

Fort Phil Kearny Historic Site

Wyoming State Historic Site, National Landmark and Interpretive Center



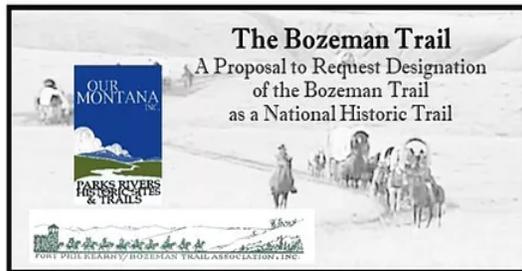
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The Bozeman Trail National Historic Trail Proposal

Update, February 2021

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The purpose of communicating with the public and decisions makers is to secure a good understanding of the benefits of National Historic Trail designation and preserving this American history; to make clear to landowners that private property rights will never be encumbered, that significant economic benefits to local communities can come from increased tourism, and that the public will be deeply involved in the decisions.



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The Bozeman Trail was established in 1863 as a 535-mile “shortcut” from the Oregon Trail on the North Platte River near Casper, Wyoming to the gold fields around Virginia City, Montana Territory.

The trail likely followed ancient trade and travel routes established and used by indigenous cultures for centuries. The trail passed through the heart of hunting lands east and north of the Bighorn Mountains claimed by Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, and Crow Tribes. Increased civilian use prompted a campaign by the tribes against the incursion. In response the U.S. military established Forts Reno and Phil Kearny in Wyoming and C.F. Smith in Montana to protect travelers. Conflict escalated, resulting in what is commonly called “Red Cloud’s War” with numerous skirmishes and three major battles including the Fetterman battle in 1866, and the Wagon Box, and Hay Field fights in 1867. In 1868 military use of the trail was discontinued. The Forts were abandoned due to spiraling costs, completion of the Union Pacific railroad line, and agreement with Indian Tribes for U.S. military withdrawal in the Laramie Treaty of 1868. It was used again in 1876 by the forces of General George Crook and shortly after the Battles of the Rosebud and the Little Bighorn, the route was opened and used by settlers. Today, segments of the Bozeman Trail route are present on private, state, and federally managed public lands in Montana and Wyoming.

Who are the proponents seeking designation of the Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail?

Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation, development, education, and promotion

Preservation Organizations to Seek Designation of the Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail

Contact: Mike Penfold, Dave McKee, JoAnne Puckett
bozemannah@gmail.com

Banner, Wyo., and Billings, Mt., December 2020

The Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association and Our Montana, non-profit organizations, are planning to ask the Montana and Wyoming Congressional delegations for legislation directing the Secretary of Interior to undertake a feasibility study leading to designation of the historic Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail.

The Bozeman Trail was established in 1863 as a 535-mile “shortcut” from the Oregon Trail on the North Platte River near Casper, Wyoming to the gold fields around Virginia City, Montana Territory. The Bozeman Trail route crosses private, state, and federally managed public lands in eight counties in Montana and five counties in Wyoming. The U.S. military established Forts Reno and Phil Kearny in Wyoming and F.C. Smith in Montana along the Trail resulting in conflict, commonly called “Red Clouds War”, with Indian Tribes resulting in numerous skirmishes and three major battles including the Fetterman battle in 1866, and the Wagon Box, and Hay Field fights in 1867.

If a feasibility study is authorized, the Department of Interior will conduct full public participation with public meetings and a formal comment period for the project. Factors to be analyzed include management cost on public lands, potential visitation, and community desirability for the designation.

“Our organizations want to stress that National designation of the Bozeman Trail will not impact landowners who have historic trail segments on their property. The legislation we propose would not provide funding for land acquisitions or result in any other encumbrances on private landowners. Our intent is to direct visitors to Auto Tour opportunities on existing public roads along the trail corridor as well as to museums and historic sites for educational opportunities about the Trail in addition to local, state, and tribal history” says Dave McKee, Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association.

