

About the Settler Era

Euro-American settlers began arriving in droves in the mid-1840s, with the first one on the Cowlitz River arriving in 1847. This settler era encompassed the period from these arrivals until the coming of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1871-75. Other than continued use of the river, the main route for this era was the Military Road, Surveyed in 1855 and completed in 1860.

"This route, called a "Territorial Road," started at Monticello opposite the "Red Slough" (now Lake Sacajawea) and proceeded north along the bank of the Cowlitz past claims identified as belonging to N[athaniel] Stone, Judge [Seth] Catlin, J. C. Leonard, A[lexander] Crawford, W[illiam] Hays, [Hugh] McMillan, [Alfred] Washburn's, J[ames] Catlin, L. P. Smith, Capt. McCorkle, E[noch] Chapman, and then took off across a ridge of hills with "deep ravines" on either side, until it reached H[enry] Jackson's place on Arkansas Creek. From there the road re-entered the woods over a "gravelly ridge covered with burnt timber" (Pumphrey's mountain) and came out again at the river bank where "Iroquois [Olequa] creek" flows into the Cowlitz... The route then meandered northward "through much fallen timber" to Mill Creek where Drew had his mill and farm."

-Ezra Meeker, "Pioneer Reminiscences of Puget Sound" (Seattle, 1905)

"We traveled by horseback, by stage, or walked. The stage coach changed horses at Jackson's. ... They used four or six horses, depending on the condition of the roads. ... Sometimes the road was too bad for the stage coaches to travel, so the passengers had to go by horseback. The roads were sometimes terrible. The military road sounds good, but it was an awful road really. Father said the men who built it looked for the highest hills and went over them. Pumphrey's mountain was an awful pull – only nine miles from Jackson's to Pumphrey's, but so steep a change of horses was needed at the top."

-Kelsey Conger (1937 interview)



H.D. Huntington house at Military Road, c. 1890

Collaborators Thank You!

This project was produced by the Cowlitz County Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission seeks to memorialize the historic places and stories of Cowlitz County through collaboration and interpretation.

