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# The Crown Collection of Photographs of American Maps

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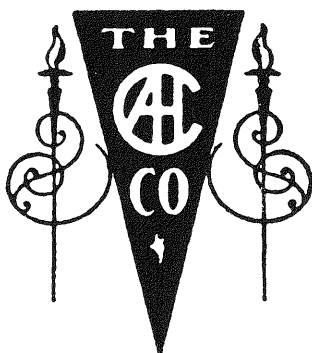
Selected and edited by

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**VOL. 1**  
**IV**

**PLATTE RIVER ROUTES**

**NO. I**

**THE CROWN COLLECTION  
OF  
AMERICAN MAPS  
SERIES IV**

**THE  
AMERICAN  
TRANSCONTINENTAL  
TRAILS**

**EDITED BY  
ARCHER BUTLER HULBERT  
DIRECTOR OF THE STEWART COMMISSION ON  
WESTERN HISTORY COLORADO COLLEGE**

**VOLUME I  
THE PLATTE RIVER ROUTES**

**PUBLISHED BY  
THE STEWART COMMISSION ON WESTERN HISTORY  
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO**

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Series Four of the "Crown Collection of American Maps," of which this is Volume I, will contain upwards of 300 blue prints of the main overland trails of America. The first four volumes, under the titles "The Platte River Routes," "The North and South Platte Routes," "The Oregon Trail in Idaho and Oregon" and "The California Trail: Fort Hall to Placerville," will portray what is familiarly and popularly known as the Oregon Trail from Independence, Mo., to the Dalles, Oregon; together with its more important feeders or branches, the Mormon Trail, Omaha to Fort Laramie, Wyo., the Overland Stage route, Julesburg, Colo., to Salt Lake City, and the California branch from the older highway, Yale, Ida., to Placerville, Calif. Other volumes will present the various "Santa Fe" trails from Independence, Mo., to Santa Fe.

This project had its origin in actual need; it was found to be next to impossible to use the many manuscripts and published diaries and journals of overland travelers in the teaching and study of Western history because of the lack of maps; not to make full use of such material was to ignore picturesque sources of value.

This inception of the work explains both its present format and the methods used to carry it out; the maps are useful only to check and identify by range and township the records of old-time travelers which make an heroic age of American history live again.

Anyone acquainted with the subject knows, however, that no great thoroughfare of old, such as the Oregon Trail or Santa Fe Trail, was ever a single track except in certain widely-separated spots where nature made only one track possible. The difficulty in calling a specific track among the ganglia which made up these trails the "Oregon" or "Santa Fe" trail, has been patriotically met by hereditary and historical societies in the erection of markers and monuments. Such work, accurately done, has a large inspirational value and should be widely encouraged.

To achieve a uniform accuracy in the present maps we have always followed the lines of the trails as laid down on the original plats of townships by the first surveyors. Wherever we have shown a solid line that is the course of the trail in question as found by the original surveyor. Ordinarily those surveyors fortunately left blank spaces where the trails were not found by them. These hiatuses we have usually bridged over by dotted lines. This was sometimes done by the surveyors themselves; but in all cases dotted lines indicate a conjecture either by a surveyor or the editor. Frequently dotted lines on an original survey indicate a point where the old trail broke out into numerous routes to overcome a difficult topography. As a result of this system, the solid lines on our maps may be relied upon as the surest composite of the ganglia which made up the trail in question. That, in all cases, these represent the so-called "original" trail, is open to discussion. That they were so called by the original surveyors is shown by the names frequently attached to them on the original plats; these names are reproduced on our maps in quotation marks just where they stand on the old plats. Local traditions here and there would indicate variations in route; traditions must be followed with discernment; they are sometimes at fault; sometimes they are truer than the very documents used to prove or disprove them. The "John Doe" trail may have originated as a trapper's packhorse route. When wagons came their drivers may have, and probably always did, find another, although nearby, route. When a stage line came through still greater variations perhaps followed. And all three of these routes can correctly be called the "John Doe" trail or road and confusion and often bitter debate may ensue.

Another difficulty also frequently arises. Any detail for any route for one decade might not hold true in the succeeding decade. "Improvements" disappeared quickly; springs dried up, floods altered pathways. Our maps present what may be loosely called the fundamentals as shown on the original surveys. It is easier and more reliable to work forward from such data than backward from modern data. Moreover, the old diaries and journals can be more successfully checked by the old-time data.

Each of our maps carry bibliographical notes which refer back by page to the lists of books given in each volume. The purpose of these footnotes vary, but, in the main, they accentuate the specific purpose of the maps, to interpret records of travel. In not a few instances these footnotes form a novel history of the townships through which the old trails ran. It is hoped that, by giving local historians access to perhaps hitherto unknown sources of interesting information concerning their fields, fresh vigor may be given to local history study; and that maps on a much larger scale than ours may be undertaken throughout the length of the ancient trails. For any perusal of the few records of travel (out of many) contained in our bibliography must convince anyone that if most novelists and all scenarios have made the subject of Western migration popular they have presented the pleasing and exciting episodes as commonplace events; whereas the records show that such were rare, and that what was commonplace hunting the path, searching for wood, water and grass, nursing the sick, burying the dead, arguing with the discouraged and coping desperately with those who became mentally unbalanced and forever lunging ahead in clouds of stifling dust, would make neither popular novels or moving pictures. Yet it is only by realizing the truth that we of another age can appreciate the true heroism of the Oregon or California emigrant.

As to bibliographical aids, no one will overlook the cartographical bibliography in Capt. G. M. Wheeler (Director) "Geographical Surveys, I" U. S. "Geological Report" (Washington, 1889); bibliographies of travel are found in H. C. Dale, "Ashley-Smith Explorations, (Cleveland, 1918); H. R. Wagner, "The Plains and Rockies" (San Francisco, 1921); F. S. Dellenbaugh, "Books by American Travelers and Explorers" (New York, 1920); and C. W. Smith, "Pacific Northwest Americana" (New York 1921).

To the founders of the Stewart Commission, Philip B. and Frances C. Stewart, the editor is indebted for much encouragement and aid. It is doubly appropriate that the final edition of these maps should appear as the first publication of this Commission with this note of acknowledgment to its founders.

ARCHER B. HULBERT

Colorado College,  
Colorado Springs, Colo.  
September 15, 1926.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY\*

The following easily accessible works of travel are cited in the following pages in abbreviated form. General and local histories will be found of great additional value.

TITLE	Date of Trip
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Burton, R. F., "The City of the Saints"	1860
Clark, C. M., "A Trip to Pikes Peak"	1859
Clayton, W., "Journal"	1846-1847
Crawford, M., "Report," S. Ex. Doc. 37 Cong. 3 Sess. 17	1862
Cross, O., "Report," S. Ex. Doc. 31 Cong. 2 Sess. Pt. 2	1849
Dale, H. C., see "General Introduction"	
Delano, A., "Life on the Plains"	1849-1850
De Smet, "Life," by Chittenden and Richardson	
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Eells, M. F., "Journal," Ore. Pion. Assn. "Trans."	1838
Fremont, J. C., "Explor. Exped. to the Rocky Mountains"	1842-1844
Greeley, H., "An Overland Journey"	1859
Greer, W. A., "A Boy on the Plains"	1860
Heap, G. H., "The Central Route to the Pacific"	1853
Hewitt, H. R., "Across the Plains"	1862
Hoen, H. B., "Overland Guide"	
Inman, H., "The Great Salt Lake Trail"	
Kearny, S. W., "Report," H. of R. 29 Cong. 1 Sess.	1845
Kelly, W., "Across the Rocky Mountains"	1849
Leonard, Z., "Adventures" by W. F. Wagner	1834
Long, S. H., "Account of An Expedition," James, Ed	1819-1820
Lowe, P. G., "Five Years a Dragoon"	1857-1863
Ludlow, F. H., "The Heart of the Continent"	1867
Marcy, R. B., "The Prairie Traveller"	
McClure, A. K., "Three Thousand Miles"	1867
Meeker, E., "Personal Experiences"	1852
Meline, J., "2000 Miles on Horseback"	1866
Minto, J., "Reminiscences," Ore. Hist. Quar. II	1844
Morris, M. O., "Rambles in the Rocky Mountains"	1863

\*The bibliographies heretofore mentioned present detailed lists. Our purpose here is to name a few of the easily accessible works, to be cited later, which describe the routes herein mapped, in the various periods of their history (1820 to 1865). "Early Western Travels" will be cited as E. W. T. Recourse to the Index of this work will usually prove very profitable.

Palmer, J., "Journal"	1845
Parker, S., "Journal of an Explor. Tour"	1835-1837
Root, F. A., and Connelley, W. E., "The Overland Stage"	
Ruxton, G. F., "Life in the Far West"	1849
Sage, R. B., "Wild Scenes" and "Rocky Mountain Life"	1841-1843
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Wyeth, N. J., "Correspondence and Journals"	1831-1836
Wheelock, T. B., "Journal," S. Ex. Doc. 1, 23 Cong. 2 Sess.	1834
Young, C. E., "Dangers of the Trail"	1865
Young, F. C., "Across the Plains"	1865

**VOL. 1**  
**IV**

**PLATTE RIVER ROUTES**

**NO. VII**

## **THE OREGON TRAIL\***

**(INDEPENDENCE, MO., TO NORTH PLATTE, NEB.)**

**KEY MAPS: NOS. 1 AND 17**

\* The general use of the name "Oregon Trail" for the overland route to Oregon and (later) California has the authority of chronology. The first surveys, however, were made after the days of the famous California migrations and often carry the name "California". We use here the name commonly applied locally.

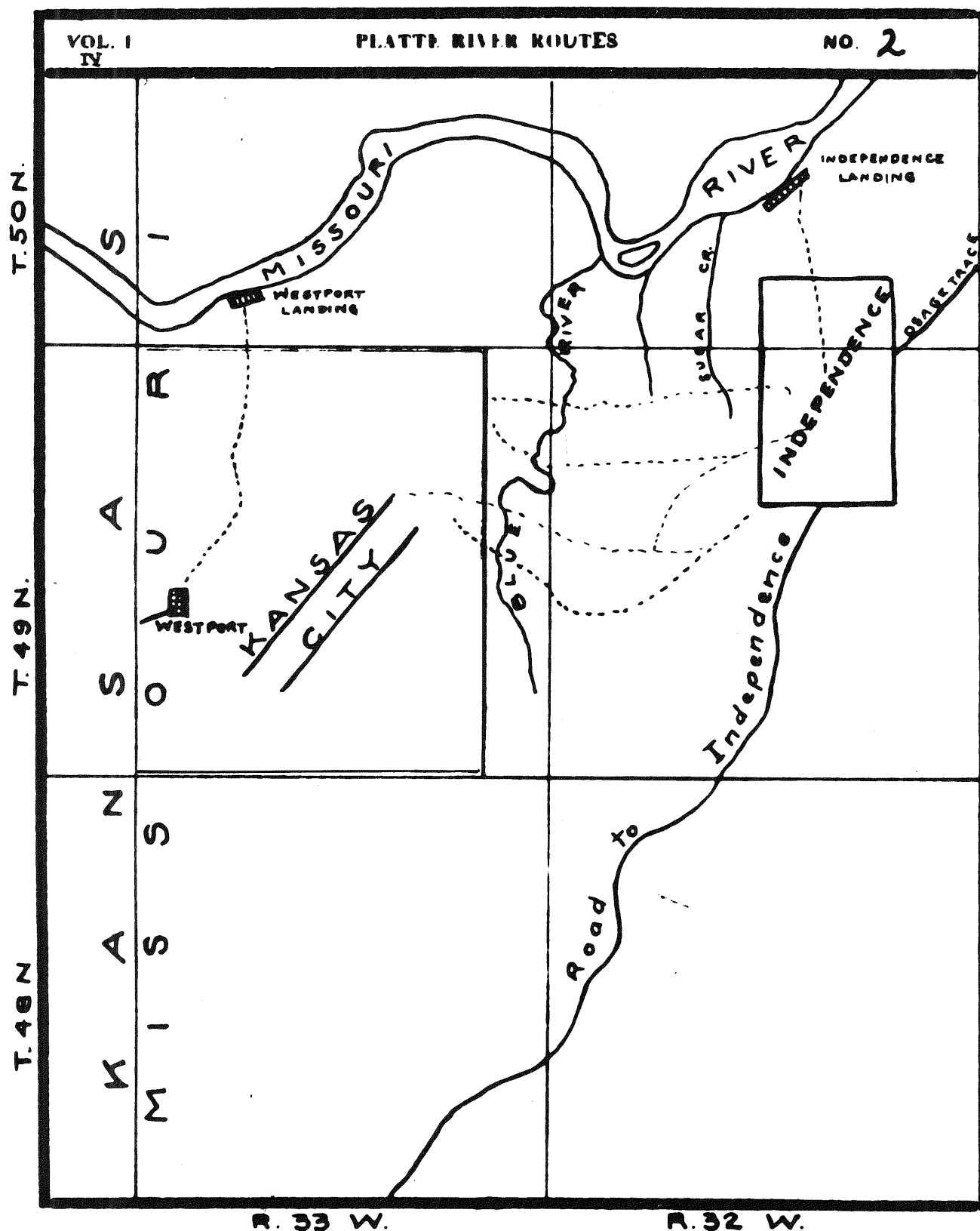
## NOTE TO VOLUME I

Volume I of this Series, entitled "The Platte River Routes," presents the historic Oregon Trail from Independence, Mo., to the junction of the North and South Platte rivers at North Platte, Neb. As inserts, the prongs of that trail coming out from Leavenworth, Atchison and St. Joseph and joining it on the Big Blue River, are given. Other maps also show the Mormon Road which ascended the Platte from the Omaha region and which parallels the Oregon Trail from near Fort Kearney to North Platte and joins it (see our Volume II) at Fort Laramie, Wyo.

Two "Key Maps" present these trails in Missouri and Kansas on the one hand, and in Nebraska on the other; the latter also shows the line of the old Nebraska City-Fort Kearney Road in outline.

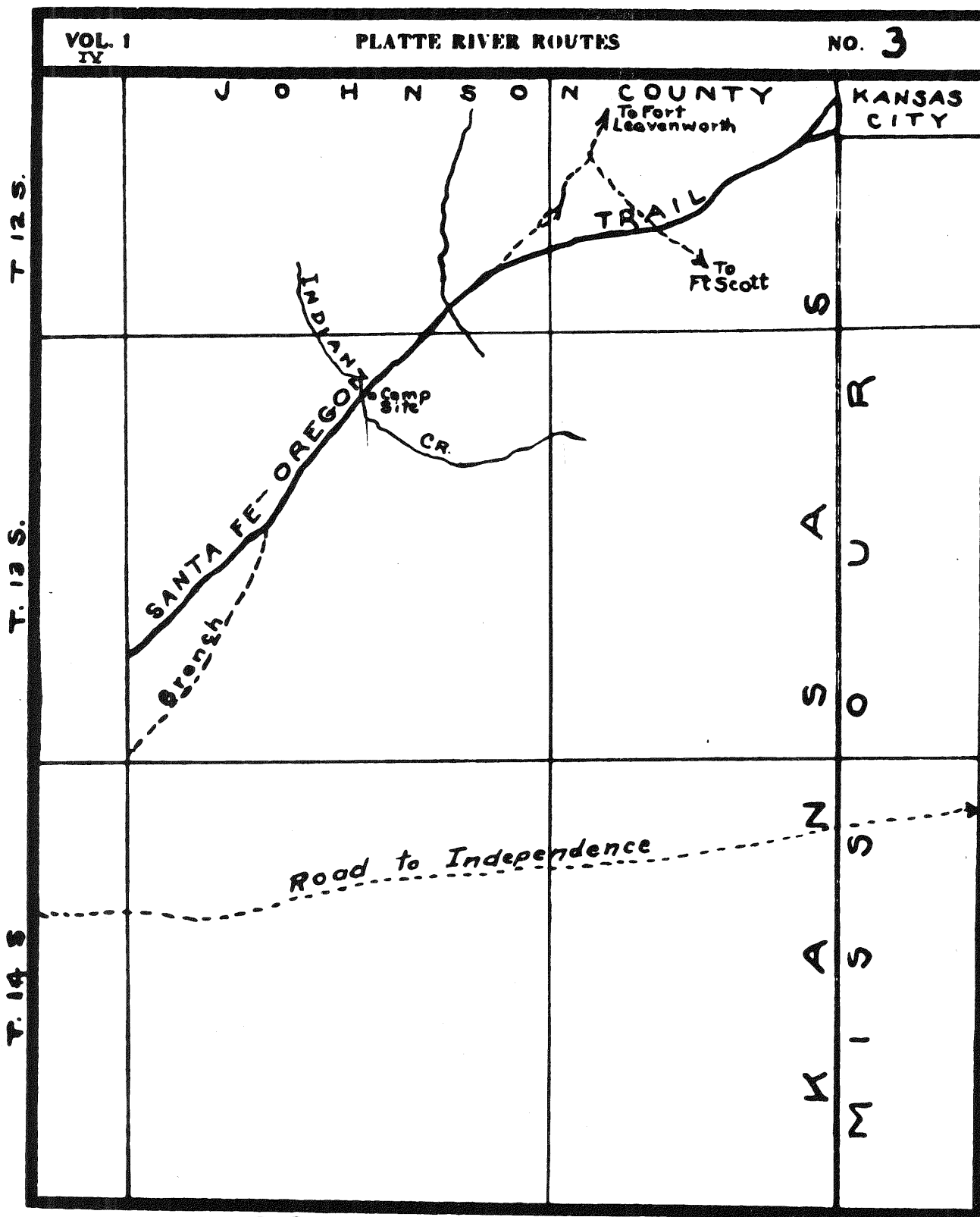
A. B. H.





Independence Landing, three miles north of Independence, Mo., and Westport Landing, four miles north of the original Westport, were the chief points where prospective travellers over the Santa Fe or Oregon trails left the Missouri river. Cf. Townsend, 22 and Kan. Hist. Soc. "Publications," II, 33. A score of trails indicated by our dotted lines led from these river ports toward the present site of Kansas City; they finally converged into the Santa Fe-Oregon trail just across the Missouri-Kansas boundary line. Cf. Gregg, E. W. T. XIX, 185-193; Palmer, 34; Townsend, 22-26; Eells, 62-63.

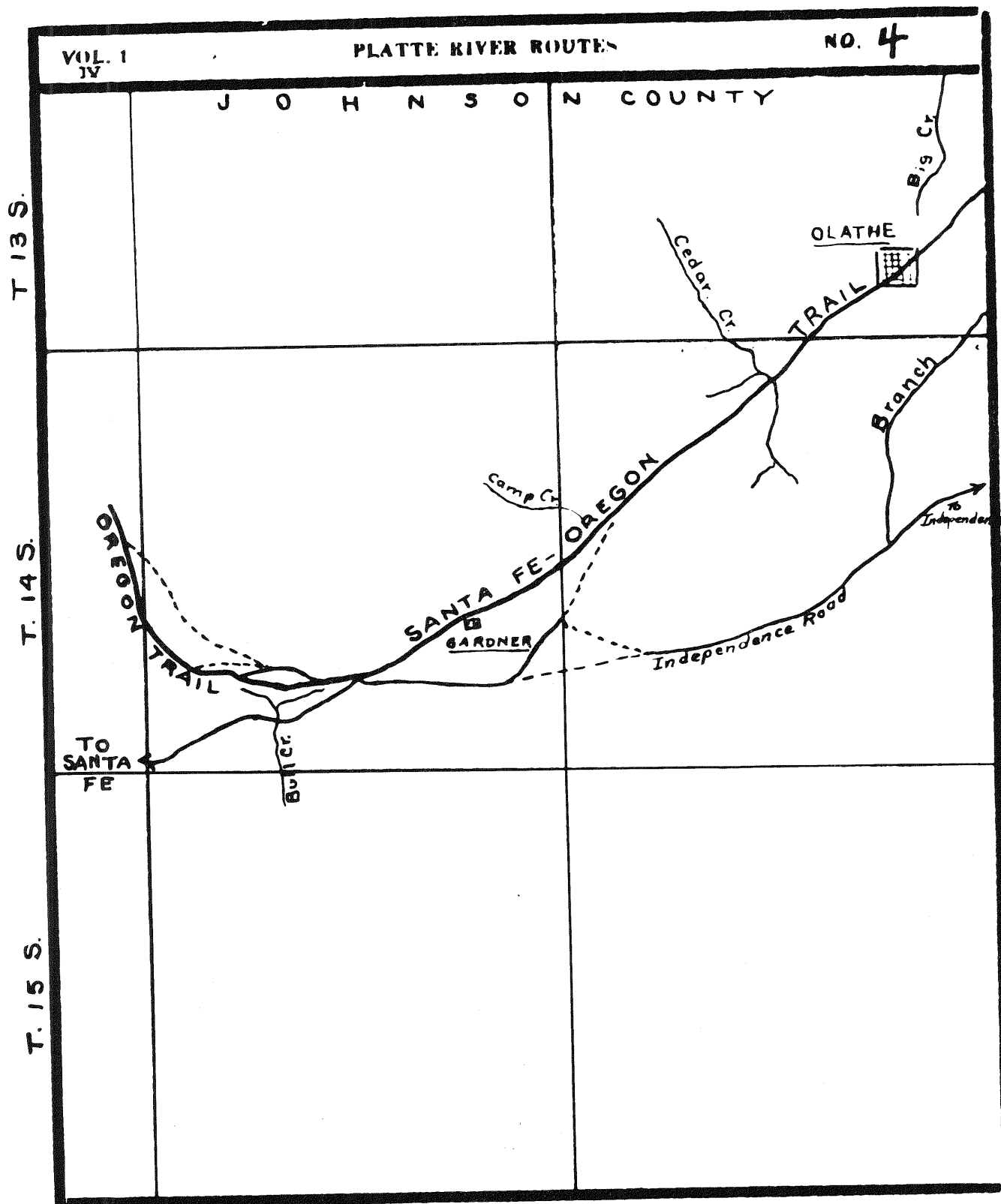




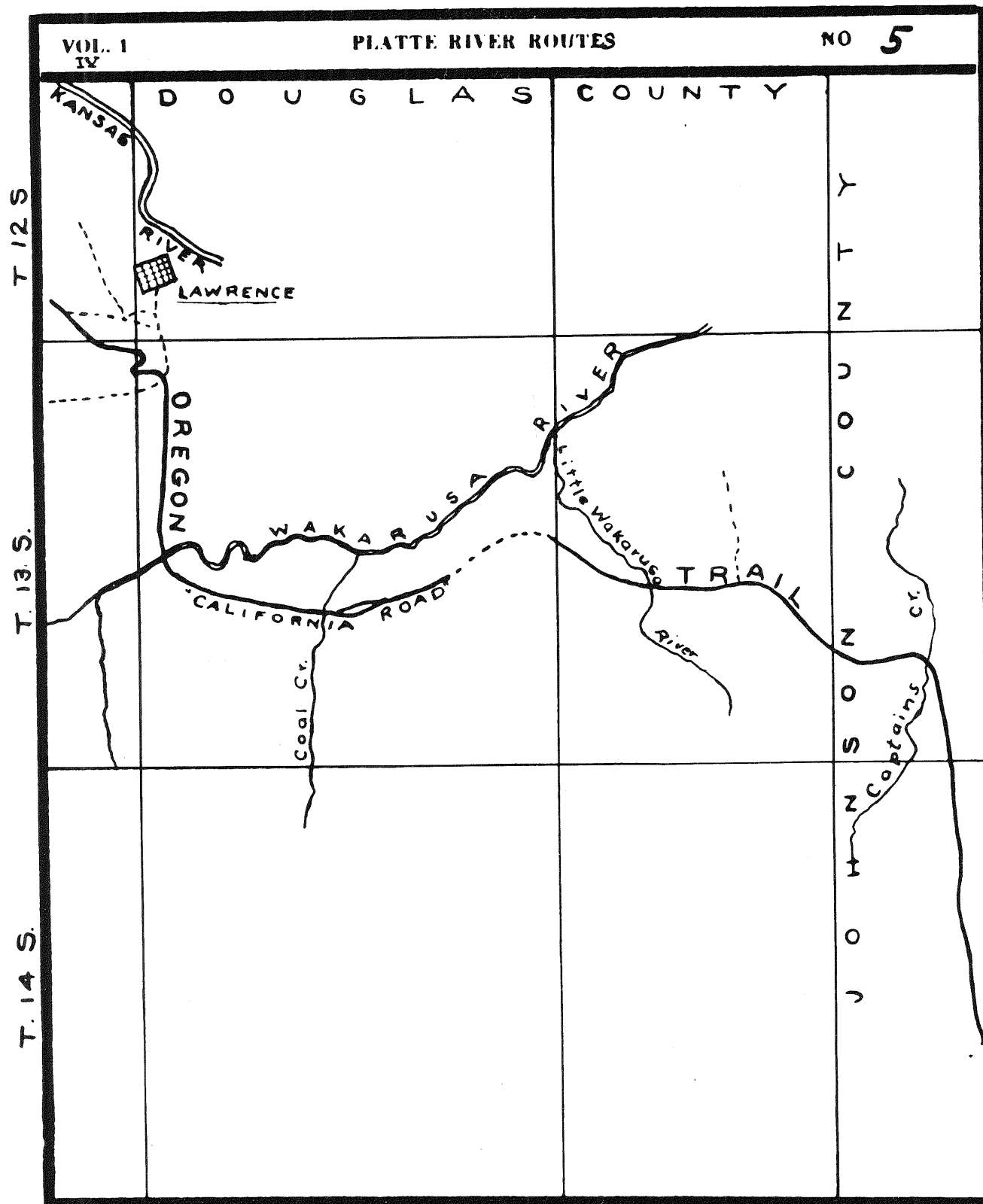
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R. 25 E.

