

**Pioneer Trail Research Monograph**

# **The Carroll Trail**

**Carroll Landing on the Missouri River  
to  
Helena, Montana. 1874-75**

*Abridged Edition*

**by**

**Steve F. Russell  
Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa , 50011**

Pioneer Trail Research  
26393 520<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Ames, Iowa 50014

The Carroll Trail story is one of adventure, danger, and the attempts at settlement of the western frontier after the civil war. This was at a time when the conflict between indigenous Indian tribes and the immigrating "white man " was reaching a peak. The battle of the Little Big Horn was only three years off and the slaughter of the large buffalo herds was too well advanced to halt. The Judith Basin and Crooked Creek segments of the Carroll Trail were in the area of the last stand of the great buffalo herds. The Blackfeet and Crow Tribes still occupied their traditional lands but were rapidly being forced to fight to protect their primary food source – the buffalo.

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The Carroll Trail: Carroll Landing on the Missouri River  
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Pioneer Trail Research  
26393 520<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Ames, Iowa 50014

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## PREFACE

I wanted to do some historical mapping projects for the Montana Centennial celebration in 1989 so I decided to do the Lewis and Clark Trail in the Bitterroot Valley and the Carroll Trail in central Montana. My goal was to provide accurate history and maps of these trails.

The Carroll Trail was really a wagon road for transporting goods from Carroll Landing on the Missouri River to Helena Montana. It passed by, or through the following locations: Hutton Bottoms, Little Crooked Creek School, Roy, Fergus, Armells, Hilger, Fort Lewis (now Lewistown, Montana), Judith Gap, Hoppley Creek (Hoppley Hole), Martinsdale, Bair Reservoir, Checkerboard, Brewer's Hot Springs (White Sulphur Springs), Smith River, Camp Baker (Fort Logan), Benton Gulch, Confederate Gulch, Diamond City, Canyon Ferry Lake, Spokane House, East Helena, and Helena.

The trail was needed when low water conditions prevented steam boats from reaching Fort Benton or Cow Island. The freighting operation over the road was not all that profitable nor was it heavily used. When the railroad came to Corinne, Utah in 1869, freight by rail and then by wagon over the Montana Trail (crossing the Continental Divide at Monida Pass on the Montana-Idaho border) started serious competition for the Missouri River Steamboats. When the railroad was completed through Montana in 1883, shipping by steamboat up the Missouri River became impractical for the gold fields of Montana.

Most of my information about the trail came from three resources, an 1869 reconnaissance map by Capt. Clift, an 1874 reconnaissance journal by Captain Constant Williams, Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry out of Fort Shaw, and a 1975 reconnaissance by William Ludlow, Captain of Engineers, Brevet Lieutenant-colonel, U.S. Army, Chief Engineer, Department of Dakota.

It was very pleasurable to compile information about this historic trail and to actually be able to travel over its entire length. I hope this information will continue to provide future generations with accurate historical information about this trail.

The original newspaper article has been rearranged to make this report, which has been written in several parts. Part 1 explains the basic facts about the trail and answers anticipated reader questions. Part 2 describes the 1875 trip of Captain William Ludlow from Carroll to Camp Baker. Part 3 is an account of the 1874 trip from Helena to Camp Lewis made by Captain Constant Williams and Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry. Part 4 contains a narrative of the author's 1988 trip from Carroll to Camp Baker. Photos of the author's 1988 trip are in Appendix A. Maps of the campsites and landmarks in the Williams Journal are in Appendix B. Appendix C. contains the author's hand-drawn maps for the newspaper article. Appendix D. contains a series of topographic maps documenting the trail route (only available in the unabridged version of this report). This PDF file also contains an attachment that gives the WGS84 latitude and longitude waypoints for the trail.

Steve F. Russell  
March 27, 1989  
Ames, Iowa

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	6
Part 1. The Carroll Trail Explained .....	8
Prehistory of The Carroll Trail .....	8
Why Was There a Carroll Trail? .....	8
Origin of the Name .....	8
Where Was Carroll? .....	8
What Was Carroll Like? .....	9
What Happened to The Carroll Trail? .....	9
Part 2. The 1875 Trip from Carroll to Camp Baker by Captain William Ludlow .....	11
Ludlow's Journal .....	11
Description of Carroll .....	12
The Carroll route from Helena .....	12
Military posts on the Carroll Road .....	12
Suggestions as to the use of Cavalry on the Carroll Road .....	13
Geologists .....	13
Author's Comments .....	13
Mauvaises Terres .....	13
Geologists .....	14
Geologists .....	15
Author's Comments .....	15
Camp Lewis, on Big Spring Creek, seventy-five miles from Carroll .....	16
Geologists .....	16
Author's Comments .....	16
Judith Basin .....	16
Geologists .....	17
Author's Comments .....	17
Judith Gap .....	17
Camp on the Musselshell River .....	17
Geologists .....	18
Author's Comments .....	18
Forks of the Musselshell .....	18
North Fork of the Musselshell .....	19
Geologists .....	19
Author's Comments .....	19
Brewer's Hot Sulphur Springs .....	19
Geologists .....	20
Author's Comments .....	21
Author's Comments .....	21
Two routes from Baker to Fort Ellis .....	21

Author's Comments .....	21
Camp on branch of Shields River .....	22
Author's Comments .....	22
Bridger Pass. Brackett's Creek. Bridger Mountains .....	22
Author's Comments .....	23
Part 3. The 1874 Trip from Fort Shaw, via Helena, to Camp Lewis by Captain Constant Williams and Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry .....	24
Author's Introduction .....	24
Williams Journal .....	24
Author's Comments .....	24
Author's Comments .....	24
Author's Comments .....	25
Author's Comments .....	26
Part 4. Traveling the Carroll Trail: The Author's 1988 trip from Carroll to Camp Baker .....	27
Introduction .....	27
Author's Narrative .....	27
Postscript .....	31
Bibliography .....	33
Appendix A. Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip .....	A01
Appendix B. Maps in the Williams Journal .....	B01
Appendix C. The Author's Hand-Drawn Maps of the Carroll Trail .....	C01
Appendix D. Topographic Maps of the Carroll Trail    Only MAP 01 is included in the abridged version	

## Part 1. The Carroll Trail Explained

### Prehistory of The Carroll Trail

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, the U.S. Army had a great desire to develop shipping routes to supply the forts of Montana Territory. Several reconnaissances were conducted for this purpose but the one commanded by E. W. Clift in the spring of 1869 was the most significant for the Carroll Trail because it demonstrated the feasibility of wagon roads from the Missouri River near the mouth of the Musselshell River to Helena and the Gallatin Valley. Clift was responsible for the exploration of a wagon road route from Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, to the mouth of the Musselshell River. The Missouri river boat landing at the terminus of this route was first known as Musselshell City and later as Fort Musselshell. The portion of Capt. Clift's route between Armell's Creek and Martinsdale would become a part of the Carroll Trail. The history of the Carroll Trail began when Lt Gustavus Cheyney Doane, from Fort Ellis, established a steamboat landing in May, 1874 as the Missouri River terminus of the Fort Ellis-Carroll Wagon Road. The settlement that grew around this landing was to be known as the "town" of Carroll.

### Why Was There a Carroll Trail?

The Carroll Trail was established by the merchants of Helena to serve as a freight wagon route between Helena and a suitable steamboat landing on the Missouri River. They wanted a third alternative to the two principal routes already in existence – the Helena-Fort Benton Wagon Road and the wagon road that went past Virginia City and ended at Corinne, Utah. Both existing routes had problems of high cost and poor reliability. The wagon road to Corinne connected with the Union Pacific Railroad but was at a distance of over 450 miles which

caused a considerable freight expense and delays during bad weather. The wagon road to Fort Benton was a toll road and expensive. Also, because Fort Benton was the upper limit of river navigation, the shipping season was frequently shortened by low water.

As a consequence of these problems, and to provide the two existing routes with more competition, the Carroll Trail was developed – Freight shipping with minimum cost and maximum reliability was very important to the merchants of Helena who were a main source of supplies for the gold fields of central Montana.

### Origin of the Name

The Carroll Trail was also known as the Helena-Carroll Wagon Road and, more simply, as the Helena Road. It was named for Matthew Carroll, one of the owners of the Diamond R freight company. The Diamond R was a major freight hauler in territorial Montana.

### Where Was Carroll?

Carroll, Montana Territory, was located on the south side of the Missouri River approximately 166.5 river-miles below Fort Benton and about 38 river-miles above the mouth of the Musselshell River. It was very near the mouth of what is shown as Carroll Coulee on modern topographical maps. This is approximately 18 airline miles north of Valentine and 32 airline miles ENE of Roy.

Carroll is now within the Charles M. Russell national Wildlife Range. The location on modern topographic maps is approximately WGS84 Latitude 47/34/35 and Longitude 108/22/30, or also T21N, R26E and between sections 15 and 16.

Determination of its exact location was a major goal of the author's research and has



required much careful work. Some authors have reported its location as near Cow Island and others have located it at the mouth of the Musselshell. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that cartographers of the late 1800s had little information about the land and creek topography of this area and made large errors in some of the maps prepared during that time.

### What Was Carroll Like?

Carroll was a rudimentary steamboat landing for Missouri River freight bound for Helena, Camp Baker, and Fort Ellis when Capt. William Ludlow, U.S. Army, was there. On July 27, 1875, he described Carroll thusly: *Carroll is a frontier 'town' of perhaps twenty or twenty-five log buildings, on the south bank of the river, six hundred and forty miles below Fort Benton, the limit of navigation on the Upper Missouri. The town is situated on a timbered plateau 15 to 20 feet above the level of the stream at low water, in the river-valley, which is some 800 to 900 feet in depth, with steep clay slopes covered with pine.*

### Where Was The Carroll Trail?

It started at Carroll Landing and went west-northwest to just north of Roy. From there it crossed Armell's Creek and turned south-southwest at Hilger. It crossed Big Spring Creek 2-3 miles below Lewistown and went on a direct line to Judith Gap. From the Gap it went on a direct line to the forks of the Musselshell near Martinsdale. It followed the North Fork to Copperopolis and then crossed the divide to the North Fork of Smith's River and down it to White Sulphur Springs. From White Sulphur Springs, the trail west closely followed the current public road to Confederate

Gulch, passing Fort Logan, Watson Post Office, and Diamond City. At the mouth of Confederate Gulch, it went west crossing the Missouri north of Diamond Island, and then continued west to the mouth of Beaver Creek, where it proceeded up Beaver Creek and Antelope Creek to just north of where Highway 287 crosses Antelope Creek. From that point it closely follows the highway and/or railroad through East Helena and into Helena.

The description above applies to the route only for the years 1874-75 because there were many changes to the route and settlements of the Carroll Trail over the many years of its usefulness but a description of these must be left to another time.

### What Happened to The Carroll Trail?

With the completion of the Northern Pacific railroad in 1883, the Carroll Trail was no longer needed to supply Helena. However, the usefulness of much of the route would continue for many years. In fact, much of the exact route is still in use today.

For example, part of the Carroll Trail served as a main route for freight, mail, and homesteaders' migration in the area from Confederate Gulch to the Judith Basin until the completion of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific RR up the Musselshell River about 1908. After this, the travel routes, and many settlement locations, were altered to meet the needs of convenient railroad access. In one sense we can say the life of the original Carroll Trail was less than ten years but we can also say that many portions of it have served the needs of the area, in various ways, even up to the present day.



