

# Teton Pass History Trail

[iPhone App: Grand Teton National Park & Jackson Hole – Local history – Tours](#)



**Group walking through fall foliage.** Karen Reinhart. History Trail (28).jpg.

## Overview of the Trail

Take a half-day hike along the History Trail and experience the colorful stories of people who traveled the Old Wagon Road beginning in the 1880s, and later, the Old Pass Road which was built in 1913. The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum and the Bridger-Teton National Forest invite you to explore a piece of Jackson Hole's history while hiking an easily accessible trail. Only about a twenty- minute drive from Jackson, Wyoming or from Victor, Idaho, the four-mile History Trail begins at the top of Teton Pass and winds eastward down the mountain ending at Trail Creek Trailhead near the town of Wilson.

Early season snow may begin to accumulate in the Teton Pass area as early as mid-October, and may linger into June. So, if you want to see relics of days gone by that are visible along the trail, plan to hike during the summer. It is a non-motorized hiking trail that is open to horse or foot traffic only. While dogs are allowed on the trail, carry a leash and be respectful of others. Be alert to the possibility of moose and bears in the area.

We recommend beginning the History Trail hike at the top of Teton Pass and hiking down. Ambitious hikers may also experience the trail from the bottom up or may wish to combine the History Trail with the Old Pass Road for loop options. The elevation gain is more than 1300 feet. With the GPS coordinates listed, the historic sites can be identified regardless of the direction of your hike.

Wear sturdy shoes and layers of clothing. Consider bringing hiking poles. Be advised that the hike may be taxing for people with back or knee problems. Remember to bring water and snacks or a lunch. The hike typically takes from 4-5 hours but that depends on how much time you spend at each stop and how fast the slowest hiker in your group is.

### **Shuttling**

To do the half-day hike from the top of Teton Pass down, we recommend shuttling a vehicle to the Trail Creek Trailhead located at the end of Trail Creek Road near Wilson, Wyoming. The trailhead is located 7.5 miles from Jackson, Wyoming or 17.3 miles from Victor, Idaho.

From Jackson: Travel west 5.4 miles from the junction of Highway 22 and U.S. 191 to Wilson. Continue through Wilson toward Teton Pass and turn left 1.2 miles from Wilson on Trail Creek Road. Park at the trailhead located at end of road, .9 miles.

From Victor: Travel east 16.4 miles on Highway 33 (turns into Highway 22 at Wyoming State Line). Turn right on Trail Creek Road. Park at the trailhead located at end of road, .9 miles.

Lock and leave a car at Trail Creek Trailhead parking lot, and then, carpool to the top of Teton Pass where the History Hike begins. This is about a 15 minute drive depending on traffic.

## **1. Top of the World: Teton Pass and Roadhouse**

**N 43° 29.8140 (43.4969)**  
**W 110° 57.3000 (-110.955)**

**UTM: 503661 m E 4816000 m N**

An informational kiosk with historical information is located at the eastern edge of the Teton Pass parking area. Your hike begins here – on the left-side of the kiosk.

Teton Pass has been an important travel corridor for at least 10,000 years. From west of the Tetons, fur trade historian James Hardee describes the American Indian travel route as going up Moose Creek and Mesquite Creek, down Coal Creek, and up Mail Cabin Creek to the summit, and then down Mosquito Creek to Jackson's Hole. Quarries in the Teton Pass area supplied obsidian for native tool making and the obsidian was traded widely. Mountain men began traveling over Teton Pass in about 1811. In 1886, the first horse-drawn wagon navigated the Pass. Three years later, the first wagon train brought five families over the pass. It often took early settlers two weeks to get their livestock, families, and wagons over the trail from Victor, Idaho into Jackson's Hole. In 1913, the Oregon Short Line railroad reached Victor, and at this time roadhouses began appearing to service travelers. One year later, the Old Pass Road was

constructed by the U.S. Forest Service. It was widened in 1928. In 1969, the current highway was built, minimizing hairpin turns.

A roadhouse and store that offered comfort and food once stood near this location. It was operated by the Scott family. In winter tunnels sometimes had to be dug through the deep snow to access the door. Once people settled in Jackson's Hole, a typical trip from Jackson to Victor was still a three-day ordeal: it took one day to reach the bottom of the pass on the east where Les Crandall's Roadhouse beckoned to travelers. Then, people spent an arduous day reaching the summit, spent the night, and traveled yet another day to reach Bircher's Roadhouse and mill on the west side.

