



PROJECT MUSE®

Route for the Overland Stage

Jesse G. Petersen

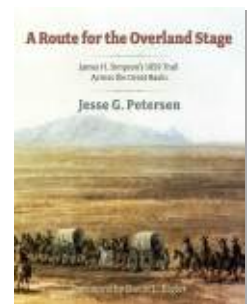
Published by Utah State University Press

Petersen, G..

Route for the Overland Stage: James H. Simpson's 1859 Trail Across the Great Basin.

Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9419>

Ten

SWASEY MOUNTAIN TO TRIPLE PEAKS



Camp 28-E. A small spring bubbles up at the foot of this poplar tree near the southwest base of Swasey Mountain. Simpson called it Chapin's Spring. *"Collamer conducted up a cañon to the left about half a mile, when we came to a fine cold spring."*



JULY 27, 1859

JULY 27, CAMP NO. 28, CHAPIN'S SPRING.—
*Marched at 20 minutes past 5. Retraced our steps
 one-fourth of a mile to old Mormon road, and
 then leave it and cut off an unnecessary detour, by
 winding in the cañon to the left.*¹

UPON LEAVING CAMP that morning, the expedition followed its earlier track back to the Mormon road, then turned to the left and began to follow it down the southeast slope of Swasey Mountain. Simpson's description makes it sound as though they left the road almost immediately after getting onto it, but it is more likely that they stayed on it for about two miles before taking the shortcut. When Simpson said they were "winding in the canyon to the left," he seems to have meant that they took a route that went somewhere to the east of the Mormon road. At two miles from the spring, today's road makes a sharp turn and goes past the eastern side of a small knoll. Traces of an abandoned road can be found on the west side of the knoll. It appears to me that today's road probably follows Simpson's shortcut.

*Three and a half miles further get into it again, in Sevier Valley, and after following it a few yards, leave it entirely, we turning to the left around a southeast spur of the House range, and the Mormon road continuing in an easterly direction to Fillmore and crossing the Sevier, it is said, at the Government bridge on the main southern road to Los Angeles.*²

When the expedition reached the valley, they came to what is now a four-way intersection. One of the branches heads southwest to join old US 6, which soon enters Marjum Pass. The branch in the center continues in a southeasterly direction, crosses old US 6, and hits today's US 50 and 6 near the north shore of Sevier Lake. This was the route of the Mormon road, and it eventually led to the city of Fillmore. The third branch heads east, then turns north to go through Whirlwind Valley and Swasey Bottom. The expedition began to follow this route. When Simpson mentioned the "main southern road to Los Angeles," he was referring to the old Mormon Corridor that is now followed by Interstate 15, but I have been unable to determine the location of the "government bridge."

After following the route of today's well-traveled road for about a mile and a half, the expedition left it and began to veer a little to the north, staying closer to the base of the mountain. The faint remains of an abandoned road can be found in this area, but after another two and a half miles, it is cut by a deep washout that cannot be crossed in a vehicle. In order to get to the far side of the washout, it is necessary to approach it from the north.

*Continuing around along the east base of House range our route, after proceeding northwardly up the valley about 11 miles, turns to the left up a cañon a quarter of a mile, where we reached some good springs, and at 12 meridian, encamped. In this vicinity there are other springs, and about half a mile further up toward the mountain, there is a small creek, 4 feet wide, 1 deep, which after running a short distance, sinks. The springs, creek, and canyon I call after Lieut. Charles H. Tyler, Second Dragoons. To this creek, along which there is an abundance of grass, we drive our mules.... Journey to-day 15.5 miles.*³

After passing the washed out area, the expedition continued along the base of the mountain by following what is now an almost totally abandoned trail. When this trail reaches the northeast corner of Swasey Mountain, it turns to the west and comes to the area of Mud Spring, where the expedition set up camp for the night.

APRIL 2002

While exploring the area near the southeast base of Swasey Mountain, I discovered a narrow two-track that leaves the Whirlwind Valley Road about two miles north of where it makes its major bend. Following this two-track toward the mountain, I came to where it intersects the abandoned road and the expedition's trail near the base of the mountain. Turning south on the abandoned road, I was able to make my way back to the washed-out section. Turning around again, I followed the abandoned road northward along the eastern base of Swasey Mountain until I reached Mud Spring and the expedition's campsite.

