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MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES'
HERITAGE KEEPER & HERITAGE GUARDIAN AWARD

NOMINATION FORM

ABOUT THE NOMINEE

Name of Nominee Mike Penfold
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ABOUT YOU

In case we need more information about your nominee.

Nomination Submitted by Ruth Towe & Our Montana
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 Date Nomination Submitted 3/16/2019

Return completed form, narrative & support documents **by March 16, 2019**
 to:
Heritage Keeper Awards Chair
Montana Historical Society
P.O. Box 201201, 225 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620-1201

Or e-mail to: Joy Lewis, jlewis@mt.gov, or FAX to: 406-444-2696.
 For information call: 406-444-1799

1. Contributions to Montana history—describe the project or on-going service within Montana’s historical community that has been accomplished by the nominee.

Mike Penfold’s volunteer efforts over many years has resulted in well documented studies of events and places that had almost faded from our knowledge. He is Chairman of the Frontier Heritage Alliance, a small group which applies for grants to study, document, map and do some archeology research at historic features which loom large in Montana’s early history. The projects involve research at the National Archives in Washington, DC, Carlyle, Pennsylvania where military records are stored, Minnesota where railroad records are available, North and South Dakota sites and the University of Nebraska, as well as information scattered in libraries and archives across the country plus diaries and other first-hand accounts. The group works closely with Montana landowners as the sites are mostly on private land. Until these studies, almost none of this information has been available in Montana.

The projects include:

The 1863-1866 Bozeman Trail—Mike and Crow Tribal Member Howard Boggess spent many weeks traversing the route(s) taken by the Bozeman Trail and located graves and other sites mentioned in diaries and contemporary reports.

The 1872 Baker’s Battle on the Yellowstone, funded by a grant from the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program, resulted in a 2-inch thick report.

The 1872 fight at O’Fallon Creek between Col. David S. Stanley and Chiefs Sitting Bull and Gall, which some historians credit as the beginning of the Great Sioux War, was also funded by the NPS’s American Battlefields Protection Program.

The 1873 battle on the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Tongue River between George Armstrong Custer’s 7th Cavalry and Crazy Horse, and the fight a few days later that took place on the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Bighorn River, also funded by the American Battlefield Protection Program. These battles occurred during the survey for the Northern Pacific Railroad.

The 1876 Battle of Powder River study, also funded by the NPS’s American Battlefield Protection Program, seen by some historians as the spark that ignited two later victories in 1876 by combined Northern Cheyenne and Lakota Sioux forces over the US Army—the Battle of the Rosebud and Battle of the Little Bighorn. In the Battle of Powder River which took place in March, the US Army, under the command of Col. Joseph J. Reynolds, mistakenly attacked a small group of Cheyenne while searching for a much larger contingent of Sioux. The Cheyenne then joined the Sioux in the Battle of the Rosebud and the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June. This study culminated in a 520-page report now available for historians and researchers.

2. What are the particular strengths and impacts of the Montana history goals the nominee has achieved? What impact has the work accomplished had on the community/intended audience?

Mike Penfold has been a driving force in all the research listed above (and more). His goals of documenting and locating where these historic events took place have been achieved. Hopefully, they will all be listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

Because of the research and subsequent outreach by Mike and others, the communities and regional areas are greatly enhanced by knowledge of our colorful and interesting past. It gives of a greater sense of place and appreciation for this place we call home. It gives the landowners a greater appreciation for events that happened on their property. These findings have not gone unnoticed by those promoting tourism in Eastern Montana. Certainly, the Billings Tourism Bureau is trying to promote ways to present this material to visitors.

More significantly, the research helps us better understand the events that led to the disastrous wars between the US Army and the Native Americans. Documentation of these battle sites sheds new light on events not generally known and often buried in archives in distant places.

3. Describe the nominee – provide a short biographical sketch and history of nominee, including: length of involvement in service; effectiveness of service; level of prior recognition; and degree of commitment to the general concepts and highest goals of the historical society.

Mike Penfold passion for conservation issues has spanned his entire career. His past positions include:

- National Forest Supervisor in Virginia, White House Council on Environmental Quality, Washington D.C.
- BLM Montana, North and South Dakota State Director
- BLM Alaska State Director
- National BLM Assistant Director Land and Renewable Resources in Washington D.C.

