

# Did Trappers Pass Through Round Valley in 1833?

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## Introduction

While researching a paper (Keter 2012) on the possibility that beavers might have been present in the Yolla Bollys as late as the 1830s, I reviewed all of the personal journals and memoirs recorded by the trappers who had passed through northwestern California at that time (Work MS, Rogers MS, Smith MS, Warner 1909). I also consulted much of the secondary literature related to trapping expeditions in the northern California region during the boom years of the "fur rush" during the late 1820s and 1830s (Holmes 1967, Hafen 1983, Maloney 1943).

Today, many of the publications documenting the early history of Round Valley have concluded that a brigade of fur trappers from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) led by Michel Laframboise passed through Round Valley in 1833. As a result of my research, however, I found that the source documents referenced in these publications contain no evidence to suggest that the Laframboise Brigade ever passed through Round Valley.

The problem with the histories of Round Valley in documenting a possible visit by the Laframboise Brigade is that all of these documents reference Alice Maloney's 1943 article in the *California Historical Society Quarterly--Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura: John Work's California Expedition of 1832-33*. In this article, Maloney documents the travel route of two HBC Brigades through northwestern California in 1833, based on a daily journal kept by John Work leader of one of the brigades. After reviewing the original entries in Work's journal of his travels through northwestern California in 1833, it is clear that there are problems with the route taken by the combined John Work and Michel Laframboise Brigades as it is outlined by Maloney. Based on a review of Work's journal, I have concluded that the Work and Laframboise HBC Brigades did not travel as far northwest as the Mattole River basin as is documented by Maloney; and, further, that there is no evidence to suggest that after the two brigades split up near the Mendocino/Humboldt County line and Work returned to the Sacramento Valley via Clear Lake that the Laframboise Brigade passed through Round Valley in 1833.

Some histories of Round Valley (Carranco and Beard:1981) also suggest that a trapping brigade led by American Ewing Young may have passed through Round Valley that same year. It is also clear, however, that the Ewing Young Brigade comprised of Euro-Americans never passed through Round Valley in 1833.

In order to clarify the historical record on this subject, and based on over three decades of hiking, exploring, and working in the region, I have undertaken an in-depth review of the primary data and traced in detail the routes taken by the Ewing Young, John Work, and Michel Laframboise Brigades during their travels through northwestern California in search of beavers in 1832-1833.

### **Ewing Young's First California Expedition: 1829-1831**

Jedediah Smith's two journeys to California (see Keter 2012) to trap beavers during the years 1826 to 1828 were immediately followed by the James Pattie trapping brigade (Hafen 1983:58). Following these successful trapping expeditions to California from American territory, and relevant to the history of northwestern California, the next Americans to arrive in California via the now established southern route was a trapping brigade led by Ewing Young. Young left New Mexico in August of 1829, and after traveling first to southern California, the brigade then headed north crossing over Tejon Pass into the Great Valley. The brigade spent the spring of 1830 trapping their way north along the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada and in the marshes and rivers of the San Joaquin Valley.

As they traveled further north they began to see evidence of recent trapping activity and observed that beavers were becoming scarce. As a result, Young rapidly made his way north in an effort to catch up with the other trapping brigade. He eventually encountered an HBC Brigade of sixty trappers led by Peter Skene Ogden. Young's observation that most of the beaver population in the country that they had passed through had been nearly "trapped out" was confirmed as the Hudson Bay Company trappers had in their possession 1,000 beaver pelts (Holmes 1967:49). The Young Brigade continued to work their way through the Sacramento Valley about as far north as Siskiyou Pass near the California/Oregon border before retracing their path to southern California, returning to Taos in April of 1831 via the southern route across the Mojave Desert.

### **Ewing Young's Second California Expedition: 1832 to 1833**

Ewing Young and about forty trappers again set out for California from New Mexico in the fall of 1831 (Holmes 1967:70). They crossed the Colorado River into California in early January of 1832 and trapped in that region for a while before crossing the Mojave desert and reaching the pueblo at Los Angeles in early April (Warner 1909:186).

After spending some time along the Pacific coast hunting otters and also putting together a herd of horses for some of his men to drive back east, in early October 1832, Young crossed over Tejon Pass with 14 men into the San Joaquin Valley. The brigade worked their way north along the eastern side of the San Joaquin Valley, trapping well into the Sierra Nevada foothills on a number of the rivers flowing into the San Joaquin Valley from the Sierra Nevada. Records are unclear how far up the various rivers they were able to find and trap beavers. On at least one occasion they traveled into the high Sierra where

they crossed over the divide into the San Joaquin basin from the headwaters region of the North Fork of the Kings River at an elevation of about 11,000' (see Keter 2012 for a description of their route).

During the fall of 1832, the Americans and trappers working for the HBC kept seeing signs of one another while working in the San Joaquin Valley but made few personal contacts. Young, hoping to bypass the HBC trappers, decided to head north towards the Sacramento River region to trap. By December the Young Brigade had worked its way north and made camp along the Sacramento River about eight to ten miles to the south of its confluence with the American River. There they encountered the HBC encampment of the Michel Laframboise Brigade (Holmes 1967:85).

Jonathon (John) Warner, who was a member of the Young Brigade, documented their travels in *Reminiscences of Early California From 1831 to 1846* (Warner 1909).

Warner wrote of their encounter with the Hudson's Bay Company brigades:

A few miles below the mouth of the American River. A short distance below, where he struck the Sacramento River, was found a large party of Hudson Bay Company's trappers from Fort Vancouver, under Michel [Laframboise]. The party had been in the valley since early spring of 1832, having come in over the McLeod trail and had trapped all the waters of the valley north and west of the San Joaquin River (Warner 1909:187). [Quoted from the original.]

[Warner later settled in San Diego County and by 1844 had become a naturalized Mexican citizen, having changed his name to Juan Jose Warner. He was given the Rancho San Jose del Valle Mexican land grant and established a successful cattle ranch. Warner's Ranch was an important stop on the trail used by emigrants to the coastal regions of southern California from New Mexico territory. Later the trail became famous as the Butterfield Overland Mail Stagecoach Line carried the mail to California from the east over this route.]

The Laframboise Brigade was joined shortly by a brigade led by John Work (Hafen 1983:62, see also Maloney 1943:22). The Indians in the region had become more hostile since their previous trips, and it appears that it is for this reason the Laframboise and Work Brigades had joined together. This was probably the result of the widespread epidemic of sickness and death sweeping through the Great Valley at that time with few or no survivors, leaving whole villages abandoned. The cause was possibly a result of disease most likely brought in via the HBC or American trappers. Young at one point became sick and nearly died during an outbreak of the disease in his brigade.

LeRoy Hafen (1983), who wrote a short biography of Young, notes that the two groups comprised a sizeable encampment:

The combined Hudson's Bay Company Party amounted to 163 persons, although only forty were trappers, the rest being women and children and Indians. John Turner, one of the survivors of the massacre of Jedediah Smith's men on the Umpqua in [1828] was working for La Framboise, but after talking with Young, he openly transferred to him. Turner interested Young in going farther north than he intended. (Hafen 1983:62). [Quoted from the original.]

John Turner, an American, and one of four members of the ill-fated Smith's party who had escaped the infamous massacre on the Umpqua River July 14, 1828, was at this time working as a guide for the Laframboise Brigade. After settling his debts, "and delivering up his traps and horses" to Laframboise, Turner (along with possibly two other Americans) now joined the Young Brigade (Holmes 1967:87). Turner, knew the country well having also guided an HBC Brigade led by Alexander McLeod south from Oregon to California in 1828-29 (Holmes 1967:87).

From the American River the Young Party, with Turner now guiding them, traveled north trapping beaver in the Sacramento Valley. They turned west towards the Coast Range crossing the Sacramento River near the mouth of the Feather River in January of 1833 . They then traveled south and west towards the present day location of Winters. Warner wrote of their arrival at the eastern edge of the Coast Range:

Finally, after a month's experience of amphibious life, the party reached dry land of the Putah River, leaving behind a deluged world...Ascending the mountain and passing along the southern and western shore of Clear Lake (Warner 1909:187). [There were record floods that year and much of the Sacramento Valley was like a lake or bog.]

Up to this point, Warner's account of Young's route though the Sacramento Valley in 1832 and early 1833 is fairly complete (Warner 1909, Holmes 1967). However, after the brigade travels up Putah Creek and passes by Clear Lake, Warner ceases to provide a detailed description of their route north. The entire description of their travel from Clear Lake through northern California to the mouth of the Umpqua River in Oregon, a distance of over 500 miles, is limited in Warner's account to only two sentences:

Ascending the mountain and passing along the southern and western shore of Clear Lake, the party traveled northwesterly and struck the shore of the ocean about 75 miles north of Ross, a port of the Russian- American Fur Company.

Young followed along up the coast, searching with little success for rivers having beaver, and in fruitless attempts to recross the mountain range, until the Umpquah River, where he succeeded in getting over the mountains and fell upon that river at the eastern base of the coast range mountains (Warner 1909:187). [From the original.]

The exact location where the Young Brigade hit the coast has not been documented , however, it now appears to have been identified by an entry of John Work in his journal for Monday, April 29, 1833. Work recorded that after the two HBC brigades had crossed the Navarro and Albion Rivers they came up a recent encampment of the Ewing Young Brigade.

...The road by which the Americans fell upon the coast is near our encampment, they are gone on Northward. They remained a little ahead of this place a considerable time, probably while their master went to [visit] the Russians (Work in Maloney 1943:47). [From the original.]

It is beyond this point on the Pacific coast "about 75 miles north of Fort Ross" (about 60 air miles) that no documentation--other than Warner's two brief sentences quoted above--has been found to provide any insight on the route of their travels through northwestern California and Oregon to the mouth of the Umpqua River. According to Warner they simply followed the coastline north into Oregon eventually reaching the mouth of the Umpqua River. It is known that they reached this point as Warner records that they encountered the fort that had been built following the massacre of the Smith party in 1828 and later abandoned (Holmes 1967:88).

Kenneth Holmes, Young's biographer and author of *Ewing Young Master Trapper* (1967), (probably largely relying on Warner's 1909 article) was no more clear on their route north from Mendocino County.

Young and his men reached the coast about 75 miles north of the Russian establishment of Fort Ross and moved northward across the forty-second parallel into Oregon Country. Along much of the way they passed through great groves of gigantic *Sequoia sempervirens*, the coast redwood, but they had little success in finding beaver in any worthwhile quantity.