In the article that appeared in the *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Owen Bennion speculated that this camp was located at Swasey Spring, which

is about a mile and a half farther to the west and a lot higher on the mountainside.⁴ Several factors have convinced me that the camp was at Mud Spring instead. The first, and most important, consideration is distance. In Simpson's table, the distance between what he called Chapin's Spring and what he called Tyler's Spring is listed as 15.5 miles. When I use the Google Earth map program to measure between these two springs, along what I believe was the expedition's route, I get the same distance. But it is another mile and a half to Swasey Spring. A second factor is Simpson's statement that to get to the spring, they turned to the left and went up a canyon a quarter of a mile. This is a reasonably good description of the route to Mud Spring, but a route to Swasey Spring would not have made a turn. Simpson also mentioned that there was a flowing stream about a half mile up the mountain from the campsite. Most of the water flowing out of Swasey Spring now goes into a pipe, but it previously flowed down a streambed that passes about a half mile above Mud Spring. There appears to be no significant streambed above Swasey Spring. A final factor is the altitude. Swasey Spring is probably too high. Simpson's reading at the campsite was 5,992 feet above sea level. Using my GPS receiver, I obtained a reading of 6,060 feet at Mud Spring, which is only 68 feet higher than Simpson's figure. Swasey Spring is about 6,640 feet above sea level, 648 feet higher than Simpson's reading.

JULY 28, 1859

JULY 28, CAMP NO. 29, TYLER'S SPRING.—
*Remained in camp till 2.30 P.M. for the purpose of recruiting the animals, preparatory to crossing the desert, and traveling all night.*⁵

GETTING A LITTLE EXTRA rest for the men and animals was a very good idea, because the next forty-eight hours were going to be the most difficult of the entire journey. And Simpson's description of the route through this region proved to be the most difficult for me to understand.

There is little doubt that Simpson's return route is even less well known than his outbound route, and it is also quite certain that the trail the expedition followed between Swasey Mountain

and Rush Valley has been the least understood section of all. Virtually all of the maps of Simpson's route that I have been able to examine show that the return route in this area follows a generally northeasterly direction, with little or no regard for actual geographical features. Even Dale Morgan's otherwise excellent trails map ignores the existence of Keg Mountain, which had a significant effect on the route. The most probable explanation for this lack of accurate detail is the fact that no long-lasting or well-traveled roads were ever established along Simpson's route through this area. Simpson himself dismissed a forty-mile section of the trail the expedition traveled as having been the wrong route for a wagon road. Furthermore, Simpson's descriptions of the route were becoming increasingly difficult to follow. It seems that he may have been getting tired of traveling, tired of dealing with his unpredictable guide, and tired of making detailed journal entries.