He has been recognized for his outstanding career accomplishments numerous times. They include:

- Meritorious Award for sustained superiority accomplishment in quality and efficiency in public service.
- Secretary of the Interior Distinguished Service commendation for ability to work with diverse groups in Montana.
- Secretary of the Interior Meritorious Service commendation for leadership as State Director of Alaska.
- Secretary of the Interior Award for sustained meritorious service in public land administration.
- President Reagan commendation for contribution to greater government efficiency.

- Director's commendation for the Resource Apprenticeship Program for minority and disadvantaged young people.
- Montana Wildlife Federation – Conservation Leaders Ship Award

In addition to working for Our Montana as the Conservation Program Director, he is the Chairman of Frontier Heritage Alliance, a member of the Governor's Private Land Public Wildlife Committee and past member of the Governor's Scenic Byway Commission, Private Land Public Wildlife Committee and other statewide committees.

Mike likes to hunt, fly fish, bike, camp, ski, back pack and do historical research. He lives in Billings with his wife, Donna of over 50 years and has raised four daughters and ten grandchildren.

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Fighting the iron horse | Montana News | billingsgazette.com

https://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/fighting-the-iron-horse/article_d2314d2a-985b-11df-9dde-001cc4c002e0.html

Fighting the iron horse

History buffs get grant to study battle sites of 1873 skirmishes

LORNA THACKERAY Of The Gazette Staff Jul 26, 2010

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Sitting Bull could count on many allies — the most renowned warriors of his time — in battling what he saw in the early 1870s as the biggest threat on the Northern Plains.

Crazy Horse, Gall, Rain In The Face, Spotted Eagle — they all understood that if the Northern Pacific Railroad were built through the heart of their last great hunting grounds along the Yellowstone River, their very existence was threatened.

Even if — and it was a big if — the iron horse didn't shed settlers and gold miners as it traversed the broad plain carved by the river and its many tributaries, the mere presence of the steaming, belching engines clanging across game trails and through breeding grounds endangered their way of life.

Where the railroad comes, buffalo disappear, Sitting Bull reasoned. It was a matter of life and death.

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Spotted Eagle, Sans Arc war chief, had vowed to tear up the railroad tracks and kill the builders. His sentiments were shared across Indian Country.

In 1872, fierce attacks on Northern Pacific surveyors and their military escorts had stopped the survey. But the next year, the survey crews were back. So determined was the government that the railroad be completed that it sent nearly 1,200 cavalry and infantry along as escorts, joined by another 500 civilian employees, 39 scouts and two newspaper correspondents.

Gen. David Stanley was officially in charge, but since he was often drunk, Lt. Col. George Custer, in command of the 810 men of the 7th Cavalry, usually called his own shots.

The force was comparable in size and included many of the same troopers who would march out of the same North Dakota forts three years later toward a collision with the same group of warriors at the Little Bighorn.

But in 1873, there was no battle to the death, just two low-casualty encounters — one near present-day Miles City and one at the mouth of the Bighorn River — and a skirmish at Pompeys Pillar.

Overshadowed by events in the fateful year 1876 and the disaster at Little Bighorn, Custer's earlier fights with the Sioux and Cheyenne along the Yellowstone are all but forgotten. These battle sites are in private ownership, visited mostly by cattle and the occasional scholar.

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Recently, the Frontier Heritage Alliance, a nonprofit group of Montana and Wyoming history enthusiasts, was awarded a \$68,800 grant from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program to produce a report on the battle sites with an eye toward nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

It is the third grant the Alliance has received to document battles fought on the route of the original railroad survey, said Howard Boggess, one of the principal investigators on the project. Previous grants have been used to research battles fought in the 1872 survey,

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which was cut short at Pompeys Pillar after Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse attacked the surveyors a few miles northeast of Billings at what is now known as Baker Battlefield.

Bogges, Mike Penfold and Dave Eckroth, all of Billings, put those grant projects together and will be completing the new grant as well.

“This one is going to attract a lot more interest because of the people involved,” Penfold said. “The same combatants were at the Little Bighorn three years later.”

Bogges estimates that the project will take about two years. Most of the grant money will be spent on printing the completed report, obtaining historic photographs and traveling to archives from North Dakota to the East Coast.

