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Selected and edited by

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Author of "Historic Highways of America," etc.

Series IV

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Privately printed by
The Arthur H. Clark Company
Cleveland, Ohio

• 1920

The Crown Collection
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American Maps.

Series IV

The
American
Transcontinental
Trails

Edited

by

Archer Butler Hulbert

Professor of History and Director of the
Stewart Commission on Western History, Colo-
rado College

Volume IV

The California Trail Fort Hall to Placerville:
with Branch to Salt Lake City.

Map
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*The California Trail
Fort Hall To Placerville.*

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Note.

The paucity of diaries written on The California Trail in its most interesting years, 1849 and 1850, is striking commentary on the exceeding hardships of the journey. Journals bravely begun must have been neglected and then thrown away by the score as an orderly migration took on the semblance of a rout when the Sink of the Humboldt and Carson River were reached. Diaries were less important than wagons; yet here on the Carson tracks of 2000 wagons were to be seen in a space of six miles in 1850. Decaying carcasses of 4000 cattle lined that forty-mile stretch of this famous pathway.

Fortunately, however, light is thrown on the route of the old trail by reports made by explorers for later mail and railway lines; these supplement the precious journals of the Pioneers.

To Mr J. G. Peterson, of the U. S. Geological Survey, the editor is, again, indebted for advice and criticism.

W. B. F.

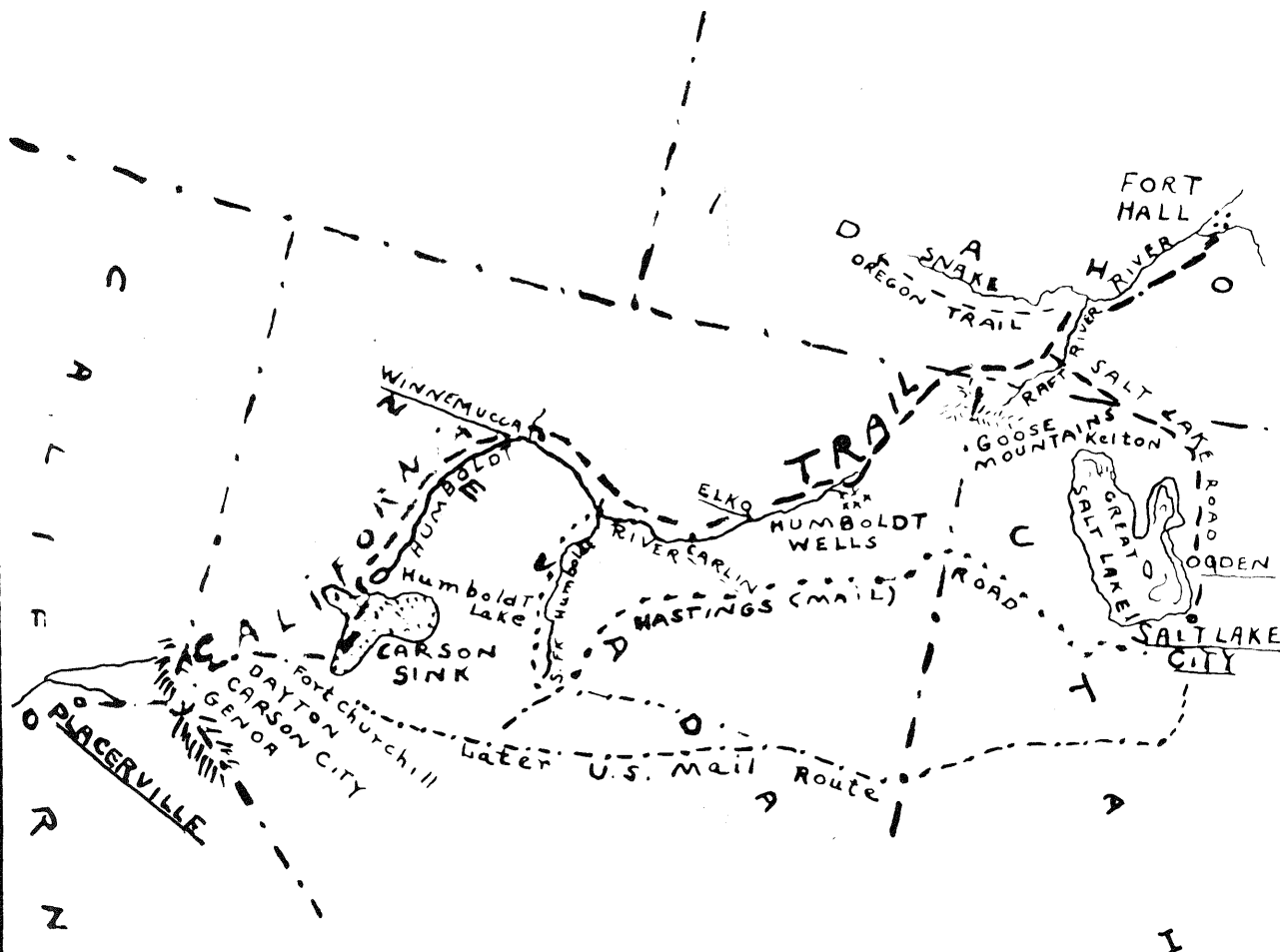
Colorado Springs, Colo. December 1st 1925.

Bibliography*

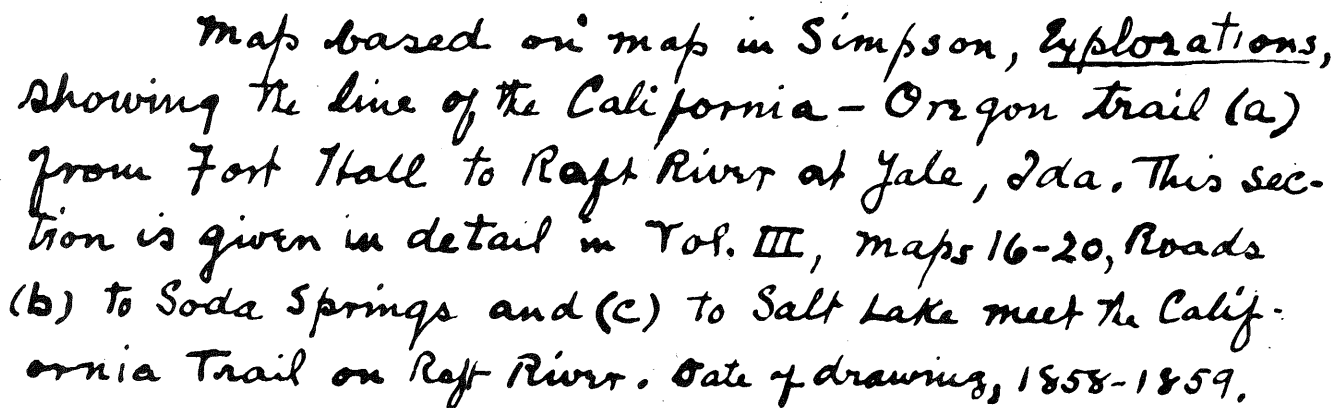
<u>Author - Title.</u>	<u>Date of Record</u>
Beckwith, E. G., "Report", see <u>Pacific Wagon Roads</u> .	
Bidwell, J., <u>Reminiscen. Century</u> , XLI.	1841
Bishop, F. A., "Report", see <u>Pacific Wagon Roads</u> .	1859
Bryant, E., <u>Rocky Mountain Adventures</u> ,	1846
Delano, A., <u>Life on the Plains</u> ,	1849
Forney, J., "Report", <u>S. Ex. Doc. 36 Cong. 1 Sess.</u> (1025)	1859
Harlan, A. W., "Journal", <u>Am. of Iowa</u> 3 ser. XI,	1850
Holeman, J. H., "Report", <u>S. Ex. Doc. 32 Cong. 2 Sess.</u> (658),	1852
Ingalls, R., "Report", <u>H. Ex. Doc. 34 Cong. 1 Sess.</u> (841),	1855
Kelly, W., <u>Across the Rocky Mountains</u> ,	1849
Kern, E. M., "Report", see Simpson, <u>Explorations</u> *,	1845
Kirk, J., "Report", see <u>Pacific Wagon Roads</u>	1859
Lander, F. W., "Report", <u>2d</u> .	
Lynde, J., "Report", <u>S. Ex. Doc. 36 Cong. 1 Sess.</u> (1024)	1859
Marcy, R. B., <u>Prairie Traveller</u> ,	1859
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Simpson, J. H., <u>Explorations Across the Great Desert</u> ,	1859
Thompson, J., "Report", see <u>Pacific Wagon Roads</u> ,	1859
Warren, S. K., "Memoir", <u>Pacific Railway Reports</u> , XI.	

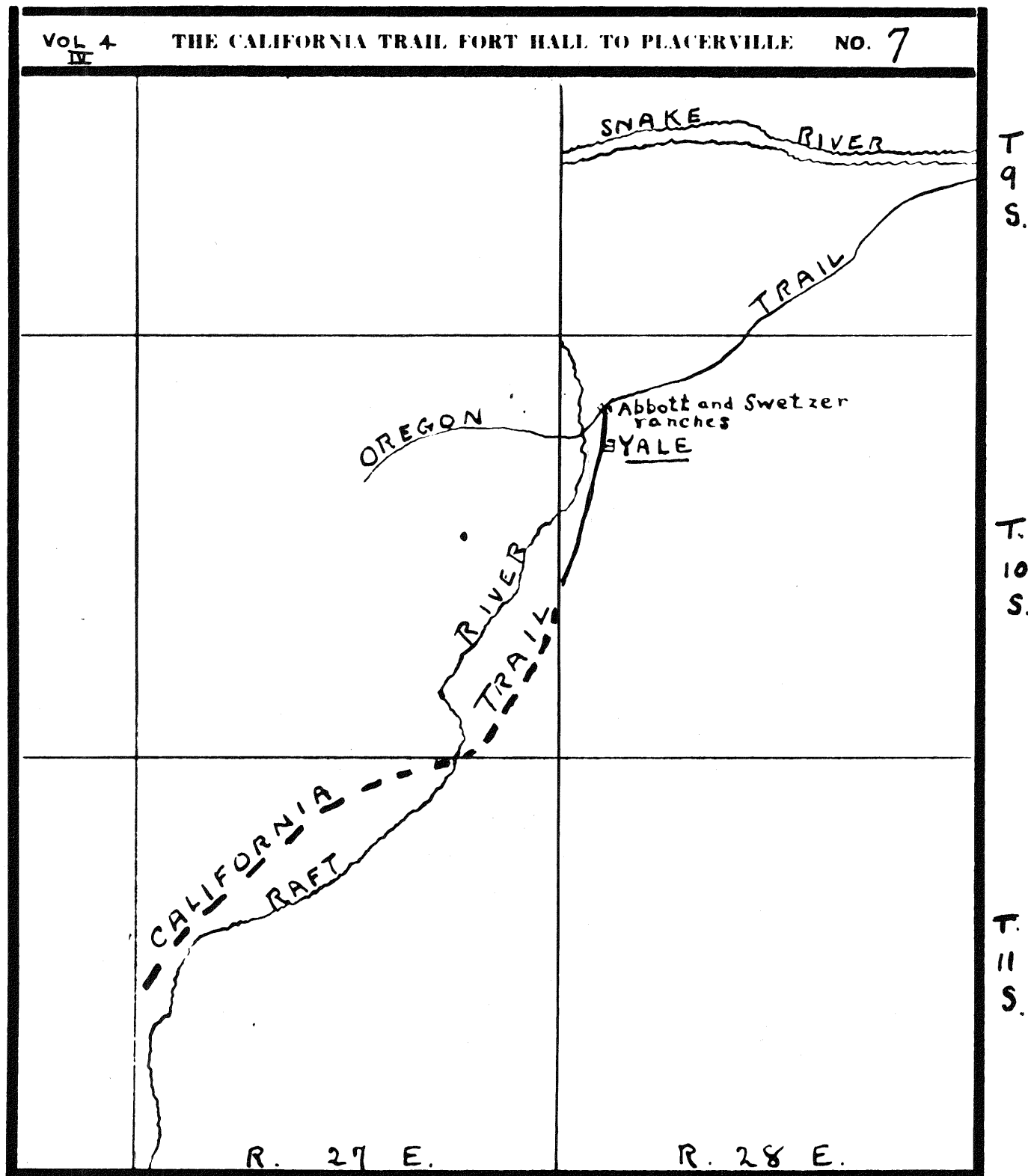
* The bibliographies cited in Vols. I, II and III apply also to this volume; add "Bibliography of Travellers and Explorers, 1846-1900", The Cambridge History of American Literature, Pt. III, 681-728.

** With Fremont's Expedition of 1845.

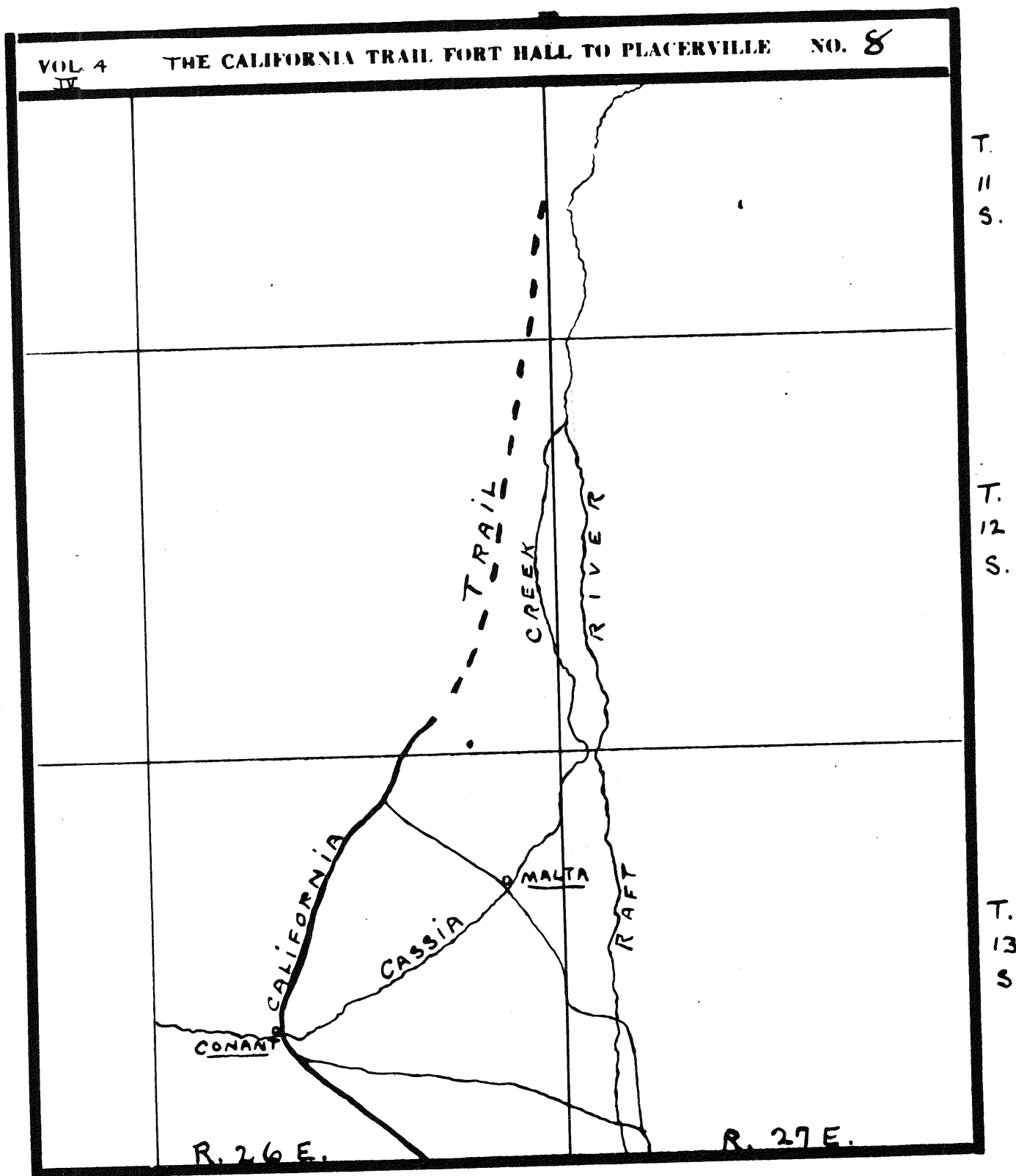


KEY TO CALIFORNIA TRAIL, FORT
HALL TO PLACERVILLE.

