

Welcome to the Historic Nobles Trail

In April of 1852, William H. Nobles placed a notice in the Shasta Courier announcing a meeting in Shasta City, where he would reveal his newly discovered wagon route, which later became known as the Nobles Trail.

Nobles proposed this deal to the Shasta City merchants: if the new route proved to be an improvement from the previously established trails, they would pay him \$2,000, a substantial sum at the time. If the route was not satisfactory, Nobles stated he would take no payment. The merchants were excited about the new route and once the six week round trip was complete, they paid his fee and he returned home to Minnesota.



William H. Nobles

Changes to the Trail

The original route runs from Black Rock Springs, Nevada to Shasta City, California and was used mainly from 1852 to 1869. During its heyday, portions of the trail were realigned for a more optimal path. The Nobles Trail offered a major advantage over other routes in the area. The new trail offered a more gradual ascent into California over the Cascade Range and gentler descent into the Sacramento Valley. It also avoided long stretches of the dreaded 40-mile desert that the Truckee and Carson trails crossed.

The growing infrastructure and settlement of the west led to the need for wagon road improvement. Established by the federal government in 1857, the Pacific Wagon Road Office oversaw the construction and maintenance of nation's wagon roads. The survey and improvement of the Fort Kearney-South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road Project, including the Nobles Trail, was commissioned. Improvements to the road and development of water sources occurred in 1860.



California National Historic Trail

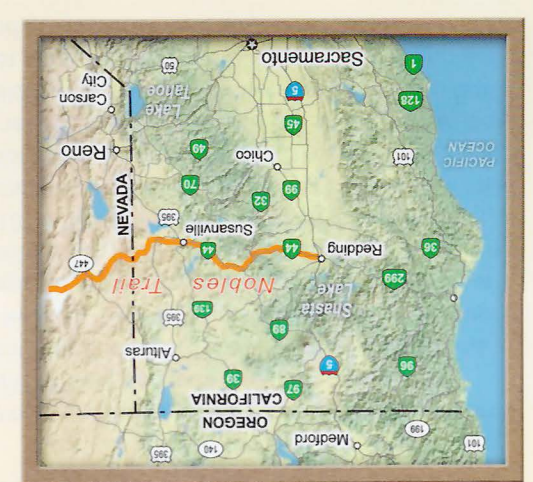
The California National Historic Trail spans 2,000 miles across the United States. It brought emigrants, gold-seekers, merchants, and others west to California in the 1800s. The Bureau of Land Management in California manages four segments, nearly 140-miles of the trail, the Applegate, the Lassen, the Nobles, and the Yreka. Between 1841 and 1869, more than 250,000 emigrants traversed the California Trail. Lured by gold, farmland and a promise of paradise in California, mid 19th century emigrants used the California National Historic Trail for a migration route to the west. Numerous routes emerged in attempts to create the best available course. Today, this trail offers auto touring, educational programs and visitor centers to present-day gold seekers and explorers.

In 1992, Congress designated the California Trail system as a National Historic Trail. In 2000, it also became part of the Bureau of Land Management's system of National Conservation Lands. This is a 36 million-acre collection of treasured landscapes conserved by the Bureau of Land Management. Find out more at: www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands.



