

CAPTAIN JOHN MULLAN

After the trail blazers come the trail makers. Their story is not so romantic, perhaps, as the former, but just as dramatic in a quiet way. Theirs is the struggle of a perseverant will, that with the help of their scientific knowledge and instruments, man and horse power, labors against the force of nature. Such is the story of Captain John Mullan, the military engineer who built the first wagon road across the Rocky Mountains. Indeed, it was the first road officially built on engineering principles in the West, as the Oregon and Santa Fé trails were just that and nothing more.

When Governor Stevens' expedition reached the vicinity of Fort Benton in September of 1853, it reunited with the advance party under Lieutenants Donelson and Mullan, who had been sent up the Missouri River in the spring ahead of the main force to survey the channel, establish a depot at Fort Union, and explore the surrounding country. The Governor was favorably impressed with the way Lieutenant Mullan had taken charge of the meteorological observations, and foreseeing qualities of leadership in the young officer, dispatched him with a small party to explore for a southerly pass and rendezvous at Fort Owen in the Bitter Root Valley. The result of his explorations was the discovery of the Mullan Pass, now used as the main highway between Helena and Missoula. The engineer reached the trading post on September 30, and found Governor Stevens who had been enjoying the cordial hospitality of Major Owen for two days.

As it was already autumn the Governor directed Lieutenant Mullan and thirteen men to establish winter quarters in the valley, and make a preliminary survey of all possible routes for a wagon road across the Continental Divide to the west. The site chosen for his headquarters during the winter of '53-54 was near a spring at the mouth of Willow Creek, beside the edge of a wood ten miles above Fort Owen. Cantonment Stevens he called it in honor of his chief. The quarters consisted of four log cabins built on the four corners of a rectangle and were connected with a rail fence. The stars and stripes, occupying the flagpole in the center, proclaimed the official character of the fort.

Lieutenant Mullan experienced a mild winter at the cantonment, and was so pleasantly surprised that, in a moment of poetic

impulse, he called the Bitter Root the "Land of Eternal Spring." The open weather remained favorable to his explorations throughout the winter, and he crossed the Continental Divide no less than six times. One party he led to the source of the Bitter Root River, through Ross Hole, across the range to the Big Hole Basin and into Idaho, going as far south as Fort Hall on Snake River. On this survey he covered the same route that Lewis and Clark did in the late summer of 1805. Another exploring trip took him east to the three forks of the Missouri and return by the Deer Lodge Valley. Besides his field trips he took meteorological and astronomical observations, and checked the depth of the snowfall in the various passes. "He made remarkable contributions to existing knowledge, both of the snows and geography of the country, at a season of the year and under circumstances when most men would have done nothing," wrote Governor Stevens. Although he depended for much of his knowledge on the information of friendly Indians, he took nothing for granted but verified conditions by personal inspection.

During the spring, summer, and fall of 1854 he explored the greater part of western Montana and retraced the route of Lewis and Clark through Idaho, following the main streams to their sources and investigating the mountain passes. In March he journeyed to Fort Benton, recovered a wagon left there the preceding fall and returned to the Bitter Root Valley, crossing the mountains on the Indian trail before they were free of snow, just to impress Congress with the feasibility of a route across the Rockies for a wagon road. In recording this trip, Governor Stevens writes in his final report to the Senate: "The Little Blackfoot River was first discovered by Lieutenant Mullan when he passed over it with a wagon from Fort Benton in March, 1854. Something more, however, is due both Lieutenant Mullan and his party and the exploration to which he contributed so largely. In the establishment of his quarters, the management of his command, and in his intercourse with the Indians, he evinced the soundest judgment and his whole sphere of duty was filled by him in a manner entitling him to the warmest commendation. I have deemed it a simple act of justice to this meritorious officer to say this much—'His judgment and discretion were equal to his boldness and resource.'"

It was Lieutenant Mullan's first command and he determined with all the ardor and energy of his youth to justify his chief's faith in him. The building of the road was the big achievement of

his life, so his careful planning and execution was probably actuated by the artist's desire to produce a work well done, feeling that out of its merit must come an inevitable reward.

He was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on July 31, 1831, the oldest son of the ten children of John and Mary Bright Mullan, and the first generation descendant in the United States of Irish parents. While still an infant his family removed to Annapolis, Maryland, and although in very moderate circumstances they determined to give their eldest boy a college education. When he was nine he was enrolled in St. John's College, Annapolis, graduating in 1847 with an A.B. degree at the age of sixteen. He was still rather young to take a position even had his parents had the means to establish him in business, so he decided the next year to enter West Point. Armed with letters of recommendation from some influential friends, among them General Walback, he went to Washington to apply in person for admittance to President James K. Polk.

