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The Economic Impact of the Mullan Road on Walla Walla, 1860-1883

BY ALEXANDER C. MCGREGOR

TRAVELERS to the Pacific Northwest during the early years of its settlement had a choice of three difficult routes: the overland journey on the Oregon Trail, the ocean voyage—portage trip via the Isthmus of Panama, or the much longer ocean voyage around Cape Horn. The Mullan Road, constructed during the years 1859-62 between Fort Benton on the Missouri River and Walla Walla near the Columbia River, was, in the words of Captain John Mullan, an effort to “secure a route where the sea travel would be avoided in toto; and at the same time have the land transit the shortest minimum.”¹

Construction of a wagon road into the Pacific Northwest required \$230,000 in congressional grants, “seven years of close and arduous attention” by Mullan, and shorter terms of service by one hundred laborers and a group of military escorts. The route followed by Mullan’s road was from Walla Walla north to the confluence of the Snake and Palouse rivers, northeast to the Spokane River, around the north end of Lake Coeur d’Alene, down the Clark Fork River, past modern-day Missoula and Helena, and finally to Fort Benton on the Missouri River. Linking the 624-mile Mullan Road with the Columbia and the Missouri would provide a route by which prospective settlers could travel by steamboat from the west or from the east, disembark at a convenient location, and then proceed across the intervening area on a well-built wagon road.²

Pacific Northwest newspapers predicted a wave of immigration over the route. The Portland *Oregonian* cited the “fact” that 30,000 immigrants soon would use the road to reach the Willamette Valley. “Much of this immigration may

be poor, but it will possess the material—muscle, energy, principle, and intelligence—to hew out homes on this coast and add to our wealth, business, and prosperity.” The Walla Walla *Statesman* expressed “feelings of the most lively anticipation” about the opening of a “great highway” and reported having received a letter from the United States consul in Italy in which he claimed that “many people in Europe” were interested in the route as an alternate to ocean travel to the Pacific Northwest.³

War Department officials hoped that the road would provide a quick, economic route for the deployment of troops in the Pacific Northwest. Another plan was to use the Mullan Road as an

¹ John Mullan, *Miners and Travelers’ Guide to Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado via the Missouri and Columbia Rivers* (New York, 1865), 1.

² John Mullan, *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla-Walla to Fort Benton* (Washington, D.C., 1863), 36. For information about the military escort and labor force, see Pal Clark, “Blazing the Trail to Walla Walla,” *Up-to-the-Times Magazine*, Vol. 24 (December 1929), 17. For information about building costs, see J. H. Bradley, “Account of the Building of Mullen’s [sic] Military Road,” *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, VIII (1917), 163.

³ Portland *Oregonian*, Aug. 2, 1862. See also Portland *Oregonian*, July 19, 1862, and Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 1, July 12, 19, 1862, Jan. 17, 24, 1863.

⁴ Samuel F. Bemis, “Captain John Mullan and the Engineers’ Frontier,” *WHQ*, Vol. 14 (1923), 203.

⁵ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Aug. 23, 1862; *Oregon Argus* (Salem), Sept. 28, 1863, May 7, 1866, quoted in Thomas Teakle, “The Teakle Papers” (a compilation of assorted articles from Pacific Northwest newspapers of the 19th century), Vol. 31, pp. 164, 168, 245, Whitman College Library, Walla Walla, Washington.

⁶ Joseph M. Cataldo, quoted in George W. Fuller, *History of the Pacific Northwest, with Special Emphasis on the Inland Empire*, 2nd ed. rev. (New York, 1946), 317. Father Cataldo was active as a missionary in Idaho, Washington, Montana, Oregon, Wyoming, and Alaska from 1865 to 1928. R. Ignatius Burns, S.J., “The Jesuits, the Northern Indians, and the Nez Perce War of 1877,” *PNQ*, Vol. 42 (1951), 47, n. 35.

⁷ Some of the difficulties encountered in the construction of this portion of the route are discussed in Mullan, *Report on the Construction of a Military Road*, 31-35, and in

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avenue over which supplies for a future northern transcontinental railroad could be moved.⁴

Early travelers over the route presented highly favorable reports. Upon arrival in Walla Walla in 1862, a group of twenty-two immigrants referred to the Coeur d'Alene pass as a "mere depression" and recommended the Fort Benton–Walla Walla journey as "a trip for health, pleasure, and bold Rocky Mountain scenery." In subsequent years, however, the opinions expressed were of a different nature. The road had become so "difficult and perilous" that "any other method" of crossing the continent was said to be preferable to the Mullan route. One traveler described the road as so "horrible . . . that no word in the English language could convey an idea of its condition."⁵

Father Joseph M. Cataldo, S.J., who came to the Northwest as a missionary in 1865, once wryly remarked: "The Mullan trail wasn't much of a road. It was a big job, well done, but we used to say, 'Captain Mullan just made enough of a trail so he could get back out of here.'"⁶

Mullan and his associates had lacked the time and black powder needed to blast a road through the most rugged mountainous sectors. To avoid the heavy construction work, they were forced to make numerous river crossings, including 146 traversings of the Coeur d'Alene and Saint Regis

Borgia rivers in a 100-mile portion of the road. Flooding soon washed out many of the bridges, and rockslides made the passage of wheeled vehicles difficult, if not impossible. The wagon road was reduced to a mere pack trail after 1865.⁷

The Mullan Road fell far short of its goals. Nevertheless, it played an important part in the development of the Walla Walla region. Two periods will be examined in this paper: the years 1860-70, during which the Mullan Road served as an access route for Walla Walla trade to the newly discovered mining areas; and the years 1870-83, when the route helped the city's merchants to develop trade with eastern Washington settlers.

ALTHOUGH bearing little resemblance to the "great highway" envisioned by the *Statesman*, the Mullan Road during the 1860s provided a path over which Walla Walla mule pack trains could transport goods to mining districts. But the route was used only sporadically for the purposes for which it was constructed.

Military use was confined to the passage of one 300-man contingent over the road during the 1860s. General William T. Sherman and other military men later claimed that the disrepair of the Mullan Road was "the main reason of the easy escape of the hostile Nez Percés from Idaho under Joseph. . . ." The road did little to aid in supplying railroad builders. Samuel Wilbur Condit, William Covington, and Harris and Company of Walla Walla used the eastern Washington sector for such purposes, but cayuse pack trains, not wagons, were the means of transportation.⁸

A third goal of the Mullan Road—to provide a route for the passage of immigrant groups into the Pacific Northwest—was realized to some degree during the early 1860s. Groups reported to have passed over the Mullan Road during this period included Captain James L. Fisk and some of the immigrants who had left Minnesota with his train; a group of 350 immigrants with wagons and sawmill equipment; a caravan of forty immigrant wagons; two groups totaling seventy-eight wagons; six wagons from Kansas; thirty-one Washington-bound wagons in the year 1866; and a portion of the so-called Captain Davey expedition of 1867. The Davey group, probably the last large caravan of homeseekers to use the road, arrived "some of them . . . prostrate with the mountain fever disease" and with all their oxen weak and lame after navigating the treacherous mountain passage.⁹

Mullan to Capt. A. A. Humphreys, Oct. 12, 1860, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Executive Document No. 44, *Report of Lieutenant Mullan, in Charge of Construction of the Military Road from Fort Benton to Fort Walla-Walla* (Washington, D.C., 1861), 54-70 (Serial 1099). The disrepair of the Mullan Road is detailed also in Randall Henry Hewitt, *Across the Plains and over the Divide: A Mule Train Journey from East to West and Incidents Connected Therewith* (New York, 1908).