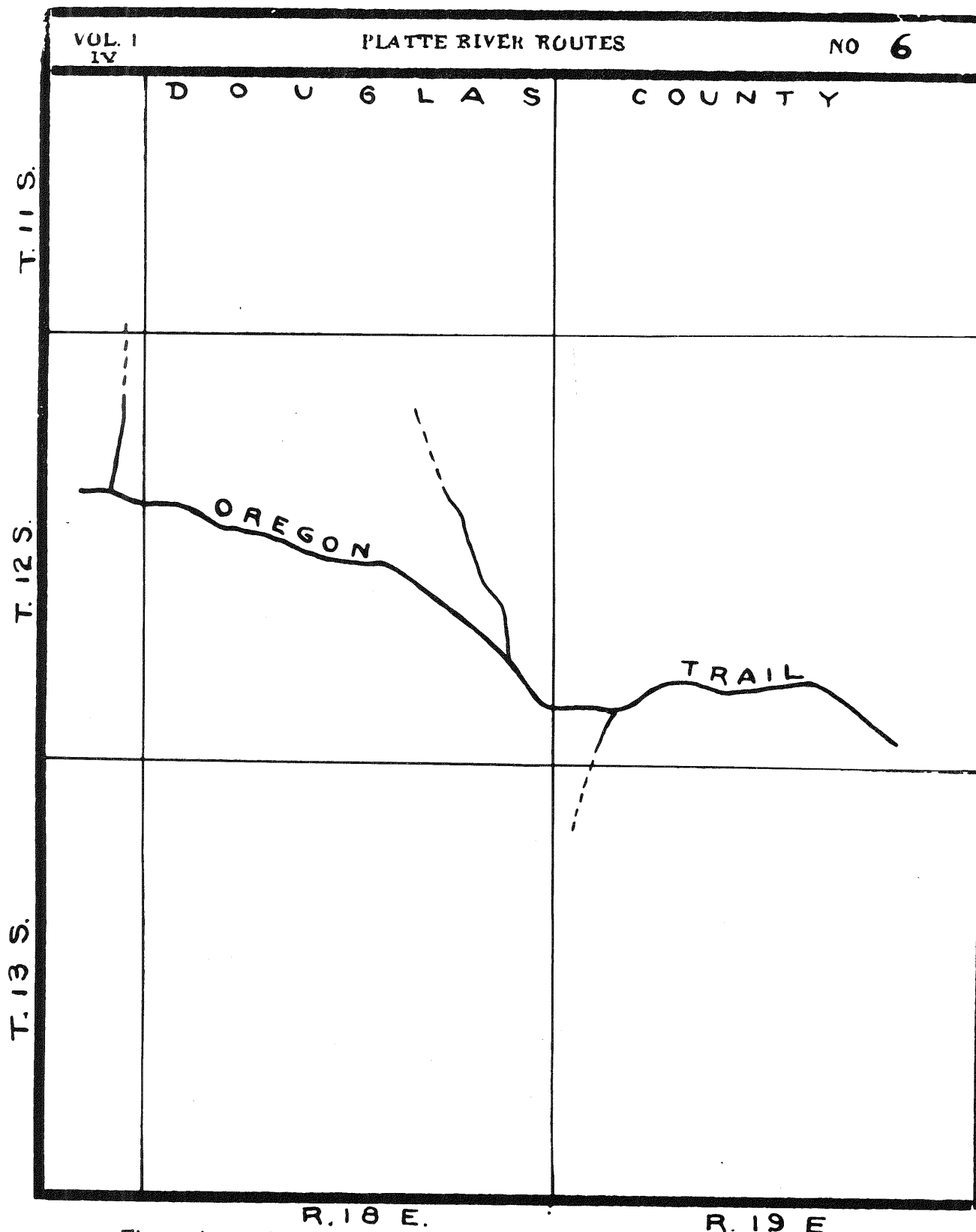
Crossing "the Line" Missouri-Kansas travellers felt they had entered the "boundless prairies." This passing the "extreme margin of civilization" (Sage, 14-15) was usually celebrated hilariously. Just beyond, the old Leavenworth prong of the Santa Fe-Oregon trail (see Map No. 14) came in to the main route. Timber at the crossing of Indian Creek made a pleasant camp site. A little to the south lay the "Independence Road," an alternate track which is shown on the preceding map and soon joins the main trail.



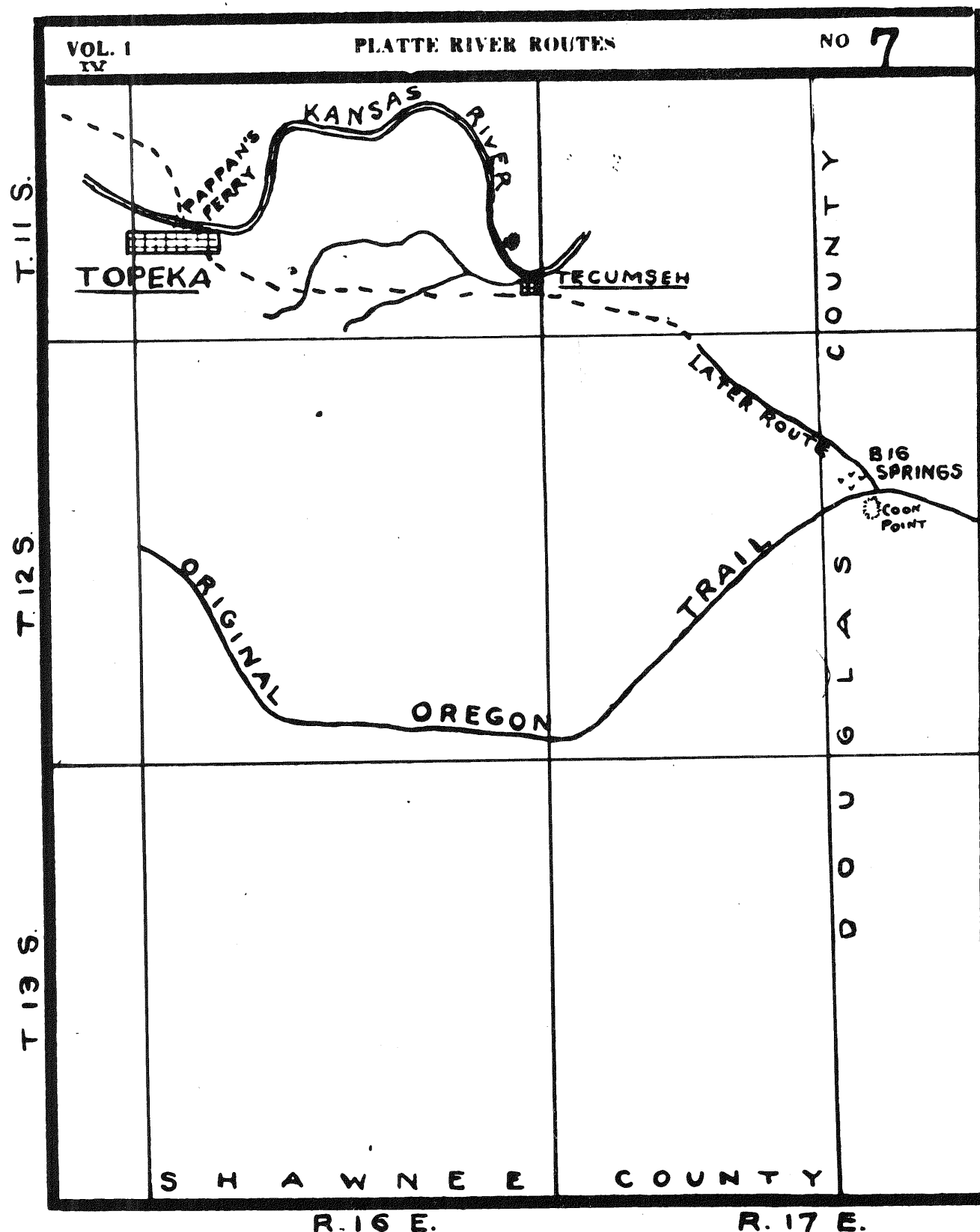
Passing Olathe (Greeley, 28) the old trail crossed Cedar or Caravan Creek. Here Caravan or Round Grove offered a good camping site (Gregg, 193; Kan. Hist. Soc. Report "Santa Fe Trail," 13). Beyond Gardner "Independence Road" joins the main trail at the historic point where the Santa Fe and the Oregon trails separated, east of Bull Creek. The Oregon Trail here turns northward from the older thoroughfare and strikes toward the Kansas River. Cf. Heap, 13-14; Kelly, 48; Marcy, 295 and Eells, 64.



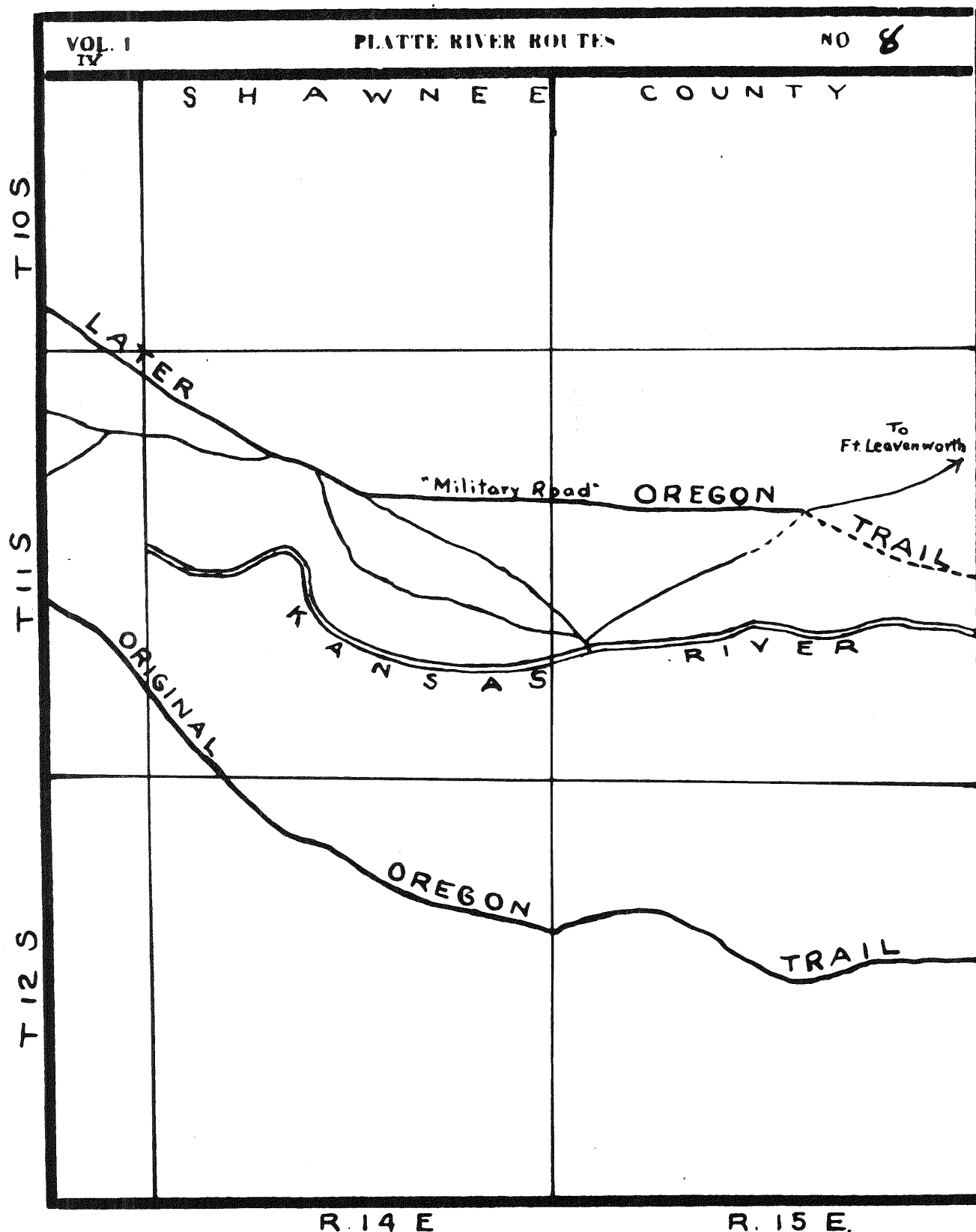
Swinging northward, the Oregon trail crossed Captain's Creek at various fords, and turning west, the Little Wakarusa and Coal creeks were encountered and, finally, the Wakarusa itself. It was such streams as these, with deep "cut banks," that afforded emigrants far more trouble, in proportion to their size, than the larger and better-known rivers which lay across their route, rivers which could be ferried. Cf. Kelly, 48; Eells, 64; Townsend, 28; Sage, 28; Palmer, 36.



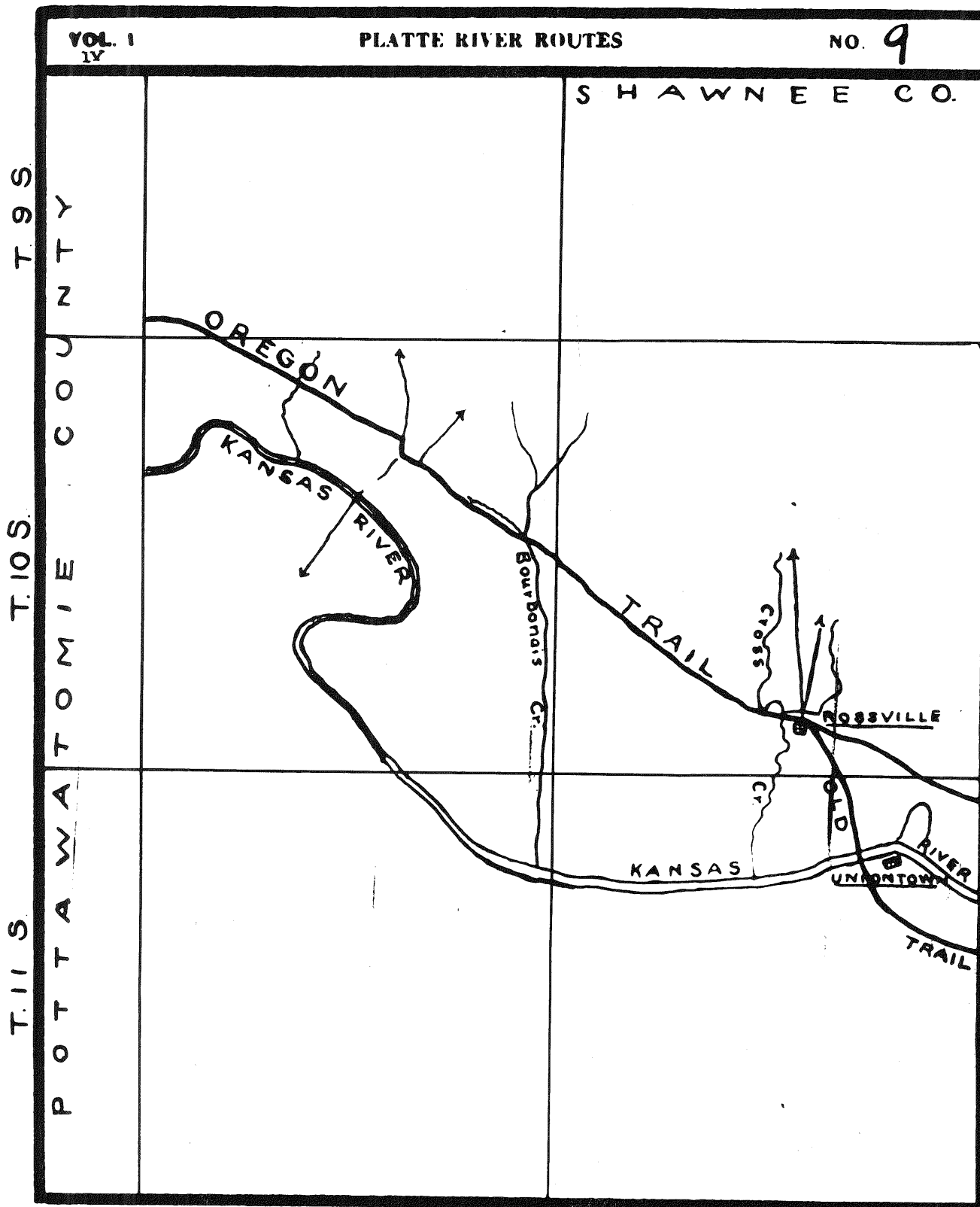
The pathway through the sweeping plains of Douglas County, as monotonous as the map suggests, made a deep impression on the minds of the early wayfarers on this "Platte Trail," as the eastern end of the Oregon trail was called by some (Sage 23). In their journals we now find the many comparisons of the plains to the ocean. The numerous "blind" tracks, indicated by dotted lines, led many astray as the customary landmarks disappeared.



In the neighborhood of Big Springs, well-known today and more noted in the old days, Cf. Kelly, 50; Sage, 23, the original Oregon trail bore southwest into the prairie toward the old Uniontown crossing of the Kansas River. The later route more nearly followed the modern highway toward Tecumseh and Pappan's Ferry on the present site of Topeka. Cf. Lowe, 33; Greeley, 30. Coon Point near Big Springs offered a reliable and welcome landmark.



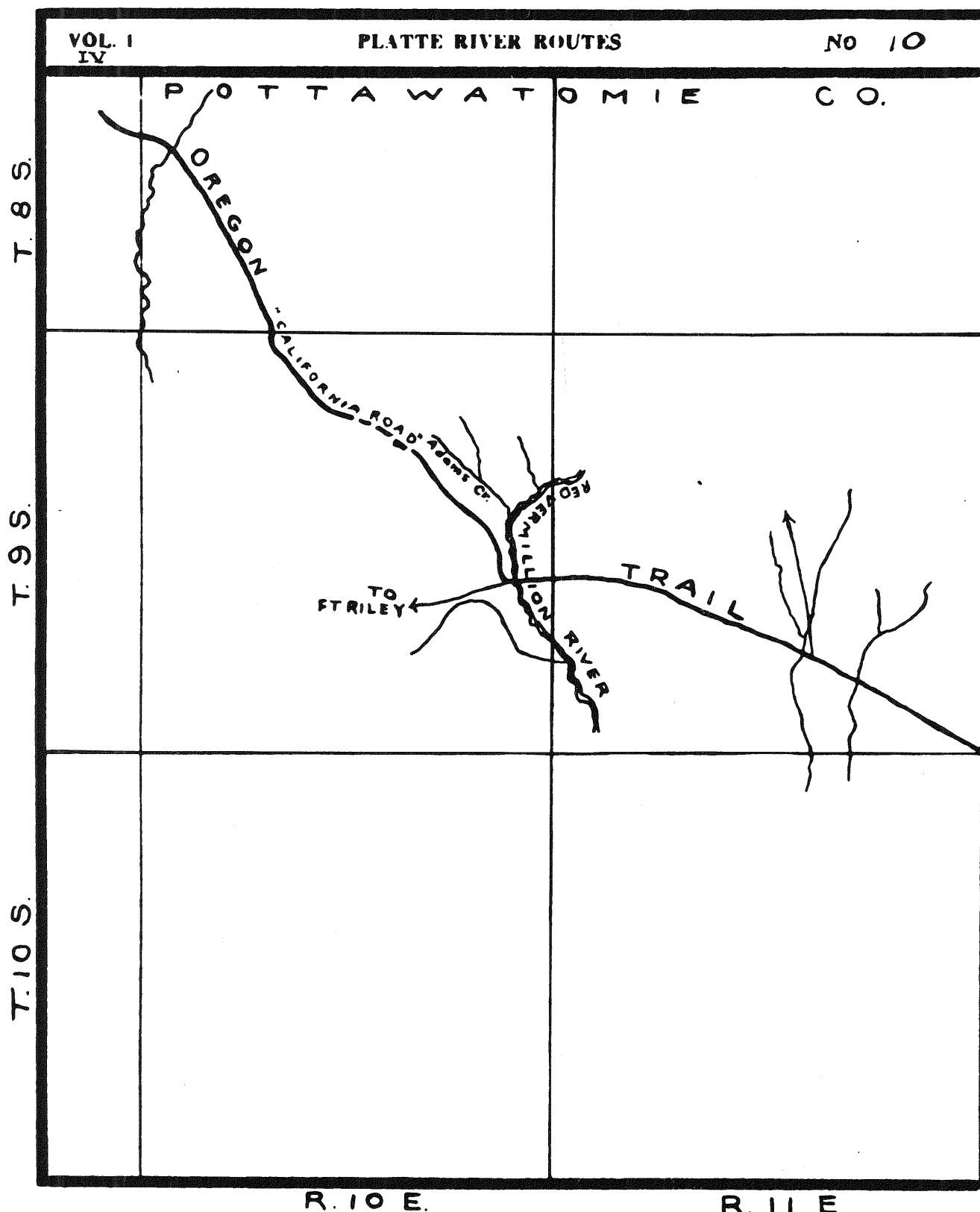
Leaving Big Springs, Palmer in 1845, for instance, describes the route as mounting "upon the ridge, which, after a distance of ten or twelve miles, becomes a broad rolling prairie" 37. The later trail, north of the Kansas, pursued the old track which became the historic, Fort Leavenworth-Fort Riley military road. The "blind" character of the path south of the river is graphically described by Eells, 64.