“Before formally making a request to the congressional delegations, our organizations will undertake an outreach effort to garner clear understanding of the proposal, provide information, answer questions, and identify opportunities. We will contact the Montana and Wyoming congressional delegations, county commissioners, state and local governments, federal land management agencies, museums, historic preservation organizations, and Indian Tribes to provide information and discuss the proposal” says Mike Penfold, Our Montana. Penfold and McKee believe that obtaining National Historic Trail status “is a win-win proposal that can preserve our history and increase visitation to local, state, and federal historic sites and museums, directly benefiting local economies.” The process for requesting a study and subsequent National Historic Trail designation is found in the National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543 (dated October 2, 1968) as amended.

of the Bozeman Trail and associated historic sites, including the designated National Historic Landmarks of Fort Phil Kearny, Fetterman Battlefield, and Wagon Box Battle Field. fortphilkearny.com
Our Montana is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit association with a mission to promote stewardship and enjoyment of Montana's natural, historic, and recreational resources. ourmontana.org

What are the benefits of National Historic Trail designation?

Designation of the Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail will provide clear and lasting documentation of the significance of the Trail and associated events to our national history for current and future generations.

National designation will illuminate the rich and dynamic history of Native American cultures on the western plains. The migration of tribes onto the plains, transformation to a horseback culture, responses to Euro-American expansion, and contributions of American Indian leaders who were of central importance during that expansion are of critical historic significance to Indian tribes as well as the nation at large.

National designation will enhance preservation efforts, education opportunities, and visitor experiences along the trail route and at associated historic sites on public lands where public access is available and prudent.

National Trail status will strengthen grant requests from museums, local communities, counties, states, Indian Tribes, federal land management agencies, and non-profit associations to improve and expand education regarding historic events and the rich cultural history of Indian peoples affected by these events.

National trail status would increase interest in visitation, and hence income at numerous associated historic sites and museums along the trail corridor in Montana and Wyoming. A representative sample includes: the Rosebud Battlefield, Western Heritage Center, Park County Museum, Fort Ellis site, Museum of the Rockies, and Pioneer Museum in Montana, and the Hoopprints of the Past Museum, Gatchell Museum, Fort Phil Kearny, Bozeman Trail Museum, and Museum at the Bighorns in Wyoming.

Increased visitation and longer duration visits to publicly available trail segments and associated sites and museums will directly benefit local economies.

What is the process for National Historic Trail designation?

Pursuant to the National Trails Act of 1968, as amended, a constituency group such as a state or local government, local community, or trails organization will approach Congress with a request for legislation to direct the Secretary of Interior to complete a National Trails System Feasibility and Suitability Study to evaluate as to whether the trail warrants National designation. The finding must include a supporting recommendation from the National Park System Advisory Board. If the trail warrants designation Congress may pass final legislation formally listing the trail as a National Historic Trail.

What does a feasibility and suitability study involve?

A key component of the Study is full public participation, including consultation with other federal agencies, state and local governments, Indian Tribes, local communities, private landowners, and other interested parties. The lead agency will hold public meetings and request comments. Public participation will be utilized to gauge the level of desirability for listing of the Bozeman Trail as a National Historic Trail.

The lead federal agency will verify and document the original route location(s).

They will conduct an extensive study of the historic record to verify that the Bozeman Trail meets the three criteria of significance for listing as a National Historic trail including:

- (A) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use;
- (B) It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history;

- (C) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historical interpretation and appreciation;

The lead federal agency will also research and address, with public input, additional topics as required by the National Trails Act of 1968, as amended. Pertinent topics include: (1) the proposed designated route, (2) areas adjacent to such trails, to be utilized for scenic, historic, natural, cultural, or developmental purposes; (3) characteristics which make the proposed trail worthy of designation; (4) status of land ownership and current and potential use along the designated route; (5) estimated cost of acquisition of lands or interest in lands, if any; (6) plans for developing and maintaining the trail and the cost thereof; relative uses of public land, estimated visitation, economic and social benefits, and estimated management costs; (7) proposed Federal administering agency (for portions of the trail on public lands; (8) extent to which a State or public and private organizations might reasonably be expected to participate in acquiring the necessary lands and in the administration thereof; (9) the relative uses of the lands involved, including: the number of anticipated visitor-days; the number of months which such trail, or segments thereof, will be open for recreation purposes; the economic and social benefits which might accrue from alternate land uses; and the estimated operational costs of such trail; (10) the anticipated impact of public outdoor recreation use on the preservation of a proposed national historic trail and its related historic and archeological features and settings, including the measures proposed to ensure evaluation and preservation of the values that contribute to their national historic significance; and (11) To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet historic significance criteria A, B, and C listed above.