He found that dignitary alone and recumbent in an arm-chair with his feet elevated on the mantel, smoking his homely clay pipe. Shyly the youth approached him and accepted the president's extended hand.

"Well, my little man, what can I do for you?" he asked in a genial tone.

Young John, losing some of his timidity, replied that he desired "to enter the army by graduating at West Point."

"Don't you think you are rather small to want to be a soldier?" inquired the president with a flicker of a smile at the corners of his mouth.

"I may be somewhat small, sir," John answered stoutly, "but can't a small man be a soldier as well as a large one?"

There being no evidence to the contrary, President Polk said, "Well, my young friend, leave your address, and I will see what I can do for you."

Six weeks after this interview, just as John was despairing of realizing his ambition, he received a bulky envelope, wax sealed, that contained his appointment as a cadet-at-large to West Point. A month before his seventeenth birthday he entered the Academy on July 1, 1848. He graduated, fifteenth in his class, in June of 1852 with such famous classmates as Colonel Jerome Bonaparte, General Silas Casey, General Cooke, and General Philip Sheridan who did not complete his course until the next year. Cadet Mullan was

made a brevet second lieutenant in the First Artillery and stationed at Fort Columbus, New York.

The next year came his assignment to Governor Stevens' expedition and his transferment to the Second Artillery. As a young engineer of twenty-three, he dressed in the army blue, and on the trail wore a soft felt, slouch hat. His uniform was later changed for the more comfortable buckskin costume of the frontier. He wore the traditional sideburns of the day, but his lack of a mustache or beard disclosed a large, firmly molded mouth and a square-cut chin. His nose was straight, his eyes deep blue in color and reflective in expression. Later in life they expressed the kindly, sympathetic soul of the man within. He had an unusually broad and high perpendicular forehead crowned with very dark, thick hair disposed to curl at the ends. In stature he was an inch or two below the average, but strongly built on athletic proportions and cut the proverbial military figure. He was of a sanguine temperament, was conscientious in fulfilling his obligations, and as a leader of men he was fair-minded, even-tempered, and generous in according praise. When he made a mistake in his calculations, and he made one in running his survey through the Coeur d'Alene region instead of the water-grade way of the Clark's Fork, he did not hesitate to admit it to the government. He chose the more difficult route because his orders called for the shortest and most practicable way. Too late he learned that Clark's Fork, though longer, was the more practicable in not being subject to as deep snow in winter. However, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railway closely parallels his line of survey, today, through the Coeur d'Alene region.

While he was building the wagon road he was dreaming of the day when the iron trail would link the continent—and he lived to see that day arrive. "Night after night," said Captain Mullan in after years, "I have laid out in the unbeaten forests, or on the pathless prairies with no bed but a few pine leaves (needles), with no pillow but my saddle, and in my imagination heard the whistle of the engine, the whirr of the machinery, the paddle of the steamboat wheels, as they plowed the waters of the sound. In my enthusiasm I saw the country thickly populated, thousands pouring over the borders to make homes in this far western land." In the fifties, though, people thought he had what would be termed today, a road-complex. They considered his dreams of a railroad a little insane, just as, a few short years ago, there were those who would not admit the possibility of crossing the ocean by air.

Because of the Indian hostilities in Washington Territory, Congress delayed the authorization to construct a road in the Northwest. But Governor Stevens' acute brain foresaw the necessity to first construct such a wagon road to make the bringing in of supplies for the building of the railway later a less arduous task, so his efforts to further that plan were continuous. In 1855 the meager sum of \$30,000 was appropriated for the building of a military wagon road across the Rocky Mountains from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla in Washington Territory. Its purpose was to connect the heads of navigation on the Missouri and Columbia Rivers, and the road was intended, primarily, for the transportation of troops through the Northwest.

As the amount was insufficient to do more than make a beginning, the matter remained dormant until Stevens' election to the House in 1856. Among his other activities he again pressed the affair with Congress, aided by Mullan's favorable report, and secured the further appropriation in 1858 of \$100,000.