Nobles Trail Today

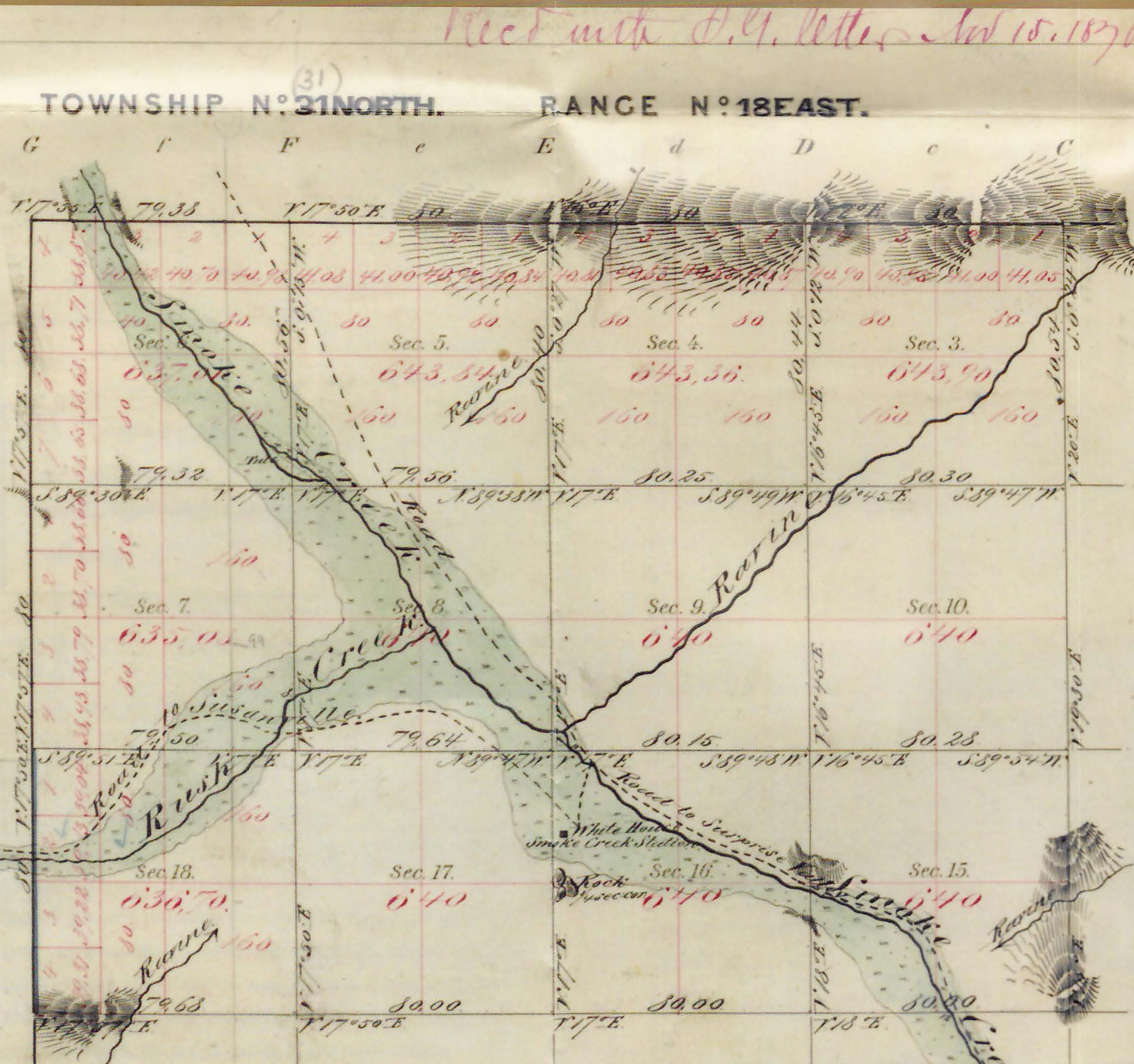
Today you can follow the emigrants' footsteps in landscapes reminiscent of the 1800s on public lands managed by the BLM, Lassen National Forest, and Lassen Volcanic Park. A 38-mile section of the Nobles Trail passes through BLM Eagle Lake Field Office-administered lands. This section of trail traverses the Smoke Creek Desert, Smoke Creek Canyon, Rush Creek Valley, the southern section of Mud Flat out to Honey Lake, and the Susan River area. Some segments of trail are still used by modern travelers, such as portions of Smoke Creek Road. Other segments of trail can only be traveled on foot and still other sections are lost.



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 115 Weatherlow Street
 Lassen County Historical Society
www.nps.gov/lavo/index.htm
 Phone: (530) 595-4480
 PO Box 100 Mineral, CA 96063
 Loomis Museum
 Lassen Volcanic National Park
www.wildlife.ca.gov/
 Phone: (530) 254-6644
 Honey Lake Wildlife Area
 Lassen County
 California Department of Fish and Wildlife,
www.fws.fed.us/
 Phone: (530) 257-2151
 Susanville, CA 96130
 2550 Riverside Drive
 Supervisor's Office
 Lassen National Forest
 2550 Riverside Drive
 Susanville, CA 96130
 Phone: (530) 252-5303
www.blm.gov/visit/eagle-lake-field-office



Contact Information



Before the Trail



Paiute conical burden basket and pine nut gathering tools. Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries.

