehistoric Bannock Trail west of the Yellowstone River. That route switched to the east bank of the river, pictured above, after a new Carter’s Bridge was installed following the epic flood of 1918. U.S. 89 South (further east of this route) was constructed in the 1940s and by the 1960s, moved back to the west side of the river near the trail’s original route. The upriver routes all arrived at a common destination—Yellowstone Park.

*“Yellow and black marked the way. Black arrows centered in bright yellow circles painted on rocks, telephone poles, trees, cliff outcroppings and buildings showed a highway’s route.... The highway was called The Yellowstone Trail....”*

*“Bolstered by their success in finishing a graded 26-mile road [between Mobridge and Ipswich, South Dakota] and overwhelmed by the enthusiasm to do more, [a] South Dakota group held an organizational meeting in Lemmon [South Dakota] on Oct. 9, 1912 and decided to push for a highway from Minneapolis/St. Paul to every tourist’s destination — Yellowstone National Park. The Twin Cities-Aberdeen-Yellowstone Trail Association (shortened to The Yellowstone Trail Association by 1915) was born and would serve, for the next 18 years, as a grass roots organization to provide for what was to become the northern route, coast to coast highway....”*

*“No single event demonstrated the grass roots nature of the highway more than trail day, 1914. Organized by the Yellowstone Trail Association with letters to each community from Joe Parmley himself, communities from Minneapolis to Yellowstone National Park turned out in force on May 22, 1914 to build, repair, or mark 1100 miles of road in one day.*

*“Typical of newspapers along the route, The Livingston Enterprise published a call for action and what to do. ‘Send your automobiles. Bring your own lunch. Decorate your automobile with at least two American flags that can be seen at least a block away. If you have a team, send it along. Shovels, picks and rakes are needed, but shovels are the most important.’*

*“People turned out in huge numbers. Lady’s groups provided lemonade, hot drinks and food. Farmers and ranchers supplied horses and equipment. Districts competed with each other over who would have the best road when the day was done. Gallons upon gallons of yellow and black paint were applied to everything that didn’t move. And a good road was built....”*

*“By 1930, highway associations such as the Yellowstone Trail Association waned. Association identity was lost in the wake of a depression and a U.S. highway numbering system that replaced the yellow and black markers with numbered signs. Federal highway funds ended the need for folks to get together to build their roads and the Yellowstone Trail was eventually absorbed by an interstate system.*

*“During its life, however, the Yellowstone Trail Association helped to prepare the way for the age of the automobile. It got folks out of the mud. And it built a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound.” (Brekke, 2003)*

## Summary

On Interstate 90, Montana's busiest highway, we are accustomed to riding in air-conditioned comfort. We now have the ability to cross Park County, Montana east to west, at legal speed, in less than 28 minutes. Motoring from the county's northern line on the two-lane U.S. 89 to Gardiner, Montana takes a little longer, but can still be done comfortably in less than two hours. Intersecting these primary north-south, east-west highways is a spider-web of less traveled roads, laid out for various reasons, but mostly sharing at a common destination. Transportation improvement in modern times is remarkable, but perhaps more remarkable is the fact that modern thoroughfares in Park County, Montana overlay routes consistently used since prehistoric times. Road names change to fit the era and the best known lose their identity to numbered highways.

The Old North Trail, became the Glacier Bee Line, the Park to Park Highway and finally U.S. 89, running north and south from the Livingston trail nexus.

From U.S. 89 North, just below the Park County line, turn west to follow a now paved Flathead Road and the pass Lt. Maynadier crossed into the Gallatin in 1860. Just a few years later, he might have run into Jim Bridger leading a wagon train, along the Blackfeet trail, now called Brackett Creek road, in a celebrated race with John Bozeman who led wagons over the pass which Sacajawea guided Capt. Clark some years before and now Interstate 90 West.

Some trails have lost their usefulness and faded into near oblivion, like Sioux Crossing, the war road, which skirts eastward along the southern end of the Crazy Mountains and served so well to raid the Crow. Today the road belongs to Sweet Grass County, but only for a while. Locked gates now bar the way.

Other trails defy modern travel, too rugged still for automobiles or trains. The wonderful Arapaho or Mountain Trail, wending its way to southern Wyoming can only be driven nominally in Park County along the now Swingley road into Boulder River country where it turns back into the trail it always was and horses still serve to pick the way across high plateau country studded with lakes and mountains.

And east to west or west to east, the remains of Clarks' "buffalow road," and the bloody Bozeman Trail lay beneath our tires.

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