Lieutenant Mullan during this interval had been variously engaged. After his survey work was completed he was ordered to Florida in 1855 to rejoin his regiment, then occupied in subduing the Seminole Indians. The same year he was stationed at Baton Rouge and was awarded his A.M. degree from St. John's College. In '56-57 he was quartered at Fort McHenry near Baltimore. Then came his orders to report at Fort Leavenworth for frontier duty under Colonel George Wright. He had served only a short time when he was recalled by Stevens in 1858 and directed to proceed to The Dalles, Oregon, to organize a road building crew. But the Indian hostilities which began in '56 and were not completely quelled until 1858 made the plan impracticable, for the center of the trouble that year was in the Spokane country directly in the path of construction. So, instead of organizing, he requested to be attached again to the staff of Colonel George Wright of the Ninth Infantry, as topographical officer, hoping that, in this capacity, he might have a chance to familiarize himself with the country and to do some incidental surveying.

There are several anecdotes extant of Lieutenant Mullan's experiences as an Indian fighter. One is told in Lieutenant Kip's *Army Life on the Pacific*: "August 11, 1858, today Lieutenant Mullan had quite an adventure. Captain Keyes with a detachment of dragoons having gone to the Snake River to select a site for the fort,

while there captured two Indians who were left under the charge of Sargent and three men. However, they had not marched one hundred yards when the Indians broke from them and sprang into the river. The party fired at them without effect, as they were concealed by the growth of willows on the bank. Lieutenant Mullan dashed into the river to his waist to secure the one he caught sight of. The Indian was exceedingly an athletic savage, the sight of whose proportions would have tempered most persons' valor with discretion, but my gallant friend is not one to calculate odds in beginning a fight. The Indian dived as the Lieutenant fired at him, and coming up with some heavy stones hurled them at his antagonist bruising him severely. He then seized Lieutenant Mullan's pistol which he got thoroughly wet; then the struggle commenced in good earnest, grappling each other first under water then above. It might have fared badly with my spirited companion, but the Indian stepping into a hole got beyond his depth and was obliged to relinquish his hold, and made his escape on the other side of the river."

After Lieutenant-Colonel Steptoe's command was cut to pieces, Colonel Wright set out on a punitive expedition against the Spokane Indians and engaged them in the Battle of Four Lakes in September of 1858. "After a continuous conflict of seven hours," Lieutenant Kip wrote, "and a continued march of twenty-five miles, the Indians were completely routed with a loss of two Chiefs, the brothers of Chief Garey. One was hanged; the other, a boy of about fourteen, Lieutenant Mullan begged for his life which was granted, provided he kept him and was responsible he did not return to his tribe. This boy called himself John in gratitude to his protector; he lived on the ranch (Mullan's) at Walla Walla later, where he remained till the fall of 1864 when the ranch was abandoned, proving always faithful and reliable."

Regarding Lieutenant Mullan's activity in this campaign, (he was then a first lieutenant of the Second Artillery, Topographical Engineers), Colonel Wright notes in his Report: "He moved gallantly forward in advance of the foot troops in the early part of the action (Battle of Four Lakes), giving and receiving from the enemy as he skirted the brush to the east of the main hill. . . ."

General Erasmus Darwin Keyes, a former teacher of Mullan's at West Point, relates in *Life on the Pacific, or Fifty Years Observation of Men and Events*, the lieutenant's peculiar value to the expedition: "Lieutenant John Mullan . . . had in his former journeys made himself familiar with the country. In addition to his experi-

ence, he possessed uncommon mental and physical activity, he knew all the trails and fords, and the crossing of streams that were not fordable. His ingenuity was so remarkable that I dubbed him "The Duke of Bridgewater."

The harsh measures of Colonel Wright's campaign succeeded in restoring peace among the rebelling tribes. Lieutenant Mullan was then stationed for several months at Vancouver Barracks, Washington, and The Dalles, Oregon. Among his brother officers were Captain William T. Sherman and Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, both of whom later became eminent Union generals in the Civil War. "After the fatigues of a day's campaign," wrote Mrs. Mullan, "the officers would relax their minds and spirits by a game of cards. John says the first large sum he ever won was at Vancouver from General (Lieutenant) Grant, about \$300. But I said, 'John, you did not take it!'

"He laughed at my simplicity and said, 'Of course, why not? He would have expected me to pay had I lost!'"