⁸ 46th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* (June 5, 1880), 4214; Gen. W. T. Sherman to Secretary of War George W. McCrary, Aug. 3, 1877, *Reports of Inspection Made in the Summer of 1877 by Generals P. H. Sheridan and W. T. Sherman of the Country North of the Union Pacific Railroad* (Washington, D.C., 1878), 33. Mullan claimed that "This [military] movement had the effect of keeping in subjection the turbulent disposition of the Indians. . . ." *Report on the Construction of a Military Road*, 21. Rations were packed in to the soldiers from Walla Walla. Martin F. Schmitt, ed., "From Missouri to Oregon in 1860: The Diary of August V. Kautz," *PNQ*, Vol. 37 (1946), 193-230. For information on Condit and other packers, see *Illustrated History of the Big Bend Country Embracing Lincoln, Douglas, Adams, and Franklin Counties, State of Washington* (Spokane, 1904), 68.

⁹ 37th Cong., 3rd Sess., House Executive Document No. 80, *Report of Captain J. L. Fisk, of the Expedition to Escort Emigrants from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton, etc.* (Washington, D.C., 1863), 1-7 (Serial 1164); W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Fisk Expeditions to the Montana Gold Fields," *PNQ*, Vol. 33 (1942), 269; Nathaniel Pitt Langford, *Vigilante Days and Ways: The Pioneers of the Rockies, the Makers and Making of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washing-*

Attempts to fund improvement of the road, including the efforts of a group of Walla Walla "farmers, merchants, mechanics, and capitalists" who met in 1866, were unsuccessful. Petitions to Congress for repair of the route were turned aside. The Walla Walla *Statesman* declared in 1867: "It is greatly to be regretted that Congress could not drop the 'negro' for a few moments, and attend to a question in which the people of the Pacific slope are so greatly interested."¹⁰

The discovery of gold in the northern Rocky Mountains enabled Walla Walla to achieve an importance it could never have gained as merely a stopping place for immigrants or troops. Trade with the newly discovered mines caused a fundamental change in this frontier town. In 1859 Walla Walla was an obscure outpost consisting of only seven houses. By 1870 it was the largest city in Washington Territory, with a population of 1,394. Its rise to prominence can be traced to its "obviously desirable location for those who sought their fortunes in trade and services to the gold seekers. . . ."¹¹

The new city was situated at the junction of the Mullan Road and the Oregon Trail. The latter route served as an avenue to the gold diggings in southern Idaho. The Mullan Road was used by Walla Walla mule pack trains to supply gold-producing areas in Montana, northern Idaho, northeastern Washington, and eastern British Columbia. During the first years of this trade, Walla Walla merchants were the main suppliers of these mining districts.¹²

MUCH of Walla Walla's trade in 1861 and 1862 was with the rich new mines of central and southern Idaho, regions not served by the Mullan Road. In 1861, 225 pack mules were reported to have left Walla Walla in one week for the central Idaho diggings. Promising beginnings of trade with Montana, British Columbia, and Washington areas accessible by the route were also under way. The *Statesman* claimed that Walla Walla's location at the western terminus of the road made it "but natural" that the city should "reap many advantages." Mullan advised "the merchants and capitalists in Walla Walla" to prosecute vigorously the trade with Montana and become the supply depot for the region.¹³

Merchants and pack train operators hurried to carry out Mullan's instructions. In 1860 Frank L. Worden and Christopher P. Higgins (operating under the firm name of Worden and Company) traveled from Walla Walla via the Mullan Road to Hell Gate, Montana, "with seventy-five horses

laden with merchandise to open a store" and "with about \$7,000 worth of goods and some \$4,000 worth of horses and cattle." By 1862 their trade with the miners in this region had so increased that they opened another store at Gold Creek, sixty miles east of Hell Gate. On at least two occasions, Worden and Company ran pack trains from Walla Walla to Montana with more supplies.¹⁴

Miners themselves traveled to Walla Walla for goods. Granville Stuart, a Montana miner, refers briefly to such trips in his journal: "Napoleon is on his way to Walla Walla" and "Fat Jack passed here on his way to Walla Walla." A man named Bachelder established an express between Walla Walla and Hell Gate.¹⁵

Many of those who panned gold in Montana were immigrants who, while traveling on the Mullan Road, had decided to stay and try their luck at prospecting. Merrill Burlingame has concluded that the Mullan Road "was probably the largest factor leading toward the mining boom" in Montana because immigrants had heard that the route provided easy access to the mines. Many of the prospective miners reached the gold-producing areas from the east; thousands of miners also traveled through Walla Walla and thence over the Mullan Road "to Missoula, the Bitterroot and Blackfoot rivers, and to Helena and its famous gulches. . . ."¹⁶

The Colville mines, reached by packers via the

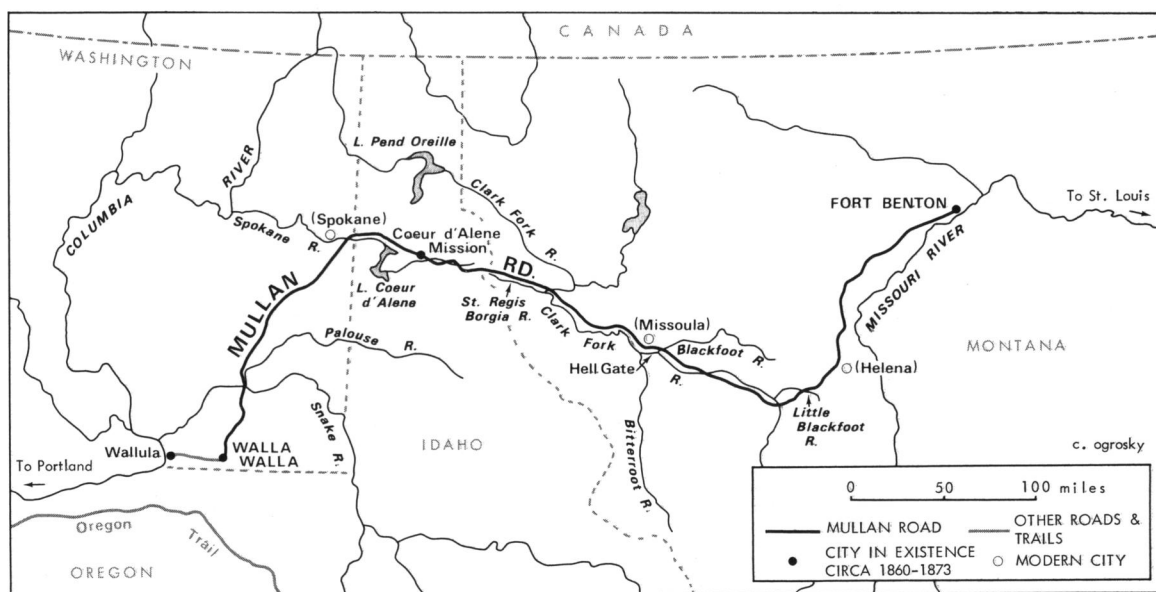
ton, and Wyoming (Missoula, 1957), 90; Paul C. Phillips, ed., *Forty Years on the Frontier as Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart, Gold-Miner, Trader, Merchant, Rancher and Politician* (Cleveland, 1925), I, 213-17 (hereafter cited *Stuart Journals*); C. S. Kingston, "The Northern Overland Route in 1867: Journal of Henry Lueg," *PNQ*, Vol. 41 (1950), 234-53; "Memorial Relative to the Mullan Road," *Statutes of the Territory of Washington, 14th Session, 1866-1867* (Olympia, 1868), 237; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Aug. 30, Sept. 6, Nov. 8, 1862, Nov. 29, 1867.