Finally they reached the mouth of the Umpqua River, where they came upon McKay's abandoned fort, which had been built just after the massacre of the Smith Party in 1828 (Holmes 1967:87-88).

Hafen (1983), who also wrote a short biography of Young, limits to a single sentence a description of their travels from Clear Lake to the Umpqua River: "In March, 1833, they went up the Pacific coast, about seventy-five miles above Ft. Ross, and continued north as far as the Umpqua River" (Hafen 1983:62, probably relying on Holmes 1967, and Warner 1909).

### **Revisiting Ewing Young's Travels through Northwestern California in 1833**

Warner writes and Holmes (1967:Map) agrees after the Young Brigade hit the Pacific they then traveled north along the Mendocino Peninsula coastline to the Humboldt Bay region and then continued north along the coast into Oregon. Travel north paralleling the coast

from about five miles north of Westport to about Shelter Cove along the Pacific coast is, however, problematic. It would have been exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the Young Brigade to have made their way north along the Mendocino Peninsula coastline. As the HBC Brigades led by Laframboise and Work found out later that year, and as documented below, when the combined brigades traveled through this region they found the way paralleling the coast north of about Little Howard and Howard Creeks (about five miles north of Westport) impassable. They were then forced inland towards the South Fork Eel River basin in order to travel to the north.

As with the Work and Laframboise Brigades that followed, it is likely that at some point where the broad coastal plain ends a few miles to the north of Westport in the vicinity of about Little Howard and Howard Creeks (Map 1), Young would have been forced inland in order to continue traveling north towards Humboldt Bay. The logical way north, as Work noted in his journal on May 6, 1833 (Maloney 1943:50), was to head east or northeast to the South Fork Eel River basin. From that point Young could have simply followed the inner gorge of the canyon of the South Fork Eel River all the way to its confluence with the main stem Eel River and then north to the Pacific coast.

Whatever route the Young Brigade took north into Oregon, after reaching the mouth of the Umpqua River they headed east following the Umpqua to its headwaters. Crossing into the Great Basin, Young finally circled around and headed back to the south and west into Sacramento Valley before returning to southern California via the Sacramento Valley in the fall of 1833.

### **Did the Young Brigade Pass Through Round Valley in 1833**

Some histories of the Round Valley region assert that the Young Brigade passed through Round Valley in 1833 (Carranco and Beard 1981:32, Keller 1971:1). This assertion, however, is problematic. Their sole reference to this purported event is contained in *The Quest for Qual-A-Wa-Loo*. This book published in 1966 was edited by Oscar Lewis. It contained; "A Collection of Diaries and Historical Notes pertaining to the early discoveries of the area now known as Humboldt County, California" (Lewis 1966: frontispiece). The book consists of manuscripts written by or concerning a number of individuals who were among the early explorers of the Humboldt Bay region. It includes manuscripts of Captain George Vancouver, Peter Skene Ogden, Jedediah Smith, Josiah Gregg, and Ewing Young, and several other lesser known individuals. Although Lewis notes that the edited and published manuscripts were "furnished by Clarence E. Pearsall, George D. Murray, A.C. Tibbetts, and Harry L. Neal," he fails to attribute the various manuscripts to any specific author nor does he mention who these individuals are.

[It appears that these men were members of the "Society of Humboldt County Pioneers." They were not researchers. One was a judge (Murray) and one a timber cruiser (Pearsall). It is not clear from the publication where they got their information on Round Valley region of Mendocino County (personal communication: Jim Baker avocational historian).]

The main problem with the Lewis manuscript concerning Ewing Young's travels in northern California in 1833 (Lewis 1966:75-88) is that it directly conflicts with the only article that it references-- that is John Warner's 1909 article "Reminiscences of Early California." The manuscript indicates that from a point about seventy-five miles north of Fort Ross Young:

...made his way northward along the seacoast, searching with little result for rivers having beaver. He made many attempts to cross the mountains but without success until, at a point just a few miles below the present boundary line between Mendocino and Humboldt counties, he came on to the Warrior Trail which he followed in a general northeast direction and passing through Long Valley crossed the Mountains to the Eel River..he then crossed the mountains to Round Valley...(Lewis 1966:79). [From the Original.]

As noted earlier, Warner in his *Reminiscences*, however abbreviated, clearly states that the Young Brigade traveled north along the California and Oregon coast as far as the Umpqua River. In addition, subsequent biographies of Young (Hafen, 1983, Holmes 1967), again generally based on Warner's article, makes clear that he traveled up the Pacific coast to the mouth of the Umpqua River before heading to the east to the Great Basin and circling back to California.

Since it is clear from Warner's account that they eventually reached the mouth of the Umpqua River, it is very unlikely that they would have circled that far back to the east and passed through Round Valley. Also, given the fact that their guide was John Turner who was familiar with the Sacramento Valley, it seems that Warner would have clearly indicated in his memoirs if they had traveled back to Oregon via the Siskiyou Trail. Rather, Warner clearly states that they eventually reached the mouth of the Umpqua River. It would not have been logical to cross over into the Sacramento Valley and then head back to the coast at some point further to the north in order to reach the mouth of the Umpqua River. At this date I have not found any primary historical records suggesting that the Young Brigade passed through Round Valley in 1833 and it is unlikely, therefore, this event ever took place.

## **The John Work and Michel Laframboise Brigades of 1832-1833**

### **Background**

Based on USGS maps and Google Earth and my experience of over 30 years of hiking trails and driving the back roads of this region, it is clear to me that the HBC Brigades did not make it as far into northwestern California as the Mattole River basin, as is stated by Maloney in *Fur Brigade to the Bonaventura: John Work's California Expedition of 1832-33* (1943:94, Map). Maloney, it appears, was not familiar with the region. The route she plotted for their travel and the locations of their encampments from May 3rd to about May

15th do not match the description of the territory that they would have been passing through as described in the daily entries in Work's journal during this period.

Laframboise did not keep a journal, and little of his travels in 1832-1833 are known beyond the time his brigade traveled with the John Work Brigade. The entries in Work's journal, however, suggest that the route taken by Laframboise back to Fort Vancouver after the two brigades separated on May 13, 1833, makes it very unlikely that the Laframboise Brigade would have passed through Round Valley.

Below, I summarize and discuss the daily entries in Work's journal for the period that the brigades spent traveling up the Pacific Coast into northern Mendocino County from late April when they reached the mouth of the Russian River and headed north along the coast until May 13th, when the two brigades separated. I have also plotted on USGS Maps (Maps 1-5) their encampments (or their general vicinity) in this region and the general route that they would have followed, given the daily entries in Work's journal

### **The Journal of John Work 1832-1833: Travels in Northwestern California**

John Work, leading a brigade of trappers from the HBC, set out on Aug 17, 1832, from Fort Vancouver for the Sacramento Valley, known at that time as the Bonaventura Valley. On their way south, Work encountered another HBC brigade led by Michel Laframboise that had been sent out to trap beavers along the Oregon coast with the intention of working their way south into northwestern California had preceded them. Finding no beavers along the coast, the Laframboise Brigade had turned inland at some point in Oregon and then worked their way south into California. As a result, the brigade trapped several hundred beavers that Work contended should have gone to his brigade. Moreover, as Work noted in his journal (Hensley 1946:89) and given the fierce competition between the HBC and American trappers, it appears that after only a few annual expeditions there was already a steep decline in beaver populations in both Oregon and California. During this era --the boom years of trapping beavers in California--the HBC brigades out of Fort Vancouver probably took far more beaver pelts than all of the American brigades combined (Maloney 1943:iii).

Work crossed into California from Oregon near Goose Lake (on a route known as the McLeod trail) and headed southwesterly following the Pitt River to Hat Creek, trapping beavers along the way (Hensley 1946:88). They eventually entered the Sacramento Valley by following Cow Creek as it flows west into the Sacramento River. The Work Brigade trapped for beavers as far south as the Stanislaus River region. By late 1832, the brigade headed north to join up with the Laframboise Brigade a few days after Ewing Young's arrival in the same region .

Eventually, the two HBC brigades moved north and wintered in the "Prairie Buttes" (Sutter Buttes) region during the floods of early 1833 (Giles 2001:9). From here, the brigades continued traveling together until May 13 in northern Mendocino County, where



they separated. The Work Brigade returned to the Sacramento Valley via the West Fork of the Russian River, Clear Lake, and Putah Creek, following the route blazed by Ewing Young. Laframboise headed north back to Fort Vancouver.

From their encampment near Sutter Buttes, in April of 1833, the combined Work/Laframboise Brigades headed southwest to the San Francisco Bay region. They traveled along the north side of San Francisco Bay passing near the Sonoma Mission. They spent time while in this region meeting with some of the *Californios* living in the area and managed to trap a few beavers in the creeks emptying into the north bay as they headed generally towards the coast.

On April 18, the HBC brigades reached and encamped on the north side of the mouth of the Russian River. In his journal, Work noted that at that time he met the governor of the Russian settlement at Fort Ross (there was a second Russian settlement near the mouth of the Russian River). In the entry in his journal for Thursday, April 18, 1833, Work wrote that the governor:

...objected to our passing his establishment and said that there was no other road except right past the fort we told him that we must pass but that we meant to pass at some distance, he told us that our two nations were at peace and that we did not see any reasons for his objections and that we must pass... he then said that as there was no other way he would allow us to pass... (Work in Maloney 1943:45). [From the original.]

From the Russian River they headed north along the narrow coastal plain that parallels the Pacific in this region. Work noted in his journal that although they spent a considerable amount of energy exploring up some of the rivers draining into the Pacific Ocean, they encountered no sign of beavers. Work wrote in his journal: for Sunday, April 28th:

Raw cold weather. Continued our journey N.W. along the coast 12 Miles. The road [ Work in his journal generally referred to the route they followed as a "road" ] much the same as usual a number of steep gullies to pass and 3 rivers but no appearance of any beaver in them, though two of them are pretty large and apparently well adapted for beaver. It is probable that they take their water not far off in the first range of Mountains and that there is little or no water in them during the dry season.... (Work in Maloney 1943:47). [From the original.]

