



BLACK ROCK DESERT
HIGH ROCK CANYON
EMIGRANT TRAILS



NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

SOLDIER MEADOWS

By the time the pioneers had reached Soldier Meadows they had already traveled over 80 miles of the rough terrain of the Applegate/Lassen trail and probably well over a thousand miles of the California trail (depending on what part of the country they started from).

The 21 mile trek through the playa to Soldier Meadows consisted of deep sand with little water or grass available.

"We left about sunset and were soon plowing our way ankle deep in the yield sand...and finding the traveling so difficult we occasionally turned from the beaten path to find firm footing, but without effect," Alonzo Delano (August 18, 1849).

The hot springs and abundant prairie grasses, although quite dry, provided food and water for the travelers and their livestock. Many pioneers viewed Soldier Meadows as an oasis from the sandy desert.

"Plenty of tolerable and abundance of dry grass; springs and rills of pretty fair water, some of mineral and hot water, marshes, efforescence of alkalai and salt; greasewood, and some few green willows. Numerous camps here." J. Goldsborough Bruff (1849)

The emigrants typically stayed in the vicinity for several days enjoying the area's amenities.

Soldier Meadows, however, wasn't always hospitable. The area experienced many problems with Indians. One person was killed and horses and cattle were stolen and butchered. Here, the emigrants traveled in groups as much as possible to avoid confrontation with the Native Americans.

In 1865 the United States military built Camp McGary at Summit Lake. It was built for protecting the Idaho mail route to Chico, California. An outpost was built at Soldier Meadows that consisted of a one hundred-horse capacity barn, a mess hall, officer's quarters, barracks, and secret underground tunnels from the barn and the mess hall to the barracks. The barn and several buildings still stand and have been incorporated into the Soldier's Meadows Ranch.

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- ✦ Possible Questions:
 - ✦ Why was the relationship between the Indians and the pioneers so contentious?
 - ✦ Who was the average person making this trip?
 - ✦ How long did it take pioneers to reach Soldier's Meadows from the beginning of the Applegate trail?
 - How long were pioneers traveling on the playa?