¹⁰ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Jan. 19, Feb. 2, March 23, 1866, May 17, 1867.

¹¹ *Report of Lieutenant Mullan, in Charge of Construction of the Military Road from Fort Benton to Fort Walla-Walla*, 70; Donald W. Meinig, "The Walla Walla Country, 1805-1910: A Century of Man and the Land," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Washington, 1953), 103; Walla Walla *Statesman*, July 19, 1862. For the population of Walla Walla in 1870, see Calvin F. Schmid and Stanton E. Schmid, *Growth of Cities and Towns, State of Washington* (Olympia, 1969), v, 40, 107. Olympia was the second largest city, with a population of 1,203; Seattle was third, with 1,107.

¹² Donald W. Meinig, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910* (Seattle, 1968), 215.

¹³ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Dec. 18, 1861, Feb. 1, July 26, 1862. For a discussion of the volume of trade and the number of miners at the diggings, see William J. Trimble, *Mining Advance into the Inland Empire* (Madison, 1914), 67, 71. For a discussion of the new mines, see Walla Walla *Statesman*, Dec. 20, 1861, Jan. 10, 1862.



Mullan and Colville roads, also produced trade for Walla Walla. Tangible evidence of the trade soon appeared. Late in 1862 the *Statesman* noted the increasing gold discoveries in the Colville area and that many men had returned to Walla Walla from that region with ample “sacks of gold dust.” A new store, run by the Oppenheimer brothers, opened near Colville; the proprietors traded goods brought in by Walla Walla freighters for gold dust and purchased beeves, cured the meat,

and sold it to the miners. For Walla Walla, trade from these regions brought a year of “unparalleled prosperity.” The *Statesman* maintained that “To-day the eyes of the Pacific and eastern slopes are turned to what was yesterday the little trading post of Walla Walla. . . .”¹⁷

Walla Walla’s trade grew in importance during 1863 and 1864 with the discovery of significant gold strikes in Montana, eastern British Columbia, and northeastern Washington. Many miners and packers shifted their operations into these areas. The diggings of central Idaho were said to be “played out,” those of southern Idaho remained important, but the districts appearing to offer the most promise were in the northern mountainous areas served by Mullan Road packers. Productivity of the Montana diggings increased from \$500,000 in 1862 to \$8 million in 1863 and to \$13 million in 1864.¹⁸

Rich strikes were also made in the Kootenay area of British Columbia. Despite attempts by Jesuit priests to discourage gold digging, “the adventurous disposition of the American people and their desire to explore every nook and corner of our vast territory” resulted in new Kootenay discoveries. The *Statesman* predicted that “Walla Walla must needs be the market from which supplies [for the Kootenay] are drawn,” and it hoped that the Montana strikes would keep the city’s packers busy “in transit to the new Eldorado, laden with the products of our valleys and the goods of our merchants.”¹⁹

During the early 1860s packers carrying merchandise from Walla Walla to the Kootenay and

¹⁴ Frank H. Woody, “A Sketch of the Early History of Western Montana, Written in 1876 and 1877,” *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, II (1896), 98-99; Albert J. Partoll, “Frank L. Worden, Pioneer Merchant, 1830-1887,” *PNQ*, Vol. 40 (1949), 191, 200; Phillips, ed., *Stuart Journals*, I, 189, 212.

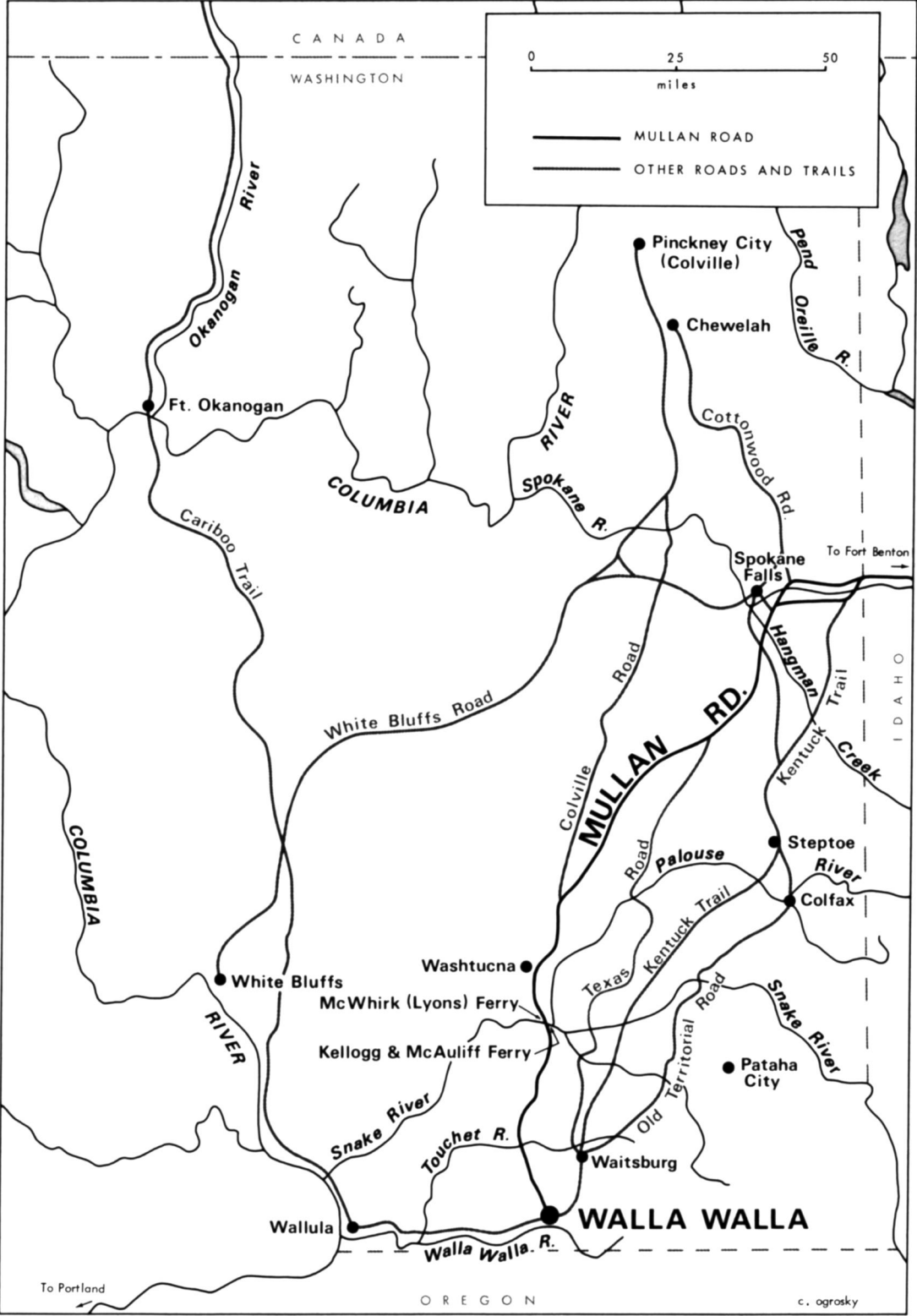
¹⁵ Phillips, ed., *Stuart Journals*, I, 182, 185, 198, 208.

