

A
STATE PARK
DEDICATED
TO
SAMUEL KIMBROUGH BARLOW
PIONEER ROAD BUILDER

The smallest state park in Oregon is situated on the south slope of Mount Hood, beside the Mount Hood Highway (State 35), Mile Post 55.90, practically opposite the entrance to the Government Camp highway maintenance station. It is described as being in Section 23, Township 3 South, Range 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ East, W.M., Clackamas County, of triangular shape, and contains only twenty-five square feet of surface, its elevation approximately 3900 feet (U.S.G.S.).

Contained in this small park is a large boulder, symbolizing his rugged strength of purpose, upon which are two tablets with the following inscriptions: "Samuel Kimbrough Barlow, Oregon Pioneer from Kentucky, Built the First Wagon Road over the Cascade mountains, Passing this Spot, 1845-1846. The Building of railroads since has been of Less Importance to the Community than the opening of this Road which enabled the Settlers to bring their Wagons and Teams directly into the Willamette Valley. Erected by the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers, 1923." The other tablet reads: "Susannah Lee Barlow, Wife of S. K. Barlow. A real daughter of the American Revolution and the real Madonna of the Barlow Trail. Arrived in Oregon City December 25, 1845. Placed by Susannah Lee Barlow and Multnomah Chapter, D.A.R., 1923".

In Lewis A. McArthur's "Oregon Geographic Names", p. 19 (First edition), we read: "Samuel K. Barlow was born in Nicholas County, Kentucky, January 24, 1792. He died at Canemah, Oregon, July 14, 1867, and is buried beside his wife at Barlow, Oregon". In William Barlow's "Reminiscences of

Seventy Years", the Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society, Vol. XIII, September, 1912, No. 3, p. 269, he states that "his father was born in 1795". A foot-note on p. 120, Thwaite's "Early Western Travels, Vol. XXX, also gives 1795 as the year of his birth.

The first recorded mention of a road, or the possibility of one, south of Mount Hood, was by Samuel K. Barlow, who captained a unit of the 1845 migration to Oregon. When crossing the Blue Mountains this observing leader noted a low gap, just south of Mount Hood. This he visualized as a possible route for a wagon road.

Upon reaching The Dalles late in September the company unit dissolved. Inquiry revealed that an Indian trail passed over the range on the south side of Mount Hood. The road possibility was discussed and the redoubtable Barlow voiced a determination to see for himself whether or not there was a feasible route for a wagon road.

The Barlow family, the Messrs. Gaines, Gessner, Caplinger, Rector, William G. Buffum and their families, together with John Bown, Reuben Gant and William Berry, elected to join with him in an assault upon the unknown. With seven wagons they moved out on Five-mile Creek where there was an abundance of wood, water and grass; there to await the return of their leader, who with H. M. Knighton had preceded them to explore the way ahead. Mr. Knighton returned not deeming the route practicable and rejoined his family at The Dalles. Mr. Barlow returned in a few days, having gone ahead some sixty or seventy miles. The party then moved to Tygh Valley where they rested a day, then went on to the mouth of "Stony (now Rock) Creek; a tributary of White River, which they called "Little Deschutes". This camp site, approximately three miles south of Wamic, was where the Barlow party began the opening of this historic road; the first to cross the Cascade mountains. The route they followed up to and over the Barlow Pass is well

defined on the Dufur and Mount Hood quadrangle sheets.

From the Palmer journals and other old records, neither the later camp sites, the end of the 1845 road-making effort, nor the site of the winter camp, can be accurately located. The broad inference is, that the road reached Barlow Pass, perhaps beyond, by the way of Barlow Creek. This pass is the water-parting between the drainage systems of White River to the Deschutes and Salmon River westward to the Sandy. With an elevation of 4,155 feet it is the first point of contact with the Mount Hood Highway (State 50), six and two-tenths miles east of Government Camp and three miles east of the Wapinitia Highway junction. The well signed Barlow Road location crosses directly over the narrow, divide summit, descending the steep, westward slope to its base, where it is again intersected by the highway which then, with necessary grade deviations, more or less follows the original Barlow route to where it left the Sandy River for the Clackamas River and on to Oregon City.

Beside the route of the old road, about mid-distance between the western base of the Barlow Pass divide and the Wapinitia junction, there is a mound of small stones that marks the lonely grave of a now unknown woman who died and was buried there by members of a pioneer wagon train she had accompanied.

While this incident was not directly connected with the 1845 Barlow party, it has become a circumstance of touching, human interest that appeals to many people who pass that way. For many years before the modern highway was established, numbers of those who traveled the old road of rocks, ruts and steeps, had paused to reverently add a stone to the growing pile. Since the advent of the highway, more and more people are attracted to this upbuilding cairn, and they too, add their token stone to revere the memory of this unknown woman who, after many weary miles of travel had perished at the threshold of her destination.

When camp was established, Mr. Barlow, accompanied by Mr. W. H. Rector, went ahead blazing the way to be followed by the thirteen workers of the party as they opened the road. In the open, marginal pine forest, characteristic of this locality, cutting was light and good progress was made.