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COWLITZ TRAIL PROJECT



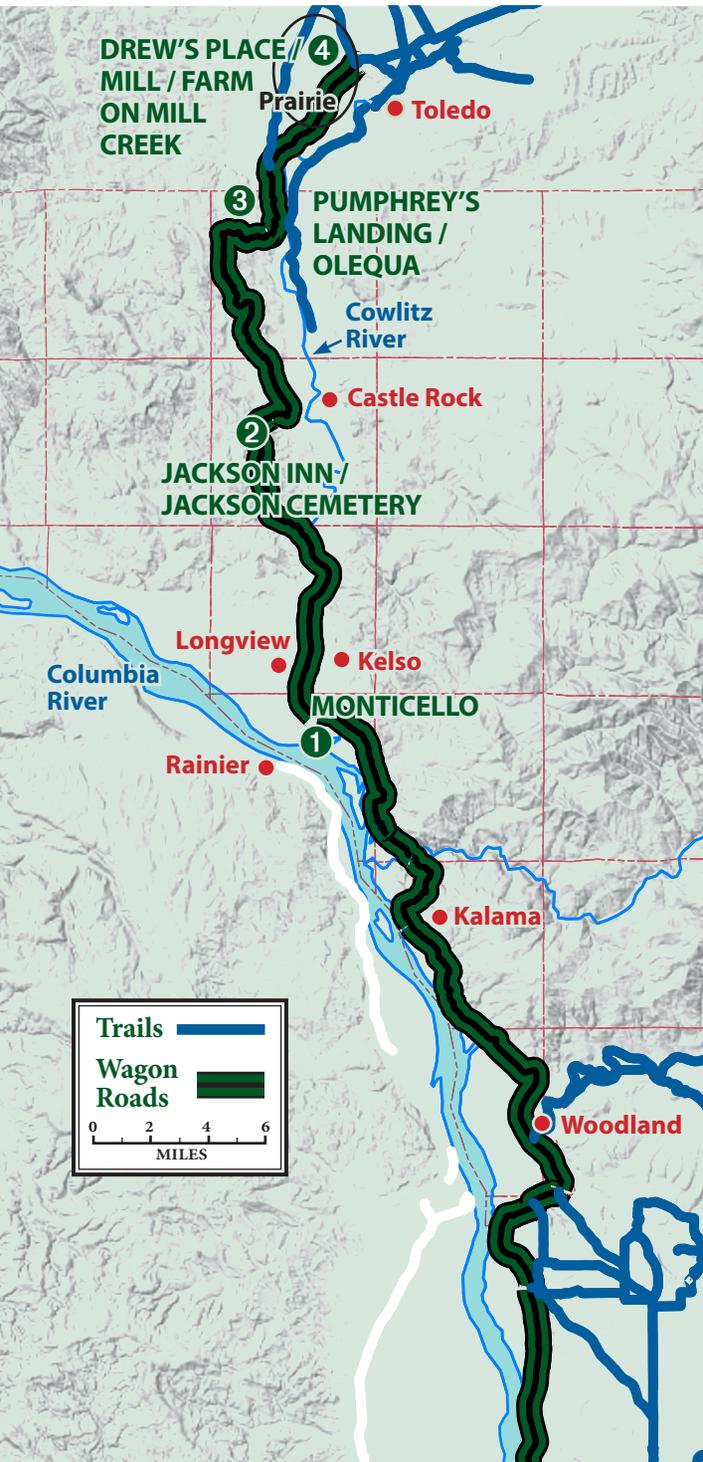
Settler Era 1840-1873



Corduroy Road near Castle Rock, late 1800's

COWLITZ TRAIL PROJECT

Settler Era 1840-1873



Early centers along the Cowlitz Trail allowed early settlers to trade and socialize.

- 1 MONTICELLO:** Founded in 1850 by a group of settlers who took over a Hudson's Bay Company agricultural station, it was the first town in Cowlitz County, and became a way station for river and trail traffic between Puget Sound and the Columbia River.
- 2 JACKSON INN / JACKSON CEMETERY:** Henry Jackson brought his family west from Indiana in the early 1850s, settling on Arkansas Creek west of present-day Castle Rock. His home was the first main resting station north of Monticello, and played host to the likes of Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens and suffragist Susan B. Anthony. He started the nearby cemetery when his daughter Sarah died in 1855. The 1855 house/Inn still stands.
- 3 PUMPHREY'S LANDING / OLEQUA:** William Pumphrey's place at the Olequa Creek crossing of the Military Road was a place for travelers to rest their horses after coming down Pumphrey Mountain.
- 4 DREW'S PLACE / MILL / FARM ON MILL CREEK:** George Drew's farm, saw mill, and grist mill on Mill Creek was the point on the Military Road where people left the Cowlitz watershed on their way north. Drew, originally from Massachusetts, settled near Cowlitz Landing in 1850, near the former site of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company (a Hudson's Bay Company subsidiary).



Jackson Inn, 1950's

[From Monticello] "Off we bounced into the woods at the rate of three or four miles an hour. ... The road was rough beyond description; during the winter rains it is just impassable, and is abandoned; for miles it is over trees and sticks laid down roughly in swamps; and for the rest, ungraded, and simply a path cut through the dense forest. ... [However,] the majestic beauty of the fir and cedar forests through which we rode almost continuously for the day and a half that the road stretched out was compensation for much discomfort. These are the finest forests we have yet met... We occasionally struck a narrow prairie ... but for the most part it was a continuous ride through forests, so high and thick that the sun could not reach the road, so unpeopled and untouched, that the very spirit of solitude reigned supreme, and made us feel its presence as never upon Ocean or Plain."

-Samuel Bowles (1865 article in the Springfield (Mass.) Republican)