



EMIGRANT TRAILS HALL OF FAME

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Jesse Applegate

Biography

- Born: July 5, 1811, Henry County, KY
- Died: April 22, 1888, Yoncalla, OR
- Married: Cynthia Ann Parker, 1831
- Farmer, surveyor, trail leader, community leader
- Resided Henry County, Kentucky; Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; and Polk and Umpqua Counties, Oregon

Achievements

- Captain of part of the Great Migration wagon train of 1843.
- Key role in opening the Southern Road to Oregon (Applegate Trail).
- Participated in the provisional government of Oregon.
- Umpqua County representative to Oregon constitutional convention (1857).

As a pioneer, trail explorer/promoter and community leader, Jesse Applegate's life was filled with achievement and controversy.

Born in Henry County, Kentucky, he attended Rock Creek Seminary in Illinois and schools in St. Louis. He trained as a surveyor and farmer. In 1831 he married Cynthia Ann Parker, a union that produced twelve children. With their families Jesse and his two brothers, Lindsay and Charles, joined the "Great Migration" wagon train in 1843, the first large wagon train to Oregon. The train split during the journey with Jesse becoming the captain of the "cow column," the slower of the two groups. Upon arrival, the Applegates settled in what is now western Polk County near Dallas.

In 1844 Jesse surveyed the Oregon City townsite and in 1845 was active in establishment of the provisional government. He served on the legislative committee and helped shape the development of the Oregon Territory.

In 1846 Jesse played a key role in opening the Southern Road to Oregon, also known as the Applegate or Scott-Applegate Trail. The route was sought as an alternative to the dangerous Columbia River float and the difficult Barlow Road south of Mt. Hood. The trail's use in 1846 and later years did not fulfill the promise of an easier route.

Jesse established a land claim in the Umpqua Valley at Yoncalla in 1849. As a learned person, he continued studying and writing on diverse topics. Known as the "Sage of Yoncalla," he represented Umpqua County at the constitutional convention in 1857.

The ups and downs of Jesse Applegate's life reveal his deep involvement in the important events of his day and his leadership on the trail and in his community.