

# SNOQUALMIE PASS

## WAGON ROAD



SNOQUALMIE *National Forest*



FOREST SERVICE  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Pacific Northwest Region





## **ABOUT THIS BOOKLET**

This booklet is your ticket for a self-conducted trip along the original wagon road over Snoqualmie Pass. This road, built in 1868, was the major land route to the Puget Sound country.

There is only one mile of this road left and it has been marked and preserved for your information and pleasure.

The road begins near the Denny Creek Campground and ends a short distance from Franklin Falls. Due to intermingled ownership, the road crosses both Forest Service and Burlington Northern Inc. lands.

It is our hope that you will use this book to enjoy a walk in the footsteps of our hardy pioneers.

Points of interest along the trail are marked by a numbered post which corresponds to a numbered post in this booklet.

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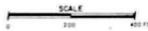
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### SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST

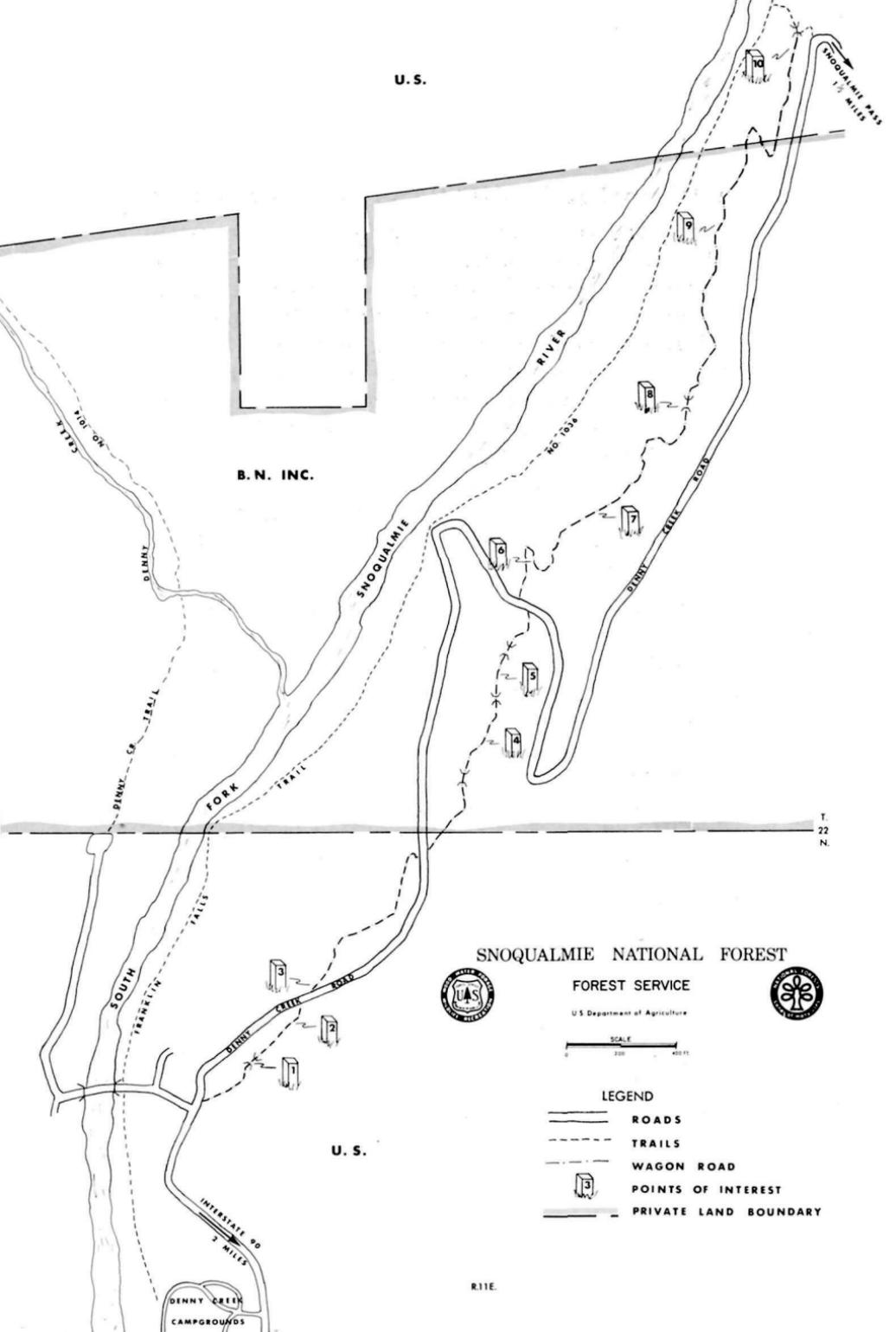
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#### LEGEND

- ROADS
- TRAILS
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## **THE SNOQUALMIE PASS WAGON ROAD**

During the years immediately following the establishment of the pioneer settlement of Seattle, this community became increasingly important among the towns on Puget Sound. With this importance and growth came the need for a route over the Cascades and on toward the east. Up until this time all of the east-west traffic was by water. This water route from the east was down the Columbia to Portland. Portland and the Oregon country were growing while Seattle and the Washington Territory were not. It was apparent to the settlers of Seattle that if their area was to grow there would have to be a road east through the Cascade Mountains.