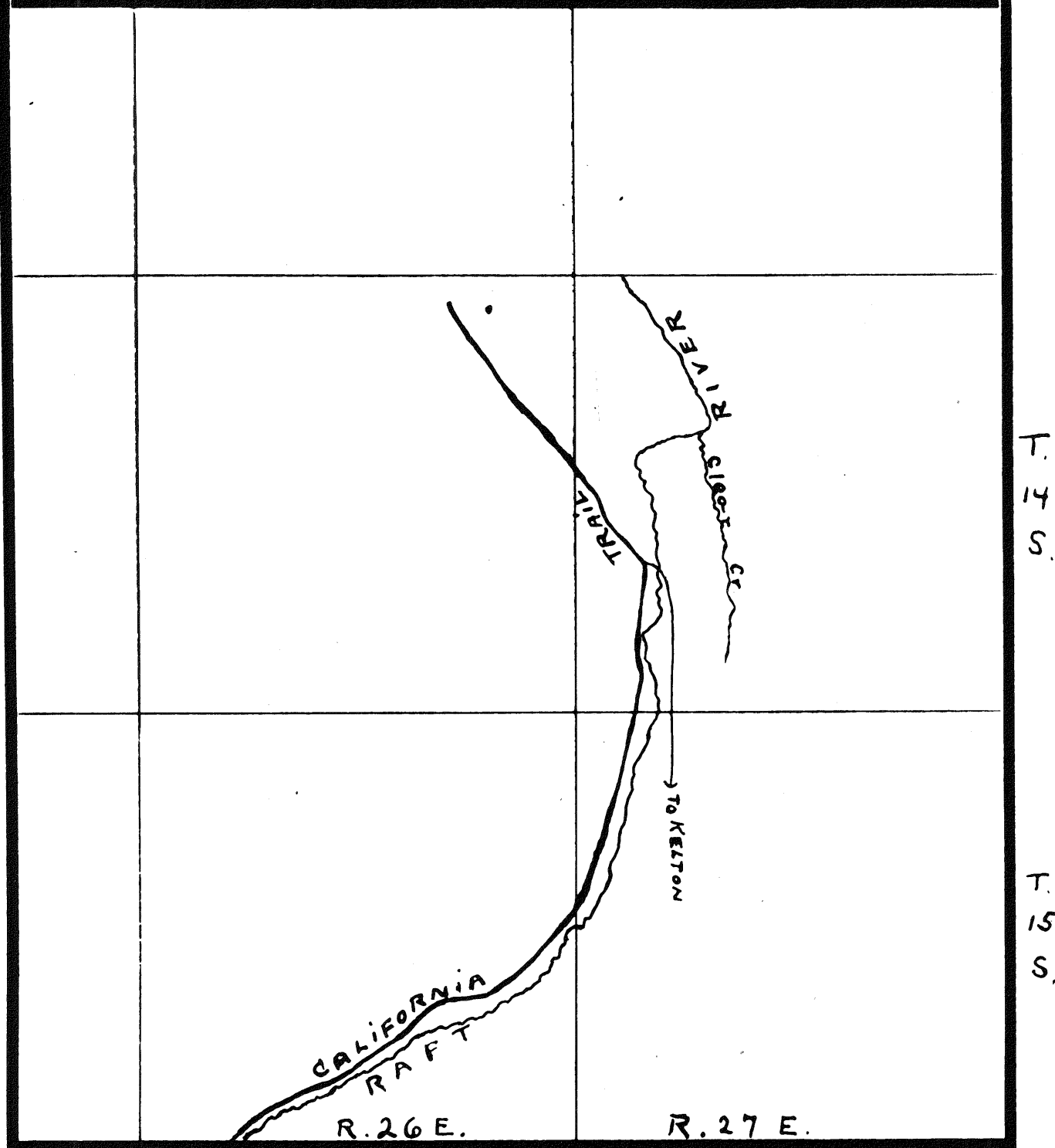




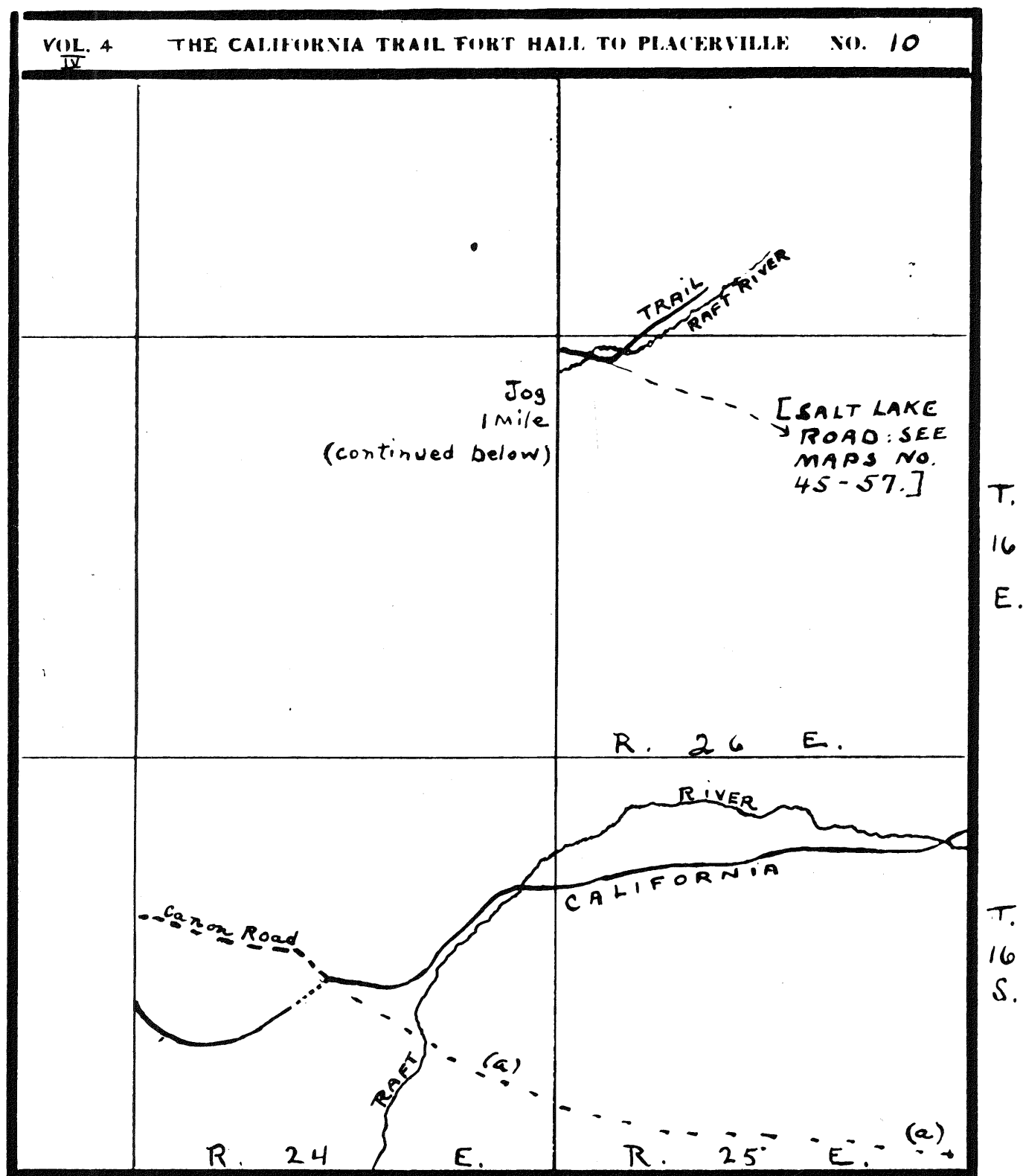
The parting of the California from the Oregon Trail near the present Gale, Ida. post office is mentioned by most Oregon as well as California travellers; Cf. Vol. III, map 20. Raft River was known as Ogden's River (III, 20), Secassure Creek (Marcy, 281, 282) and Cassia Creek, evidently a contraction for one of its present branches. Cf. Pacific Wagon Roads, 62; Harlan, 52; for various pathways up the valley.



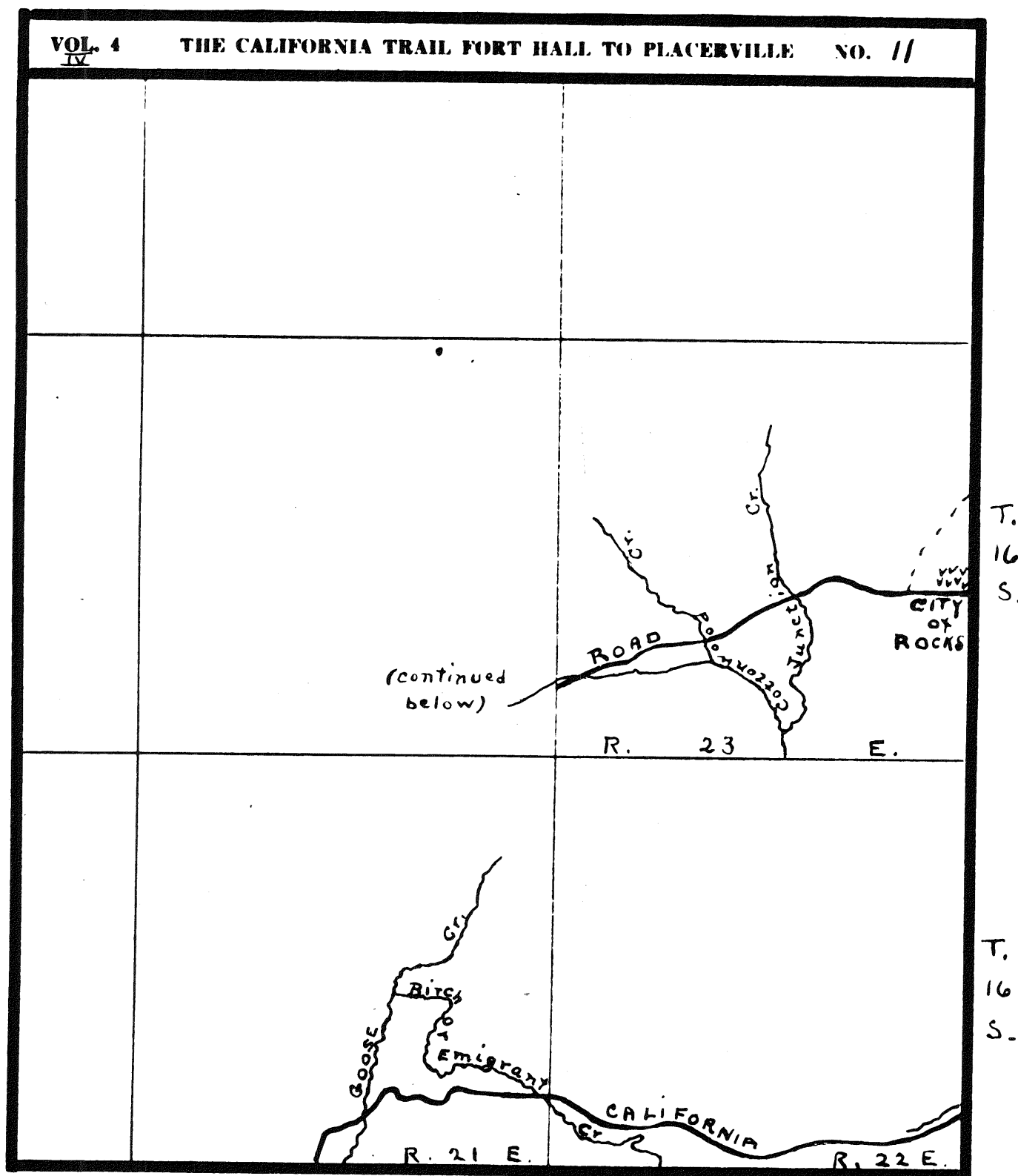
Orlano (161) found the '49ers crossing the Raft as many as three times in the space of sixteen miles. For all the dust (Harlan, 52), and lack of fuel except willows (Thompson, 62), this route was preferable for ox-teams even as late as 1859, Lander, 31. Hudspeth's Cut-off ("b" on Map No. 6) from Soda Springs entered the older trail near Conant, junction point not identified to date; Mary 282.



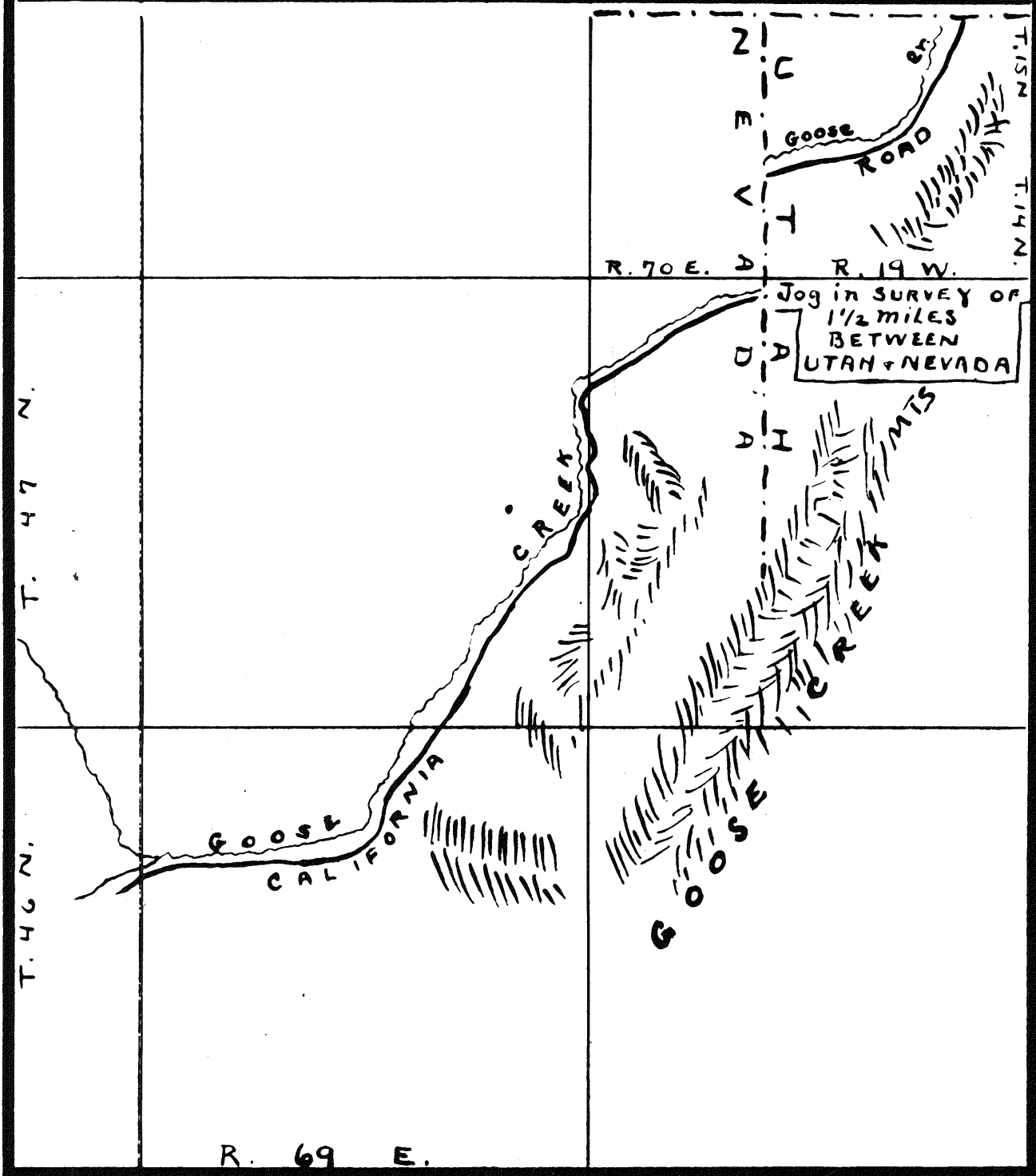
At the point where Raft River bears to the west the road indicated "To Kelton" continues southward. This was the line of an ancient Indian and fur trader's highway long before the Raft River section of it was known to California immigrants. Odgen, a quarter of a century earlier, found it a highway to Great Salt Lake; cf. III, 20.



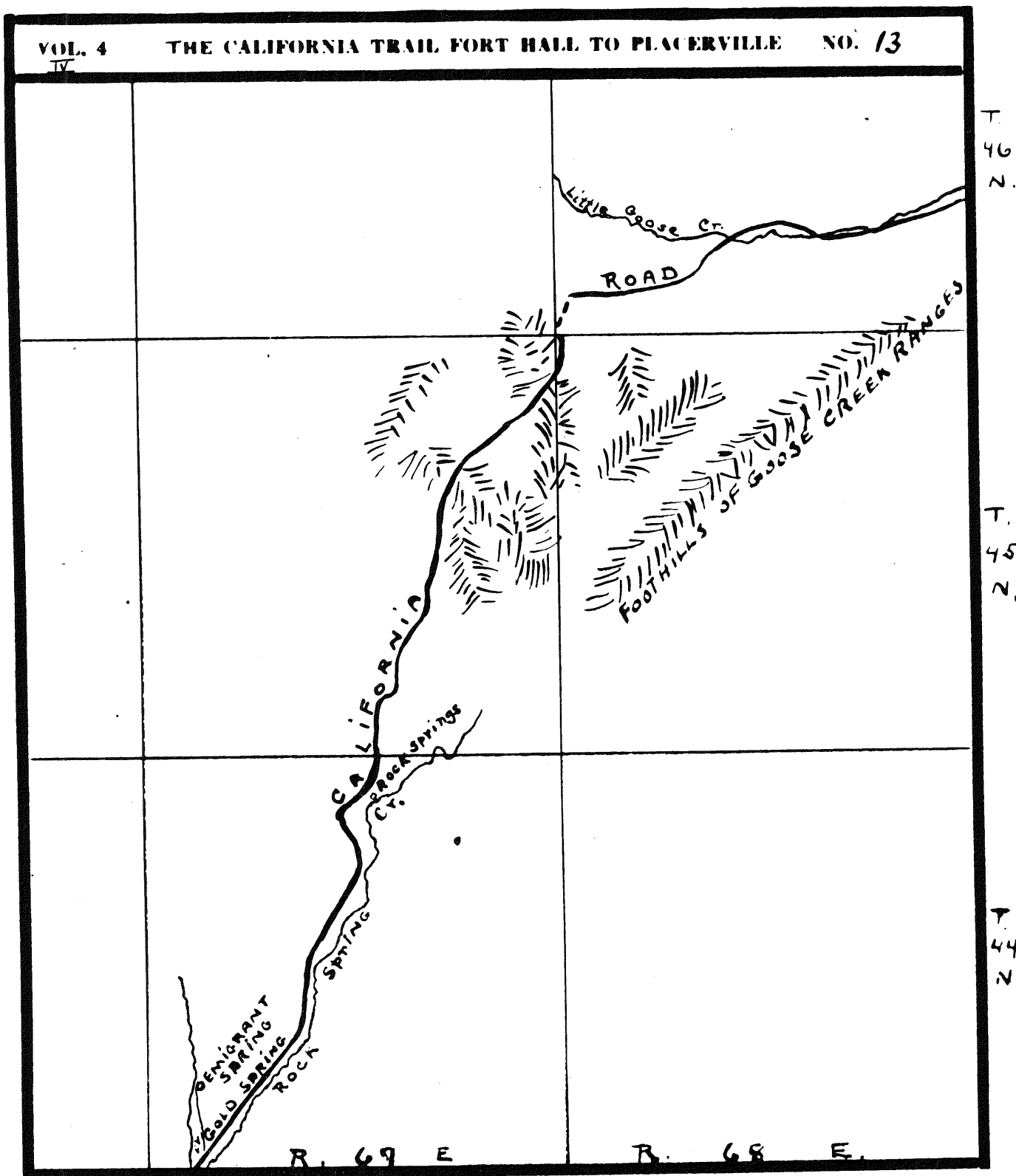
The junctions here with the early trails from Salt Lake City to the Raft, in R. 26 and R. 24, became important as the Mormon settlement grew, and until the "southern" route (see map 5) supplanted that of the '49ers. Such meeting points of trails were local postoffices, where, on sticks, and under stones, messages were left for on-coming friends or to be carried back homeward by chance travellers; Delano, 151, 156.



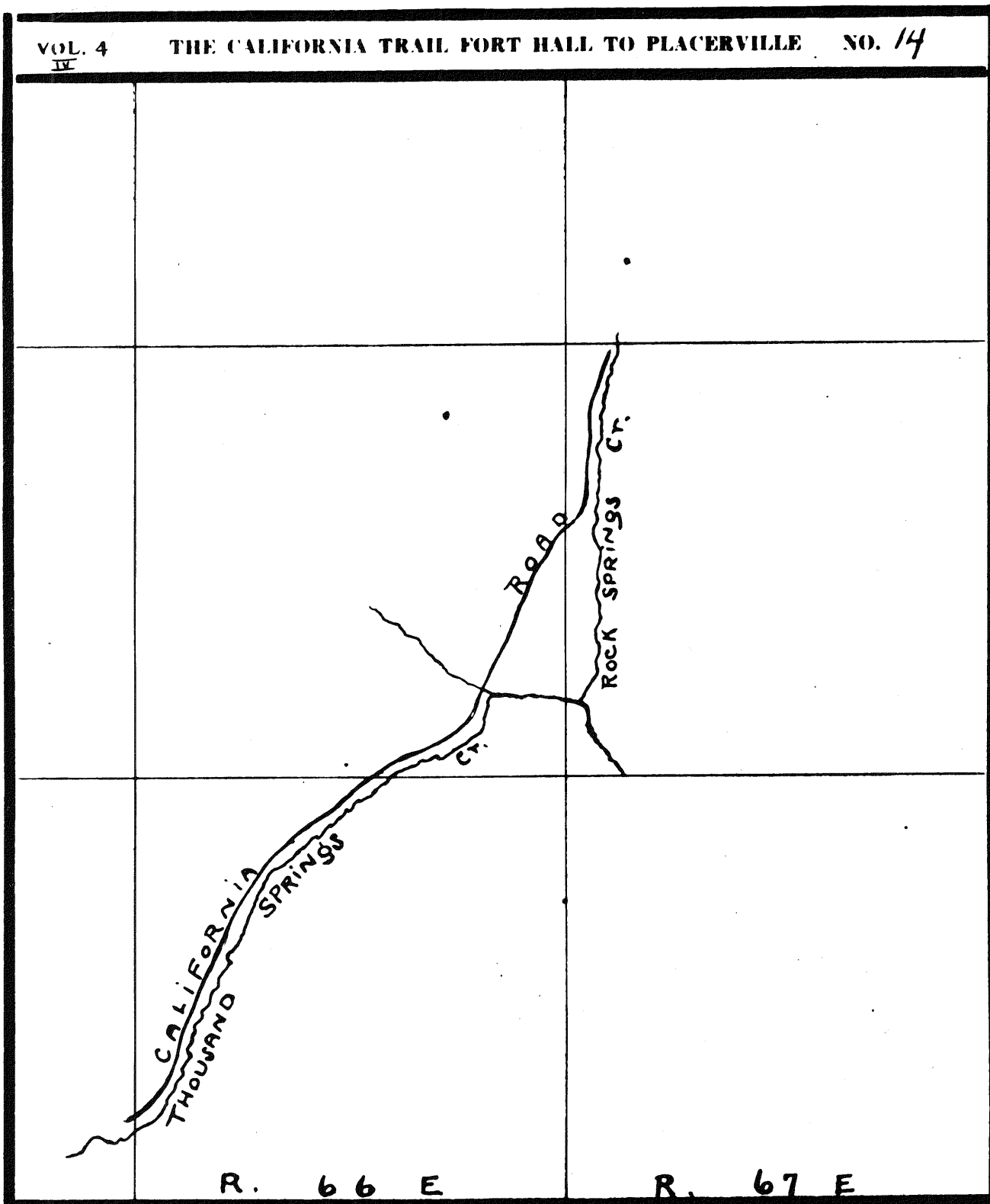
The mind 12,000-acre tract known as "City of Rocks" near Gooding, Ida., through which, for three miles, the old trail ran "maraculously" (Harlan, 53) was well-known to the migrating Argonauts. Good camp-sites on the various nearby creeks gave relief to jaded teams. Cf. Delano, 151; Pac. Wagon Roads, 62; Lynde 241, 252. For earliest wagon train to pass this way (1845) see Simpson, 22 note.



