

= Barlow Road =

The Barlow Road (at inception , Mount Hood Road) is a historic road in what is now the U.S. state of Oregon . It was built in 1846 by Sam Barlow and Philip Foster , with authorization of the Provisional Legislature of Oregon , and served as the last overland segment of the Oregon Trail . Its construction allowed covered wagons to cross the Cascade Range and reach the Willamette Valley , which had previously been nearly impossible . Even so , it was by far the most harrowing 100 miles (160 km) of the nearly 2 @, @ 000 @-@ mile (3 @, @ 200 km) Oregon Trail .

Before the opening of the Barlow Road , pioneers traveling by land from the east followed the Oregon Trail to Wascopam Mission (now The Dalles) and floated down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver , then a perilous and expensive journey . It was also possible to drive livestock over Lolo Pass on the north side of Mount Hood , but that trail was too rugged for vehicles and unsuitable for wagons .

The Barlow Road begins at The Dalles and heads south to Tygh Valley (some consider Tygh Valley to be the beginning) , then turns west and roughly parallels the White River on the north and then west , crosses the south shoulder of Mount Hood at Barlow Pass , follows Camp Creek and the Sandy River for some way , and finally leads to Oregon City . The road was rendered largely irrelevant in the early 1900s by the construction of the Mount Hood Highway . It still exists as a dirt road in some places , while many other parts have been paved over by new modern streets and highways .

= = Planning and construction = =

When Sam Barlow arrived at The Dalles late September 1845 , as many as sixty families were waiting for river transport . The expected wait was more than ten days , and the transportation " exorbitantly " priced . Local inquiries turned up little information about traveling over the mountains except that water , timber , and grazing were plentiful . Barlow and H. M. Knighton set out to determine the feasibility of a route , seeking a more expedient and less expensive way to the Willamette Valley . Knighton decided it was impractical after 20 or 25 miles (30 ? 40 km) and returned . Barlow forged on with a train of seven wagons , intending to return for river transport if the mountain passage proved impractical .

On October 1 , 1845 , Barlow and three men scouted ahead of their company and entered Mount Hood 's foothills from the east near Tygh Creek , about 35 miles (56 km) from the mouth of the Deschutes River . They came within perhaps 12 miles (19 km) of Mount Hood . They thought they had glimpsed the Willamette Valley , and learned from the Indians of a trail leading to Oregon City , but returned to Tygh Creek about five days after their departure . There Joel Palmer was waiting for him with a 23 wagon party . Palmer had followed Barlow for a better route , and had just returned from exploring the same area . The combined company organized road clearing through the forest , mostly by burning .

The clearing party made it to the top of a ridge , now known as Barlow Pass , where they were effectively lost . Barlow , Palmer , and a man named Lock hiked the south face of Mount Hood west of Palmer Glacier to scout a westward route off the mountain . Palmer , in better physical condition than his companions , climbed high on the glacier (likely Zigzag Glacier) , and took detailed notes on the surrounding ridges and rivers . They returned to the group , arranged for guards for their wagons at a place they named Fort Deposit . Several families in wagons ill @-@ suited for travel through the wilderness remained at Fort Deposit , while the remainder returned to The Dalles . Barlow 's group followed the Sandy River west on foot . Palmer noted an intersection with a trail coming from The Dalles by way of Lolo Pass , around the north side of Mount Hood , which had previously been the only overland trail traversed by pioneers . Near the present @-@ day city of Sandy , they turned southwest to reach Eagle Creek and Philip Foster 's farm near present @-@ day Clackamas .

That autumn , Barlow considered the route over the mountains and petitioned the Provisional Legislature of Oregon for permission to build a road on December 9 , 1845 , claiming that his

estimated cost of \$ 4000 was lower than that of others familiar with the route . Permission was granted with a vote of 8 @-@ 2 on December 17 , 1845 , approved by Speaker pro @-@ tem Henry A. G. Lee , and signed into law by Governor George Abernethy .