You can contact the Trail Committee at bozemannah@gmail.com to offer support, ask questions, provide comments, or request a visit with committee member. ontana.org/bozemannah.

A BRIEF HISTORY of the BOZEMAN TRAIL

Sparked by the discovery of gold in 1862 near Bannack City in present-day Montana, the gold rush was fueled soon by additional discoveries at Alder Gulch near Virginia City and elsewhere. In their search for a shorter route off the Oregon-Overland trail in Wyoming in 1863, 25-year old John Bozeman, with longtime frontiersman John Jacobs, scouted a route off the Oregon/Overland trail on the North Platte River in central Wyoming to the mining camps in the Beaverhead Valley in Montana on what would become known as the "Bozeman Trail". During the trail's few years in use there would be a number of different starting and ending locations, as well as many diversionary routes.

Despite only a few thousand emigrants traversing the trail, and its limited years of use, its most significant consequence was that it cut through the Powder River Basin, a large area of land bordered by the North Platte River, the Bighorn Mountains, the Yellowstone River, and through a larger region including the Black Hills and Yellowstone Valley. This area encompassed the last and best hunting grounds of the Northern Plains Indians. The traffic through scattered the buffalo for which the Indians depended upon for their livelihood, and subsequent Indian attacks would lead to military occupation of the region and result in the Indian wars on the Northern Plains.

In 1863, guided by Rafael Gallegos, Bozeman led a train of 45 wagons and 90 men off the North Platte at Deer Creek and on north to Rock Creek where they were stopped by a war party of Cheyenne and Sioux. They were told to go back, and they would be safe, or to go on and they would all be killed. The wagons returned and Bozeman with a few others rode back to Virginia City. They would try again.

1864 was the first year in which wagon trains traveled over the Bozeman Trail on through to Montana. Four large trains left the North Platte at Richard's Bridge, five miles east of Casper. The first train was headed by Allen Hurlbut who pioneered some revisions in the route from Rock Creek to the Tongue River. When camped along the way they stopped to allow the men to prospect for gold, and his wagons were passed by John Bozeman's which went on to arrive in Montana first. Other emigrant wagons followed that year, leaving the North Platte from various points. Most of the travelers had gone through Fort Laramie.

1864 was also the year of the Sand Creek massacre in Colorado. The attack and destruction there on a friendly village, mostly of Cheyenne, by Colonel John Chivington of the Colorado volunteers, was the impetus for the Cheyenne alliance with the Sioux in what would become known as "Red Cloud's War". In 1865, the military expedition of General Patrick E. Connor, guided by Jim Bridger, established a new route from the Platte that was used by all subsequent travelers. Bridger's route left the Platte at Sage Creek. They followed the emigrant road to a point near present day Ranchester where Connor attacked a non-hostile village of Arapaho Indians on Aug. 29, 1865. A number were killed, including women and children, and their teepees and winter supplies destroyed. This attack was instrumental in the Arapaho also allying with the Sioux.

While Connor was campaigning, James A. Sawyers led a government-funded wagon road expedition from the Niobrara River in Nebraska to Virginia City, Montana over much of the later part of the Bozeman Trail. Sawyers met up with the Arapaho right after their attack by Connor. After two weeks fighting and delay, they were rescued by Connor's troops and escorted on to Montana. Sawyers' significant contribution to the route of the trail was to suggest a new cutoff west of the Bighorn River that became the final route in that region.

As a peace treaty was being attempted in 1866 at Fort Laramie between the army and tribes, the meetings were interrupted by Colonel Henry B. Carrington coming through with troops to establish Fort Phil Kearny in Wyoming and Fort C. F. Smith on land which would become the Crow reservation in Montana. The Army would also re-garrison Fort Reno south of Fort Phil Kearny. When discovering the plans, Chief Red Cloud left in anger vowing to fight. The forts were being built to defend emigrants along the trail and to protect mail and supply routes to the forts and would actually begin the transition of the Bozeman Trail from an emigrant road to a military road. The new route was opened by a cutoff from near Fort Phil Kearny and traveling closer to the mountains. It re-joined the emigrant route north of Sheridan. This latest, military variant of the trail has become popularly known as the major route of the Bozeman Trail.