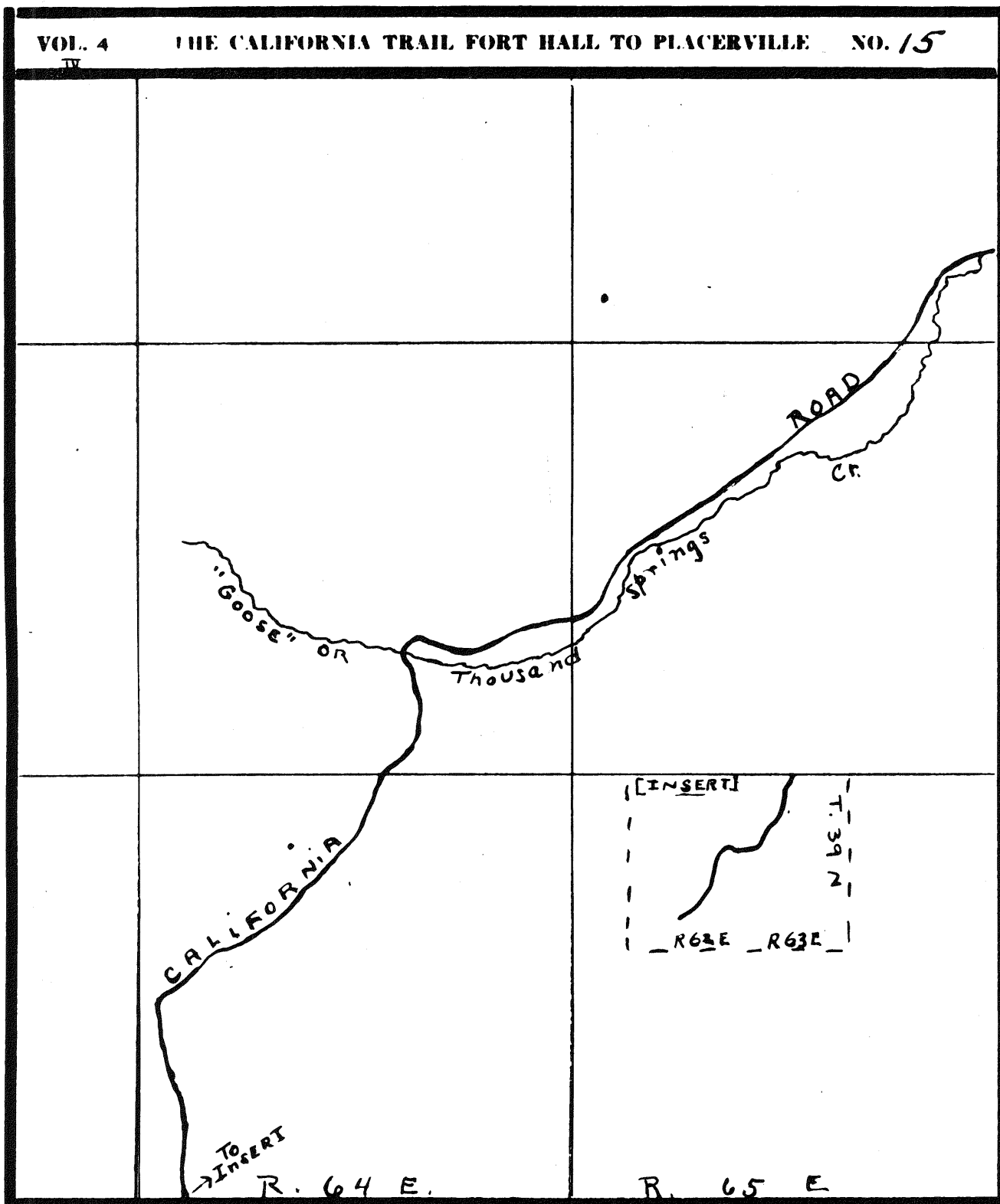
The "strange, mild valley of Goose Creek" (Orlando, 152), which offered easy ascent of the spurs of Goose Creek Mountains (Lynde, 241), was the pathway of the '49ers for eighteen miles. Here the meager grass supply was soon exhausted; Harlan found "100 wagons jammed close together ... 33 miles and no grass yet"; 53; cf Kelly, 183.



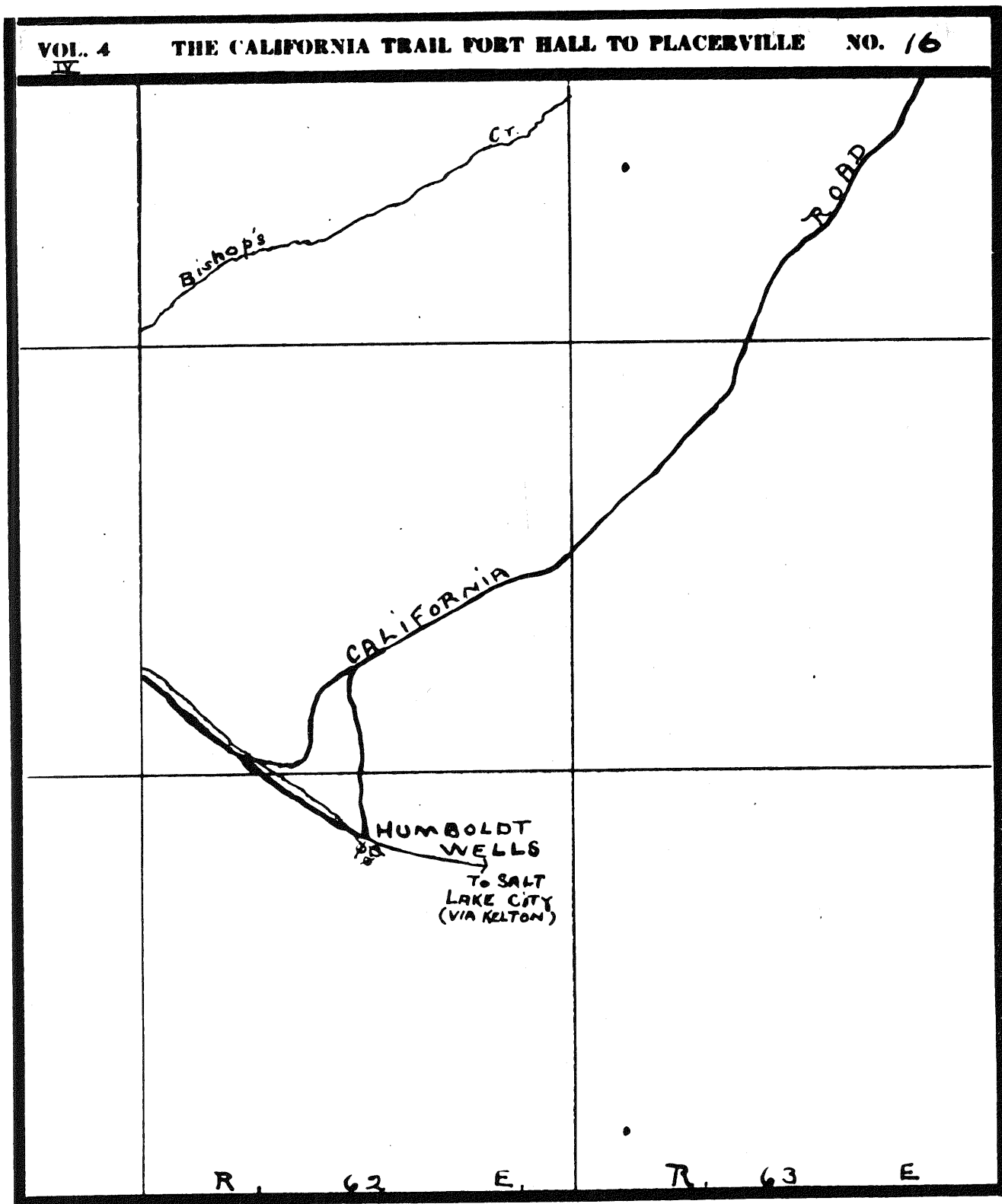
Save for the rugged ridge near Bear River (III, 8.), Goose Creek Mountains offered the only serious handicap to winter travel on the California Trail east of the Sierras, Simpson, 92. Their fantastic formations (Ingalls, 162) aroused the fever of many an Argonaut; Kelly describes men spending the noon hour digging for gold "without finding a speck", 183; cf. Orlando, 153.



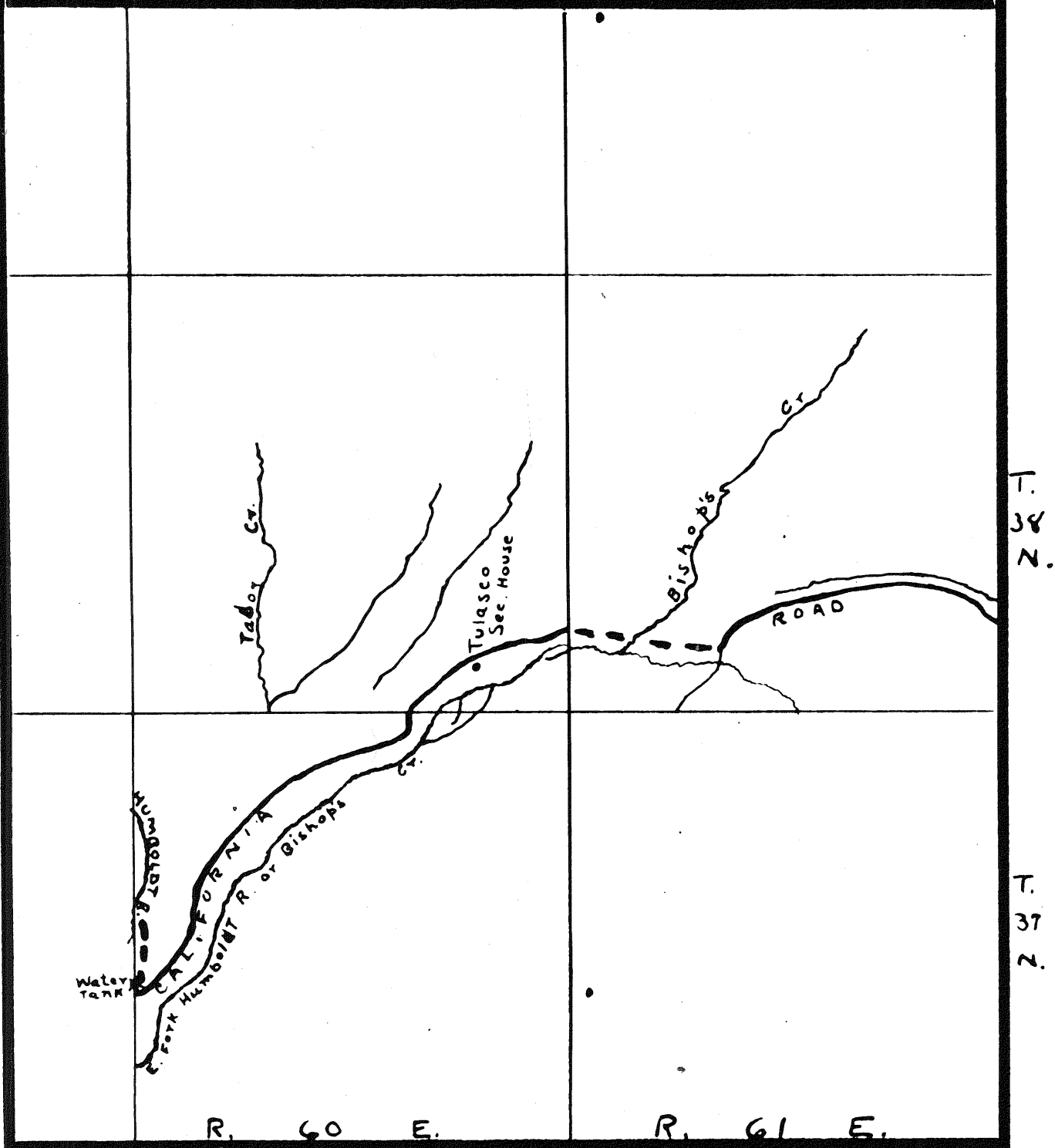
The pathway to the summit of the divide (pre-
ceding map) was comparatively smooth; the
descent into the valley of Rock Spring Creek was
more difficult, cf. Orlando, 153; Lynde 247. The
springs (hot and cold) hereabouts were greatly
relished by the hurrying hordes; Harlan, 53. By some
the valley was called "Mell Spring"; by others "Hot Spring".



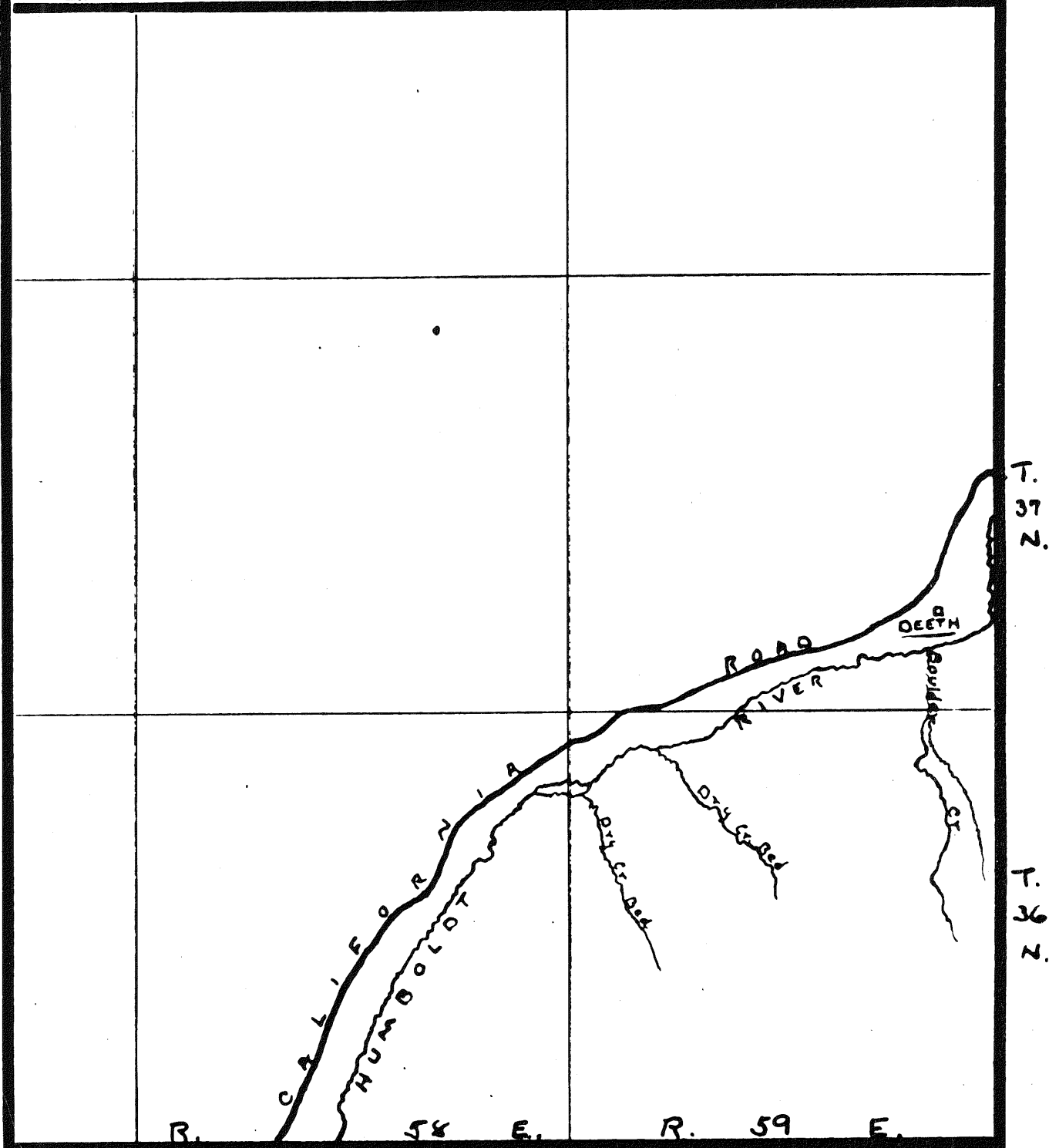
The mystery of Thousand Springs Creek valley, the first desert stream encountered by the '49ers which had no outlet save a "sink", and confused by some with Goose Creek, is reflected in their diaries. One optimist states that the gas from the hot springs might be conveyed in pipes "to answer a small community here for fuel and light" (Harlan, 54). An abrupt climb (Bishop, 42) (cont.).



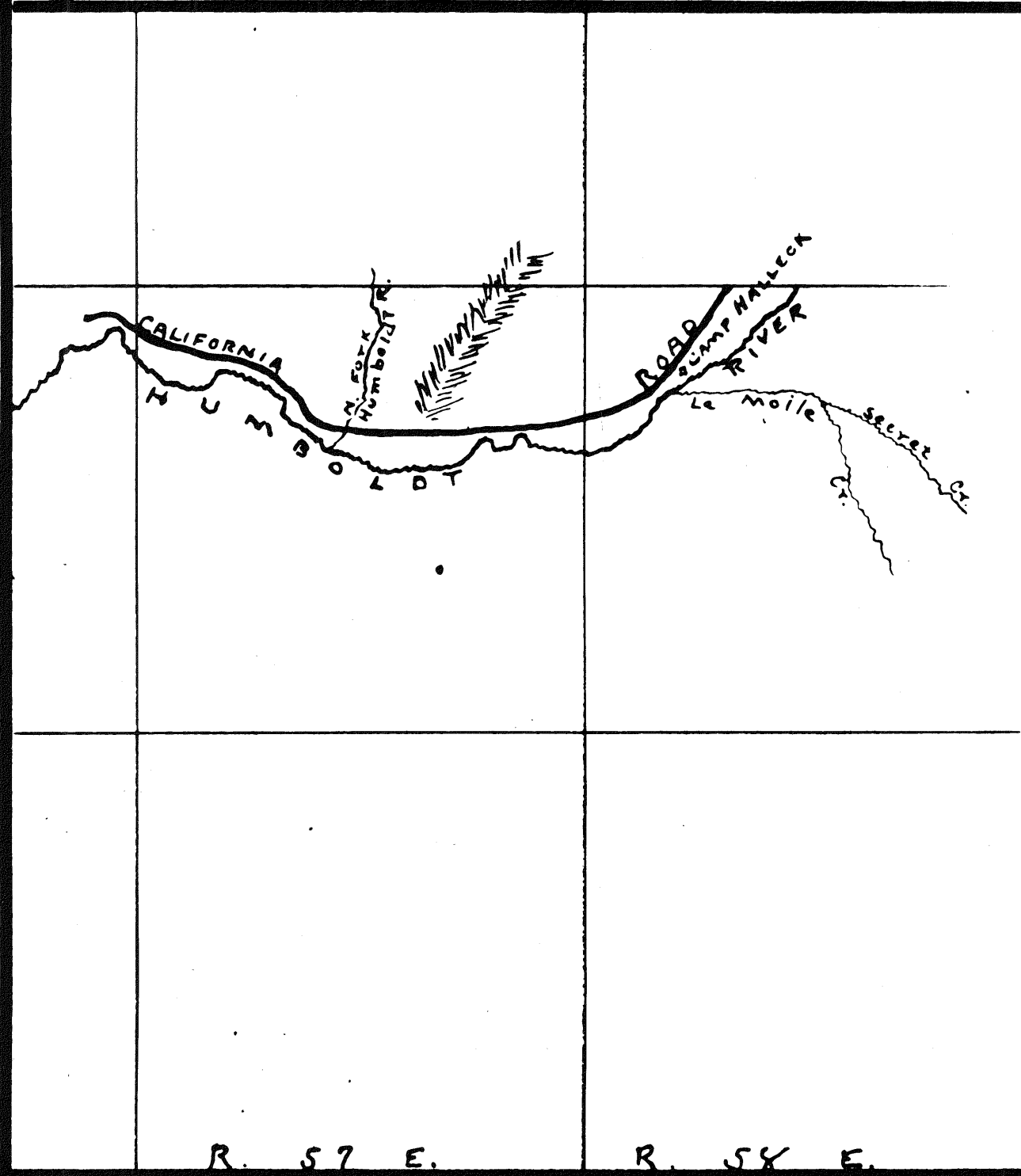
led over the divide to the famous landmark of this section of the route, Humboldt Wells. Here the forlorn desert plain "was pitted over for miles like a tan-yard, with oblong holes, some of which were very deep, and of a remarkable appearance, looking as if formed by art; they were so equally spread and so uniformly shaped; all were deep (cont.)



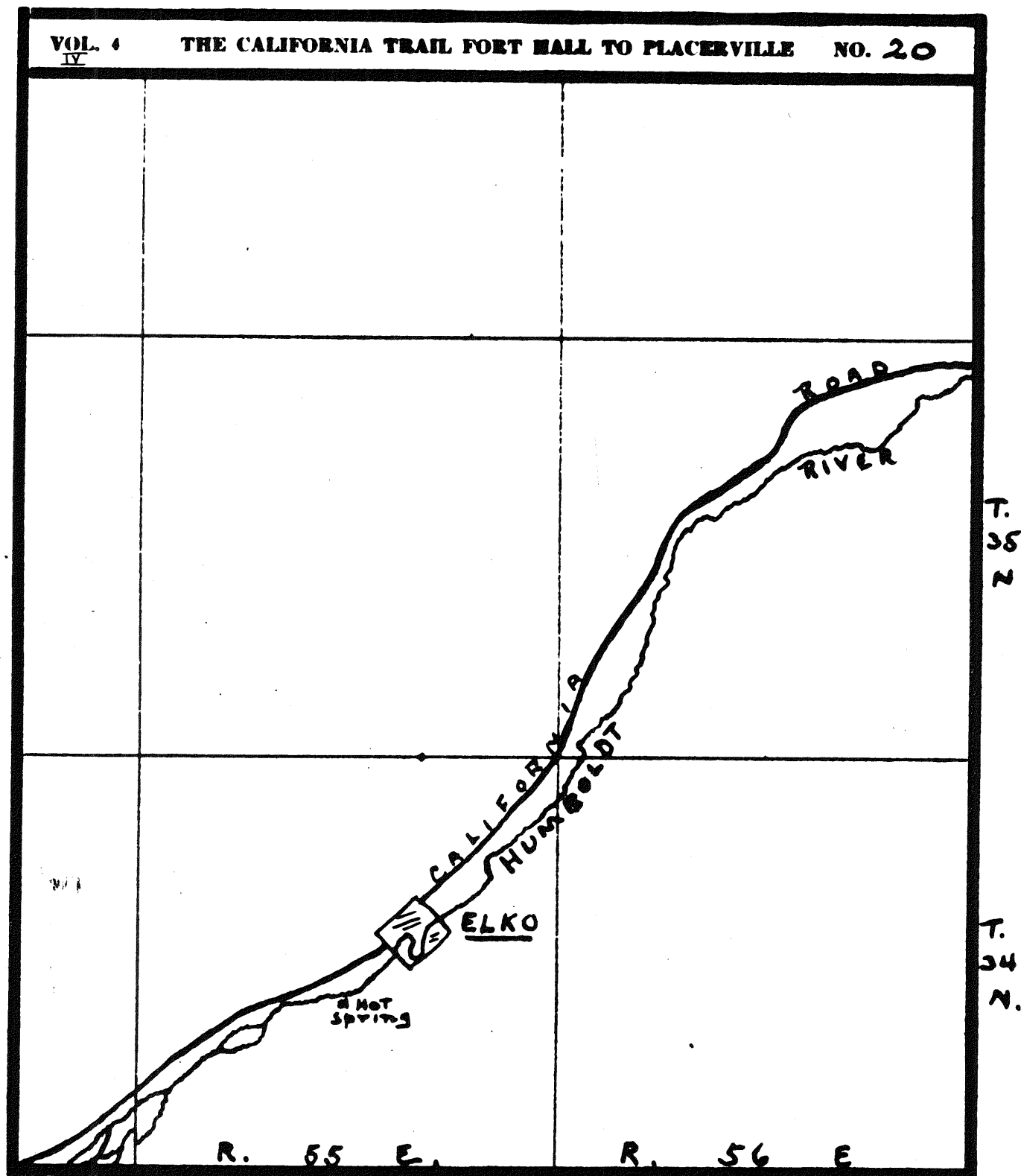
and [1849] half-filled with stagnant water," Kelly, 185. There, by one route or another, travellers now entered the long-looked-for Humboldt River valley. Possibly no migration pathway in history is described in such contradictory terms by its historians as this track of the California Trail between the "Wells" and the "Sink" of the Humboldt. These range from Captain (con't.)