¹⁶ Merrill G. Burlingame, *The Montana Frontier* (Helena, 1942), 131; Dorothy O. Johansen and Charles M. Gates, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1967), 266-67. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, Aug. 9, 1862.

¹⁷ J. Orin Oliphant, ed., “Recollections of Ben Burgunder,” *WHQ*, Vol. 17 (1926), 194, 201; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Dec. 6, 13, 1862; Walla Walla *Union*, July 1, 1871. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, Dec. 20, 1861.

¹⁸ Alton B. Oviatt, “Pacific Coast Competition for the Gold Camp Trade of Montana,” *PNQ*, Vol. 56 (1965), 169; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Jan. 10, Aug. 30, 1862, Oct. 3, 1863; J. Ross Browne, *Resources of the Pacific Slope* (New York, 1869), 511. For similar figures on the productivity of the Montana diggings, see J. H. Bradley, “Effects at Fort Benton of the Gold Excitement in Montana,” *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, VIII (1917), 127-31. For lower estimates, see 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Executive Document No. 92, James W. Taylor, *Gold Mines East of the Rocky Mountains* (Washington, D.C., 1867), 7 (Serial 1293).

¹⁹ Walla Walla *Statesman*, March 7, Oct. 24, 1863, Jan. 16, 1864.



Montana diggings found that the Mullan Road was not only a convenient route but was "the only route . . . feasible for pack animals." Those hauling to the Kootenay generally followed the Mullan Road to the Spokane River, thence to Lake Pend Oreille and northward, because that route was "nearly a day's travel" shorter than any other.²⁰

Five ferries operated in one 15-mile stretch of the Snake River, either on the Mullan Road itself or on spurs that joined that route. Competition among the ferry operators was keen. Each proprietor claimed that his location provided the best route to the mining areas. The proprietors of McWhirk's (later Lyons) Ferry, on the main Mullan Road crossing, advertised a "\$1000 reward To any man that can find as good or Direct a Wagon Road to the Kootenai mines or Colville as the route crossing Snake River at McWhirk's ferry." The *Statesman* reported in 1864 that at Kellogg and McAuliff's crossing, one mile upstream from McWhirk's, "Every day not less than from two to five large pack-trains cross the ferry. . . ." There were several ranches and stores

along the main route, and traders were located "at every watering hole with a keg of 500-yard whiskey and a sack of beans" for sale to travelers at greatly inflated prices.²¹

Evidence of the economic impact of the Kootenay diggings upon Walla Walla in 1863 and 1864 is provided by the newspaper accounts of pack trains that loaded merchandise in Walla Walla and proceeded to the gold-producing area. In 1863 "Capt. Mullan with a party of some 20 persons" was among those leaving Walla Walla on prospecting trips to the Kootenay.²²

The rush of miners to the region began in earnest in 1864. One hundred packs crossed McWhirk's Ferry early in the year bound for the Kootenay; ten pack trains of forty animals each left Wallula (Walla Walla's port on the Columbia River) in one week for the area; and two hundred packs were outfitted in Walla Walla during another week in preparation for travel to the Kootenay. Dan Drumheller and Charley Allenberg took a pack train from Walla Walla to the Kootenay, set up a store at Wild Horse Creek, and sold their merchandise. Announcements similar to the following appeared more and more frequently as the year progressed: "Mr. Day will leave this city next week with a pack train of fifteen or twenty animals, loaded with miner's merchandise for the Kootenai mines."²³

By the summer of 1864, the streets of Walla Walla were crowded with men who were passing through town en route from Boise to the Kootenay. Miners and packers who returned to Walla Walla from the area brought back optimistic reports. In August the *Statesman* noted: "Two parties arrived from the [Kootenay] mines to-day in quest of supplies. They will load and return immediately, with numbers of their intimate friends."²⁴

The packers also brought back tangible evidence of the wealth of the diggings. One packer arrived in Walla Walla with forty ounces of dust, another with "900 fine . . . 46 per ounce." The Kootenay-Walla Walla expressman returned with several "big lumps" of gold ore as did other Walla Walla citizens. Wells, Fargo, and Company reported in October 1863 that "considerable quantities" of gold dust from the Kootenay had been brought to their Walla Walla office.²⁵

Walla Walla traders were also actively involved in trade with western Montana during 1863 and 1864. Pack trains regularly passed Hell Gate en route to the new Montana diggings, sometimes at the rate of five in one day. As early in the season as February, the *Statesman* reported that "a number of persons in this valley are

²⁰ Walla Walla *Statesman*, March 26, 1864, Sept. 8, 1865; Otis W. Freeman, "Early Wagon Roads in the Inland Empire," *PNQ*, Vol. 45 (1954), 129. For further discussions about the advantages and uses of the Mullan Road in the mining trade, see: Walla Walla *Statesman*, May 27, June 3, July 1, 1864, Aug. 3 to Sept. 21, 1866; Walla Walla *Union*, July 1, 1871; Daniel M. Drumheller, "Uncle Dan" Drumheller Tells Thrills of Western Trails in 1854 (Spokane, 1925), 110-12; Burlingame, *Montana Frontier*, 131.

²¹ Walla Walla *Statesman*, May 20, 27, July 1, Sept. 16, Dec. 2, 1864. Kellogg and McAuliff's Ferry was on the Mullan Road as located in 1859; McWhirk's was downstream on the new route adopted by Mullan in 1861. McWhirk charged the following ferriage rates: horse and rider \$1.00, packed animal, \$1.00, loose animal, \$0.50, footman, \$0.50. Walla Walla *Statesman*, May 20, 1864; *Oregon Argus* (Salem), May 7, 1866, quoted in "Teakle Papers," Vol. 31, p. 246; Kingston, "Northern Overland Route in 1867," 248. One of the first areas north of the Snake River to attract settlers was the region where the Mullan and Colville roads split apart. The Cow Creek House, a way station near this junction, was established in the early 1860s. William S. Lewis, *Story of Early Days in the Big Bend Country: Breaking Trails, Rush of Miners, Coming of Cattlemen, Making Homes, Pioneer Hardships in the Big Bend Country* (Spokane, 1926), 7, 8. The Jan. 31, 1868, Walla Walla *Statesman* reported "everything on the Mullan route . . . in active preparation for the coming spring rush" and noted that "the proprietors of the Spokane upper bridge, the 'Pioneer,' have worked hard and faithful . . . and spent considerable money to merit a continuance of public patronage."

²² Walla Walla *Statesman*, Oct. 24, 1863.

²³ *Ibid.*, March 19, April 2, May 20, 1864, Feb. 10, 1865; Drumheller, "Uncle Dan," 110-12.