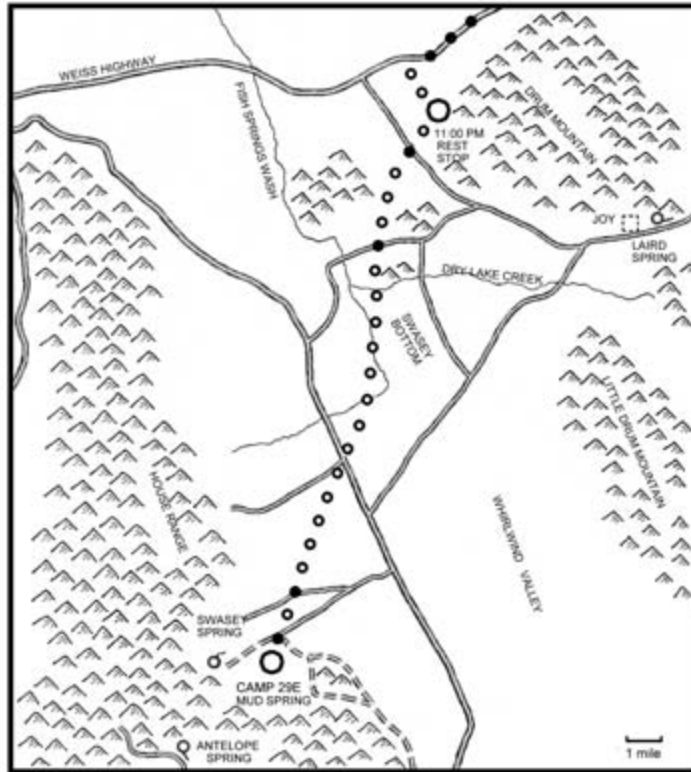
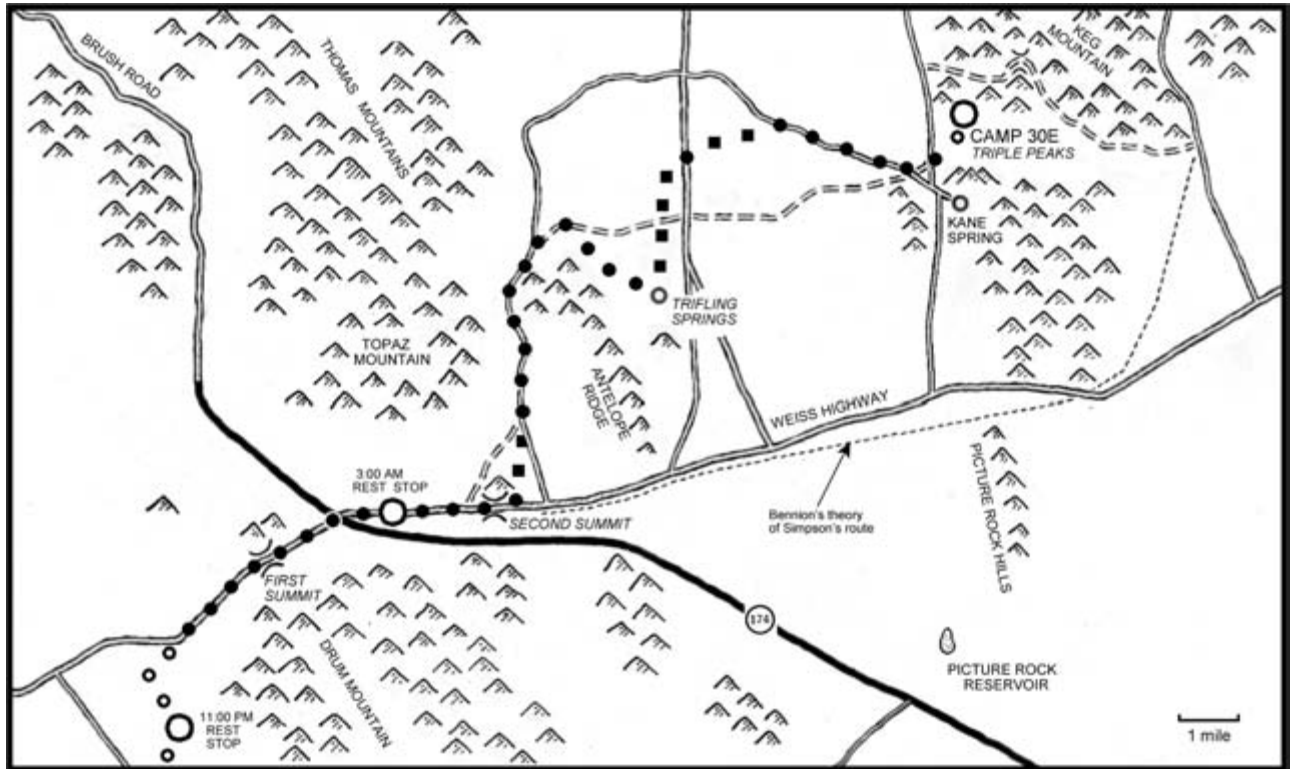
*Take a course northwardly for about 15.6 miles up a branch of arm of Sevier Lake Valley [Whirlwind Valley], where we, about 11 o'clock, stopped to take supper and bait the animals with some grass we had brought with us.*⁶

During the first leg of this part of its journey, the expedition traveled in a slightly east-of-north direction, slanting across Whirlwind Valley, then turning a little closer to due north as they crossed Swasey Bottom, which lies to the northeast of the House Range. No road or trail of any description follows the first sixteen and a half miles of this day's journey today. It is doubtful that anyone ever used this section of the trail again. The few emigrant journals that have been found all indicate that they traveled the route that Simpson recommended, not the one he actually followed.