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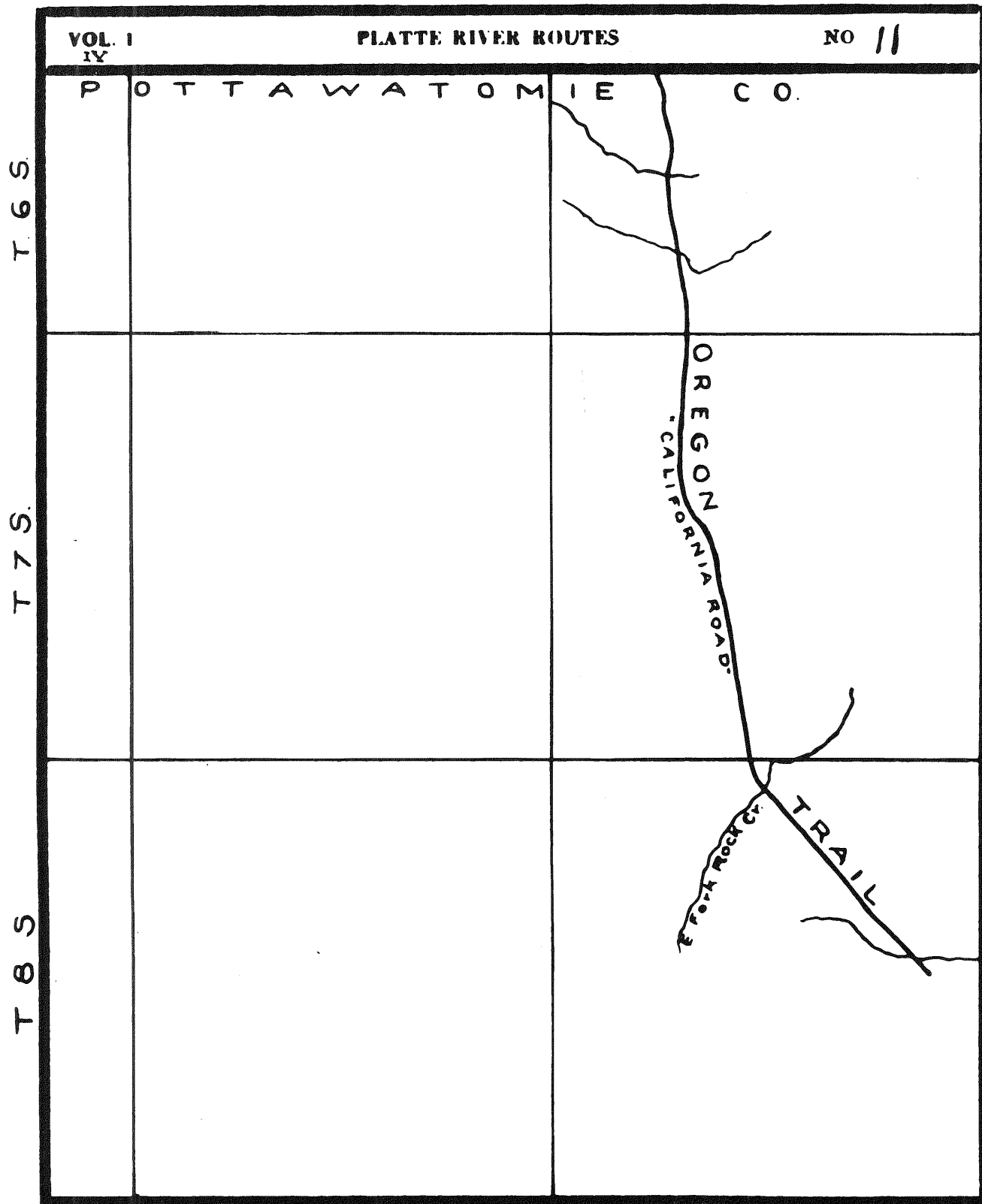
R. 13 E.

The much-dreaded crossing of the Kansas near old Uniontown was difficult enough in the early history of the trail (Fremont, 8). But such strategic spots were soon seen to offer lucrative points for investment of pioneer capital and ferries were established which, if high in price, at least offered comparatively safe means of overcoming a fearsome handicap to progress. The Pottawatomie Mission, opposite Uniontown, served as a relief station as well as point of inquest. Cf. Lowe, 92-94; Sage, 25; Kelly 51-54.



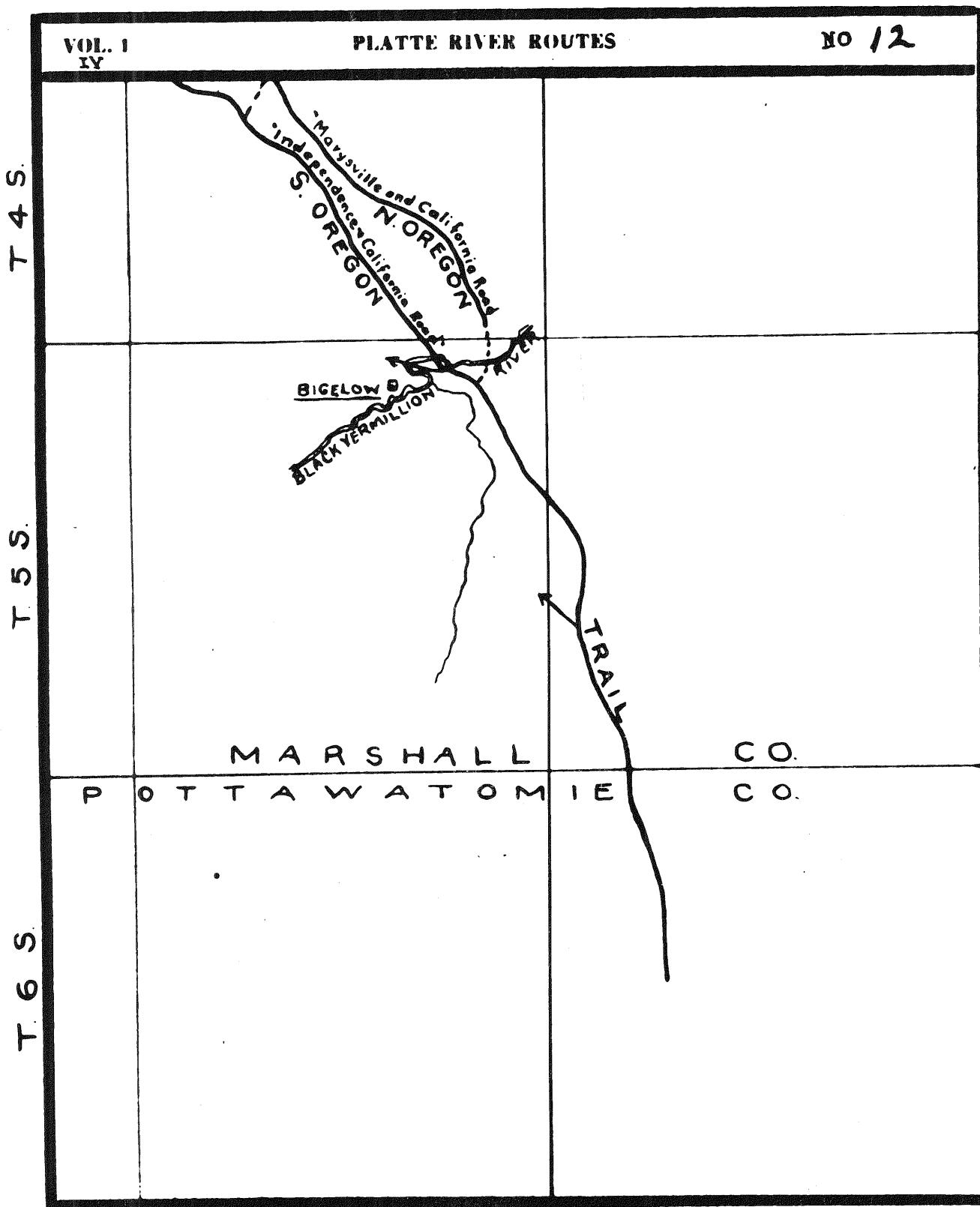
The Kansas River crossed, emigrants usually lay by and perfected the semi-military organizations deemed necessary as the Indian country to the northward was entered. Eells, 66; Sage, 29; Palmer, 39. Resuming the trail, thus fortified against misadventure, the first of the two Vermillion rivers, the Little Vermillion, now known as the Red, was encountered. It was often found to be more of a handicap than the much larger Kansas which had been left behind. Cf. Palmer, 42; Kelly, 56.



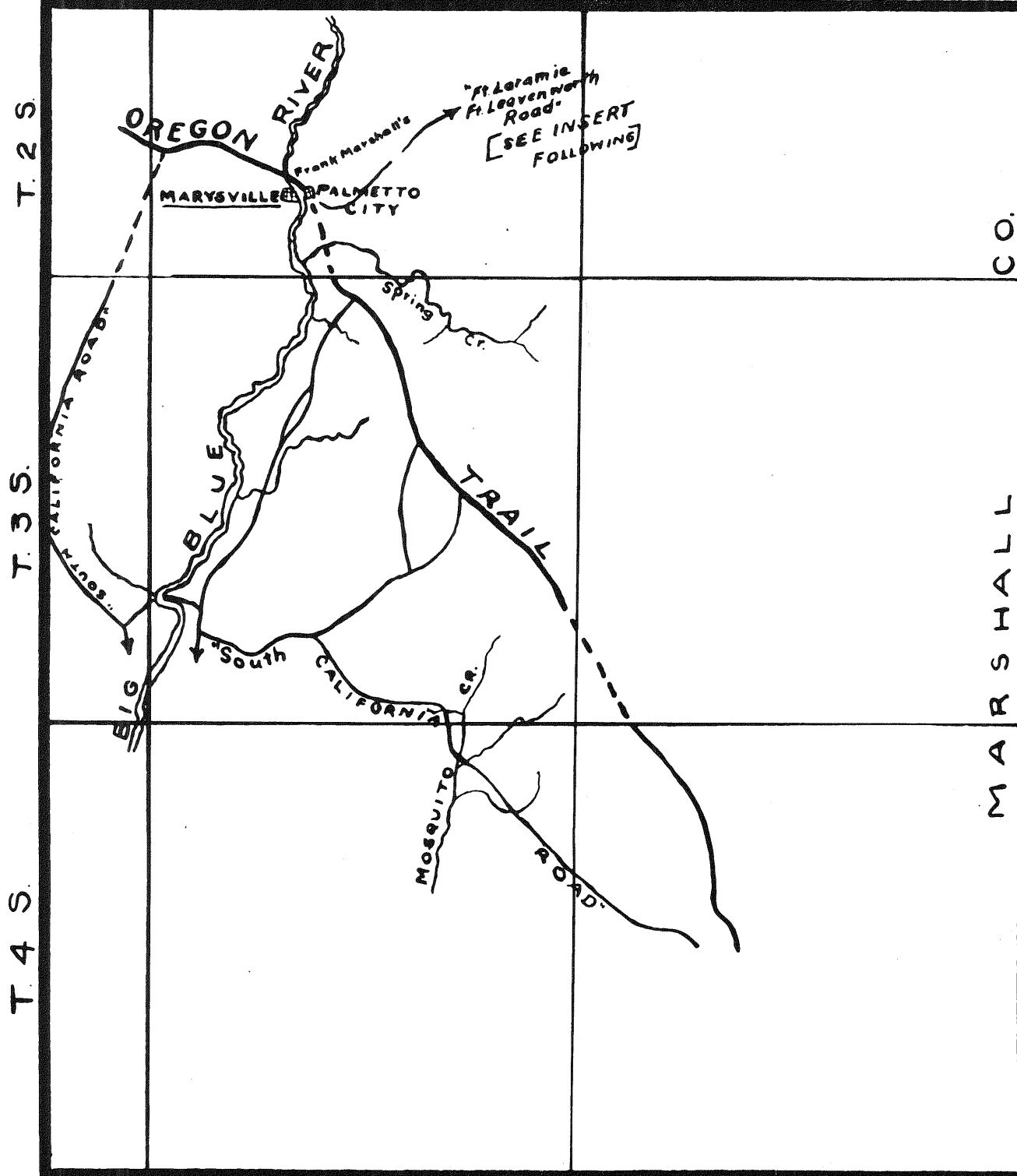


R 8 E. R 9 E.

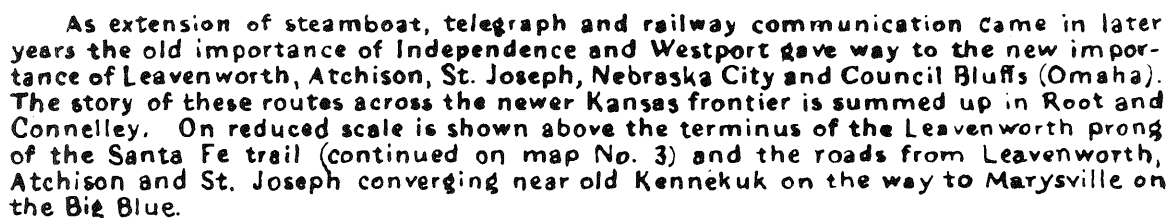
Emigrants to whom the stereotyped expressions "trackless prairies" and "pathless wilderness" had become common were uniformly amazed to learn that in real life such things were almost unknown. Those who supposed their Oregon Road would be a plain path which no one could miss, soon found that any thoughtless straying might mean hardship if not real danger. Innumerable trails so crossed and re-crossed the road that trained guides were sometimes confused. Kelly's experience (57 seq.) would have been amusing had it not proven almost a matter of life or death.

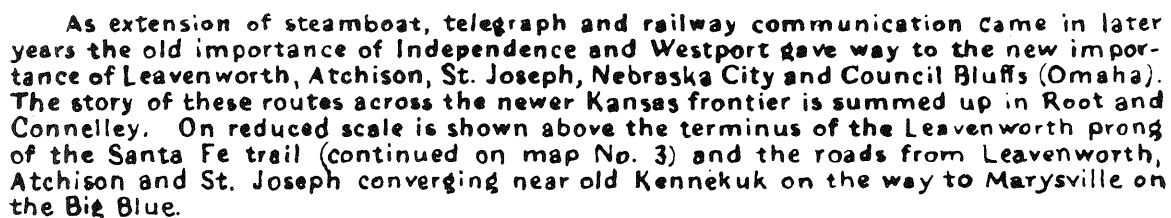


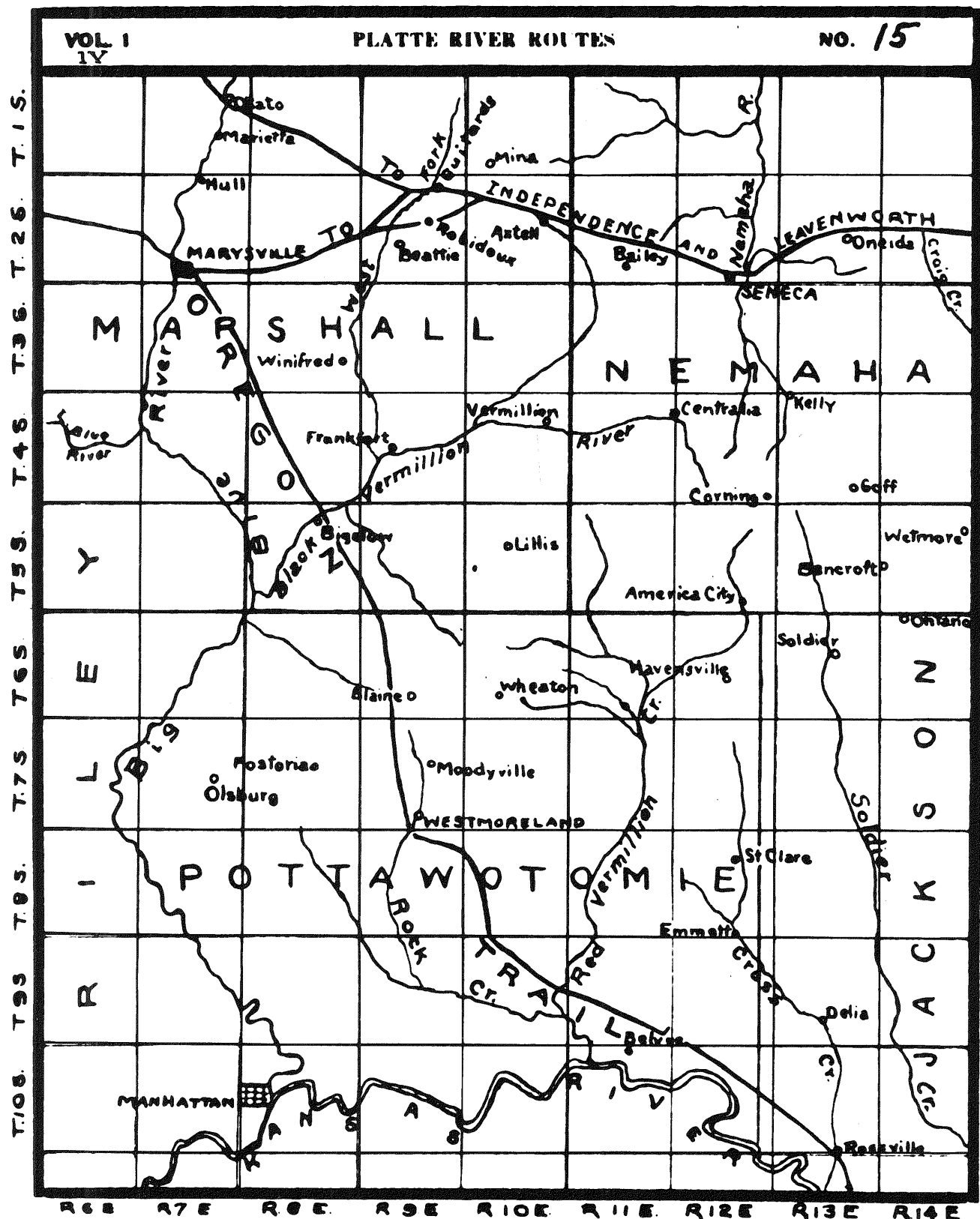
The Big Vermillion, or Black Vermillion as it is now called, proved the next serious hazard for the covered wagons of old. Cf. Townsend, 36; Palmer, 44. Yet delays here, or on the Big Blue just beyond, were taken excellent advantage of since the banks of these streams afforded the "last chance" to secure hickory timber for weakened or broken ox bows, axle trees, wagon tongues, etc. Extra supplies of this timber were gathered to meet the accidents likely on the long road ahead. Cf. Sage, 26; Palmer, 44.



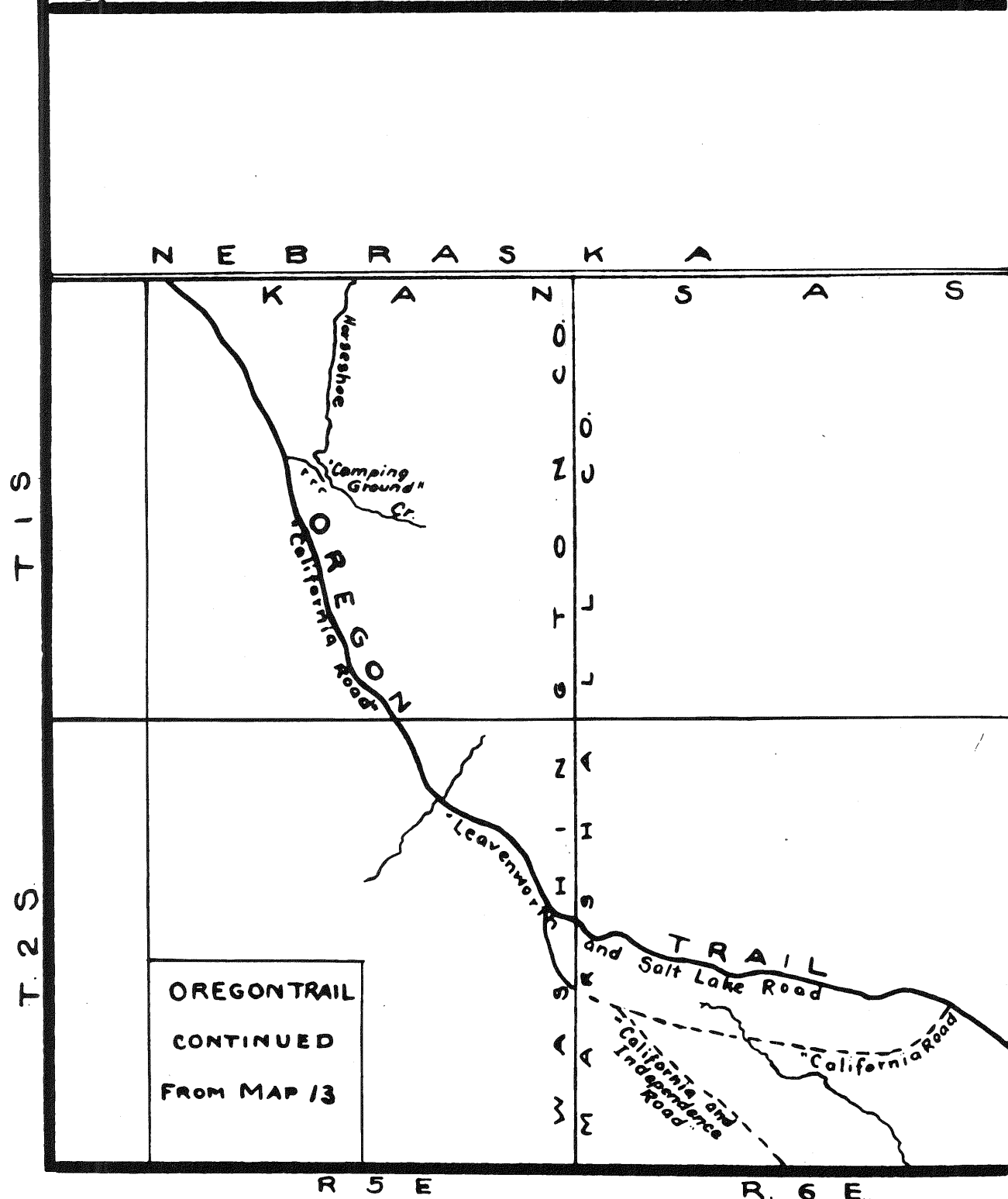
As the rich valley of the Big Blue was neared the old trail broke into many branches, used at different seasons and in different kinds of weather. The "South California Road" crossed the river some eight miles south of the main crossing place which was at Frank Marshall's near Palmetto City near the present Marysville. Here, as the following inserts show, the old trail was joined by the road from Fort Leavenworth, Atchison and St. Joseph. Cf. Kearny, 210; Minto, 134.







