
Military Road From Myrtle Creek To Jacksonville: 1853

The three-mile stretch of road that parallels Old Stage Road west of Medford was originally used by the military in those distant days when Oregon was still a territory. The Jackson County Commissioners declared the Old Military Road a public highway April 4, 1853 (Commissioners' Journal).

But it wasn't until 1939 that Ariel Burton Pomeroy presented a petition signed by 102 local residents, mostly aging pioneers, to the Jackson County court to preserve the name "Old Military Road."¹ In that petition, Pomeroy, a local resident, indicated the road was originally under the supervision of Gen. Joseph Hooker. He earned the nickname of "Fighting Joe" during the Civil War. The petition asked the court to recognize this segment of ancient road ... and formally apply to it the name 'Old Military Road,' thus preserving to posterity this historic and authoritative name."

The Old Military Road in Oregon - A military road from Myrtle Creek (Canyonville) to Jacksonville that was declared a territorial road on January 31, 1854 (*Oregon Statesman* newspaper).

1. Send your questions to "Since You Asked," Mail Tribune Newsroom, P.O. Box 1108, Medford, OR 97501; or by fax to (541) 776-4376; or by e-mail to: youasked@mailtribune.com

<http://www.mailtribune.com/archive/97/oct/103197n8.htm>

2. Abbot, Henry L. *Report of Lieut. Henry L. Abbot, Corps of Topographical Engineers, upon Explorations for a Railroad Route from the Sacramento River to the Columbia River, made by Lieut. R. S. Williamson, Corps of Topographical Engineers, assisted by Lieut. Henry L. Abbot, Corps of Topographical Engineers, 1855.* United States War Department. *Reports of explorations and surveys, to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.* Made under the direction of the Secretary of War, in 1853-4. House of Representatives Exec. Doc. No. 91, 33rd Congress, 2d Session. Nicholson, Washington, 1856.

Military Road Surveyed By Brevet Major B. Alvord, United States Army: 1853

The following quotes are from Volume VI - *The Pacific Railroad Survey*: 1855².

Page 14². "From Myrtle creek, in Umpqua valley, to Jacksonville, in Rogue River valley, our field work has been checked by a sketch of the military road, located in 1853 by Brevet Major B. Alvord, 4th infantry. This sketch, which I think was never published, was kindly furnished by Major Alvord."

Page 107². "October 30. [1855] — We learned, upon good authority, that the reports from Rogue river had not exaggerated the Indian disturbances there. None but strong parties could pass through the valley, and most of the homes north of the river were burned."

Page 107². "October 31. [1855] — We continued our course up the valley of the South Umpqua river, and encamped with volunteers near the entrance of the Umpqua canon, at Canonville, which consists only of one house and one barn. The road followed the stream for the greater part of the way. . . ."

Page 107². "November 1. [1855] — This morning we followed the volunteers through the canon, a difficult pass through the Umpqua mountains. . . . A few resolute men might hold this defile against an army; and it is wonderful that the Rogue river Indians, who are intelligent, brave, and well armed with rifles have never, in their numerous wars, seized upon it, and thus prevented the approach of troops from the Umpqua Valley. . . ."

3. Klamath County Historical Society. *Applegate Trail II, "West of the Cascades"*. Klamath Echoes. page 14

Portions Of Military Road Constructed

Page 107². "November 1. [1855] (continued) — ". . . This pass is about eleven miles in length, and communication through it is sometimes interrupted by freshets. The road over which we traveled was constructed in 1853, by Brevet Major B. Alvord, United States army, and it is the best route known through the Umpqua mountains."

In 1853 the military road was located or surveyed for its entire length, and constructed in two documented places: 1. 10 - 11 miles of the Canon, and 2. Grave Creek hills. The following quote is from *Applegate Trail II, "West of the Cascades"*.³

"Commencing with the first legislature of Oregon Territory, requests had been made to the U.S. Congress for Federal aid to improve transportation routes. Finally, after Delegate Ex-Governor Joseph Lane asked approval by the 32 Congress of appropriations for Oregon roads, one of which was the road from Camp Stuart to Myrtle Creek, \$20,000 was secured, the act finally being signed by President Fillmore on January 7, 1853. \$5,000 of this amount was spent on the Alvord-Applegate survey made during the fall of 1853. The primary purpose was to find a passage avoiding the Umpqua Canyon. Failing in this, Alvord decided to spend the remainder of the appropriation in improving the road through the canyon and the nearby Grave Creek hills. Construction contracts were made with the Applegate brothers, Jesse and Lindsay, and with Jesse Roberts, all local residents."

More information Contact an officer of the *Hugo Neighborhood* on how you can become involved in your community's land use, and/or history projects.

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 by preserving, protecting, and enhancing the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, as 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. Make checks to the *Hugo Neighborhood* and send them to our Treasurer.

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MILITARY ROAD: 1853

Louse Creek to Grave Creek



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