

NACHES PASS TRAIL Lucile McDonald, "A road to the mountains is started by private subscription," Washington's Yesterdays. Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1953. pp. 112 - 113.

Book available at <http://www.wlbooks.com/cgi-bin/wlb455.cgi/54421.html>

Among the earliest items of business to be brought to the attention of county commissioners were petitions for roads to replace the Indian trails. They could do very little other than appoint several men to "view out" a proposed route, walking it and making recommendations for such time when funds might be available.

By the summer of 1850 enough wagons had beaten their way from Plamondon's, or Cowlitz Landing, to New Market so that the trail could be negotiated, if one had the fortitude. Nothing had been done as yet to fill mud holes, lay planks over bogs or substitute bridges for ford'ing streams. Settlers already were clamoring for a road over the Cascades to bring immigrants direct to the Sound without the necessity of the dangerous passage down the Columbia by boat or the expense and perils of the Barlow toll road over the shoulder of Mount Hood.

Seemingly without realizing how tremendous was the undertaking, citizens around the Olympia area held a meeting, circulated a paper and took up a collection totalling \$1500 for the purpose of building a wagon road "around the northern base of Mount Rainier and down the valley of the Yakima toward Fort Walla Walla. "A letter to the Oregon Spectator relates that Michael Simmons headed the subscription list and that "a strong party of active young men properly organized and provided with the requisite provisions, utensils, wagon and oxen" left on August 5 to commence their labors.

It added, "Their success ... has been truly encouraging, so far as to give us hopes that they will succeed in their most earnest endeavors in opening a thoroughfare in time for some portion of the immigrant parties of the present year. ... The route was described in a petition presented September 2 to the Lewis County commissioners as running "from Olympia to the Mountain Plains on the summit of the Cascade Mountains."

As can be guessed, only a few miles were completed before funds were exhausted and the project had to be put aside for the time being.