On April 29, Work recorded in his journal that after they crossed the Navarro and Albion Rivers, as noted earlier, they came upon the recent encampment of the Ewing Young Brigade. On Tuesday, April 30, they crossed the Big and the Noyo Rivers, where they encountered a band of Indians. Work noted that:

...They are the only Natives we have seen since we left the Russians except one band a few days ago, These Indians are not shy but come to us without

hesitation and assisted the people to make their rafts and carry their things, there might be in all 35 to 40 men...We were able to obtain no information from them respecting the road or whether any beaver in this river or anywhere near us (Work in Maloney 1943: 47). [From the original.]

After crossing the Noyo River (probably some distance inland) the brigades made their encampment probably somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Bragg. They did not travel on May 1 due to bad weather. On May 2, they continued "10 miles NNW." spending the night somewhere to the south of the Ten Mile River. Actual travel that day would have been closer to six miles and in a more northerly direction unless they were well inland when crossing the Noyo River (Work tends to overestimate distances traveled in this region).

Today, as noted earlier, most historians documenting the movements of the Work Brigade from 1832 to 1833 rely on Alice Maloney's 1943 article: "Fur Brigade in the Bonaventura John Work's California Expedition, 1832-33." This article contains the unedited transcript of Work's journal documenting his travels to California in 1832 and 1833. Using footnotes, Maloney (1943:87-96) then maps and traces their route north based on the daily entries in Work's Journal. It appears that Maloney provided a relatively accurate account of their travel route and the locations of their daily encampments in much of California to about the Ten Mile River. North of this point, however, there are some problems with her interpretation of the daily entries Work made in his journal. These problems are related to where the brigades located their encampments and the route that they traveled while in northern Mendocino County. Maloney (1943:94, Map) concluded that the brigades traveled as far north and west as the Mattole River basin in southern Humboldt County. As documented below, however, a critical review of Work's entries in his journal for these dates indicates that the brigades made it no further north than about the Mendocino/Humboldt County line and that they never made it as far to the northwest as the Mattole River basin.

### **Work's Travel Route into Northern Mendocino County from the Ten Mile River**

It is clear from a reading of the description in Work's journal of the brigade's travel for the days May 3-5 that it does not reflect a description of the landscape that they would have been passing through relative to the locations where Maloney (1943:94) has placed their encampments on those nights. As a result, the route north and northeast that they followed, as described by Work in his journal entries over the next several days, did not take them as far to the north and west as the Mattole River basin in the Mendocino Peninsula, but rather, the brigades had decided due to the rough terrain encountered along the coast to turn inland, most likely several miles to the south of Rockport.

Maloney (1943:94) concluded that on May 3rd, they traveled six miles north from their previous encampment to the south of the Ten Mile River (Map 1). That would have placed their encampment for that day in the vicinity of Westport. Maloney does not provide a specific location for where they encamped on this day. For the following day, May 4th, Maloney (1943:94) concluded that they reached and encamped near Rockport. Work

recorded that they traveled 11 miles that day-- Rockport is about 9 miles traveling overland. She then places them about ten miles to the north of Rockport on the night of May 5th. Work recorded that they traveled ten miles that day. This would have placed their encampment for May 5 as much as several miles to north of Usal Creek (Map 2).

It is apparent that Maloney plotted these locations based on the miles that Work recorded the brigades had traveled each of these days, rather than the written description and the compass bearings recorded in his journal. By tracing Work's description from the entries in his journal of the countryside that they were passing through and using the compass bearings he provided for their route each day from May 3rd to May 5th it is clear that the brigades did not travel nearly as far north as the mouth of Usal Creek by the night of May 5th. The following section presents in some detail the entries for Work's journal for the days of May 3-13 in order to retrace his route in northwestern California. (Refer to attached Maps 1-6).

On May 3, Work writes in his journal that they proceeded to and crossed Ten Mile River:

...proceeded on to the river [Ten Mile River] which we crossed by 8 o'clock before the tide was too high all but one family which remained behind seeking some horses which were astray, and did not get across till the evening tide. **We encamped a little way from the river on account of the bad weather and to wait for the people behind. Marched about six miles** (Work in Maloney 1943:9). [From the original emphasis added.]

Maloney concluded from Work's journal that the brigade continued north from Ten Mile River for about six miles. This would have placed their encampment on May 3rd in the vicinity of Westport (Map 1). The entry in Work's journal for that date, however, creates some confusion as to where they encamped on the night of May 3rd. It can also be interpreted from the passage quoted above that they spent the night just to the north of the Ten Mile River as Work noted that they "encamped a little way from the river" in order "to wait" for the rest of their party to cross. It is possible that Work may have included in the travel distance for that day their approach to the river. Further, they may have had to travel inland some distance from the ocean in order to forge the river due to the rainy weather they were experiencing,

Another reason to deduce that they did not travel far on May 3rd is that Work gives little detail about the landscape they are passing through on this particular day and no compass bearing. This is unusual as he almost always recorded in his journal the compass bearing they traveled each day and provided a brief description of the countryside they were passing through as well as the number of drainages that they crossed. For May 3rd, however, Work only notes the character of the surrounding countryside and lack of beavers, despite what appears to be good beaver habitat.

...No signs of beaver are to be seen in [Ten Mile River] it tho' it appears well adapted for them as there are no cut wood found carried down by the current it is probable that there are no beaver in them even towards their

heads; it is likely that the most of them have very little water in them above the high water mark during the dry season (Work in Maloney 1943:49). [From the original.]

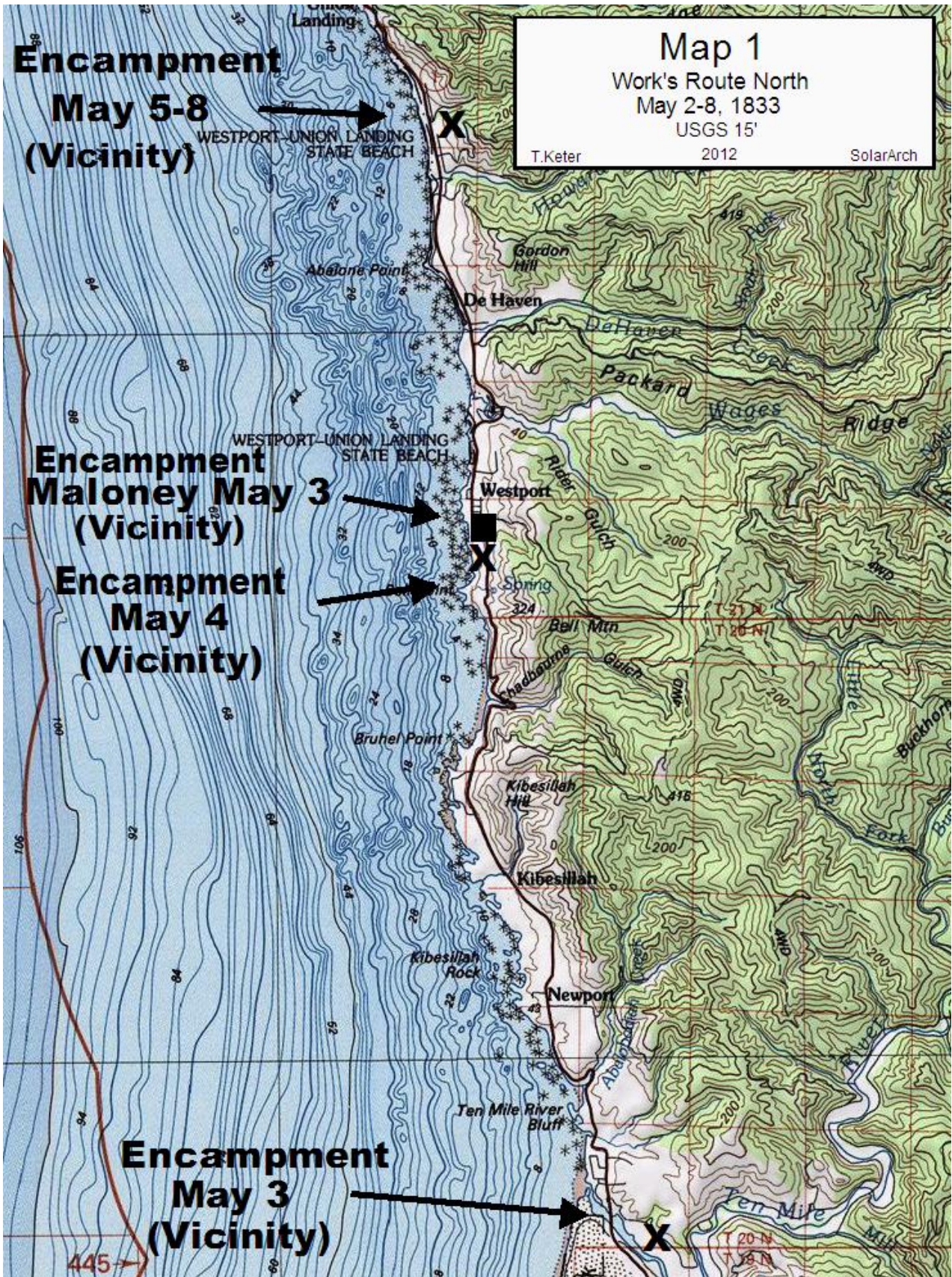
On Saturday, May 4th Work wrote in his journal:

Stormy showry weather. Raised camp and proceeded 11 miles N.W. round a sandy bay [possibly Newport], the road good today, crossed two small rivers, the woods here are farther from the shore than these days past, but the end of the mountain seems to strike into the sea ahead of us. (Work in Maloney 1943:49). [From the original.]

This northwest bearing would fit with the brigade paralleling the coastline north from Ten Mile Creek as it trends to the northwest towards Bruhel Point. The route here lies across a fairly broad coastal plain trending northwest for about four air miles. At Bruhel Point and for approximately one mile north to Bell Point, the broad plain disappears and the mountains drop directly down to the sea (Map 1). Unlike further north along the Mendocino Peninsula, however, the slopes are not quite as steep, and the area is more open, making it relatively easy to reach Bell Point, where the coastal plain again widens out and extends north for about four air miles to just south of Little Howard Creek.

