

# The Lolo Trail

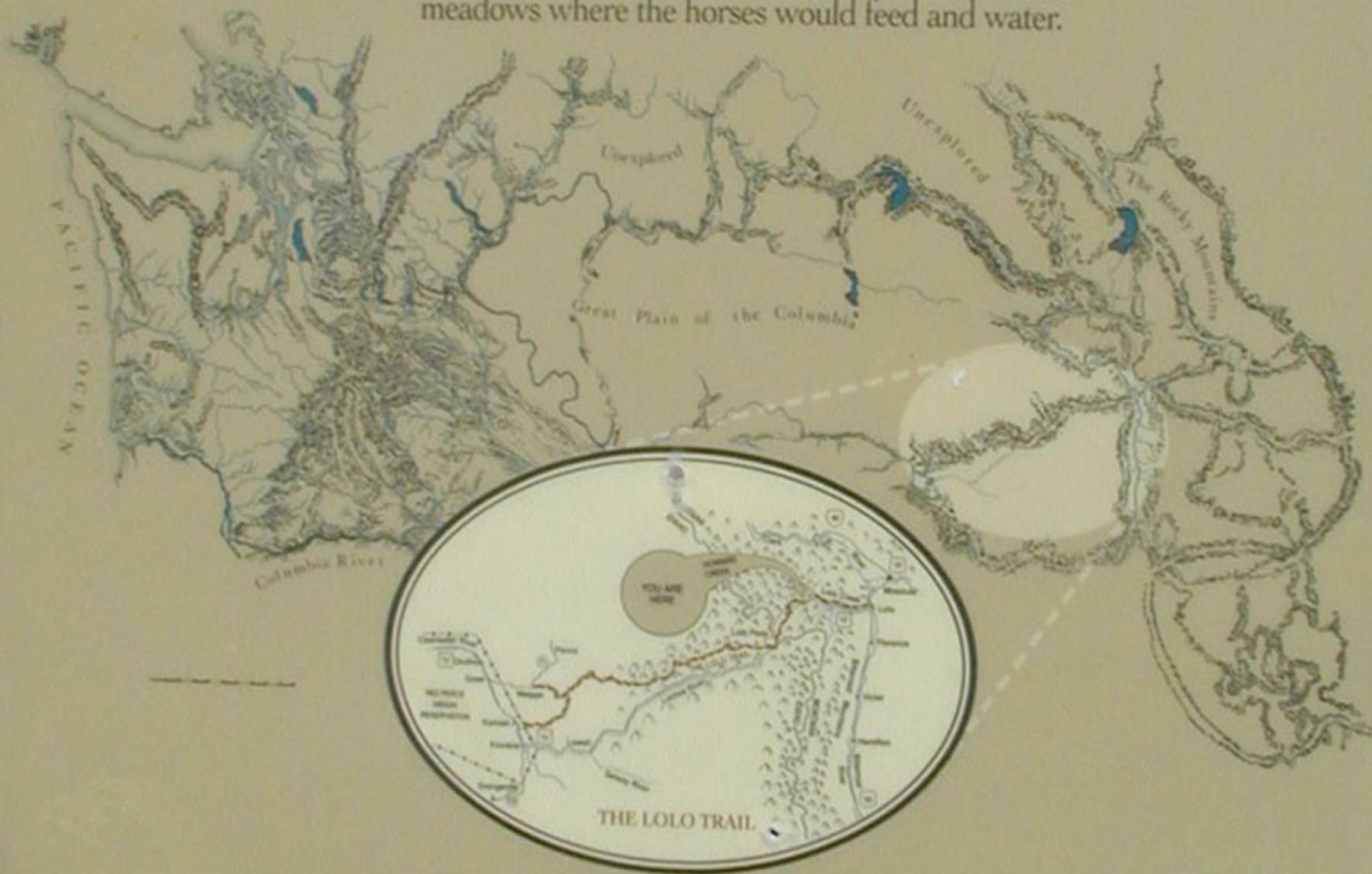
*The Lolo Trail, established by American Indians, was one of the few northern routes across the Rocky Mountains.*

Two historic land routes, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce (Nee-Mee-Poo or Nimiipu) National Historic Trail, wind through the Lolo Trail corridor.

Highway 12 doesn't follow the Lolo Trail. Early travelers had to cross the mountains north of Highway 12 to avoid the brush-choked land along Lolo Creek. The Trail climbs steep slopes to the ridgetops, crosses low saddles, and traverses steep hillsides, occasionally dropping down into grassy meadows where the horses would feed and water.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS  
TO PUGET SOUND

from Explorations and Surveys  
1853-4



Twice, this nation's love-affair with railroads brought surveyors to Lolo Creek. The first effort quickly ended in 1854 with the conclusion,

*"It is thoroughly and utterly impracticable for a railroad route."*

This advice was soon forgotten. Fifty years later, another attempt was made from both sides of the mountains. A trace of the abandoned railbed intended for the 1909 "Clearwater Short Line Railroad" is visible near the highway a few miles east of here. The Trail remained the only continuous route through these mountains until Highway 12 was completed in 1961.



LOLO NATIONAL FOREST