

SPRING HILL STATION: This stage station was new and as yet unnamed in May of 1860. It was built in this oddly indefensible location as a “home station” where stage passengers boarded and passengers ate. It was valued at “not less than \$6,000” at the time of its destruction in 1865.

LILLIAN SPRINGS STATION: In the summer of 1859 this was the first stage station built in Colorado. It was used by three successive stage companies. When the L&PP was reorganized early in the 1860s as the Central Overland California and Pike’s Peak Express Company (COC&PP), Lillian Springs continued to be used until the new station, Spring Hill, was built.

DENNISON’S STATION: L.S. Dennison, his black-eyed wife Mary and son Albert lived here in 1860 and provided fresh teams for the coaches. This private ranch was destroyed in the Indian uprising of 1865 and the family apparently abandoned it. The site is not marked and is not accessible to the public.

ILIFF’S RIVERSIDE RANCH: In Iliff, on the north side of the river, was the headquarters ranch of the famous cattleman, John Wesley Iliff. Iliff built this Riverside Ranch in 1871 because a railroad had begun grading along the South Platte River and Iliff intended to use the ranch as a shipping center for his cattle. The railroad was abandoned, but Iliff fenced a large area here anyway and drove the cattle to Julesburg for shipping. Unfortunately the site is not marked.

VALLEY STATION: This station was built in 1859 and served from the beginning of the South Platte Trail to the end under four stage companies: The L&PP, the COC&PP, the Overland Stage Company, and Wells Fargo and Company. After 1863, there was a telegraph station here. In the turbulent month of January 1865, a company of cavalry commanded by Lt. Judson J. Kennedy was sent to Valley Station to do what it could to protect travelers and settlers. Kennedy arrived on the morning of January 15 in the middle of a series of Indian attacks in the area and found Valley Station so badly damaged by a previous attack that he ordered his men to fortify the station with “government corn and adobes that were nearby.” A sign and marker at the site are 3.7 miles northeast of the Overland Trail Museum on River-view Road. There is also a historical marker at the site of the first school in Old Sterling (north on US 138) and Hadfields Island (south on US 6) and a self-guiding tour brochure is available for historic sites in Sterling.

WASHINGTON RANCH: This ranch was founded by a former Pony Express rider, James Moore, and his brother Charles in 1861 or ‘62. There was a large store and huge corrals with very thick walls. The brothers and their employees successfully defended it against Indian attack on January 30, 1865.

WISCONSIN RANCH: This ranch was established by two teamsters, Ralph and John Coad, as a supply station for their freighting business. Here they kept a herd of oxen and large storehouses of supplies to be freighted into Denver in the winter when prices were high. Mark Coad was here with his sister, her husband and their two children on January 15, 1865, when the Indians attacked. Mark claimed that not only did he hold off the Indians but that he killed three of them. Lt. Kennedy’s soldiers evacuated the family after the Indians had withdrawn. The ranch was nearly destroyed.

AMERICAN RANCH: Originally called Moore and Kelly’s, it was a station for changing teams for the Overland Stage Company. It was operated by an Irishman, William Kelly and his wife. It probably received its name when it became a post office in 1863. When the station burned accidentally in 1864, the Kellys abandoned it. A newcomer, William Morris, his wife Sarah, and two infant boys settled here shortly after. The Indian attack on January 15 caught the family off guard. William and three hired men were killed, a fifth man escaped though badly wounded. Sarah and the children were abducted by the Indians. She survived but the children did not.

FORT WICKED: An historical marker two miles south of Merino on US 6 identifies the site of what was simply called Godfrey’s Ranch, until the owner gave it this catchy name after its successful defense against Indian attack. There are a number of dramatic and fanciful stories about how the Godfreys defended the ranch buildings against the Indians, especially how the daughter, Celia, put out a fire in the haystack amid a shower of flaming arrows and bullets. Actually, Holon Godfrey, his wife Matilda, and several children lived here from 1860 to 1867 and operated a store, serving travelers with staples plus baked goods, butter, eggs, and fresh vegetables in season. With the coming of the railroads, the stage stations were abandoned, the sod buildings melted back into the ground, most of the trail ruts filled in with sand or were plowed over so they are no longer visible, and an era passed into history.