The ease of their travel that day as Work recorded in his journal-- "good road today" --- clearly could not have been written by someone who Maloney (1943:94) concluded was traveling north from Rock Creek towards Usal Creek (Map 2). Moreover, Work also recorded in his journal for that day that they "crossed two small rivers , the woods here are farther from the shore than these days past..." This would match the countryside if they would have traveled north from the vicinity of Ten Mile Creek that day, as they would have crossed Abalobadiah and Kibesillah Creeks. Therefore, based on Work's written description of their route, it is likely that their encampment was in the vicinity of or perhaps just to the south of Westport on the night of May 4th (Map 1). Again, Work overestimated the distance they traveled that day. He indicated that they traveled eleven miles while the actual distance is more likely about five to six miles, depending on where their encampment was the previous day.





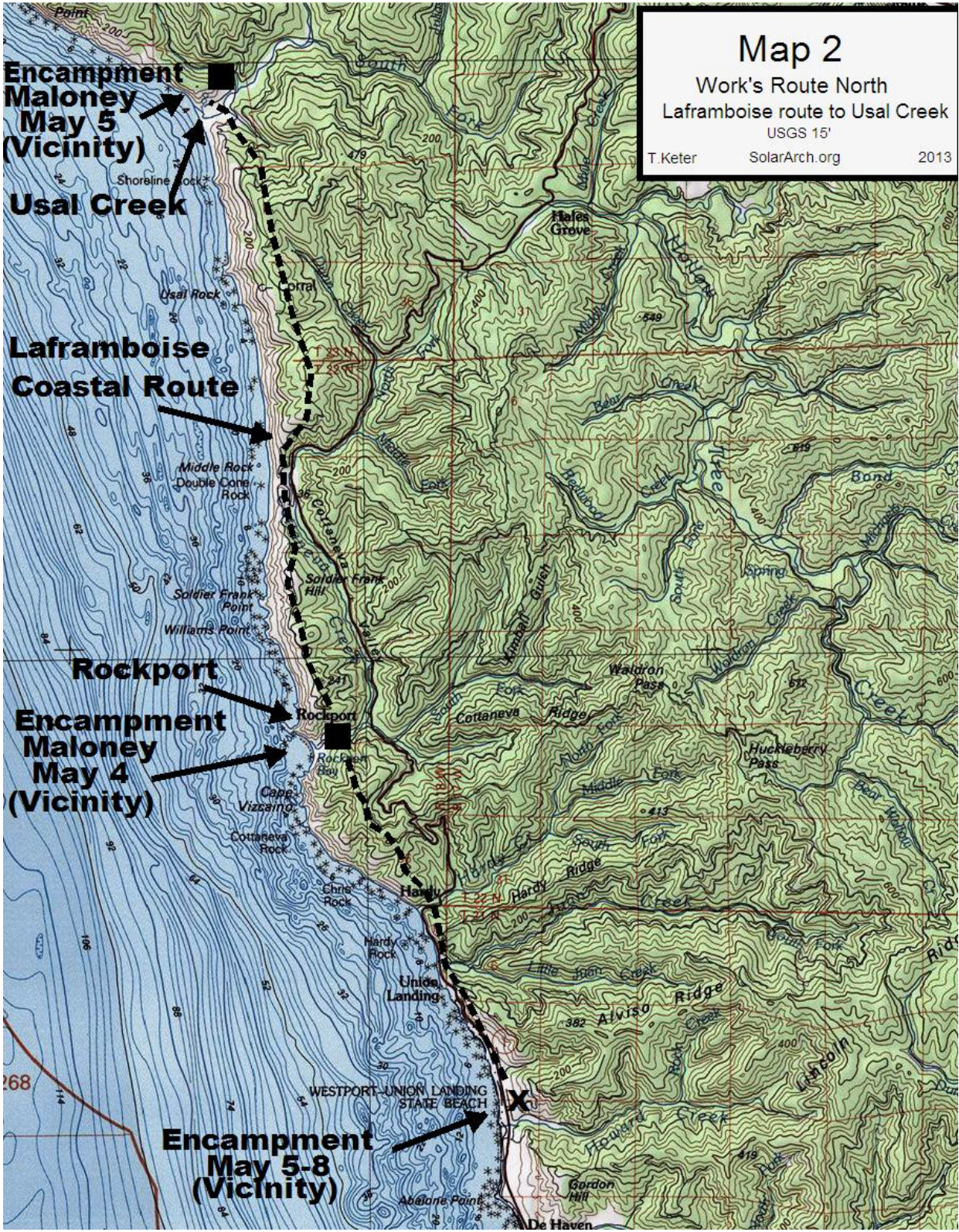


On Sunday, May 5, Work wrote in his journal:

Lowering weather not so stormy as these days past. Continued our route 10 miles N. Except one deep gully and two steep hills we had to pass the road was very good, **it lay through a fine plain of rich land extending 500 or 600 yards from the shore to the foot of the hills whose sloping sides next to the sea are without wood and covered with fine grass.** The woods, mostly tall pine begins on the tops of the hills and continues backwards. A little ahead of us the hills appear much steeper and close to the sea shore, and there are three or four points that jut out into the sea. Sent two men ahead to examine the road, they report that the road lies close along the shore round a rock (Mooney believed this was Needle Rock about 20 miles to the northwest from here) and cannot be passed but at low water and they had to return the tide being in. Passed several Indian lodges, but the Indians had all run off on our approach. (Work in Maloney 1943: 49-50). [From the original. Emphasis added.]

Work's description in his journal of their travel on May 5 clearly does not match the topography that they would have been passing through given Maloney's conclusion that they traveled from about Rockport north to somewhere in the Usal Creek region that day (Map 2). Further, the compass bearing that Work recorded in his journal for that day--north--also fits with the almost due north trending axis of the coastline from Westport to about Handy Creek. North of about Juan and Handy Creeks the Mendocino Peninsula coastline begins to trend to the northwest. From this point for most of the way north to Shelter Cove (about 25 air miles) travel along the immediate coastline is impossible. Traveling somewhat further inland from the immediate coast north from about the mouth of Usal Creek to about Bear Harbor is a tangle of the deep cut ravines and dense undergrowth and an overstory of redwood trees that would have made the way north only a little less difficult even without horses packed with supplies and furs.







Images 1-2 show the nearly vertical coastline north of Handy Creek. The fact that Work wrote in his journal on May 5th that it was "a good road toady"--given the steep terrain, and in places possibly dense forests or undergrowth, north of about the vicinity of Little Howard and Juan Creeks to about the mouth Usal Creek, makes it more likely that the brigade spent the night of May 5th somewhere in the vicinity of Little Howard Creek or Juan Creek (the divide between Little Howard and Juan Creek roughly marks the northern terminus of the broad coastal plain mentioned by Work in his journal for May 5). Work estimated that they traveled 10 miles that day again over estimating the distance they traveled--the total distance to Juan Creek from Westport is roughly 6 miles to 6.5 miles overland on a fairly direct line (Map 2).

Image 1  
(Google Earth)  
Northwest from the mouth of Handy Creek  
where the sea meets a nearly vertical Coastline





Image 2 (Google Earth)

CA1 turns inland north of Handy Creek as the coastline becomes impassable. The first ridge (in photo) to the east of the coastline is passable north to about the mouth of Usal Creek



**Leaving the Coast and Traveling Inland: John Work's Journal Entries May 6-8**

A final reason to conclude that the brigades encamped in the vicinity of the northern terminus of the coastal plain in the vicinity of Little Howard and Juan Creeks the night of May 5th is the fact that Work records in his journal that due to the difficulty of the terrain ahead they were stymied in their effort to proceed north paralleling the coastline. The problem was of a magnitude that they remained encamped at the same location for the next three nights while men were sent out to scout a way north along the coast.

As Work noted in his journal for May 6th, Laframboise and three men headed north in an attempt to find a route along the coast. They returned that evening and Laframboise informed Work that traveling along the coast was "exceedingly bad, indeed so much so that it is doubtful whether we will be able to pass our party."

On Monday, May 6, Work recorded in his journal:

Drizzling rain and heavy showers all day. The weather was unfavorable to raise camp moreover we were induced to stop in order to send ahead to examine the road M. Laframboise and three men went on for that purpose....and represent the road as exceedingly bad, indeed so much so that it is doubtful whether we will be able to pass our party; **they went on about 12 miles along the brow of a hill and had to cross three gullies very deep their sides so exceedingly steep that it was with difficulty they could clamber up them.** The weather was so foggy that they could see no distance so that they might judge the appearance of the country. **Some of the people**

**were out hunting behind the mountains to the Eastward & represent that the country had a pretty good appearance thinly timbered with oak and pine** [most likely Douglas fir and tan oak] & there are small plains [glades or open areas]; but the fog prevented them from seeing any great distance (Work in Maloney 1943:50). [From the original. Emphasis added.]

From Work's description of the rough terrain that Laframboise encountered on May 6th it is clear that he made his way north to a point probably somewhat to the south of the mouth of Usal Creek. The verbal description of their route in Work's journal for that date matches the terrain north of Little Howard Creek. The coastline between Little Howard Creek and the mouth of Usal Creek is at least eleven miles over rough terrain. Laframboise would have crossed over Juan, Handy, and Cottaneva creeks ("three gullies"). Travel along this section of the immediate coastline is impossible, it is possible, however, to travel north with reasonable effort by following the northwest/southeast trending ridgeline paralleling the coast referred to by Work in his journal as "the brow of the hill" (it may have been even more open at that time as a result of Indian burning practices). This relatively long drainage divide between Cottaneva Creek and the Pacific Ocean lies only a few hundred yards to about one-half mile in from the ocean and extends north nearly to the mouth of Usal Creek (Map 2).

On May 7th, Work recorded in his journal that, despite good weather, they did not "raise camp" that day. Instead, Laframboise led four men along the coast making a second effort to find a way north. The party spent the night of May 7th, somewhere in the vicinity of Usal Creek or just to the north. It is north of Usal Creek that the terrain paralleling the coast as it trends to the northwest becomes nearly impassable. The way north towards Shelter Cove is laced with steep, often nearly vertical deep-cut drainages that drain west to the ocean. There are also thickets of dense impenetrable undergrowth with an overstory of old growth redwood forests. Travel through this region becomes nearly impossible (personal observation and experience).

On the evening of Wednesday, May 8th, Laframboise and his scouting party returned to camp. Work wrote in his journal:

Fine weather. Did not raise camp waiting for Michelle, he arrived in the evening, and reports that as he advanced the gullies became more frequent and many of them so very deep and steep in the sides nearly perpendicular, that notwithstanding there is no wood or stones but the sides clay and covered with grass; it is with much difficulty that horses were able to climb up them. We might probably in time be able to pass with our camp but it would take so long that **we have determined to cut across the mountain and pass along behind them where we expect the deep ravines will not be so frequent** (Work in Maloney 1943 50). [Emphasis added. From the original.]