In the spring of '59 Mullan organized his crew; there were many Irish and French and New England Yankees among them. He sent in advance his exploring parties of engineers and surveyors under the direction of Captain W. W. DeLacey and Surveyor Conway P. Howard. As assurance against Indian molestation the civilian road builders were given an escort of 100 soldiers of the Third Artillery, commanded by Lieutenants James Howard, White, and Lyon. Starting construction at Walla Walla the crew moved rapidly over the prairie land and rolling hills, building bridges, grading some stretches, and constructing ferry boats for the St. Joseph and Coeur d'Alene Rivers. Entering the St. Joseph valley they encountered some delay while corduroying several swamps, and were forced to cut a way through the timber to the Coeur d'Alene Mission. It was August then, but the crew had completed 200 miles of road in slightly more than six weeks.

From the mission their real difficulties started. The first obstacle was a dense stretch of forest choked with a network of fallen timber—100 miles of it covering spurs, ridges, gullies, ravines, canyons, hills, and every other kind of mountain formation. Mullan, now that he was started after a five years' delay, was eager to push forward as far as possible before the winter caught him. He transmitted some of his energy and determination to the men, for they swung their axes and picks and handled their spades with a hearty

diligence, while the sweat streaked over their faces and along their arms and chests under the burning rays of an Indian summer sun. They toiled with a stolid determination in the chilling rains of a mountainous region in autumn. They only paused to build bridges across the creeks as they slowly hewed their way through the jungle.

Reaching the canyon of the St. Regis-Borgia River on the fourth day of December, their leader called a halt in construction for that season. Then followed the building of Cantonment Jordan. There was little pasturage around the camp, and the stock were already so much reduced by exhaustion that they could barely paw through the light snow to reach the scanty herbage. Despite their weakened condition, Lieutenant Mullan ordered the horse herd driven to the Bitter Root Valley one hundred miles away, knowing that it was his only chance to save the stronger animals. The cattle he had slaughtered and used for beef. Because his lusty crew were used to strenuous labor, Mullan kept them busied throughout the winter at cutting and hauling wood, repairing equipment and harness, and doing courier and sentry duty. The technical men and officers prepared their reports, drew maps, recorded the temperature and snowfall, and planned the work for the coming season.

Early in the spring construction started at the Bitter Root ferry, fifteen miles east of Cantonment Jordan where the snowfall was lighter. Later in the year the intervening stretch was built. So many of his horses had died in the winter, that Lieutenant Mullan purchased 117 head from the Flathead Indians, and secured the services of 20 of their young men to transport 11,000 rations from Fort Benton to his road builders.

The crew worked rapidly up the canyon of the Clark's Fork grading, bridging, and cutting timber to complete 30 miles by May. But the hills had an inconvenient and irritating habit of getting in the way and presenting slopes of solid rock. One hundred and fifty men toiled for six weeks blasting rocks and grading over one series of spurs. At this place there occurred the only serious accident during construction when two men received severe injuries from a premature explosion.

The work progressed rapidly for the rest of the summer, the 60 miles to Hell Gate being finished by June. In July the crew reached the Sun River, having done little construction east of Hell Gate, though the line of survey was run and the route chosen from the Big Blackfoot River up the Hell Gate Canyon and the Little

Blackfoot, with some variations, across Mullan Pass into the Prickly Pear Valley near the present site of Helena, and then to the Missouri via the Bird Tail Rock and the Sun River. At this latter point Mullan divided his party into four detachments, leading one himself to explore for the best route to Fort Benton.

On his arrival there he found Major Blake and 300 troops awaiting him. Believing that the road would be completed in August, Lieutenant Mullan had requested the War Department to send the recruits by steamer to Fort Benton, where he would meet and conduct them to the garrisons in Washington and eastern Oregon. Turning over his wagons to Major Blake, Mullan journeyed ahead by pack horse, making repairs and alterations in his new road.

With easy marching the troops reached Fort Walla Walla in 57 days, saving the government, it was estimated, \$30,000 by using this direct route. They were the first travelers to use the military road over its entire length.

"Several of John's friends," wrote his wife in 1892, "sent memorials to Senators and members of Congress to have the government acknowledge his services in a substantial way, but John says he will never accept a pension as long as he can work."

In 1861, Congress appropriated another \$100,000 to continue the improvements on the road, so Lieutenant Mullan organized a third party at Walla Walla and was given another escort of 100 men under command of Lieutenant Marsh. Moving forward swiftly he tarried here and there to build a bridge, remove fallen timber, clear away landslides, and make such changes in the road as high water and melting snows necessitated.