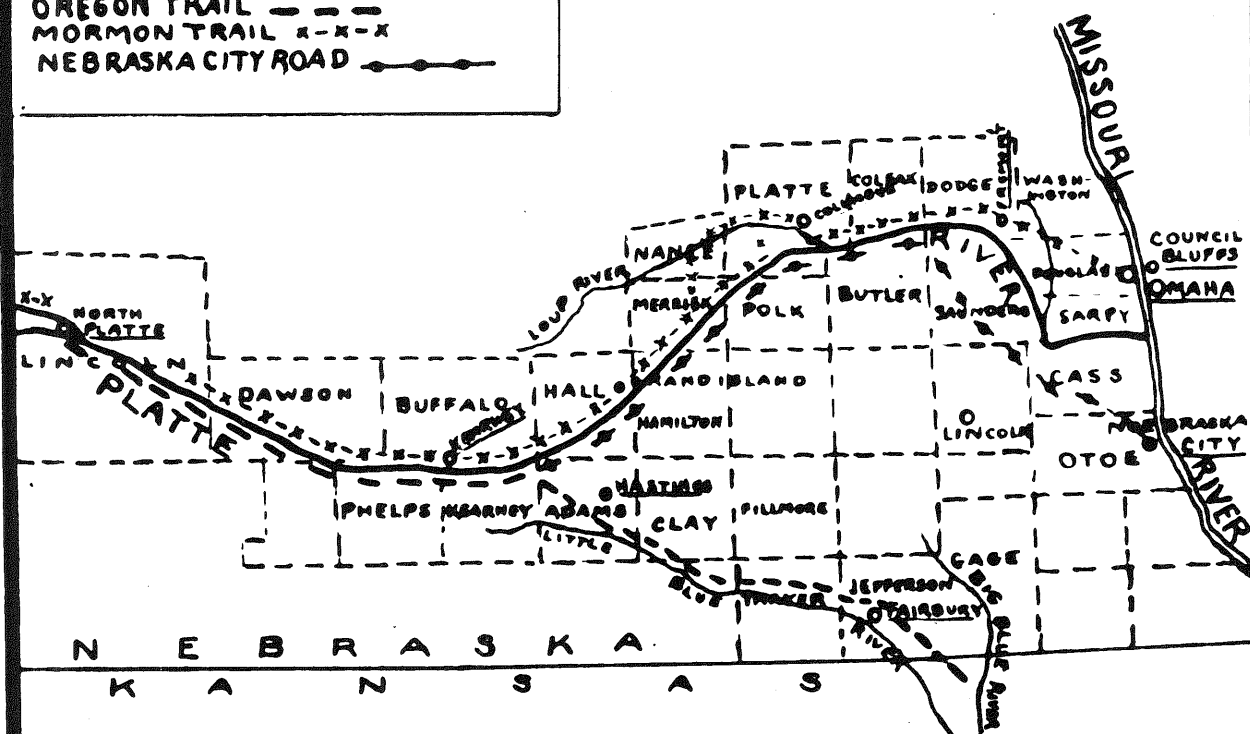
Crossing the Nemaha near Seneca, the Leavenworth-Atchison-St. Joseph route divides northeast of Robidoux, one fork (the first main stage line) crossing the Big Blue on the track of the Oregon Trail at Marysville, the other crossing the same stream near Okato and joining the Oregon Trail at Otoe, Neb. (see Map No. 18). For these routes given as inserts Cf. Lowe, 21-32, 34-35; Kan. Hist. Soc. "Transactions" I and II, 263-4 and "Collections" IV, 340; VII, 86; Burton, 505; Ludlow, 13; Morris, 35-47 Mar 260; Hewitt 30-35; F. C. Young, 46; Clark, 1-12.



After the days spent on the level reaches north of the Kansas River the pull up over the "mountain road" (Sage, 35) between the Big and Little Blue rivers offered a toilsome innovation to daily routine which few travellers fail to mention in their records as they finish the last lap of the trail within the present state of Kansas. The general vagueness of their knowledge of local geography is illustrated by Sage's omissions and Palmer's confusing the Little Blue with the Republican (45). Cf. Kelly, 66.

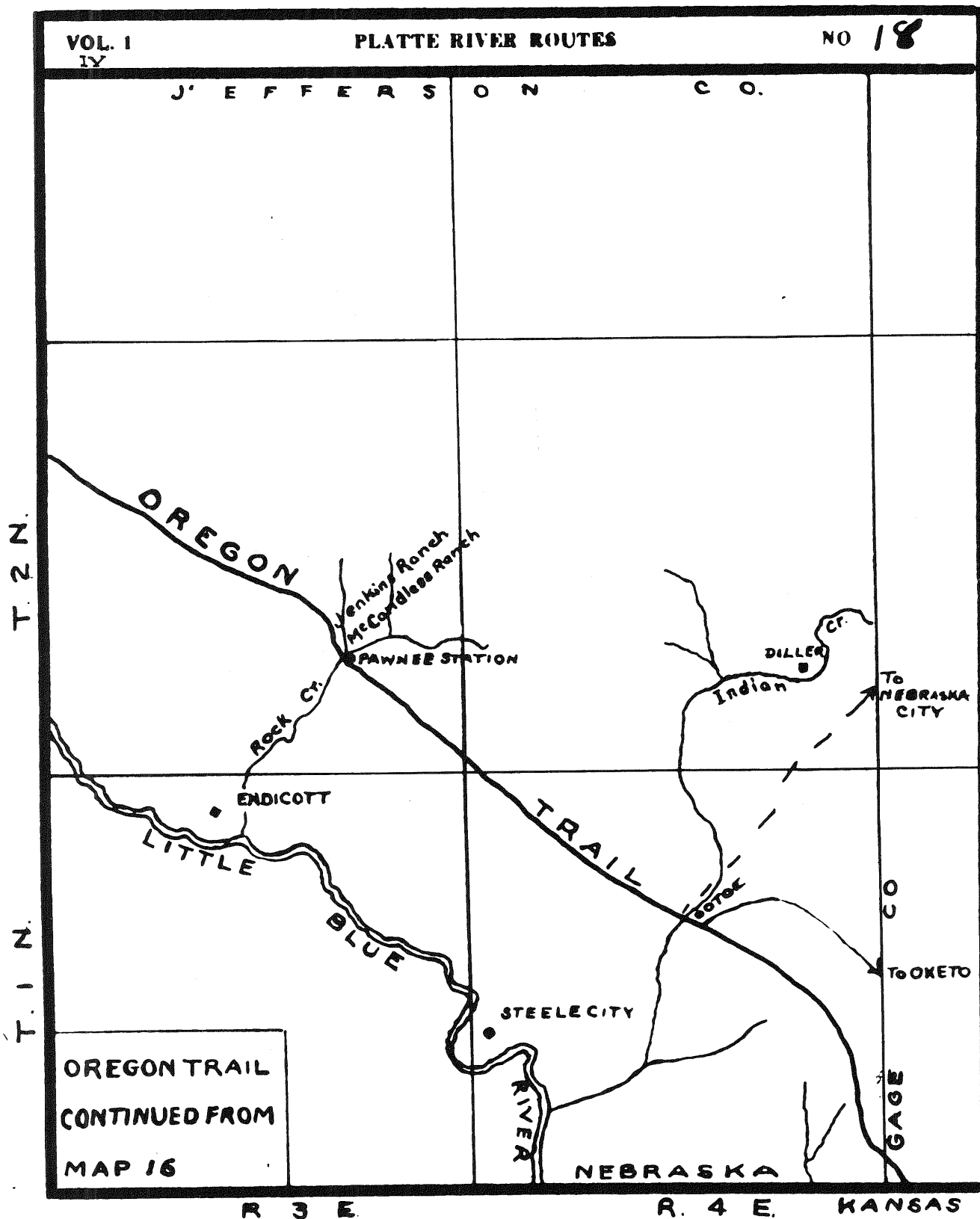
**KEY**  
**TO**  
**OREGON TRAIL**  
**MORMON TRAIL**  
**AND**  
**NEBRASKA CITY ROAD**  
**IN**  
**NEBRASKA**

OREGON TRAIL — — —  
MORMON TRAIL x-x-x  
NEBRASKA CITY ROAD — — —

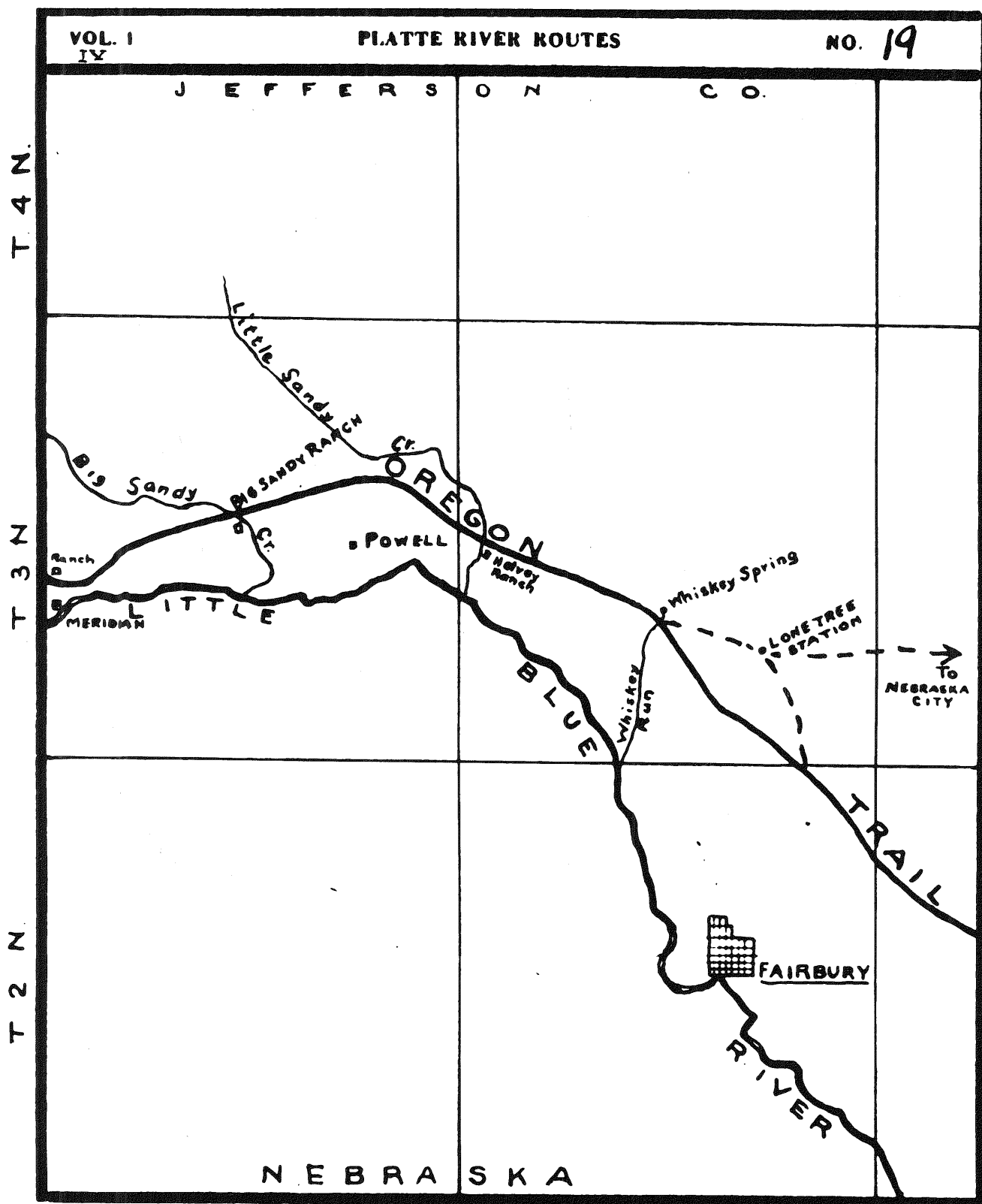


The above outline on reduced scale shows the route of the Oregon Trail from the Big Blue to North Platte, Neb. The old wagon road from Nebraska City is also included, showing its junction with the older trail near Fort Kearney (Cf. Map No. 26). North of the Platte River is drawn the historic Mormon Trail from the Omaha region by way of the Platte and Loup to and beyond Kearney, as given in detail hereafter (Map Nos. 34-45; 26-32).



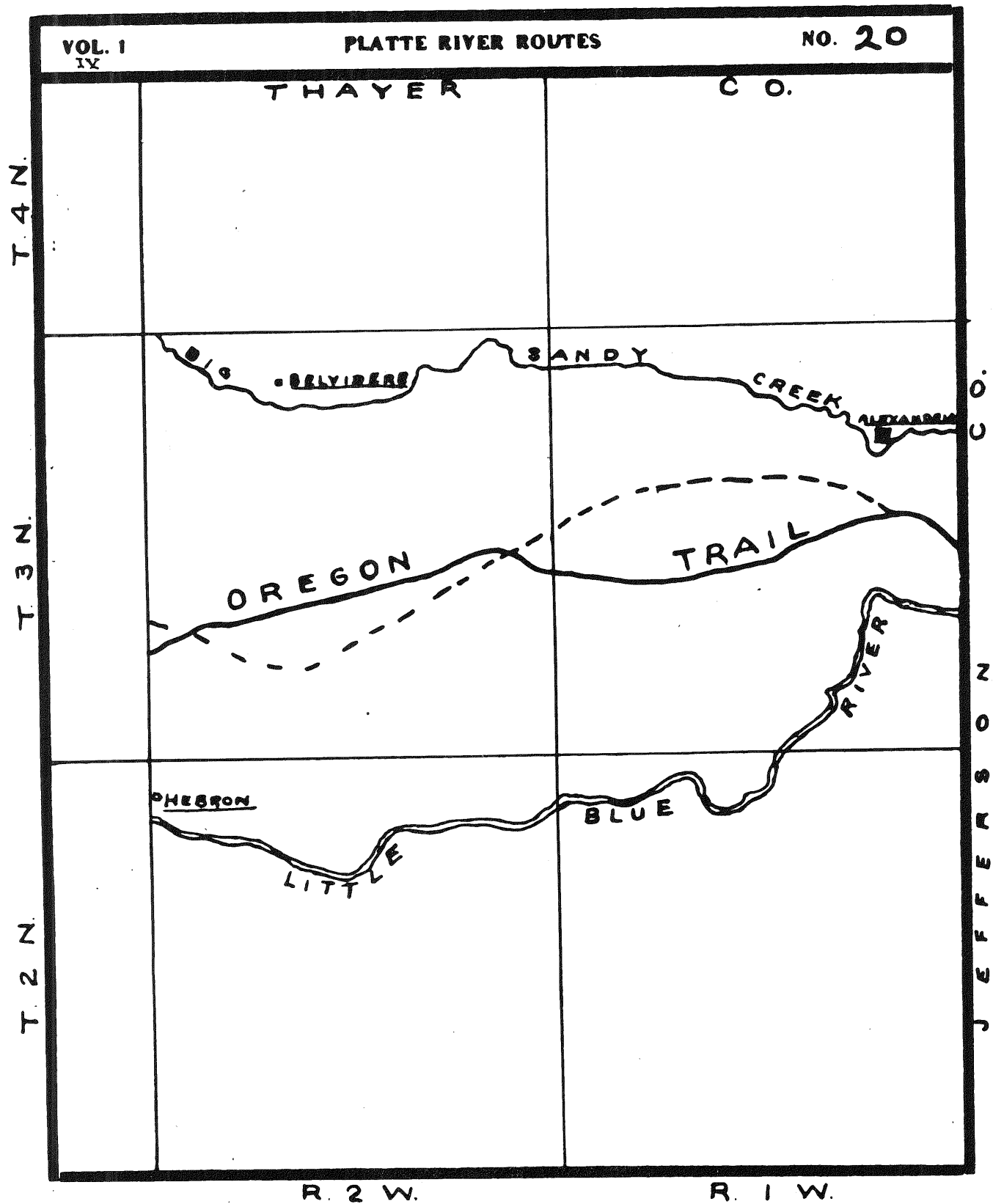


The Oregon Trail enters the present state of Nebraska 1986 feet east of the Gage-Jefferson County line. The sight of the rich and inviting valley of the Little Blue elicited acclaim from all who kept records. Every rod of the old pathway in Jefferson County teems with romance and tradition; each also teemed with mud in the early spring at which time the trains from Independence or Leavenworth usually arrived here. Historic Rock Creek and its ranches were of special importance in the hey-day of the old trail. Cf. Neb. Hist. Soc. "Proceedings" (2 series, V, 217-222; Burton, 30; Clark, 28; Marcy, 37-42.

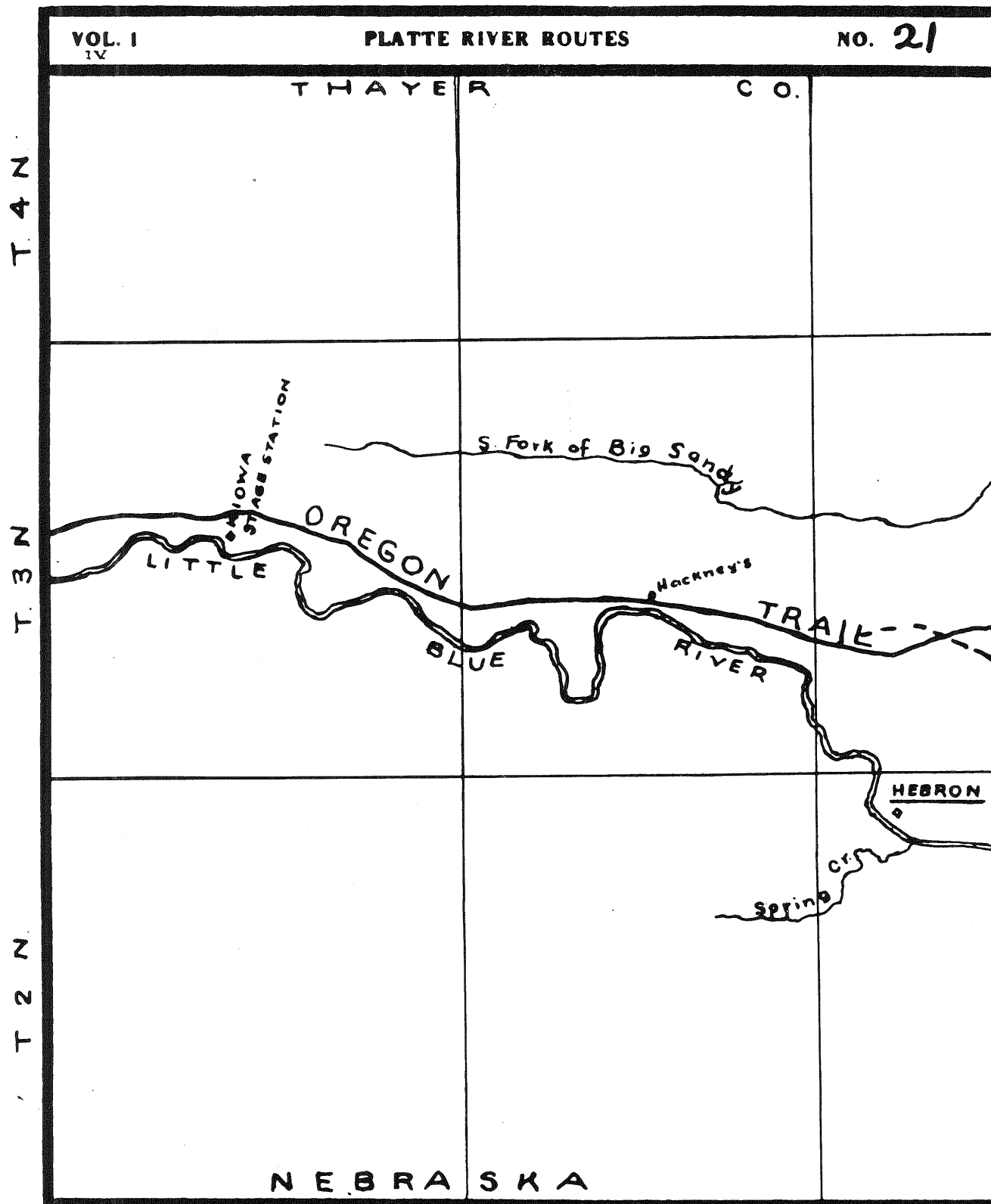


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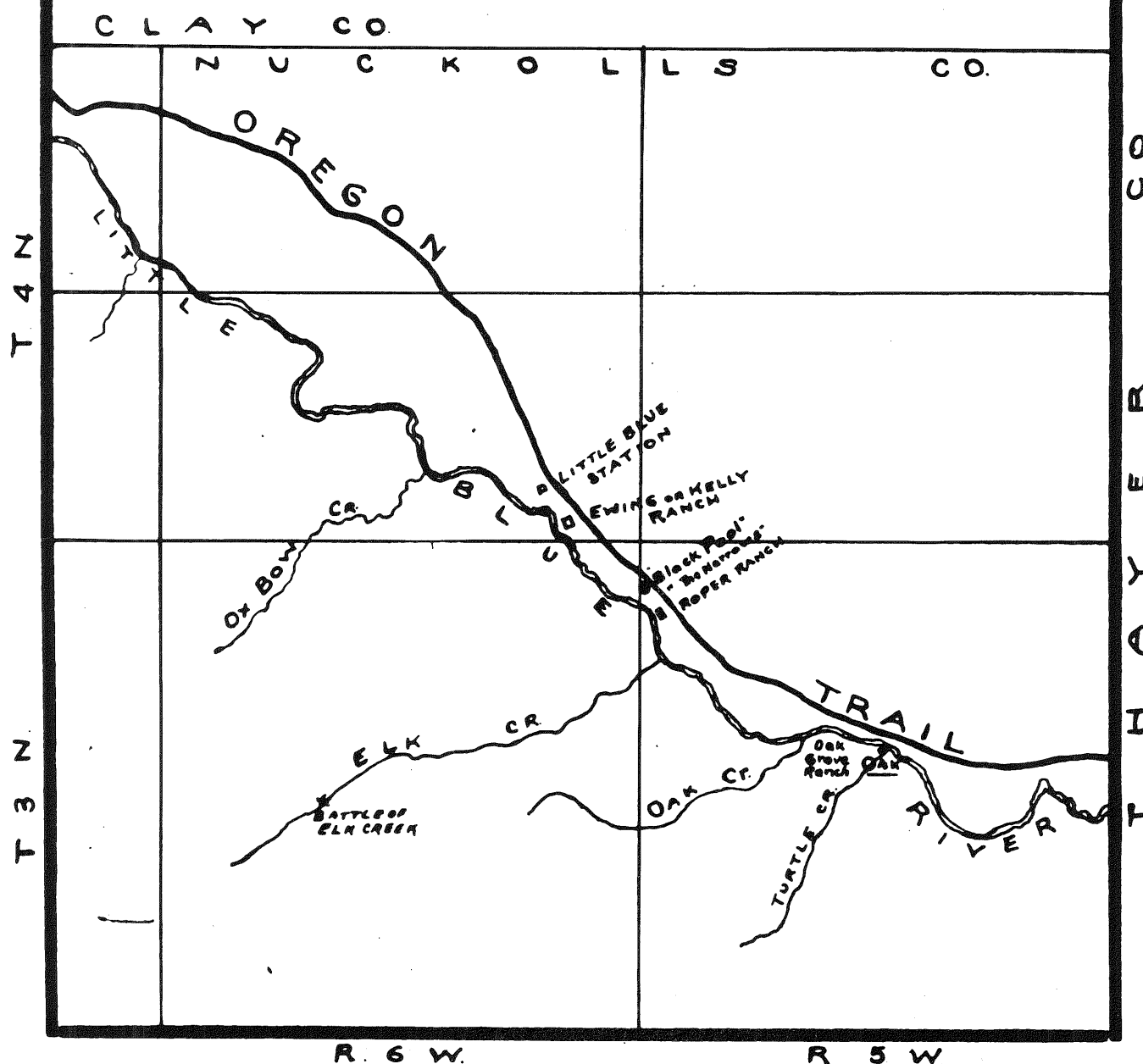
Identification of the trail near the Little Blue is easy and each historic site is filled with trail-lore. For location northeast of Fairbury see Neb. Hist. Soc. "Proceedings" (2 ser.) V. 174. At Lone Tree Station, Id., 218 and Root and Connelley, 370; Ludlow, 107. At Whiskey Run and Spring, Neb. "Proceedings" XVII, 110; Id. (2 ser.) V. 219. At Little Sandy Crossing, Clark, 31. At Big Sandy, Stansbury, 27; Root and Connelley, 72, 113, 127, 511; Burton, 31; Cross, 135. At Meridian, Neb., "Proceedings" 294-5.