The road 's toll was authorized for two years effective January 1 , 1846 and specified toll rates at five dollars (about a week 's wages) for each wagon and ten cents for each head of horse , mule , ass , or horned cattle . The grant named the route " Mount Hood Road " ? but it was immediately known as the " Barlow Road . "

The road was built with the financial backing of Philip Foster and a crew of forty men . Five toll gates were eventually built along the route . Barlow 's estimate of \$ 4000 had underestimated the number of trees to be cut down and forgotten the numerous challenging bridges that would have to be built over rivers such as the Sandy , Zigzag , White , and Salmon . The White River continues to challenge its bridges to this day .

In its first season of operation , Barlow recorded the passage of 152 wagons , 1300 sheep , 1559 mules , horses , and cattle . Despite ongoing maintenance , the general condition of the road was considered to vary from " rough to barely passable . "

= = Early use = =

The direction of travel was effectively one @-@ way until 1861 , when a better road was blasted through Laurel Hill . Despite the expense and difficulties of passage , the road was very popular , with more than a thousand immigrants and 145 wagons recorded in the first year of operation . Approximately three @-@ quarters of the pioneers entering the Willamette Valley traveled the Barlow Road , with most of the remainder choosing the Columbia River route .

Barlow 's concession expired in 1848 , and he and Foster terminated their largely unprofitable partnership on November 29 , 1848 . Others continued to operate the toll road , but weather and mountain conditions made this a financial struggle . By 1863 , the toll had decreased to \$ 2 @-@ 50 per wagon and team .

In 1849 , a military wagon train destined for Oregon forts passed over the road . It carried 250 tons of munitions in more than 400 wagons pulled by 1700 mules . From the beginning of Barlow Road to the camp the soldiers made at what has been known since as Government Camp , they abandoned 45 wagons after dozens of mules died of starvation .

= = Later use and historic designations = =

Various owners operated the road until 1882 . Ownership then passed to the Mount Hood & Barlow Road Company . E. Henry Wemme purchased that company in 1912 , and made improvements to the road . Wemme 's attorney , George W. Joseph , became the owner upon Wemme 's death in 1914 , in a probate dispute so contentious that it shaped the 1930 race for Governor of Oregon . Joseph and his wife donated the road to the people of Oregon in 1919 .

The 1923 Oregon Legislative Assembly designated the path from Idaho to the Pacific Ocean as the " Old Oregon Trail " route and approved signage with a prairie schooner and oxen for modern travelers to navigate . In 1978 , the entire Oregon Trail , including the Barlow Road , was named a National Historic Trail by the U.S. Congress . In 1992 , the Barlow Road was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district . In 2005 , part of it was incorporated into the Mount Hood Scenic Byway .

The Oregon Trail , Barlow Road Segment is a small segment of an alternate route , near Wemme , that was separately listed on the National Register in 1974 . Also Rock Corral on the Barlow Road , a campsite on the Barlow Road near Brightwood , was also separately NRHP @-@ listed in 1974 .

= = Today = =

On the western side of the Cascades , U.S. Route 26 follows more or less the same route from Sandy to Government Camp ; south of Government Camp , US 26 follows a valley just west of the

Barlow Road 's route along Barlow Creek . The route is concurrent with a few miles of the southern end of Oregon Route 35 , and much of the Mount Hood Highway .

The Barlow Road is intact as a dirt road in a roughly north ? south stretch along Barlow Creek ; other portions are pristine ruts up to six feet deep . The easternmost part of the original Barlow Road in Wasco County traverses an unpopulated area within Mount Hood National Forest and follows small Forest Service roads and " Jeep trails " , then Rock Creek Dam Road , and finally Wamic Market Road , north of the White River , from the Cascades to Tygh Valley . The areas east of Mount Hood National Forest have always been sparsely populated . Good rut viewing is possible at Pioneer Woman 's Grave near Bennett Pass and in several other places . Much of the Clackamas County side is buried under US 26 . Overall , about twenty percent of the road is still visible today .

A roadside marker and trail at Laurel Hill (just west of Government Camp) provides history and access to the portion where a sixty percent grade was present in the early Barlow Road . Wagons were lowered down the hill winched by ropes wrapped around trees .