**WAR DEPARTMENT**  
**REPORT**  
**OFA**  
**RECONNAISSANCE**  
**FROM**  
**CARROLL, MONTANA TERRITORY,**  
**ON THE UPPER MISSOURI,**  
**TO THE**  
**YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK,**  
**AND RETURN,**  
**MADE IN**  
**THE SUMMER OF 1875**  
**BY**  
**WILLIAM LUDLOW,**  
CAPTAIN OF ENGINEERS, BREVET LIEUTENANT-COLONEL U.S. ARMY.  
CHIEF ENGINEER DEPARTMENT OF DAKOTA

## Part 2. The 1875 Trip from Carroll to Camp Baker by Captain William Ludlow

### Author's Introduction

In the summer of 1875, Capt. William Ludlow and his survey party traveled from Carroll to Camp Baker and then on to Fort Ellis near Bozeman. From Fort Ellis, the survey party continued on to Yellowstone Park and then returned to Carroll. The chronological account that is given here follows the journal entries of Captain Ludlow. The reports of the geologists, Edward S. Dana and George Bird Grinnell, are included as comments. Some of the journal entries and geologist comments have been paraphrased, or omitted, when they seem superfluous to the central idea. Wherever reasonable, however, the exact wording of the journal has been followed. Dana and Grinnell were with Lieutenant Thompson who had decided to go ahead of Captain Ludlow and travel all the way to Camp Baker.

### Ludlow's Journal

**July 6. -Fort Stevenson. Dak.** Embarked on the steamer from Bismarck the evening of July 5th. Fort Stevenson, eighty-four miles from Bismarck, was reached at midnight.

**July 7. -Fort Berthold.** The boat reached Berthold at 5 a.m. and stopped for two hours to land some freight. Berthold is the agency for the combined tribes of Crees, Gros Ventres, and Mandans, who occupy a common village built on the north bank of the river, surrounding an old stockade of the Northwestern Fur Company, which had formerly a trading-post here. At that early hour, the village was still asleep, and a stroll through it numerous Indian curs that with snarls and threatening aspect resented the intrusion.

**July 8.** -Was hot and uneventful.

Toward afternoon, the mosquitoes became more and more troublesome, and at night forbade sleep. About 11 p.m., the boat was stopped for the purpose of landing Reynolds (who had his horse with him), and dispatching him in advance to Fort Buford, with a note to the post-quartermaster for supplies and one to the post-surgeon. a member of the party had been severely attacked with a disorder brought on by the heat and the effect of the river water, which it is injudicious for one unaccustomed to its use to indulge in freely.

**July 9. -Fort Buford, Dak.** Arrived at Buford, three hundred miles above Bismarck, at 3 a.m. The surgeon, Dr. Middleton, kindly came down at once and announced that the invalid was suffering from a sharp attack, and that it would be in a high degree dangerous for him to proceed. I made preparations to go ashore and remain until the next succeeding boat, which would pass in a week or ten days, should enable me to continue the journey. Meanwhile Lieutenant Thompson would be in charge of the party, and instructions were given him to proceed to Carroll and examine thoroughly the neighboring country. A full opportunity would, at the same time, be afforded to determine the latitude and longitude of Carroll as a starting-point for the survey of the Carroll road, thence to Camp Baker, which might then be proceeded with, immediately on my arrival.

**July 15.** -News from Carroll received at Buford. The Josephine returned to Buford from Carroll, having safely landed the party, and brought a note from Lieutenant Thompson to the effect that the Indians had been very

troublesome on the Carroll road, had run off a drove of forty mules belonging to the Transportation Company, and had even boldly invaded Carroll and attempted to steal horses from the picket-rope. I received information also that three recruits of a large detachment which had recently gone up the river, destined for Fort Shaw, had been killed in the immediate vicinity of Camp Lewis, seventy-five miles out of Carroll.

**July 27. -Carroll is reached.** Carroll was reached at 7 p.m. I found a note from Lieutenant Thompson to the effect that the vicinity of Carroll had been examined and the necessary observations taken; and, finding that forage and rations were becoming scarce, it had been determined to proceed on the road toward Camp Baker in order to save delay. A courier was dispatched to Camp Lewis for escort and transportation by Lieutenant-Colonel Otis, assistant inspector-general of the department, who was en route to Helena, and we waited the reply.

**Description of Carroll.** Carroll is a frontier "town" of perhaps twenty or twenty-five log buildings, on the south bank of the river, six hundred and forty miles above Bismarck and one hundred and sixty-five miles below Fort Benton, the limit of navigation on the Upper Missouri. The town is situated on a timbered plateau 15 or 20 feet above the level of the stream at low water, in the river valley, which is some 800 to 900 feet in depth, with steep clay slopes covered with pine. It owes its existence to its being the terminus of the road recently opened from Helena, and the point at which freights are transferred to and from the boats.

**The Carroll route from Helena,** Montana has long suffered from its isolation and from the want of an outlet for its productions. Until the opening of the Carroll road, the only regular communication with the outer world was by the road from Helena to Corinne, on the Union

Pacific Railroad, a distance of over four hundred and fifty miles. The distance from Helena to Carroll is more than two hundred miles less than this, a difference which, to the heavy bull-trains averaging only twelve or thirteen miles per day, represents a saving of fifteen or sixteen days time. The Missouri River, as far up as Carroll, is generally navigable for the flat-bottomed steam-wheel boats that ply upon it until some time in October; and it is evident that, by the aid of a connection at Bismarck with the Northern Pacific, an important and valuable outlet for the wealth of the Territory has been discovered, available from the opening of navigation in the spring until quite late in the fall, a period of over five months.

In addition to the encouragement to the industries of Montana, a large saving can be made by the Government in the cost of transporting its troops and supplies for the use of this route. These considerations, supported by the necessity for maintaining troops to act as a check upon the lawlessness of the large number of Indians annually congregating in the vicinity of Fort Peck, constitute an appeal to the government to protect the road against forays by the Indians, an obligation which is recognized in the distribution of troops along the line of the road.

#### **Military posts on the Carroll Road.**

At Camp Baker, fifty-two miles east of Helena, is a permanent garrison of two companies of infantry; at the forks of the Musselshell, fifty-six miles farther east, is a summer camp of two companies of infantry and one of cavalry; at the Judith Gap, thirty miles farther, is a detachment of eighteen or twenty men; and at Camp Lewis, thirty miles farther and seventy-five miles out of Carroll, is another summer garrison of two companies of infantry, from which a small detachment guards the stage-station at Box Elder, forty miles out of

Carroll. These posts can conveniently receive their supplies from Carroll.

**Suggestions as to the use of Cavalry on the Carroll Road.** If, in addition to the garrison at the forks of the Musselshell and Camp Lewis, a force of cavalry, sufficiently large to patrol the road and push reconnaissances south and east, could be established between Camp Lewis and the Judith Gap, and in this range the requisites of wood, water, and grass are both excellent and abundant, the route could be made as permanently safe as any other highway, and such loss of property and life as occurred last summer could be prevented. The truth of the general proposition cannot, I think, be questioned that the settlements of Montana can best be protected by troops removed from their immediate vicinity and pushed out toward the sources resulted only in arousing the party, and brought a note from the up-river and Montana posts by whence hostile incursions are to be apprehended.

### **Geologists**

The town of Carroll is situated in the alluvial bottom of the Missouri, which is at this point quite extensive, and well timbered with a fine growth of cottonwood. The course of the river-valley is here easterly, and it continues for a considerable distance with but little change in general direction...

### **Author's Comments**

The location of Carroll as reported by Ludlow is Latitude 47/34/48 and Longitude 108/24/00. The location on modern topo graphic maps is approximately Latitude 47/34/35 and Longitude 108/22/30, or T21N, R26E, and section 15/16. The actual town site has long since been eroded away by the Missouri River.

Camp Baker is now known as Fort Logan and is located 17 miles west of White Sulphur

Springs on County Road 360. The summer camp near the forks of the Musselshell River was known as Fort Howie in the late 1870s. The detachment at Judith Gap was west of the present town and at or near the site of the Oka stage station. Camp Lewis was located near the center of present-day Lewistown. The summer garrison at the Box Elder stage station was located about 3 miles west of Roy.

Ludlow is a little aggravated at the organization and use of troops along the Carroll Trail. The tendency of these garrisons was to remain in camp where it was warm, reasonably comfortable, and relatively safe!

**July 30. -Start from Carroll.** The stage came in an early hour, bringing word from the commanding officer at Camp Lewis that, much as he desired to do so, he had no transportation or men that he could possibly send. Colonel Otis therefore hired such transportation as could be obtained in Carroll; and securing a few rifles and rounds of ammunition, we started soon after midday, our escort being half a dozen unarmed recruits, en route to {Fort} Shaw.

The road out of Carroll leads up a long sharp ridge to the west, constantly ascending, with many turns, until an altitude of over nine hundred feet above the "town" is attained; the view thence was wide and varied. Up and down the river, the valley, sinuous and green, its steep slopes scored by deep ravines, could be traced for many miles. Bordering that, the tumbled Bad Lands on the south bank and the yellow prairie on the north, and in the distance the various ranges of mountains in detached groups the Bear's Paw, seventy miles to the north and west; the Little Rockies, thirty miles north; the Judith Mountains, forty miles south and west; with the Great and Little Moccasins close by, and the Snowies beyond.

**Mauvaises Terres. Camp on Little Crooked Creek.** The road at first traversed a rolling sterile prairie, gradually descending.

Camp was made on Little Crooked Creek, thirteen miles from Carroll, and in what are called the Bad Lands, which extend out from Carroll for over thirty miles. The landscape is dreary to the last degree, with rolling and broken outlines. The soil throughout the region is a finely-ground clay of dark ashen hue and texture and irregularly striped by dirty alkaline streaks. In the absence of rain, it is dry and dusty; but thoroughly wetted, it becomes a greasy, slippery, fathomless mass of clinging mud, through which the straining animals can hardly drag the heavily weighted wheels. Wood is almost entirely wanting; water is very scarce, and when found is alkaline and tepid. The vegetation is sage and cactus, with occasionally a little thin, poor grass. Near camp, two trains were encountered going into Carroll; they halted for the night two or three miles behind us.

**Geologists:**

The Helena Road at Carroll rises in two or three very steep pitches the greater part of its final ascent, and, within two or three miles of where the road leaves the valley the high plateau is reached, which is kept, with little change of level, beyond Crooked Creek. The height here, as given by an aneroid, is 665 feet.

The appearance of the surrounding country,

as viewed from the top of the bluffs back of Carroll, is very forbidding. The whole landscape is of a somber, gray tint; the color of the soil and the sage-brush sparingly relieved by the dark green of the stunted pines that grow here and there on the summits of the bluffs and along the little ravines. There is little vegetation, except the *Artemisia* and, altogether, the region seems incapable of affording sustenance to man or beast.

Notwithstanding its uninviting appearance, the neighboring country abounds in game. This region has been, and still is, though to a less extent than formerly, the favorite feeding ground of a portion of the great northern herd of buffaloes: antelope are numerous on the plains, and mule deer and elk are found in the pine-timbered ravines. Farther back from the river, in the hill-country, the big-horn, or mountain sheep, and the grizzly bear occur, though nowhere as numerous. Little Crooked Creek, thirteen miles from Carroll, retains water holes until midsummer, when it generally dries up entirely. Five miles beyond, a branch of Crooked Creek also affords a little poor water in the early summer; but, late in the season, the only water on the route is found in pools in the bed of Crooked Creek, and this is decidedly unpalatable.

**July 31. -Box Elder Station forty miles from Carroll.** Camp was broken early, and the journey resumed through the same enlivening scenery for twenty miles, crossing Crooked Creek, a sluggish alkaline stream, deeply cut into the dark-gray clay (where the sight of a party of mounted Indians some miles away, disturbed our lunch and started us on the road) to where the bounds of the Bad Lands were reached, and the road ascended upon a high rolling prairie, over which a push of seven miles led into the valley of Box Elder Creek. This is a stage-station, forty miles from Carroll, where a guard of four soldiers is maintained from Lewis. The halting place is marked by a log cabin standing on the bank of the creek, a small stream of swift-flowing water, which has its source in the slopes of the Judith Mountains. During the day, two or three single buffalo were seen, and antelope had appeared from time to time since leaving Carroll.