After a growing number of Indian attacks, on Dec. 21, 1866 the now-allied forces of the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho attacked a wood wagon from the fort and diverted Colonel William Fetterman and 80 men over Lodge Trail Ridge into

Topics addressing potential for land acquisitions and estimated cost are applicable on a case by case basis. Pursuant to the Trails Act Congress limits fee title acquisition of to an average of ¼ mile on each side of a trail segment, and only with the consent of the landowner.

Is the Bozeman Trail worthy of a feasibility and suitability study?

Yes. In 2002 the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Western History Association published a preliminary assessment of historic trails entitled “The Clash of Cultures Project: Assessing the National Significance of Trails associated with U.S. Army/American Campaigns in the Trans-Mississippi West.” In the assessment the authors found that the Bozeman Trail meets the three criteria of significance for listing as a National Historic Trail under the broad theme of Military Campaigns. The “Clash of Cultures” assessment include these preliminary findings:

1. The Bozeman Trail is nationally significant for its associations with the Powder River campaign and the Red Cloud War; indeed it was the establishment and use of the trail that was the cause of those conflicts.
2. The National Trails Systems Act states that a National Historic Trail “must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use.” The Bozeman Trail meets this definition since it was the actual establishment and use of the trail itself that precipitated the Powder River Campaign and Red Cloud’s War. Furthermore, the trail was used as a military campaign trail by both the U.S. Army and American Indians – Lakota, Arapaho, and Cheyenne – during those conflicts.
3. The documented presence of intact trail segments on public lands and the opportunity for education and recreation at numerous associated historic sites and museums along the route in both states underscores the potential for public recreation or historical interpretation.

If a feasibility study is authorized by Congress the proponents recommend that additional research be conducted to determine if the Bozeman trail also meets the significance criteria under the broad themes of Native American History, Prehistoric Travel Routes, Exploration, and Trade and Commerce which would include historic mining booms.

Does the Trail have to exhibit physical integrity?

No. The National Trails Act does not emphasize physical integrity of National Historic Trails, which are defined as “extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance”. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify for significance but its location must be sufficiently known.

The identification, preservation, management, and enjoyment of intact trail segments on public lands with available and appropriate access can follow formal listing. Future field studies would be used to develop preservation and interpretive opportunities on public lands.

Would private landowners be impacted?

No. Designation does not encumber private property rights with any type of federal restrictions or management requirements. Nor does national designation allow public visitation unless authorized by the landowner.

The exception is if a project is a mix of federal ownership/minerals, requires a federal permit or license, or utilizes federal funding or resources to implement a project on private land. In these cases, projects would comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), to consider adverse effects to cultural resources eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including eligible segments of the Bozeman Trail. This is not a change from current federal regulations.

Would access to private land be required for the feasibility study?

No. If implemented, the feasibility and suitability study does not involve documentation of trail segments. Access to private land is not needed to determine the general route of the trail or analyze potential public benefits specifically on public lands.

Can landowners with trail segments on their property actively participate in the National trails program?

Yes. There are a variety of opportunities of landowners to engage in preservation and education for trail segments on their property. In example, a landowner may grant public access to trail segments. They may seek grant funding for preservation, interpretive signing, or a National Register of Historic Places study of their trail segment.

It is important to note that private landowners may choose not to actively participate.

Would multiple uses on federally managed public lands, including split mineral estate settings, be changed by National Trail designation?

No. The Resource Management Plans (RMPs) for the Casper and Buffalo Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field offices currently provide protective buffers and management direction for the Bozeman Trail on BLM and split estate lands as if it is a National Historic Trail. National Trail designation would not change or increase these protective measures. The Bozeman Trail has been evaluated as eligible for nomination to the NRHP in Montana and Wyoming. Several intact trail segments in Wyoming have been listed on the National Register. Federal agencies are required to consider potential effects by federal undertaking to the Bozeman Trail by proposed federal undertakings on public land, and where split estate minerals occur, pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. We have consulted

ambush near Fort Phil Kearny killing all of them. It was the Army's worst defeat with the Indians and would remain so until the Battle of the Little Bighorn a decade later. Actually, even before the battle, the emigrant traffic on the Trail was almost totally stopped and directly after the battle, the Trail was closed and used exclusively for the military.