The fourth of July found the crew in a thick cedar forest at the head of a canyon. Lieutenant Mullan suspended work and the road builders celebrated Independence Day in an old-fashioned patriotic manner. They exploded so much powder and punctured the scenery so freely with their rifles that lurking Indians, who had been molesting the crew, thought the whites had gone insane and discreetly withdrew into the forest. From then on they considered the road builders "bad medicine" and caused no further trouble.

Mullan named the defile Fourt-of-July Canyon. It is now a part of the Coeur d'Alene National Forest of northern Idaho. The Mullan tree may still be seen near the summit not far from the present automobile highway. It is a white pine on which Mullan's carving, "M. R. July 4, 1861," is legible, although the tree has

suffered much from the vandalism of souvenir-hunters. The initials correctly stand for Military Road, as Secretary of War Davis had directed Lieutenant Mullan to mark the trail at frequent intervals with the letters "M. R." Through the confusion of initials, however, the old road became popularly known after its famous builder.

Lieutenant Mullan went into winter quarters at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark's Fork Rivers, seven miles east of the present site of Missoula, Montana. The location of this camp, called Cantonment Wright in honor of General George Wright, was on a bluff forming the east bank of the Big Blackfoot. The winter schedule included the building of a bridge across this river and the construction of the heavy grades in Hell Gate Canyon.

The weather played a trick on Lieutenant Mullan that year, for the winter of '61-62 was unusually severe. Snow fell in November and lay on the ground until mid-April. For days the weather was too cold for the crew to work. While half of them cut and hauled wood the others, awaiting their turn at the chores, would sit huddled around the fires.

In January, one of the men, Charles Shaft, volunteered to take the mail to Salt Lake City for the reward of \$500 offered by Mullan. Having no horse he started on foot for the Deer Lodge Valley to get one. While walking on a log across a frozen slough he slipped and broke through the ice, wetting his feet. At first he gave little heed to such a minor accident. When, shortly, his moccasins froze to his feet, he became alarmed and returned to the camp of the military escort on the Clark's Fork River, about eighteen miles east of the cantonment. Before he could reach the soldiers' winter quarters the frost had penetrated to his bones, causing him excruciating pain.

An Indian brought word of Shaft's misfortune to Mullan. He dispatched two men, Bill Hengan and Dave O'Keefe, who covered the distance on foot in a day, nearly exhausting themselves breasting the deep snow. A day they rested, then, placing Shaft on a hand sledge, the pair trekked along the ice on the river and reached the cantonment on the afternoon of the second day, to receive a big drink of whiskey for their arduous labors.

Dr. George Hammond, the army surgeon attached to the expedition, examined Shaft's mortifying feet and found it necessary to amputate both his legs above the knees. The road workers raised

a purse of several hundred dollars for him, and he was left in the care of the Jesuit fathers at the Pend d'Oreille mission.

A chinook in February broke the steady cold. Then, with the snow in a melting state, a sudden freeze formed a solid crust of ice, making it impossible for the stock to paw for food. As a result, many of Mullan's and the settlers' animals died the lingering death of starvation.

But the work of road building had to go on. Replacing his losses from the horse herds of the Indians, Mullan pushed on in the spring to Fort Benton, putting the finishing touches to the road. At its eastern terminus he paid off part of his crew, and the rest returned with him to Walla Walla. There, in August, the expedition was disbanded for the last time. Many of the road builders remained in the Northwest, some to farm and others to prospect. In recognition of Lieutenant Mullan's meritorious service he was promoted to the rank of captain on August 11 of '62.

The road was officially completed, but it did not satisfy the exacting demands of Captain Mullan, who estimated that \$70,000 more would be needed to finish it as he had planned. It was 624 miles long, 25 to 30 feet wide, and its total cost of construction amounted to \$230,000.