After studying this area for some time, it became apparent that if I wanted to follow the expedition's exact route, I would have to do it on foot. This was going to be an extra long hike, and I decided to get some help.

JULY 2003

It did not take much to persuade Lou Dunyon to make a trip to Whirlwind Valley with me. We



JULY 28 AND 29, 1859



traveled to the area in his pickup truck, and he dropped me off at a spot where a narrow two-track crosses the expedition's trail at the northern end of Swasey Bottom. He then continued along the two-track until it joined the main valley road, and turned south to wait for me at the road that leads to Mud Spring. I headed south on foot, traveling the expedition's route in reverse. I covered about ten miles of the route during this hike. It was a long day, but for once, I did not have to hike the same trail twice.

Simpson did not mention it in the text of his report, but the table of distances lists a "summit of Thomas's range" at 14.6 miles from the camp. This summit is on a ridge that is not a part of what is known as the Thomas Mountains today. The ridge in question runs east and west between Drum Mountain and the north end of the House Mountains, dividing Whirlwind Valley from Fish Springs Flat. On a greater scale, this relatively low ridge is the division between the Sevier Lake basin and the Great Salt Lake basin.

At 11:00 P.M., when the expedition had reached a point one mile beyond the summit of the low ridge, they stopped for a short time to have some supper and give the animals some of the grass they had cut while camped at Mud Spring. Simpson did not say how long they remained at this location, but due to the fact that they fixed some supper and fed the animals, it is probably safe to assume that they were there for about an hour.

From this point we bore off northeastwardly to a pass through Colonel Lorenzo Thomas's range, 3 miles, by an easy grade, bringing us to the summit.⁷

After driving through this area several times, and spending a considerable amount of time studying the maps, I finally concluded that the site of their supper break was about a mile and a half from the nearest road, which called for a short cross-country hike. I also noticed that in this area there seems to be a slight discrepancy between Simpson's description of the route and what is shown on his map. In the text of the report, Simpson states that when they left the site of their supper break, they went in a northeasterly

direction, but an examination of his map shows that at about this point the trail turns to the northwest for a short distance, possibly about a mile, before turning again and heading northeast. I needed to find out why there was a difference between the map and the text.

JULY 2005

My friend Jim Hall decided to take another desert trip with me, and we drove to the low ridge near the base of Drum Mountain. Leaving his SUV near the road, we hiked to the spot where I believe the expedition had stopped for supper. We approached this location from the southwest, following what I believe to be the expedition's route. When we reached the site, the reason for the turn to the northwest became obvious. We found ourselves on the western edge of a deep wash with almost perpendicular banks, and could see that it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to continue to the northeast from that point. To make matters even more difficult, on the far side of the gully they would have been forced to begin climbing into some steep hills that make up the northern tip of Drum Mountain. By turning to the northwest, the trail could remain on fairly even terrain, with a gradual downhill slope. After traveling in this direction for about a mile, they would have reached the bottom of the slope, where it would become possible to turn to the northeast again. From there they began to climb up a gentle slope as they approached the south end of the Thomas Mountains. It would appear that when Simpson said they went northeast from where they had stopped for supper, he was speaking in broad, rather than specific, terms. I was now satisfied that the puzzle of the kink on the map had been solved.

I was also able to determine that the place where they made their turn back to the northeast was the same point that is listed in the table as the "base of Thomas's range." For quite some time I had a question about why Simpson had described this point as the base of a mountain range. Although during my first few visits to the area I had not determined the exact location, I had noted that it was nowhere near any sharply rising mountain slopes. When I did discover the

location of this point, the answer became clear. From this particular spot, the terrain begins to slope upwards toward the north. Although the slope is quite gradual for the next few miles, it is continuous. Simpson's statement that they were at the base of the mountain now made sense. It should be kept in mind that the expedition traveled through this area during the night, and that particular night was darker than usual. Simpson mentioned that there was no moon, and to make matters even worse, there was a cloud cover that even blocked out the starlight. It is a wonder that he was able to provide any description of the country at all.