²⁴ Walla Walla *Statesman*, June 10, July 1, 22, Aug. 26, 1864. Provisions usually included whisky, flour, coffee, and beans. See, for example, Walla Walla *Statesman*, Nov. 14, 1863.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1863, Sept. 16, 1864.

making preparations to start from this city . . . with goods and provisions” for the Bitterroot and Beaver Head mines in Montana. Observers noted the passage of numerous pack trains over the Mullan Road destined for the Beaver Head strikes.²⁶

Although the Walla Walla packers offered lower prices than merchants from other regions, goods were expensive. Granville Stuart recorded in his journal:

May 5, 1863. Two pack trains arrived from Walla Walla. Bought from them the following:

52 lbs.	Tobacco	@	\$4.00	\$208.00
168 lbs.	Bacon	@	.40	67.20
241 lbs.	Sugar	@	.60	144.60
17½ lbs.	Soap	@	.50	8.75
				\$428.55 ²⁷

Trade with the Colville area was also important to Walla Walla merchants. During 1863 and 1864 large volumes of freight were taken from Walla Walla and Wallula to Colville. One company hauled 50,000 pounds of goods in six trips; another carried “13,000 pounds of bacon, sugar, etc., thirty-six days since he started for the goods. Paid freight bill on same, \$1,950.” Large amounts of Colville dust were brought to the Walla Walla Valley, including one shipment worth \$22,000. In September 1863 another major shipment arrived; the *Statesman* announced that “Mr. John U. Hoffstetter and several other gentlemen came down from Colville, this week, bringing with them about \$35,000 in Columbia river gold dust.”²⁸

The mining trade had caused Walla Walla to become an important outfitting point for miners and a supply depot for packers. During months in which cold weather restricted travel to the gold-producing regions, the city’s businesses received a boost from the influx of miners taking up winter residence in Walla Walla.²⁹ In the fall of 1864, for example, the *Statesman* commented:

The city this week has presented a lively and animated appearance. Main Street has been thronged each day by strangers, mostly from the different mining camps, and as a consequence quite a “run” has been made on the hotel proprietors for board and lodging.³⁰

PLACER mining in the Inland Empire reached its apogee during the years 1865-67. By this time traders from other regions had begun to challenge Walla Walla for the lucrative mining trade. Saint Louis merchants, who brought their wares into Montana via Missouri River steamboats to Fort Benton, expanded their operations. Before 1865 no more than four steamers had arrived at

Fort Benton during any one season. But the number of arrivals increased thereafter: eight in 1865, thirty-one in 1866, and thirty-nine in 1867. Before 1866 packing charges from Walla Walla to Montana were less per pound than those from Saint Louis. By 1867, however, the rates from Saint Louis and Chicago were substantially less than those from Walla Walla.³¹

In 1866 Portland merchants completed a road to the mining areas of Montana that bypassed Walla Walla. This route involved steamboat service up the Columbia from Portland to White Bluffs (a landing on the river northwest of Walla Walla), overland travel to Lake Pend Oreille, and steamboating on that lake and on the Clark Fork River. The Oregon Steam Navigation Company began offering preferential rates for travel over the new White Bluffs Road. Walla Walla residents railed against the “heartless” attempt to “induce the miner to travel out of his way.” The *Statesman* described the endeavor as “the greatest humbug” which the “Oregon Steam Navigation Co. has begotten for purposes vile as the prostitution of its own offspring.”³²

The White Bluffs route and Wallula’s effort to bypass Walla Walla with the “Wastuckna Wagon Road” failed to divert much of the traffic. An estimated seven-eighths of the cargo from the Pacific Slope continued to go over the Mullan

²⁶ Oviatt, “Pacific Coast Competition for the Gold Camp Trade,” 169; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 28, 1863, July 29, Aug. 5, Sept. 23, 1864. Mail service and express pack trains plied the route throughout the year, although in December dog teams were required to get through the snowbound mountains. Walla Walla *Statesman*, Jan. 2, 1864.

²⁷ Phillips, ed., *Stuart Journals*, I, 239.

²⁸ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Sept. 12, 1863, Aug. 12, 19, Sept. 23, 1864; “Journal of W. Park Winans,” entry of Jan. 2, 1863, quoted in N. W. Durham, *History of the City of Spokane and Spokane Country, Washington, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Spokane, 1912), I, 272.

²⁹ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Oct. 10, 1863.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Sept. 9, 1864.

³¹ “Steamboat Arrivals at Fort Benton, Montana, and Vicinity,” *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana*, I (1876), 317-21; Alton B. Oviatt, “Steamboat Traffic on the Upper Missouri River, 1859-1869,” *PNQ*, Vol. 40 (1949), 98.

³² Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 16, April 6, 20, May 4, June 1, 8, 1866.

³³ Meinig, *Great Columbia Plain*, 215-17; Freeman, “Early Wagon Roads in the Inland Empire,” 130; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Dec. 22, 1865, April 16, Sept. 14, 1866, April 5, 12, 1867.

³⁴ Trimble, *Mining Advance into the Inland Empire*, 58; Oscar Osburn Winther, *The Old Oregon Country: A History of Frontier Trade, Transportation, and Travel* (Stanford, 1950), 214-27; James W. Watt, “Experiences of a Packer in Washington Territory Mining Camps During the Sixties,” *WHQ*, Vol. 20 (1929), 36; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 10, 1865, March 2, 1866. For discussions of the White Bluffs—Pend Oreille route, see Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 16,

Road. Packers preferred Walla Walla ("a considerable city where they could have a 'good time'") to the desolate townsites of Wallula and White Bluffs. Walla Walla was at the junction of the proven routes and possessed "an ever expanding scale and variety of businesses. . . ."³³

Walla Walla packers sometimes used the steamboat service on Lake Pend Oreille in conjunction with the Mullan Road, for they preferred that route early in the season when Mullan's passes were snowbound. Many packers followed the Mullan Road from Walla Walla to the mountains and then turned northward to utilize the steamboat service. The British Columbia government attempted to capture the Kootenay trade by improving a mountain road to the coast and by imposing high tariffs, but its efforts had little success. Most of the business with southern Idaho, however, was lost to merchants in Omaha, San Francisco, and Portland.³⁴

Despite the increased competition, Walla Walla merchants and packers continued to be heavily engaged in the mining trade. A major gold strike on the Little Blackfoot River of western Montana in 1865 "induced an immense immigration" not only from Idaho and Washington, but also from Oregon and California.

Nearly all of the vast crowd of gold seekers came over the Coeur d'Alene mountains by way of the military wagon road

constructed by Lieut. John Mullan. . . . During the whole of the summer and the fall of 1865, the road was literally lined with men and animals on their way to the new El Dorado.³⁵

Supplies were freighted to the mines from Walla Walla by "hundreds and even thousands of pack mules." The *Statesman* reported that "Seventy pack trains numbering from fifteen to ninety animals each" were outfitted during the fall of 1865 in Walla Walla for the Montana mines. A San Francisco merchant estimated that "Over 100 pack trains, averaging 50 animals each, with three hundred pounds to the animal, making an aggregate of 750 tons were sent from various points on the Columbia River to Montana." The cost of transportation was estimated at \$240,000, the value of the goods about \$1,200,000. But despite the heavy traffic, supplies at the diggings were scarce. A Montana miner wrote to the *Statesman*: "Unless we have a very heavy accession to the stock of flour now here, that article will reach \$1.00 per pound before spring."³⁶

At the height of the Montana rush, fifty prospectors arrived in Walla Walla on one evening and stopped in that city "for the purpose of buying animals and generally procuring outfits." Walla Walla-based merchants too prepared to head for the Blackfoot River country with their wares.³⁷ The *Statesman* reported enthusiastically:

