

The 1846 Applegate Trail—Southern Route to Oregon

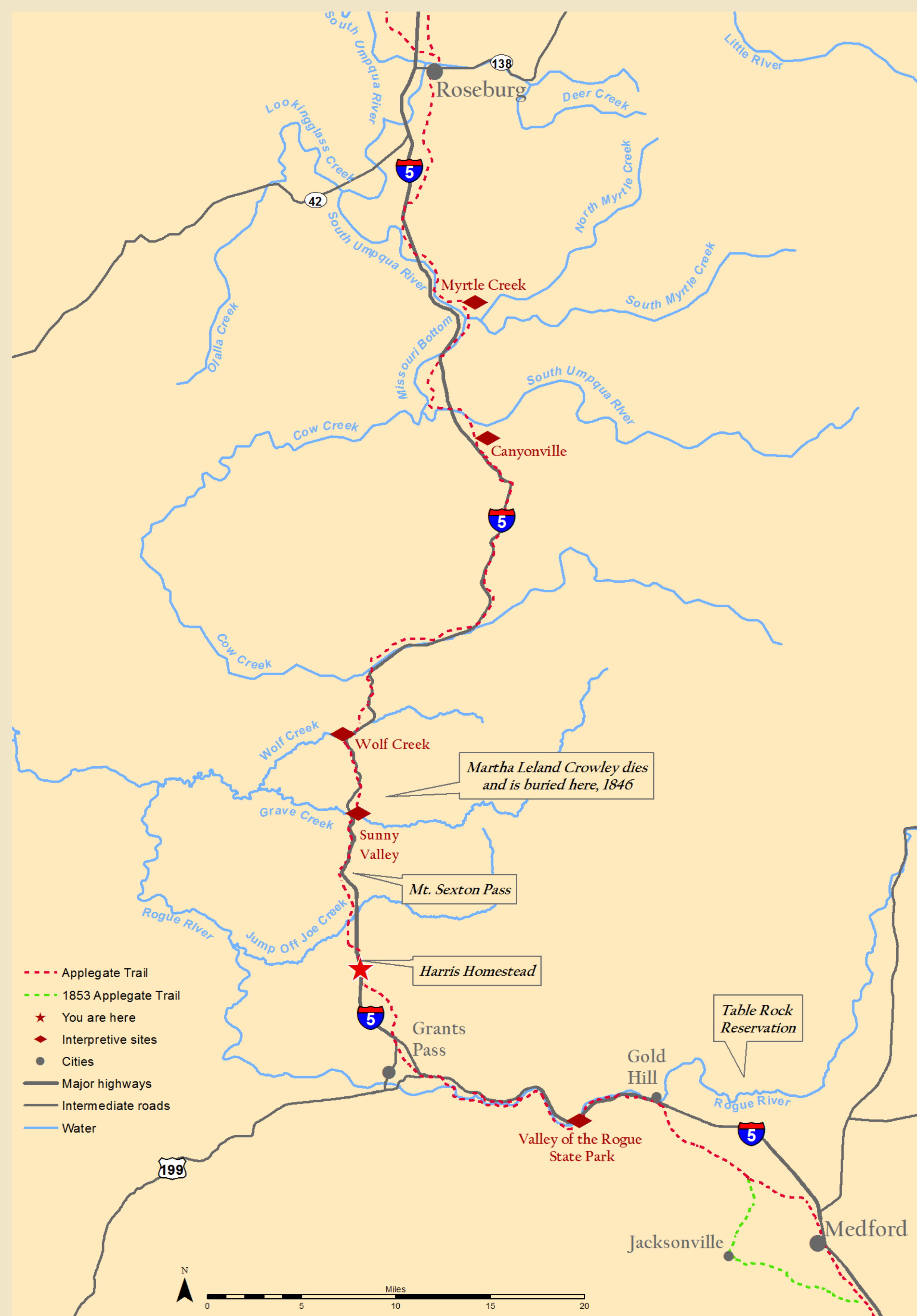
The perilous last leg of the Oregon Trail down the Columbia River rapids took lives, including the sons of Jesse and Lindsay Applegate in 1843. The Applegate brothers and others vowed to look for an all-land route into Oregon from Fort Hall (in present-day Idaho) for future settlers. Additionally,

It was important to have a way by such we could leave the country without running the gauntlet of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s forts and falling prey to Indians which were under British influence. -Lindsay Applegate

In 1846 Jesse and Lindsay Applegate and 13 others from near Dallas, Oregon, headed south following old trapper trails into a remote region of Oregon Country. First they crossed the Calapooya Mountains, then the Umpqua Valley, Canyon Creek, and the Rogue Valley.

They next turned east and went over the Cascade Mountains to the lakes of the Klamath Basin. The party detoured around the lakes and located the trail through canyons, over mountain passes, and across deserts, connecting the trail south from the Willamette Valley with the existing California Trail.

In August 1846 the first emigrants to trek the new southern road left Fort Hall. With Levi Scott guiding the wagons, Jesse Applegate and others traveled ahead to mark the route. The trailblazers opened a wagon road through nearly 500 miles of wilderness, arriving in the upper Willamette Valley in December.