As the old trail breaks for higher ground between the Little Blue and Big Sandy Creek, one is reminded that it was not only the springtime mud in this rich valley that handicapped the advancing pioneers. Malaria in the lowlands in the '50ies and '60ies provoked much illness; Lowe, 312. The network of trails on the high ground was commented on freely. Cf. Fremont, 15-17; Sage, 50-58; Burton, 31; Delano, 46; Merriam, 267.



The valley of the Little Blue was dominated in the old days by Arikle Pawnees, save when they were fleeing southward from raiding Sioux from the north. Cf. Fremont, 15; Neb. "Proceedings" (2 ser.) V. 175; Lowe, 312; Kelly, 69. For historic Kiowa Station in pioneer and stage coach days see Neb. "Proceedings" (2 ser.) 294; Burton, 38; Root and Connelley, 102. Typical descriptions are given by Stansbury, 207 and Bryant, 72-77.



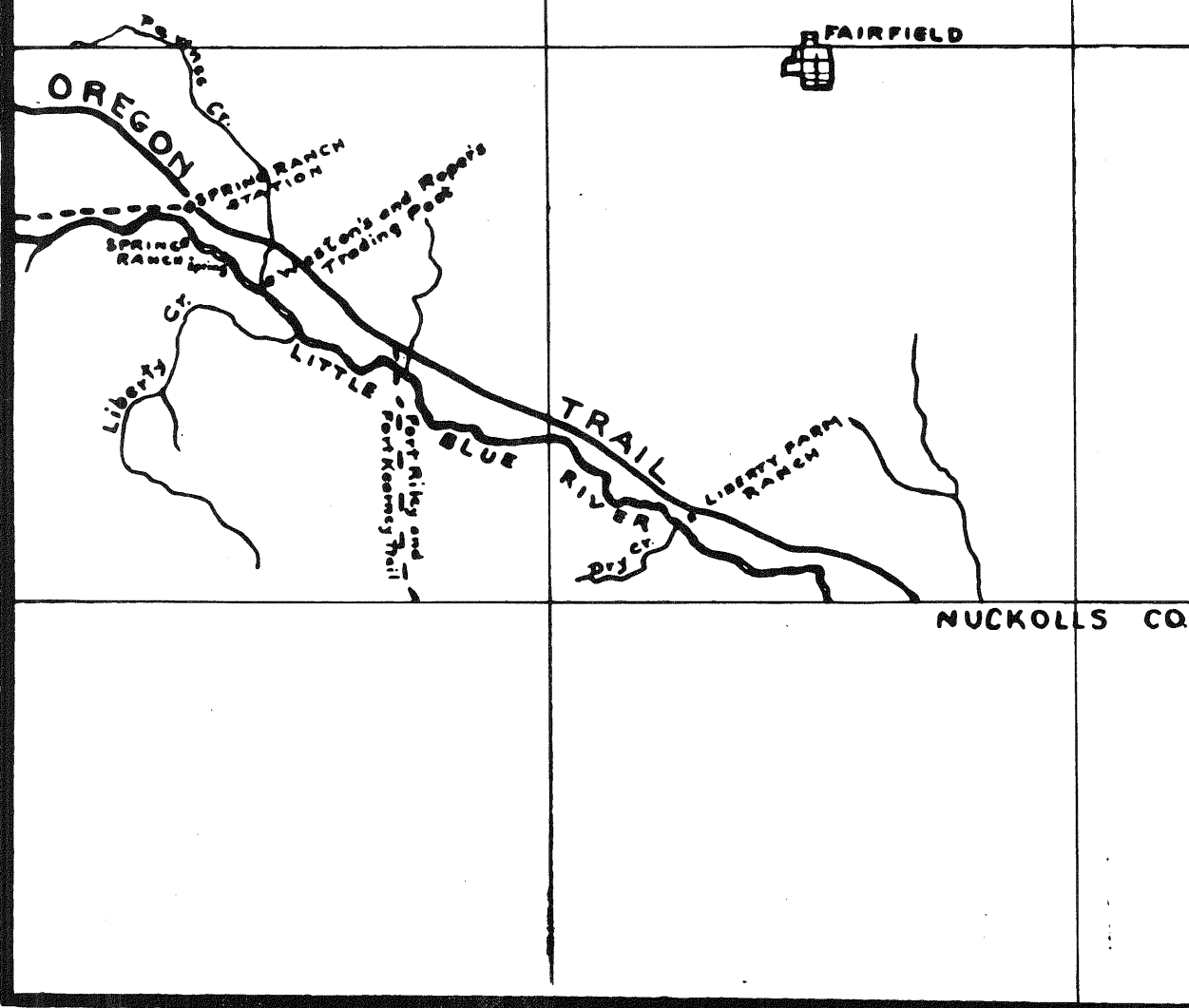
The smaller number of tributaries here entering the Little Blue from the northeast lessened, to a degree, the difficulties of travel on the trail; yet it was, even there, found to be from ten to forty rods in width, with many detours; Neb. "Proceedings" (2 ser.) V. 294. For the historic Oak Creek region Cf. Inman, 401; Root and Connelley, 23-25. The dangers of the "Narrows" and "Black Pool" are mentioned in the latter book, 364. Also Cf. Eells, 69; Cross, 137 and Clark, 35-36.

T. 6 N.

T. 5 N.

CLAY

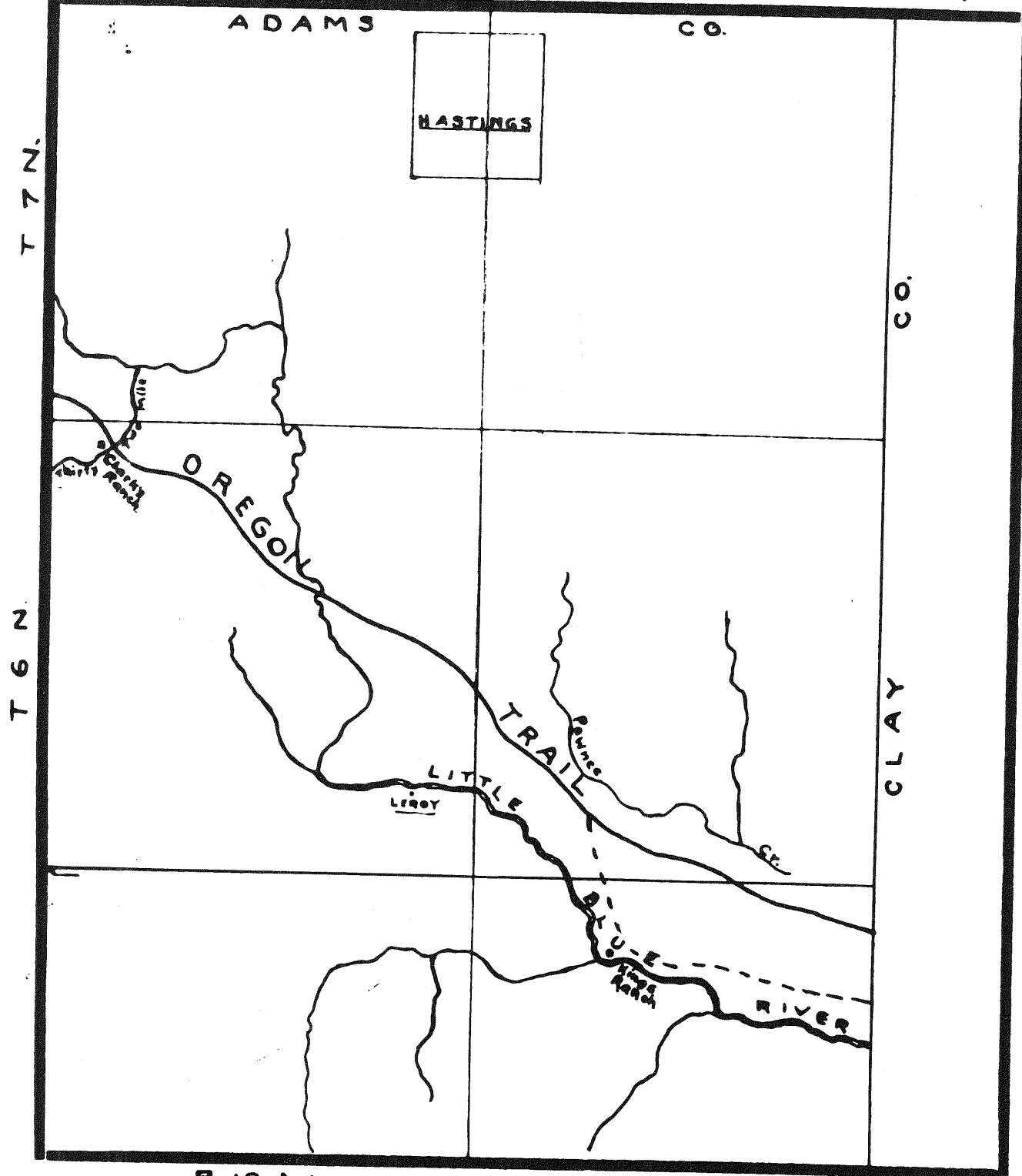
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R. 7 W.

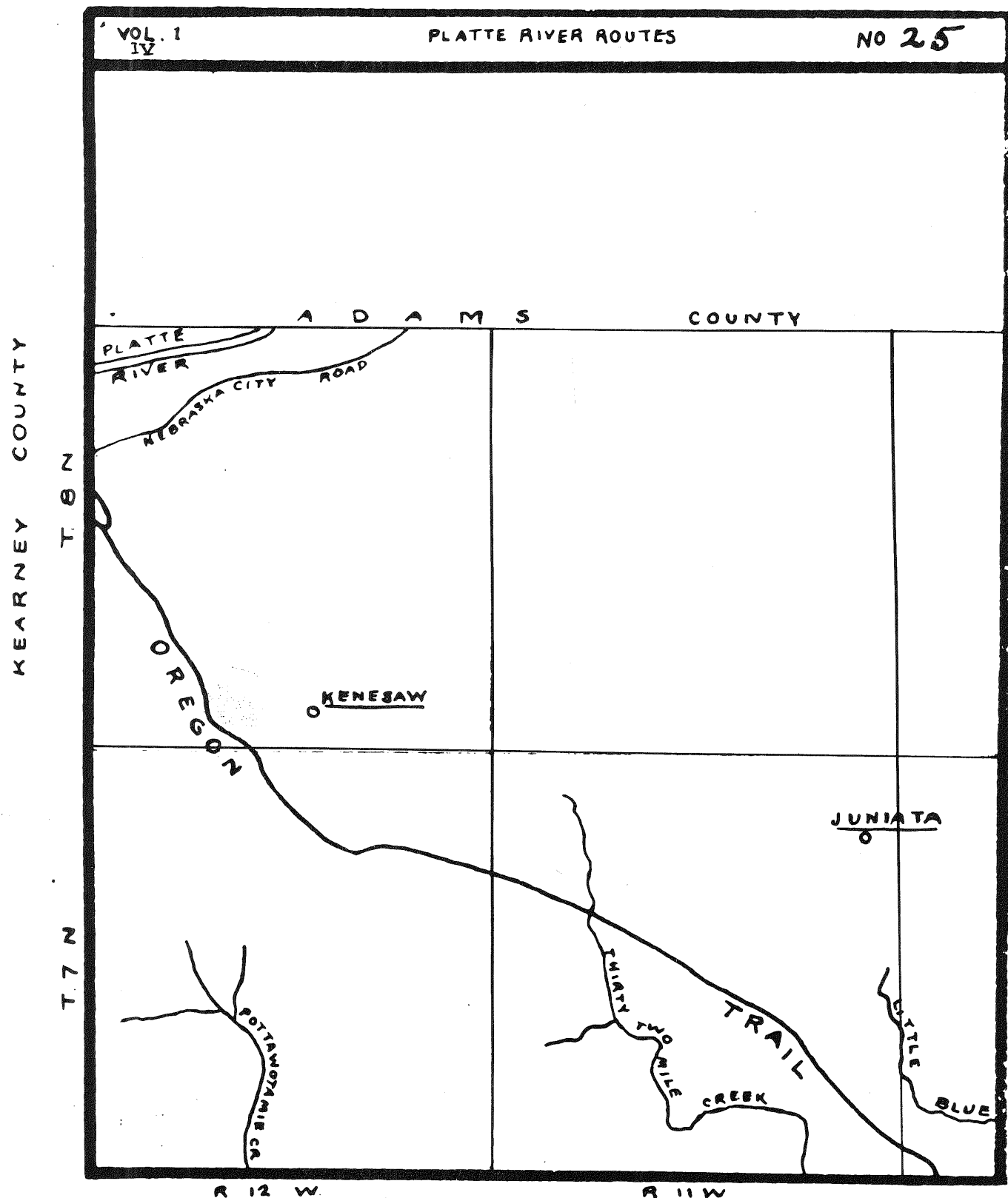
Southwest of Fairfield, Liberty Farm and Spring Ranch were well-known camping sites and later famous overland stage stations. References to them in early days are found in Townsend, 37-42; Palmer, 45-46; Kelly, 70-73. For Liberty Farm see Burton, 38. Pawnee Crossing is described by Ludlow, 108 and Spring Ranch in Neb. "Proceedings" (2 ser.) V. 29. The junction of the Fort Kearney-Fort Riley road is shown in Range 8.



R 10 W.

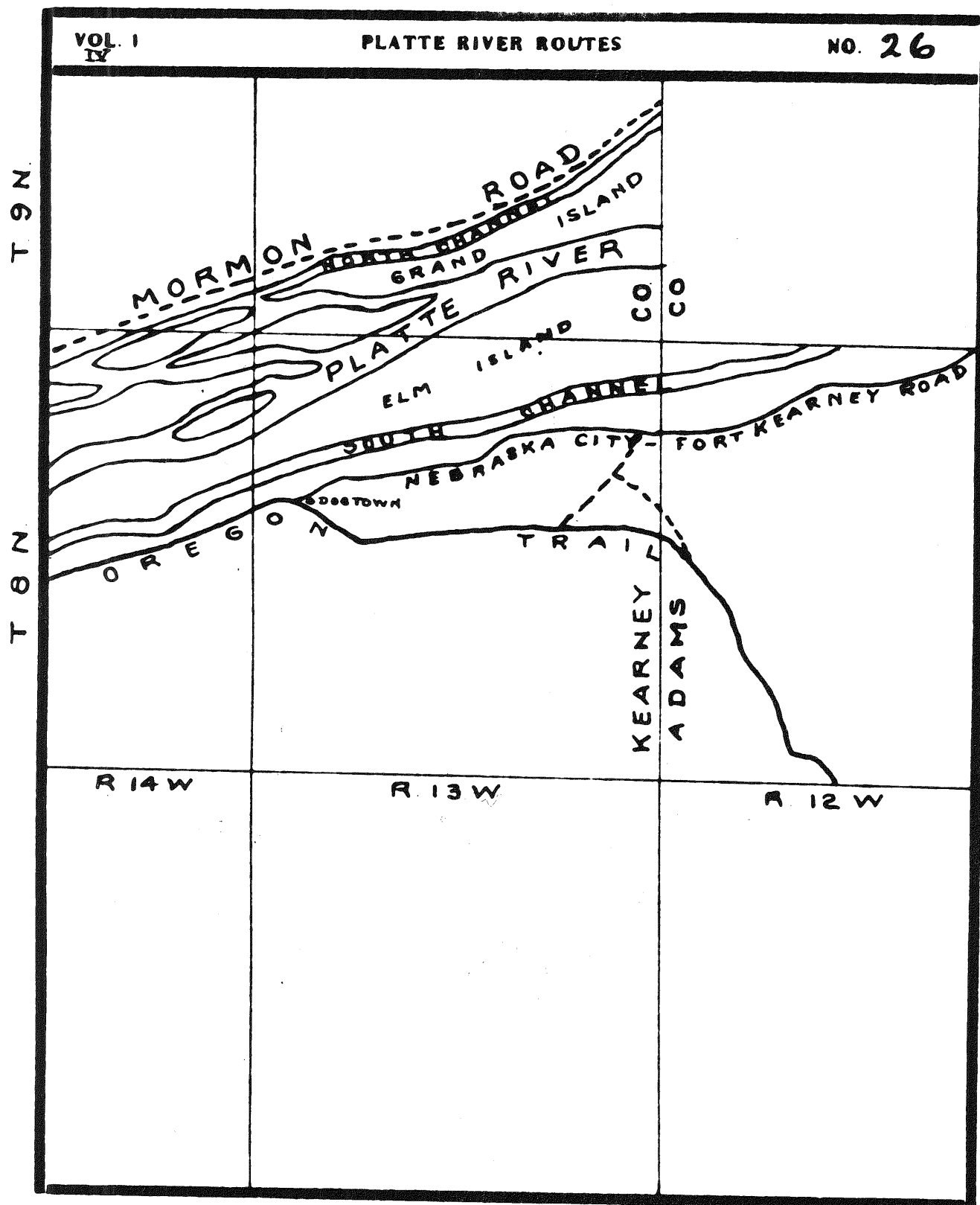
R. 9 W

Our dotted line connecting King's Ranch with the old trail illustrates numerous detours which confronted and often confused the teamsters of old. This beautiful Hastings section of Nebraska was the old-time blood-red frontier of the pioneer period. Beyond Thirty-Mile Creek lay the high, barren divide over which the Oregon Trail led to the Platte River. Cf. Stansbury, 7; Cross, 138; Burton, 38; Ludlow, 108, and Low.



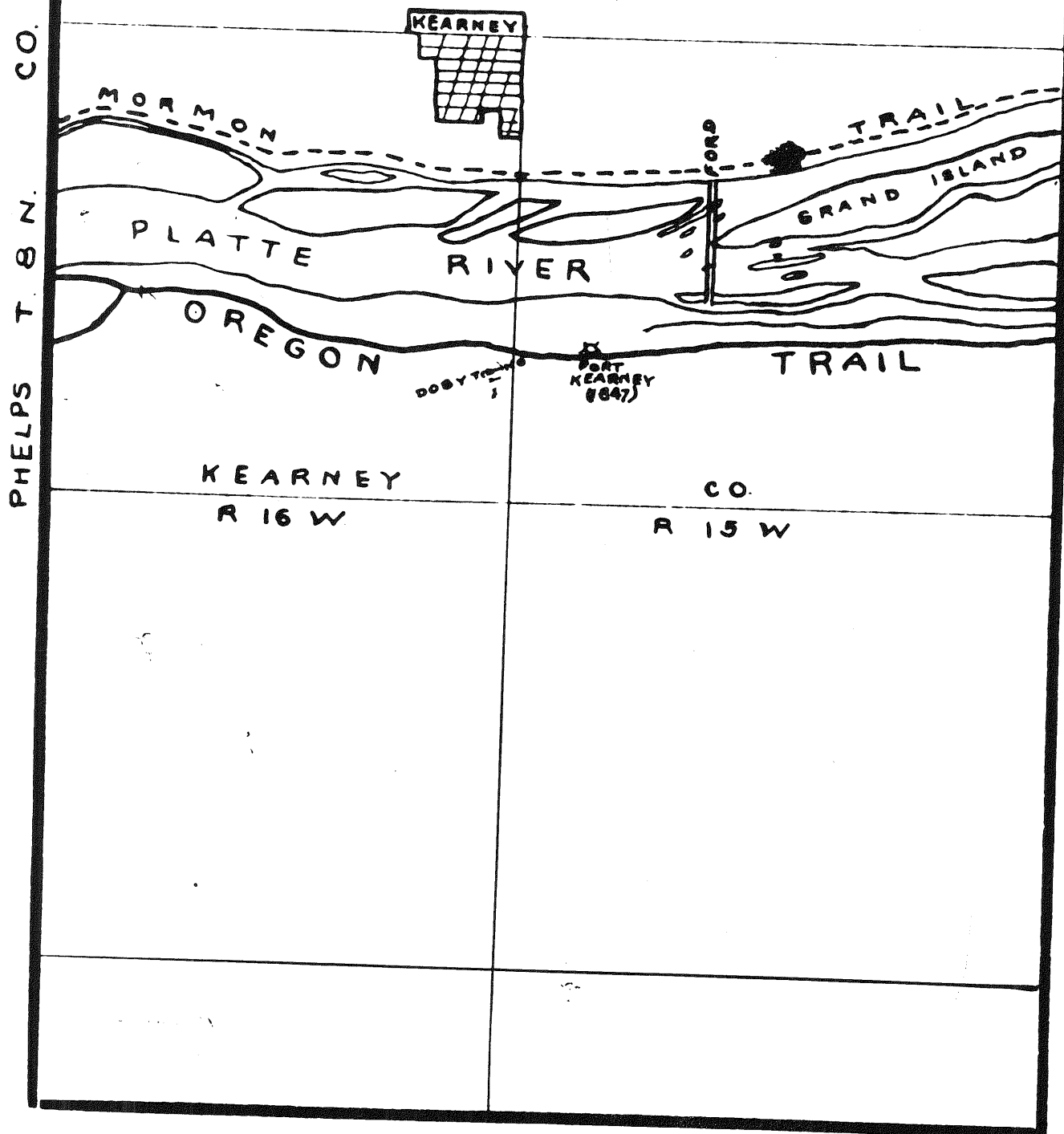
As the emigrant trains crawled slowly out of the valley of the Blue, and pioneers anticipated with varied emotions the sight of the far-famed Platte River, the records prove that they were conscious of a distinct advance on their long journey. The last leaving of the Blue" (Neb. "Proceedings", 2 ser. V. 176) and the first glimpses of the "Coast of Nebraska" (Meline, 18), as the sand dunes of the Platte were called, are expressions redolent with a sense of adventuresome change. Cf. Fremont, 17; Kelly, 76; Burton, 39; Minto, 141; Palmer, 46.