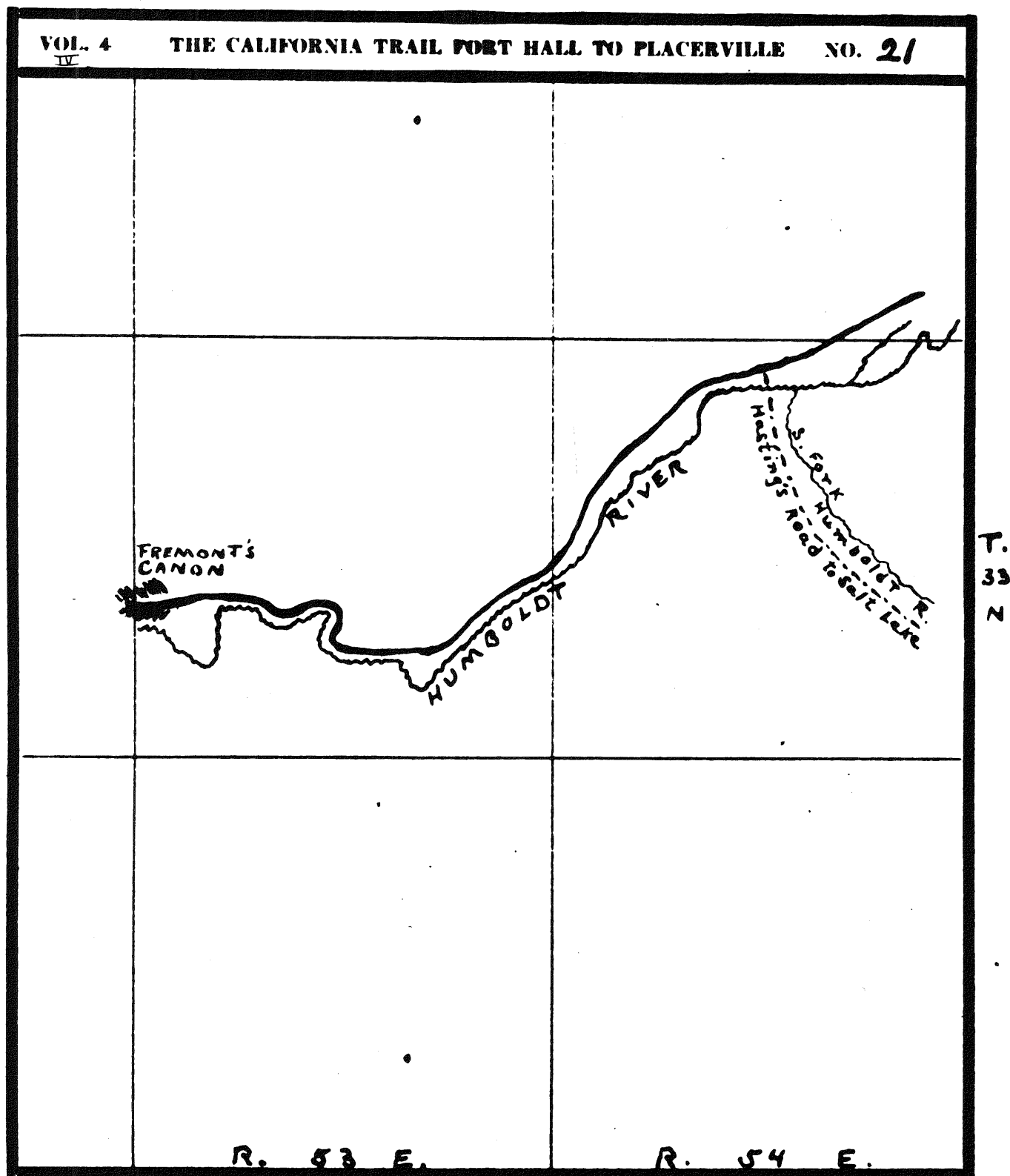
Ingalls's observation in 1855 "Never journeyed 200 miles along any river with the enjoyment and satisfaction I did on the Humboldt [with 450 mules, 300 horses and 70 wagons]" to the most frightful accounts of hardships, insanity and death. The explanation is to be found in the fact that stagnant water was usually poisonous and flowing water healthful; also (Cont)



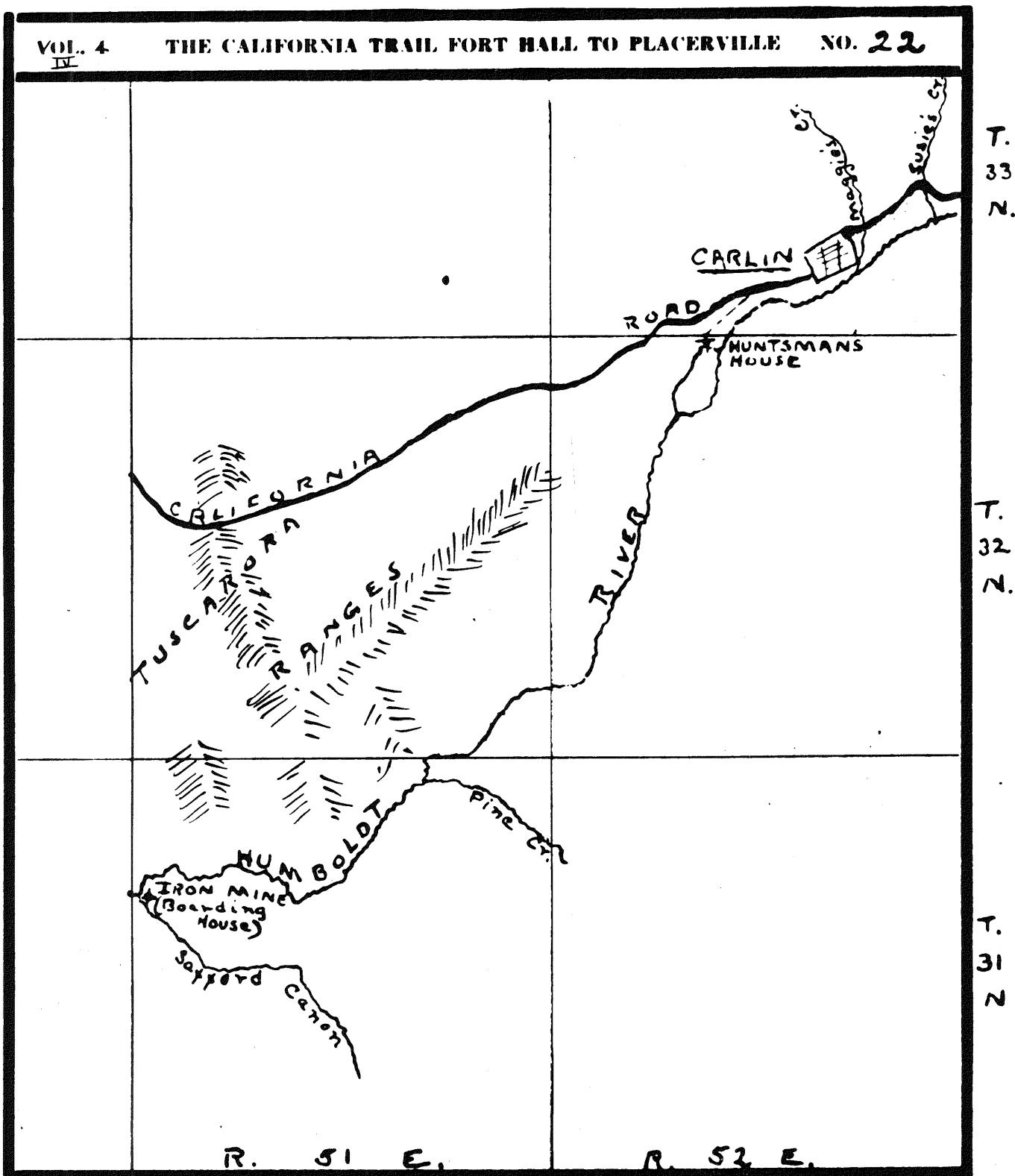
in the fact that, in dry seasons, a fair road and good grass was found near the river; whereas in times of floods the emigrant trains were forced onto the sandy bluffs at the cost of physical exertion many men and animals could not afford (Bishop, 40; Bryant, 201; Beckwith, 35). Near the mouth of the La Moile more provision of forage was available (cont.)



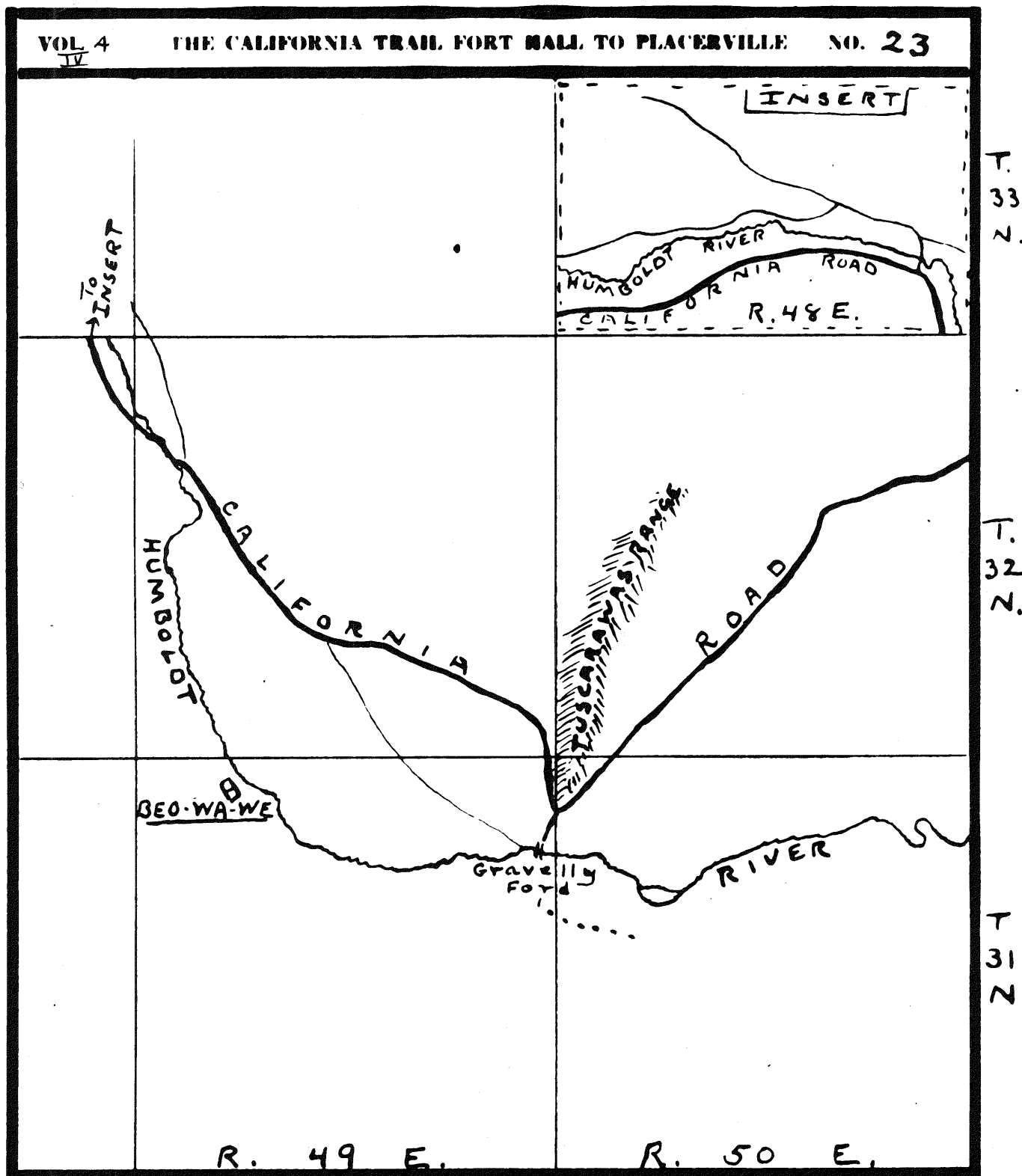
than usual. There was located the "Old Hay Reserve" of later days when the Central Pacific was being built by the site of Camp Halleck (Gen. Land Office map "Nevada", 1914). High water in the river brought alkali deposits to such meadows rendering grass, which had been good, very poisonous to cattle. The only recourse then was to the parched hills for forage.



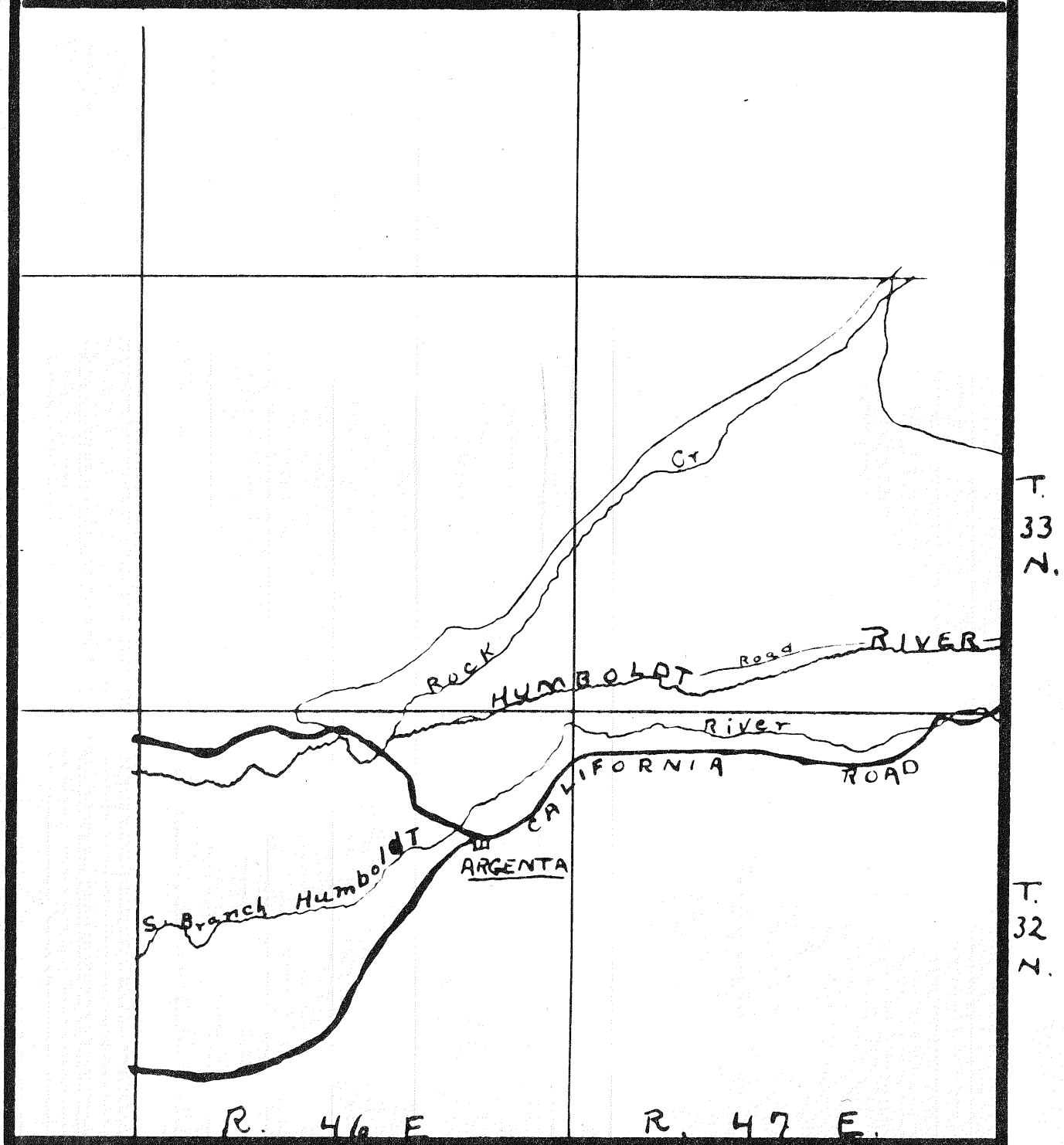
Between the present Echo and Fremont's Canon, the South Fork enters the Humboldt; it became a later route to this valley from Salt Lake City, known as the Hastings' Road, see map No. 5; cf. Bryant, Ch. XIV; Holeman, 445; Harlan, 54; Simpson, 64. Hudspeth was looking for this cut-off in 1846, Bryant, 170. The Donner party delayed so long looking for it that tragedy overtook them, Id. 250.



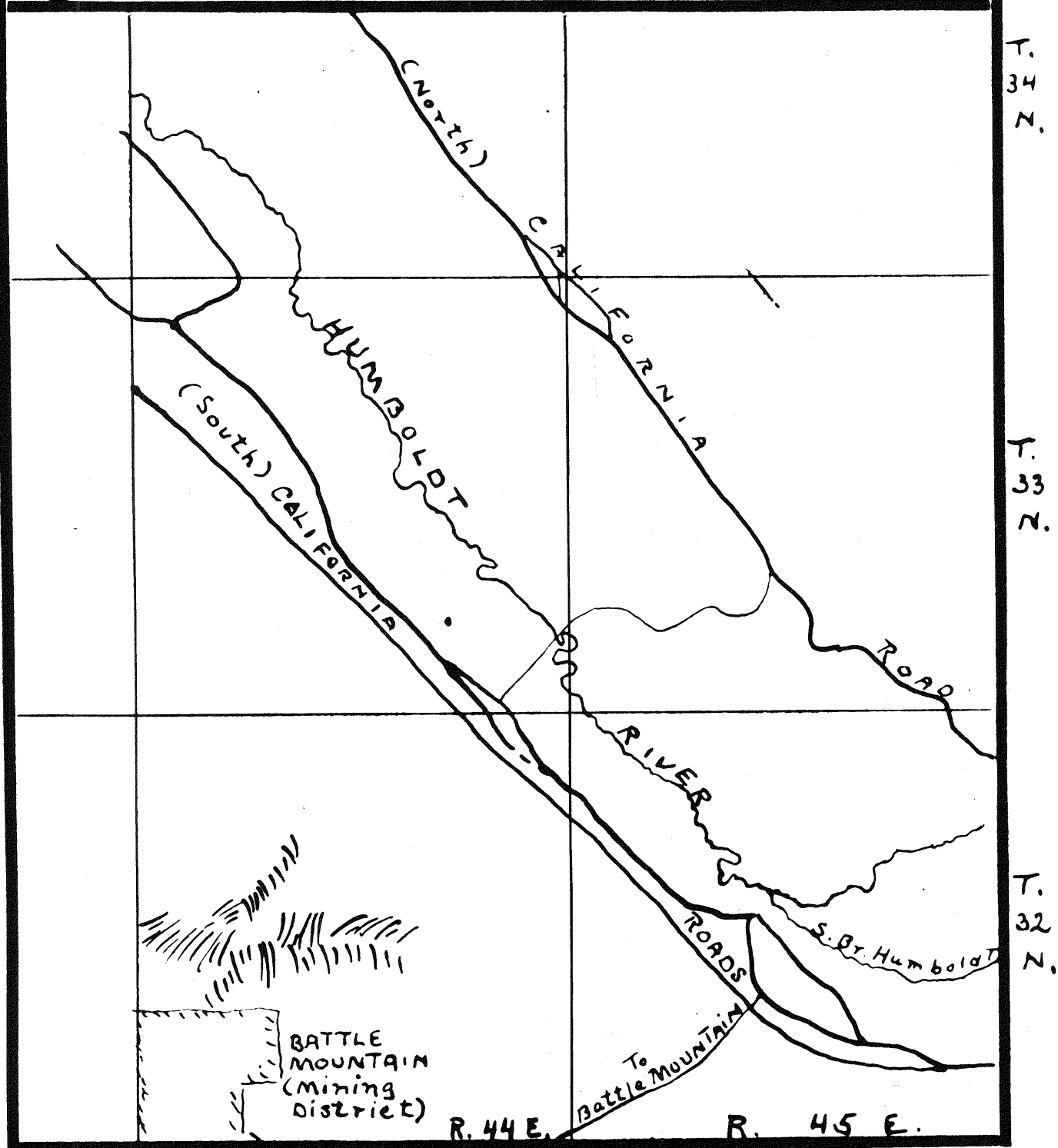
Traversing Fremont's Canon (map preceding, Bishop, 41), meadows known later as The Old Carlin Hay Reserve were found near the mouths of Susie's and Maggie's creeks. West of Carlin the main track was forced away from the river by the southern foothills of the Tuscarawas Mountains. A vivid story of a night's march through them is given by Kelly, 191.



