

## Naches Pass

George W. Fuller. A History of the Pacific Northwest. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949. "Naches Pass and Captain George B. McClellan," p. 192 - 193.

To Captain George B. McClellan, in 1853, was assigned the work of directing surveys from the western end of Governor Stevens' railway survey and of exploring the Cascades." He received ample assistance, having ten officers and thirty men at his disposal. He was also to undertake the building of a military road from Walla Walla to Steilacoom.

Congress had appropriated funds for the task, and McClellan was ordered to survey and locate the road and to make contracts for its construction. The government wished to open the road by fall, in order to accommodate the emigration of that year. He was ordered, in case he was unable to carry out the original instructions, "to fix the line of the road, especially through the Cascade mountains, and to perform such work on the most difficult portions as will enable the immigrants to render the route practicable by their exertions, detaching a suitable person as guide and director, to meet them at Walla Walla."

Of this task McClellan made a complete failure. He arrived late at Vancouver and showed no sign of doing anything. To meet the emergency, the settlers did all they could toward building the last hundred miles of the road. Money, provisions and tools were subscribed, and many contributed time and labor. Headed by Edward Allen of Olympia a party of road makers went to the Naches pass. McClellan neglected every opportunity to perform his duty, for he had been instructed to step in, lead and pay just such a group, if necessary.

The emigrants found no guide awaiting them at Walla Walla, and when they reached the mountains the road crew had gone home, thinking that they were not coming. But enough of the work had been done to enable the wagons to get through. In the matter of exploring the Cascades, McClellan simply reported that he had heard from the Indians that deep snow would make it impossible for him to pass over the range. His opinion was that the Columbia river route was the only one worth considering for a road.

The government's road program was turned over to Lieutenant Richard Arnold in 1854. He travelled over the road opened the previous season, adopted as far as possible the route chosen by Allen and continued to build toward the east. The government money was expended on minor improvements. The settlers were never reimbursed for the work which they did. It was held that the appropriation was for a military road and that the settlers did their work for the benefit of emigrants, a fine distinction, in utter disregard of the original instructions to McClellan and the subsequent use which the government made of the road.