Long before the first Euro-American explorers and settlers made it to California, American Indians lived in the areas crossed by the Nobles Trail. Emigrants traveling the Nobles Trail encountered several American Indian tribes. Within the eastern half of the trail, this included the *Kammu Tukadu* and *Wadhut* bands of the Northern Paiute people.

Important local resources included pine nuts, other large and small seeds, root crops, and berries. People hunted large game including deer, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn with bow and arrow, traps and corrals.

Although some of the emigrant trails were new, many shadowed earlier Indian routes that followed major river systems and crossed imposing mountain ranges. Initially, American Indians assisted and guided explorers and emigrants. However, as time progressed and the number of travelers increased, conflict and confrontations escalated.

Thousands of emigrants and their cattle, horses, and sheep, traveled west of the Mississippi River into and across American Indian traditional homelands from 1840 to 1880. Emigrant wagon roads, incoming settlers, government policy towards Indians, and the railroad led to loss of traditional lifestyles and undermined the American Indians' political and economic independence. Today, the local Indian peoples use natural resources near the Nobles Trail to continue aspects of their traditional culture.

| Year. | Population. | Increase. |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| January 1, 1849 (Estimated) | 26,000 | |
| " 1850 | 107,069 | 81,069 |
| " 1852 | 264,435 | 171,838 |
| 1860 | 379,994 | 115,559 |
| 1870 | 560,247 | 180,253 |
| 1880 | 864,836 | 304,589 |

Census showing California population increase, 1849-1880.

The End of the Line

By 1869, the Central Pacific Railroad ran from Sacramento, over the Sierra Nevada, and along the Humboldt River in Nevada. This offered a more efficient way for passengers and freight to enter California. While the Nobles Trail was abandoned as an emigrant trail,

it continued to be used as a road between settlements in northern California and in some areas by the logging industry. Today, some portions of the Nobles Trail can be traveled by vehicles or on foot, while other portions have disappeared completely.

Find Out More

There are many sources of information for the Nobles Trail. Museums, parks, and partners have exhibits and stories documenting the emigrant and Native American experiences. Some of these include:

- **A Guide to the Nobles Trail** by Richard K. Brock and Robert S. Black. 2008. Trails West, Inc. Reno, NV. <https://emigranttrailswest.org/>

- **Lassen Historical Museum** 115 N Weatherlow St, Susanville, CA 96130. (530) 257-3292.
- **Auto Tour Routes for the California National Historic Trail** by National Park Service: https://www.nps.gov/poex/playyourvisit/upload/NevadaATR-IG-041612_web.pdf
- **Nobles Trail Photo Tour** by Trails West, Inc.: <http://emigranttrailswest.org/virtual-tour/nobles-trail/>