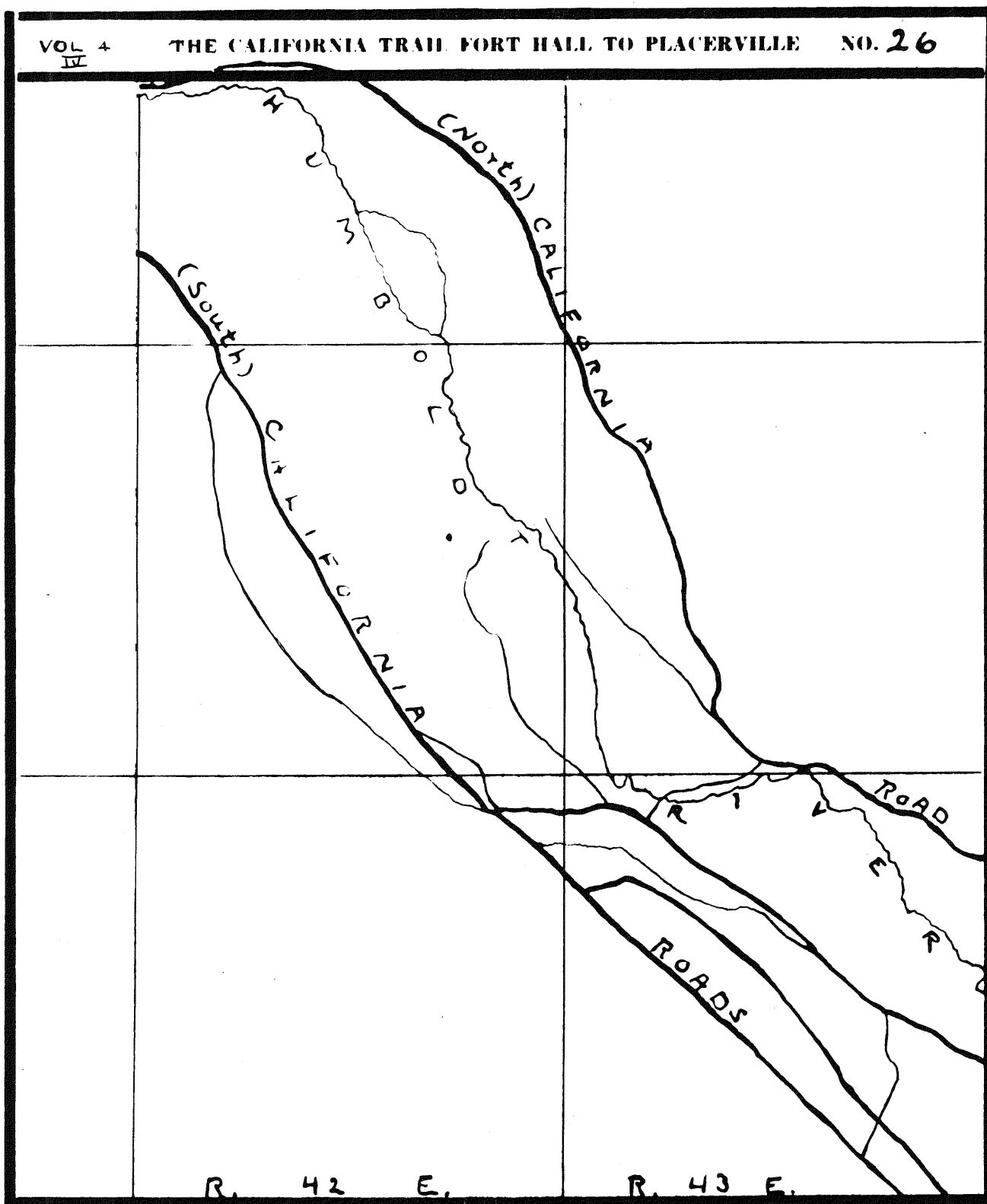
Gravelly Ford was a landmark on the trail, the passage thro the range here being difficult, Simpson, 27,64; Bishop, 41. Here the later Chorpennings & Co. "Mule Express" (anteceding the "Pony Express") mail line (1859) ran into the old trail, from the south; it came over the Hastings Road, but kept south of the river to this point, possibly on the track of Beckwith's trail; see map in Simpson Report. Cf. Lynde, 241; Bishop, 41.



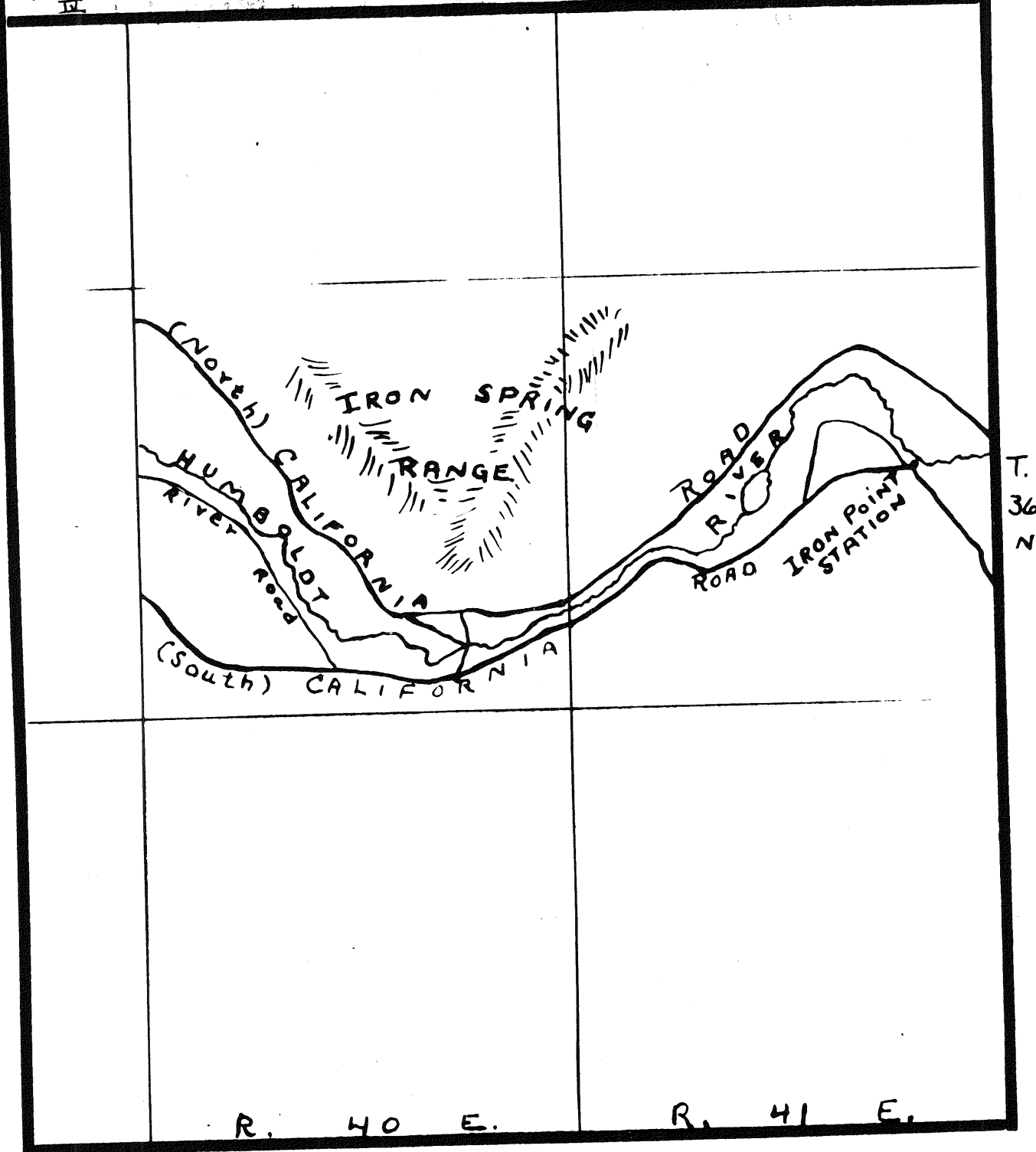
At about the present site of Argenta the trail broke into two branches on either side of the river which we indicate as the "North" and "South" routes. Bidwell kept mostly on the north bank (126); it was the usual route in 1850 (Harlan, 55), although forage and the state of water governed decisions. Cf. Ingalls, 163; Kelly, 193.



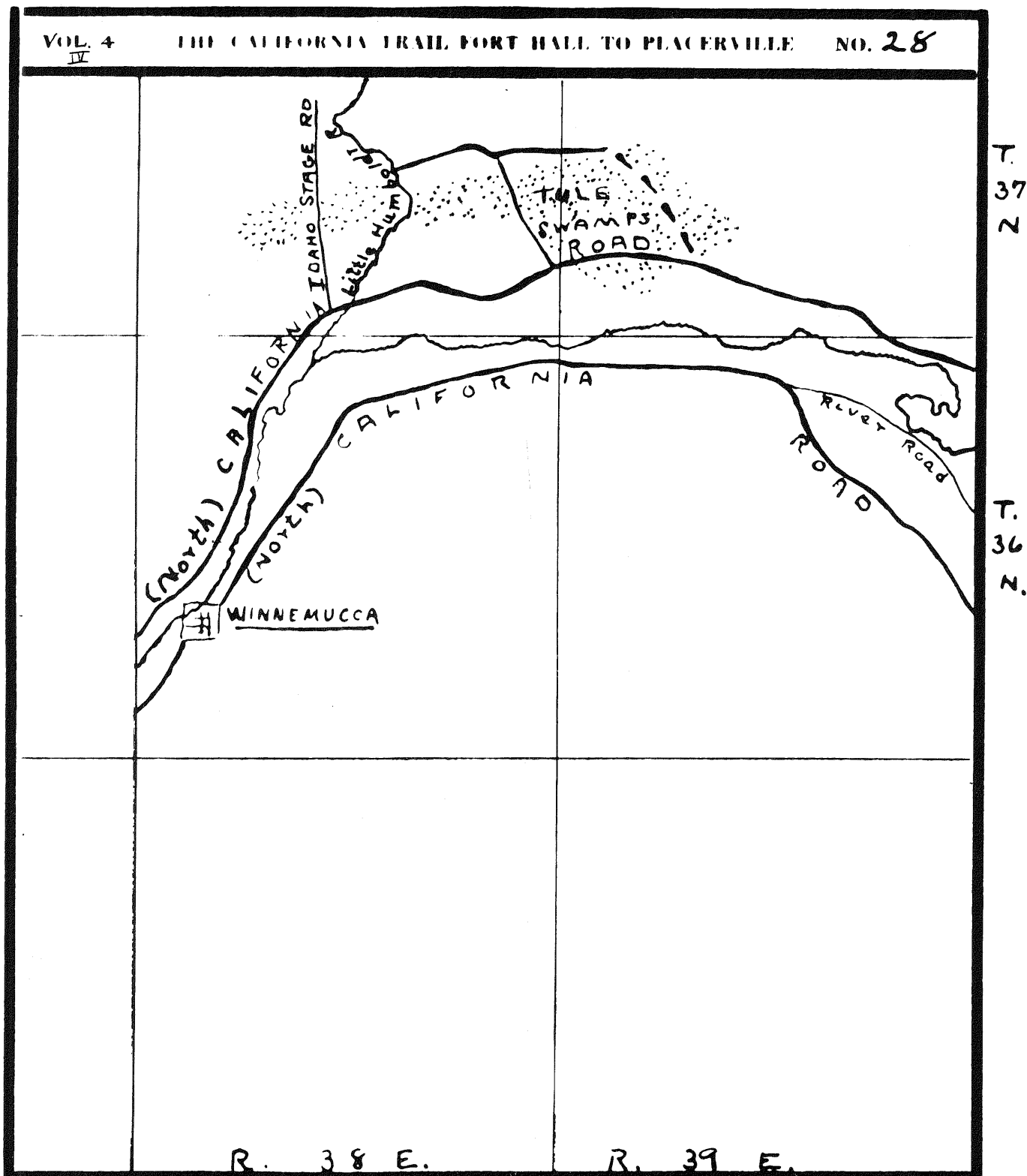
To the men of the era of '49 the Battle Mountain country presented scenes fit only for the pen of a Dante. "These mountains", wrote Harlan, have all been burnt down to ash hills; some of them look hot yet. . . . This morning our cattle had no grass and we have driven them ten miles down the river to tolerable grass (con't.)



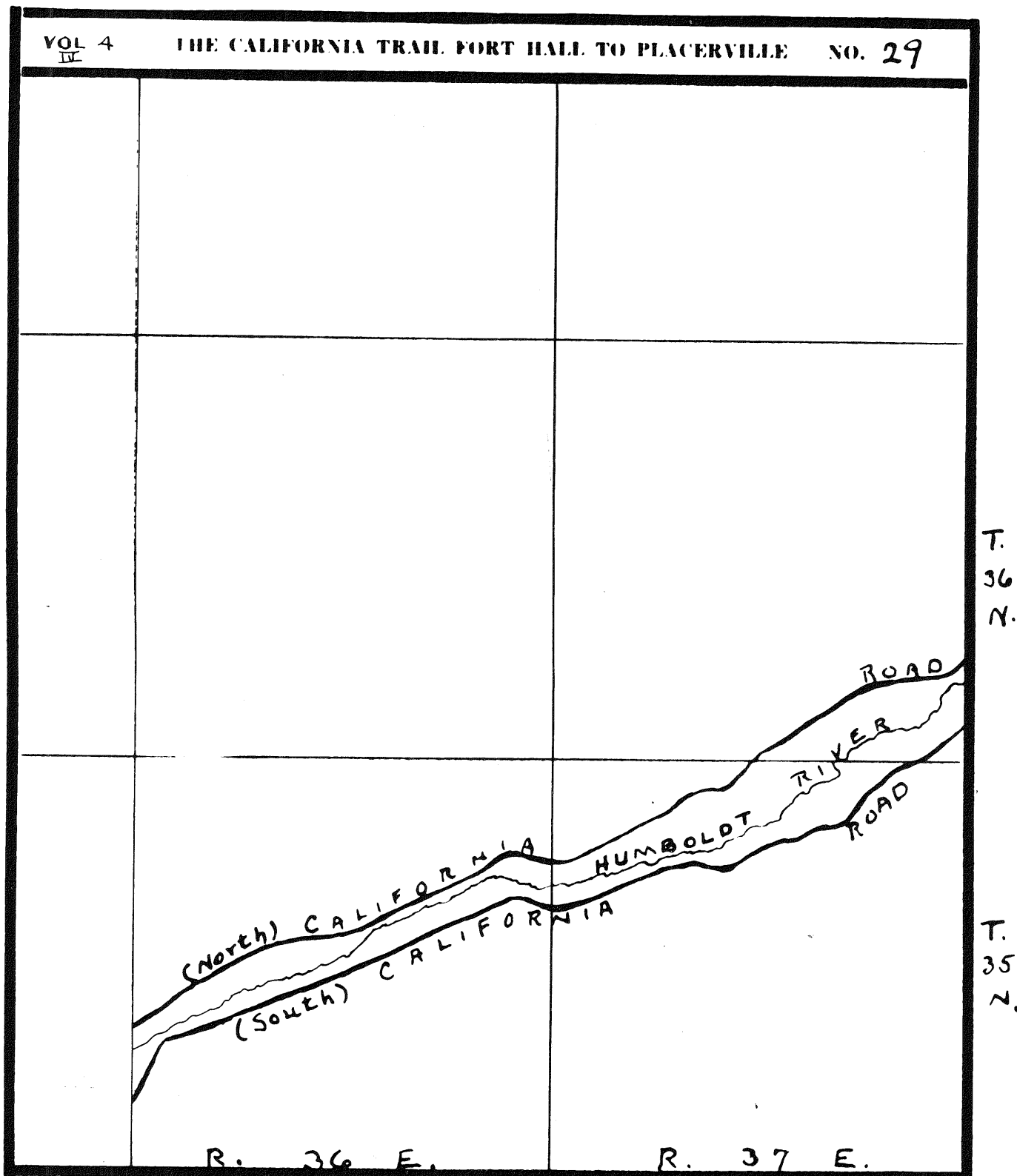
(Though scarce) . . . Today we have had a cool north wind, roads very dusty . . . we have rolled on about 21 miles". As the river was descended. Indian pilfering became more annoying, but efforts "to chastise" the redmen "is very much like running down grayhounds with bull dogs," Harlan wrote, 55. Beyond the present Iron Point Station (cont.)



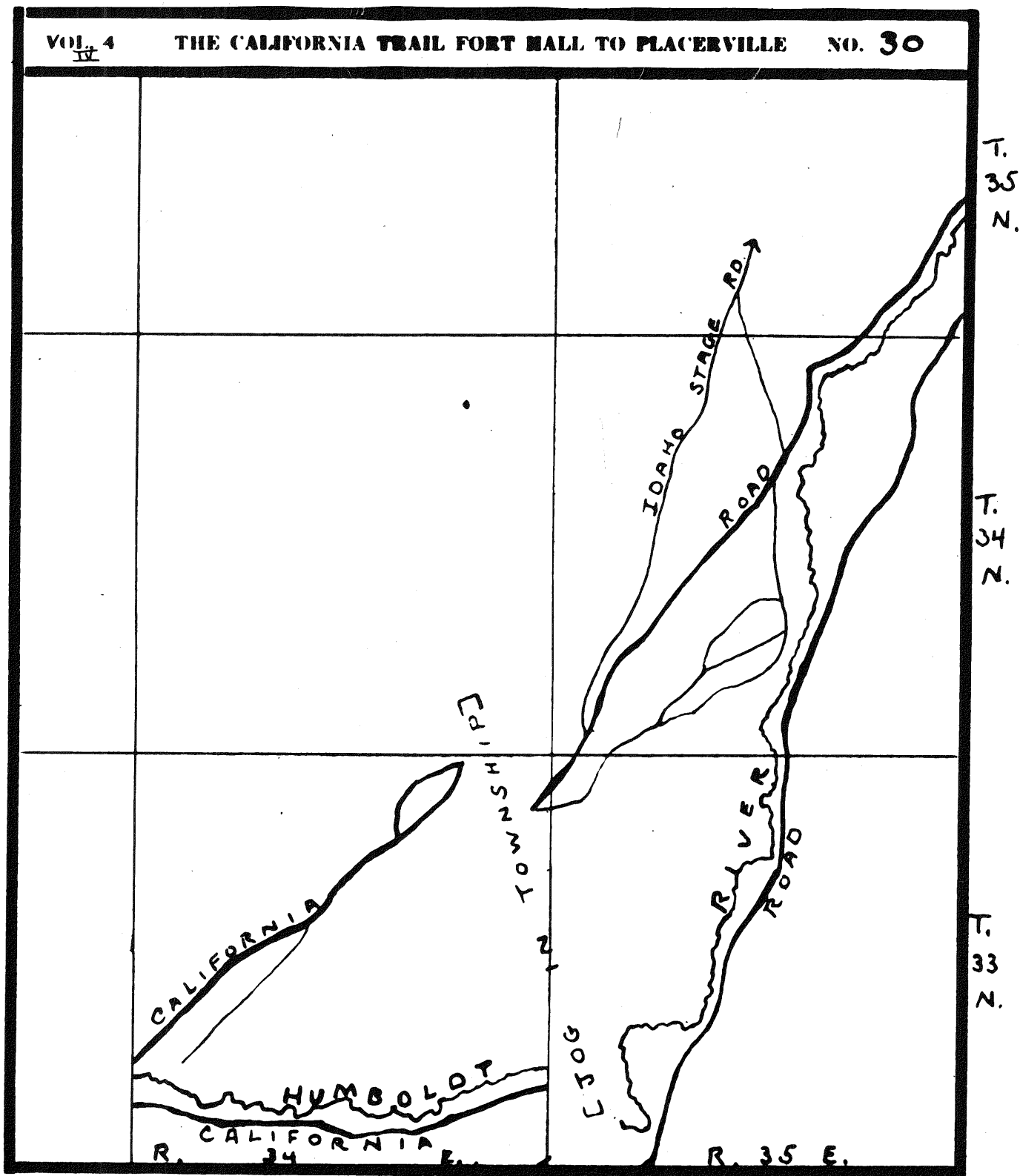
The monotony of the sun-burnt valley was relieved by hot springs and tule swamps. "... in passing a stony point," wrote Harlan, "there was several small hot springs near one of which I measured some bull Rushes over 12 feet high standing erect; 55-56. The meadows here were recommended by Kirk as a good site for a fort to overawe the Indians, 37.