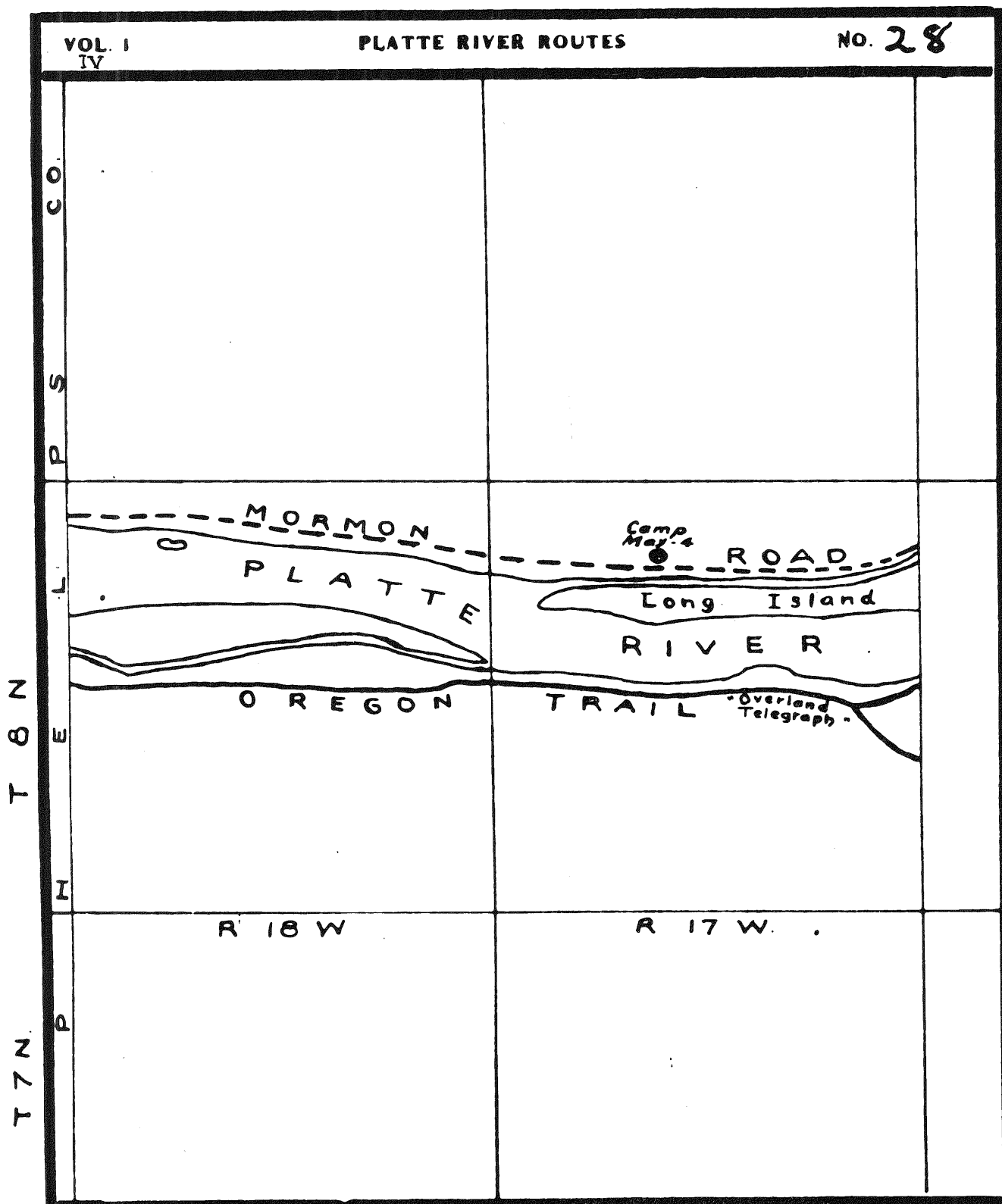


Throwing itself upon the Platte River "Coast," the Oregon Trail joins the Nebraska City road Cf. Map No. 17 in Range 13. At the main junction stood that excrescence of frontier towns, Dogtown, just east of the Fort Kearney reservation.

North of the Platte is the continuation of the Mormon Trail from Map No. 45. The inclination of the leaders of the Mormon hegira to cross the Platte and join the better-established Oregon Trail was stoutly withstood by Brigham Young who was fearful lest his followers who came later would suffer from the "prejudices" of the Gentiles. Cf. Clayton, 114-116.



For the story of old Fort Kearney, flanked on the west by infamous Dobytown, as Dogtown flanked it on the east, see all travellers mentioned, especially in Root and Connelley. For the earlier days the accounts of Dodge, Townsend, Fremont, Eells, Parker and Clayton are important, antedating the post itself. The few safe fords across the Platte made the one marked at the tip of Grand Island strategic. Cf. Neb. "Proceedings" 2 ser. V. 299 Hewitt, 110-115. For Mormon Trail, Clayton, 113-116.



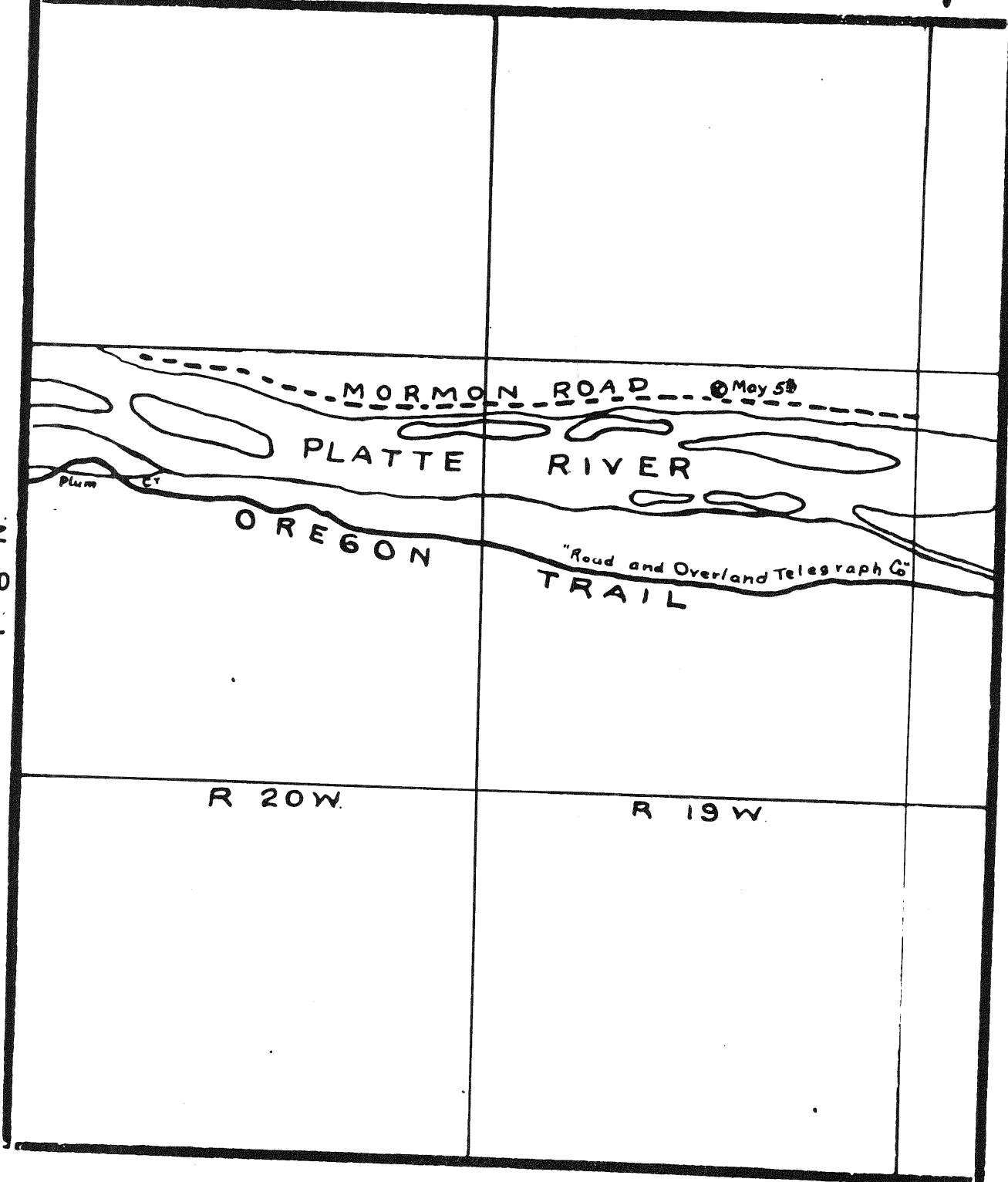
Our dotted line north of the Platte shows the approximate track of the Mormon Road, with the dates of camping of the original road-marking party to May 11 on succeeding maps. No diary of emigrant party makes more interesting reading, in many particulars, than Clayton's of the pioneer Mormon party (Cf. pp. 113-132).

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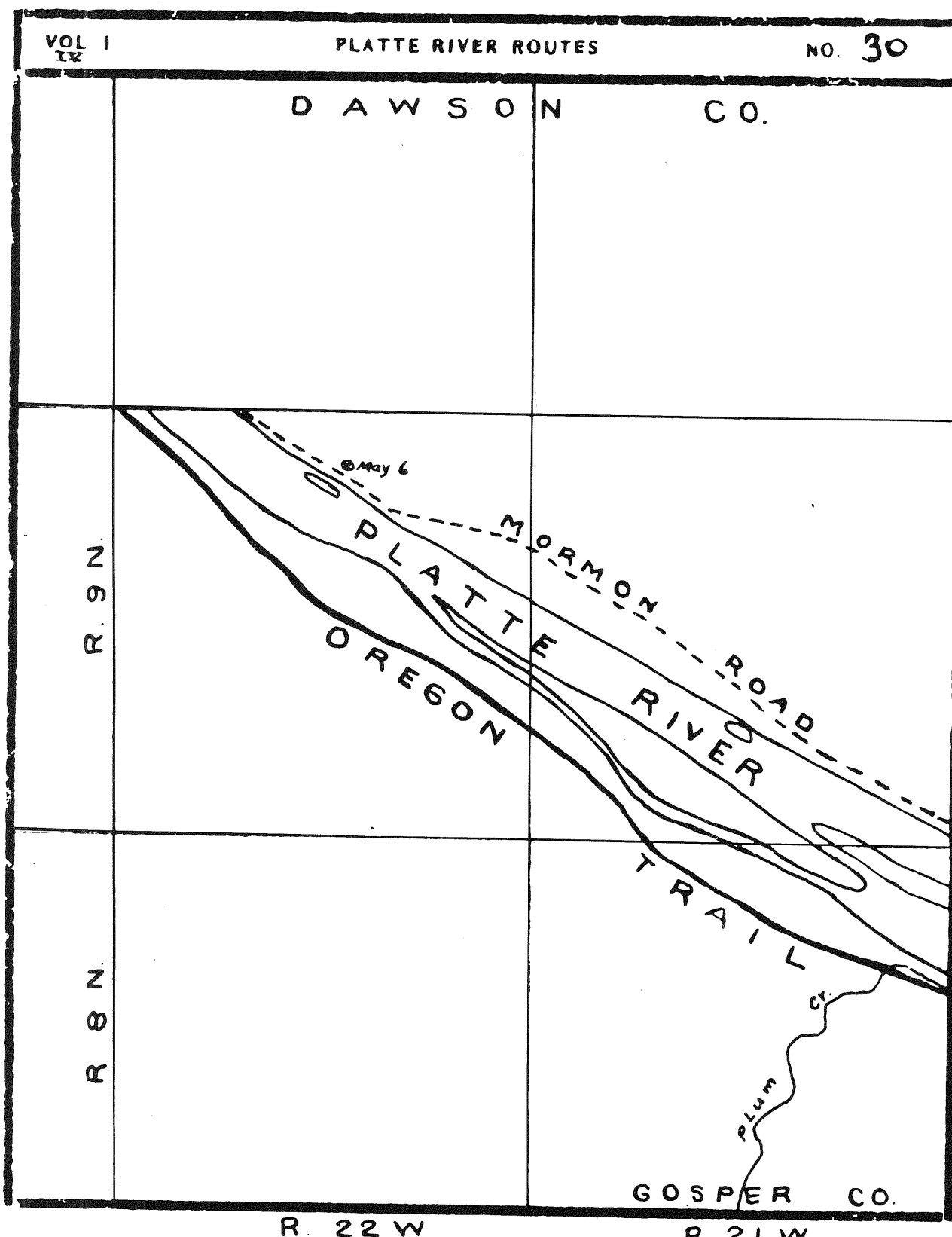
PLATTE RIVER ROUTES

NO. 29

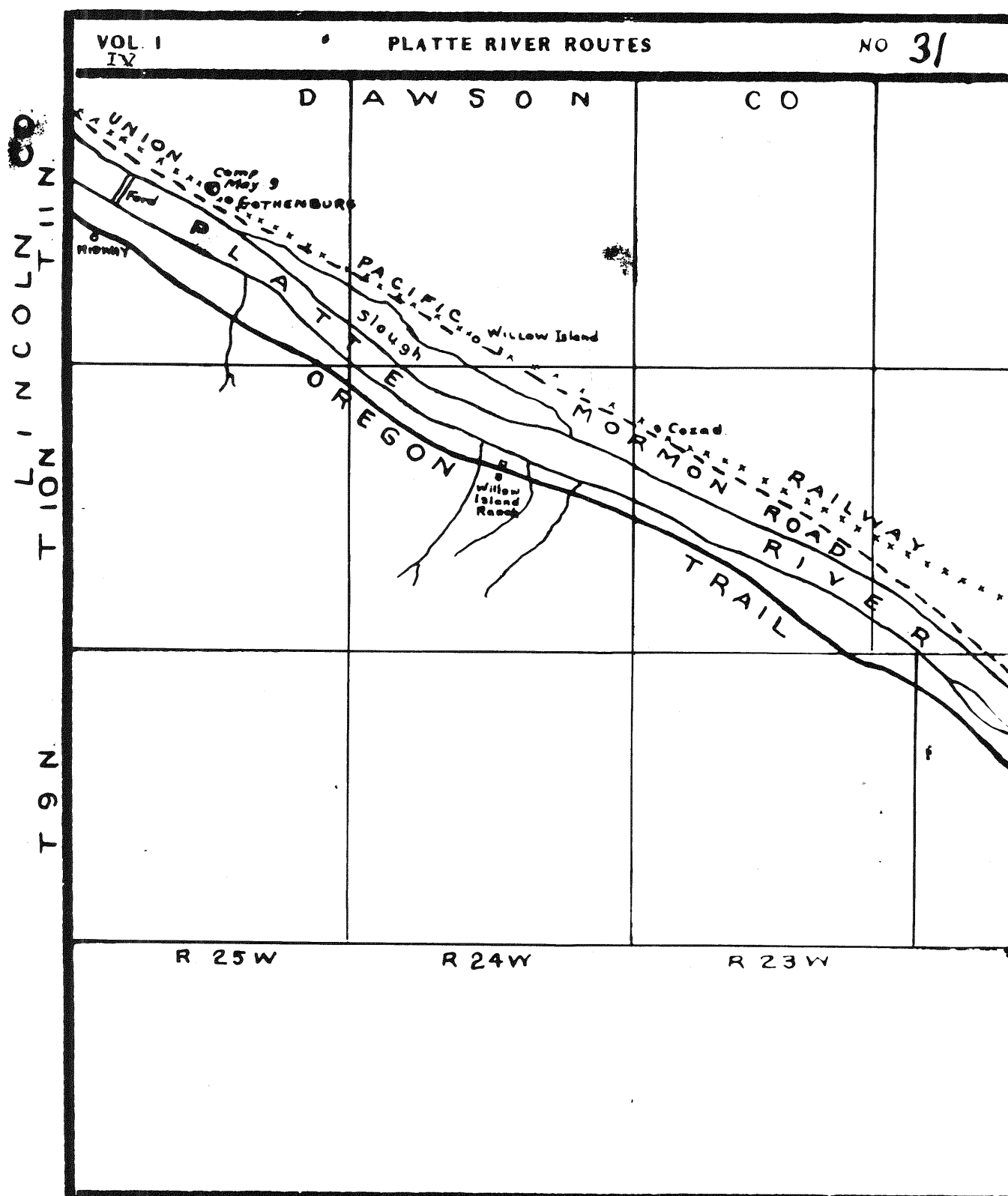
CO.  
GOSPER  
T. 8 N.



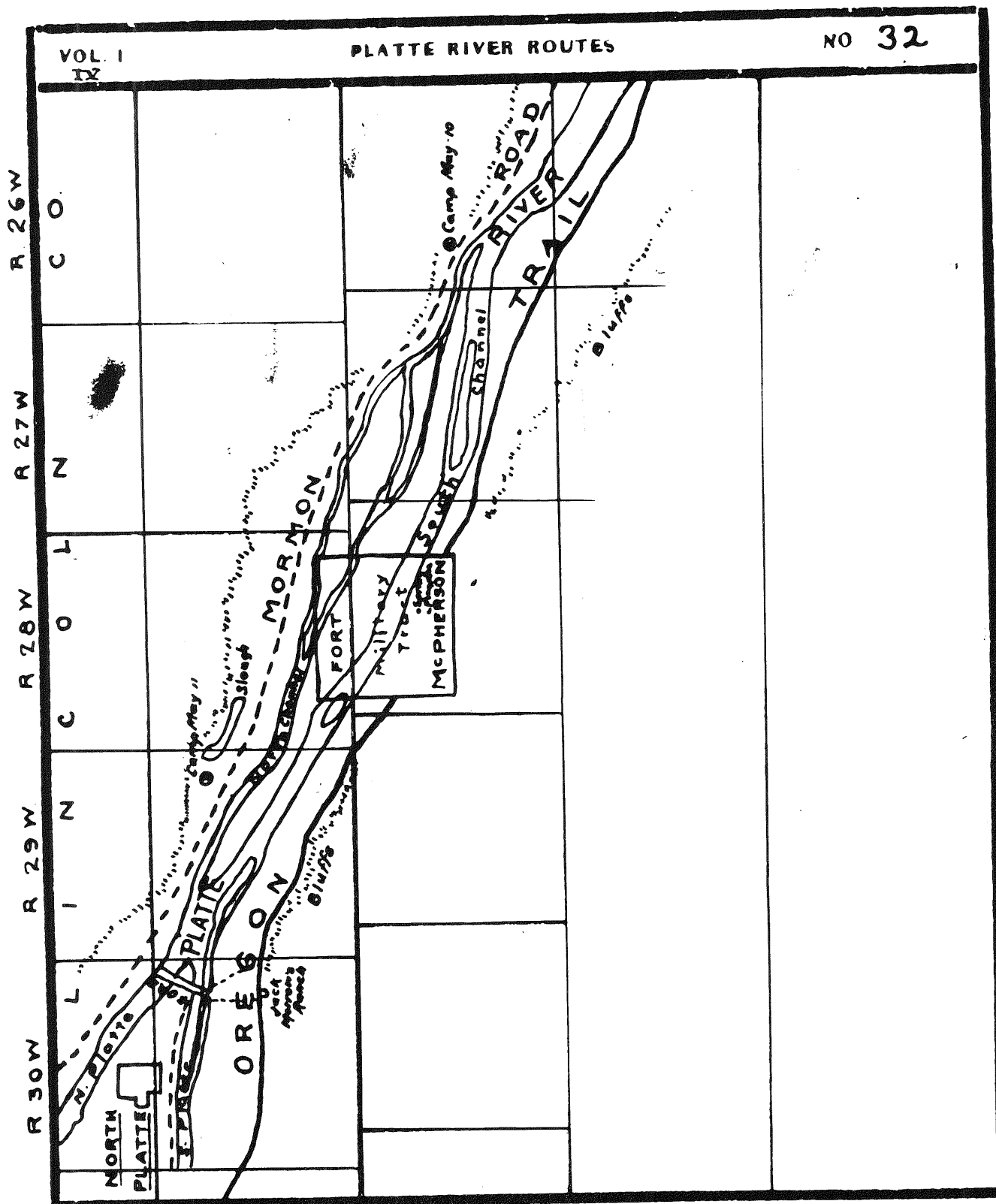
The words "Overland Telegraph" and "Road and Overland Telegraph Co." quoted on this and the map preceeding, appear thus on the original surveys and, of course, date late in the pioneer era. Except for short cuts, over topography impossible for wagons, the old trail was the route of the epoch-making telegraph line, rendering a service in this respect not usually recognized. But for the highway as a practical line for forwarding the building materials, and making possible guarding and repairing the system, the plains and Rockies could not have been encompassed by the electric telegraph when they were.



The monotony encountered by emigrants on the trail in Kansas and Southern Nebraska was evident in their journals, but it was in these stretches along the lower Platte, between Fort Kearney and Fort McPherson, that many became obsessed with it. Plum Creek (see map proceeding also) offered the only antidote in this section to the oppressive sameness of prospect. It was hereabouts, as a study of the old journals will prove, that many became discouraged and not a few became unbalanced. Indian attacks appeal picturesquely to the moving picture artists, but, if the truth were known, more pioneers to Oregon went insane on the journey in the '40ies and '50ies than were killed by redskins. Cf. Cross, 143; Burton, 39; Sage, 35; Hewitt, 93.



Rising gently, at a rate of about six feet to the mile, the trail swung northeast through Dawson County, the willow islands of the Platte furnishing fuel for the trains; Eells, 70-71. Increasing altitude, which is often an irritation to many, doubtless accentuated the morbid conditions developed in emigrant trains. Pawnee Ford, near Gothenburg, and the adjacent Pawnee spring and swamp, were landmarks in this vicinity. Cf. Long, 1, 462; Crawford, 2; Hewitt, 128.



T 13 N. T 12 N. T 11 N. T 10 N.

Noted Cottonwood Springs, Neb. ("Proceedings," 2 ser. V. 271) gave rise to the early Camp Cottonwood (Root and Connelley, 342; Inman, 355) and later Fort McPherson (Meline, 29). This post guarded the famous Forks of the Platte, with its Pawnee ford there, as well as the one near Gothenburg. Cf. Fremont, 25-27; Palmer, 52-54. For the well-known Jack Morrow ranch Cf. Inman, 364; Clark, 51; Meline, 31; C. E. Young, 53.

For continuation westward of Oregon and Mormon Trails see Volume 2 of this Series.

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PLATTE RIVER ROUTES

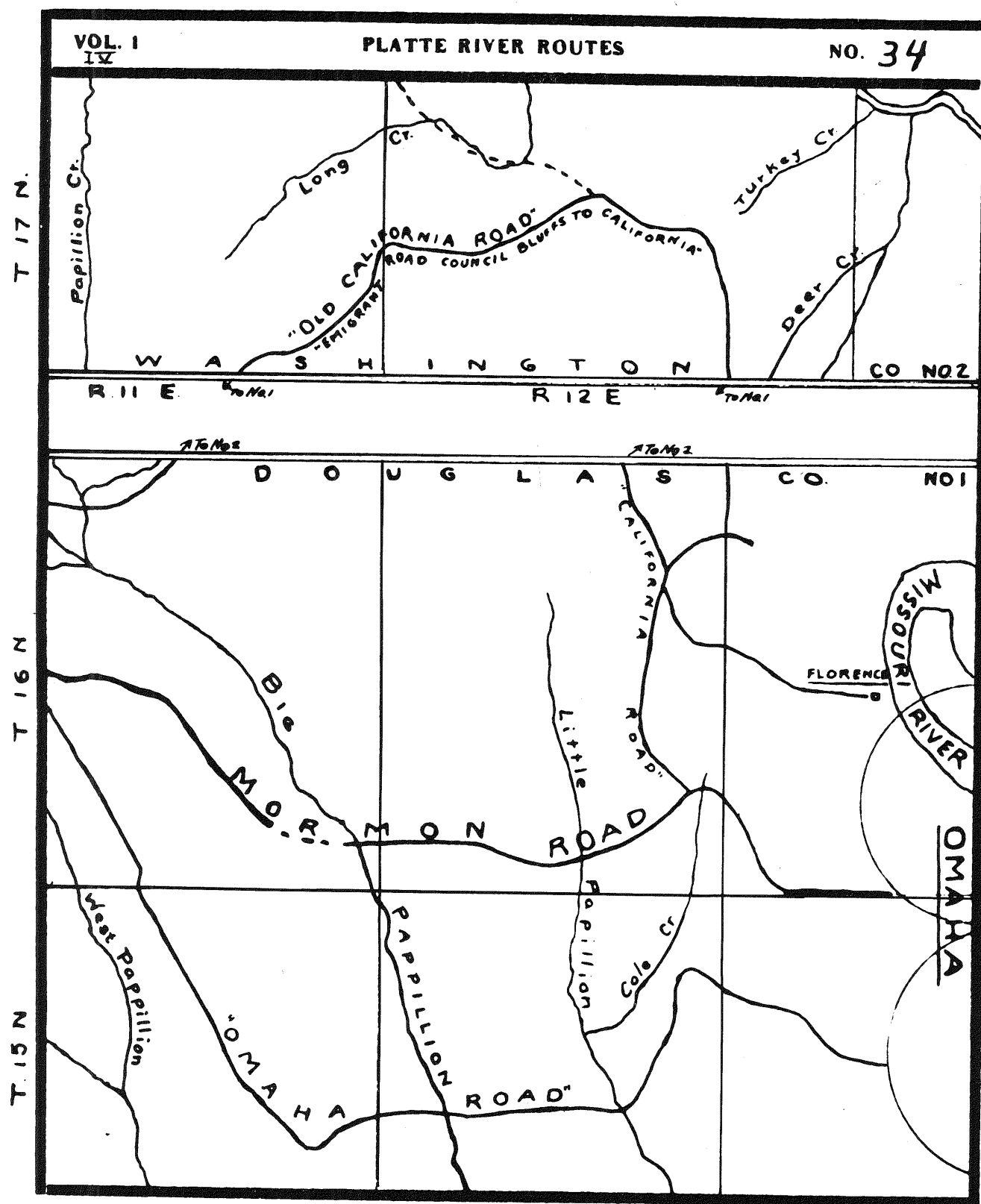
NO 33

## THE MORMON ROAD

(OMAHA, NEB., TO NANCE CO., NEB.)