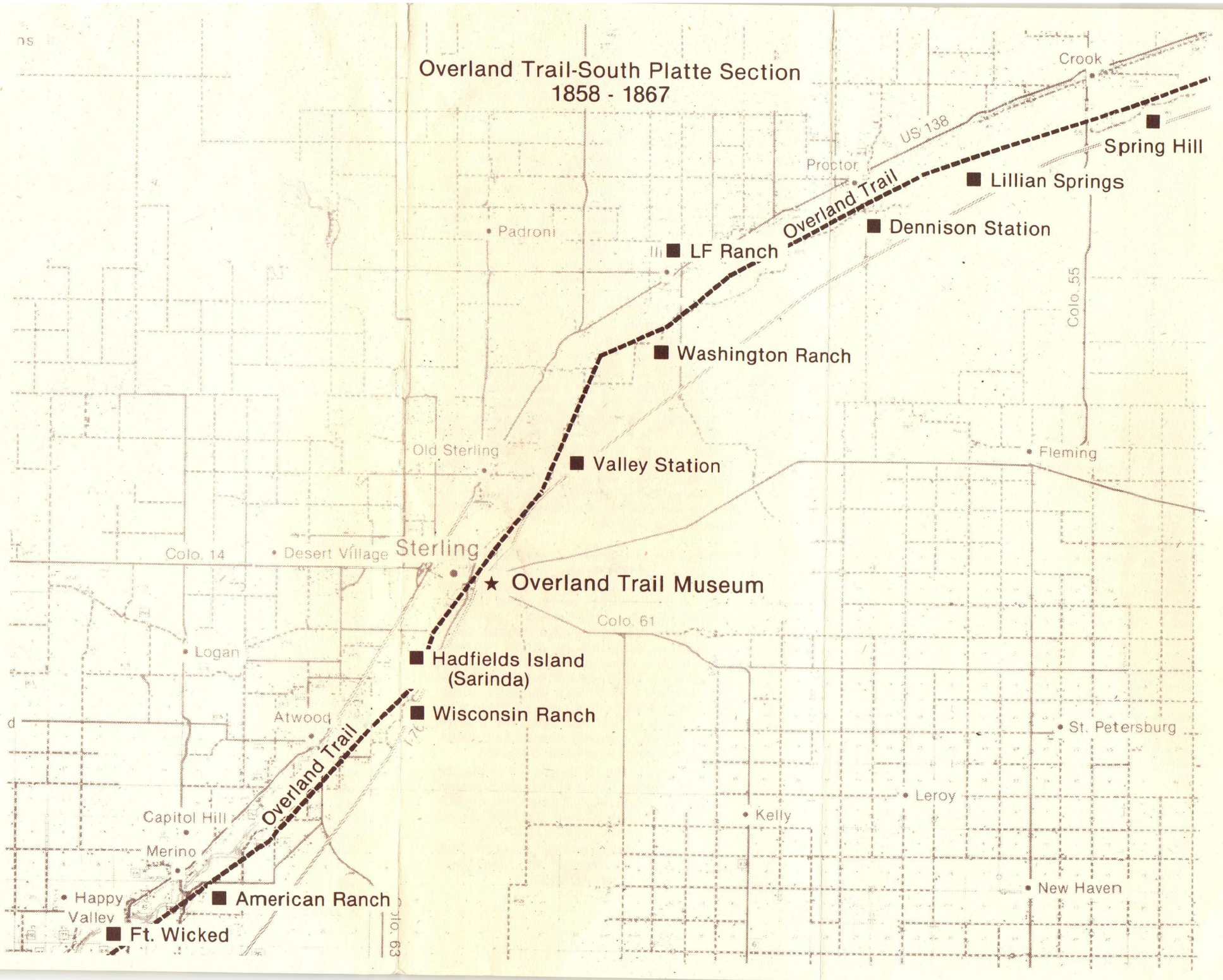
A Self Guided Tour In Logan County

ENJOY a scenic, rural drive into the past to meet the ghosts of Colorado pioneers: The miners, fur traders, settlers and Indians who used the “superhighway” of the high plains. On an average day thousands of people and hundreds of wagons deepened the ruts and widened the road to 7.5 feet in places. Some of the sites are marked, so you can stand on the spot where the stage coach passengers stopped at the sod buildings for their meals of buffalo, antelope, biscuits, coffee, and dried apple pie. Sites can be reached from I-76 which passes through the sandhills, or from US Hwy 6 & US Hwy 138, which joins the small towns built between 1874 and 1908, with their early buildings still standing. There are good roads along the river in the Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area and from the Overland Trail Museum in Sterling to Atwood (County Road 370), that roughly parallel the trail, where the wagon drivers cursed the endless sand and the insects and the heat of the treeless river bottom.

A monument with directions for reaching the historical markers at Spring Hill and Lillian Springs is just east of the river on the stretch of Highway 55 between Crook and I-76 at the Tamarack Ranch entrance.

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Overland Trail-South Platte Section 1858 - 1867



Crook

Spring Hill

■ Lillian Springs

■ Dennison Station

■ LF Ranch

■ Washington Ranch

■ Valley Station

★ Overland Trail Museum

■ Hadfields Island (Sarinda)

■ Wisconsin Ranch

■ American Ranch

■ Ft. Wicked

US 138

Colo. 55

Colo. 61

Colo. 63

Proctor

Padroni

Old Sterling

Sterling

Desert Village

Colo. 14

Logan

Atwood

Capitol Hill

Merino

Happy Valley

Fleming

St. Petersburg

Leroy

Kelly

New Haven