#### **Geologists:**

From Crooked Creek, the road runs on nearly southwest, rising slightly til a point some few miles from Box Elder Creek is reached, when there is a more sudden rise of '50 feet up to a plateau, which on top, is very level, and the northern edge of which can be distinctly seen extending some distance in both directions... The rise of land continues until we reach Box Elder Valley, where the high plateau is seen extending east and west, and here a descent of 80 feet is made to the level of the stream. Box Elder Creek takes its rise in the Judith Mountains, and after a northerly course of about seven miles, turns easterly and then southeasterly, finally reaching the Musselshell River. At the stage-station, where we camped for several days, its course is nearly east and

west. It is a running stream and furnishes fair water. Our delay at this point gave us an opportunity to explore to some extent the Judith Mountains.

Our examination of the Judith Mountains was hasty and incomplete, owing to lack of time at this point; and our movements were still further embarrassed by the necessity of taking some precautions against the hostile Sioux, known to be in the vicinity at the time.

The summit of Cone Butte commands an extensive view over the prairies to the north. The Little Rocky Mountains and the Bear's Paw Mountains, though far in distance, are the most conspicuous points to be noticed. Its commanding position is well appreciated by the Indians who use it as a lookout, for which it is most conveniently situated. A shelter which we found on the summit, formed of large flat blocks of trachyte resting upon the spreading branches of a stunted pine-tree had doubtless been used as a resting place by many an Indian scout. Cone Butte is itself a conspicuous object from all the surrounding country, even as far north as the Little Rocky Mountains; its perfectly conical shape being very striking from any point on the Carroll road.

#### **Author's Comments**

Cone Butte is the most spectacular landmark on the Carroll trail and can be seen for many miles. It is puzzling that it was not mentioned when the survey party first saw it as they had traveled just a few miles west of Carroll. Cone Butte and Gordon Butte, near the forks of the Musselshell, are excellent trail landmarks because they can be seen for many miles and the trail runs nearly in a straight line with both of them.

**August 1. — Camp Lewis, on Big Spring Creek, seventy-five miles from Carroll.** The road led in a general southwest direction along the northern foot-hills of the mountains, which were eight to ten miles distant, rising steep and wooded to the height of some 2,000 feet. The road was good, although somewhat hilly, the grass fair, and the creeks, several of which we crossed, were all bright little streams of good water.

As we advanced, the mountains began to define themselves. The Little and Greater Moccasins separated from the Judith and from each other, between them appearing the distant Highwoods, with patches of snow; the Snowies, to the south, also snow-crowned; and, separating them from the Little Belt, could be seen the depression which marks the Judith Gap.

The road follows the western flank of the Judith, at the southwest extremity of which, on the banks of Big Spring Creek, finally appeared the garrison-flag and the white tents of Camp Lewis, thirty-five miles from Box Elder. The camp is situated in the level valley of the creek, the garrison consisting of two companies of the Seventh Infantry, Captain Browning commanding. The creek, the main affluent of the Judith River, rises a few miles above Lewis, in a huge spring, from which the stream emerges, full-grown, with a rapid, tumultuous current of ice-cold water, abounding with the black speckled mountain-trout. The course is northwest in a gravelly bed 15 or 20 feet wide and 1 to 2 feet deep. Wood has, in a great measure, to be hauled by the garrison from the mountains, but the grass is rich and luxuriant.

### **Geologists:**

The road from Box Elder to Camp Lewis follows along the foot of the mountains, but at such a distance from them that very few observations could be made... Near Armell's Creek a mile to the north of the road-crossing,

gray clays are conspicuous, forming high bluffs with perpendicular faces, quite different from anything seen near Crooked Creek... Our road approached quite near the mountains at Bald Butte... From this point, the road bears away from the hills again, crossing the divide between the Musselshell and Judith Rivers, and passing between the Judith and Moccasin Mountains...

Camp Lewis is situated on Trout Creek, or Big Spring Branch, as it is sometimes called, which is the largest branch of the Judith River. This is a wide stream of clear, very cold, water, which takes its rise in a spring about five miles from where the camp is situated.

**August 2.** -Lewis is the second stage-station on the Carroll road, seventy-five miles from the "town". We layover one day to rest the animals.

### **Author's Comments**

In 1874, the stage stop was at Reed and Bowles Station on Big Spring Creek, about 2.3 miles below Camp Lewis. The survey map of 1875 shows both the route by the camp and the route through the stage stop.

**August 3. — Judith Basin.** Took the road again at an early hour, ascending upon a partly level and rolling prairie fairly grassed over, where rapid progress, parallel to the Snowy Range, was made, crossing several fine creeks which rise in the Snowies and flow north and west into the Judith River.

The Judith Basin, a sketch of which is given, opened to the north and west, showing a fine, well grassed, gently-rolling prairie, some fifty miles east and west and sixty miles north and south, of irregular diamond-shaped, and inclosing about 1,500 square miles, from the borders of which rose, massive and detached, the encircling ranges, the Judith, Snowy, Little Belt, and Highwoods. Throughout this elevated



region (and more especially later in the Yellowstone Park), we had daily occasion to observe the marked depth and clearness of the coloring, owing, I presume, to the utter purity of the atmosphere; the colors of objects comparatively near by seemed to possess an unsurpassable richness and reality, and even on distant mountains, seventy five or eighty miles away, while the colors were necessarily blended and their details lost, they exhibited a wonderful transparency and distinctness, undimmed by the haze and vagueness which usually obscure such distant objects. It is this quality of the atmosphere that furnishes the chief beauty of the Judith Basin, which can hardly be termed a mountainous country, although the various ranges grouped about it, and separated from transparent purple upon the sky, and seeming hardly to rest upon the yellow prairie which forms so fine a contrast, they look like massive islands in the tawny ocean that rolls against them.

The basin will some day be a great stock-raising, and, by aid of irrigation, an agricultural region. It has always been considered a fine hunting country, where game of all kinds could be found, although we saw none, with the exception of a few antelope; the recent presence of the Crow camp having driven it off.

At Ross's Fork of the Judith, near the gap, and twenty seven miles from Lewis, we met lieutenant Thompson, who had come out from Baker with two spring wagons to meet us. Camp was made, with good grass and fair water; wood scarce.

### **Geologists:**

From Camp Lewis the road passes on thirty miles to the Judith Gap, crossing a portion of the country which has some promise of becoming valuable in time. Quite a number of running streams pass through it, of which Cottonwood Creek, Little Trout Creek, and

Buffalo Creek are the most important. The latter becomes dry late in the season. Little Trout Creek is famous for the number and beauty of the trout it contains.

### **Author's Comments**

The Judith Basin country is still precisely as Ludlow described it. A drive through the basin today produces the same lasting impression of the size of the area and the clarity of the air as Ludlow described. His prediction of a land that some day would be a great stock-raising and agricultural region was right on target. The trip through the basin was a welcome change from the "Mauvaises Terres" that occupied the first forty or fifty miles west of Carroll.

**August 4. -Judith Gap.** Pulled out at 6 a.m. The road lead directly through the gap. From the southeast extremity of the Little Belt Mountains rises a fine spring, flowing east at first, and then doubling back through the gap into Ross's Fork.

The gap is formed by a depression five or six miles in width between the timbered Snowy and Belt ranges. It constitutes the head of the Judith Basin; to the south appearing a broad, level stretch of prairie, sloping down to the Musselshell, twenty or twenty-five miles distant. The Crow camp at the time we passed was said to be seven or eight miles to the eastward, on the southern slope of the Snowies. We also heard that a fight had taken place two nights before between the Crows and a party of Sioux, and that a war-party of one hundred Sioux had passed subsequently through the gap, going northward.

### **Camp on the Musselshell River.**

Emerging from the gap, the road led west and south over a dry, sterile, and dusty prairie, in the teeth of a blistering southwest gale, crossed Hoppley's Hole and Haymaker's and Daisy

Dean Creeks, into the valley of the Musselshell, whose freshness and greenness and abundance of timber afforded the strongest contrast to the country behind us. The hired teams were mortally weary, and had been with the greatest difficulty urged all day against the strong, hot wind. Released from harness, they ran to the bank and leaped bodily into the stream, thrusting their muzzles deep into the cool water with great contentment. The river is twenty-five or thirty feet wide, and on the average seven or eight inches deep, of clear, rapid flow, over a gravelly bottom; the valley level, wide, fertile, and richly grassed, with heavy clumps of timber on the low banks of the stream.

### **Geologists:**

The Judith Gap is the divide between the Judith and the Musselshell Rivers. At this point the Little belt Mountains and the Snow Mountains approach one another quite closely.

From the Judith Gap to the Musselshell Canyon, a distance of rather forty miles... This district is remarkable, perhaps more so than any other seen by us, for the deep and wide valleys which have been cut through the nearly horizontal rocks, and which lead away from the neighboring range, the Little Belt Mountains. There are now no streams running from the mountains, with the exception of Haymaker's Creek near the Forks of the Musselshell, and yet the remarkably level prairie is broken by a number of striking ravines or valleys. These are all alike in that they show no evidence of any important action by recent running water, but, on the contrary, point to agencies which must have done their work in glacial times.

Three very conspicuous valleys, one of them a mile wide, with steep banks more than one hundred feet in height, are crossed before going twelve miles from the gap. Hopley's Hole is by far the most remarkable of these. West of Hopley's Hole, the plain is nearly level for a long distance, broken only by one or two

gullies.

Haymaker's Creek, twenty-five miles from the gap, offers another example of the extensive erosion which has taken place in this region. A short distance below the road-crossing, the sandstone is exposed.

### **Author's Comments**

Judith Gap was a nearly ideal outlet to the south and west. It was very popular north/south route in central Montana and provided an easy wagon road route to the upper Musselshell and upper Smith Rivers. Camping at this location was definitely risky because of the frequent passing of Indian hunting parties. The Judith Basin was legendary for its abundance of buffalo in the 1870s. Hopley's Hole is a beautiful oasis in the middle of arid land on the route between Judith Gap and the forks of the Musselshell. It was also a difficult obstacle for wagons to cross because of the very steep east bank. The wagon road followed in nearly a straight line between Judith Gap and the forks of the Musselshell. Gordon Butte offers an excellent landmark for traveling west because it can be seen from many points on the trail. The forks of the Musselshell offered an ideal camping site — abundant trees, water, and grass.

### **August 5. -Forks of the Musselshell.**

Made an early start, and at two or three miles from camp came to the "forks" of the Musselshell, where the north and south branches unite. Here a ranchman had established himself, raising cattle, and, by means of an irrigating-ditch, cultivating some seventy-five or eighty acres in oats and wheat. Throughout Montana, owing to the very thorough drainage, the general altitude above the sea, and the prevailing dryness of the atmosphere, irrigation is essential to successful agriculture. A stage-station of the Carroll road is made at this ranch, sixty-five miles from

Lewis and fifty-six miles from Baker.

**North Fork of the Musselshell.** The road followed west and north up the North Fork, passing through a rocky, wooded canyon of considerable beauty. Here the road, overlooking the stream, whose windings it followed, and deeply shaded by pines, made a very agreeable drive, the more so that we were now beyond any danger from Indians. Emerging from the canyon, the road led west and south over a high, rolling, and hilly prairie. At the foot of a long down-grade lay Copperopolis, which was found to consist of a mining-shaft and a deserted shanty. The North Fork of Deep Creek was reached at 4 p.m. and camp made. The creek abounded with trout, and the wood, water, and grass were plenty and good.

#### **Geologists:**

The Musselshell Canyon divides the Little Belt Mountains from what is called the Elk Range. It is a narrow mountain-ravine with steep hills on both sides, which some approach very closely together, and again recede, giving room for a little strip of green on the border of the stream. It is, throughout its length of eight miles, very picturesque, especially near the eastern end, where the abrupt walls and buttresses of white limestone contrast strongly with the dark-green foliage of the pines and spruces.