“Most of our time is donated,” Bogges said.

They’ll start their search at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Bogges said they’ll drive from there to Carlyle, Pa., where military records are stored. Then they’ll go to Minnesota to look at the archives there before heading to North and South Dakota for more research. The University of Nebraska also has some material they’ll want to take a look at. Almost none of the information is available in Montana.

“These are places we know where this stuff is,” he said. “It’s detective work really. We try to do almost a genealogy on all the officers and men.”

Although they plan to review all the military and railroad records available, they hope to find the private journals and diaries of participants in the campaign for a more rounded history.

Their job will be to put all the information scattered in libraries and archives across the country into a report that provides a single point of reference.

“We have to go back East to find it, but we’re bringing it all back to Montana,” Bogges said. “Actually we’re building a pretty good resource library and bringing it home.”

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The Frontier Heritage study does not include any archaeological work at this time, he said. Some archaeology has already been done, and they hope to look at those reports and talk to the archaeologists who did the work to see if more is needed.

Most of all, Boggess, Penfold and Eckroth hope to build good relationships with landowners.

“What we do does not affect owners’ rights,” Boggess said. “When we get done you can’t even tell we’ve been there.”

Landowners each will get a copy of the finished report and new knowledge about their property.

“These landowners appreciate this history and are more likely to preserve it,” Penfold said. “They can be the best protectors.”

The three men also join in educating local communities about the history on their doorsteps. They talk at community meetings and at schools about their work.

Their new project will concentrate on the two most significant battles of the 1873 Northern Pacific survey.

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Custer, who was new to the Northern Plains that year, and Stanley marched from Fort Rice, near Bismarck, N.D., on June 20. Although the Sioux and Cheyenne knew of the buildup of troops at Fort Rice and expected the survey to resume that summer, they did not discover the long military column until early August on the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Tongue River.

Alerted to the soldiers' approach, Crazy Horse devised a plan of attack that he had used successfully in other battles. After he hid the main body of warriors in the timber, he sent out a party of decoys to lure the enemy into his trap.

At the same time, Custer and two companies of the 7th were scouting well ahead of the main body of troops. Suddenly six warriors charged, then turned and fled as the troopers returned fire. The cavalry raced after the decoys for about two miles with Custer and about 20 of his men taking the lead.

It must have looked like a dream come true to Crazy Horse. Everything was working as he planned. But Custer sensed the trap and turned around just in time to form a skirmish line against the warriors trying to surround the troops. The heavily outnumbered cavalry held out for four hours until the rest of the column arrived and the Indians rode away.

One soldier had been shot in the arm and about 10 warriors were killed. One soldier and two civilians, including the regimental veterinarian, had left the main body of troops and were killed.

Custer pursued the retreating tribesmen, ordering a 36-hour forced march, but he could not catch the fleeing warriors.

Crazy Horse and his war party found Sitting Bull's village of about 400 lodges near the mouth of the Rosebud and warned him about the soldiers before alerting his own people on the opposite side of the Yellowstone. The Sioux camps combined and were moved out of Custer's path to a place of safety. Although the 7th Cavalry was hot on their heels, Custer's troopers had not been able to make the river crossing as the skillful Sioux had done in bull boats.

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Custer camped with about 450 men on the Yellowstone near the mouth of the Bighorn River on Aug. 10. During the early morning of the next day, the Sioux prepared to attack from across the river. An estimated 1,000 warriors fanned out along the bank opposite Custer. The first shot was fired at daybreak.

Fighting was intense, but Custer managed to fend off the attack and send the warriors back across the river in retreat. Custer lost one man with three others wounded. Indian casualties were estimated at 30.

With the expeditions forces together again, Custer discontinued his pursuit. The column continued west to Pompeys Pillar, where the railroad survey was at last completed.

After weeks of searing hot days in their cross-prairie trek, many of the troopers stripped and jumped into the Yellowstone on Aug. 16.

A small party of warriors, who had been following the column's progress for the previous five days, opened fire. The bullets slapped harmlessly in the water.