Soon after the camp was established, twenty-three wagons under the leadership of Joel Palmer arrived. The Palmer party was the last element of the 1845 immigrants to reach The Dalles. Prospects of getting down the river were not good and Mr. Palmer induced fifteen wagons to join him in following the Barlow party, who had left a few days before, to seek a route over the mountains. They started October 1, their number increased to twenty-three wagons. They overtook the Barlow party on October 3 and encamped with them at the mouth of Rock Creek.

In the morning Mr. Palmer with a companion went forward on horseback to reconnoiter, hoping to encounter Mr. Barlow and Mr. Rector who were on the same errand. They returned the evening of the fifth. Mr. Barlow had not returned.

As grazing in the timber was poor and the loose cattle much trouble, they determined to send them to the Willamette Valley by the way of the Indian trail that crossed the south side of Mount Hood about timberline. Two families elected to go with the cattle drivers. The drivers were to get provisions and return. Mr. Barlow and Mr. Rector came in during the afternoon and the two parties immediately met and jointly adopted measures for the prosecution of the work ahead.

By the evening of the tenth the road had been opened up to the top of a ridge where the descent to White River was to be made. To assist the workers a dense thicket of "laurel" was fired, practically clearing the

road down to the stream. On the eleventh Mr. Barlow, Mr. Palmer and Mr. Lock, set out to find a way over the divide, returning to camp near midnight of the following day. A consultation was held next day to decide upon the movements of the company in the near future. The provisions sent for had arrived, but the general supply was nearly exhausted and many had no means for procuring more. Some began to despair of getting through that season. Those left with the cattle could not keep them together and a number had been lost. The Indians stole several horses, and with other mishaps occurring, not more than one-third of the party could be kept at work on the road, the remainder were needed in camp and to pack provisions to the workers.

Mr. Palmer was again elected to go ahead. He chose one companion and they spent two long, arduous days looking. On October 14, the weather that had been clear for months, clouded up in the night. Realizing the danger of so many families being caught in the mountains was serious, Mr. Palmer hastened to return and tell the people of the difficulties to be encountered. On their way they came upon an advance crew of four men of their company clearing the road. The next day they all started for the main camp with the tools and provisions, arriving at two o'clock in the afternoon.

The whole matter was laid before the company. Mr. Barlow and Mr. Rector offered to continue work on the road until the party could go and return from the valley; agreeing to insure the safety of the wagons for a certain per cent of their value. In rounding up the cattle it was found that many had strayed, but by nightfall nearly all of them were in camp. Some who had no horses started for the valley on foot. Others were to remain and move the camp to White River, and those who intended leaving at

once could then follow this stream up to the Indian trail.

On October 16, there was every indication of rain. Mr. Barlow and Mr. Rector started moving, followed later by Mr. Buffum, his wife and Mr. Thompson. Mr. Palmer joined the later group and they set out for the settlement in a cold rain, enveloped by clouds and frequently losing the trail. On October 18, they met the party bringing in the supplies that the good people of Oregon City had generously contributed upon hearing of the plight of the families who had attempted the Barlow route. The donated supplies consisted of eleven hundred pounds of flour, a hundred of sugar, with tea and other items. The two Gilmores with Mr. Stewart had volunteered to take them in to the camp; the only cost to the recipients being the hire of the horses. Two of the packers wished to return to the valley and on the nineteenth, Mr. Palmer joined Mr. C. Gilmore and the Indian who had been sent to assist the packers, and hastened on to the camp with the much needed provisions. Many difficulties assailed them. The rain turned to snow as they ascended and increased in depth as they advanced, where drifts added to their troubles. Separated in a dense cloud, the Indian stole a horse and decamped in the mist.

October 20, the wagon camp was reached in the afternoon and there was much rejoicing as several families were entirely out of food, others nearly so. After waiting one day Mr. Gilmore left camp with three families. Others soon started and in a few days all of the families had departed, except those of Mr. Barlow, Mr. Rector and Mr. Caplinger, who had gone to the settlement for horses. Ten men remained in camp. A suitable place was selected for a wagon yard, a cabin was erected for those who were to stay through the winter and for sheltering such effects as could not be packed out. On October 25, Mr. Palmer with Mr. Creighton,

Mr. Farwell and Mr. Buckley, all with heavy packs, left in the afternoon. A short distance out they met Mr. Barlow and Mr. Rector going in with horses. On the twenty-seventh they overtook nine persons in two families, four of them small children, all nearly barefoot and scantily clad, but out of the snow. Mr. Palmer and party had traveled through four inches of fresh snow and were glad to get out of it as their moccasin soles were worn through. When they left the Sandy they met Mr. Buffum, Mr. Lock and a Mr. Smith, with fourteen horses going in to Fort Deposit, as they called the wagon camp, to bring out such articles as could be packed. The numerous herds of cattle passing over the trail had so eaten the grass and bushes that the horses going and coming so late in the year were nearly famished; some so weak they could hardly climb the steep ascents.