KEY: MAP NO. 17



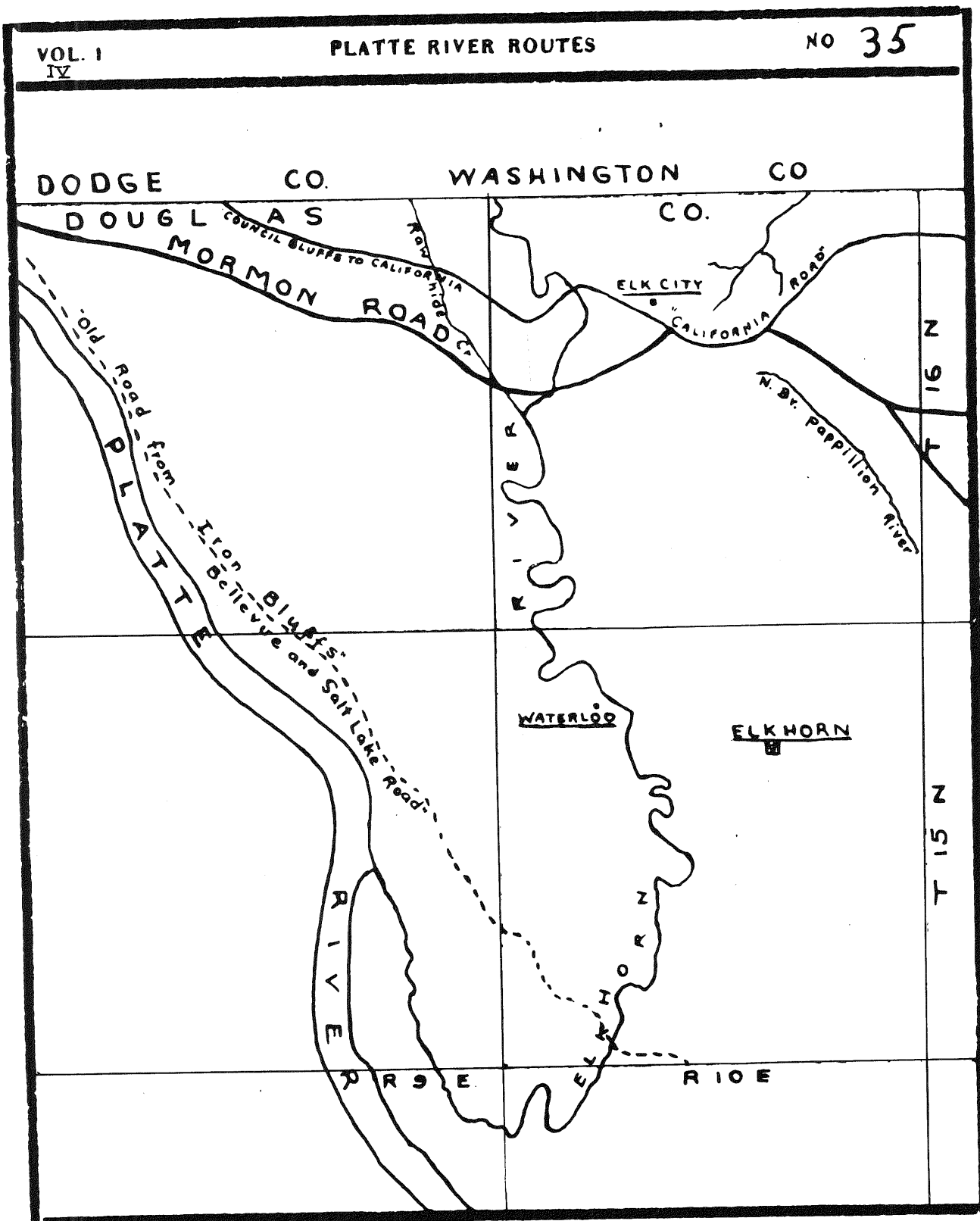


R 11 E

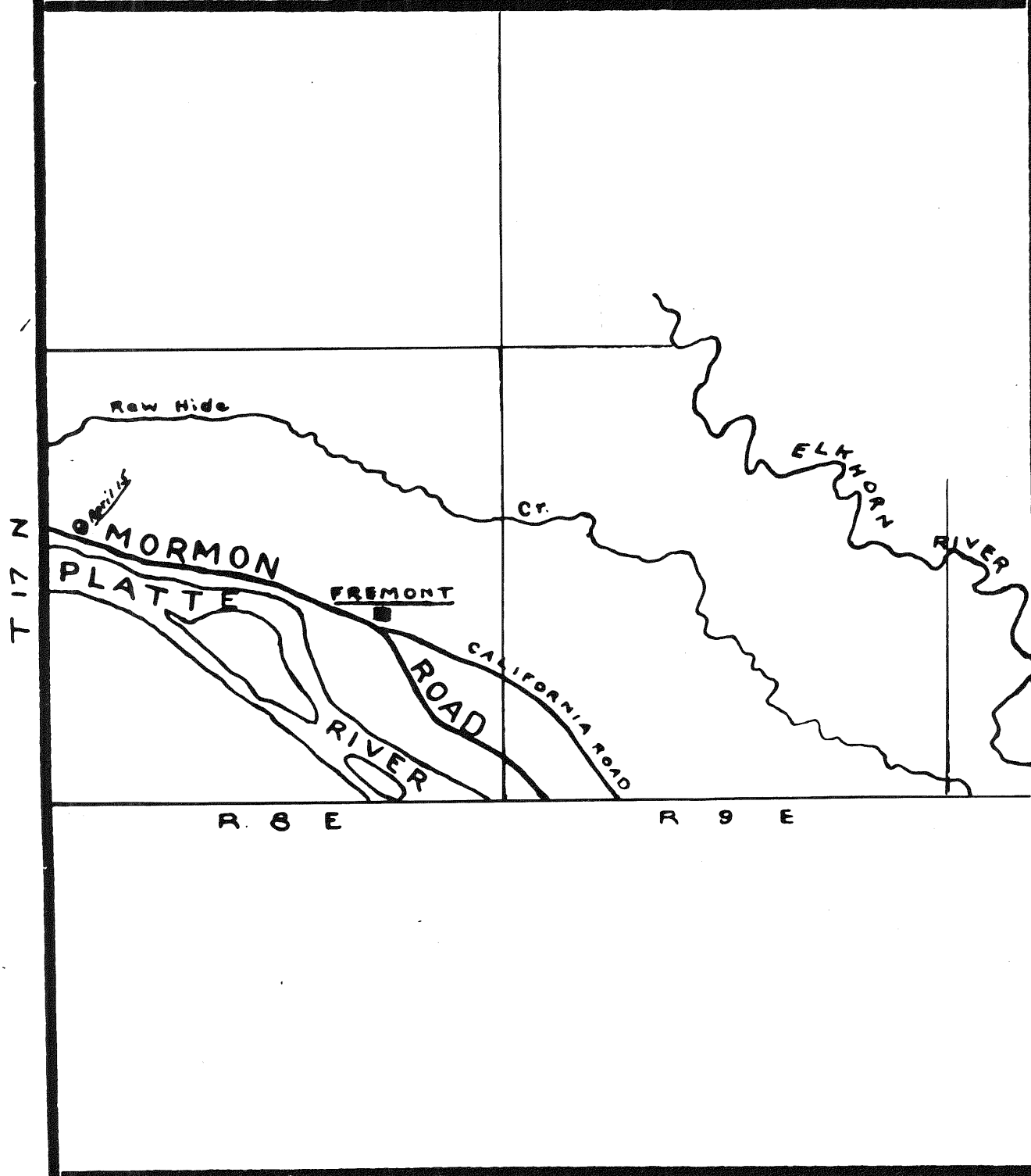
R 12 E

R 13 E

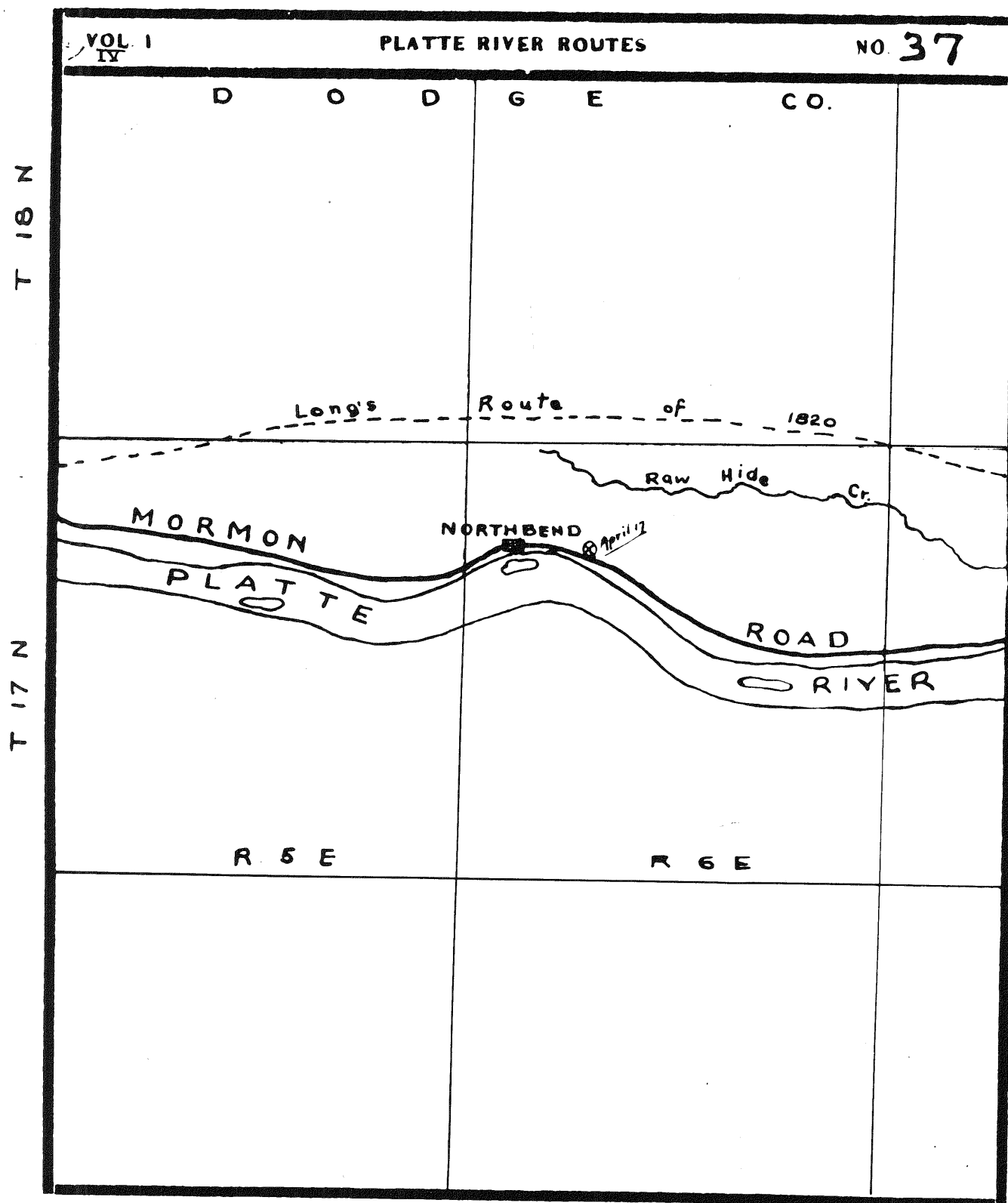
From the Omaha-Council Bluffs region old trails led westward to the north bank of the Platte and up that river (Long, 1, 427; Parker, 45). One of these routes was made famous by Brigham Young who marked it as the Mormon Road in 1847. The whole story is vividly given in Clayton's "Journal." The first stage of the journey was across the rich level (and often difficult) valleys of the Pappillion Creeks. An alternate track to the Mormon Road, the "old California Road," given above, shows an effort to find better footing on higher ground. Cf. Clayton, 73-74; Crawford, 2; Hewitt, 84; Hoen, 7.



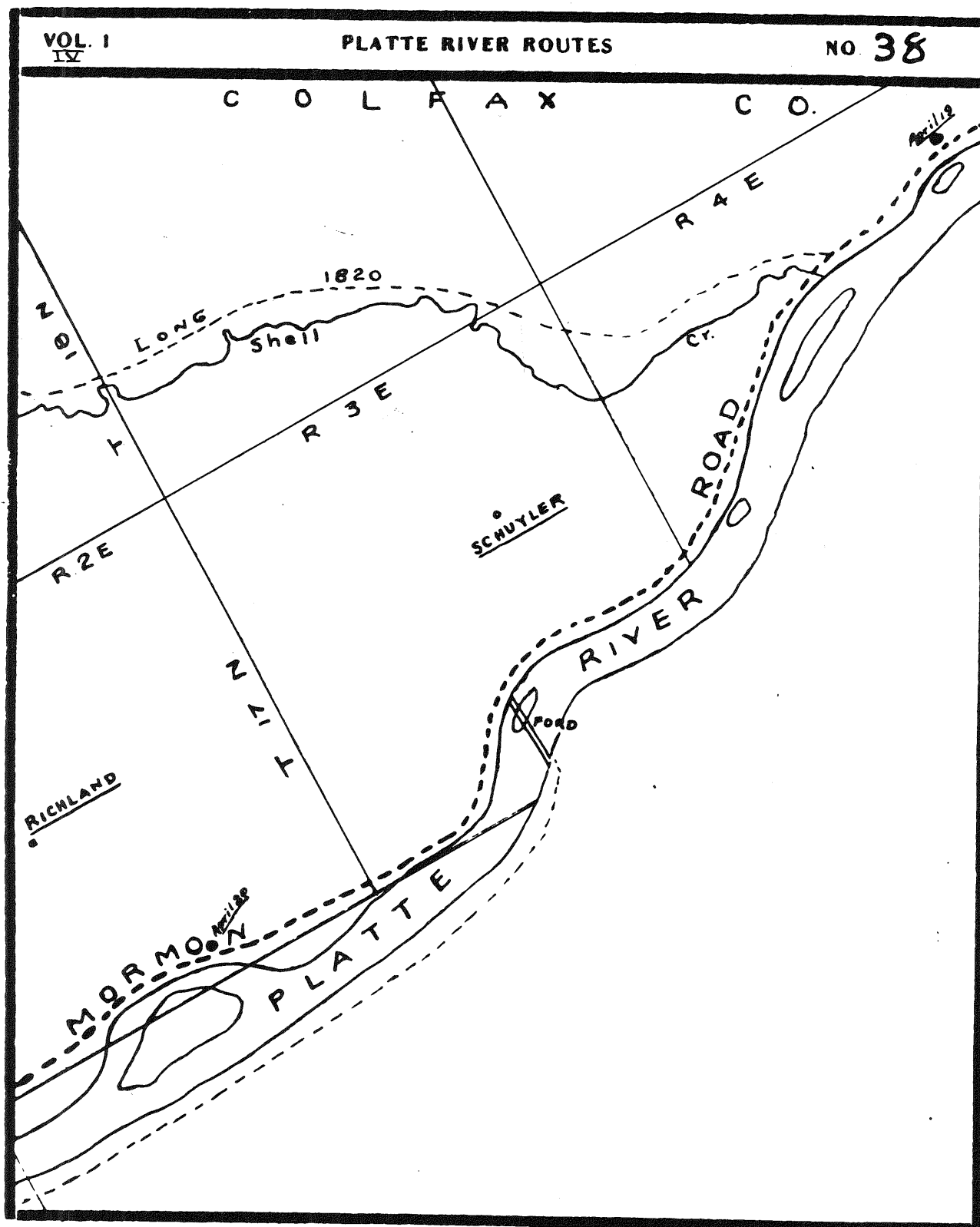
The rich and often muddy valley of the Elkhorn, or "Horn" as Dodge called it (7), was the chief obstacle to be overcome before the Platte was reached. Almost any track here was followed, and any ford essayed, as trains in different seasons and years floundered westward in the region southwest of Elk City. Sometimes direct crossings could be made; sometimes the Elkhorn was followed for ten miles before being crossed (Parker, 46). Old diaries teem with the difficulties here encountered. Cf. Long, 1, 428; Clayton, 74-78; Inman, 112; Neb., "Proceedings" (2 ser.) V. 299; Hoen, 7.



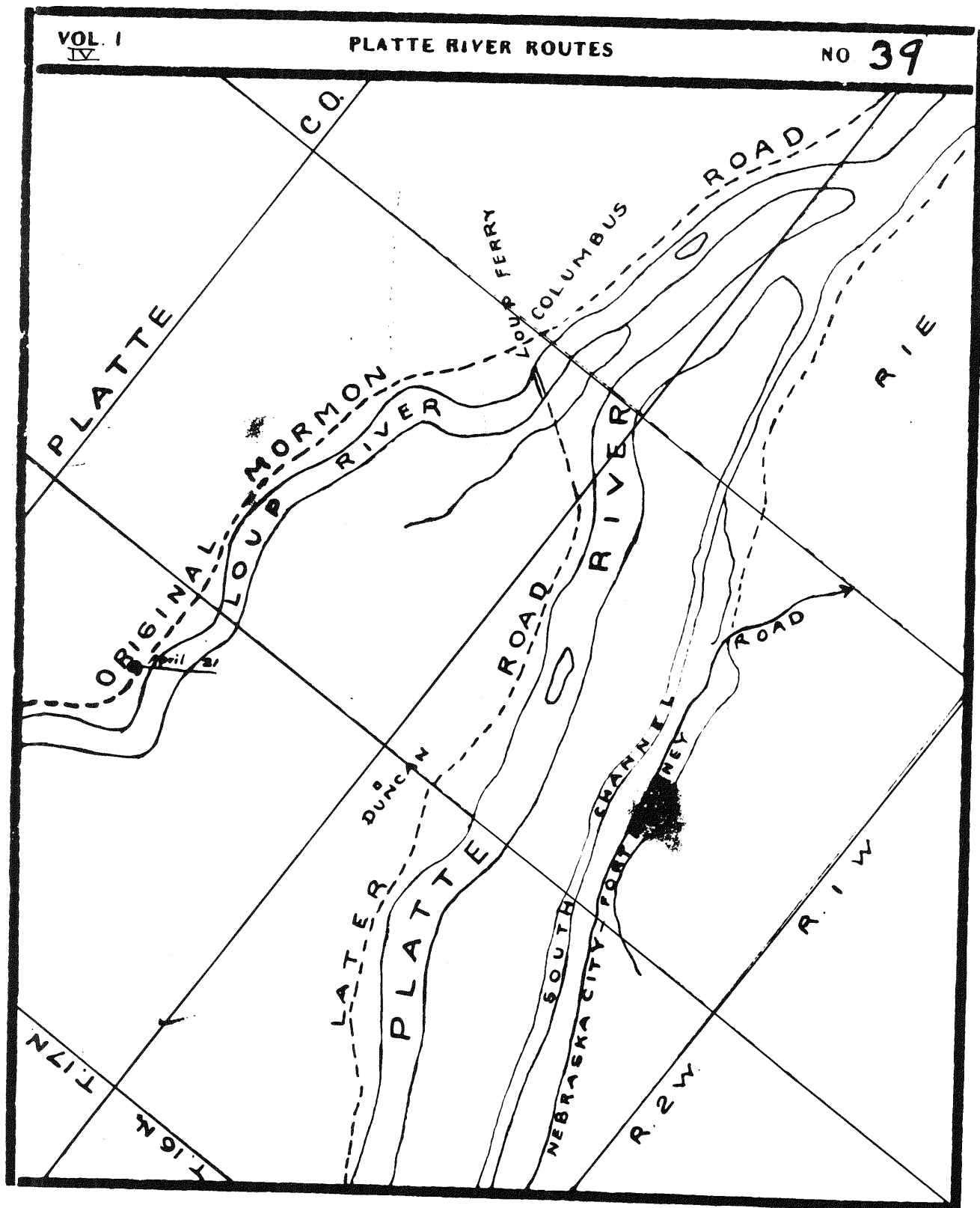
The more northerly "California Road" joined what became the usual road of migration near Fremont. Local and State histories supply a great amount of material on this Fremont region. The "California" track was evidently most used in the earlier years; Cf. Long I, 430. The story of these trails leads up to the notable climax of the building of the Union Pacific Ry. across these valleys to Fremont in the 60ies.



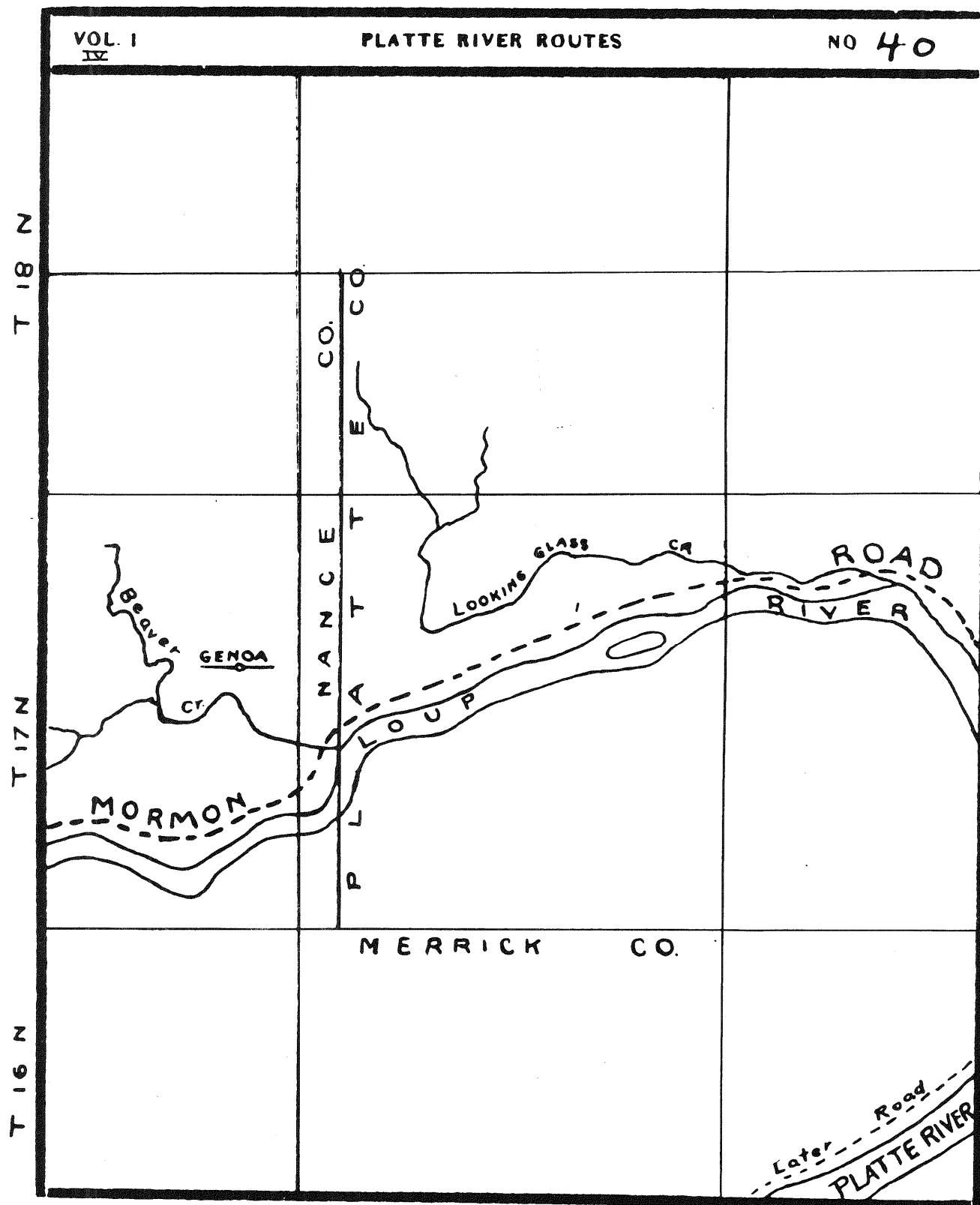
The conjectural line of Long's early expedition, swinging north of the Raw Hide, is inserted from Long's account. Also, conjecturally, we insert the camps by date of the original Mormon road-marking party of 1847 from Clayton's very entertaining record. Cf. Hewitt, 84; Crawford, 2; Clayton, 49. Careful local study might well correct the Mormon camp sites as here given and would be worthwhile if only by leading to a careful study of Clayton's "Journal" by local students.