As a military highway the road was unimportant, there having been no occasion to use it as such after Major Blake's march. But it proved invaluable to overland travelers and settlers. The latter could come by water two-thirds of the distance West up the Missouri River from St. Louis to Fort Benton, thence across the Rockies by road. In the summer of '62 a party of 300 emigrants, Oregon-bound in their covered wagons, followed it from Fort Benton westward with more ease, they reported, even through the mountains, than those using the central route. As no maintenance was provided later travelers were forced to rebuild the parts of it washed out by spring freshets or obstructed by landslides. By 1866, four years after its completion, the Legislature of Washington Territory estimated that 20,000 persons had passed over the Mullan road the previous season and one million dollars in treasure, this computation probably referring to freight, grains, stock, and farming implements brought in by the emigrants. In January of '61 the Assembly had passed a vote of thanks for Lieutenant Mullan's "industry, energy and ability in constructing the Military Road," since it facilitated emigration to the Territory. Then in 1877, General Sherman journeyed over the trail, and was surprised to find timothy

and bluegrass growing in wild luxuriance in the damp places of the forest. He credited Lieutenant Mullan with having sown the original seed to provide provender for army horses and emigrants' animals, and commended his thoughtfulness in so doing. The blue grass is indigenous to the Rocky Mountain region, but it is not unlikely that the engineer scattered the seeds of timothy along the route.

During construction the crew had frequently found indications of gold in the streams they crossed and the ground they covered. Not until 1865, however, was gold discovered in quantities sufficient to excite the imagination and quicken the pulse in the locality of the road. That year rich strikes were made along the Big and Little Blackfoot Rivers, and during the fall and summer a continuous stream of miners leading pack horses, or burros, or an occasional ox-cart, poured over the Mullan road from California and Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Of all the strange outfits to use the old trail for the path to El Dorado, none was stranger than a pack train of seven camels. These animals were loaded with merchandise and freight at Walla Walla to supply the mining camp and other settlements of Montana. In competition with mules and horses this bizarre experiment proved a failure and caused many a stampede, for no self-respecting member of the equine tribe would permit one of those foreign animals to come within yards of him. The Indians thought the camels remarkably strange beasts at which they were feverishly eager to take a shot. That might have been expected of the red men, but the best tale is told of a white man whose knowledge of zoology was so vague that—

But here is the story. On one trip camp was made on Snowshoe Creek near Blackfoot City, and the camels turned out to graze. A young Kentuckian, celebrated around the mine settlements as a Nimrod, chanced upon the desert animals that particular day. With hunter caution he crept upon them, and carefully drawing a bead on one camel blazed away. The beast sunk to its knees and rolled over without a sound.

The Kentuckian, greatly pleased with his marksmanship, was directing his sights at another when the irate owner dashed up, trailing a sulphurous cloud of profanity and imprecations. Finally he became articulate enough to ask the astonished hunter what in the steen blanks did he mean by shooting one of his camels?

To which amazing information the Kentuckian calmly replied in his drawl, "Why, I thought it was a moose!"

Another outpouring of invectives and threats was suddenly dammed by the Kentuckian's deliberate voice, "Well, mister, you can have the camel, if it's yours."

A dead camel was insufficient to appease the owner's wrath, for he required the crestfallen hunter to hand over his gun, ammunition, watch, and money, and to deed over his claim in Ophir Gulch. Then, as a final atonement for his zoological ignorance, the Kentuckian had to dig a grave and bury the animal.

Eventually, these unmitigated nuisances from Arabia were taken to Arizona in 1876 and used to haul freight from Fort Yuma to the desert settlements.¹

Such a sequel to his road building was undreamed of by Captain Mullan, who returned to Washington in March of 1863 and was married on the twenty-eighth of April to Miss Rebecca Williamson of Baltimore. While in New York City on his wedding trip he gave a lecture upon request before the Geographical Society on the resources and topography of the Northwest. He had conceived a deep attachment for the western country. While engaged on road construction he had filed on a piece of land in the vicinity of Walla Walla, Washington Territory, and left three of his brothers in charge. Now, after his marriage, he looked forward to returning West and becoming a settler himself. Resigning his commission in the army on May 23, 1863, he sailed, after it was accepted, for the Pacific Coast via the Isthmus of Panama.

By August he and his bride arrived in Walla Walla. With his characteristic energy the road builder threw himself into the labors of the pioneer who would wrest productivity out of a soil swarming with sagebrush. From the rising of the sun to its setting he was out fencing, plowing, planting, and attending to numerous other details of cultivating new land. On Sundays the toil of the week ceased, and church services were held in the small parlor of the farmhouse with Father DeSmet, or other missionaries, officiating at the Mass.