Leaving the canyon, we emerge into an open rolling country, covered with grass, and with few exposures of the underlying rock. This, as far as could be observed, was a yellowish fragmentary slate, with occasional veins of quartz and calcite. A number of openings have been made by individuals prospecting for metal, but only faint indications of copper were observed.

At Copperopolis, a mine has been sunk some 40 feet into this slate, and some very fair copper-ore and a little silver ore are being taken out. The mine is being worked on a very small

scale indeed, only two men being engaged in it; but the ore obtained is sufficiently valuable to pay its way to the East, where (near Baltimore) it is smelted. Near this point we pass the divide, and descend rapidly to the valley of Deep Creek, leaving the Musselshell behind us, and striking waters that flow into the Missouri near Sun River; that is above Fort Benton.

#### **Author's Comments**

It is likely that the stage station at the forks was at or near what was later called Gauglersville. The stage station site was on the north side of the river. The north fork canyon is still a wooded and beautiful contrast to the country to the east. The site of Fort Howie was about one mile east of the mouth of the canyon but Ludlow does not mention it. The mining area of Copperopolis was partially active in 1875. The "Deep Creek" that they reached was the North Fork of the Smith River at the mouth of Eightmile Creek. The camping location is now under Lake Sutherland.

#### **August 6. -Brewer's Hot Sulphur Springs. Bifurcation of the Carroll Road.**

**Camp Baker, Mont.** The road led down the valley of Deep Creek west and south to Brewer's Springs, where the luxuries of a hot bath, followed by a generous breakfast, were enjoyed. The waters well up freely, strongly impregnated with sulphur, from several springs, with temperatures varying from 105 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. They are taken up in wooden pipes, and introduced into the bathing-houses. The odor is at first unpleasant, but the water is soft and thoroughly delightful to the skin. The color is a milky, cloudy blue, and soft, delicate filaments of sulphur adhere to the sides of the bath and stream from the mouths of the supplying tubes. A small hotel has been built for the accommodation of visitors.

At this point unite the two forks of

Deep Creek, which, bearing the name of Smith's River, flows here north and west past Camp Baker to join the Missouri. The Carroll road bifurcates, one branch going west over the mountains, the other following the rich and fertile river valley, which supports thousands of cattle on its lush pasturage, until at sixteen and three-fourths miles from the springs the road reaches Camp Baker, where it deflects to the west, toward Helena.

The post is an irregular-looking cluster of buildings planted in the midst of a level and stony plain, surrounded by mountains, upon which frequent patches of snow appear. An irrigating ditch brings a current of water through the garrison, but hardly appears able to vivify the arid soil. The troops at Baker are two companies of the Seventh Infantry, Major Freeman commanding. I found here my party awaiting me, and without loss of time made preparations for the trip to Ellis. The transportation and escort which had hitherto accompanied the party had returned to Ellis, and as the road to that point was considered comparatively safe, a small force only was needed.

### **Geologists:**

The valley of Deep Creek; though here somewhat narrow, becomes rapidly wider as we follow it down to Camp Baker. It is a fertile alluvial plain, and is no doubt susceptible of successful and profitable cultivation. There is as yet, however, no market for cereals in the vicinity, and the grassy meadows are given up to large herds of cattle, which range at will over the valleys and foot-hills.

Every settler owns cattle and horses, and these require little or no care, even in winter. The inhabitants state that they cut no hay for the winter-consumption of their stock, nor do they build stables or shelters for them at that season. The animals are said to run out all winter and to keep fat on the standing hay.

Montana beef has quite a reputation for excellence west of the Missouri, so that the raising of cattle is likely to prove the most profitable pursuit for the settler until railroads shall have supplied him with a market for other products. Deep Creek, like most of the streams in this neighborhood, abounds with delicious trout and grayling (*thymallus*), both of which attain a large size, sometimes weighing three pounds or more.

To our left, as we come down the valley of Deep Creek, we have the Elk Range high above us, the summits of which consist of trachyte. This has taken many curious forms, as pinnacles and towers, which rise above timber, and give to the hills a very castellated appearance. An outcrop of purplish-red slate to the left of the road, and dipping 40 degrees southerly, deserved to be mentioned, as its exact counterpart was seen at Camp Baker, sixteen miles distant, there overlying the Potsdam limestones.

The Sulphur Springs are about 17 miles from Copperopolis, and lie at the point where the road to Camp Baker turns at a sharp angle to the west. The springs have a temperature of 150 degrees or thereabouts, and are strongly impregnated with sulphureted hydrogen. They are quite well known through the Territory, and are believed to have the beneficial effects generally ascribed to similar springs, and to be especially valuable in cases of rheumatism, a complaint very common among miners. Considering the vast trachytic upheaval which has taken place in that vicinity, the presence of hot sulphur springs can hardly excite surprise.

From the Sulphur Springs, the road continues west, at the foot of the Big Belt Mountains, crossing a wide grassy plain, which has an even, uniform slope up to the edges of the hills. The stream, some ten miles from the springs, where Newland Creek joins it, runs through a gorge of porphyritic trachyte with a distinct columnar structure. This rock borders

the creek for some distance, and the dike runs across the road, continuing on in a northerly direction. From here, a march of seven miles took us to Camp Baker; the road passing along by bluffs of Miocene tertiary, to be described later.

#### **Author's Comments**

The large numbers of cattle (Ludlow says thousands) being raised on the upper Smith River in 1875 comes as a surprise to this author. The market must have been the central Montana gold mining regions instead of the east because of the large shipping distances involved in getting to eastern markets. The opening of the Carroll Trail may also have influenced the settlers to try large-scale ranching in this region.

The appearance of the Elk Range, as described by the geologists, cries out for a name change to something related to castles! Indeed, the Elk range was to become known as the Castle Mountains a few years later.

Brewer's Hot Springs (now White Sulphur Springs) was certainly a most refreshing stop to the survey party. The luxuries of a hot bath and good food could hardly be passed up. Brewer's Hot Springs was also on one of the routes between Fort Shaw and Fort Ellis and may have enjoyed considerable business from the passing troops. Prior to Brewer's establishment of the mentioned accommodations, the usual stopping place in this area was Trinity Springs, three miles to the northeast.

Newlan Creek was a prominent landmark in 1875 and is mentioned by the geologists (but then called Newland Creek). It also has been referred to as "Newton" creek on some of the very early territorial maps.

#### **Author's Comments**

The wagon road route from Camp Baker to Fort Ellis is described below even though it was not part of the Carroll Road. It has been

included because of its interest to residents of southern Meagher County and because part of the reason for the Carroll Trail was to provide a shipping route for Fort Ellis.

**August 7. Two routes from Baker to Fort Ellis. Moss Agate Springs.** Pulled out at 8 a.m., with transportation consisting of two six-mule teams and a four-mule ambulance, with saddle-horses for the party, and a sergeant and two men for guard and camp duty. There are two routes from Baker to Ellis: one, called the Duck Creek route, via the Missouri and Gallatin valleys, is perfectly safe, being within the settlements, but several miles longer than the other, called the "outer" route, which, returning nearly to Brewer's Springs, goes up the South Fork of Deep Creek almost direct to Ellis, passing between the Crazy and Big Belt Mountains.

From the springs south, the valley is at first broad and level and heavily grassed, the creek flowing northward. Many antelope were seen grazing in the meadows. Camp was made at 3:30 p.m. near a fresh, cold spring issuing from the hillside on the east bank of the creek. The locality is the ordinary halting-place, twenty-seven miles out of Baker, and is called Moss Agate Springs. The grazing and water are excellent, but the supply of wood is small.

#### **Author's Comments**

From Camp Baker, the Carroll Trail continued on west to Helena. Ludlow and party went south to Fort Ellis and Yellowstone Park.

Camp Baker (now Fort Logan) was a major military post in Montana Territory. It was on the Carroll Trail and a route between Fort Shaw and Fort Ellis. It experienced a permanence afforded to few of the early-day military outposts. Ludlow mentions two routes in common use between Camp Baker and Fort Ellis. The first went over Duck Creek Pass and into Broadwater County. It joined the

Helena-Bozeman road near Townsend. The second route, which the party followed, went south to Ringling and then over Bridger Pass on what is now called the Bridger Road. One of their camping places was at Moss Agate Springs, still well known and, at one time, was a stage stop on the wagon road from White Sulphur Springs to Park County.

**August 8. -Camp on branch of Shields River.** Course continued nearly south up the valley. The creek gradually became smaller and finally was dry. "Sixteen-mile Creek," a branch of the Missouri, flowing a strong current west and south was crossed eleven miles from camp, and the road beyond lay over a dry, yellow, gently-undulating prairie, which farther on grew more hilly, and became an interminable waste of sagebrush. The antelope were numerous during the day.

Cottonwood Creek, a small branch of Shield's River, was crossed thirteen and a half miles from Sixteen-Mile Creek. The water is pure and plenty, and the valley is well supplied with cottonwood trees. Continuing, the sage-brush still occupied the ground, and camp was finally made on a small creek flowing east, the valley of which furnished an ample supply of excellent water and grass, and wood sufficient for camping purposes. Bridger pass appeared seven or eight miles south of us, and Flathead Pass opened to the westward through the Big Belt Range.

#### **Author's Comments**

The party traveled south to the Ringling area and then through Potter Basin, west of Potter Creek, and camped on, or near, Flathead Creek.

**August 9. — Bridger Pass. Brackett's Creek. Bridger Mountains.** Pulled out at 6 a.m. The trail led into a broad valley, stretching eastward at the foot of the mountains. richly grassed. intersected by several small streams.

and affording the finest pasturage for three or four herds of cattle which were browsing in the meadow. These had probably been driven over the mountains from the Gallatin Valley for the summer.

Crossing the valley brought us to the foot-hills of Bridger Pass, which, though much lower than the neighboring mountains, still gave promise of an arduous climb for the heavy wagons. A creek flows out of the pass, up the valley of which a road of fair grade could be easily constructed.

In the absence of this, the trail climbs several steep hills in succession, alternately ascending and descending. but constantly rising, through with more than double the necessary labor, until at the summit of a long, sloping hog back, falling steeply on both sides, a preliminary divide was reached, whence descent was made, following a small branch into the valley of Brackett's Creek.

This is a tributary of Shield's River, flowing eastward and separating the group of mountains over which we had passed from the main range, the pass through which still lay before us. Crossing the creek, the second ascent was found to be more gradual and less severe than the former, although of about equal altitude. Reaching the second summit, the descent began down the left bank of Bridger Creek, flowing southward.

The peaks to the west across the valley were lofty, varied in form. and from certain points of view exceedingly fine. Huge patches of snow rested in the more sheltered places on their summits. and one could begin to realize the altitude of 10,000 feet above the sea. which sufficed to maintain this wintry feature even under the clear, hot rays of the summer sun.

The timber throughout the pass is pine. with various small woods in the creek bottoms. Grass is abundant, even among the timber, and the brooks are bright, mountain streams constantly fed from the snow fields above, and

abounding with trout. Elk and deer are numerous, though they are driven from the immediate vicinity of the trail by frequent travel and possibly by the flies, which in great numbers and varieties prove disastrous annoyance to the cattle.

Still following Bridger Creek, the road made a long bend to the south and west, around the base of Bridger Mountain, into the main valley, which turns west to join that of the Gallatin. Crossing the creek, the trail wound over a range of hills, and descended into the valley of the North Gallatin, up on the south bank of which, three or four miles farther west, Fort Ellis is situated. The Bozeman Pass road, leading east and south to the Yellowstone, climbs the hillside opposite to where the road reaches the river.

Fort Ellis stands near the head of the Gallatin Valley, for the defense of which it was constructed. It appears as an assemblage of log houses, irregularly placed from frequent additions, of uninviting exterior, but comfortable within.