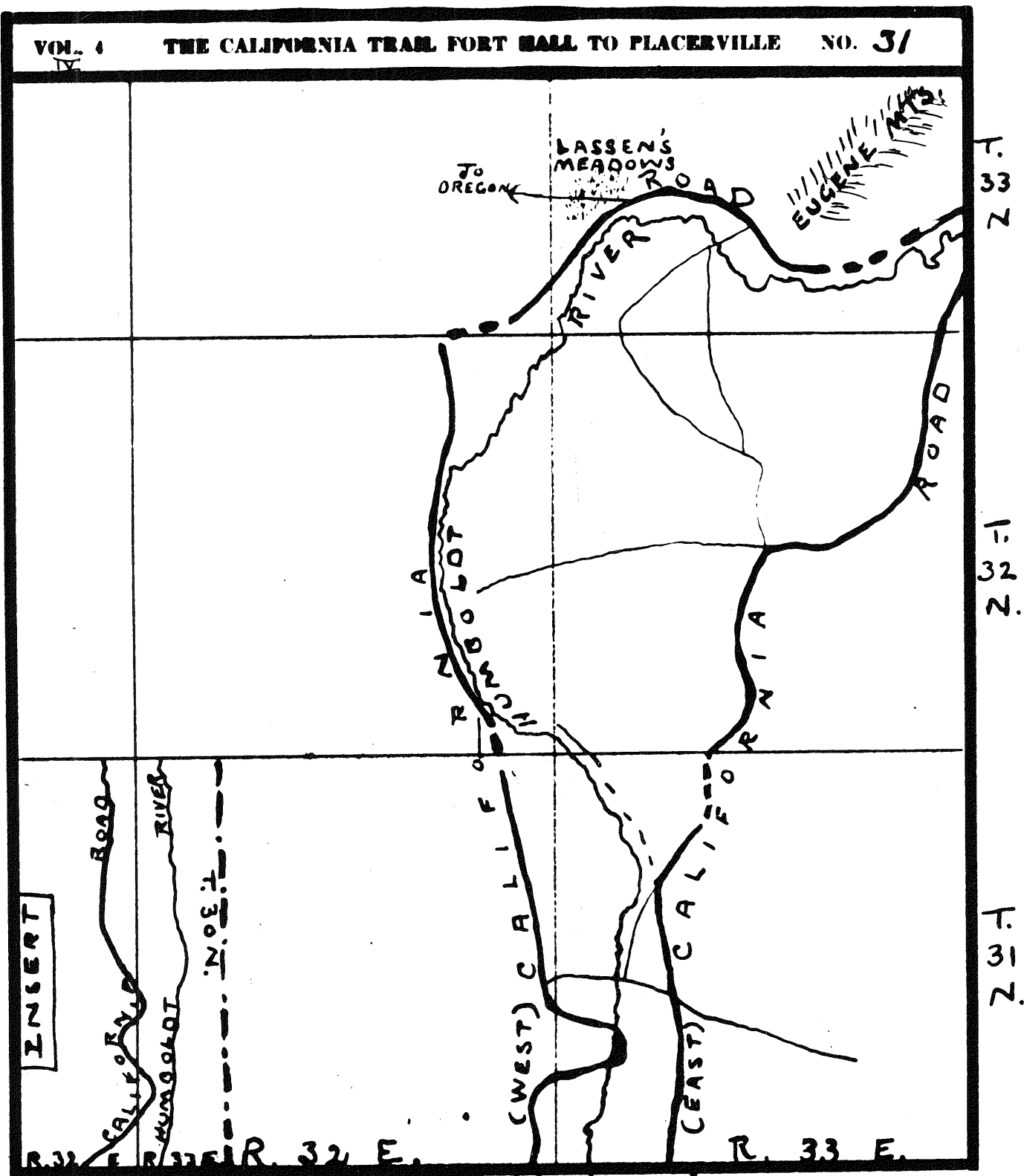
The Big Bend of the Humboldt, northeast of Winnemucca, was known for its tule swamps and heavy sanded tracks through them; cf. Bidwell, 126 and Harlan (56) who writes: "... our road today has been sand from 4 to 6 inches deep, the water hot ... There are hundreds of persons with packs on their backs that live on rose



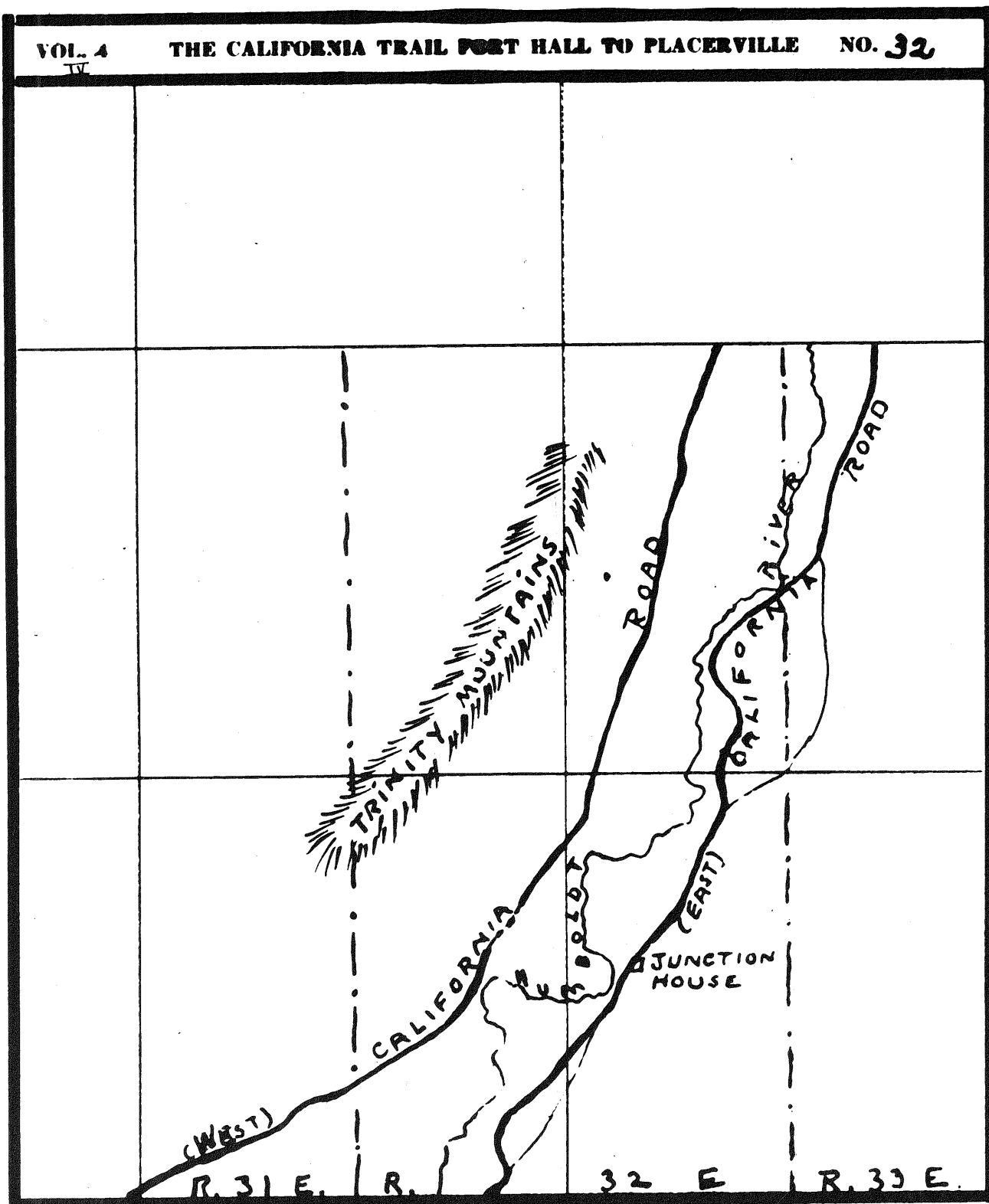
berries and frogs having no other means of subsistence; flour has been sold at \$1.00 per pound and two dollars a pound has been refused in many cases". The hope of finding a more tolerable course on the South side of the river was attempted by many a '49er: "We took up our march over an ash plain on which there is neither water (con't.)



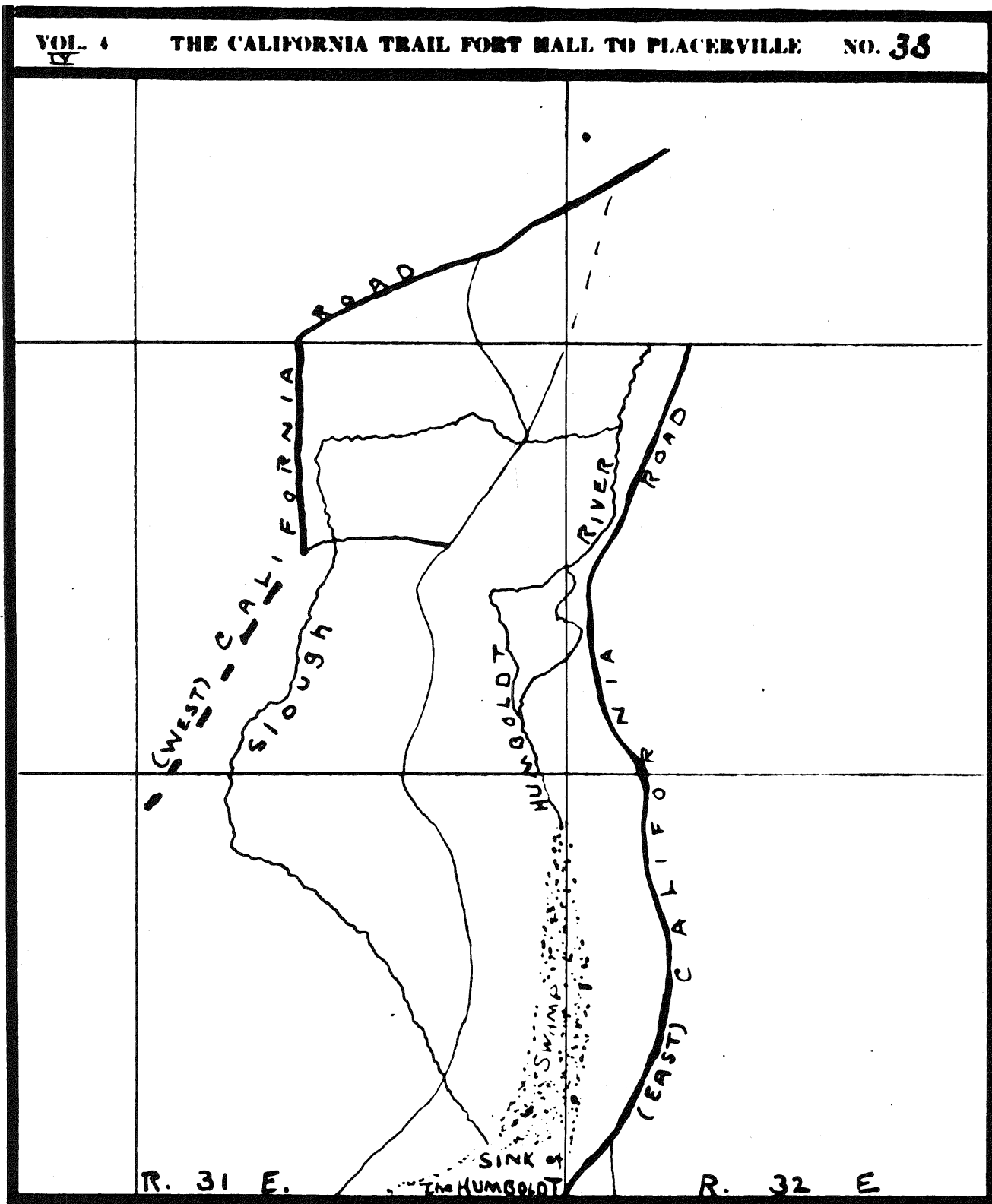
nor a spear of grass . . . most of this distance the river winds its way among high lime and ash banks, small bottoms but few willows and we must go further and this place is not called a desert!" Already the terrors of the dreaded Humboldt Sink region before them greet the '49ers here, putrid cattle lying along the trail, forty three horses being seen in one spot.



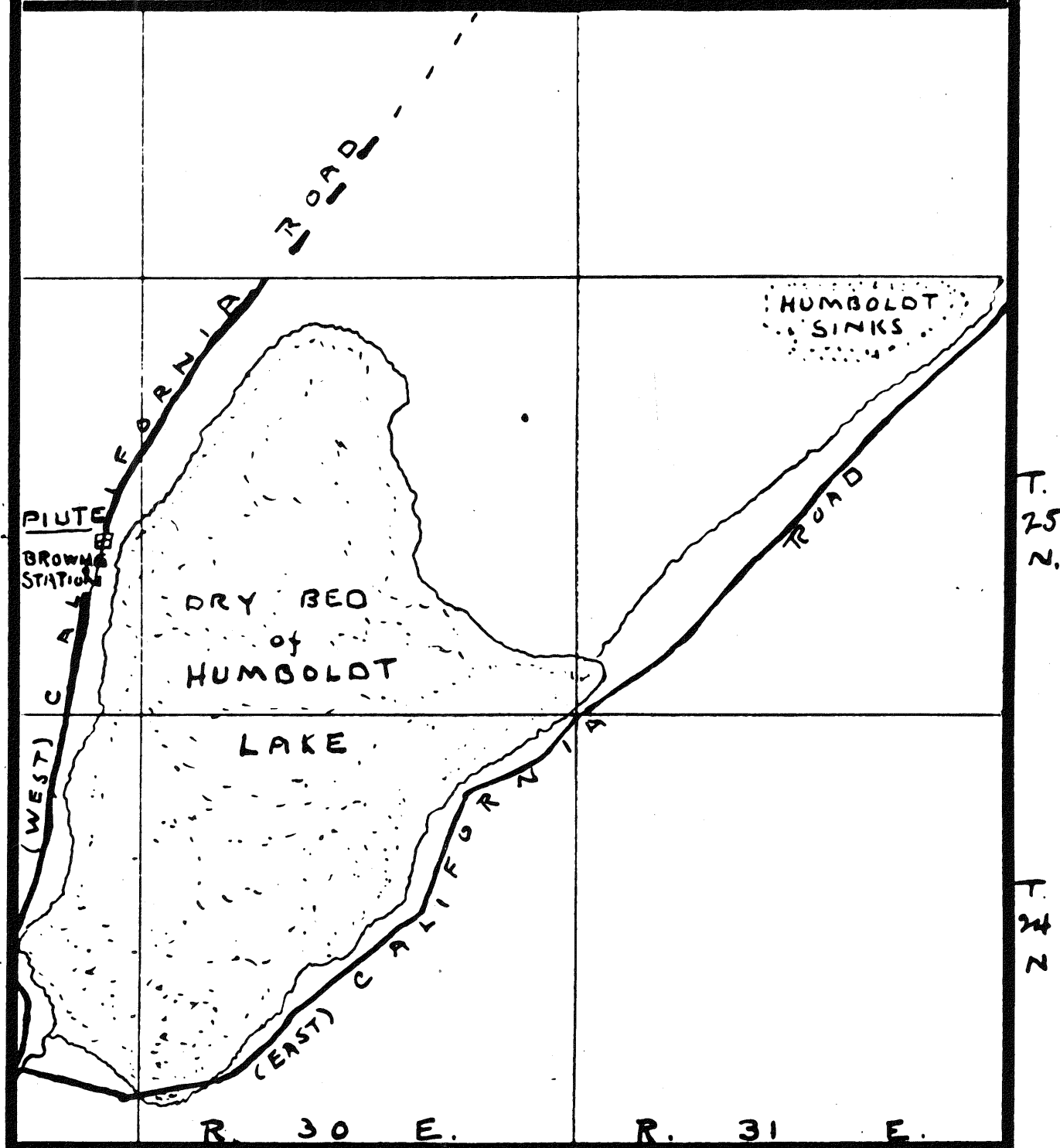
Lassen's or Lawson's [TO INSERT] Meadows offered a dubious oasis in the sun-paroled valley. Here the Honey Lake, or Noble, Road led westward to the Rogue River Valley in Oregon; Beckwith, 42; Bryant, 196, 249, Delano, 178. The old California ^{Trail} here turns southward toward the Sink of the Humboldt and Carson River. Cf. Simpson, 26; Beckwith, 36; Kelly, 194; Ingalls, 163.



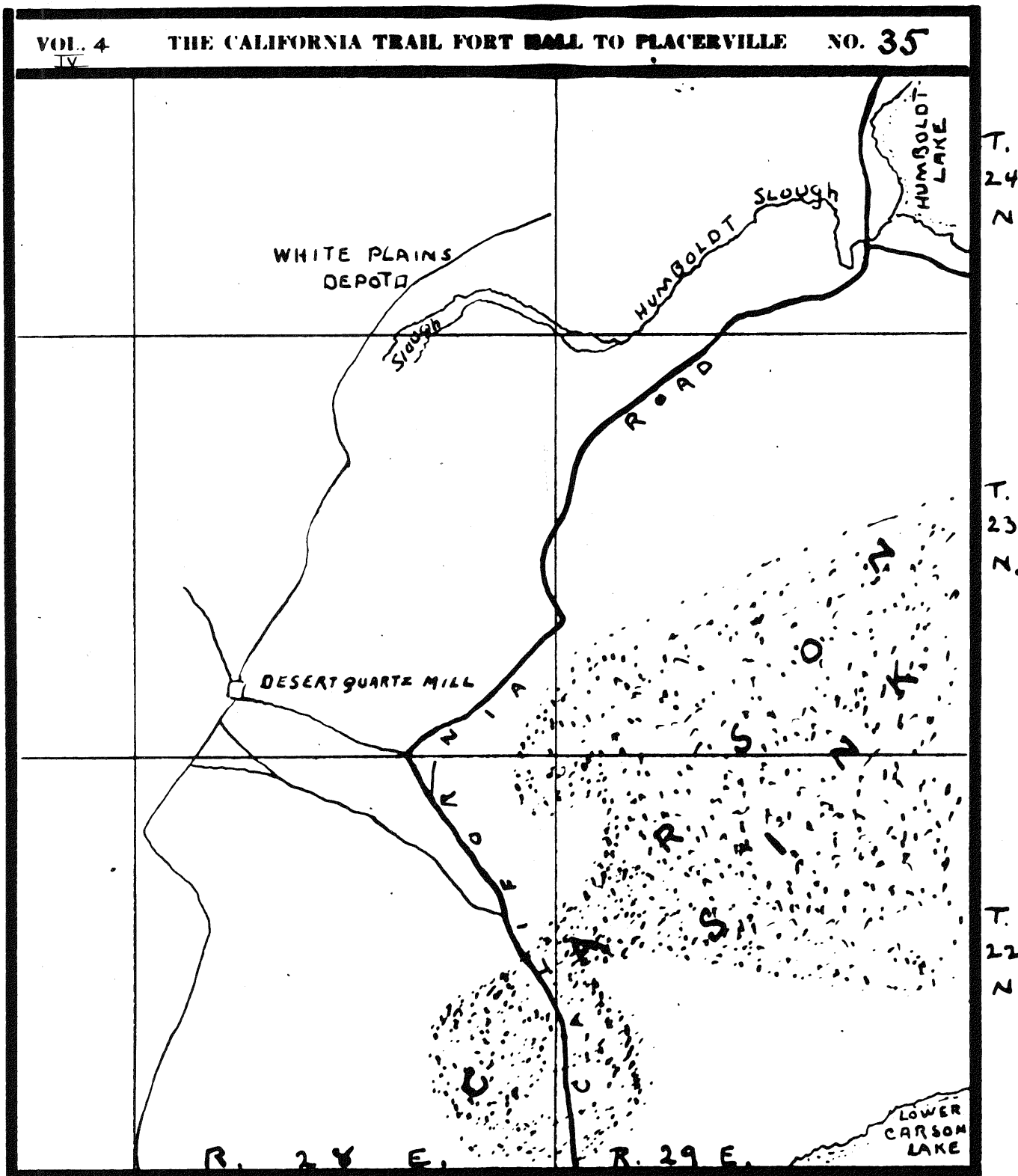
Every record bears testimony of the hardships of the '49ers on any of these southward tracks. Forage, such as it was, secured at Lassen's, was brought forward into the desert region now entered; Kelly 195-7. If the "wet" route was chosen, the traveller found rough ground between the spurs of Trinity Mountains and the river and then encountered, in T. 27, (cont.)