Completion of the survey did not result in the imminent arrival of the hated iron horse. In the financial panic of 1873, the Northern Pacific was bankrupted. The railroad didn't make it across the Yellowstone to the site of Billings until nine years later.

https://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/battle-study-supported-by-grant/article_e74b989c-66ed-5338-87e4-780ceff85781.html

Battle study supported by grant

LORNA THACKERAY Of The Gazette Staff Jul 28, 2008

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Some say the Great Sioux War began on the morning of Aug. 22, 1872, in the O'Fallon Creek Valley between present-day Miles City and Terry.

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Sitting Bull, a powerful Hunkpapa chief, spoke at intervals in the firing as he and war chief Gall attempted to surround Col. David S. Stanley and his 600 troops in the narrow canyon.

Stanley was escorting a Northern Pacific Railway survey crew through Eastern Montana, and Sitting Bull and Gall knew the implications.

Sitting Bull: Fight to the last

Once the railroad came, there would be no more Indians, Sitting Bull yelled from his hillside position. They would fight to the last, he warned. If white men continued to invade their hunting grounds, the Hunkpapa would join with the other Sioux bands, the Cheyenne and Arapaho to stop them.

Four years later, Sitting Bull gathered in the largest alliance of warriors on the Northern Plains and defeated the Seventh Cavalry at Little Bighorn.

The Battle of O'Fallon Creek was hardly more than a skirmish and is largely forgotten in the wake of other, more storied battles.

But the Frontier Heritage Alliance, a nonprofit organization that includes both Montana and Wyoming, hopes to rescue it from obscurity.

The alliance recently received a \$55,800 grant from the National Park Service's American Battlefields Protection Program to study the battle, document it, map it and even do a little archaeology.

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Money from grant

It was one of 32 grants totaling \$1.37 million awarded this year, said Kristen McMasters, a Park Service spokeswoman.

"There are not a lot of requests from the West," she said in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C. "But we've worked with this group before and they are productive. It's a pleasure to work with them."

Most grants are used to protect battlefields in the East, where Revolutionary War and Civil War battles were fought.

But Frontier Heritage Alliance has been able to win funding for Indian Wars battle sites, including the O'Fallon Creek site and the Baker Battlefield near Billings.

The alliance has already completed a grant won for a study of Baker Battlefield, where Maj. Eugene Baker fought many of the same foes as Stanley did at O'Fallon Creek a week later and Lt. Col. George Custer did at Little Bighorn in 1876.

Baker, who brought troops out of Fort Ellis near Bozeman, also was escorting a Northern Pacific survey in August of 1872. His troops moved east, while Stanley's moved west. They were supposed to meet at the Powder River, but on Aug. 13, Baker was attacked on the Yellowstone east of present-day Billings by a force that included Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Casualties were light, but Baker's survey crew decided they'd had enough and left the field.

One hundred sixty miles away, Gall had found Stanley's column. He and his warriors dogged the survey crew from Aug. 16, occasionally exchanging gunfire and keeping the survey crew on edge. Just before the battle at O'Fallon Creek, Sitting Bull joined Gall. Together, they probably had between 200 and 300 fighting men.

"The site is on private land," Mike Penfold of Billings, an officer with Frontier Heritage Alliance, said Monday.

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Penfold and alliance members Howard Boggess and David Eckroth, also of Billings, are doing the primary research. Eckroth, who did an archaeological survey of Baker's Battlefield, will lead a survey at O'Fallon Creek this fall. The amateur archaeologist has already spent time exploring the field.

Reached in Minneapolis where the trio is digging through railroad archives at the Minnesota Historical Association, Penfold said the research is well under way.

"This one should go fairly quickly," he said. "We're finding lots of good information."

They've already visited the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to scour military records that will help them document their final report to the Park Service.

O'Fallon Battlefield is a unique opportunity, Penfold said.

"It's about as pristine as you can find," he said. "It's really been protected by the landowner."

In 1872, it was dangerous country.

With no sign that Baker was anywhere near to support him, Stanley decided on Aug. 20 to cut the survey short and return to Fort Rice in North Dakota. His column backtracked from the Powder River to O'Fallon Creek.

Troopers and the civilian crew they were protecting must have spent an uneasy night on Aug. 21-22 after Sitting Bull gave them a scare. Just as Stanley was preparing to break camp, the Sioux attacked.