Mr. Palmer and companions camped on the Sandy October 28. After resuming their travel next day they met a party that had been sent out to meet and assist those who were on the way. Later in the day they came to a work party's camp, where they obtained some needed food. On October 31, they put up at Hatche's on the Clackamas, just a month after leaving The Dalles, arriving at Oregon City the next day. This ending Mr. Palmer's connection with the opening of the road.

The Barlow, Caplinger and Rector families, who had remained at Fort Deposit until the camp had been made snug for the winter, were delayed until considerable snow had accumulated on the high ground, and they encountered many difficulties before reaching Oregon City, in the evening of December 25, 1845.

Early in January of the new year, William Barlow, a son of Samuel K. Barlow, who had been active in all features of the road enterprise, with one companion, took several horses to the mountain camp loaded with food.

A trip that was quite difficult. On reaching camp they learned that a wandering band of Indians had visited the lone caretaker, William Berry, and left him a small supply of dried salmon and "whortle" (huckle) berries. William Barlow had intended to remain at the camp. Berry, however, insisting that he would be quite all right alone, urged him to return to the valley, and with his companion left the next morning; the midwinter return trip being accomplished in three days, and no horses were lost. This ended the first chapter of the building of the Barlow Road.

The foregoing is a brief synopsis of the epochal 1845 attempt of a few courageous and hardy pioneers, led by Samuel K. Barlow and Joel Palmer, to open a wagon road over the formidable, then unknown, Cascade Mountains, by skirting the southern base of Mount Hood.

These incidents were gleaned from the narrative of William Barlow and the article by Walter Bailey, both published in "The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society", of September 1912, Vol. XIII, No. 3; and from the edited journals of Joel Palmer, published in Vol. XXX, of Thwaite's "Early Western Travels". All are authentic, informative and interesting recountings of the trials and difficulties experienced by these pioneer road builders, accompanied by their families, together with their stock and other possessions; all of them requiring a measure of diverting care at all times.

Without complaint, through all the stories runs a thread of their trials and discouragements. When tired and hungry, their very souls were often tried almost to despair, in overcoming the relentless harshness of the ever pressing wilderness. Yet, through these fleeting hours of darkness, there always shone a ray of the beacon light of pioneer hope. As each new obstacle was overcome their spirits rose to heights of exultant

triumph, and with a new, transcendent courage they turned again to the task of subduing the ever recurring difficulties of the unknown fastnesses that surrounded them.

Despite all their troubles they were still susceptible to the beauties and picturesque features of the primordial wilderness they had invaded. On October 11, a time of the year when Mount Hood is most glorious, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Barlow and Mr. Lock were seeking out the way. Upon reaching an open place well up on the White River slope, they paused to look upon the towering majesty of the mountain before them. Expressing the sentiments of all three, the reputedly "prosaic" Mr. Palmer was moved to record his impressions in the following words: "I had never looked upon a sight so nobly grand . . . No pen can give an adequate description of this scene".

In December 1845, Samuel K. Barlow had secured from the Provisional legislature, convened at Oregon City, a charter to build and operate a toll road over the route he had blazed over the mountains. In the following spring, with a crew of forty men he opened the road to the wagon camp, and the Barlow Road, such as it was, became a reality in the summer of 1846. The wagons and goods cached somewhere in the White River area were taken to their destination and the road served a considerable portion of the migration of that and succeeding years, eventually becoming the modern, year around highway over the mountains in 1924, serving the summer and winter resorts at Government Camp.

A mile or so beyond Government Camp, an ascending side road diverges to reach Timberline Lodge; the million dollar mountain hostelry, which rests near the limit of tree growth. This wonderful resort was sponsored by the Forest Service as a Works Progress Administration project, and opened to the public in 1937.

Closed during the war, it was formally reopened on December 2, 1945

The press reports stated that three thousand winter sports enthusiasts visited at Government Camp and Timberline Lodge on that date. On Sunday, December 24, two thousand was the estimated number of visitors, responding to the appeal of invigorating, outdoor winter sports carried on in this area of scenic beauty and stimulating atmosphere.

It is a far cry from the comfortable, modern surroundings that offer conveniences to these thousands of pleasure-seekers in 1945, to the wearying efforts of the 1845 migrants who, wet, cold, often hungry and nearly barefoot, sleeping where night overtook them; the pace of the weakest setting that of the strongest, as they struggled over the mountains, sometimes in the driving mists and snows above timber line, or again in the depths of forested **canyons**; led thither in the fulfillment of the destiny that lured them to the Oregon Country.

The statement has been made that more persons climb to the summit of Mount Hood every year, than ascend all the other peaks of the Northwest together. If this be true, the climbers, coupled with the hundreds who now visit the mountain for winter sports, presage a wonderful future for the Mount Hood area. As Oregon's population grows, visitors will increase in like proportion.

Much credit is due the State Highway Department for keeping open such a splendid winter road to serve those who find a thrill and keen enjoyment in the winter snows of these scenic altitudes, and there will always be an abundance of youthful enthusiasm to justify its existence and care.

All honor to Samuel K. Barlow - "he builded better than he knew".



W. A. Langille
State Park Historian

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