Mrs. Mullan soon conceived the idea of building a church through popular subscription. Two merchants in Walla Walla donated a piece of land and "I at once started to get up a fair," writes she, "the first ever held west of the Rocky Mountains. The supper table was supplied by many ladies of the town, the fancy table mostly by my donating the pin cushions and various odds and ends given

¹ Even to this day (1934), descendants of these camels, which were eventually turned loose to run wild, are reported seen in the remote desert regions of Southern California.

me at my wedding on leaving home. Without laying out a penny, we realized \$3000." Buckskin-garbed miners from Idaho were the most generous with their donations. "Several times in one evening," continues Mrs. Mullan, "I was asked to take supper, which I made the pretense to eat for charity's sake, and these men would weigh out of their leather pouches \$5 and \$10 of gold dust."

She had the pleasure of seeing her plan result in a successful consummation. Within the year a church and a school, that boasted sixty pupils, were constructed two miles from Fort Walla Walla.

Not so fortunate, though, were her husband's efforts with the ranch. After he had completed his payments on the land, labor, buildings, and machinery, and worked for sixteen months to improve the soil, a painful difference arose with his married brother, Louis, who wished the property recorded in his name, although the other two brothers, Charles and Ferdinand, had also contributed their share of labor. According to the land law then obtaining, the title went to the person who could prove he had been longest in possession. As John Mullan had kept no account of his expenditures he lost his claim. This left him heavily in debt and was the harder to bear because of his brother's selfishness. Giving up his ranch to Louis he left for Baltimore where his wife had preceded him by several months.

During his sojourn in the West he had observed the need for a mail and stage line connecting northern California and Idaho, so he decided to execute a plan that would supply the want. He received a contract from the government, and an appropriation from Congress of \$75,000 per year to carry mail and freight from Chico, California, to Ruby City, Idaho, for four years.

To put the stage line into operation he had to reconstruct the road and build stations at suitable distances, besides securing horses, coaches, and drivers. Nor did his difficulties end here, for the Indians in northeastern California began to commit depredations. Captain Mullan hastened to San Francisco to apply for military protection. General McDowell immediately responded with eight companies of troops and had posts established at Camp Lyon, White Horse Creek, Pueblo, Summit Lake, and Smoke Creek. Governor Gibbs of Oregon also contributed two companies. Detachments of soldiers were then placed at every station endangered by the Indians along the route. Not only did the presence of the troops protect the U. S. Mails and the stage line, but the lives of the settlers also.

An article in a Boise City paper for September 5, 1865, makes an announcement that "Captain Mullan arrived at Ruby on the first with a load of through passengers in 11 days from Chico, (a distance of 600 miles) without a change of teams except at long intervals, stopping to arrange matters along the road, select stations, etc." The schedule included three through stages a week, and the opening of the line was welcomed by the Boise paper for the twofold purpose it accomplished, that of furnishing a means of transportation and of quelling the Indian disturbance. "Whatever advantages Idaho and California may derive from expelling the Indian difficulties and opening this overland route," the article continues, "is due in a great measure to the energy and perseverance of Captain Mullan, not forgetting the promptitude with which General McDowell and Colonel Curry answered the call for troops."

Barely had six months passed, though, when Captain Mullan's successful business venture faced a ruinous competition. Governor Ney of Nevada also secured a government contract, and was allotted nearly twice the appropriation granted Mullan's line. He chose his route closely parallel to the latter's for about 300 miles. Since Ney was enabled to carry passengers at lower rates than he could, Captain Mullan realized that to continue the operation of his stage line under those conditions would involve him in bankruptcy. He hurried to Washington to petition for the annulling of either contract. "My husband's conservative views," explains Mrs. Mullan, "had to give way to the radicalism that prevailed at that time. Thus he gave up a project to others, that he had initiated and expended so much money (on)."

After he had disposed of his equipment at an enormous sacrifice he found himself \$12,000 in debt. Thus he was financially ruined for the second time. Out of this wreckage the admirable integrity of the man shines. He courageously looked about for another beginning and decided to enter the law profession in San Francisco. He had already acquainted himself with common and international law, so by studying with diligence for several months he was able to pass the required examinations and was admitted to the California bar. He had soon secured a position in a bank, and with his wife's willing assistance at copying, was able to earn from two hundred to three hundred dollars a month.

Just at this time through the most fortunate circumstances the question of increasing the city water supply arose, and Captain

Mullan was retained by the municipality in the dual capacity of engineer and legal counsel. For his services and advice he received \$8,000. He soon began to specialize in land law, and after taking in Mr. F. S. Hyde as partner, he built up the most successful practice of its kind in the state. This enabled him to liquidate his debts, and shortly afterwards he became the owner of a "very handsome house" and furnished it in the latest mode.