The spot that Simpson called the base of the Thomas Range is located in the bottom of a shallow drainage, a little less than a mile east of an old government well. The well is just south of a graveled and well-maintained road that is known as the Weiss Highway. This road leaves US Highway 6 near Jericho, then heads west across the desert all the way to the Deep Creek Mountains. After making the turn to the northeast, the expedition started up the slope, and after traveling a little less than a half mile, they joined the Weiss Highway. After another mile and a half, they came to the summit of what Simpson described as "a pass through Colonel Lorenzo Thomas's range," where they paused long enough for someone to take an altitude reading. Whoever did this may have been hampered by the darkness, because the reading was more inaccurate than usual, being about 400 feet higher than the actual elevation of this summit. Because of this error, I spent quite a bit of time attempting to find a higher spot that could have been crossed by the expedition, but I finally concluded that this summit is the only place that fits Simpson's description of the route. Although Simpson said the pass was in the Thomas Range, it actually lies southwest of those mountains, and northwest of Drum Mountain. It is the highest point on a very low ridge, and I doubt that many people would describe it as a pass. But once again, it must be remembered that Simpson never did see this area in daylight.

Descending on east side by a good grade, 2.2 miles more, we halted, at 3 o'clock in the morning, to take breakfast, and feed the animals with barley.⁸

East of the low summit, the Weiss Highway slopes slightly downward for about a half mile, then begins to head upslope again. At a mile and a half from the summit, the expedition's trail crosses today's State Route 174, sometimes called Brush Road. This paved highway leaves US 6 a few miles south of Lynndyl, and leads to some beryllium mines that are located on the southwest side of the Thomas Mountains. Turning to the east near this intersection, the expedition continued to follow the future route of the Weiss Highway. The site of the 3:00 A.M. breakfast stop was about three-quarters of a mile east of the intersection.

While the expedition was stopped for breakfast, Simpson inserted some comments into the report about the route they had just traveled and his feelings about Reese's recent actions;

The route we have come from Tyler's Springs, evidently a crooked one, in Colonel Thomas range; and besides, it makes too great a detour to the north. The true route should evidently pass the range 4 or 5 miles to the south of us, and the indications are, there would be no difficulty. The guide, though he has examined these passes twice, has bungled a great deal to-day.⁹

This route that Simpson decided they should have followed, and which he referred to as the "true" route, would have taken them farther to the east. Leaving Mud Spring, the other route would have gone northeast, rather than north-northeast. After crossing Whirlwind Valley, it would have gone through a pass that is located near the center of the Drum Mountains. This route would have taken them past the deserted mining town of Joy, and then past the northwest side of Mount Laird. Evidently someone, possibly Reese, told Simpson that there was water along this route. Without ever traveling this route himself, Simpson decided to add it to his map. Immediately after the expedition returned to Camp Floyd, Simpson sent Lt. Smith back to this area, instructing him to travel this other route, and to find and develop Marmaduke Spring, which was supposed to be somewhere along this route. Smith, who also referred to this spring as Big Horn Spring, reported that he had found no flowing water. There was some water, but it was

in a small basin where a small amount of runoff water had collected. Attempts to dig a well were fruitless.¹⁰ Charles Tuttle's emigrant journal indicates that his party was traveling just behind Lt. Smith's detail through this area, and he and other members of his party had assisted the soldiers in their futile attempts to excavate the spring.¹¹

Ironically, there is a good spring not far from where they were digging. It is known as Laird Spring, and is located at the southern base of Mount Laird. On the day that I had hiked across Whirlwind Valley, Lou Dunyon and I drove by it on our way back home. For some time I wondered if it might be the same as Marmaduke Spring, but after making some careful measurements and comparing them to the distance figures in Smith's report, I have concluded that Laird Spring would be too far away from his route. In order to get to Laird Spring, Smith's detail would have had to have gone around the south side of Mount Laird, and an analysis of his distance figures show that his route passed at least a mile and a half to the north of this mountain. Another argument against Laird Spring is that it has too much water. Although it could have been different in 1859, today there is a large pool surrounded by a lush growth of reeds and rushes.