### **The Garrison.**

General Sweitzer commanding, includes four companies of the Second Cavalry and one of the Seventh Infantry; but during the summer the mounted troops are required to guard the passes and make frequent scouts, sometimes of considerable extent and hence spend but little time in garrison. At the date of my arrival, two companies were absent, one scouting, the other acting as escort to the party of the Secretary of War in the Yellowstone Park, while I was preparing for the field, and started early next morning.

### **Author's Comments**

After leaving Flathead Creek. the wagon road closely followed the present route of the Bridger road over Bridger Pass and crossing Brackett Creek.

The journal continues with the trip to Yellowstone Park and all of the wonders that were observed. During the period of Montana development, several expeditions were made to Yellowstone.



## Part 3. The 1874 Trip from Fort Shaw, via Helena, to Camp Lewis by Captain Constant Williams and Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry

### Author's Introduction

In the spring of 1874, Capt. Constant Williams and Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry traveled from Fort Shaw to Camp Lewis. They went south from Fort Shaw to Helena and then followed the Carroll Trail from Helena to Camp Lewis. The journal narrative by Williams contains short, choppy comments and map notations which this author has chosen to paraphrase, when necessary, for a smoother reading flow. Where possible, the exact wording of the journal has been followed.

### Williams Journal

**April 18-25.** — Captain Williams and Company F of the 7th U.S. Infantry leave Fort Shaw and travel south to the Helena area. They started in clear weather but encountered snow the morning of the 19th. They traveled on part of the Mullan Wagon Road before arriving at the mouth of the Silver Creek fork of 3 Mile Creek north of Helena. They passed within three miles of Helena to the east and camped for the evening at the head of Spokane Creek near Spokane house and on the Bozeman Road.

**April 26.** — A rain storm forced the party to remain in camp the entire day.

**April 27.** — Departed at 6:40 a.m. for Beaver Creek and the crossing of the Missouri River. A good ferry crosses the river above the mouth of Beaver Creek at Edmundson's. Evening camp was at the mouth of Confederate Gulch just as the wagon road enters the canyon.

### Author's Comments

The party traveled east of Helena on what

was called the Helena Bozeman Road. The road was located very near the route now followed by the railroad tracks. Their evening camp of April 26 was at a place known as Spokane House near the divide between the Spokane Creek and Beaver Creek drainages. The ferry crossing of the Missouri was at a place called Diamond Ferry in an 1872 survey map of the area. The ferry derived its name from Diamond Island just to the north.

**April 28.** — Departed at 6:40 a.m. . The road through Confederate Gulch is very difficult especially for trail wagons. Encamped one mile above Diamond City. Plenty of wood and water but the grazing is poor.

**April 29.** — Departed at 7:15 a.m. The road runs up Confederate Gulch to Cement Gulch (on the left) which the latter it follows to its head and then over a divide into Benton Gulch. We halted at the divide for 2 and ½ hours. The road follows Benton Gulch down for 6 miles and there leaves it. Encamped at leaving.

**April 30.** — Departed at 8:00 a.m. The road runs east to Camp Baker. Encamped just beyond Camp Baker where there is water and grass. Wood was obtained from the Post.

**May 1.** — Laid in camp this day.

**May 2.** — Departed at 7:15 a.m. The road followed up Deep Creek and crossed the North Fork just below Brewer's Hot Springs. There was a good camping place on the south bank of the creek.

### Author's Comments

The wagon road of 1874 to Camp Baker



(now called Fort Logan) went up Confederate Gulch, Cement Gulch, over the divide, and down Benton Gulch. This is nearly the same route now followed by the present-day road. From Camp Baker to White Sulphur Springs, the wagon road followed first the south side and then the north side of the river to the mouth of Newlan Creek. The wagon road then went in nearly a straight line to Brewer's Hot Springs. Captain Williams does not mention using the hot springs for bathing but it seems like too great a temptation to pass up!

**May 3.** — Departed at 7:15 a.m. The road keeps on the south side of the North Fork of Deep Creek, crossing Willow Creek and 4-mile Creek (both running into Deep Creek from the south), the latter having a bad bottom on the west side after rain. Camped in the forks of Deep Cr. and 8-mile Creek. Water and grass at camp. Wood in mountains ½ mile south of camp.

**May 4.** — Departed at 7 a.m. The road enters the canyon of the North Fork of the Musselshell two miles beyond Copperopolis Creek. Copperopolis, Checkerboard, and Flagstaff Creeks are all bridged. Wood, water, and grass are available all through the canyon.

### Author's Comments

The road stayed to the south bank of the North Fork until it reached the mouth of Eightmile Creek. The evening camp of May 3rd was just above the mouth of Eightmile Creek (now under Lake Sutherland). The three creeks mentioned (Willow, Fourmile, and Eightmile) are the same names in use today for the same creeks.

**May 5.** -Departed at 7: 15 a.m. The crossing of the North Fork of the Musselshell is about one mile above the mouth of the South Fork (or Flathead Creek). Fort Howie is one mile from the lower end of the canyon. There is water and grass after leaving the canyon but not

much wood. The road leaves the Musselshell bottom after the crossing and leads to the left. The ranch after the crossing is the last house to be found on the road until Dawes' Trading Post is reached. After leaving the ranch, the road begins to cross foot-hills and the country presents an arid appearance. There is no wood on Daisy Dean Creek but the water and grass are both good. A good bridge crosses the stream. Camp was made on the east bank of Daisy Dean Cr.

**May 6.** — Departed at 7:15 a.m. At 2 miles, the road crosses a water-course which is very miry, but a good crossing can be found above the present one. The road goes down a very steep hill to Haymakers' Creek. The stream is bridged. Water and grass are good but there is no wood. The road continues north and east to a large ravine called Hoppley's (or Hoppy's) Hole. There is no running water in it, unless it may be higher up toward the mountains, here where the road crosses. Water was obtained by digging springs in a side ravine next to our camp on the west side. Grass is good and wood plentiful on the east side of the ravine. The east side is precipitous and the road difficult

**May 7.** — Departed at 6:55 a.m. Crossed Elk Creek (so-called) at 4 miles. It is a dry water course. No wood. Red Spring Creek, 4 miles further, has water in holes, in some places good, but in others alkaline. Water can also be obtained by digging in the bed of the stream. Grass, but no wood. This creek is also called Meadow Branch. The road passes around the east end of the Little Belt Mountains into the Judith Gap (which lies between the mountains crossed and the Snowy Mountains) and thence into the Judith Basin. At 9 miles, Ross Fork is crossed, a clear running stream and the grass in its bottom is excellent. There is no wood however. The banks are low and the ford is good. We camped on the west bank.

**May 8.** — Departed at 6:55 a.m. Crossed Buffalo Creek, a small stream running

into Ross's Fork. No wood, but water and grass. Easy grades on road so far.

**May 9.** — Cold rain storm. Laid in camp this day in consequence of stormy weather.

**May 10.** — Departed at 8:15 a.m. Crossed Cottonwood Creek which has a wide, deep valley. Plenty of wood, water, and grass. After leaving Cottonwood Creek, the road forks. Take the right hand road for Camp Lewis after passing which it rejoins the main road in the valley of Big Spring Fork of the Judith River. Big Spring Fork is a fine stream of water running through a fertile valley. Wood in

abundance a mile above camp. Camp Lewis is on the south side of the creek.

### Author's Comments

The trail went in nearly a straight line from the forks of the Musselshell to Judith Gap. The creeks mentioned (Daisy Dean, Haymaker, and Hopley) are the same names in use today. From Judith Gap, the trail went north for 8-9 miles and then headed in a straight line for the Lewistown area. Camp Lewis was William's destination so his journal does not describe the trail from Camp Lewis to Carroll.



## Part 4. Traveling the Carroll Trail: The Author's 1988 trip from Carroll to Camp Baker



*This article was prepared for the 1989 Montana Statehood Centennial and published in the White Sulphur Springs, Montana by the Meagher County News, Beef Edition, Thursday, June 1, 1989, Pages 5-20. The original article included 2 maps and 11 photos.*

### Introduction

In the summer of 1988, I took a trip along the Carroll Trail from the site of Carroll on the Missouri River to Camp Baker. The trip required two days and a considerable amount of investigation and backtracking, however, the narrative of the trip will be given as though the trip was continuous.

The trip was made in a station wagon, so travel along the route was mainly restricted to maintained public roads. Much of the Carroll Trail that has not been obliterated by modern road construction is on private property so it is necessary to obtain many permissions if one is to travel the exact route. As an alternative, one can travel the public roads that intersect the trail and get a small glimpse of it at several points.

Included in Appendix A will be photographs of some of the landmarks. I also recommend the use of a detailed state map, while reading this narrative, to provide a more global perspective.

### Author's Narrative

I've found it! The area surrounding the site of Carroll, Montana Territory, was reportedly

under water due to the Fort Peck Dam but the reports were wrong. The area is easy to get to and the road is in reasonable condition because it is part of the network of roads maintained by the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. My 1977 Chevy wagon is loaded down with 35mm and video cameras, film and tape, radio communications equipment, and the map collection from the national archives. It's a perfect day for the trip west along the Carroll Trail. It will be hot and dry and sunny but it will also be good road conditions and clear for photography. My trip will be much faster and more pleasant than the trip taken by Capt. Ludlow and his party 113 years ago.

Photo #1 shows the Missouri River and steamboat landing area for Carroll. The precise town site location would be to the right, somewhere out into where the river is now located. The wagon road west, out of Carroll, went into the hills and up the ridge visible in the background of the photo. As I follow the road west, it climbs up the steep sidehill and the backbone of the ridge just like it did in Ludlow's day. The route is a maintained access road in this location and will continue winding and climbing until it reaches the top in a couple

of miles. I stopped near the top to photograph the Missouri River valley east of the area of the town site (Photo #2). This will become part of my research documentation. Maybe in a future century, another researcher will be using these records to "rediscover" the site of Carroll just as I have done. I have dubbed this part of my work "Historical Preservation by Photography". I believe that undeveloped historical sites in Montana are rapidly disappearing because of road building, logging, farming, ranching, and the general process of settlement and development. By using photography for historical preservation, the future generations of Montana will be able to vicariously enjoy our frontier history and heritage.

After reaching the top, the road heads west into the area shown on the old maps only as Mauvaises Terres – "bad lands". Little was known of the geography of this area between Lewistown and the mouth of the Musselshell until well after the homesteading days. Maps prior to about 1920 are very inaccurate except, fortunately, the Ludlow survey map. Today, in my air conditioned car with plenty of food to eat and pop to drink, these are not bad lands. Instead, this land is remarkably beautiful and interesting. Not beautiful in the sense of a river bottom or timbered hillside or a meadow, but beautiful in the starkness and contrasts of a bright day. The alkali land has a sculptured appearance giving it an almost surrealistic appearance.

I have begun to look for Black Butte and Cone Butte on the horizon. I know they are prominent landmarks for the general direction of the trail and I want a telephoto picture of them when they can first be readily seen from the trail. About 4 miles from Carroll, I reach a junction in the road where the Wilder Trail (now a road) goes north to the river bottom. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the settlement of Wilder was located a few miles upriver from Carroll. It was just northeast of Rocky Point.

The course of the river channel has made a major change in this area and the site shown on the maps has probably been washed away. Wilder was on a trail that went from Fort Maginnis to Zortman. Some of the archive maps show a Wilder much closer to the mouth of the Musselshell River so it is possible that two separate locations were once called Wilder.

I am beginning to see the buttes through several miles of haze. Photo #3 (telephoto lens) shows Black Butte on the left and the tip of Cone Butte on the right. I plan to take close photos of each when I get to Roy.

West of the Carroll-Wilder junction, the Carroll Trail and the Wilder Trail are the same. The trail kept to the high ground and turned south toward Little Crooked Creek. At 12 miles from Carroll, the trail passes the abandoned Little Crooked Creek School site. Just east of the site, the Carroll Trail intersects the Old Musselshell Trail. Near the school, I meet two large recreational vehicles, with out-of-state licenses, headed east. They are headed to the wildlife refuge for exploring and camping. I wonder if they are aware of the historical significance of the route they are traveling?