Nobles Trail

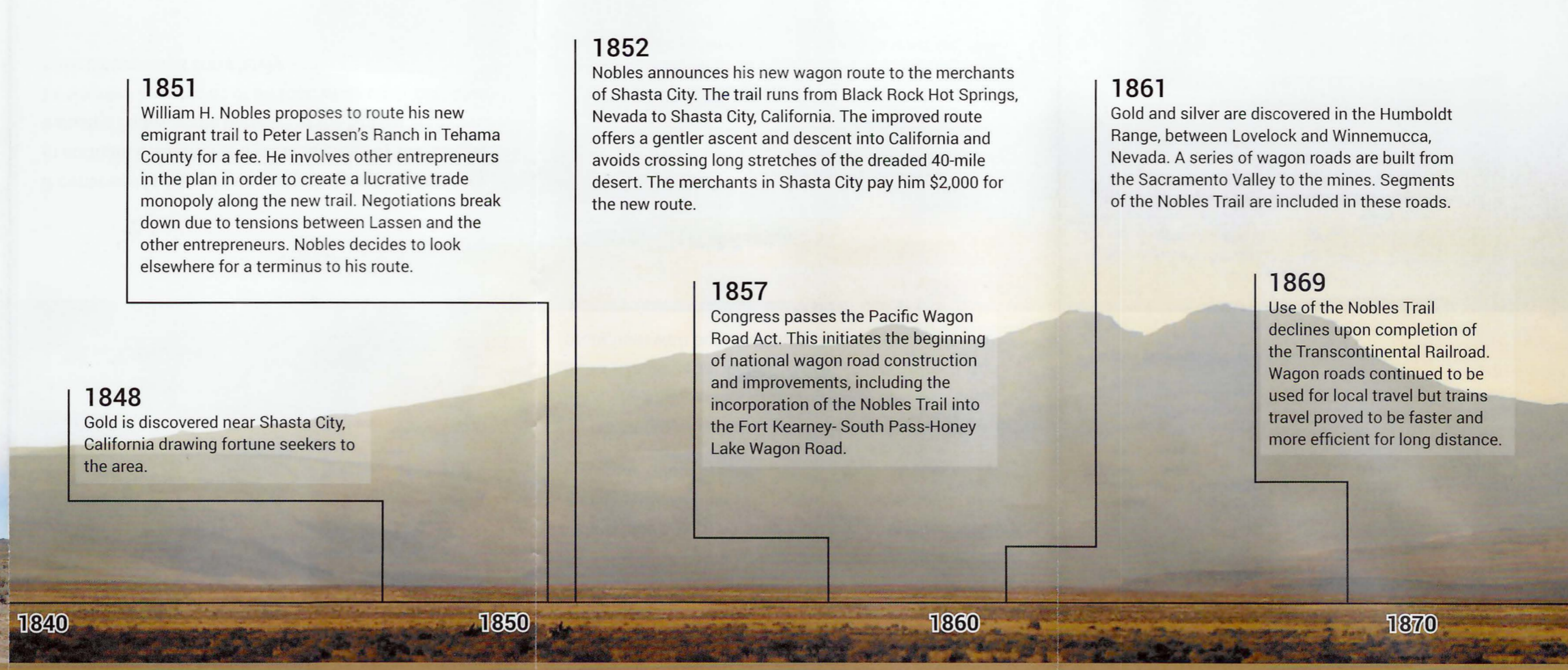
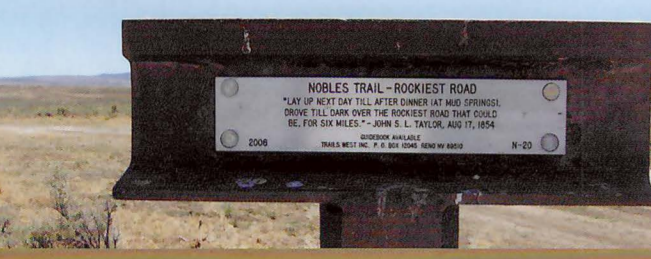
California National Historic Trail



Map & Guide

Visit the Trail!

Trails West, Inc. has installed trail markers made of steel railroad rails inscribed with brief excerpts from emigrant journals. Trails West is a non-profit historical organization dedicated to locating, marking, and preserving the California Trail and its many branches. The 61 markers are located along the trail from its beginning where it leaves the Applegate Trail (Marker N-1) in Nevada to its end near Shasta City, California (Marker N-61). Most of the information associated with each trail marker is from the Trails West Nobles Trail website and "A Guide to the Nobles Trail." An Avenza PDF Map is available for hiking and driving the trail between the markers within the BLM Eagle Lake Field Office jurisdiction.



1851
William H. Nobles proposes to route his new emigrant trail to Peter Lassen's Ranch in Tehama County for a fee. He involves other entrepreneurs in the plan in order to create a lucrative trade monopoly along the new trail. Negotiations break down due to tensions between Lassen and the other entrepreneurs. Nobles decides to look elsewhere for a terminus to his route.

1848
Gold is discovered near Shasta City, California drawing fortune seekers to the area.

1852
Nobles announces his new wagon route to the merchants of Shasta City. The trail runs from Black Rock Hot Springs, Nevada to Shasta City, California. The improved route offers a gentler ascent and descent into California and avoids crossing long stretches of the dreaded 40-mile desert. The merchants in Shasta City pay him \$2,000 for the new route.

1857
Congress passes the Pacific Wagon Road Act. This initiates the beginning of national wagon road construction and improvements, including the incorporation of the Nobles Trail into the Fort Kearney- South Pass-Honey Lake Wagon Road.