When Phil Miller and I traveled through Whirlwind Valley in 1998, we knew next to nothing about the expedition's route. We simply stayed on the better-traveled road, and unwittingly followed the route that Simpson decided would have been the better one. Crossing the valley in a northeasterly direction, we passed the abandoned mining camp of Joy and entered the canyon that leads to the base of Mount Laird.¹²

At 4.15 A.M., July 29, we left our place of bivouac, and in 2 miles reached second summit of range, whence, bearing magnetically north 25 E., could be seen the Champlin Mountains [Simpson Mountains], for the water in which we were aiming.¹³

In the text of his report, Simpson said they came to a "second summit." The table lists this spot as "Summit east of Thomas's range." This second summit is so slight that it is difficult to be

certain about its highest point, but it is located on the Weiss Highway, a little east of the southeastern base of Topaz Mountain, which makes up the southern tip of the Thomas Range. Looking a little to the north of east from this summit, one can see Keg Mountain and, beyond that, the upper peaks of the Simpson Range. The members of the expedition could see the place they wanted to get to, a place where they knew they could find water. But they still had to find a route that would take them past Keg Mountain, and they still had a long way to go. They were beginning to realize that if they did not find some water soon, the livestock, and perhaps even some of the men, might start dying from thirst.

From the base of Topaz Mountain, the Weiss Highway continues toward the east, and it appears to me that it is at this point that trails researchers have lost Simpson's route. The maps that I have seen do not show very much detail, but they all seem to indicate that the trail continued in an easterly direction until reaching the area of the Sheeprack Mountains. (There is one exception to this, and there will be more about it later.) I have become convinced that this concept of the route is wrong, and the main reason that this error has occurred is because Simpson failed to mention a critical change in the expedition's direction of travel.

I have become quite certain that when Simpson left the second summit, he made an abrupt turn to the north in an attempt to get back to his outbound route. Although he probably did not know exactly where he was, he must have been aware that he was getting relatively close to the expedition's outbound trail, and I think he now wanted to get back to it as soon as possible. If the expedition had not been so desperate to find water, they may have followed the eastern base of the Thomas Range for fourteen miles, where they would have intersected the outbound trail a few miles east of Dugway Pass.

When Simpson left the second summit, he decided to leave the wagons behind and do a little scouting on his own. This may be an indication of how desperate he was getting, because it is one of only two instances in the entire report where he mentions that he did his own scouting. Turning to the north, he headed up the valley toward what

he described as a pass. Simpson failed to mention this change in direction, and not being aware of this turn, trails researchers have assumed that the expedition simply continued in an easterly direction along the Weiss Highway. Although this turn in the trail is shown on Simpson's map, without any mention of it in the text of the report, it seems to have gone unnoticed.

At half past 9 A.M., being about 5 miles in advance of column, hurrying on alone over the desert to the east of Thomas range to examine a pass ahead, I heard a halloa from some one in rear, whom I found to be Mr. McCarthy.¹⁴

Simpson had traveled about five miles from where he left the wagons, and would have been near the northern tip of Antelope Ridge, when McCarthy caught up with him. At this point Simpson was only about nine miles from the outbound trail, but his plan for getting back to it was quickly discarded when he learned that there was water to be found back toward the south and in the mountains to the east.

He brought me the intelligence that Stevenson had returned and reported a small spring and some grass to the right of the route we were pursuing, and about 6 miles from the train; also another spring, or rather a couple of springs, 6 miles beyond that again, in the mountains. In consequence of this, I immediately sent word to Lieutenant Murry to divert the train to the first mentioned spring, going there also myself. I found, however at the locality two trifling springs of no value, the water even by digging not being sufficient for half a dozen men. Besides, it had a very poor taste.¹⁵

Acting on the information brought to him by McCarthy, Simpson altered his direction of travel and headed southeast until he came to two small springs. As it turned out, these springs were not very important to Simpson, and he did not bother to give them a name or even list them as springs in the table of distances. He realized right away that these meager seeps would never provide enough water to be of any use to future travelers, and it would serve no purpose to tell anyone how to find them. Not only did he fail

to describe their location, he did not even mark them on his map. However, it was important for me to know where they were. As valueless as they were to the expedition, they were nevertheless an important turning point on the trail, and the actual alignment of the trail could not be determined until the location of the springs had been identified.

Simpson said the springs were to the right of his position when McCarthy overtook him, but he neglected to say how far away they were. However, his map shows that the trail made a little open-topped loop that drops to the south, turns back to the north, and then turns to the east again. It seems reasonable to assume that Simpson was at the top of the western leg of the loop when McCarthy arrived. After learning about the springs, he would have turned to his right and traveled in something of a southeasterly direction until he reached them. Upon determining that the springs were inadequate for the expedition's needs, he changed directions again and headed back to the north, thus forming a loop with the springs located at its lowest point. This scenario seemed to explain the general alignment of the route, but it did not provide an accurate location for either the loop or the springs. For reasons that will be described shortly, I was confident that I had already determined the location of the next campsite, and I was also aware that Simpson said it was three miles from the trifling springs to this camp. I therefore felt that I should be able to find the site of the springs by working back from the campsite.

