

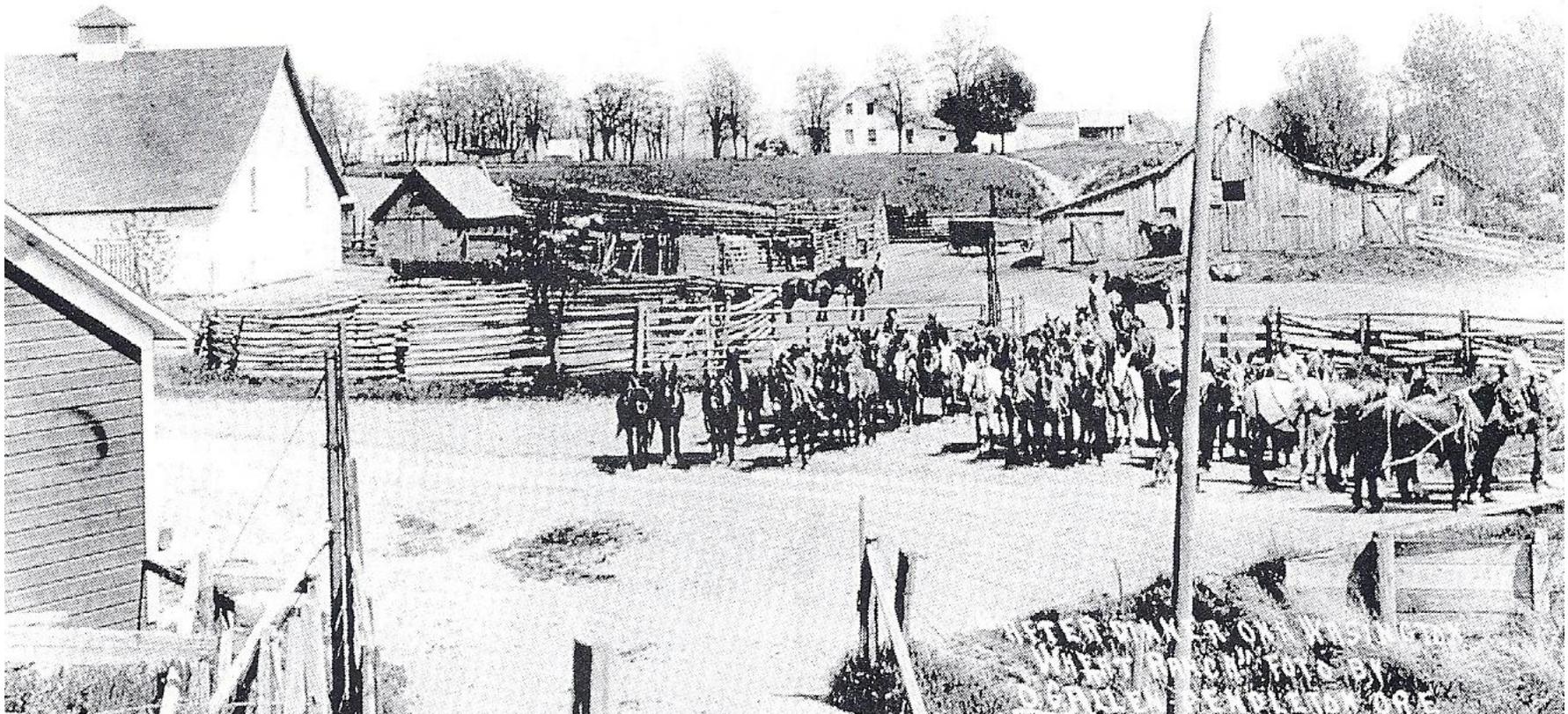
HALFWAY HOUSE

on the Mullan Road

Beginning in 1869, Benjamin and Malinda Flathers provided a forage station and accommodations for travelers along the Mullan Road near this location. The Mullan Road was the first engineered wagon road in the Pacific Northwest. It linked the steamship dock at Old Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia River and the new U.S. military fort in the town of Walla Walla with the steamship dock at Fort Benton, Montana on the Missouri River. The Flathers' station near the Mullan Road's Touchet River crossing was called Halfway House because of its location approximately halfway between the Fort in the town of Walla Walla and the Snake River crossing at Lyons Ferry.

The construction of the Mullan Road by Lt. John Mullan and his crew of 100 civilians and 100 soldiers began in Walla Walla in June of 1859, and was completed in October of 1860. In May, 1861, Lt. Mullan began rebuilding and improving portions of the route. In August 1862, the 655 mile road, including the previously existing portion from Wallula to Walla Walla, was finally completed, providing a route for pioneer families, miners, and military supplies between two of the country's major rivers. The completion of the road realized the long-held dream of President Thomas Jefferson of linking the continent from east to west.

In 1866 a memorial to the U.S. Congress by the Montana territorial legislature in Helena pleaded for repairs, and reminded Congress of "the necessity for a great national highway connecting the Missouri and Columbia rivers by a good and substantial wagon road." Though the figures used were perhaps an exaggeration, the memorial went on to say, "From Jan. 1 to Nov. 15, 1866, 1500 head of horses have been purchased by individual miners at Walla Walla; 5000 head of cattle were driven from Walla Walla to Montana; 6000 mules have left the Columbia river and Walla Walla loaded with freight for Montana; 52 light wagons with families have left Walla Walla for Montana; 31 wagons with immigrants have come through from the States via the Mullan Road, a portion of whom settled in Walla Walla valley... not less than 20,000 persons have passed over the Mullan road to and from Montana during the past season; \$1,000,000 in treasure has passed down through Walla Walla and Wallula during the same period."



The Flathers home sits on the hill above the barns, corrals, and outbuildings. *Photo by O.G. Allen, Pendleton, OR.*

You will find more information about the Mullan Road and Walla Walla area history at www.ww2020.net/historic-sites and at the planned Mullan Road History Site at 13th & Abadie in Walla Walla. Sign courtesy of Walla Walla 2020.