1861
Gold and silver are discovered in the Humboldt Range, between Lovelock and Winnemucca, Nevada. A series of wagon roads are built from the Sacramento Valley to the mines. Segments of the Nobles Trail are included in these roads.

1869
Use of the Nobles Trail declines upon completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Wagon roads continued to be used for local travel but trains travel proved to be faster and more efficient for long distance.

Leave No Trace

Take only pictures and leave artifacts where you find them. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 makes removal of cultural resources punishable by fines and jail time.

Camp away from sensitive areas such as Smoke Creek Cave, Nobles Trail, and other associated archaeological sites.

Report looting, graffiti, and trail damage to the Bureau of Land Management, Eagle Lake Field Office, Susanville, California.

Travel Responsibly by staying on designated roads and trails. Go over, not around, obstacles to avoid widening the trails. This protects wildlife habitats and sensitive soils from damage.

Protect sensitive areas by staying on designated routes, trails, and roads. Cross streams in designated areas, avoid the trail when wet and muddy, and camp in previously disturbed areas.

Respect the Rights of Others including private property owners, recreational trail users, campers, hunters and others so they can enjoy their activities undisturbed. Leave gates as you found them. Keep dogs controlled or on leashes.

Educate Yourself prior to your trip by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies. Plan for your trip and know how to operate your equipment safely. Be prepared and check out your vehicle to ensure it is in good operating condition and has a spare tire. Ensure that you have extra water and food in addition to blankets and appropriate clothing for the all types of weather.



Butte Creek to Manzanita Chute

The route ascends Butte Creek to Butte Lake and passes between Black Butte and Prospect Peak. In 1854, Lieutenant E.G. Beckwith recorded his impressions of the lava field the trail crosses: "After leaving the creek [Butte Creek] we passed two or three small ponds, and entered one of the most recently formed and strongly marked volcanic fields we have seen in these mountains. . . . The lava rocks are black, and about 100 feet high, occupying the valley in a confused mass, which would be difficult to cross on foot." The segment continues west past Pine Meadows, crosses Hat Creek and Lost Creek, climbs Nobles Pass, and ends at Manzanita Chute.

Bridge Creek to Feather Lake

This heavily-forested segment leaves Bridge Creek and climbs to the Sierra crest. Passing Summit Springs, the segment ends at Feather Lake, where the Nobles and Lassen trails merge. Mary C. Fish painted a vivid picture of the region in 1850: "The timber here grows to an amazing size. . . There is also plenty of game in the mountains consisting of Grizzly Bears, Mountain Sheep, Deer, Foxes, &c. I saw the track of a Grizzly bear which being measured . . . was found to be eight inches long and six inches in diameter."

Rush Creek Valley to Viewland

Pristine trail ruts run on alternating sides of a bladed road from Rush Creek Valley to present-day Viewland, California. The route ascends a drainage of Rush Creek for about three miles, crosses Bull Flat, and arrives at Mud Springs. Continuing west over a road that Mary C. Fish described as, "an awful rough road it being perfectly macadamized with rocks only the rocks were about a foot high," the segment ends northwest of the town of Viewland.

Deep Hole Springs to Smoke Creek Canyon

From Deep Hole Springs, the segment runs southwest. The main route stayed on the desert playa, but a side trip could be made to Wall Spring, two miles northwest. In 1859, J.B. Brown found this playa, "level as floor, not a spear of living shrub or plant." The route continues southwest, passes Buffalo Springs, and ends at the mouth of Smoke Creek Canyon.

Nobles Trail Junction to Granite Creek

Beginning one mile northwest of Rabbit Hole Springs, where the Nobles Trail left the Applegate Trail, this segment closely approximates the bladed road between Gerlach and Winnemucca, Nevada. The route heads west across the desert to Trego Springs, the water source that made the opening of this route possible. J.B. Brown described a miserable night's camp here in 1859: "Such a scene I never wish to see again as being enacted here. . . . Some of the loose cattle which have had no grass for two days nor water for 20 miles travel . . . and of course are nearly crazed are running about in all directions lowing and bellowing in search of water and grass." The trail continued west across the playa for another 12 miles before good water and grass were found at Granite Creek.