The camp's wagon train quickly formed a circle so tight "the wheels almost touched," one account said. The animals were driven inside with the survey crew.

Stanley formed a skirmish line with two companies and moved on Sitting Bull's forces on the bluffs above. Steadily they drove the Sioux from their positions without taking any casualties. One warrior was killed with a shot to the head.

A force of about 100 warriors approached from the rear. A Gatling gun sprayed bullets in the direction of the approaching Sioux, but still they came, Thomas Rosser, the railroad's chief engineer, reported.

"Our ranks began to waver and officers had to threaten the men to keep them in line and make them do their duty," he wrote.

The warriors came within 100 yards of Stanley's rear guard, then turned "as one man" and rode away.

Gunfire may have been kept at a minimum, as low casualties attest. The warriors probably were short on ammunition after their earlier encounter with Baker on the Yellowstone.

The Sioux trailed Stanley back to North Dakota, but no major skirmishes followed.

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/historic-bozeman-trail-briefly-cut-across-county-s-wildest-looking/article_1f282484-8629-5c26-9165-3f14f6ed3c81.html

Historic Bozeman Trail briefly cut across county's 'wildest looking hills'

From the 52 reasons to love Yellowstone County series

By BRETT FRENCH french@billingsgazette.com Nov 1, 2014

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From the Rims looking south across the Yellowstone River it's easy to see how rugged the South Hills were for emigrants on the Bozeman Trail to cross. The pioneers would have dropped to the river near the middle of the photo. In the background are the Pryor Mountains.

BOB ZELLAR/Gazette Staff

One of the toughest sections along the historic Bozeman Trail existed in a portion of the 10 to 12 miles between Pryor Creek and the present-day Billings Motorcycle Club on the banks of the Yellowstone River.

52 reasons to love Yellowstone County

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“So we start this AM & travel over some of the roughest hills I ever saw often we are on a narrow ridge just wide enough for a wagon & again pulling up a steep acclivity by means of ropes & letting down again by the same means,” wrote Theodore A. Bailey in his 1866 diary of his trip.



Such details are revealed in a collection of Bozeman Trail diaries included in historian Susan Badger Doyle’s two books, “Bound for Montana, Diaries from the Bozeman Trail” and “Journeys to the Land of Gold, Emigrant Diaries from the Bozeman Trail, 1863-1866.”

“The Bozeman Trail was one of these overland gold rush trails,” Doyle writes.” A shortcut from the Platte River Road to the Montana goldfields, it was relatively short in length — less than five hundred miles; stunningly brief in existence — a mere four years from 1863 to 1866; and strikingly little used — only thirty-five hundred emigrants traveled over it. Yet the Bozeman Trail, opening in the midst of the Civil War and closing just prior to completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869, has the enduring distinction of being the last great overland emigrant trail in the American West.”

Diary entries

Despite being just south of Montana’s largest city, the South Hills section of the Bozeman Trail remains undeveloped within a swath of public and private lands. With the exception of buried natural gas and oil pipelines, much of the hills are still grazing land that probably look similar to what westbound travelers saw about 150 years ago. Certainly the hills are just as steep.

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Ellen Gordon Fletcher, who had left a pampered life on a New York farm, wrote of the route to Billings on July 6, 1866: “We came to a very steep place about noon. The road had been over hills but we then came to some of the roughest wildest looking hills we have had to pass over.”



Mike Penfold reads copied diary entries from Bozeman Trail emigrants as he has lunch atop a hill along the possible route between Pryor Creek and Billings in the South Hills on land leased by the Billings Motorcycle Club.

BRETT FRENCH/Gazette Staff

The diary entries contain little capitalization or punctuation as well as misspellings, yet they clearly spell out the struggles of the journey. They also describe the Billings area as rich in buffalo, good grass and timber.

“quite a valley along the river on the other side and as we came in sight of it from the top of the bluffs it was literally covered with buffalo as far as you could see also on the road to day they (buffalo) were if any odds thicker than ever and frequently ran so close to the train that the drivers could shoot them down as they walked beside their teams,” wrote C.M. Lee, a teamster, on Sept. 22, 1865.

First ORVers

The Bozeman Trail’s first entrance into what is now Yellowstone County occurred along an ill-defined route that likely made use of buffalo and American Indian trails. Each wagon train likely took a slightly different path.