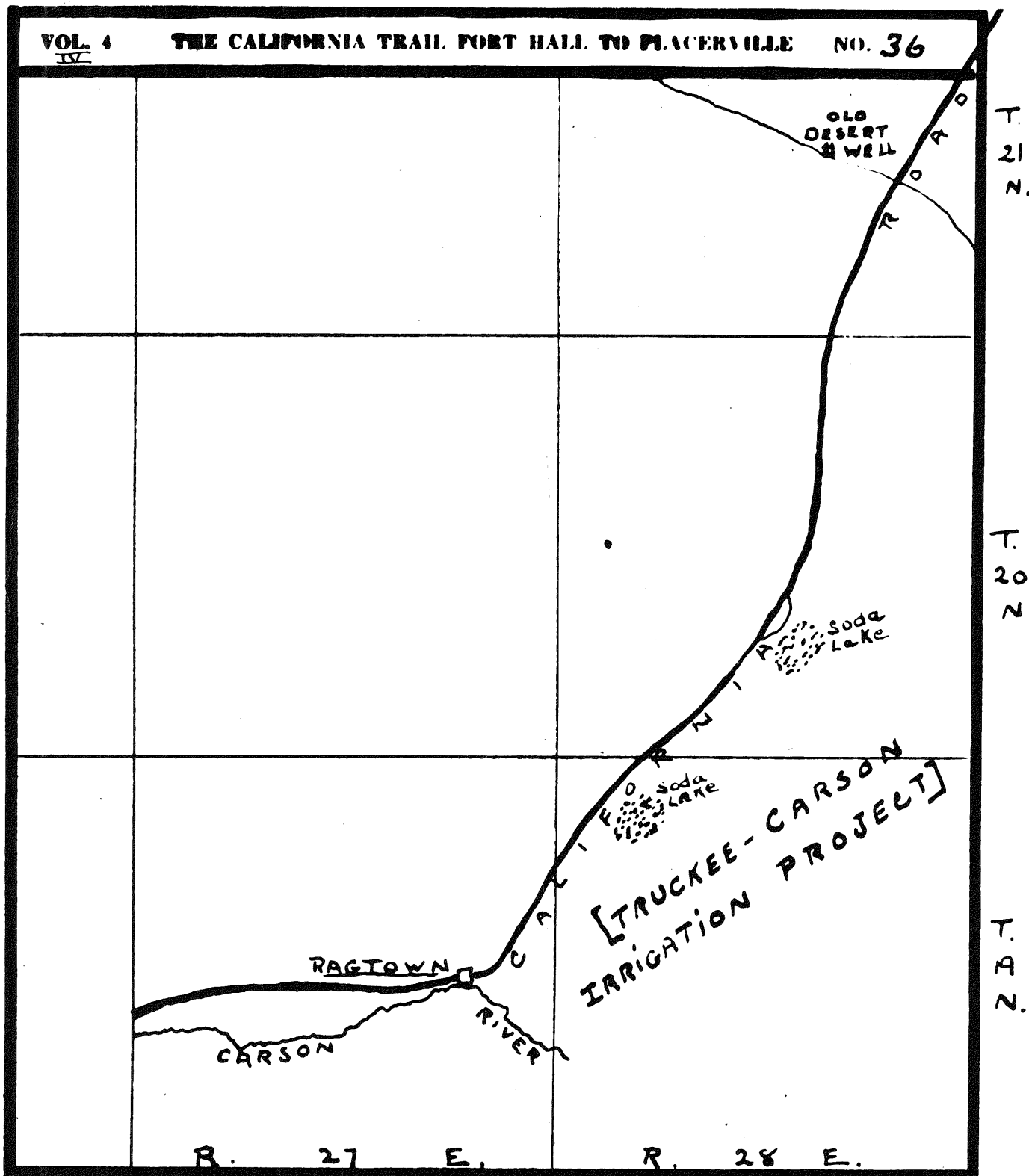
The troublesome slough of the Humboldt above the Sink. If the "East" route was essayed, a wide circle was made to avoid the dismal stretches of Carson Sink. Added to privation, was the difficulty of following a sure pathway; Bryant found this a trial in 1846 (208-213) as did Kern before him (478). Cf. Simpson, 92; Kelly, 195; Harlan, 57; Bishop, 43.



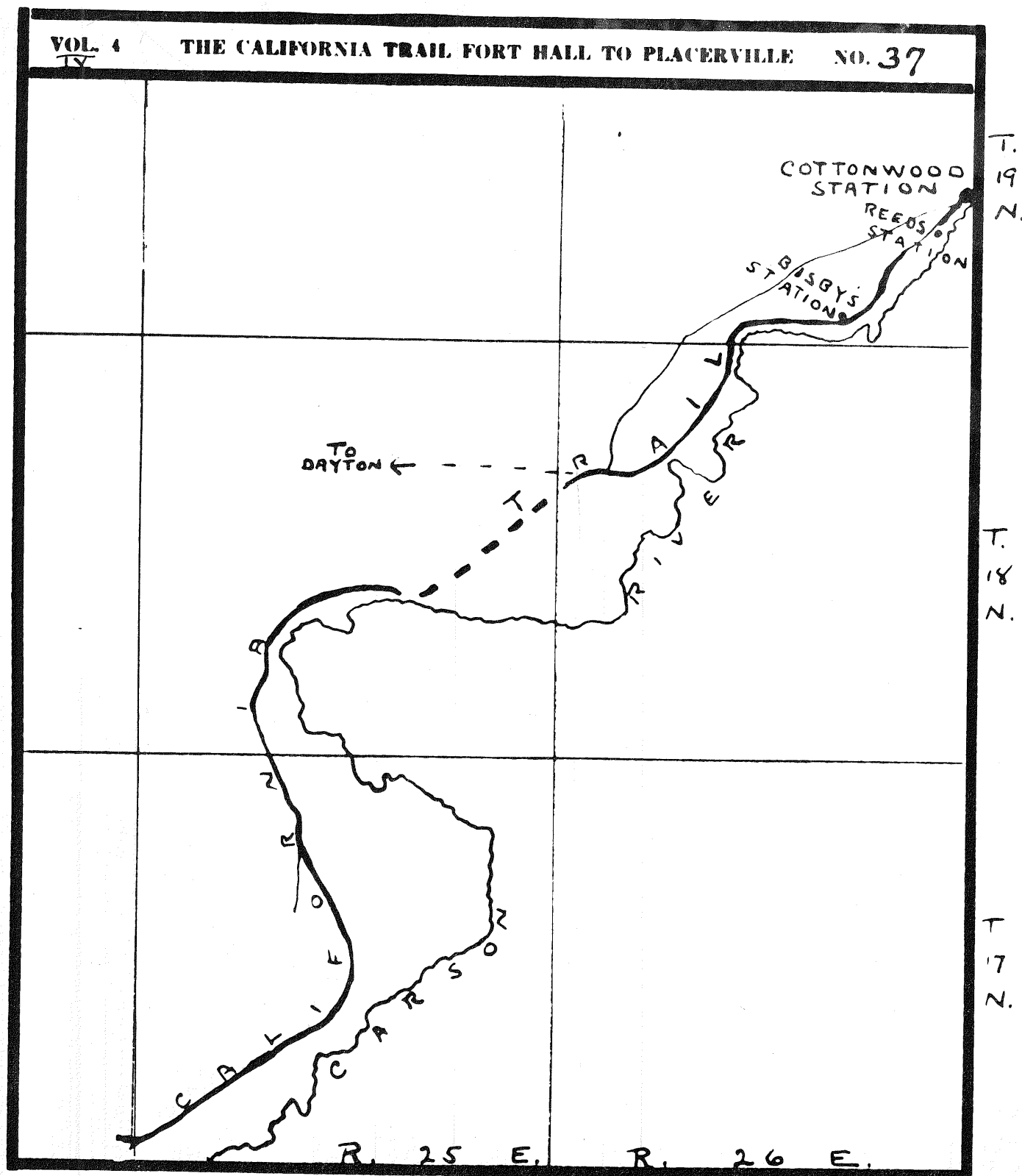
All travelers who kept records described the Stroupe Sink. Kern left the earliest of these (1845): "This lake is about 8 miles long by 2 in width; it is marshy, overgrown with bullrushes, at the upper end. . . The country here becomes more desolate in its appearance. . . The outlet, after running several miles toward the rim of this basin, forms a large marsh in the midst of the sand hills" (478-479).



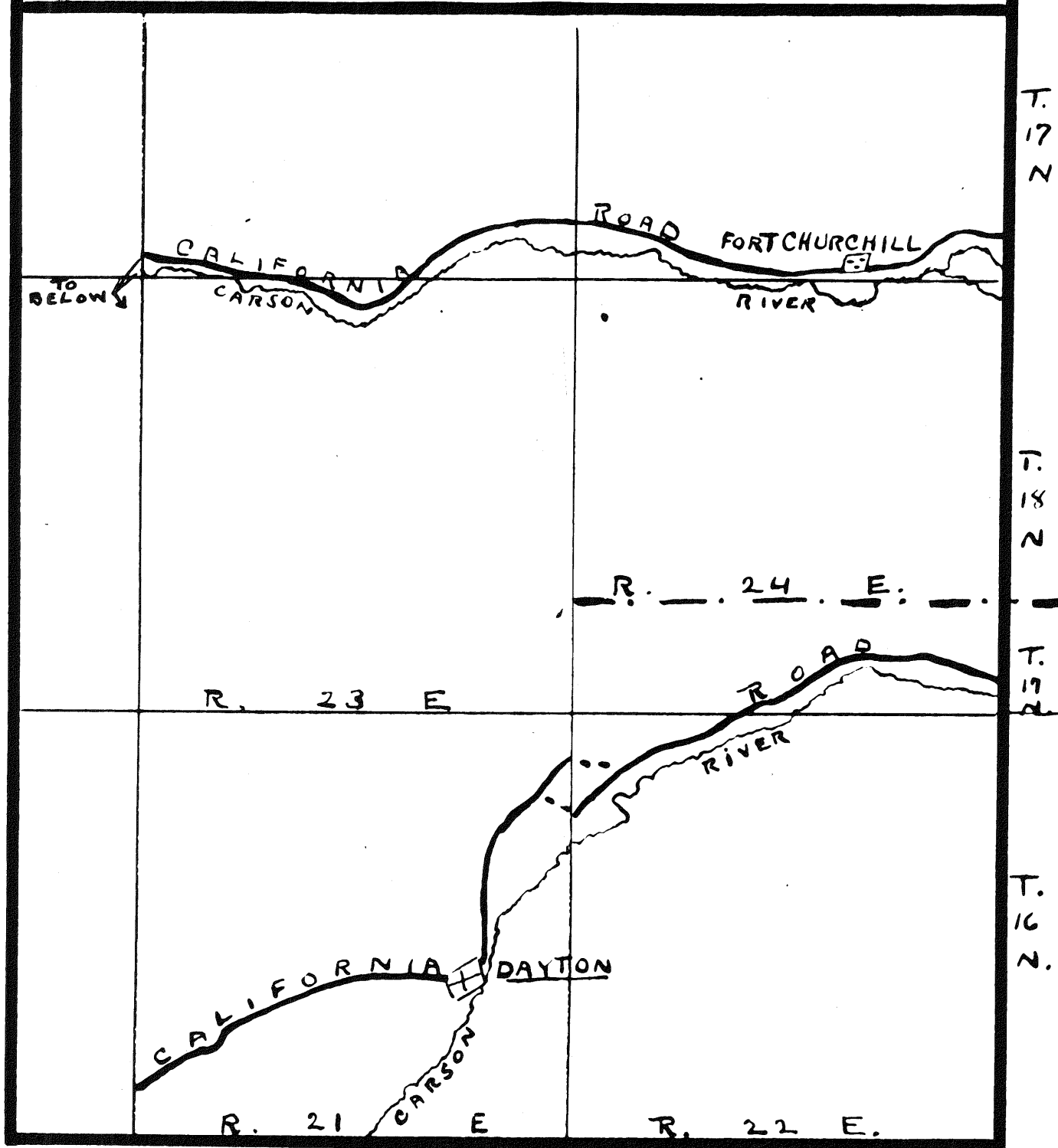
Kern's record shows that the earlier track through the alkali flats, now known as Carson Sink, was the line via White Plains Depot and Desert Quartz Mill (479), but the easterly line, crossing the Slough near the lake, was the main track of the '49ers; Simpson, 92; Tharlan, 58; Bryant, 212; Kelly 208. The scene, when the great migration of 1849 broke (con't.)



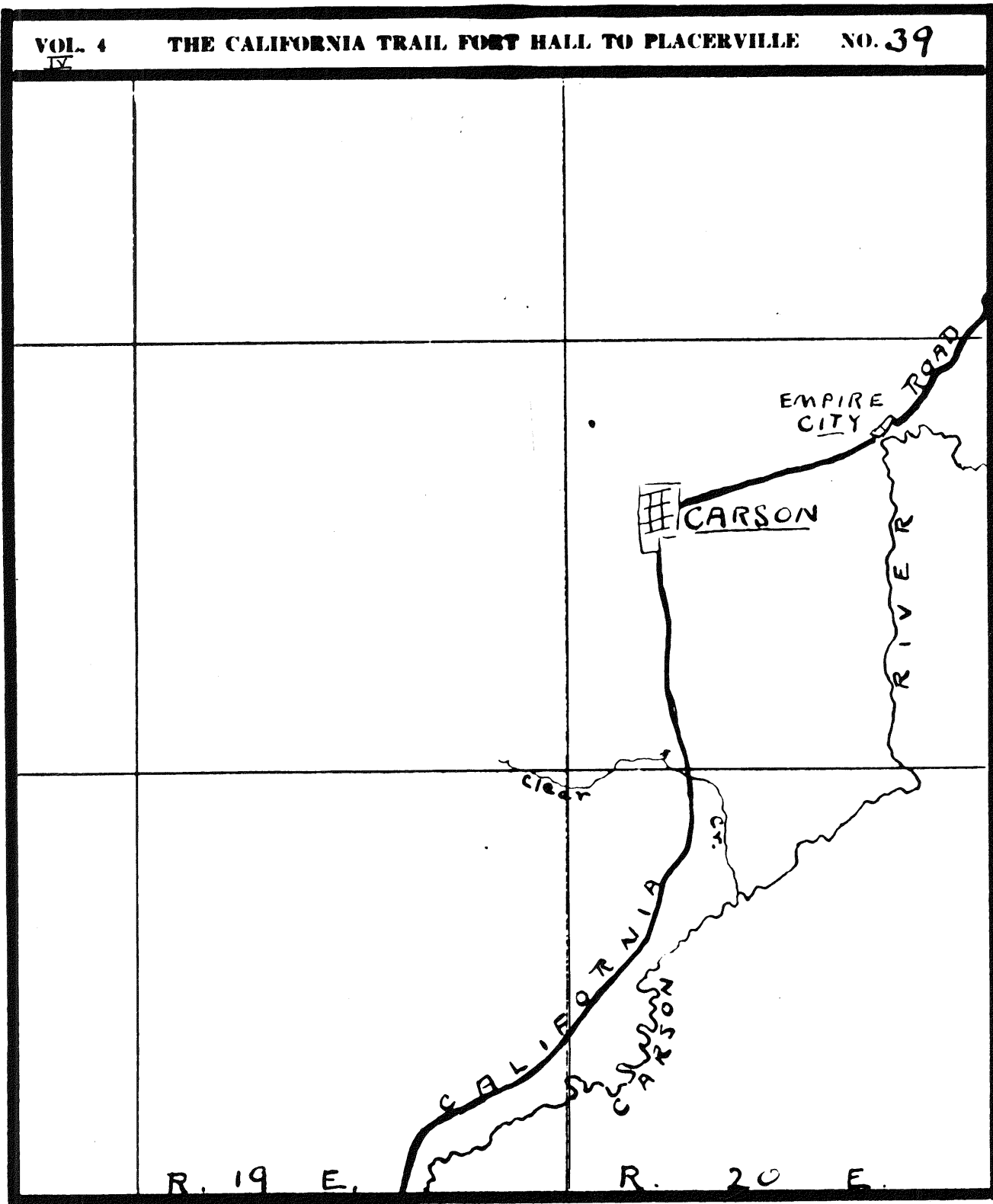
across the Carson flats and on by the Desert Well (Marcy, 275) to Ragtown (Lestrille, Nev.), better description; with water at \$1.00 a gallon, no forage whatever, and outfits abandoning equipment at every camp, it was a case of saurez qui peut unlike anything known in American history. Gaining Carson River, outfits spread up and down its banks to recuperate (cont.)



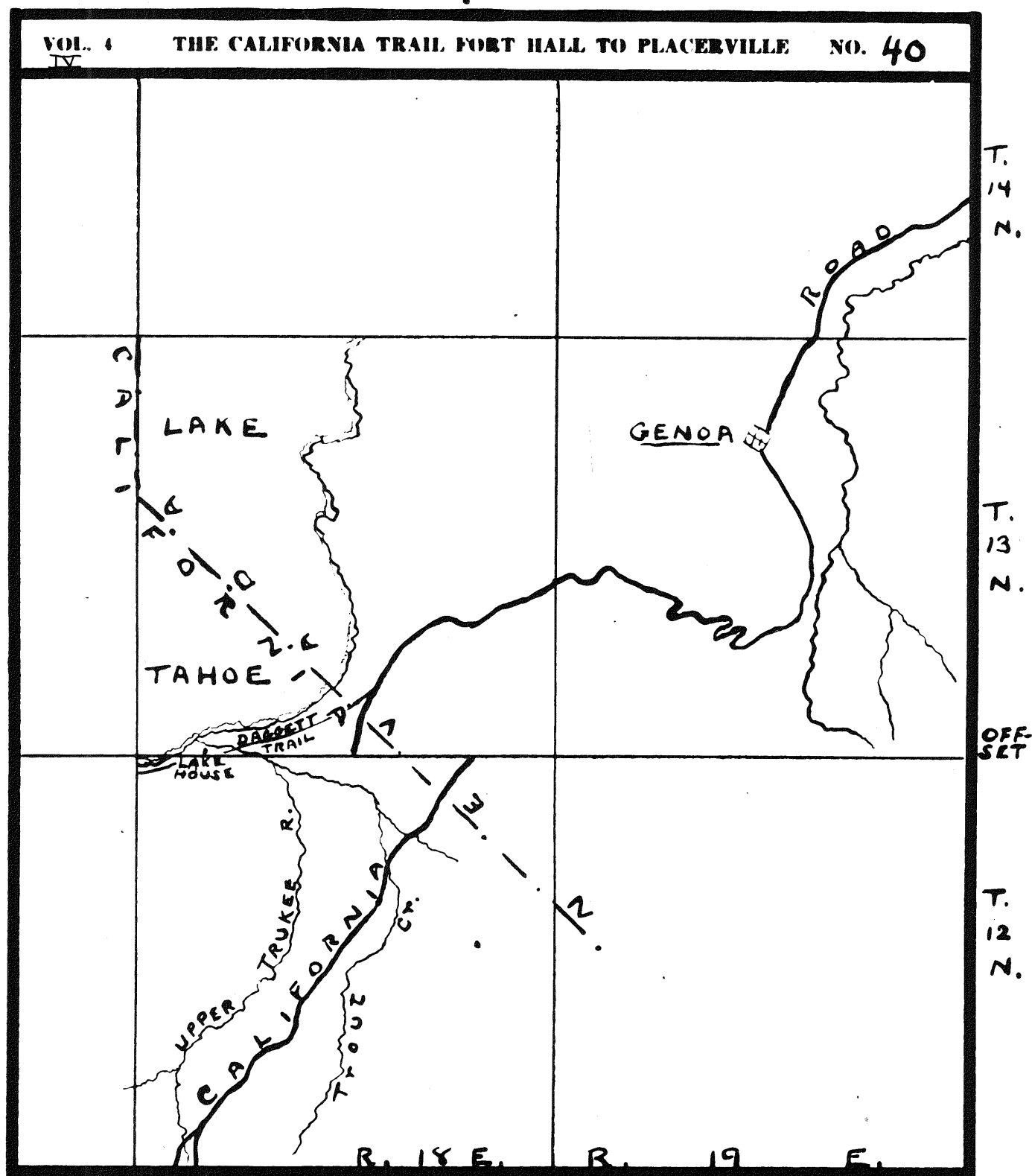
for the race to the oases of the Truckee. Old Cottonwood Station (Northan, Nev.) was a well-known breathing-spot on the Carson; Harlan 58; Kelly 214. One 20-acre tract along the river was said to contain the wrecks of 3000 wagons in the summer of 1850; Harlan, 58. The wild race for life turned white men into savages, more to be feared than the half-starved native "Digger" (con't.)