As a result of Laframboise's explorations, Work concluded that it was not possible to proceed north paralleling the coast. Also contributing to the decision to head inland was

the fact that on Tuesday, May 7th, while Laframboise scouted a way north along the coast, Work noted in his journal:

...L. Kanota and three men struck into the mountains to the Eastward, they returned in the evening and **report that the country behind the mountain has a good appearance and is in many places clear of woods.** There are rugged hills and deep ravines to cross but they are passable but in places much embarrassed with underwood through which a road must be cut (Work in Maloney 1943:50). [Emphasis added. From the original.]

It is clear from Work's journal that the brigades, after finding the way north along the coast impassable, now turned inland (Map 3). On Thursday, May 9th, Work made the following entry in his journal:

Blowing fresh part of the day, but fine weather. **Raised camp and ascended a steep mountain which we crossed a distance of 12 miles N.N.E.** and encamped on a small spot on the brow of the hill pretty clear of woods but with barely enough water for the horses. The road through thick woods & for woody country the road was not bad. L. Kanota went ahead to examine the road, & reports that where we have to pass tomorrow is very rugged & much encumbered with underwood (Work in Maloney 1943:51). [From the original. Emphasis added]

Work recorded a bearing of "N.N.E." or about 22 degrees 30 minutes east of due north (most likely magnetic north). Since the Mendocino Peninsula at this point trends northwest it is clear that they are heading inland to the northeast towards the Pacific Ocean/South Fork Eel River divide. The north northeast bearing that they generally followed for the next two days, as recorded by Work in his journal, would have made it impossible for them to have ever reached the headwaters of the Mattole River Basin that lies well to the northwest of their encampment of May 5-8.

It is likely that they headed up one of the southwest to northeast trending ridgelines in the immediate area of Howard and Handy Creek drainages, possibly heading for Elkhorn Ridge (the Pacific coast/South Fork Eel River divide). Traveling through this country is best accomplished on the trending ridgelines, where possible, due to the steepness of the general terrain and dense vegetation in the lower reaches of the canyons. Also the redwood forests and dense understory tends to thin out at higher elevations. Above about 2,000' in elevation and further inland, the redwood forests are increasingly replaced by the forests dominated by Douglas fir and tan oak (Griffin and Critchfield 1972).

At some point they would have passed through or around the head of the divide of the Hollow Tree Creek basin. From the entry in Work's journal it is not clear where they spent the night of May 9th (Map 3). It appears they are on or near the top of a ridgeline, since Work notes in his journal that there is little water at their encampment despite the fact that most springs in the area would still have been running high that time of year. Given Work's tendency to overestimate the distance they traveled each day and roughness of the

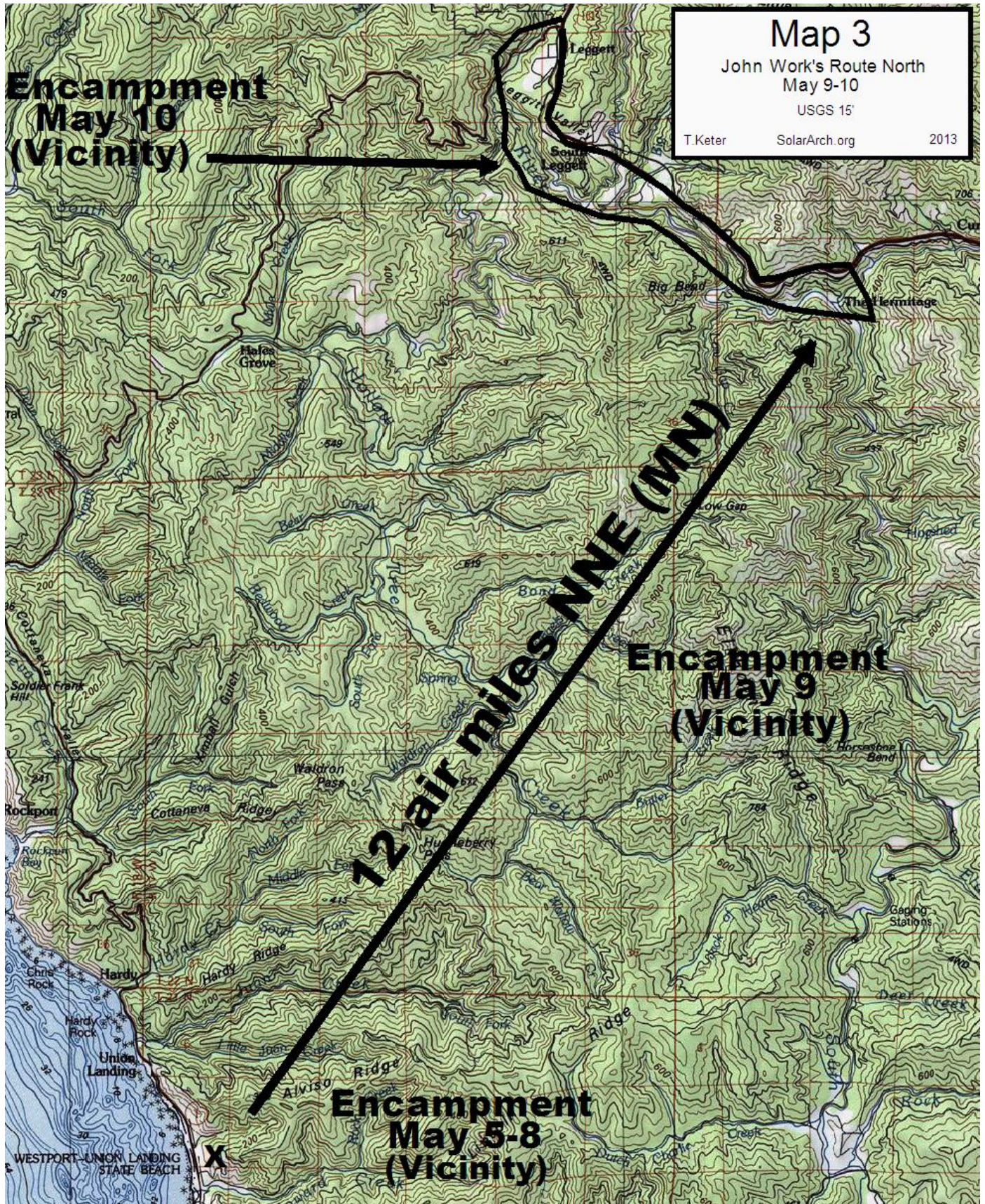
terrain that they were working their way through, it is very likely that they traveled less than 12 miles that day.

On Friday, May 10, Work makes an entry in his journal that clearly indicates that the brigades had reached and were encamped that night on the South Fork Eel River (Map 3).

Fine weather, continued our route 9 miles N.N.E. & **encamped on a pretty large river**. The road very rugged and in places difficult. The river where we are encamped appears remarkably well adapted for beaver yet there is not the least appearance of any ever have been in it. The men who were sent ahead to examine the road report that there where we have to pass tomorrow is in places very bad but that the country begins to have a better appearance, many little plains and the woods not so thick but still very hilly (Work in Maloney 1943:50). [Emphasis added. From the original.]

For the night of May 10th, Maloney places their encampment far to the northwest on the Mattole River (1943:94). The fact that they had turned inland from the coast and were traveling in a generally NNE direction and given the entry in Work's journal that on May 10th they "encamped on a pretty large river" clearly indicates their encampment that day was on the South Fork Eel River rather than on the much smaller Mattole River. Given the distance traveled over two days in a north-northeast direction, it is likely that they hit the South Fork Eel River at a point somewhere south from about the current town of Leggett to about the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek (Map 3).





**Map 3**  
 John Work's Route North  
 May 9-10  
 USGS 15'  
 T.Keter      SolarArch.org      2013

**Encampment  
 May 10  
 (Vicinity)**

**Encampment  
 May 9  
 (Vicinity)**

**12 air miles NNE (MN)**

**Encampment  
 May 5-8  
 (Vicinity)**



On May 11th the two HBC brigades reached the northern most point in their travels together--probably somewhere just to the south of the Humboldt County/Mendocino County line. Leaving camp on the morning of May 11th they continued on a north northeast bearing rather than following the river. Work's journal entry for that date is summarized below:

Fine weather. Continued our route 10 miles N.N.E. **up a small fork of the river**, the road very rugged and much encumbered with underwood several steep points of hills to pass, and many places were very difficult notwithstanding some men were ahead clearing a road. The country is beginning to have a much better appearance, the woods are becoming much clearer with here and there little plains but the country is so very hilly one cannot see a great distance....Some of the people who were ahead examining the road saw a pretty large party of Indians, they took to their bows & arrows instantly, probably look upon all strangers as enemies (Work in Maloney 1943:51). [From the original. Emphasis added.]

Although the canyon inner gorge narrows at about Leggett, it can essentially be followed for about nine miles northwesterly to about the mouth of Red Mountain Creek . At this point, the South Fork Eel River canyon opens to the bald hills and it would have been easy country to travel through all the way north to the South Fork's confluence with the main Eel River. For that reason, it is worth pointing out that after reaching the river the brigades chose to continue the next day on a "N.N.E." bearing rather than following the easily passable South Fork canyon.

Beginning about the confluence of Rattlesnake Creek with the South Fork Eel River northwesterly to about Leggett the creeks entering the South Fork Eel River from the east generally trend from northeast to southwest. Given their general location and orientation along the South Fork Eel River (generally trending southeast to northwest) and the description of the general topography of the area provided in Work's journal, it is likely that the brigade headed to the northeast up one of the minor or major drainages in the area to the south of Red Mountain (Rock Creek , Cedar Creek, or Big Dann Creek) climbing to the South Fork Eel River/East Branch South Fork Eel River watershed divide and dropping down into the upper reaches of the East Branch drainage. Much of this area immediately to the east of the South Fork has reddish colored laterite soils (especially Red and Little Red Mountains). In some areas this has resulted in a dense growth of manzanita and other brush species (although anthropogenic burning may have reduced this to some degree at the time they passed through the region).