The wagon train Bailey accompanied, perhaps poorly guided, went down Bitter Creek past what is now Pictograph Caves State Park to the Yellowstone River before having to turn around and backtrack, their route blocked by the steep cliffs and hills at the creek’s mouth. Yet all of the wagon trains that traveled toward what would become Billings eventually ended up in the same place: on the Billings Motorcycle Club’s grounds.

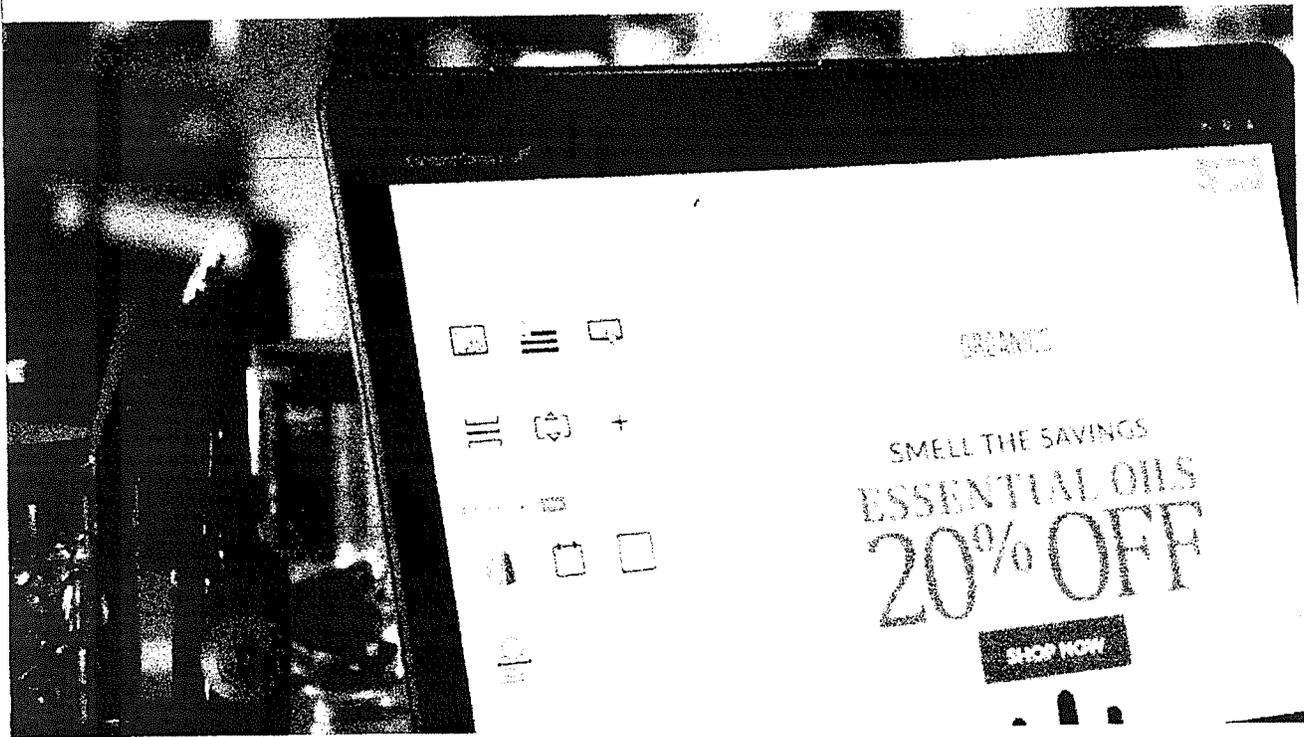
The pioneers and prospectors who took wagons up and down these same steep clay hills covered in sagebrush and grass that are now crisscrossed with motorcycle trails. So the wagons were the first off-road vehicles to make use of

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the area, joked Mike Penfold, a Billings resident who has studied the history and location of the Bozeman Trail.

The emigrants also dropped down to the Yellowstone River at the same place that Sgt. Nathaniel Pryor and three other men likely drove their remaining horses south across the waterway and through the hills during their 1806 journey en route to the Dakotas.