The History Trail generally follows the route of the Old Wagon Route. As you walk the trail, picture yourself among the passenger wagons and freight sleighs which traversed this route between 1886 and 1913.



**The Scotts who ran the roadhouse. JHSM. 19580720001p.jpg.**



Roadhouse at the pass summit. JHSM. 19582606001.jpg.

## 2. Look at that Road Grade!

N 43° 29.7540 (43.4959)  
W 110° 57.2400 (-110.954)

UTM: 503739 m E 4815880 m N

At this point just to the east of the History Trail, the road bed of the Old Wagon Road is visible as it drops off the top of Teton Pass. The Old Pass Road can be seen above the wagon road and below today's highway.

Travelers had to “rough lock” their wagon’s rear wheels with a heavy log and drag another log behind in order to decrease wagon speed down this steep descent. Despite these precautions, upsets were common. A steep, hairpin turn along the Old Wagon Road was known for years as Peanut Point—a place where a freight sleigh loaded with Christmas mail and goodies, including big sacks of peanuts, had a wreck coming down the Pass in about 1936. Today, though the road has improved and the grade is less, trucks still topple and spill their cargo.



**Topped cargo from a horse-drawn Wagon. JHSM. 20050022028.jpg.**



**Wagon upset. JHSM. p20020031010m.jpg.**



**Photo of three road grades. Karen Reinhart. HistoryTrail.3roadsKR.[32].jpg.**

### **3. What's this Old Ford Tractor Doing Here?**

**N 43° 29.7240 (43.4954)**  
**W 110° 57.1200 (-110.952)**

**UTM: 503867 m E 4815830 m N**

According to local Olympic skier Pete Karns, Neil Rafferty designed and built a Teton Pass rope tow spanning 900 vertical feet in the early 1940s. A four-wheel drive Dodge Power wagon was mounted on a frame and the wheels were removed. The front axle drove the lower rope tow and the rear axle drove the upper rope tow. This tractor must have been used before or after the Dodge truck and was likely operated in a similar way. Strong arms, several pair of leather gloves, and good technique were required in order to grab the rope for the ride up. For ten cents, Neil also offered the services of his "Ski Jitney"—a jeep that shuttled skiers from Trail Creek up to the top of Teton Pass during the early season. Teton Pass is still popular for skiing today but minus the ski lift which persisted through the late 1960s.



**Neil Rafferty and rope tow truck. JHSM. p19913981001.jpg.**



**Skiers in Telemark Bowl. JHSM. p19946041001.jpg.**



**Ski tow in operation. 19581905001.jpg. JHSM.**



**Close-up of wooden battery. HistoryTrail(42).KR.jpg. Karen Reinhart.**



Photo of group around tractor. Karen Reinhart. Hikers and ski lift tractor.KR.jpg.

#### 4. Old Wagon Road Junction

N 43° 29.7540 (43.4959)  
W 110° 57.0600 (-110.951)

UTM: 503968 m E 4815880 m N

At this point you have joined the Old Wagon Route and you are walking where wagons once rolled. Take a close look at the bed of the Old Wagon Route and use this image to pick up traces of the Wagon route as you continue down the mountain.

In the early days, people who needed to get supplies or catch the train in Idaho (after 1912) wisely rode the mail and freight stages going over the Pass. Pearl Williams Hupp was one person who took advantage of their regular routes. An excerpt from her oral history follows:

*“They didn’t have a dentist in Jackson, so I got on the [mail] stage and went over to Victor, [Idaho], took the train to St Anthony, and had my dental work done there. I wanted to get back [to Jackson] for a New Year’s party. [When] I got back to Victor on the train...the mail carriers didn’t see me. I started out after them and never did catch up, so I walked over Teton Pass on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December. [It] took me from two o’clock in the afternoon till seven in the evening to get to the top of Teton Pass. When I got down to Wilson, I was pretty cold. There was a car there to meet me...Instead of going to the party, I went to sleep.”*

Pearl Williams was appointed town marshal by Jackson’s mayor, Grace Miller, in 1920. Pearl felt that she got the job because she had a horse. The townspeople elected an All Woman Town Council in 1920 and 1921. The women quickly made improvements to the town’s infrastructure while diminutive Pearl kept the peace.



**Pearl Williams with her horse. JHSM. p19980029001.jpg.**



**Passenger sleigh and freight. JHSM. 19580534001P.jpg.**



Mail sleigh. JHSM. 19583119001.jpg.