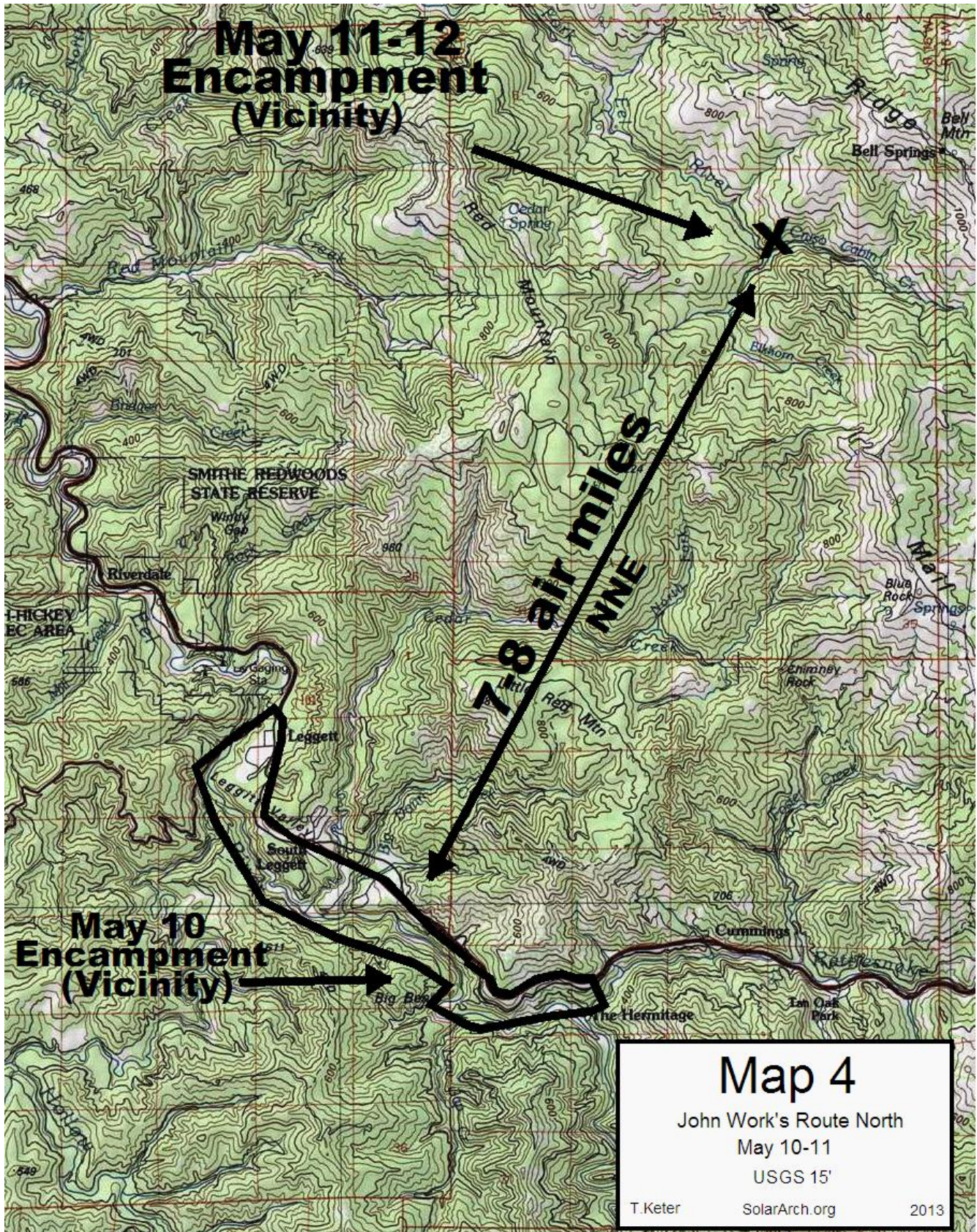
Following a general trajectory to the north northeast, the brigades would have remained to the south of Red Mountain (4,099') crossing over the divide somewhere to the south perhaps in the Little Red Mountain area. From this vantage point the broad crest of Red Mountain to the north and Mail Ridge/Bell Springs Ridge to the east makes a long distance view to the north and east impossible. During their travels that day Work notes "the country is so very hilly one cannot see a great distance." This result would not be true further to north if they had crossed over Red Mountain. Crossing over this extended

ridgeline (3,500-4,000' in elevation) at any point would have provided sweeping views in all directions. Moreover, if the brigades were further north near Garberville (where Maloney places their route) the watershed divide trending northwest/southeast (Mail Ridge) between the South Fork and Main Eel River narrows and the steep but relatively gentle "Bald Hills" of the region are dominated by grasslands and oak woodlands, making for easy travel. Also, just a few miles to the east of Garberville from the South Fork/Main Eel River divide on Mail Ridge, there are sweeping vistas to the east to the Yolla Bollys and west to the ocean.

It is not clear where they made camp on the night of May 11. It appears that it would have been in the vicinity of the upper reaches of the East Branch South Fork Eel River basin (Map 4). One clue in placing their encampment on the upper East Branch that day is the entry in Work's journal for May 13. On that day, after not traveling on May 12th, the two brigades separated and Work wrote that his brigade then "cut across a steep hill and **ascended the fork on which we were encamped** 11 miles S.E." (Work in Maloney 1943:52). (Emphasis added.)

The East Branch South Fork Eel River runs from the southeast at its headwaters at the watershed divide with Cedar Creek northwesterly to its confluence with the Main Eel River just to the south of Garberville at Benbow Valley. The ridge dividing the East Branch and Cedar Creek at its headwaters runs roughly east-west (today there is a primitive BLM road connecting Mail Ridge with Red Mountain (Map 4). This ridge connects directly to the east with Mail Ridge (forming the eastern headwaters of the East Fork basin) just to the south of Bell Springs. Mail Ridge extends far to the north into Humboldt County and was the location of the earliest trail used to reach Humboldt County from the south during the historic period. It likely was a major travel route for the local Indians during the prehistoric era. Today the Bell Springs County Road follows the ridgeline north from US 101 about 10 miles north of Laytonville in Mendocino County to Alderpoint Road east of Garberville in Humboldt County.







Entries in Work's journal for May 12-14 provide important information on where the two brigades separated and, as discussed in the following section--the possible route taken from this point back to Fort Vancouver by Laframboise. Work wrote in his journal for Sunday, May 12:

Fine weather. Did not break camp. Two parties were sent ahead to examine the road and report that the country to the S.E. appears pretty good, but towards the N.E. it is very rugged, but to the eastward the country appears more passable--Not falling in with beaver along the coast as we expected we have arranged to divide the party, **Michelle and his people to proceed on along the coast**, while I return with the others and try whether anything can be done on the way to the valley, and there when we get to it. It was always our plan to separate the people the first large river we found where there were any beaver & where we could do so by giving the people all an equal chance and not creating any jealousies among them, but the bad road we have passed and not finding any beaver discouraged the men so that a party of them desired permission to return and the opportunity was embraced of separating the parties.... (Work in Maloney 1943:51) [From the original. Emphasis added.]

[Maloney (1943:94) places their camp May 12 between Briceland and Garberville which would have placed them even further to the northwest of Round Valley.]

### **John Work Heads Back South to the Sacramento Valley (Maps 5 and 6)**

On Monday, May 13th Work wrote in his journal:

Fine weather. Separated the people this morning. I with my party cut across a steep hill and ascended the fork on which we were encamped 11 Miles S.E. [135 degrees] (Work in Maloney 1943:52).

It appears that the Work Brigade traveled to southeast and then over the South Fork Eel divide at some point into the main Eel River basin and encamped somewhere to the west of the river (Map 5). This would likely have placed them either towards the southern end of Mail Ridge or on the east facing slopes of the main Eel River basin in the upper reaches of one of the creeks draining to the east. On Tuesday May 14th, it is clear the Work Brigade continued to the southeast, heading in the general direction of the main stem of the Eel River. Work recorded that they traveled "12 Miles S.E." and camped somewhere along the Eel River. However, he gave no clear indication of the location where they spent the night (Map 5). On May 15, Work recorded that they continued traveling to the southeast.

To summarize briefly Work's return trip to the Sacramento Valley, the brigade "pursued a course up the Eel River and over the divide to the headwaters of the Russian River" (Maloney 1943:94). The brigade encamped the night of May 16 on the West Fork Russian River somewhere to the north of Redwood Valley, having traveled a distance of about 12

miles to the southeast that day. On May 17th, they continued following the West Fork south. They encamped on the night of May 17 most likely near the confluence of the East and West Forks of the Russian River.

From there, Work traveled east, retracing the route of the Young Brigade past Clear Lake, down Putah Creek, and into the Sacramento Valley. They spent the summer in the Delta region trapping beavers. Work noted that after only a few years of intensive trapping they found "the beavers shy and more difficult to trap due to the effect of the tides." The same difficulties are met by trappers today (Hensley 1946:89).

The Work Brigade then headed north for Fort Vancouver. After much difficulty related to many of the members of the brigade suffering from the epidemic of disease that was sweeping the Sacramento Valley, they were met in southern Oregon by a rescue party led by Laframboise. They finally made it back to Fort Vancouver on October 31, 1833 (Maloney 1943:xix). Although Work was disappointed in their hunt, McLoughlin, the factor at Fort Vancouver, estimated they had taken 1,023 beaver and otter skins and realized a profit of £627.

## **Michel Laframboise and the Brigade's Return Route to Fort Vancouver**

Michael Laframboise was known as "the king" or "captain" of the California Trail (Holmes 1967:82, Maloney 1943:104). Beginning in the late 1820s and for over a decade, he led HBC brigades south from Fort Vancouver into California to trap beavers. Maloney (1943:104) summarizes his place in the pantheon of the trappers working in California during the boom years of the late 1820s and 1830s:

Michael Laframboise was the most famous French-Canadian of the Pacific slope...He was a "trouble shooter" for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Pacific Northwest and is credited by more than one traveler with having a wife in every Indian tribe with which he came into communication. His success in dealing with the aborigines is sometimes ascribed to this practice. He is mentioned by nearly every traveler who wrote on this region, and his name appears frequently in the official records of the Province of California and in mission records as well.