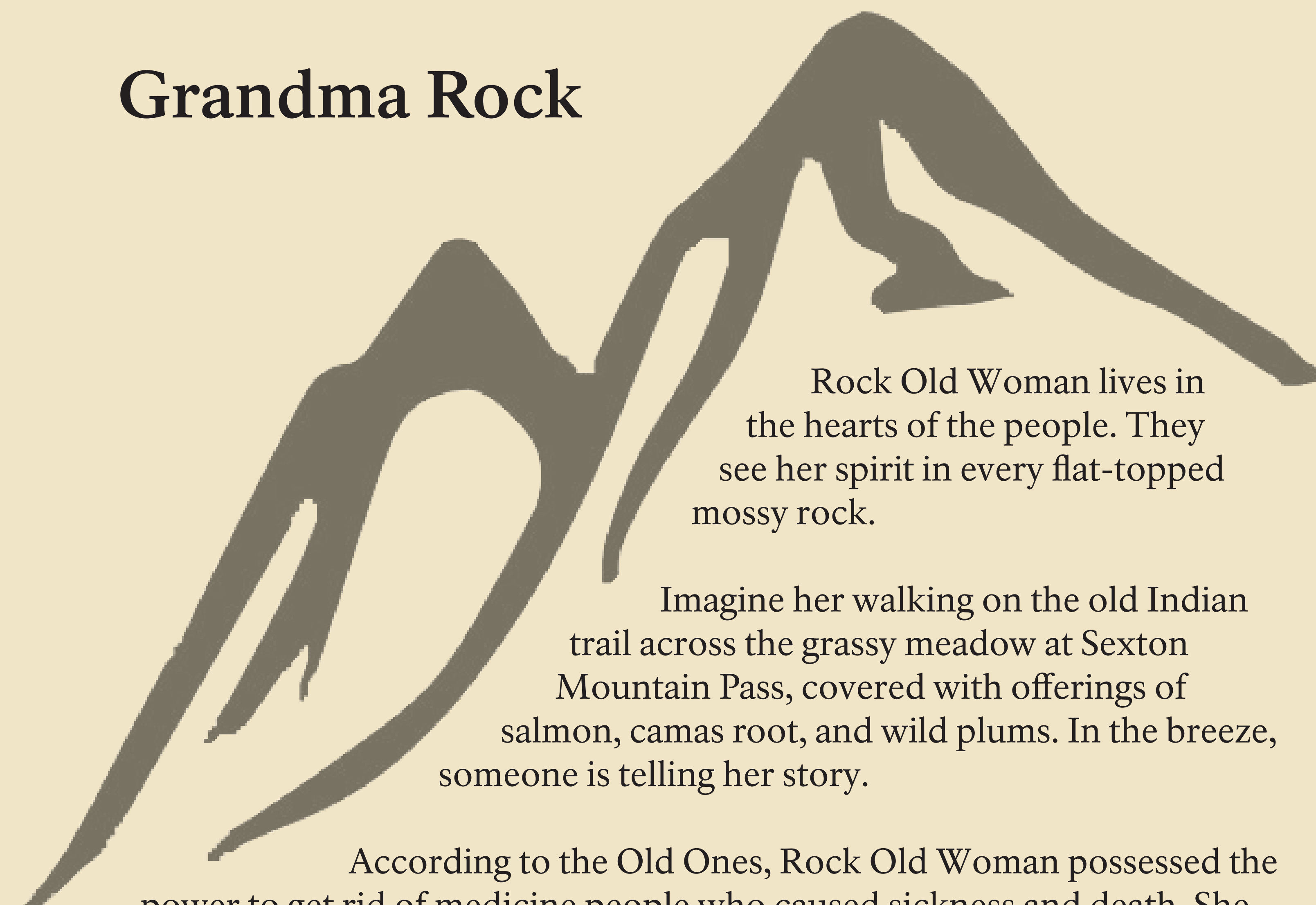
Father and Uncle Jesse, seeing their children drowning, were seized with frenzy, and dropping their oars, sprang from their seats and were about to make a desperate attempt to swim to them. But Mother and Aunt Cynthia cried out, 'Men, don't quit your oars! If you do, we'll all be lost!'
-Lindsay Applegate's son Jesse

Our hearts are broken. As soon as our families are settled and time can be spared we must look for another way that avoids the river.
-Lindsay Applegate

The Applegate Trail, part of the California National Historic Trail, contributed significantly to the settlement of southern Oregon.

Sexton Mountain Perspectives

Grandma Rock



Rock Old Woman lives in the hearts of the people. They see her spirit in every flat-topped mossy rock.

Imagine her walking on the old Indian trail across the grassy meadow at Sexton Mountain Pass, covered with offerings of salmon, camas root, and wild plums. In the breeze, someone is telling her story.

According to the Old Ones, Rock Old Woman possessed the power to get rid of medicine people who caused sickness and death. She used a stone pipe, a rock bucket, and a song.

As she sang her song, she placed the pipe of death into the medicine person's mouth to smoke. Rock Old Woman heated stones and dropped them into the bucket, boiling the victim's heart, stirring it with a paddle until the one who caused sickness and death in others died.

With the first emigrant wagons, the last native people to walk the trail paused at the summit and thanked Rock Old Woman for their good health as their ancestors have done for centuries. They gave gifts of food and whispered her name. Those who know Rock Old Woman well call her Grandmother.

High to the north, through the trees, emerges Sexton Mountain summit. There, she stands in stone with her tools around her, a contemplative vision for those who live long lives without sickness.

Emigrants



Wagon coming down Sexton Mountain

Diary of Virgil Pringle

October 18, 1846

Have some bad road that takes till after dark to go 6 miles (up and over Sexton Mountain).

October 19, 1846

Move one mile to a camp, having none last night, and spent the day burying Mr. Crowley's daughter, who died yesterday evening, age about 14 years.

Diary of Lester Hulin

October 20, 1847

Upon leaving camp soon came to a fine creek [Jump Off] Joe Creek] then bad roads ensued (rough hilly and sideling) but by night we were in a valley with good camping ground at hand (on Grave Creek) distance 8 M[ile]s