At the battles at the Wagon Box fight near Fort Phil Kearny and another in the Hayfield fight near C. F. Smith, the following summer, a much smaller number of troops held off attacking Indians with the use of newly-issued rapid fire rifles. It was time to make peace and the complex Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 was negotiated. The government agreed to abandon the 3 forts and the Bozeman Trail, and the Indians

would agree to cease fighting and continue hunting on the lands. The trail routes would be used later by General George Crook for the Little Bighorn Campaign in 1876, and then for settlement into the area.

The people involved during those few short years represented practically the entire spectrum of those who inhabited and settled the west. Some of the famous participants in the Bozeman Trail History include:

John Bozeman: A young man from Georgia who journeyed west to mine for gold in Colorado and Montana. He established the original Bozeman Trail route and beginning in 1864 lead wagon trains of emigrants along the trail from the North Platte River in Wyoming to the Gallatin Valley of Montana.

Jim Bridger: One of the most famous frontiersmen of the west, Bridger guided emigrants and military forces along the Bozeman Trail and established several alternate trail locations used by travelers. He specifically served as Colonel Carrington's guide from Fort Kearney, Nebraska to Fort Phil Kearny and remained the colonel's chief guide and interpreter during Carrington's tenure at the Fort.

Red Cloud, Oglala Lakota: One of the most renowned Lakota leaders who forged an alliance of tribes to combat intrusion of emigrants, settlers, and military forces into the Powder River country. Due in part to his leadership of tribal resistance, the Bozeman trail was abandoned, and military forces withdrew from forts along the trail. In later years he served as a skilled leader in negotiations of the 1868 Laramie Treaty.

Tribal Leaders: Many historically significant tribal leaders allied with Red Cloud to resist use of the Bozeman Trail and participate in significant engagements including the Fetterman, Hayfield and Wagon Box battles. Lakota leaders included High Backbone, Man Afraid of His Horse, and American Horse. Cheyenne leaders included Little Wolf and Dull Knife. Arapaho leaders included Black Coal and Eagle.

Tasunka Witko (Crazy Horse): A key to victory in the Fetterman battle was a group of decoys including a young Lakota warrior named Crazy Horse, who enticed the forces of Captain Fetterman and George Grummond to chase them over Lodge Trail Ridge to a planned ambush and their demise. The young Crazy Horse would reach greater acclaim as a warrior in another ten years at the Rosebud and Little Bighorn Battles.

Colonel Henry Beebe Carrington: Constructed and served as Commander of Fort Phil Kearny in 1866. His command or lack thereof regarding the Fetterman battle was highly controversial, resulting in two formal investigations. Although Carrington was not found to be at fault or censured as a result of the investigations, he spent his life following retirement defending his actions as commander at Fort Phil Kearny.

Captain William Judd Fetterman: A civil war veteran who was breveted for distinguished service in several engagements during the Atlanta campaign under William Tecumseh Sherman, Fetterman arrived at Fort Kearny in November of 1866. Despite his obvious skill as a leader in combat, his one great weakness was underestimating the fighting prowess tactical skill of the Plains Indians. His lack of respect may have led him to disregard Carrington's orders to not cross Lodge Trail Ridge, leading to his demise and the annihilation of his entire 80-man force.

Margaret Sullivant Carrington: Wife of Henry Beebe Carrington she arrived with her husband at the future site of Fort Phil Kearny in 1866. She compiled a detailed and comprehensive journal during her travels to Wyoming and stay at Fort Phil Kearny. She wrote about the wildlife, environment, daily events, Indians, and personalities including Jim Bridger. Her comprehensive and valuable account entitled “Absaroka, Home of the Crows: Being the Experiences of an Officers Wife on the Plains” was published in 1886 and stayed in print until very recently.