The Ludlow camping location for the evening of July 30, 1875 was at 13 miles – where the trail crossed Little Crooked Creek. The next day, they crossed to the south bank of Crooked Creek about 23 miles out of Carroll. Fearful of attack from Indian hunting parties. Ludlow wasted no time continuing west and over the dividing ridge between Crooked Creek and Box Elder Creek (north of Roy). I continue west-southwest on the gravel road until I reach Highway 191. The Carroll trail continued west at this point but there is no public access here so I must turn south and follow 191 to Roy.

At Roy I stopped at a gas station to fill up and ask directions. A helpful group of local residents in the station patiently listen to all of my questions and offer advice as to how I may proceed with my trip. A gravel road goes to the

south of Roy and over a large ridge. The view of Black Butte and Cone Butte is excellent from this vantage point. Photos #4 and #5 show these prominent landmarks. At this location, the wagon road surveyed by Capt. Clift in 1869 passes just to the north of both buttes. I decide to take a detour here and go east to Dovetail Butte because I am also doing research on the route that Clift surveyed, from the mouth of the Musselshell to Fort Ellis, and want to verify some initial map research. Later I'll return to Roy and continue my journey west.

After returning from my detour, I continue west of Roy on Highway 191. Box Elder Creek valley was very lush and refreshing compared to the "Mauvaises Terres" and the party stopped at the stage station on the bank of the creek about 3 miles west of Roy and about 38 miles from Carroll. Lieutenant Thompson and the geologists, Dana and Grinnell, spent several days in this area. They climbed Cone Butte for a spectacular view of the surrounding area and several distant mountain ranges. For me, the hike will have to wait for another year. Also, I can't take the time now to locate the stage station on the creek or the trail location near Fergus.

After the Box Elder Stage Station, the trail was located in the general vicinity of Highway 191 all the way to Lewistown. I have decided to stay on the highway this year and will follow it to Lewistown. About 8 miles west of the stage station, the trail reached Arnells Creek and crossed it near the settlement called Arnells. I have been enjoying the landscapes in this area, especially the crossing of Arnells Creek.

From Arnells Creek, the trail followed the ridges west and south and then went to just east of Hilger, where it turned almost due south toward Lewistown. At 61 miles from Carroll, the trail crossed Warm Spring Creek just west of Highway 191. My attention is starting to be diverted from the trail and focused on the great scenery of the Judith and Moccasin Mountains.

This part of the trail also affords a great view of the beginning of the Judith Basin Country. It is at this point that the beauty of this country, so aptly described by Ludlow, begins to captivate me. This feeling gives history buffs a sense of a common bond with the early explorers of the region.

The trail continued southerly past Upper Carter Pond and crossed Burnette Creek near where Highway 191 does. At 69 miles from Carroll, the trail reached Reed and Bowles Trading Post on Big Spring Creek below Lewistown. Here the trail bifurcated with the easterly branch going to Camp Lewis and the southerly branch continuing toward Judith Gap. Camp Lewis was located about 2.3 miles up Big Spring Creek from the stage stop and trading post (Captain Ludlow reports its location as 74.5 miles from Carroll). It is a safe assumption that the army was not keen on locating too close to an "undesirable" influence on the troops!

The trail branch that went to Camp Lewis quickly reunited with the main branch near where the southern boundary of the Lewistown airport is now located. Today I've decided to take the branch toward Camp Lewis, but I quickly find the development of Lewistown has removed all readily-seen historical evidence except the Reed's Fort Post Office. It was located east and south across Little Casino Creek from Camp Lewis. It is being preserved and the land surrounding it is being maintained as a park. Photograph #6 is the log cabin as it looks today. I've tried to get the same photographic perspective that appears in the photo on page 57 of "Meagher County. An Early-Day Pictorial History 1867-1967," published by the Meagher County News.

From this vicinity, the trail headed directly toward the Gap. The route was relatively easy and the party camped on Ross's Fork of the Judith north of Garneill and about 94 miles from Carroll. I will be forced to follow

Highway 191 to Garneill because there is no easily followed county roads along the route from Lewistown to Judith Gap.

I spent considerable time in the Judith Gap area and was rewarded by cordial help from the local residents. With this help, I was able to find physical evidence of the trail as well as locate the site of the Stage Station at Oka. Photo #7 shows the furrows worn by the wagons in an unplowed field near Oka Stage Station.

From Judith Gap, the trail turned west and went directly toward Gordon Butte and the Forks of the Musselshell near Martinsdale. Traveling in nearly a straight line, the trail had to cross Hopley Creek, Big Coulee, Haymaker Creek, and Daisy Dean Creek. The trail distance from Judith Gap to the Forks of the Musselshell is about 30 miles. Finding the crossing of Hopley Creek is very important to my research so I decided to go south to Harlowton and then back north on a county road. Photo #8 was taken north of the wagon road crossing and looking north into Hopley's Hole. This was a great vantage point on the east side. I did not have road access to the west side. The trail between this point and the forks of the Musselshell is entirely on private property so I had to be content to travel south again to Harlowton and then go west on Highway 12.

The trail crossed the North Fork to the south side about where Highway 12 now crosses and stayed on the south side just as the highway does now.

The canyon of the North Fork, Flagstaff Cr., Checkerboard Cr., and Copperopolis Cr. are all mentioned in the journals along with the mine at Copperopolis. Copperopolis Creek was the name given to the coulee just south of the mines. The creek in this coulee runs into the upper end of Bair Reservoir. Photo #9 shows an empty Bair reservoir caused by the drought of 1988. West and north of Copperopolis, near where the Jamison Trail road goes north, the

Carroll trail turned north and went through the open meadows of the North Fork of Eightmile Creek. It then turned west and passed south of Volcano Butte and then intersected the North Fork of the Smith River under Lake Sutherlin. Part of the old route was later turned into a county road which has since been abandoned. I traveled Highway 12 through the canyon of the North Fork and, as I have many times before, totally enjoyed its beauty and relative coolness.

I have followed Highway 12 since the forks of the Musselshell but did stop to view the sites of Fort Howie, Bair Reservoir, Copperopolis, and Lake Sutherlin. The only parts of the Carroll trail that are not very near the highway are the section a few miles east of White Sulphur Springs and the section just to the south of Volcano Butte. Photo #10 shows Lake Sutherlin dry at the forks of Eightmile and the North Fork of the Smith. This was a camping location for both Ludlow and Williams.

East of Copperopolis there is a great evening view of the Castle Mountains and the "castles" on it. However, the camera demon strikes and my photo of this scene is underexposed. The reader can get the same view at about 6-7 p.m. during midsummer. The lighting effect I observed may occur at other times also.

The trail went down the south side of the North Fork of the Smith all the way to White Sulphur Springs. The journals mention both Fourmile Creek and Willow Creek. Capt. Williams comments that west side of Fourmile Creek is difficult to cross when it is wet. I think this is the major reason the road was rerouted away from the creek in later years. At White Sulphur Springs, the trail came in from the northeast at the same location as old highway 89 before its route was changed in the mid 1960's. It continued in a westerly direction directly toward the hot sulphur springs. Ludlow's party arrived at the hot springs the

morning of August 6, 1875 and stopped at Brewer's hotel for a nice breakfast and a relaxing dip in the bathing-houses.

Capt. Williams and his party camped on the west end of town on May 2, 1874. This camp was just west of the bridge where the county road crosses the North Fork.

My trip through White Sulphur is hurried but I am compelled to stop and photograph the sun shining, blood red, through a massive smoke cloud produced by a large forest fire near Helena. Photo #11 looking west is a poor imitation of the actual sight.

From Brewer's hot sulphur springs, the trail headed on a direct course for the mouth of Newlan Creek. It did not, however, go down the canyon but, instead, went up on the north ridge like the present county road does. From all of the evidence I can gather, it appears that there was more than one commonly used crossing of the Smith between Newlan Creek and Camp Baker (Fort Logan). The first was west down the first coulee to the north and then across the river to the southwest side. The second followed closely the county road route for about 3-4 miles and then crossed the river.

Capt. Ludlow reached Camp Baker (Fort Logan) the evening of August 6, 1875 and camped overnight.

My trip west of White Sulphur Springs to Fort Logan was on county road 360. I've traveled portions of this route many times but my summer vacation is ending and my story must end.

### Postscript

I hope you have enjoyed reading some of this historical information about the Carroll Trail. I am continuing to work on documenting its location and will eventually publish a research report about it. I also am finishing the preparation of a map volume of historic pioneer trails in Territorial Meagher County. It will be given to the Meagher County Historical

Association for display during the centennial. I would welcome communication with readers interested in pioneer trails and their location. My address is Dr. Steve F. Russell, 26393 520<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ames, Iowa 50014

In support of my pioneer trail research, I frequently compile a list of historic place names and geographic names in use during the time that the trail was active. For readers interested in original place names, I have included the following list for the Carroll Trail route of 1875:

Missouri River  
Carroll  
Little Crooked Creek  
Crooked Creek  
Box Elder Creek  
Box Elder Stage Station  
Black Butte  
Cone Butte  
Armells Creek  
Deer Creek Divide or Warm Springs Creek  
Big Spring Fork  
Camp Lewis  
Cottonwood Creek  
Beaver Creek  
Little Trout Creek  
Buffalo Creek  
Ross Fork of Judith's River  
Judith Gap  
Red Spring Creek  
Elk Creek  
Hopley's (or Hoppy's) Hole  
Haymakers Creek  
Dirty Creek (Willis Coulee?)  
Daisy Dean Creek  
"Stage Station" (Gauglersville)  
Forks of the Musselshell River  
Fort Howie (Ruins)  
North Fork of the Musselshell River  
Flagstaff Creek  
Checkerboard Creek  
Copperopolis Creek

Copperopolis Mines  
8 Mile Creek  
Trinity Springs  
Brewer's Hot Springs  
Newton Creek (Newlan Creek)  
Birch Creek  
Thompson Creek  
Camp Baker (Fort Logan)  
Benton Creek (Benton Gulch)  
Cement Gulch

Confederate Gulch  
Diamond City  
Mouth of Confederate Gulch  
Diamond Ferry, Edmundson's  
Mouth of Beaver Creek  
Beaver Creek  
Spokane Creek  
Spokane House (Moran)  
Helena





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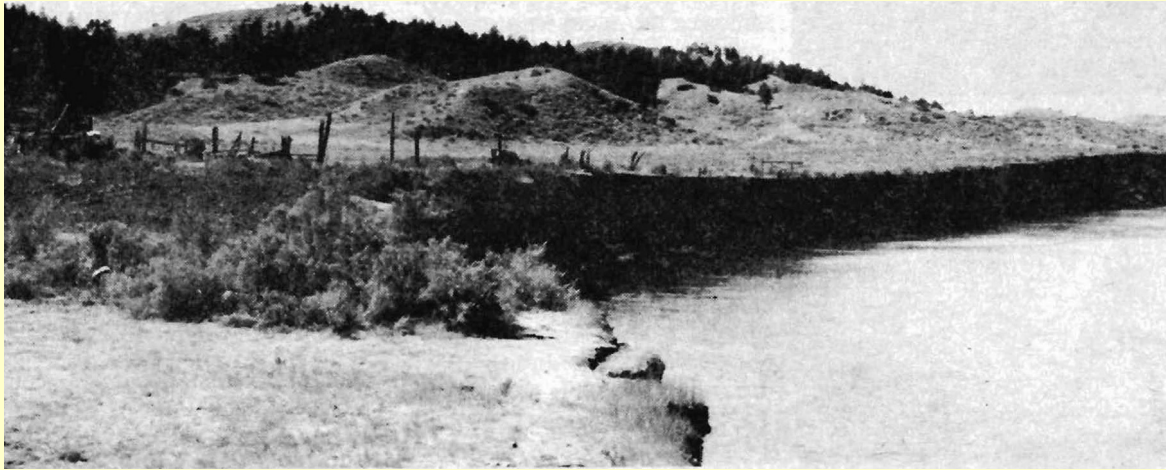
Ludlow, William, *Report of A Reconnaissance From Carroll, Montana Territory, On The Upper Missouri, To The Yellowstone National Park, And Return, Made In The Summer Of 1875, By William Ludlow, Captain Of Engineers, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, U. S. Army, Chief Engineer Department Of Dakota*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1876.