In 1853 Governor Stevens sent Captain George McClellan to find a route through the Cascades to the Puget Sound area. Captain McClellan started over Snoqualmie Pass, but encountered snow and reported to Governor Stevens that this route was not feasible. Governor Stevens was not satisfied with this answer and in 1854 sent Lt. Abiel Tinkham to survey the route. Lt. Tinkham came through the pass on January 21 and reported to Stevens that in his opinion Snoqualmie Pass was feasible for the road.

Indian uprisings in 1855-1856 threatened the settlement of Seattle and temporarily put an end to further efforts to establish an overland route through the Cascades.

In 1859 a committee in Seattle solicited \$1050 and appointed a superintendent of roads. Thus the first organized movement for opening a road over Snoqualmie Pass was under way.

The Congress of 1860-1861 passed a bill giving \$75,000 for a military road through the pass. However, the Civil War put an end to these funds.

Another meeting was held on July 22, 1865, by Seattle citizens A. A. Denny, H. L. Yesler, and J. E. Clark, and funds were solicited to improve a 25-mile section through the pass. The citizens collected \$2500 to begin work and let a contract to W. W. Perkins for \$100 a mile. With 20 men, he set out to build a road over Snoqualmie Pass. By November about 25 miles had been opened, but more money was needed to improve it for travel.

In 1867 the County appropriated \$2500 for continuing the maintenance and improvement work. During the summer of 1868 the Snoqualmie Pass Wagon Road was finished and travel in both directions was possible.

The road was used mainly by freight wagons and settlers until 1909 when the Alaska-Yukon Exposition, held in Seattle, created a new incentive for bettering the road. The officials of the Exposition promoted an auto race from New York to Seattle via Snoqualmie Pass, and this drew the attention of the County Commissioners to the road. Sufficient money was raised, and the road was improved enough so that 150 cars could get through, thus starting auto traffic over Snoqualmie Pass.

Today more than three million cars cross the pass each year. The Washington State Highway Department is in the process of making a seven-lane freeway to accommodate the traffic.

## EARLY DAY PUNCHEON

Wet boggy areas were crossed with a land bridge of split cedar planks called puncheon. These bridges were constructed much in the same way as the new bridge on which you are standing.

Over 100 years ago the cedar plank road under this bridge held up rumbling freight wagons on their way to Seattle merchants. Still later early day automobiles chugged their way over the same puncheon.

Many areas of the rot-resistant Western redcedar puncheon are still visible along this trail.

Photo Courtesy of Joseph Stenstrom





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## DECAYED FOREST GIANTS

Pioneers used hand tools and brute force to push this road through the wilderness. These decayed stumps and logs are remnants of the battle of man against nature.

Summer after summer the fallen timber was removed from the road. Winter after winter the winds threw other forest giants down to again render the way impassable.



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### **TREE-CHOKED ROAD**

This section of road is an example of road cuts that had to be done by hand. This road was a tribute to the determination of the pioneers of Seattle.

Man fights against nature for progress. After many years of non-use, however, mother nature is reclaiming her property. The young trees now clogging the road bed are 50 years old.

### PEACEFUL STROLL

As you walk along this section of the old wagon road, let your thoughts drift back to the time when it took two to three days to reach this spot in the wilderness. Perhaps you are walking in the very footsteps of this couple and enjoying the same peacefulness.



**SNAP!**

Go the steel jaws of the trap used by the buckskin clad "mountain men." The wagon road not only served as a route over, but also a way into the bountiful Cascades for fur trappers.

The marten is an elusive weasel-like animal whose fur is prized. He nests and hunts in hollow trees. The fur trapper, taking advantage of the marten's natural curiosity, would chop a hole in the tree and set a baited trap there to catch this fur bearer.

**GEE-YUP! YAWH-HOO!**

The crack of whip and snap of lines accompanied the shouted commands of the teamsters as they urged the straining animals to pull their creaking wagons up the steep pitches in the rough roadway.

Steep slopes, such as this one, required doubling up of teams and blocking, for short rest periods, as wagons toiled to the top of the grade.



Snoqualmie Pass Highway through the wilderness — 1906.