Frances C. Grummond Carrington: Frances arrived at Fort Phil Kearny on October 3, 1866 with her husband, second lieutenant George Grummond. She left the fort in January of 1867 with the body of her husband George, killed in the Fetterman battle. In 1871 she married then widower Colonel Henry Beebe Carrington. Shortly before her death in 1911 Frances published “My Army Life and the Fort Kearny Massacre”. Her account provides an invaluable account of events at Fort Phil Kearny and a rare insight into life on the frontier through the eyes of an army wife.

John “Portuguese” Phillips: Born on the island of Pico in the Azores, John arrived in California at the age of 18 seeking his fortune as a gold miner, eventually

with the BLM and the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office to confirm there would be no change to the BLM RMPs due to National Trail designation.

Would authorization of uses or projects on state lands be affected by National Trail designation?

State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) provide comments on cultural resources to the Offices of State Lands for consideration as part of the States land use and authorization review process. Historic Trails included in SHPO comments usually meet one of the following conditions: trails that have been formally listed on the NRHP, determined eligible by the Keeper of the NRHP, or trails designated under the National Historic Trails Act.

To be included in Wyoming SHPO recommendations, trail segments must be intact, retain historic integrity and be within the parcel boundary. In general, they recommend a 1/4 mile buffer be made around the trail where any drilling location is in direct line of sight of the trail. If a trail segment no longer retains historic integrity, or SHPO cannot confidently determine the current integrity of the trail segment, it is not included in SHPO comments. SHPO may note the presence of suspected contributing segments of the National Historic Trails in the comments.

Public Outreach

The project committee and board members of the FPK/BTA and Our Montana are eager and willing to meet with State and local government officials, private landowners, Indian Tribes, and other interested citizens or organizations to discuss the National Historic Trails Act and our proposal. To discuss the proposal or schedule a meeting, please contact the committee members at

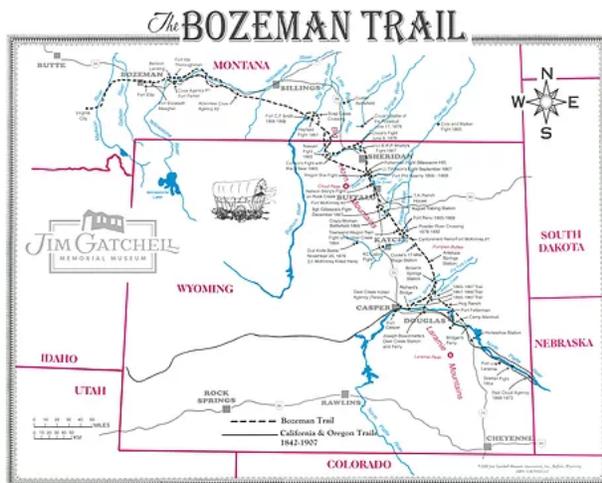
Bozemantht@gmail.com

arriving at Fort Phil Kearny. On the evening of December 21, 1866, he volunteered to ride 190 miles south to Horseshoe telegraph station with news of the Fetterman battle. Phillips and Daniel Dixon along with others arrived at Horseshoe Station on the morning of December 25th. Phillips then travelled on to Fort Laramie, arriving on the eve of December 25th in the middle of a Christmas ball, to deliver an additional message from Lieutenant Colonel Henry Wessells at Fort Reno.

The Bozeman Trail, opening during the Civil War and closing just prior to completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869, has the enduring distinction of being the last great overland emigrant trail in the American West. For a brief period of time the Bozeman Trail and associated historic sites became center stage for the westward expansion of a new nation, the brave resistance to change by the native inhabitants, and the fascinating history of the individuals significant in our national history.



Photos Courtesy of Mike Penfold and Our Montana



The Bozeman Trail map courtesy of the Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum

[View Wyoming/Montana PBS The Bozeman Trail, A Rush to Montana's Gold](#)

The Bozeman Trail was a shortcut to the newly discovered gold fields of Montana Territory. Cutting through the heart of Indian country, it provoked a clash of cultures that exploded into warfare, destruction and tragedy. It was a singular road that changed this part of the American west forever.

[View Bozeman Trail, On The Tracks](#)

Our Montana sponsored a wagon train on the Bozeman Trail from Fort Laramie to Virginia City. The wagon train kept as close to the actual route of the old trail.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

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528 Wagon Box Road
Banner, WY 82832 - 307-684-7629