## 5. Markers and Makers of History

N 43° 29.5800 (43.493)  
W 110° 56.8200 (-110.947)

UTM: 504260 m E 4815560 m N

Find the historic wagon route trail markers, placed on a gnarled tree stump on the right side of the trail by local historian Doris Platts. The author of *The Pass: Historic Teton Pass and Wilson, Wyoming*, Platts had the foresight to search for the old wagon road and mark the trail, keeping it alive throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The Forest Service began restoring the trail in the late 1990s. A local non-profit organization, Friends of Pathways, jumped in to assist. The entire trail was re-connected with labor from a 1000 Boy Scout ArrowCorps5 members who came to the Bridger-Teton National Forest in 2008. The final reconstruction was completed in 2010 with support from the Wyoming Business Council.



Trail marker. Karen Reinhart. Trailmarker.K R.jpg.



Doris Platts. Karen Reinhart. DorisPlatts.KR.jpg.

## 6. Don't Get Bugged Down: a Story of Cal Carrington

N 43° 29.5620 (43.4927)  
W 110° 56.5800 (-110.943)

UTM: 504585 m E 4815530 m N

Look along this stretch of the trail for evidence of ingenuity. In this wet area, travelers laid down old carpet, making it easier for travelers to not get bogged down. Now, look below the trail and observe the wet, swampy area. Here's a story about this road told by Margaret Feuz in 1958:

"One man says there used to be a spring in the middle of the road about where the Idaho/ Wyoming line is and they called it the 'red mud hole.' There was no way to go around it for the creek was below and the mountains were straight up on the other side. The only thing you could do was to go straight through it or over it. One spring day during the run off, a man came along with a load of supplies for Pap Deloney's Store. He saw a hat lying in the middle of the mud hole so he waded out to pick it up and there was Cal Carrington, and his head was all he could see. He asked him if he needed any help and he said no, he was horseback and he thought he could make it. So the man went back to Victor to get help, but when he got back Cal was gone. Said he always thought the horse was still there because from then on no one ever got mired in that deep again."



Cal Carrington. JHHSM. 19946065000.jpg.



Cal Carrington. JHHSM. 20100003001.jpg.

## 7. Walking the Wagon Route

N 43° 29.5980 (43.4933)  
W 110° 56.3400 (-110.939)

UTM: 504899 m E 4815600 m N

Mail carrying stories give readers a sense for the harsh realities that people faced trying to get their mail. Early settler Stephen Leek and a friend set out in deep winter to get the mail and some goods in Rexburg, Idaho. They stripped to the waist, piled their clothing on their snowshoes which they put on their heads. Then, they forded the frigid Snake River, put their clothes and snowshoes back on, climbed Teton Pass, camped and took turns tending the fire through the night. The two men stayed at ranches along the way. The entire trip took two weeks. They were popular when they returned!

In 1894, M.G. Tuttle wrote about getting the first post office in Jackson. Residents of Jackson's Hole petitioned the government and were told that they had to carry their own mail sack on schedule for a year to prove that it could be done. Every signer on the petition took his turn and after a year, Uncle Sam provided a regular mail carrier. Mrs. Tuttle remembers how important they felt: "We could order things from the mail order houses and get them without waiting six months...the first order I sent for was a pair of slippers and Montgomery Ward sent me a pair of wooden shoes that weighed ten pounds, and the poor mailman had to carry that package on his back and on skis over that terrible hill." [Teton Pass] When the mailman had to carry them back again, he, understandably, wasn't happy.

And lastly, in the spring of 1917, when residents and the Idaho train were snowed in, people in Jackson Hole went without mail for sixteen days. According to Dick Winger's oral history, the first class mail was finally hauled over the hill on elk hides. Then, it snowed again for twenty-one days without any more mail.



**Sleighs on Teton Pass. JHSM. p19580521001.jpg.**



Covered wagons on the old wagon route. JHSM. 19914046001.jpg.

## 8. A Short Walk to Old Pass Road

N 43° 29.7120 (43.4952)  
W 110° 56.1600 (-110.936)

UTM: 505163 m E 4815810 m N

When you reach the trail junction post, follow the trail called “Phillips Connector” (to the left) and walk uphill a short distance until you reach the Old Pass Road. Stop when you reach the pavement at a large switchback.

Soon after filing a homestead claim on eighty acres in Wilson, Mike Yokel, Sr. built a log cabin with the help of neighbors. His cabin was on the site of today’s Stagecoach Bar in Wilson. He then brought his wife, Maude, and their first child to Wilson. To make money for their growing family, Mike worked various local jobs in summer, and in winter, he pursued his career as a professional wrestler. In Mike Sr.’s words, *“There are very few wrestlers that have any children.”* Mike frequently snowshoed over Teton Pass and boarded a train in Victor to travel to his wrestling matches. He won several national and international wrestling titles including World Middleweight Champion in 1913.