In the history of mining excitements, we doubt whether there ever has been a rush equal to that now going on to Montana. From every point of the compass they drift by hundreds and thousands . . . all bound for Blackfoot. In addition to the usual conveyances, men of enterprise have placed passenger trains on the route between Walla Walla and Blackfoot, and those trains go out daily with full passenger lists.³⁸

TRADE with Montana remained heavy during 1866, but by 1867 improved steamboat service to Fort Benton and the continuing deterioration of the Mullan Road had caused a marked decline in Walla Walla's trade with the Montana mines. Saint Louis and Chicago interests constructed fleets of light-draft steamboats well suited to the Missouri River, helping them to capture a large share of the trade. The productivity of the mines decreased, and packers reported "dull times." An immigrant who traveled over the Mullan Road in 1867 stated that business was "very poor," although he noted that "from ten to twenty men came through on the road each day. These were mostly miners returning to spend the winter at Walla Walla or the Willamette Valley."³⁹

Attempts by Canadian merchants to take over the Kootenay trade failed, and the men in that region—estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000—

July 27, Aug. 3, 1866, and Portland *Oregonian*, April 27, 1866. Mullan later admitted that the Clark Fork River would have been a better pass for the Mullan Road, since this passage, although longer, had less snowfall than the Coeur d'Alene route. *Report on the Construction of a Military Road*, 6.

³⁵ Woody, "Sketch of the Early History of Western Montana," 103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Sept. 29, 1865, March 9, 1866. An estimated 1,000 pack animals were outfitted in Walla Walla and Lewiston in a two-week span for travel over the Mullan Road to the Montana mines. Simeon G. Reed to J. W. Ladd and D. F. Bradford, Sept. 4, 1865, quoted in Dorothy O. Johansen and Frank B. Gill, "A Chapter in the History of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company," *OHQ*, Vol. 38 (1937), 29. On Aug. 25, 1865, the Walla Walla *Statesman* reported the departure of 475 mules via the Mullan Road for the mines. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, May 19, Sept. 1, 15, 1865, April 20, May 18, Nov. 23, 1866.

³⁷ Walla Walla *Statesman*, March 2, June 6, 1866.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1866.

³⁹ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Oct. 26, Nov. 23, 1866, June 28, 1867; Kingston, "Northern Overland Route in 1867," 242-44. The territorial legislature's "Memorial Relative to the Mullan Road" claimed that 20,000 people used the road, 6,000 mules were outfitted, and \$1 million in gold was brought to Walla Walla in 1866. The figures probably are exaggerated, but traffic was indeed heavy. See Oviatt, "Pacific Coast Competition for the Gold Camp Trade of Montana," 175, and Bradley, "Effects at Fort Benton of the Gold Excitement in Montana," 127-31.

continued to rely upon Walla Walla for “bread-stuffs and bacon.” Walla Walla packers preferred to travel via the Mullan Road to the Spokane River, thence northward via the Lake Pend Oreille region. The amount of this travel is shown in the 1865 report that thirty-five packers were en route to the diggings with 151,000 pounds of flour.⁴⁰

The *Statesman* frequently took notice of the departure of such pack trains carrying Walla Walla merchandise. Reports similar to the following were common: “Mr. L. Burt’s pack-train—35 animals—loaded at Schwabacker Bro’s & Co’s on Monday, with flour and groceries and left for Kootenai” and “Messrs. Nye & Johnson will start a saddle train for . . . Kootenai mines. . . . Fare \$40.”⁴¹

As late as 1870, a Kootenay prospector noted that “to you of Walla Walla we must look for our flour, bacon, etc.,” and he claimed that trade with the Kootenay formed “the bulwark that sustains your greatness and has raised your valley to its present cash basis and general prosperity.” Gold production from the Kootenay had begun to decline by 1867, and, despite assurances that Chinese miners “are only allowed to work the claims that have been abandoned by white men,” so many whites had sold out that one writer predicted: “with another year the ‘Johns’ will hold undisputed sway in the Kootenai country.”⁴²

In 1867 mining in the Inland Empire also began to decline, and Walla Walla traders began to lose the business of all areas except the Kootenay. By 1870 population and mining output were declining in both Montana and Idaho, although brief flurries of trade sometimes occurred.⁴³ A gold discovery at Montana’s Cedar Creek caused daily departures of miners from Walla Walla

with all conceivable outfits—some with teams of oxen, horses and mules; some go on horseback, with pack animals; others on horseback without pack animals; some go on foot with a cayuse to carry blankets and grub; others go on foot and pack their blankets on their backs.⁴⁴

Walla Walla packers operated saloons and stores at the new diggings and returned home with gold dust.⁴⁵

A crop failure in Montana in 1869 led to large shipments of flour—two of which totaled more than 20,000 pounds. Again the departure of pack trains was “an almost hourly occurrence” providing “full employment for the packers, who are scarcely allowed to return from one trip before they are summoned to load up for another.” Between August and October 1869, the Walla

Walla stores of I. T. Reese and Jordan and Company outfitted 1,297 mules for Montana and 232 for the Kootenay with cargoes of flour, whisky, and general merchandise. During 1870 from \$17,000 to \$20,000 in gold was assayed each month in Walla Walla.⁴⁶

Evidence of the excitement created by a gold discovery can be found in news accounts of the 1865 rush to the Coeur d’Alene. Acting upon the reports of one Charles Wilson, miners hurried to the area from throughout the Pacific Northwest. Because of “the great excitement on account of the Coeur d’Alene mines,” Walla Walla merchants promised to sell their wares at “San Francisco cost prices.” Wagons loaded with flour, bacon, and beans were hauled from Walla Walla over the Mullan Road to Coeur d’Alene. When Wilson was unable to relocate his find, the irate miners began to look “rather more after that personage than for the new diggings. . . .” Wilson was ultimately “only saved from being hung by the intercession of the priest at the [Coeur d’Alene] Mission. . . .”⁴⁷

WITHIN one decade, 1860-70, trade with mining districts had caused Walla Walla to be trans-

⁴⁰ Trimble, *Mining Advance into the Inland Empire*, 57; Walla Walla *Statesman*, June 30, 1865, Dec. 7, 1866. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, March 10, April 14, Sept. 8, 1865, Oct. 26, 1866, April 26, 1867.

⁴¹ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 24, March 31, 1865. See also the issues for Aug. 25, Sept. 1, 1865, and Oct. 26, 1866.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Sept. 21, Dec. 7, 1866, Jan. 1, 1870. See also the issues for June 28, 1867, and Feb. 3, 1872.

⁴³ Rodman W. Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1890* (New York, 1963), 143; James L. Onderdonk, *Idaho: Facts and Statistics Concerning Its Mining, Farming, Stock-Raising, Lumbering, and Other Resources and Industries* (San Francisco, 1885), 47.

⁴⁴ Walla Walla *Union*, April 9, 1870.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, June 18, July 2, 1870. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, May 15, Dec. 11, 1868, July 23, 1870.

⁴⁶ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Aug. 13, 20, Sept. 3, 11, 18, 1869, Sept. 24, 1870. Lists of packers, cargoes, and destinations for outfits leaving the stores of Reese and Jordan were published in the Walla Walla *Statesman*, July 30–Oct. 16, 1869. In one week these two firms outfitted eleven packers for Blackfoot (512 packs) and one each for Missoula City, Granite Creek, Burnt River, and the Kootenay (155 packs). The assay figures are totaled in Alex McGregor, “Economic Impact of the Mullan Road on Walla Walla, 1860-1883,” undergraduate honors thesis (Whitman College, 1971), 110.