MARCH 2002

I traveled to the west side of Keg Mountain, left my SUV near Kane Spring, and, relying on my new GPS receiver to tell me where it was, hiked to a spot that I had calculated to be three miles southwest of Camp 30-E. Then I spent almost an entire day wandering around in ever-expanding circles, working my way outward from where I thought the springs should have been. This was the first time that I had an opportunity to use my GPS, and it was good practice for that, but I found nothing that looked like a spring. By the end of this day, I had concluded that there was something seriously wrong with the information

I was relying on, and finally concluded that it was Simpson's three-mile figure that was the problem. Although I later learned that Simpson made several other fairly serious errors in his distance figures, this was the first time that I had discovered one, and I expended a great deal of effort in making certain that it was Simpson's error rather than mine. After failing to find the springs from the east, I began to examine the western approach again. I started by going all the way back to where Simpson made his turn to the north, and soon decided that I had been looking at the wrong side of Antelope Ridge. Up until this time, I had assumed that after Simpson made this turn he began traveling along the eastern side of Antelope Ridge. He said that he was east of the Thomas Mountains, and I had assumed that he was also east of Antelope Ridge. But as I was taking another look at the maps of this area, I noticed a faint road traveling through the small valley that lies between the Thomas Range and Antelope Ridge. After reaching the northern tip of Antelope Ridge, this faint road turns to the southeast along its eastern base. As I studied it further, I began to realize that the alignment of this road is very similar to the alignment of the trail on Simpson's map. It occurred to me that if Simpson had gone through this valley, he would have been very close to the northern tip of the ridge when McCarthy caught up with him. This scenario would also fit better with Simpson's statement that he was going to examine a pass. The valley becomes quite narrow at its northern end, and can clearly be described as a pass. There is nothing to the east of Antelope Ridge that can be described as a pass.

Assuming that Simpson had been at the northern tip of Antelope Ridge when McCarthy reached him, and had then turned to his right, he would have been traveling in a southeasterly direction, along the eastern base of Antelope Ridge. Looking at Simpson's map, I attempted to estimate the distance from the beginning of the loop to its lowest point, and came up with about a mile and a half. Now going back to my USGS 7.5-minute map, I plotted a line that resembled the first half of Simpson's loop, and marked a spot that was 1.5 miles from the northern tip of Antelope Ridge. I felt that this

was as close as I was going to get. I found that this spot is in a low area, a little less than a half mile north of an unnamed and isolated knoll that lies about midway along the eastern side of Antelope Ridge. My next step was to recheck the distances between the various segments of the day's journey. To my surprise, I discovered that the distance between Simpson's second summit and the possible location of the springs was 6.7 miles. I was surprised because I recognized that this was the figure that appears in the table of distances as the distance between the second summit and the spot that Simpson designated as "In the valley." This could hardly have been a coincidence, and everything fell into place. The trifling springs and the "In the valley" site were the same. Simpson did not think the springs were important enough to be mentioned in the table, but they were at a spot that could be used as one of his "in the valley" locations.

The next thing that I needed to do was to locate the route between the trifling springs and the next campsite. Working on my USGS map and referring to Simpson's map, I plotted a line that resembled the second half of his loop, and then continued on to the location of Camp 30-E. I found that part of the probable route corresponded to a well-traveled dirt road that crosses the valley between the Thomas Range and Keg Mountain. I also found that the distance along this segment of the trail is 7.2 miles, which is the figure that is listed in the table as the distance between the "in the valley" site and the next camp. This was the clincher for the location of the trifling springs. I was now certain that I had found the location of the springs, and just as certain that when Simpson said it was three miles from the springs to the campsite, he should have said 7.2 miles.