The Long party ascended Shell Creek, the "La Petite Coquille" or "Muscleshall" of 1820 (Long, I, 431) and Parker in 1835 evidently followed the same trace (47). But the Mormon pathfinders crossed the Shell near its mouth (Clayton, 81-84) on the line of the later route of the Western Stage Company (Hoen, 8). The ford southwest of Schuyler (Neb. "Proceedings," 2 ser. V. 299) gave access to the south bank of the Platte a route pursued by many non-Mormon emigrant trains in later days. These rival lines of migration gave rise to the historic rivalry of communities on the two sides of Platte River.

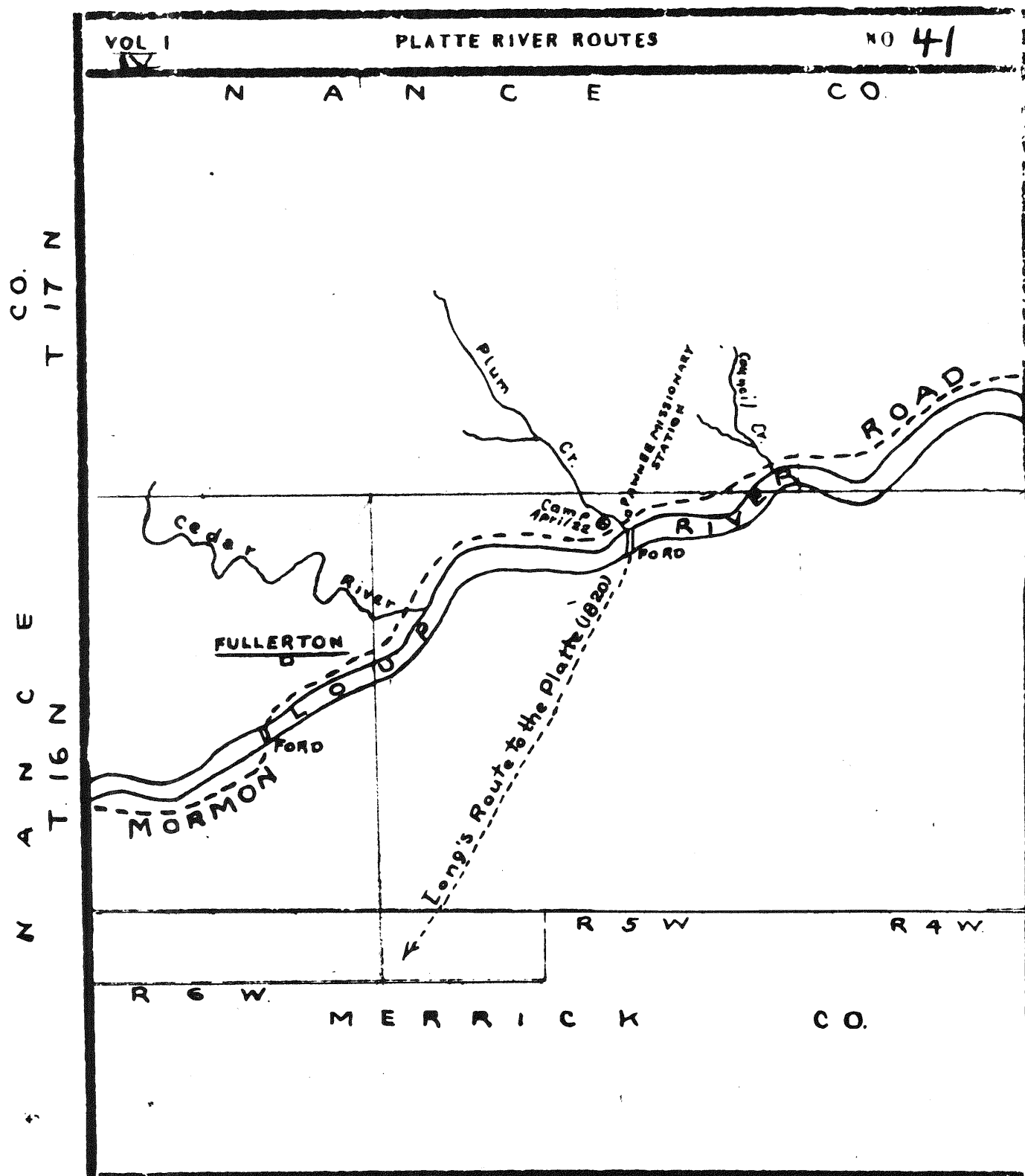


The original Mormon party under Young ascended the Loup River by the present site of Columbus, evidently following the track used by Long (1, 432, and Parker (49). Later caravans, however, crossed the Loup ferry near Columbus and kept to the Platte; Cf. Crawford, 2; Hewitt, 87-92; Dale, 119. Clayton gives the record on the Loup (86-87). The pathway on the southern shore of the Platte falls into the old Nebraska City road in Range 1 W.



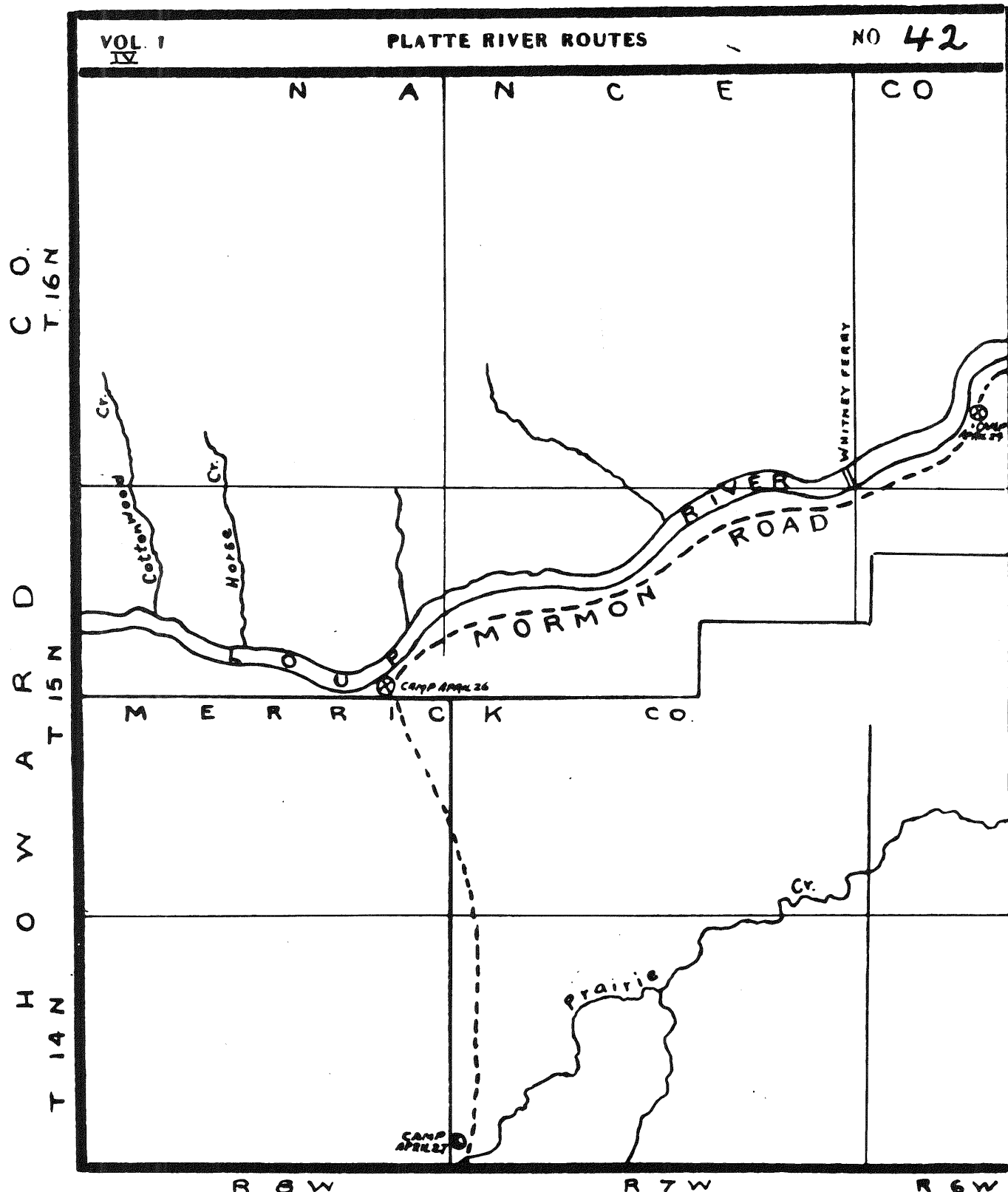
R 4 W R 3 W R 2 W

The roundabout nature of the Loup route, chosen by Young, is made evident in this map; it clearly illustrates the Mormon leaders' desire not only to lead the Saints to a new land undefiled by Gentile feet but also to do it on a pathway equally immaculate. The prejudices involved are clearly indicated by Clayton on the one hand and by such annalists as Hewitt (89-92) on the other, although almost every diarist reflects them.

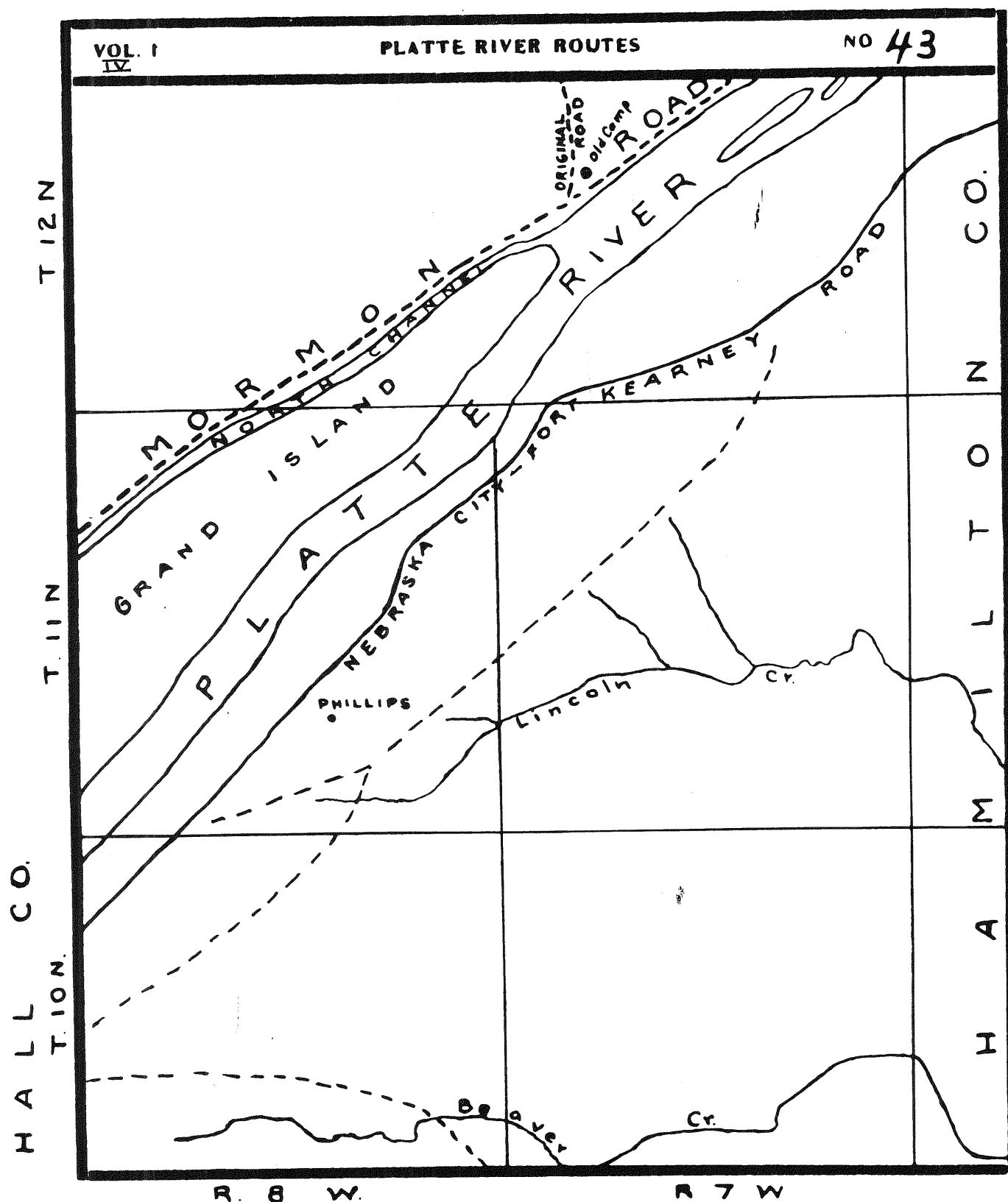


The Mormon hehira pursued the old trail (Long's I, 435-449) across Council Creek to the noted Pawnee rendezvous at the mouth of Plum Creek where the early A. B. C. F. M. had its missionary station. Here Brigham Young discarded Long's route southward and passed on westward to the ford southwest of Fullerton. Even then he refused to strike back to the Platte, but plodded along on a dim trace hardly visible. Cf. Dale, 119; Dodge, 7-12; Clayton, 89-101.

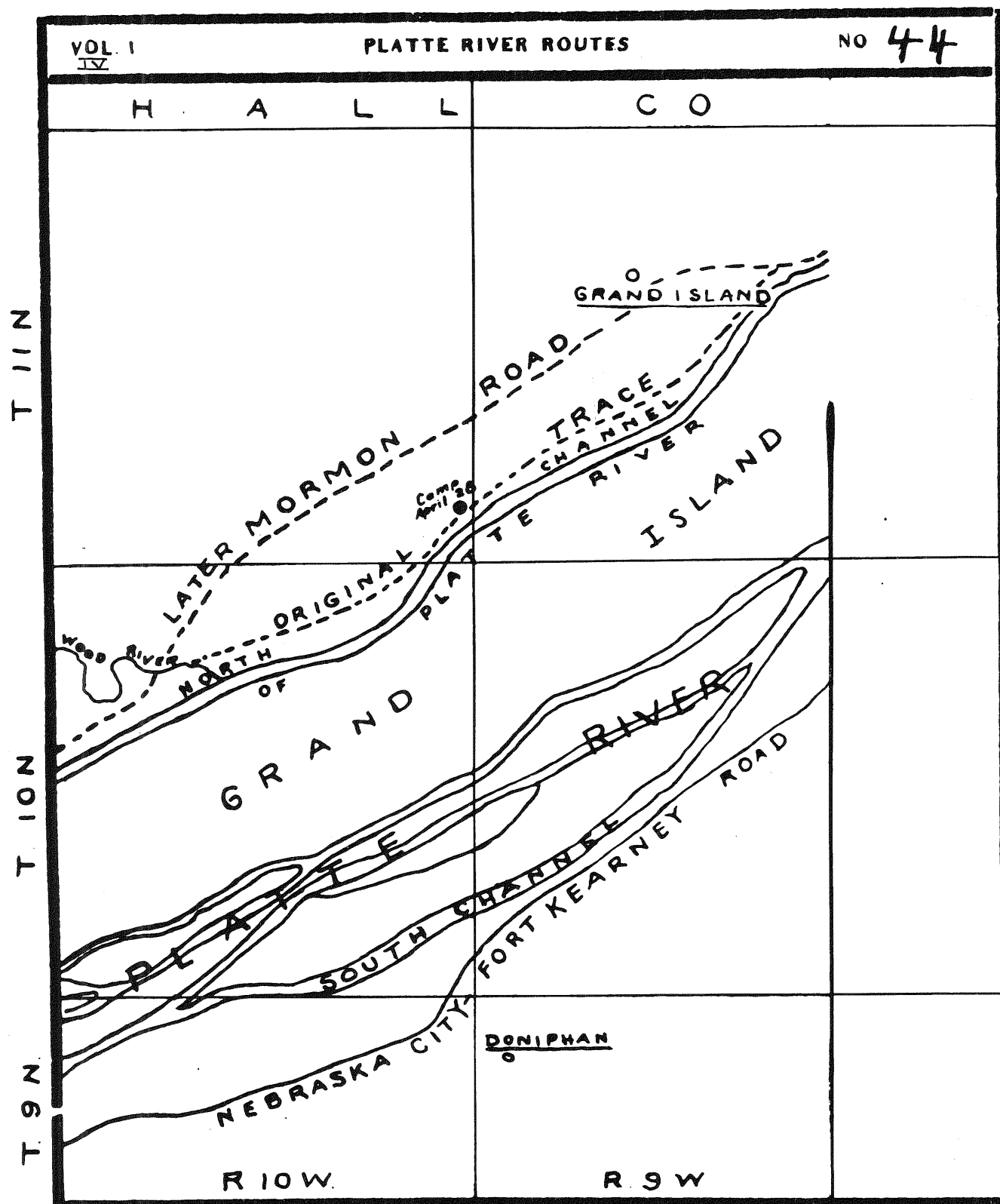




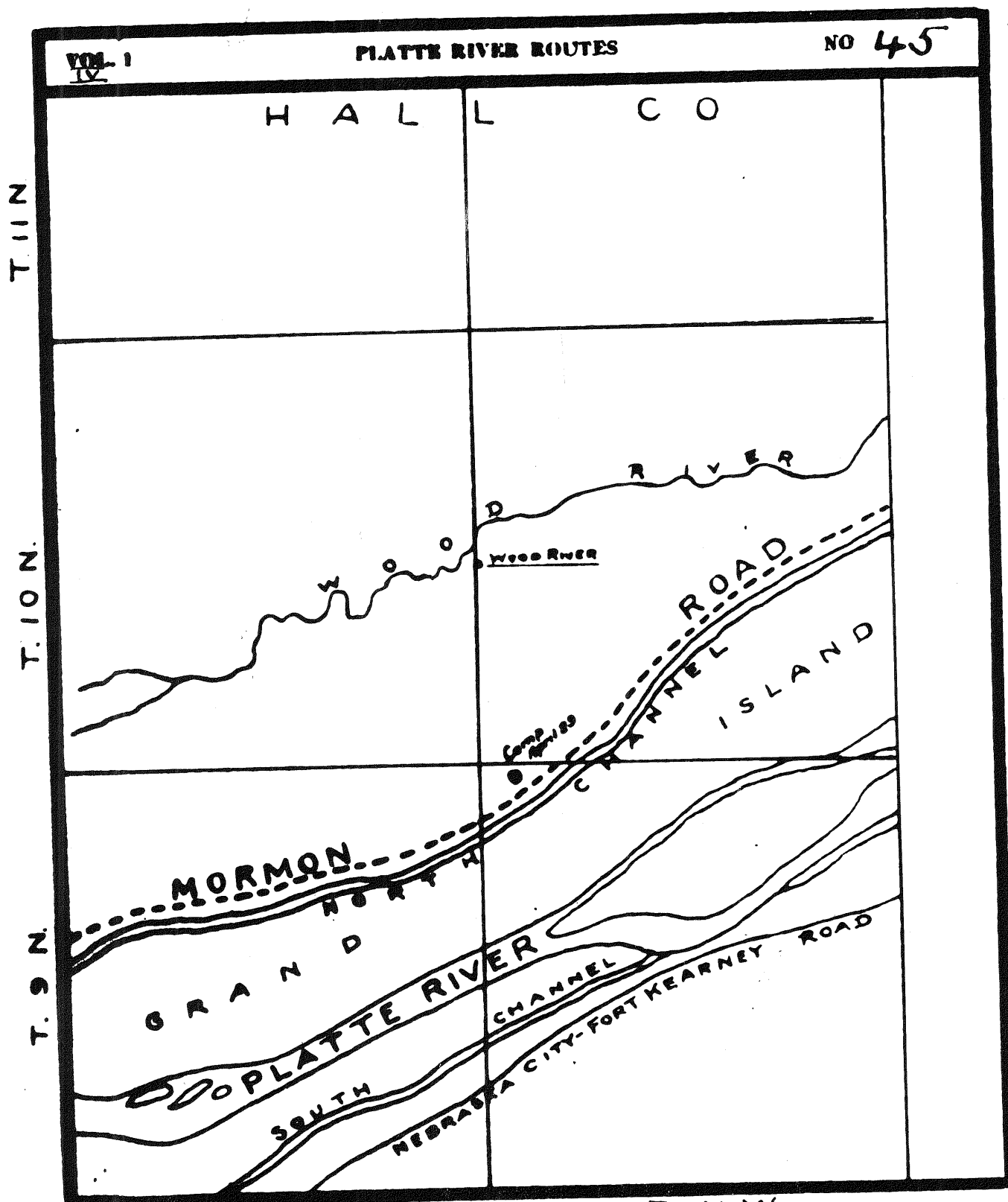
Young's stern purpose to open and maintain a distinctly Mormon route had to be reconsidered when the camp of April 26 was pitched. As a result a southward course across the prairies to Prairie Creek was essayed the following day. Cf. Crawford, 2; Clayton, 104-111.



At the foot of historic Grand Island the original Mormon party fell into the old and more practical Platte River road, which was used by the Mormon trains of later years. Cf. Dodge, 13; Clayton, 3. South of the Platte is shown the Nebraska City Road which was the pathway used by many non-Mormons faring westward from the Omaha section. As a high and dry road to and from Nebraska City it became a popular and important freight route from the lower Missouri River as well as from the Omaha section. The Mormon Trail across the omitted T. 13 was a straight line to T. 12.



The original Mormon pathway clung closely to the bank of the North Channel southwest of the present site of Grand Island. The later route, however, swung west to the present site of that town, meeting the original track later on Wood River, or Great Wood River as Long called it (I, 454). The camp site here was locally famous. Cf. Hewitt, 102-103; Crawford, 2; Clayton, 111-112.



R. 12 W. ADAMS CO. R. 11 W.  
 Following a very blind track (Clayton, 112-114 the Mormon advance party steadily followed the river in Hall County.  
 Their pathway from this point is continued jointly with that of the Oregon Trail on Map No. 26.