⁴⁷ Walla Walla *Statesman*, June 2-16, 23, 30, July 21, 1865. Portland merchants also took an active interest in the trade. Portland *Oregonian*, June 6, 15, 1865.

⁴⁸ Commodities in demand by the miners included: “flour, tea, sugar, tobacco, bacon, lard, gum boots, and good liquors.” Walla Walla *Statesman*, April 8, 1871. See also Walla Walla *Statesman*, Feb. 24, June 23, 1865, June 26, Dec. 11, 1868, Sept. 3, 1869, Aug. 13, 1870, Feb. 3, 1872, and

formed from an insignificant outpost to the largest city in Washington Territory. Merchants catered to the needs of miners, packers hauled merchandise to the mining camps, mules and horses were sold to miners, cattlemen built up large stocks of beeves, and hogs were fattened to supply the gold-producing regions, wheat was raised in the Walla Walla Valley for the mining camps, and hotels and restaurants were built to accommodate miners living in Walla Walla during the winter months. As an access route to the mines of western Montana, eastern British Columbia, and northeastern Washington, the Mullan Road played an important role in this growth.⁴⁸

Competition for the Pacific Northwest gold trade was so intense during the 1860s that Walla Walla was an outpost "within a competitive network that spanned half the nation." Goods from Portland and San Francisco were taken by Oregon Steam Navigation Company boats to Wallula, freighted from there to Walla Walla, and thence to the various mining camps. Because many of their wares were carried by pack trains from Walla Walla to the mines, the merchants of Portland and San Francisco took an active interest in Walla Walla's affairs.⁴⁹

Walla Walla *Union*, March 12, April 2, 1870. Sales of horses, sheep, cattle, and hogs to the miners are discussed in several places, including the Walla Walla *Statesman*, March 17, 1865, Nov. 2, 1866, Sept. 27, 1867.

⁴⁹ Meinig, *Great Columbia Plain*, 219.

⁵⁰ Walla Walla *Statesman*, Sept. 8, 1865, Feb. 2, March 9, 16, Nov. 2, 1866.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 27, 1868, April 23, Aug. 6, 1870; Walla Walla *Union*, June 8, 1872; Meinig, *Great Columbia Plain*, 233.

⁵² Walla Walla *Union*, March 2, 1872; Walla Walla *Statesman*, Nov. 18, 1871; T. C. Elliott, "The Mullan Road: Its Local History and Significance," *WHQ*, Vol. 14 (1923), 208. Ferry proprietors, who a few years earlier had promised to provide the best routes to mining districts, now claimed to be located on the best immigrant trails. Notices similar to the following were common: "Information for immigrants—All persons who wish to go to Spokane Falls, Crab Creek, Four Lakes, and Fort Colville should leave Main Street near the Stine House and follow the Mullan Road." Walla Walla *Union*, Feb. 28, 1880.

⁵³ Walla Walla *Spirit of the West Weekly*, Aug. 27, 1875; Walla Walla *Union*, April 20, 1878, Sept. 30, 1882. Lyons Ferry records were made available to the writer by Mr. and Mrs. Nae Turner, long-time operators of this ferry. The multivolume Lyons Ferry Record Books give daily business records. The writer has condensed these records into yearly statistics; see McGregor, "Economic Impact of the Mullan Road," 113-32. Unless otherwise cited, information about the Lyons Ferry is from the Lyons Ferry Record Books. Information about the residences and occupations of many of these ferry users may be found in early histories of eastern Washington counties, early city and regional directories, accounts written by settlers, etc.

When the deteriorating condition of the Mullan Road threatened Walla Walla's trade with the Montana mines, San Francisco merchants pledged \$5,000 for the repair of the route and expressed concern about the possible loss of trade with the area. Merchants from areas outside the Pacific Northwest—in particular those from Chicago, Saint Louis, Salt Lake City, and Omaha—also became involved in trade with the gold diggings.⁵⁰

The decline of the mining trade seemed to indicate a bleak future for Walla Walla. The *Statesman* admitted in 1868 that the town presented "rather a dull appearance" and that on Main Street "possibly . . . a half a dozen unoccupied stores" could be found. Despite the temporary stagnation in trade, however, the town was able to weather the loss of the mining business and to become increasingly prosperous. The rapid spread of farming in eastern Washington made the city "the focus of a new kind of traffic serving a new hinterland, diminished in radius, but expansive in promise." Walla Walla was developing as a trading and milling center for the surrounding agricultural lands.⁵¹

A rapid influx of settlers onto unclaimed lands north of the Snake River enabled Walla Walla, the only established city in the region, to become the supply center for these areas. Much of the early settlement was in the Big Bend, Colville, and Spokane River areas and could be reached from Walla Walla via the Mullan Road and the Colville Road, which branched off from the former route. Other roads were also important, most notably the Old Territorial Road and the Kentuck Trail which were used extensively during the late 1870s and the 1880s by settlers in the upper Palouse region.⁵²

The degree to which the Mullan Road was used to reach newly settled areas is shown by the records kept by the proprietors of Lyons Ferry, located at the point where the road crossed the Snake River. Although this ferry was in operation as early as 1860, extant records date back only to 1872. These records show that after 1872 only a handful of traders with the mines used the road. Frank McMahon and George Dacres, two of those who crossed the river at Lyons Ferry during the 1870s en route to the mining districts, were reduced to bartering for furs and pelts with the Indians.⁵³

Replacing the mining traders in importance were settlers and livestockmen from various parts of the Big Bend region and from other areas in eastern Washington. Among those using the Mullan Road crossing were residents of Walla

Walla, Waitsburg, and Pataha City and settlers in the regions of Crab Creek, Grand Coulee, Sprague Lake, Spokane River, Cow Creek, and the lower Palouse River.

DURING the 1870s merchants and packers still played a prominent role, but they no longer depended upon business with miners. Two of the most frequent patrons of Lyons Ferry during these years were "Wild Goose Bill" (Samuel Wilbur Condit) and "Virginia Bill" (William Covington). "Wild Goose Bill" was engaged in transporting supplies from Walla Walla to "the unsettled regions embracing northern Idaho and northeastern Washington." His train served settlers, a few scattered miners, and surveyors for the Northern Pacific Railway. Covington ran a pack train of up to nineteen horses from Walla Walla to the upper Columbia River.⁵⁴

The regularity with which these two packers brought supplies into the region is shown in the ferry records for 1874. That year Condit crossed twelve times with a total of 231 pack horses, and Covington paid ferriage twelve times for 131 packs. In other years the two men crossed with wagons, teams, and several Chinese miners. Records show that employees of Schwabacher Brothers and Johnson, Rees, and Company, two Walla Walla mercantile establishments, also used the road. Oppenheimer and Company, merchants of the Colville region, frequently crossed Lyons Ferry en route to Walla Walla for supplies.⁵⁵

The ferry crossing was also used by numerous sheepmen and cattlemen, particularly during the late 1870s and early 1880s, a period when the open range livestock industry was important to many areas of eastern Washington. During the 1860s Walla Walla livestockmen had used the road to transport meat to hungry miners. Newspaper reports similar to the following were common: "Wm. McEnnery has just brought up from southern Oregon 300 head of cattle which he intends to 'winter' at his place in the upper Walla Walla Valley, and then plans to drive them to the Blackfoot mines."⁵⁶