Captain Mullan served once in politics on the Democratic County Committee in 1872. Six years later the Governor of California appointed him special agent to collect the State's claims against the Federal Government, and the family removed to Washington, D. C. He acted in the same capacity for Oregon, Washington, and Nevada. It was, Mrs. Mullan writes, "a position involving immense labor in segregating and arranging the separate claims, the vouchers of each individual who had contributed in any way to the cost of the warfare against Indians or otherwise, in money, service, purchase of provisions, horses, wagons, etc., for which the States had paid, demanding reimbursement from the general government."

The road builder returned to Montana to participate in the ceremony of driving the golden spike on the Northern Pacific railroad at Gold Creek upon its completion in August, 1883. And a royal celebration it was. Henry Villard, the president of the road, had invited about 300 guests, all men prominent in the social, financial, and political world, to make the first excursion over the line. There were representatives from the British, French, and German Governments, Judges of the Supreme Court, statesmen, lawyers, bankers, financiers, business executives, and engineers. In all this assemblage no man had earned a better right to be a guest of honor than the military engineer, Captain Mullan, the first to run a survey line. That day, on which the golden spike was driven into the ties at the scene of the first gold discovery in Montana, marked the fulfillment of Captain Mullan's dreams, the harvest of all his early effort at road making.

On his second visit to Montana in September of 1886, the *Helena Herald* in an editorial speaks of him and his work, which in the last analysis is his finest monument: "Helena gives hospitable welcome to Captain John Mullan, whom our people have not had the pleasure of greeting since the memorable 'Last Spike' excursion, which formally opened the great Northern Pacific road to transatlantic commerce and travel. From this distinguished engineer and explorer the Mullan Road . . . and the Mullan Pass across the

Rockies take their names, and remain ever to remind present and future generations of the man's works."

An incident occurred in 1884 that illustrates his loyalty to his friends. Henry George, an authority on the land and labor question in Ireland, who as a young journalist in San Francisco had made Mullan's acquaintance, was seized and arrested in Dublin while studying the labor troubles and the Home Rule question. Upon learning this, Captain Mullan immediately petitioned the Secretary of State and the British Ambassador to secure his release, as George was a native-born citizen of the United States.

Mullan's later years were devoted to his law practice in Washington, D. C., where he passed away at the age of 80 on the twenty-eighth of December, 1909. Mrs. Mullan had died eleven years before on September 4, 1898, six years after writing her private memoir of her husband. Three of his five children survived him, they being: Emma Verita, who was married to State Senator George Russell Lukens of California, and died without heirs in San Francisco on March 20, 1915; Mary Rebecca, who is married to Henry Hepburn Flather, and resides in Washington and Tulip Hill, Maryland; and Frank Drexel, married to Mary Thomas Knapp. They are the parents of the old grandchild, Elizabeth Williamson.

"My father, as I recall him," writes his daughter, Mrs. Flather, "had a masterful air, a keen sense of humor, loved a joke and a good story. His blue eyes twinkling with merriment. He had a wonderful skin, cheeks like winter apples, and his white beard, merry blue eyes, and rosy cheeks he looked the ideal Santa Claus—and children on the street would so call him.

"He was paralyzed for five years before his death, the last two years being confined to bed and a wheelchair. He bore his affliction with amazing patience, grateful to everyone for the smallest service rendered."

Out West at the cities and villages along the old road that bears his name, marble monuments mark its course today in remembrance of the pioneer pathfinder and road builder, while Montana and Idaho have towns named to perpetuate his memory for posterity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: I have listed only the most important sources. Necessarily, he is mentioned in numerous books relating to Northwest history.

Bradley, Lieutenant James H., *An Account of the Building of Mullan's Military Road*, Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, Vol. 8. Helena, Mont., 1917.

Frontier Magazine, May, 1932, University of Montana, Missoula. *Journal from Fort Dalles, O. T., to Fort Wallah Wallah, W. T., July, 1858. Lieutenant John Mullan, U. S. Army*, edited by Pal Clark.

Mullan, Captain John, *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton*, U. S. Engineer Dept., Government Printing Office, Washington, 1863.

Mrs. Henry H. Flather, his daughter, of Washington, D. C., furnished much of the material from her mother's diary and Memoir. I did not inspect the originals, but based by research on copied portions which Mrs. Flather kindly sent me, as much of the material was of a purely personal nature.

ADDISON HOWARD