
Big Road or Great North-South Road

Hugo's Regional Stage Stations: Louse Creek and Grave Creek.¹⁻³ *Knights of the Whip* by Gary and Gloria Meier is recommended for those interested in stagecoach days in Oregon.⁴ Most of this brochure is composed of quotes or information from this publication applicable to Hugo's regional area of interest from Louse Creek to Grave Creek.

Transportation in the Early Days Oregon life on the frontier during the 1850s was isolated and overland transportation was difficult or nonexistent. At the beginning of the decade there were no roads worthy of the name, and except during the summer months the openings through the forests were impassable because of mud. The crude bridges washed out regularly and placid low water fording places in a dry summer became torrents of danger in winter and spring. The primary means of travel in Southern Oregon was by horseback, muleback or on foot. Wagons were used in the valleys for local trips, but the passes through the mountains, sometimes merely a narrow ravine along a creek bottom, discouraged the use of wheeled vehicles for longer travel. pages 2 - 3.

Big Road During Oregon staging days the "Big Road" or "Great North-South Road" was between Portland, Oregon and Sacramento, California. In general it followed the old Hudson Bay Company's south trail (i.e., Jacksonville Road of Applegate Trail from Rogue River to Grave Creek).⁵

1. Hugo Neighborhood. April 7, 2009. *Hugo's Regional Stage Stations*. Brochure 1 in Stage Station Brochure Series. Hugo, OR.

2. Hugo Neighborhood. August 29, 2009. *Louse Creek Stage Station*. Brochure 2 in Stage Station Brochure Series. Hugo, OR.

Oregon Staging Days: 1860 - 1887

Oregon Staging It is probably safe in saying that the era of Staging Days in Oregon began on September 15, 1860. For on that day great shining Concord stagecoaches of the California Stage Company departed Sacramento, California, and Portland, Oregon, simultaneously at 6 a.m. page 15.

Sacramento to Portland Route On June 21, 1859 Congress directed the Postmaster General "to contract with the California State Company for daily service in stages, between Sacramento City, California, and Portland, Oregon, running through in seven days, from April 1 to December 1, . . . at \$90,000 to annum." By order of the Postmaster General, service on the contract was to begin on September 15, 1860. page 22.

Coaches The were generally two types of stagecoaches used on the Oregon and California runs. The larger and fancier of the two was the Concord coach. The lighter and smaller stagecoach came to be called the "mud wagon." The mud wagons were designed, as the name implies, for use in mud, snow and on rough roads. They were quite popular in Oregon during the winter and rainy season. pages 29 - 30.

Knights of the Whip A stage driver was a highly skilled individual, and was treated accordingly. Indeed, a man who held the ribbons over a six-horse team down the steep slopes of the Siskiyou and in the canyons of the Umpqua and Calapooya Mountains was more esteemed than the statesman or millionaire who rode beside him. The driver was "the Lord in his way, the captain of his craft, the fear of timid passengers, the admiration of stable-boys, and the trusty agent of his employer." page 94.

Concord Coach & Mud Wagon

Thoroughbraces As a better alternative to steel springs over rough roads, American coach designers developed a suspension system called a thoroughbrace. A large and heavy frame was attached to the front and rear axles. At the four corners of this frame iron posts about a foot high were mounted and securely braced. To the top of the posts on each side was fixed a six or eight-ply belt of thick bullhide leather about four inches wide, running from front to rear, forming a cradle upon which the body of the coach was suspended. These thoroughbraces functioned as shock absorbers for the team as well as the passengers, allowing the large body to sway fore and aft and sideways – a motion somewhat like floating. page 28.

Stage Robberies varied with the locale. Some areas were more suited to the activities of road-agents due to terrain and distance to quick help. The vast forests and gorges of the Siskiyou Mountains made the tracking of road-agents extremely difficult. The Wolf Creek and Sexton Mountain grades were popular neighborhoods for "road-side withdrawals" as were other lonely stretches in Western and Southern Oregon. page 180.

End of Staging Days On December 17, 1887 the railroad was completed between Portland and Sacramento and closed the book on Staging Days. page 127.

3. Hugo Neighborhood. August 29, 2009. *Grave Creek Stage Station*. Brochure 3 in Stage Station Brochure Series. Hugo, OR.

4. Meier, Gary and Gloria. 1987. *Knights of the Whip, Stagecoach Days in Oregon*. Timeline Publishing Company. Bellevue, WA.

5. General Surveyor Office of Oregon. 1855 & 1856 GLO Surveys and Maps. Surveyor Luke G Hyde; Hugo Neighborhood. 2006. *Hugo's Applegate Trail Field Notes*. Brochure 10A in Emigrant Trail Series. Hugo, OR.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

Email: hugo@jeffnet.org

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/>

Edited by Karen Rose & Mike Walker

HNA&HS Officers

Hal Anthony, Outreach Chair
3995 Russell Road
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Wayne McKy, Chair
6497 Hugo Road
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Mike Walker, Education Chair
3388B Merlin Rd #195
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Oregon Knights of the Whip: 1860 - 1887

Brochure 4 Of Stage Station
Brochure Series



*1860 - 1887 Were the Years of Daily Stage Service on
the Great North-South Road.*



Mud Wagon
Courtesy of Knights of the Whip

September 20, 2009

Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society

Brochure 4 of Stage Station Brochure Series

HNA & HS 2009 - 35

C:\Documents and Settings\mike\My Documents\Genealogy\Stage Coach Line\BROCHURE 4 Knights of
the Whip_092009.wpd