Except for Work's journal (and brief references by John Warner, and the recording of "visitors" in documents kept by the Russians at Fort Ross and records of some of the missions) there is little in the historical record related to the Laframboise Brigade's travels through California in 1832 and 1833. What can be reconstructed from these limited sources is that in the spring of 1832, Laframboise leading a Hudson's Bay Company brigade of about forty men (there were also women and children traveling with the brigade,) left Fort Vancouver and headed to California. He was sent by John McLoughlin, who was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, to trap beavers down the Oregon and northern California coasts to about the San Francisco Bay area. Due to a

lack of finding beavers along the Oregon Coast, the Laframboise Brigade turned inland at some point and crossed from Oregon into northern California and the Sacramento Valley.

He established a seasonal encampment--French Camp--several miles to the south of present day Stockton and for the next decade or so HBC trappers spent some part of nearly every year in this region trapping beavers. French Camp was also known as *Castoria*, the French word for "beaver" being "*castor*" (Mackie 1997:116). French Camp was the location of the HBC's southern most permanent encampment in California.

As noted earlier, John Warner, who was with the Ewing Young Brigade at that time, recorded that the Laframboise Brigade had spent much of the summer and fall trapping beavers in the region:

A short distance below, [about five miles south of the American River] where we struck the Sacramento River, was found a large party of the Hudson Bay Company's trappers from Fort Vancouver, under Michel. This party had been in the valley since early in the spring of 1832, having come in over the McLeod trail and had trapped all the waters of the valley north and west of the San Joaquin River (Warner 1909:187).

By December Laframboise and his brigade were encamped along the Sacramento River. It was at that time, as noted earlier, that the Work Brigade and Laframboise Brigades joined together for their mutual protection, possibly from hostile Indians as a result of the epidemic sweeping the Great Valley. Eventually, the two HBC brigades moved north and wintered in the "Prairie Buttes" (Sutter Butters) region during the floods of 1833 (Giles 2001:9). From there, the brigades continued traveling together until May 13, when they separated with the Work Brigade returning to the Sacramento Valley via Clear Lake and Putah Creek, following the route blazed by Ewing Young.

### **Did the Laframboise Brigade Pass through Round Valley?**

Although there is no account of the route taken by the Laframboise Brigade subsequent to the last entry in Work's journal for May 14, many of the histories written on the Round Valley region have concluded that the brigade passed through Round Valley in 1833 (Carranco and Beard 1981:32, Keller 1971:1). This conclusion is generally based on the annotations of Work's journal by Maloney (1943) and the map she compiled plotting their travel route based on his daily journal entries.

Another problem, however, in concluding Laframboise passed through Round Valley is found in *Genocide and Vendetta* (Carranco and Beard:1981) one of the more important, and generally, historically accurate works on the history of this region. Unfortunately, Carranco and Beard transpose and therefore provide an inaccurate quotation from a publication---*Chronicles of Camp Wright* (Tassin 1887)--in support of their assertion that the Laframboise Brigade passed through Round Valley.

In 1874, A.G. Tassin traveled to Northwestern California and visited Camp Wright in Round Valley and also explored the surrounding Yolla Bolly country, interviewing a number of old-time settlers and Native Americans. He also traveled to the coast, where he interviewed Tony Metock, a Huchnom medicine man and chief (according to Tassin) who had attended school in San Francisco. In 1887 Tassin published a series of articles in *Overland Monthly* about his trip to northwestern California. Tassin's Indian informant, Tony Metock, provided the information summarized by Tassin in his article on this subject of trappers passing through Round Valley.

Carranco and Beard (1981:33-34) provided the following quote from Tassin's original article:

All these Indians of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Trinity Counties say that as far as can be ascertained --and they are nearly unanimous on the subject-- **about one hundred white men, having women and children with them, appeared on the coast** (although no ships were seen) assembled in Long Valley and proceeded thence in three parties towards the east (Tassin 1887: 373). [Emphasis added].

The actual quote, taken directly from Tassin's article in *Overland Monthly* is presented below:

All these Indians of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Trinity Counties say that as far as can be ascertained --and they are nearly unanimous on the subject-- **about one hundred years since, a body of some six hundred white men, having women and children with them, appeared on the coast**, (although no ships were seen) assembled in Long Valley and proceeded thence in three parties towards the east. One of them passed where Ukiah now stands, another through Potter Valley; and the last through Round Valley, in which they camped several days. They did not molest the Indians-- in fact paid not the slightest attention to them.

They were all mounted on horses--which as well as white people, the Indians had never seen before--and had pack animals with wire baskets on each side to carry the children. All the saddles were made of iron, but not heavy. These people had plenty of jerked meat, but ate acorn mush, like the Indians....They were well armed with flintlock muskets but each had bows and quivers full of arrows besides. (Tassin 1887: 373-374). [Emphasis added.]

A review of the numerous trapping expeditions from that era (or any earlier era) does not document any brigade approaching 600 men, women, and children. At that early date a party of 100 people would have been remarkable and nearly all were under half that size. Moreover, the fur trade is well documented in the historic literature and it is clear that no expeditions traveled through the interior Coast Ranges of Northwestern California until 1828, when the Jedediah Smith Party traveled from the Sacramento Valley to the Pacific

coast. Another problem with this account and the possibility that it was referring to the Laframboise Brigade is found in the very next paragraph of Tassin's article:

The Indians were very observant, and took notice of everything; They were not Spaniards--**these came long afterwards**, and never as far as Round Valley. Tony did not believe they were Russians... (Tassin Oct 1887: 376-377). [Emphasis added.]

Moreover, the source for this information, Tony Metock, was a Huchnom, not from Round Valley but from the coastal region to the west of Round Valley.

Another factor that led Carranco and Beard to conclude that the Laframboise Brigade passed through Round Valley was their interpretation of the archaeological record related to the presence of HBC trade beads that have been recovered from archaeological excavations of prehistoric sites in Round Valley. They posited that the recovery of trade beads also provides evidence that the Laframboise Brigade passed through Round Valley (Carranco and Beard:1981:34). It is clear from the archaeological record for northern California, however, that trade beads preceded the presence of Euro-Americans in the region. For example, in 1828, on Jedediah Smith's journey to the Pacific coast from the Sacramento Valley, he encountered Indians (most likely Wintun) who already possessed trade beads. On April 13, Smith wrote in his journal:

...I encamped about 12 O Clock to dry my things which were wet by the last rain and stretch some Beaver skins which I had on hand. One of the Indians which came to me had some **wampum and Beads. They were procured as I supposed from some trapping party of the Hudsons Bay Company** which came in that direction from their establishment on the Columbia (Smith MS. 1827-1828) . [From the original. Emphasis added.]

### **John Work's Journal: Possible routes of the Laframboise Brigade**

The entries in Work's journal for the days of May 12th-14th, strongly suggest that the Laframboise Brigade did not pass through Round Valley on their return trip north. Rather, the brigade headed to the east or northeast on May 14th--via one of the two possible routes discussed below--eventually returning to Fort Vancouver after what was considered a successful trapping expedition (755 large beaver, 84 small beaver, and 152 other skins) (Anonymous 2008:Brochure). The exact route taken back to Fort Vancouver by Laframboise is not known, and the only documentation concerning this subject is contained in the entries of Work's journal for the days of May 12th-14th.

The first possible route back to Fort Vancouver is based on Work's journal entry for Sunday, May 12. Work writes:

Fine weather. Did not break camp. Two parties were sent ahead to examine the road and report that the country to the S.E. appears pretty good, but

towards the N.E. it is very rugged, but to the eastward the country appears more passable--Not falling in with beaver along the coast as we expected we have arranged to divide the party, **Michelle and his people to proceed on along the coast**, while I return with the others and try whether anything can be done on the way to the valley, and there when we get to it (Work in Maloney 1943:51). [Emphasis added. From the Original.]

Work, here, seems to make it clear that after they separated Laframboise was to somehow first head inland to the northeast or east. He then infers, however, that at some point the Laframboise Brigade was to somehow turn westward towards the Pacific Ocean in order "to proceed on along the coast" of northwestern California and Oregon for his return route to Fort Vancouver.

The second, and more likely possibility, as documented below, for the route taken by Laframboise is based on the fact the since Laframboise had originally headed south from Fort Vancouver along the coast and found no beaver, he simply planned to cross the snowy mountains and connect with "Smith's road" (possibly the trail Smith took to the coast from the Sacramento Valley in 1828), head east into the Sacramento Valley, and then take the well-known Siskiyou Trail north to Fort Vancouver. Significantly, John Turner, who had been traveling with Laframboise when they came into California in 1832 and had only begun working for Ewing Young the previous winter in the Sacramento Valley, had been a member of the Smith Party in 1828 when they traveled from the Sacramento Valley to the Pacific Coast on a route just to the north of the Yolla Bolly Mountains (for a description of this route see Keter 2012). This might have been the trail that was referred to by Work in his journal of May 13 as "Smith's road."

On Monday, May 13, when the two brigades separated, John Work recorded in his journal that his brigade traveled "11 Miles to the S.E." that day. He indicated that the Laframboise Brigade first followed the route that they were taking that day for a short distance--possibly following the draw to the southeast up to the head of the divide between the East Fork Eel River, Cedar Creek (East Fork), and the Main Eel River basins. At this point one can connect directly to Mail Ridge. As noted earlier, this extended ridgeline, trending north/south, forms the divide between the main Eel River and South Fork Eel River basin north to their confluence in Humboldt County. Work wrote in his journal for May 13th:

...Michelle & party came on a piece the same road, **and will have to take to the E. or the N.E. & cross a mountain on which there is some snow, beyond this mountain it is expected he will fall upon Smith's road & a better country.** Michelle's party amounts to 30 Men, 17 Whites & 13 Indians and my party amounts to 33 Men 27 Whites & 6 Indians. Michelle reckons his party strong enough to ... [unintelligible]... along the coast.-- (Work in Maloney 1943:52). [From the original. Emphasis added.]