Follow the Phillips Connector trail back to the junction post on the History Trail. Continue down the History Trail (follow the arrow).



Car on windy Old Pass road. JHSM. 19582992001.jpg.



**Cars on Old Pass road. JHSM. 19580508001P.jpg.**



**Wagons and cars on Old Pass road. JHSM. 19582993001.jpg.**



**Mike Yokel. JHSM. bc0167.jpg.**

## 9. Log Landing Area

N 43° 29.5680 (43.4928)  
W 110° 56.2200 (-110.937)

UTM 505112 m E 4815550 m N

If you look around, you will notice big stumps that are remnants of a time when timber was harvested for building homes in Wilson. Timbering was never a big industry in Jackson Hole. However, there were a number of small mills used to serve locals and their building needs. Because of the steep terrain, horses were used to drag the logs to wagons where they were loaded.

In the early days, there were two other industries that had more of an impact on the development of Jackson – cattle ranching (60% of the cattle raised in Jackson were shipped over Teton Pass) and dude ranching. As time went on, many ranchers turned from raising cattle to wrangling dudes. It was easier to keep dudes—wealthy people who came to Wyoming to experience the western lifestyle—during the brief months of summer than it was to feed and care for cattle year round.



Horse logging. JHSM. 19913794001.jpg.

## 10. Cattle Meadows

N 43° 29.5920 (43.4932)  
W 110° 56.1000 (-110.935)

UTM: 505253 m E 4815590 m N

Cattle were driven from Jackson Hole by the hundreds, corralled at night in the open meadow you can see through the trees to your left, and taken over Teton Pass to the railhead in Victor the next morning. The meadow, with its uniform grass, is still clearly identifiable from the surrounding vegetation. A few logs from the corrals still remain as evidence. Because of Jackson Hole's open and abundant grasslands, cattle ranching was the economic mainstay of the valley by 1913. About 15,000 cattle were in Jackson Hole at that time.

After the disastrous winter of 1889-1890, some cattlemen in the West switched to raising sheep. They were cheaper to purchase and cost less to raise than cattle. However, because sheep grazed on public lands like cattle, there were conflicts between sheep herders and

cattlemen. The cattlemen of Jackson were determined to keep sheep out. One story tells of Jackson Hole stockmen who tied a Rexburg, Idaho shepherd to a tree, gave him a few lashes and then fired a shot which was a signal for the other men to start slaughtering the sheep. After the incident was over, 300 animals had died, including the shepherd's horse and dog. The men burned his camp equipment and only set him free after he promised to vacate the area, taking his remaining sheep back to Idaho. In 1905, managers of the Teton National Forest followed suit, banning sheep from the National Forest to protect elk habitat. Despite such efforts, by 1909, the rest of Wyoming supported 6,000,000 sheep compared to 900,000 cattle. But the following year overgrazing and drought decimated the sheep herds and the number of cattle raised in Wyoming would never again be surpassed by sheep.



**Herding cattle on Old Pass Road. JHSM. hs4191006.jpg.**



**Cattle in corral area on Teton Pass. JHSM. hs4191005.jpg.**

## **11. Crater Trail Junction and Glory Bowl**

**N 43° 29.6220 (43.4937)**  
**W 110° 55.8000 (110.93)**

**UTM: 505699 m E 4815640 m N**

In the late 1930s, keeping the road over Teton Pass “broke out” was vitality important to Jackson Hole and winter maintenance was an annual argument. On January 1, 1940, state highway officials ordered snow plows to cease work on the Pass. It was too costly a venture. Mayor Harry Clissold recalled the story of 1940 – “the year they stole the snowplows”. Citizens commandeered the state’s plows, and one evening plowed up and over the windy Old Pass Road themselves. After that, the highway department kept the Pass open.

Avalanches have literally shaped the Teton Pass area as well as the lives of people who depend on it as a travel corridor. Look up towards the highway and you will see Glory Bowl, the bowl-shaped chute just below 10,086 foot Mount Glory. Snow collects and slides down this bowl throughout the winter. A large avalanche can accumulate enough force to strip Crater Lake of accumulated ice, snow, and water - leaving the lake bed dry as it continues down the avalanche path to this point. In the early days, mail carriers and freighters sometimes lost their lives to

unforeseen avalanches. Occasionally horses were heroes, refusing to move forward, saving their passengers with their sense of impending doom as avalanches ran directly in front of the travelers. In 1932, mail driver Merl Swanson and nine passengers were saved from an avalanche that deposited eleven feet of snow on the pass. In the end, the trip took seventeen hours. Today, the Wyoming Department of Transportation often triggers "controlled" avalanches to improve highway safety on Teton Pass.