**Journal of the March of Company F, 7th U.S. Infantry, Commanded by Captain Constant Williams, April and May 1874, from Fort Shaw, Montana Territory, to Camp Lewis, Montana Territory, pursuant to Standing Order No. 73, Headquarters, Fort Shaw, Dated April 7th, 1874.**

Bureau of Land Management, **General Land Office Records**, original plat maps.

# *The Carroll Trail*

Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 1. Steamboat Landing at Carroll on the Missouri River**



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 2. Missouri River valley east of Carroll**

# *The Carroll Trail*

## Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip



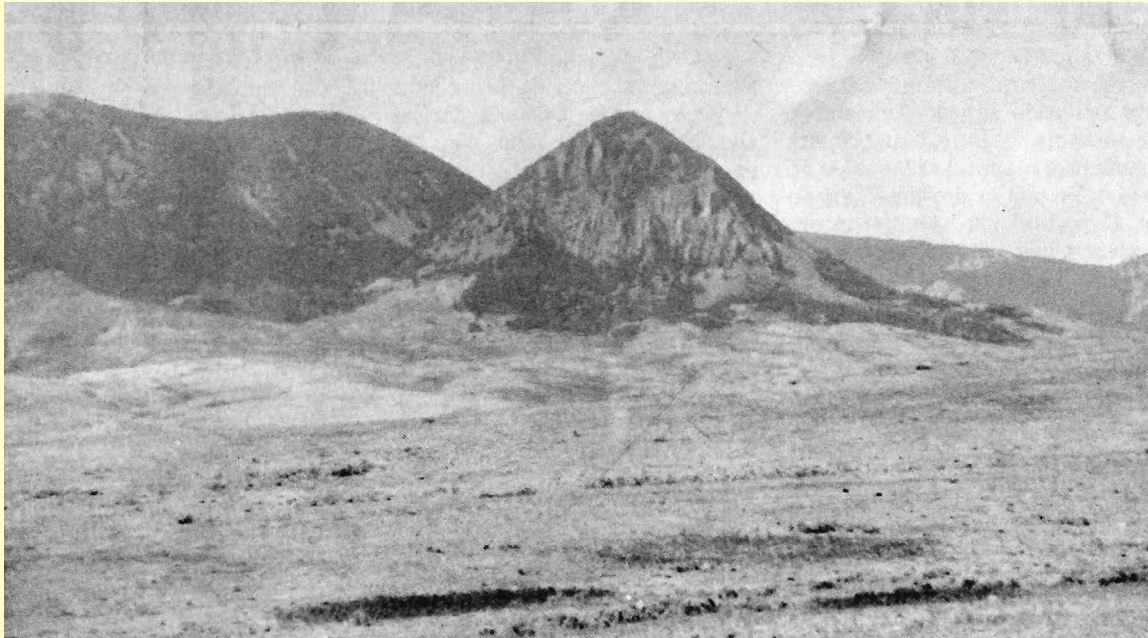
Steve F. Russell

**Photo 3. Junction of the Carroll and Wilder Trails. Black Butte on the left and the tip of Cone Butte on the right.**



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 4. Black Butte south of Roy**



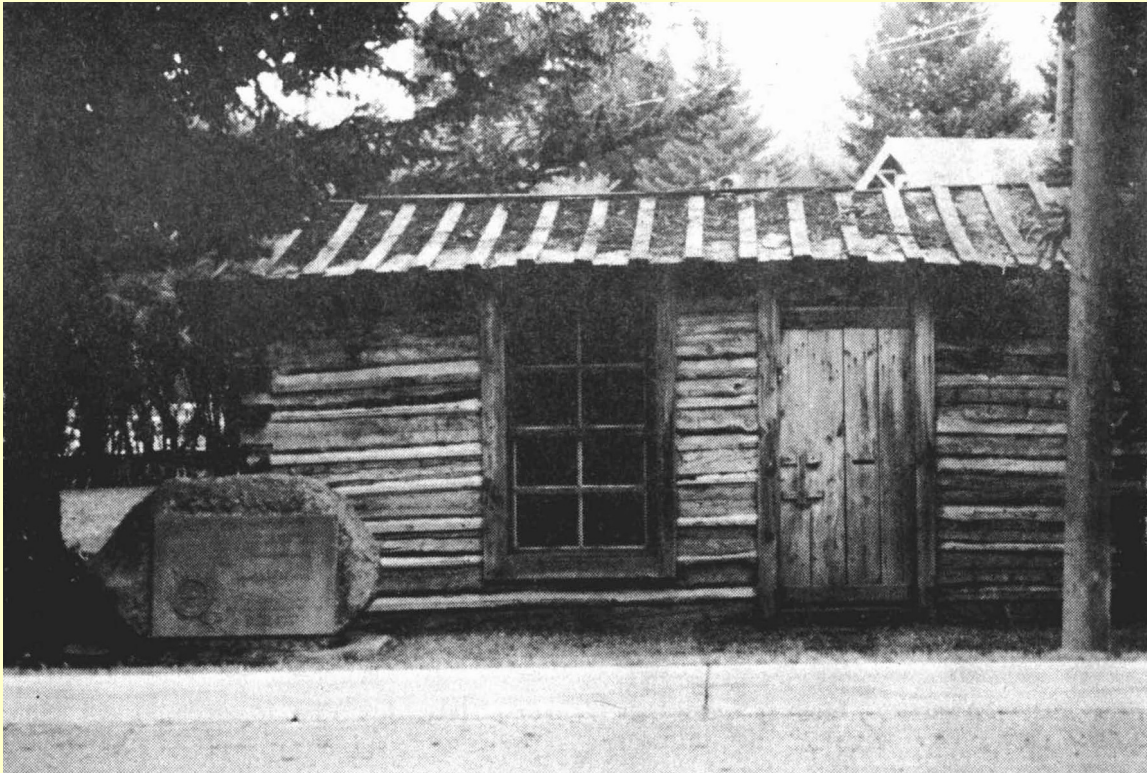
Steve F. Russell

**Photo 5. Cone Butte south of Roy**



# *The Carroll Trail*

Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 6. Reed's Fort Post Office at Lewiston**



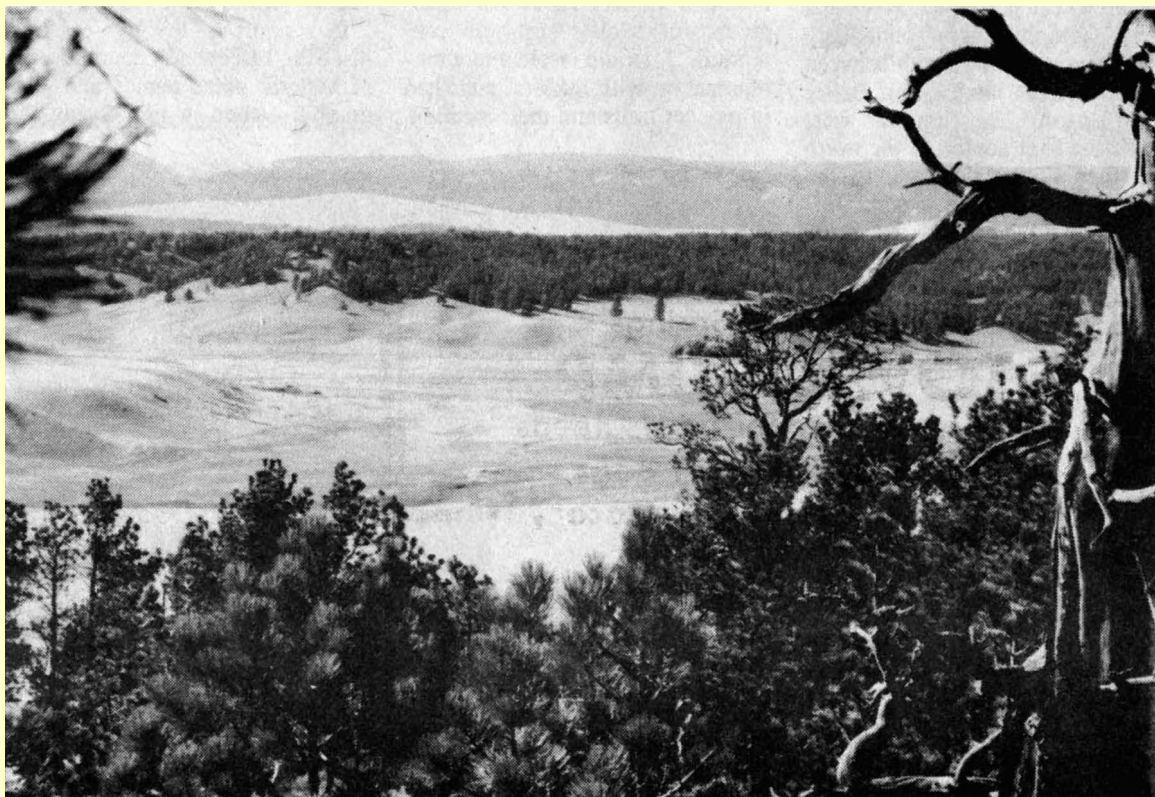
Steve F. Russell

**Photo 7. Wagon ruts in the Carroll Trail near Oka Stage Station**



# *The Carroll Trail*

## Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip



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**Photo 8. Hopley's Hole, looking north**



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**Photo 9. Bair Reservoir, looking towards Copperopolis. Reservoir is almost completely dry due to drought of 1988.**

# *The Carroll Trail*

## Photos of the Author's 1988 Trip



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 10. Lake Sutherlin is also dry, due to draught. Looking north towards Little Belt Mountains and at the forks of Eightmile Creek and the North Fork of Smith River.**



Steve F. Russell

**Photo 11. Forest Fire produces a blood red sun.**



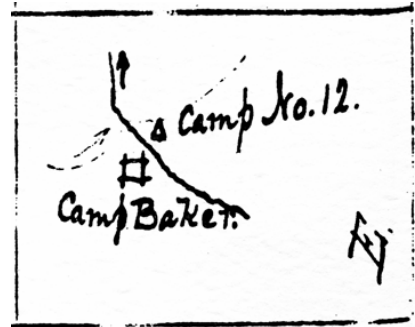
Appendix B. Journal Figures, Captain Constant Williams, April 29 to May 10, 1874