Given the general vicinity of their encampment on May 11th and 12th and based on Work's journal entry for May 13th, he now seems to indicate that Laframboise intended to head to the east or northeast in returning to Fort Vancouver. The entry in Work's journal

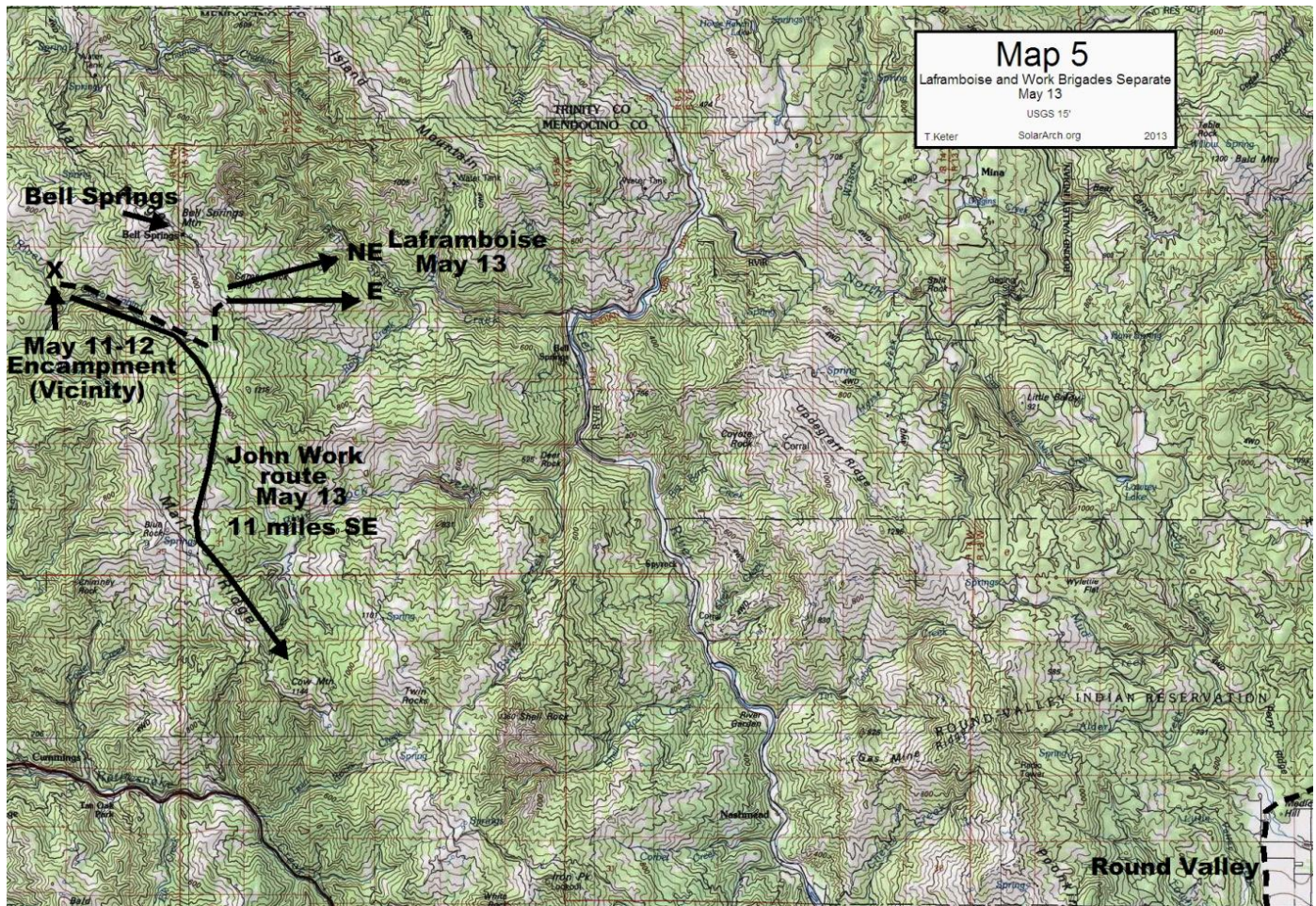
for that day is, however, confusing. He indicates that the Laframboise Brigade plans to travel to the "E. or NE." and "cross a mountain on which there is some snow" and that "beyond this mountain it is expected he will fall upon Smith's road & a better country." The reason that Work's entry in his journal for May 13th is confusing is due to the fact that the next following relevant passage in Work's journal for that date concerning the possible route taken by Laframboise is unintelligible; -- "Michelle reckons his party strong enough to ... [unintelligible]... along the coast."

This statement of course still leaves open the possibility that Laframboise could have eventually taken a coastal route north. However, he may simply have decided that their brigade was strong enough to travel to the Sacramento Valley (where the two brigades had originally been combined for mutual protection) and that the unintelligible words in the above quote might have actually been "avoid travel" or something similar.

Another reason to favor the inland route to the east or northeast as the more likely possibility is due to the fact that Maloney (1943:xix) notes that at the time they split up Laframboise was "already overdue at Fort Vancouver." This would argue for the more direct return route to Fort Vancouver via the Sacramento Valley--especially given the fact the Laframboise Brigade had not had any success in trapping beavers when traveling along the coast in Oregon on their trip south the year before (Maps 5-6).

Given the time of year, it is likely that the only remaining snow-capped mountains in the view-shed of the Mail Ridge region in this vicinity would have been the crest of the Yolla Bolly Mountains--Black Rock and North Yolla Bolly Mountains and Mount Linn--about 35 air miles to the northeast. It is possible in a very heavy snow year that some portions of the southwestern facing slopes of Hammerhorn and Solomon Peaks and South Fork Mountain (for example at Horse Mountain) may have also had some snow remaining.





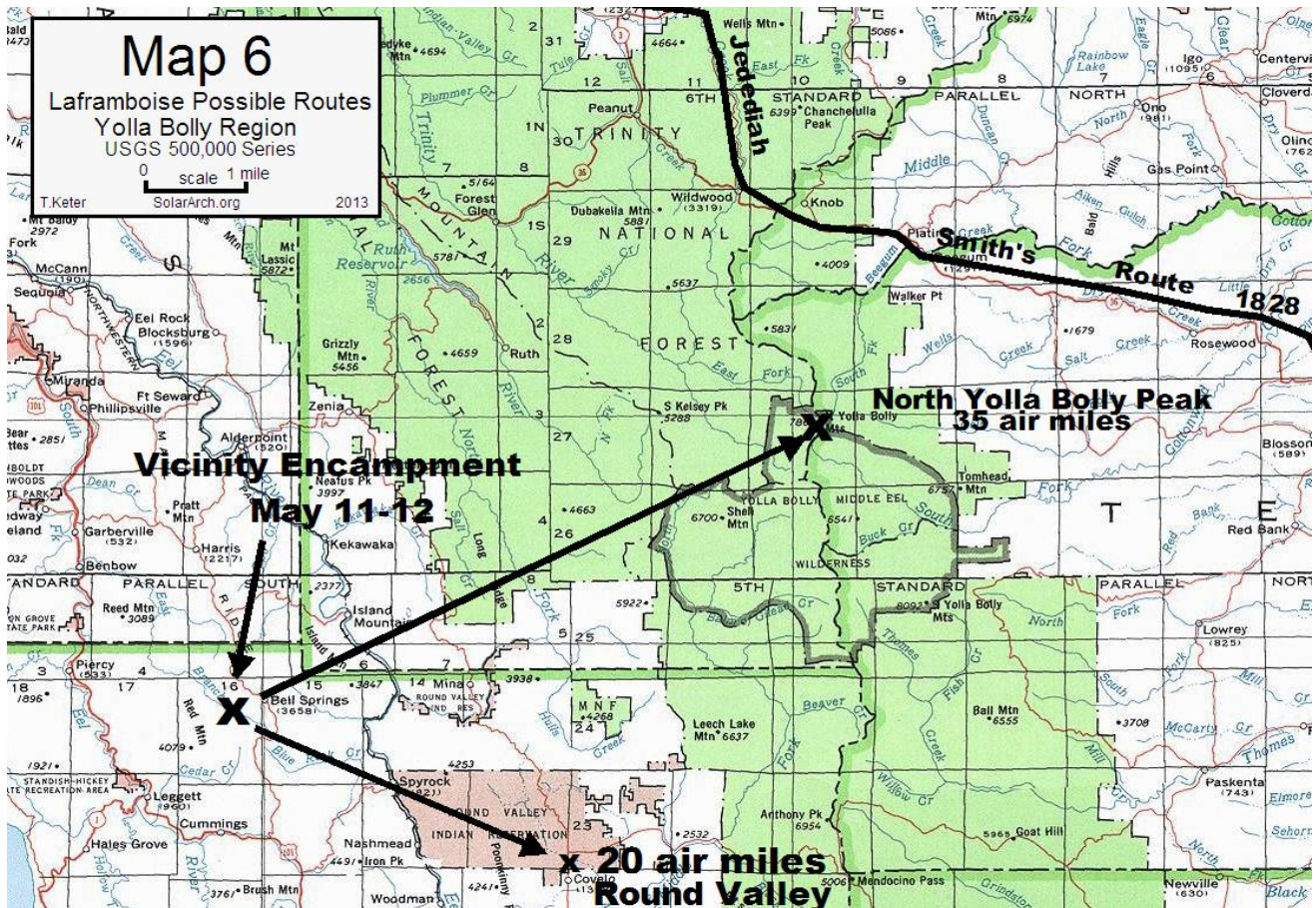
On May 14 Work made his last comment on the Laframboise Brigade in his journal:

...We marched 12 miles S.E. today. Michelle and party are encamped a little this side of our last station here they expect to be able to strike along the Mountain to the N.E. ... (Work in Maloney 1943:52). [From the original.]

As can be seen on Map 6 if Laframboise were to follow a compass bearing to the northeast it would have been in the direction of the crest of the Yolla Bollys that as Work noted in his journal "on which there is some snow", this general direction would have led to "Smith's Road," that descended to the east into the Sacramento Valley (Map 6).

Another motivation for passing through this region as hypothesized in my study of potential beaver habitat in the Yolla Bolly Mountains is that it has the topographical features and characteristics of high altitude areas where beaver and other fur bearing animals might be found (see Keter 2012).





## Conclusion

Although the exact route the Laframboise Brigade took back to Fort Vancouver from what is today northern Mendocino County is unknown, one thing is clear, given the location of their encampments from May 11th to May 13th in the vicinity of the Mendocino/Humboldt County line, whichever route Laframboise took, it is unlikely that he would have passed through Round Valley (Map 6). The reason for this supposition is because Round Valley is located about 20 air miles (and two or three days travel in steep country) to the southeast of their encampments of May 11th-13th and the Mail Ridge region, where on May 14th Work recorded in his journal that Laframboise was supposed to be heading to the northeast. What would not be logical given the time of year--whether they took a coastal route or the inland route-- would be for Laframboise to head far to the southwest and away from his ultimate goal Fort Vancouver.

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