**Glory Bowl suspension bridge built on new highway to shed avalanches. JHSM. bc0128.jpg.**



**Glory Bowl suspension bridge damaged from avalanche, taken on 1/22/1970. Teton National Forest. GloryBridge001.jpg.**



Snow plow pulled by tractor. JHSM. p19580725001.jpg.

## 12. Reed Hotel Billboard

N 43° 29.6040 (43.4934)  
W 110° 55.5600 (-110.926)

UTM: 505952 m E 4815610 m N

Can you find a rock that served as a billboard along the Old Pass Road? “Ma” and Pat Reed, who owned the Reed Hotel in Jackson, used this stone to advertise their business. The Reeds ran the hotel from 1908 until 1917, and then left the hotel under the care of their employees, Rose and Henry Crabtree, while they took a vacation. The Reeds’ absence grew into seven years and the establishment became the Crabtree Hotel. Though the hotel has long-since closed, the Reed Hotel rock remains as part of the history of Teton Pass. (A replica of the Crabtree Hotel building, rebuilt in 1992 after the original structure was torn down, can be viewed from the southeast corner of Town Square.) This natural billboard is located on the Crater Trail. To find it, divert off the History Trail where it comes together with the Crater Trail. Walk uphill about 30 yards to find the rock on the right side of the trail. Walk back to the History trail and continue downhill.



**Photo of Ma Reed. JHSM. p19580015001.jpg.**



**Reed Hotel rock. 20100069009.jpg.**



The Crabtrees. JHSM. p19583466001.jpg.



Crabtree Hotel. JHSM. p19945086001.jpg.

### 13. Corduroy Bridge

N 43° 29.5800 (43.493)  
W 110° 55.5600 (-110.926)

UTM: 505988 m E 4815570 m N

Take a look around you and notice how wet the area is. High mountain springs and wet seeps created deep mud holes on this well-traveled path. Settlers cut down trees and laid the logs across boggy areas to harden the road, allowing horses and wagons to better navigate the mud. These structures are called corduroy bridges and were probably built in the late 1890s or turn of the century. This wooden bridge is tricky to find as it is partially buried – it is located just before you reach the single log foot-bridge that spans the North Fork of Trail Creek. To see the bridge, walk off the left side of the History Trail about 20 feet. People also built corduroy bridges to span boggy, thermal areas in Yellowstone National Park.



Corduroy bridge. Steve Morris. B0000232.JPG.

### 14. Sawmill Meadows

N 43° 29.3700 (43.4895)  
W 110° 54.5400 (-110.909)

UTM: 507351 m E 4815180 m N

The sawmill dates to 1912— or possibly earlier—and was used into the 1940’s. A historical reference indicates that the remains of this steam-powered boiler and cement foundation was once the Lundy Sawmill, however the “Schoefield” inscription in a cement foundation suggests

that it may have been the Schoefield Brothers' Sawmill belonging to the nearby George Schoefield homestead. This sawmill was positioned along a major transportation corridor. It operated at the same time as the Crandall Roadhouse on Trail Creek at the bottom of the pass and the nearby U.S. Forest Service Lee Ranger Station.



**Sawmill in operation. JHSM. p19583372028.jpg.**



**Sawmill meadows. JHSM. 20050022014.jpg.**



Close-up of “Schoefield” in cement. Karen Reinhart. HistoryTrail (18).sawmillSchofield.KR.jpg.

## 15. Trail Creek Trailhead: End of Hike

N 43° 29.5080 (43.4918)  
W 110° 54.4800 (-110.908)

UTM: 507442 m E 4815440 m N



Trail Creek Trailhead. Karen Reinhart. HistoryTrail (16).KR.jpg.

If you are interested in more information about trail opportunities and how you help care for trails, please visit:

[Bridger-Teton National Forest](#)  
[Friends of Pathways](#)

[www.fs.usda.gov/btnf](http://www.fs.usda.gov/btnf)  
[www.friendsofpathways.org/](http://www.friendsofpathways.org/)

To find out more about the history of Jackson Hole, visit: [www.jacksonholehistory.org/](http://www.jacksonholehistory.org/)

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