During the 1870s livestockmen used portions of the Mullan Road for a different purpose: to drive their sheep and cattle to the Big Bend for summer range. Dooley and Kirkman and Chris Ennis, proprietors of meat markets in Walla Walla, drove cattle from ranges north of the Snake River to their shops in town, where the animals were prepared for sale as beef. Walla Walla sheepmen grazed 30,000 head on a summer range in the Big Bend. Sheep trailed to this region made up a

large portion of the 22,170 to 41,941 head reported as crossing Lyons Ferry yearly from 1878 to 1883.⁵⁷

The Mullan Road was also used to help ease an oversupply of livestock in eastern Washington. Montana interests purchased sheep and cattle in the region and then drove them over the road to better market areas. Sheep buyers rode into southeastern Washington on horseback from

⁵⁴ *Illustrated History of the Big Bend Country*, 68; *Walla Walla Union*, April 27, 1878. For additional information about Condit, see C. S. Kingston, "Samuel Wilbur Condit, Frontiersman," *PNQ*, Vol. 37 (1946), 129-41, and John F. Weber and Eugene H. Wybourny, "'Wild Goose Bill' and His Ferry," *Pacific Northwesterner*, Vol. 14 (1970), 1-11.

⁵⁵ Condit and Covington continued to use the ferry at regular intervals during the summer months until 1879. From 1879 to 1881 they crossed with teams and pack horses; after 1881 they seldom crossed the ferry. Walla Walla was by then losing its position as the distribution center for northeastern Washington. The April 9, 1869, *Walla Walla Statesman* reported that "For the past two weeks there has been a steady stream of Chinamen pouring through this valley on their way to the mines. To all appearances they come in like locusts."

⁵⁶ *Walla Walla Statesman*, July 19, 1862, Sept. 16, 1864, July 13, 1866, July 16, 1870; *Walla Walla Union*, June 8, 1872; *Portland Oregonian*, June 5, 1865; J. Orin Oliphant, "The Cattle Trade from the Far Northwest to Montana," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 6 (1932), 69-76.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Early Days in the Big Bend Country*, 11; *Walla Walla Statesman*, Aug. 25, 1877; *Walla Walla Union*, Oct. 18, 1870, Oct. 28, Dec. 16, 1871, Sept. 30, 1882. The number of bees that crossed Lyons Ferry was never more than a few thousand a year, because cattle, unlike sheep, could swim across the Snake River during most of the months of the year.

⁵⁸ "Interview with Arthur Cox," in "Interviews Obtained from Pioneers Relative to the History of Grazing in the State of Washington," WPA Historical Records Survey, 1941, p. 40, Washington State University Archives. Occasional reports similar to the following demonstrated the trade: "Our friend James Ritchie, the well-known Montana cattle dealer, writes that he will be in Walla Walla in a few days, when he will be prepared to negotiate for any bands of cattle that may be on sale." *Walla Walla Statesman*, June 10, 1871. See also *Walla Walla Union*, Oct. 18, 1870, Oct. 28, 1871. For discussions of the trade, see J. Orin Oliphant, *On the Cattle Ranges of the Oregon Country* (Seattle, 1968), 178, and 47th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Miscellaneous Document No. 42, Clarence Gordon, "Report on Cattle, Sheep, and Swine Supplementary to Enumeration of Live Stock on Farms in 1880," in *Report on the Production of Agriculture as Returned at the Tenth Census, June 1, 1880* (Washington, D.C., 1883), 139-40 (Serial 2131).

⁵⁹ For the population of Walla Walla in 1880, see Schmid and Schmid, *Growth of Cities and Towns, State of Washington*, 75. Seattle was second with 3,533.

⁶⁰ For 1890 population figures, see *ibid.*, 75, 109. The four largest cities in 1890 were: Seattle, 42,837; Tacoma, 36,006; Spokane, 19,222; Walla Walla, 4,709.

⁶¹ Frederick L. Ransome and Frank C. Calkins, *Geology and Ore Deposits of the Coeur d'Alene District, Idaho* (Washington, D.C., 1908), 78.

Montana, purchased sheep, and then grazed them eastward. A pioneer eastern Washington sheepman recalled that "the trail usually followed was the old Mullan road route into Montana, or as close to it as possible."⁵⁸

The United States government was another important user of the Lyons Ferry crossing. On September 3, 1878, for example, 235 mounted men with wagons, horses, mules, and ambulances crossed in one day. Nine days later, 222 mounted men returned across the ferry. The total government ferry bill for 1878 was \$990.97.

Walla Walla's success as a supply center for eastern Washington was shown in the 1880 census, which credited the city with 3,588 inhabitants—over 2,000 more than in 1870 and more than any other city in Washington Territory. But when the Northern Pacific Railway reached the town of Spokane Falls in 1881, Walla Walla was doomed as the principal supply center for the Inland Empire.⁵⁹

The completion of the transcontinental route to salt water in 1883 initiated a period of rapid growth for Spokane Falls, and it soon replaced Walla Walla as the primary distributing center for eastern Washington. In 1880 the population of Spokane Falls was estimated to be 350. A decade later, with 19,222 inhabitants, the city was four times the size of Walla Walla. The Mullan Road and other trails northward from Walla Walla proved to be no match for the network of roads and rail lines branching out from Spokane Falls.⁶⁰

For two decades the Mullan Road had made an important contribution to the development of Walla Walla. During the 1860s it was the headquarters for servicing many of the region's gold diggings. During the 1870s it helped Walla Walla to develop as an agricultural trading center by providing access to the newly settled regions in the Inland Empire. The authors of one study have noted that "Roughly constructed as it was, the highway now familiarly known as the 'old Mullan Road' was for many years the only line

of travel into a region to whose development it substantially contributed."⁶¹

The history of Walla Walla and the impact of the Mullan Road on its development is the recurrent story of a frontier town: competition for the trade of the hinterland. During the 1860s merchants from Walla Walla and several other cities competed for the Pacific Northwest gold trade in much the same way that the businessmen of New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia had vied for the trade of the Ohio Valley earlier in the century.

Walla Walla's attempts to become a supply center for mining and agriculture illustrate the impact of technology upon trade rivalries. The steamboat helped Walla Walla to gain prominence by providing transport for trade goods up the Columbia River from Portland to Wallula. Yet improved steamboat service on the Missouri River hurt Walla Walla, because it enabled Saint Louis and Chicago merchants to cut their shipping costs to the Montana mines. The completion of the Northern Pacific to Spokane Falls also adversely affected Walla Walla, because it allowed the merchants of Spokane Falls to gain control of the agricultural trade previously held by the Walla Walla businessmen.

The rapid growth of Walla Walla from half a dozen houses to the largest town in Washington Territory in only one decade also suggests that Walla Walla would be an appropriate subject for a study of urbanism on the farwestern frontier.

The Mullan Road illustrates how a project can have results totally unforeseen by its planners. Constructed to provide a convenient crossing between the Missouri and the Columbia rivers for troops and immigrant wagons, the Mullan Road proved important as a pack trail to mining and agricultural areas. By inadvertently connecting Walla Walla with important mining districts and areas that would later be occupied by farmers and livestock owners, the planners of the Mullan Road helped to provide the impetus for Walla Walla's sudden rise to prominence and its development as a major center for agricultural activities in the Pacific Northwest.