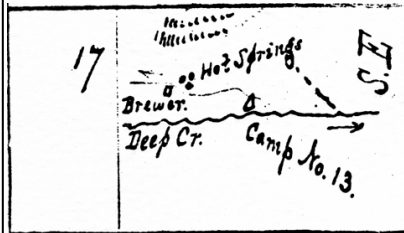
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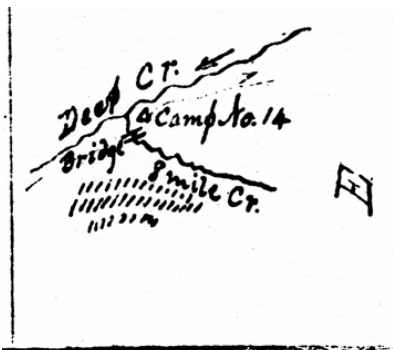
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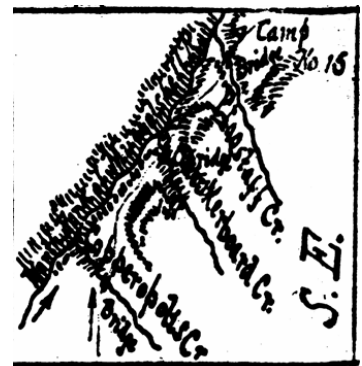
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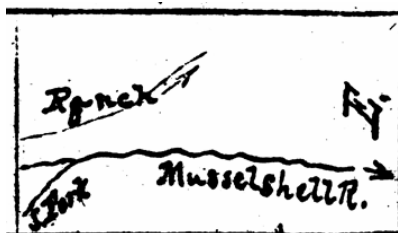
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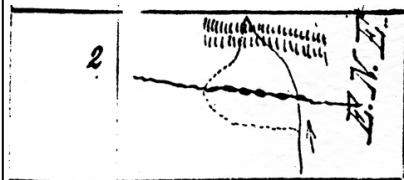
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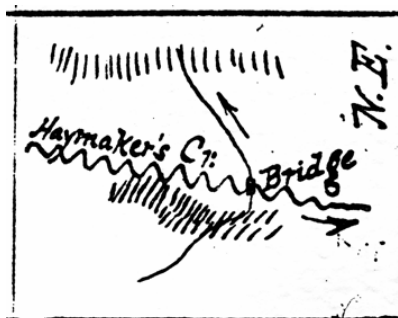
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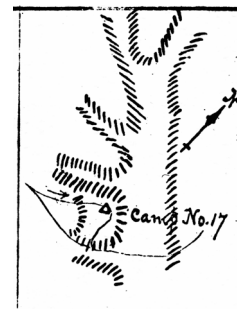
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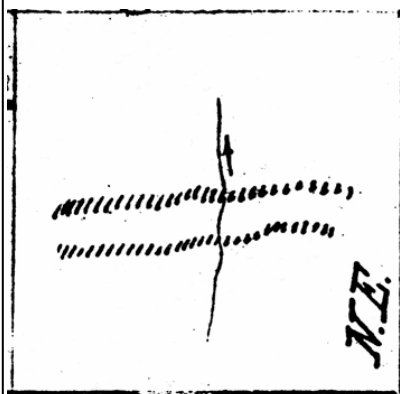


May 6-02



May 6-03 Camp No. 17

Appendix B. Journal Figures, Captain Constant Williams, April 29 to May 10, 1874



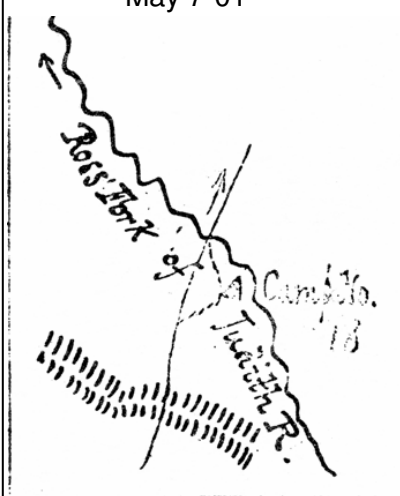
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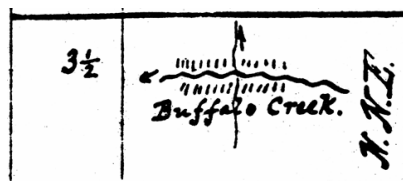
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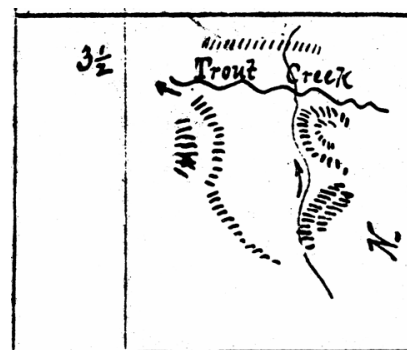
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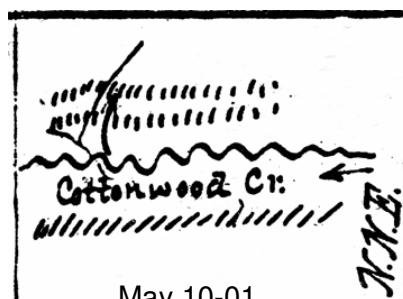
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May 8-02



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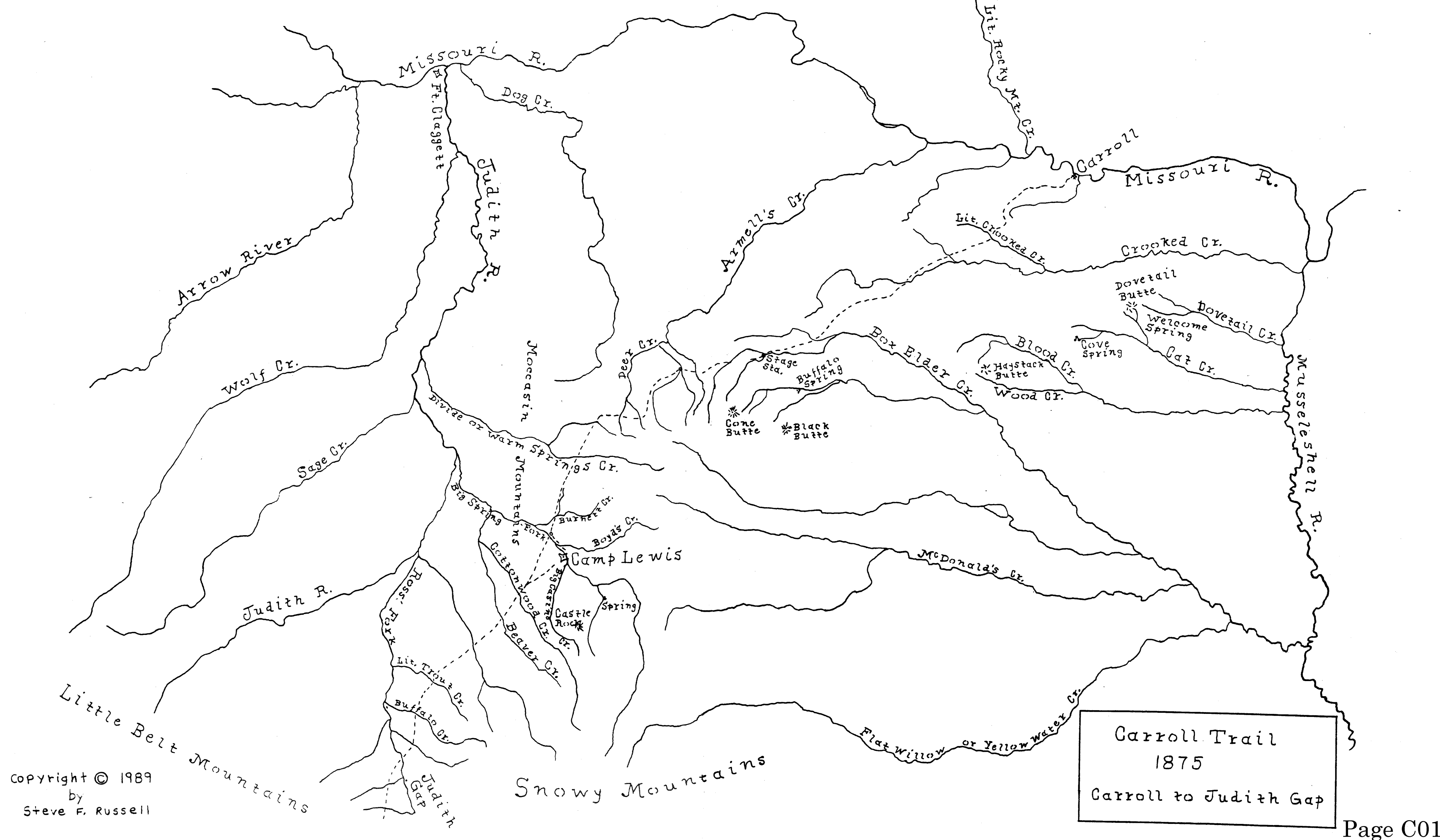


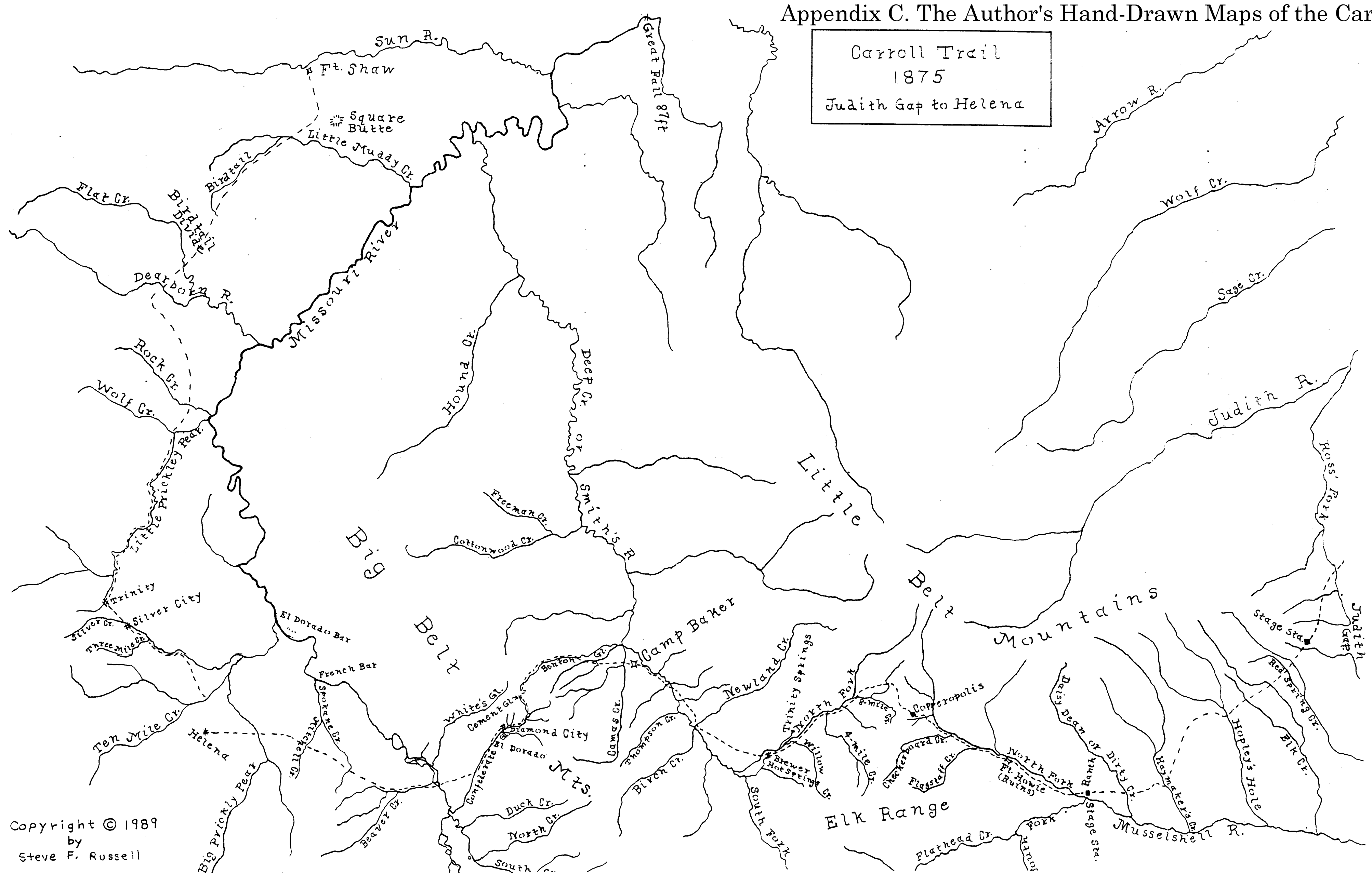
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May 10-02 Camp No. 20









## Appendix D. Topographic Maps of the Carroll Trail - MAP 01