Tough going

For the emigrants to get through such rough country as Billings' South Hills, they had to be creative. Sometimes they would dig a ditch into the dirt to lessen the angle for wagons across hillsides, Penfold explained.

They could also take the smaller wheels on the front of the wagon and put them both on the uphill side and the larger rear wheels on the downhill side of the wagon to lessen its leaning.

"They went up and down more than they went around," Penfold said.

Going down steep hills, the emigrants would sometimes chain the wagon's wheels — called a rough lock — and then let the oxen or mules drag the wagon downhill. On really steep sections, they would sometimes set a post or use a tree as a tie-off point to lower or pull up the wagons by a rope tied to the axle.



Mike Penfold checks his GPS as he walks a possible route that emigrants took during the Bozeman Trail's early days, 150 years ago.

BRETT FRENCH/Gazette Staff

Lee's diary contains a very detailed description of the troublesome drop from the South Hills into the Yellowstone River bottom.

“the descent from the bluffs to the river is very steep and dangerous at least two hundred feet I should judge the first half is not very steep then pass along a descending and sideling ridge barely wide enough for a road for a couple of hundred yards to the last descent which is at an angle of about 65 degrees and around a curve with only just room for the road before starting down this last hill we rough locked both hind wheels with log chains and went ahead trusting to Providence all got down safely”

Considering the difficulties of such travel, it's amazing the emigrants made it at all. Some didn't, dying from sickness or killed in accidents or in fights with Indians along the way. Davis Willson's 1866 diary noted that, “In all the trains that have come up to the present time there have been 10 killed and 5 wounded.

Short life

Although the Bozeman Trail was short lived, the route that came to the Yellowstone River near Billings had an even more brief life. In 1865, when the Army sent a road-building crew along the trail, they avoided the rugged South Hills.

By 1866, emigrants had abandoned the Billings route in favor of a road that traveled along Bad Pass north of Bighorn Canyon and followed the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River downstream to the Rock Creek Valley. The new route proved easier and meant that travelers didn't have to struggle through the South Hills, move upstream to Blue Creek and climb the hills again before dropping down Duck Creek to reach the Clarks Fork River.

So the Bozeman Trail is not one distinct route. It was moved and realigned according to the wagon train leaders who were always searching for a better, easier, safer way. But for a short time, at least, some of those emigrants dropped down to the Yellowstone River just south of Billings.

For a student of history like Penfold, a chance to walk along the same hills in search of that likely route is a connection to the rugged past of our pioneer ancestors. Hiking the hills and scanning for a likely trail the emigrants may have taken, the possibilities seem to narrow yet still prove elusive.

“You've got to speculate a heck of a lot, but they wouldn't have gone over there,” Penfold said pointing to the hills above Blue Creek, “or over here” he added, pointing toward Pictograph Caves. More likely, the emigrants came right over the hill on which he was standing.

Some history

Although called the Bozeman Trail, entrepreneur John Bozeman strung together his route from a collection of old game and Indian trails to create a shorter route to the gold discoveries in Bannack, a town that would become the territorial capital of Montana. The first trail into Bannack came from the west, traveling north

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from Wyoming into Idaho along the western edge of the Rocky Mountains. Bozeman was looking to cut that distance.

As historian Susan Badger Doyle points out, the Bozeman Trail might not have even been named after John Bozeman if the wagon train he guided in 1864 hadn't passed another that had set out earlier but halted to let its travelers search for gold.

That 1864 trip came after Bozeman's first effort to follow the route, in 1863, was turned back by a large group of Cheyenne and Sioux near present-day Buffalo, Wyo. The wagon train was traveling through land guaranteed to the tribes by the U.S. government in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851. The Bozeman Trail complicated the agreement and eventually led to a greater U.S. Army presence and the start of what was called Red Cloud's War, named after a chief of the Oglala Lakota.

"By August 1868 the army had abandoned all three Bozeman Trail forts and left the Indians to believe they had driven the soldiers from their territory," Doyle wrote. "The trail was not used again until 1876, and then as an invasion route during the Great Sioux War."



From a high point in the South Hills, Mike Penfold scans the country for a possible route that emigrants took while traveling along the Bozeman Trail.

BRETT FRENCH/Gazette Staff

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Brett French

Montana Untamed Editor

Montana Untamed editor for the Billings Gazette.

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