AUGUST 2003

Nancy and I took a trip to the area between Topaz Mountain and Keg Mountain to take a look at the section of the route that I now believed the expedition had followed during the late morning and early afternoon of July 29. We found the two-track that leaves the Weiss Highway near Simpson's second summit, and headed north on it as it traveled through the

valley following a narrow two-track between Topaz Mountain and Antelope Ridge. After circling the northern tip of Antelope Ridge, we turned to the southeast until we reached the northern base of the isolated knoll. We were unable to find any springs, but we did see two or three grassy areas, which usually indicate the existence of some subsurface moisture.

These springs proving of no value, after resting the mules and putting in fresh ones for those broken down, we attempted to reach with our wagons the springs reported by Stevenson, 6 miles farther on. The teams, however, were too much fagged out to accomplish it, and the consequence was that late in the afternoon, after proceeding 3 miles, we were obliged to halt and encamp for the night in a locality near some triple peaks, where there was neither grass nor water.¹⁶

In the text of the report, Simpson again fails to indicate the direction they took after leaving the trifling springs, but the map clearly shows that the trail went north for a short distance, then began a sweeping turn that had them heading slightly north of east until they reached the western base of Keg Mountain. In order to understand the expedition's movements through the interior of Keg Mountain, it helps to realize that when looking down from above, the mountain resembles the shape of the letter H. There are two main ridges, nearly equal in size, running north and south, and they are connected near their centers by a ridge that runs east and west. After crossing the valley between Antelope Ridge and Keg Mountain, the expedition reached the base of the western ridge at a point about midway along its length.

NOVEMBER 1998

I drove to the west side of Keg Mountain, and spent the best part of a day exploring the area. I was specifically looking for the triple peaks that Simpson mentioned in his report. I had approached this area by driving north from the Weiss Highway, skirting the western base of the mountain. I was taking my time, driving slowly along the narrow road, looking for a formation that included three separate peaks. After driving

the entire length of the ridge and seeing nothing that would fit that description, I turned around and headed back to the south, intending to get back on the Weiss Highway and leave the area. When I was about halfway back to the highway, the road topped a small rise and there they were, three tipi-shaped peaks, rising up from a common base, and standing in a row. It surprised me to realize that I had driven right by this formation while on my way north. Driving back and forth a couple times to view the peaks from different angles, I soon realized that it is very easy to miss them when facing to the north, but equally difficult to miss them when looking south.

This formation is very distinct, the peaks are of nearly equal size, and they are spaced equal distances apart. But is it truly the formation that Simpson called the Triple Peaks? I am quite certain that it is. I will readily concede that three mountain peaks, in fairly close proximity to each other, is not a rare occurrence, and I am sure that there might be any number of places in Keg Mountain itself where one might look around and see three peaks. However, I am just as certain that anyone who has seen this particular formation would agree that it could have inspired the name "triple peaks." I made no effort to determine the exact location of the campsite during this trip, but since then I have been back to this area several times. After doing a lot more measuring and trail plotting, I have concluded that the campsite was directly north of the triple peak formation, and about a mile from the well-traveled road. The first time that I made my way to the location of the campsite was about a year after finding the triple peaks formation. I parked on the side of the main road and hiked to the general area of the campsite. When I was about halfway there, I came across a very faint two-track coming to the area from the southwest, but I did not explore it any further at that time. A couple of years later, I came back to get a GPS reading and take some photos. At that time, I found where the two-track leaves the main road, and was able to drive to a point about a quarter mile from the campsite. It was during this trip that I explored the area to the north of the campsite, looking for the route that the expedition would have used when it left the triple peaks camp.

At about sundown the mules were driven to the water and grass supposed to be 3 miles distant, in two herds.... We have been traveling since yesterday at half-past 2, or for about 30 hours; the weather has been warm, and the mules have had no water. The consequence is that all are fagged out, and we feel that we must reach water soon, or the expedition become demoralized and we fail of getting through to Camp Floyd across the Great Salt Lake Desert by a new return-route, as I had hoped.... Journey from Tyler's Springs 36.9 miles.¹⁷

The end of this very long day found most of the men resting in this waterless camp, while a few others and almost all of the livestock were somewhere in the mountain to the east, still trying to reach the elusive springs that had been reported by Stevenson. Although Stevenson had indicated that the other springs were only six miles beyond the trifling springs, the actual distance turned out to be closer to twelve miles. Nothing was heard from the men who had been sent to find the springs until the following morning.