A. Curtis  
Washington State Historical Society

## NEWS BY WIRE

A telegraph line was built in the early 1900's by the Postal-Telegraph & Cable Co. This was a trans-continental line the same as the Western Union of today. This pole is a remnant of the postal-telegraph system that served the communication needs of the growing Seattle area.

In those early days the wires hummed with messages of all kinds. They told of the bountiful timber covered slopes along the Puget Sound and of the hardships and heartaches the pioneers endured trying to tame this vast wilderness.

## WHOA-UP THERE!

Called out the teamster as he pulled his team to a stop for a drink of water, possibly from this stream.

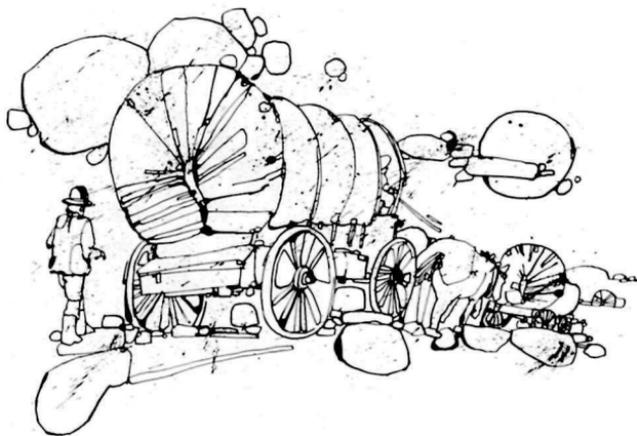
No doubt the pioneer thought of those who would follow as his eyes travelled upward through the natural opening. Could he have imagined the kind of growth that would within 100 years require two wider, higher transportation routes through the same pass? . . . the old Denny Creek highway and the new teeming freeway along the rocky slopes above you.

## WHOA-EASY NOW!

Commanded the teamster, as hoofs beat and wagons rumbled over the rough roadbed of split puncheon.

Wet boggy areas were crossed with a land bridge of split cedar planks, called puncheon, laid on pole stringers.

The puncheon here has withstood the elements for over 100 years, a tribute to the rot-resistant quality of Western redcedar.



## EARLY MINING ACTIVITY

Here, partially buried by time, are several sections of narrow-gauge railroad iron used in mining. Tracks were laid into the dark mine shafts to transport ore to the surface. Small hand cars rattled along such tracks, hopefully bringing wealth to the early day prospectors.

The first mineral discovery in this area was on Denny Mountain, near Snoqualmie Pass. It was made in 1869 by Arthur Denny, father of the City of Seattle, based on information obtained from the Indians. In 1882 the Denny Iron Mines Co. was formed and about \$7000 was spent in development of these mines. The ore, however, was found to be of low grade and not worth mining.



The Forest Service gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Conservation Activity Camp Program of the Chief Seattle Council of Boy Scouts in restoring this Wagon Road.

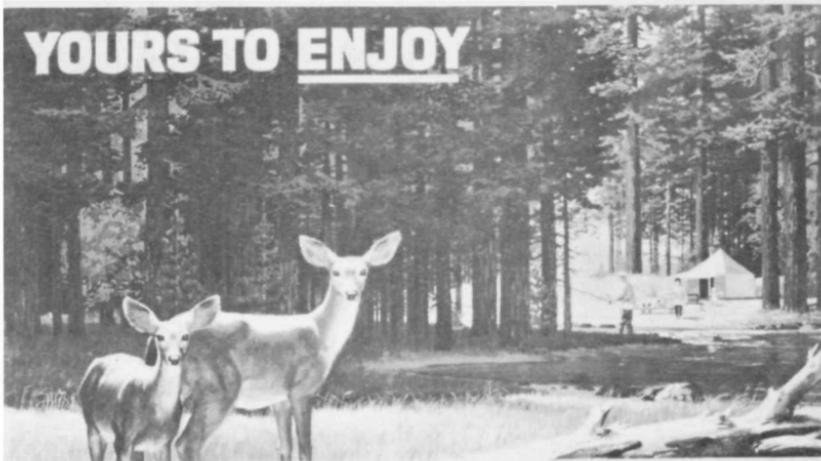
Beginning in 1965, a total of 175 boy and man hours were spent in library research on the historical background of this road.

Actual field work to restore the road was begun in 1967, and continued through the summer of 1970. A total of 6400 boy and man hours of field work was performed.

The Forest Service would also like to extend thanks to Burlington Northern Inc., for allowing this portion of their land to be used for public enjoyment.



**YOURS TO ENJOY**



**NOT TO DESTROY**



**PLEASE! Only you can  
PREVENT FOREST FIRES**