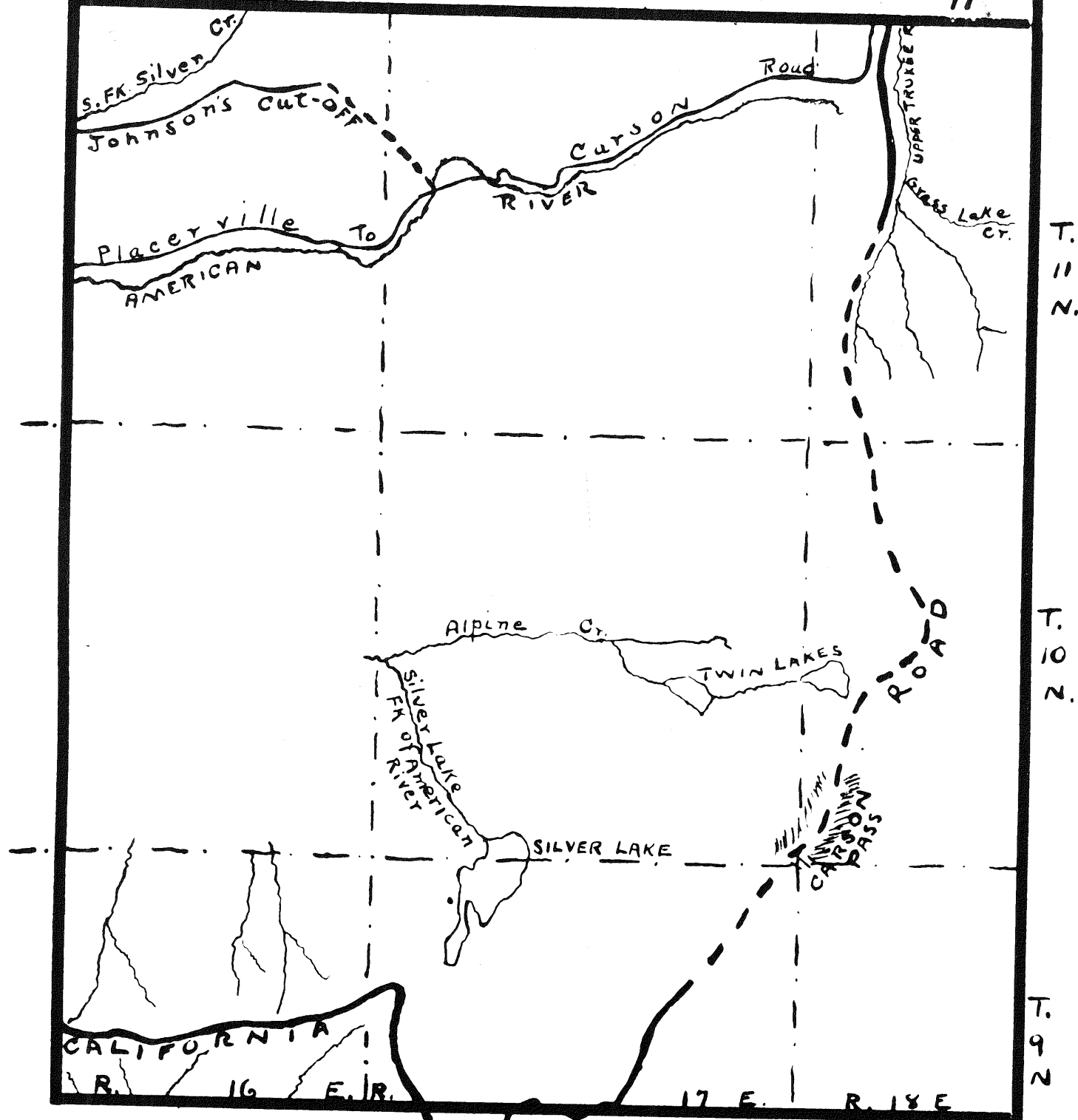
Indians, Holeman, 442. In the anxiety to get forward, various routes cross country to Dayton were followed, (Kelly, 217) see preceding map; Harlan 58. The main track followed the river to Fort Churchill (Simpson, 93) and Dayton where it struck westward (Harlan, 59) to the present Empire City and Carson.



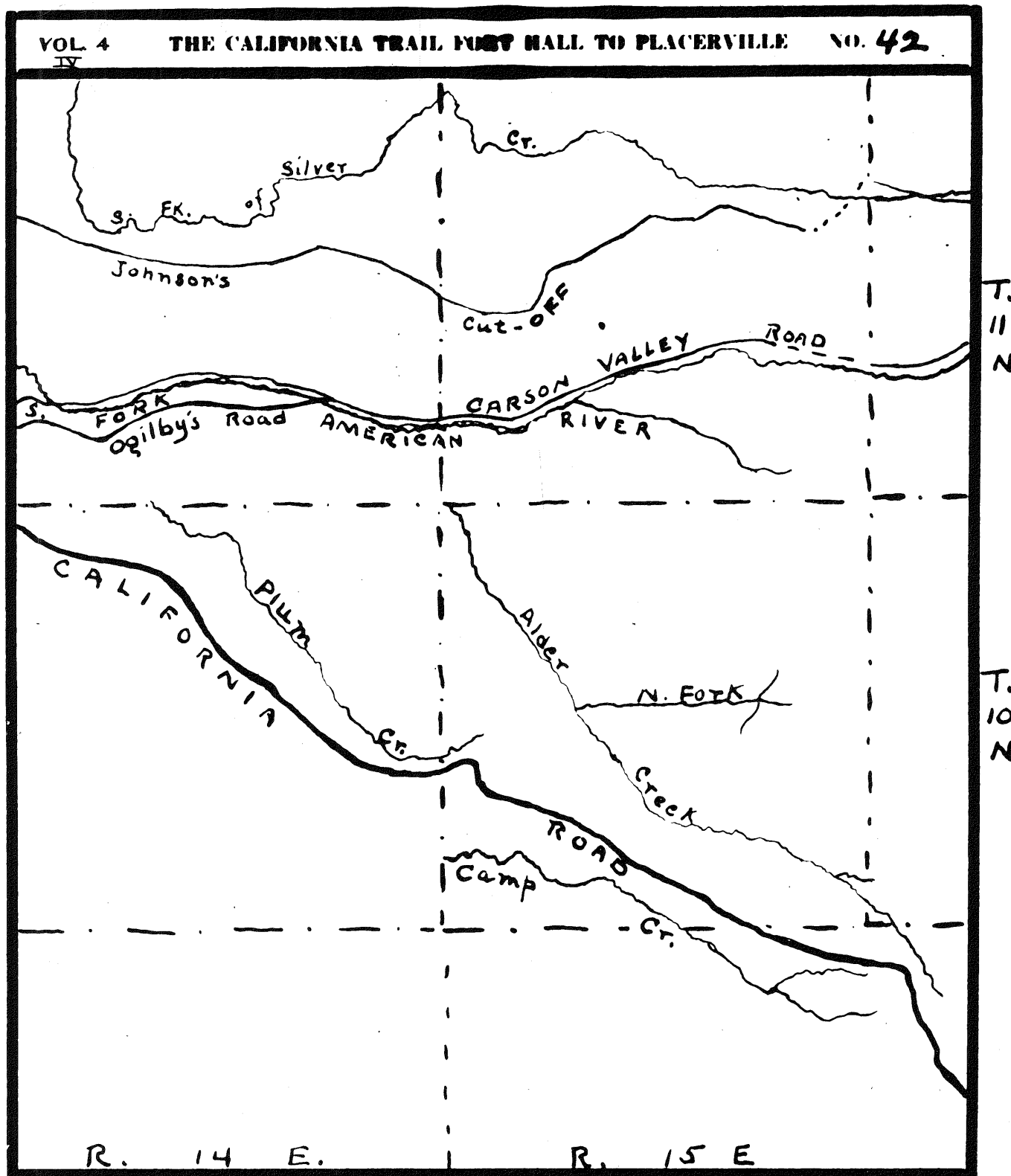
From Carson and its region, destined to such fame a decade later, the pathway of the '49ers struck southward across Clear Creek (Simpson, 92) and followed near the Carson into the more fruitful country of Rees's Ranch, the present Genoa (map following) cf. Simpson, the 992; Marcy, 275.



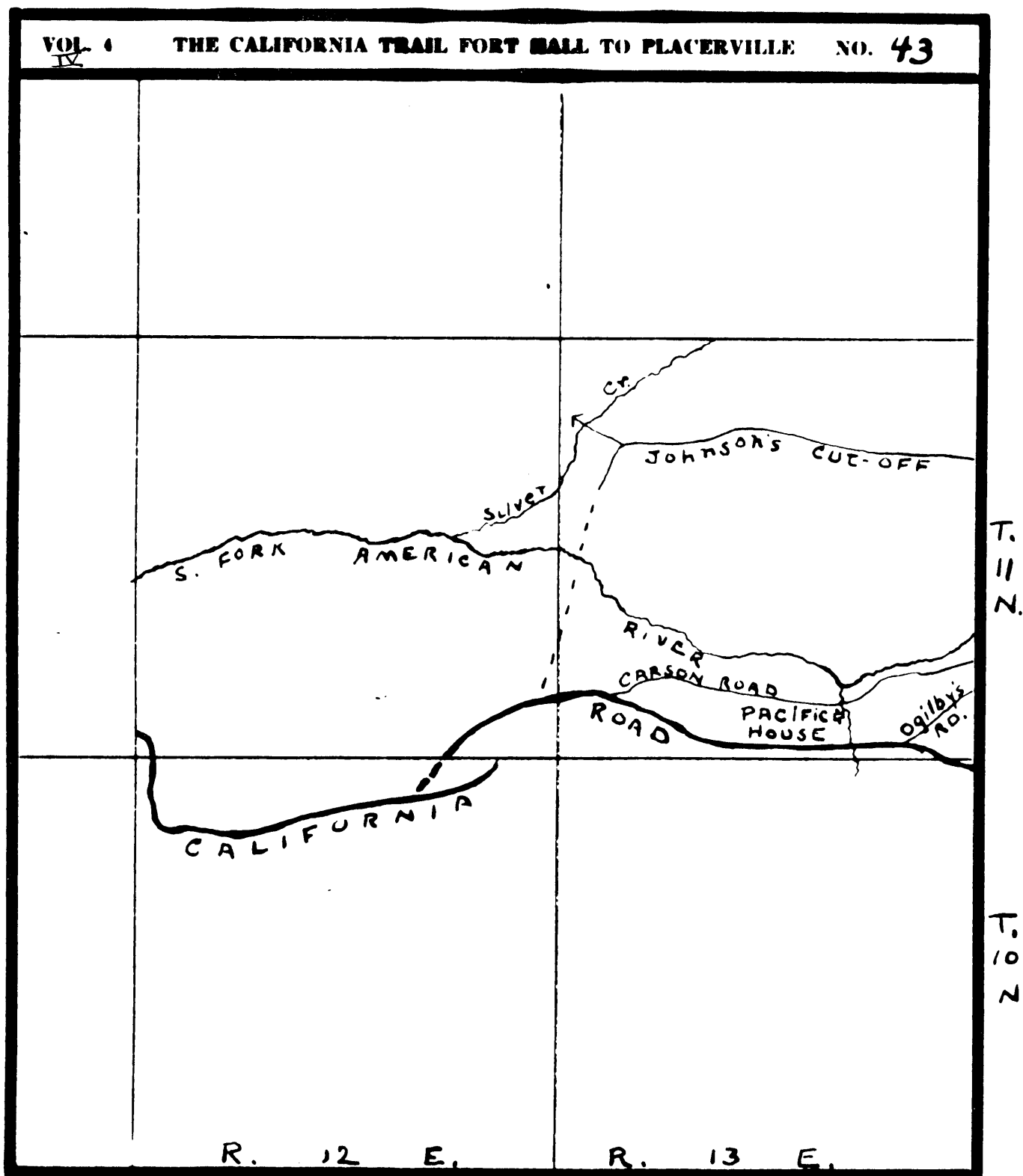
While fate placed the highest barrier for the California pioneers (the Sierras) in the very last stages of their pilgrimage, yet the refreshing streams tributary to Lake Tahoe gave them the needed courage for the mountain climb beyond; Bryant, 223; Harlan, 61; Simpson, 26, 93. Numerous ancient trails from Lake Tahoe crossed the mountain ranges. The Daguerre (cont.)



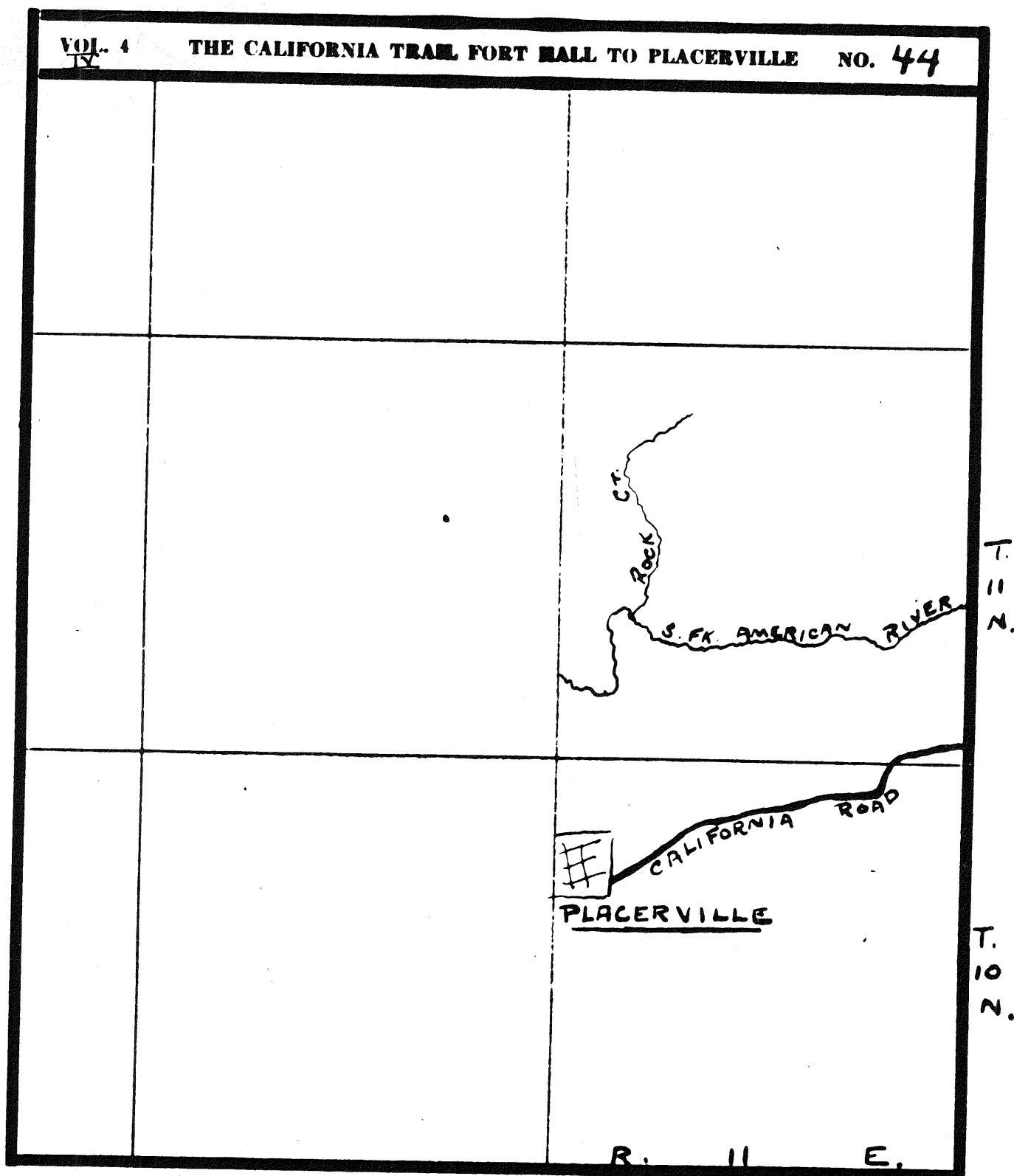
Trail, as one of these came to be known, branched from the main route near the Nevada-California line (map preceding); it crossed Johnson's Pass (Simpson, 96) to the East fork of the American, locally known as Strawberry Creek in 1859. Another trail left the main route in the S.W. corner of T. 12 (map preceding) and crossed the range to the head of the East fork of the American; it later became (as above) the Placerville-Carson Road. From it (con't.)



diverged Johnson's Cut-off (map preceding) in T. 11, crossing the divide through Johnson's Pass, and used by wagon trains as early as 1845; Simpson, 22, 97. Another trail followed the Truckee To Carson Pass (map preceding) and gained the divide indicated in T. 9, R. 16. This route "continuing along the foot of the Sierra Nevada for 18 or 20 miles before turning to the west" (Simpson, 95-96) was the main (cont.)

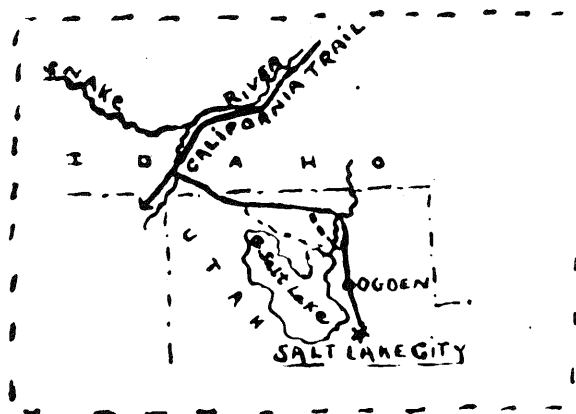


trail of the '49ers. Earlier trains had also entered California by another pathway, from Walker's River to the Stanislaus; Bidwell, 128. The Johnson, Saggett, Placerville-Carson and "California Road" converged, as above, in the western part of T. 11 R. 13. The crossing of the Sierras is described by practically every diarist. "The transit from the arid plains . . . to the quick, teeming country lying (con't.)

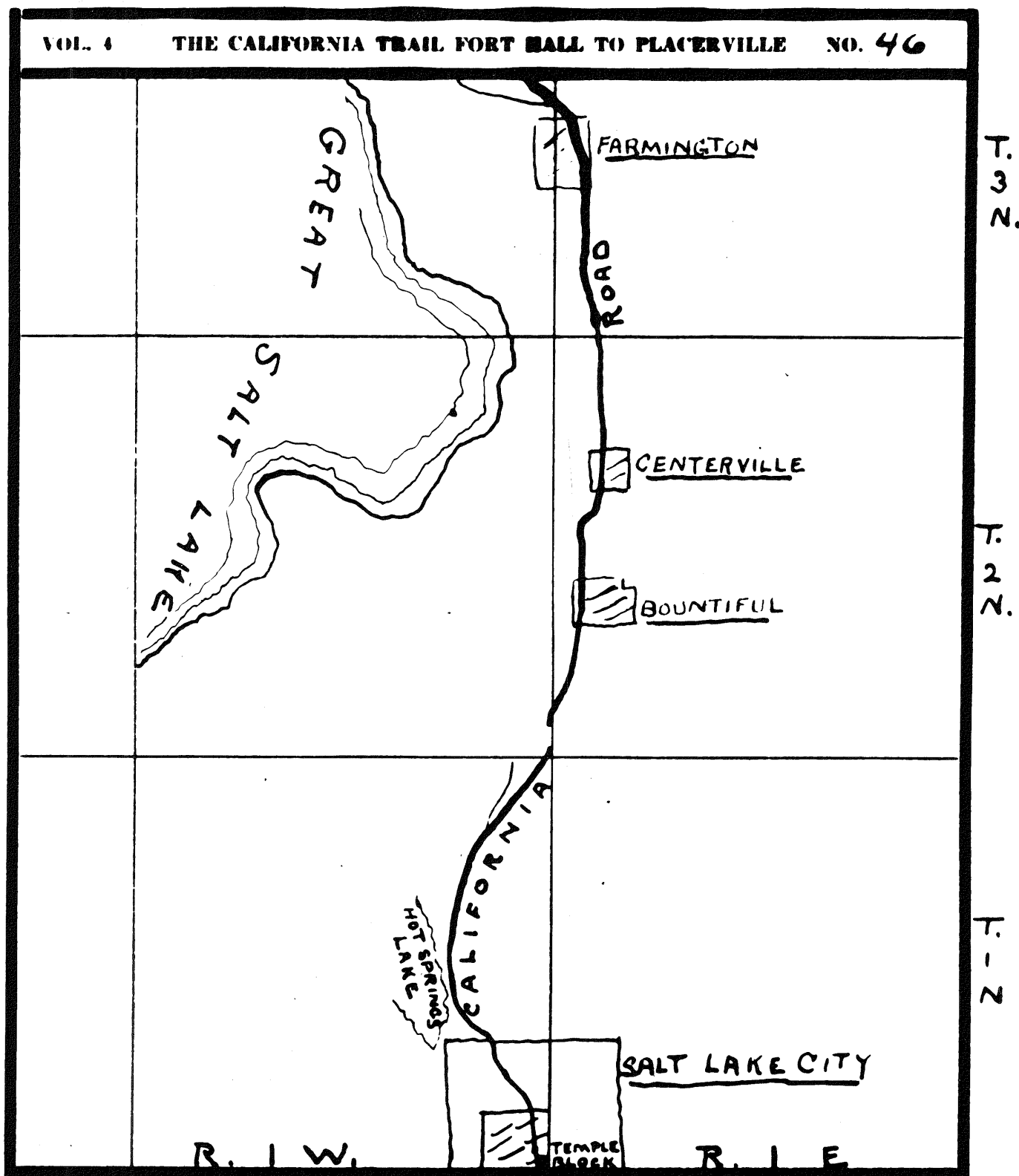


on the western slope is most singularly marked and sudden, and shows how much, irrespective of latitude, the laws of climate and production are dependent upon physical circumstances and features of country"; Simpson, 98. Fremont (*Exploring Expedition*, 245-247) gives a map of the American River valley and trail with a record of travel over it in 1844.

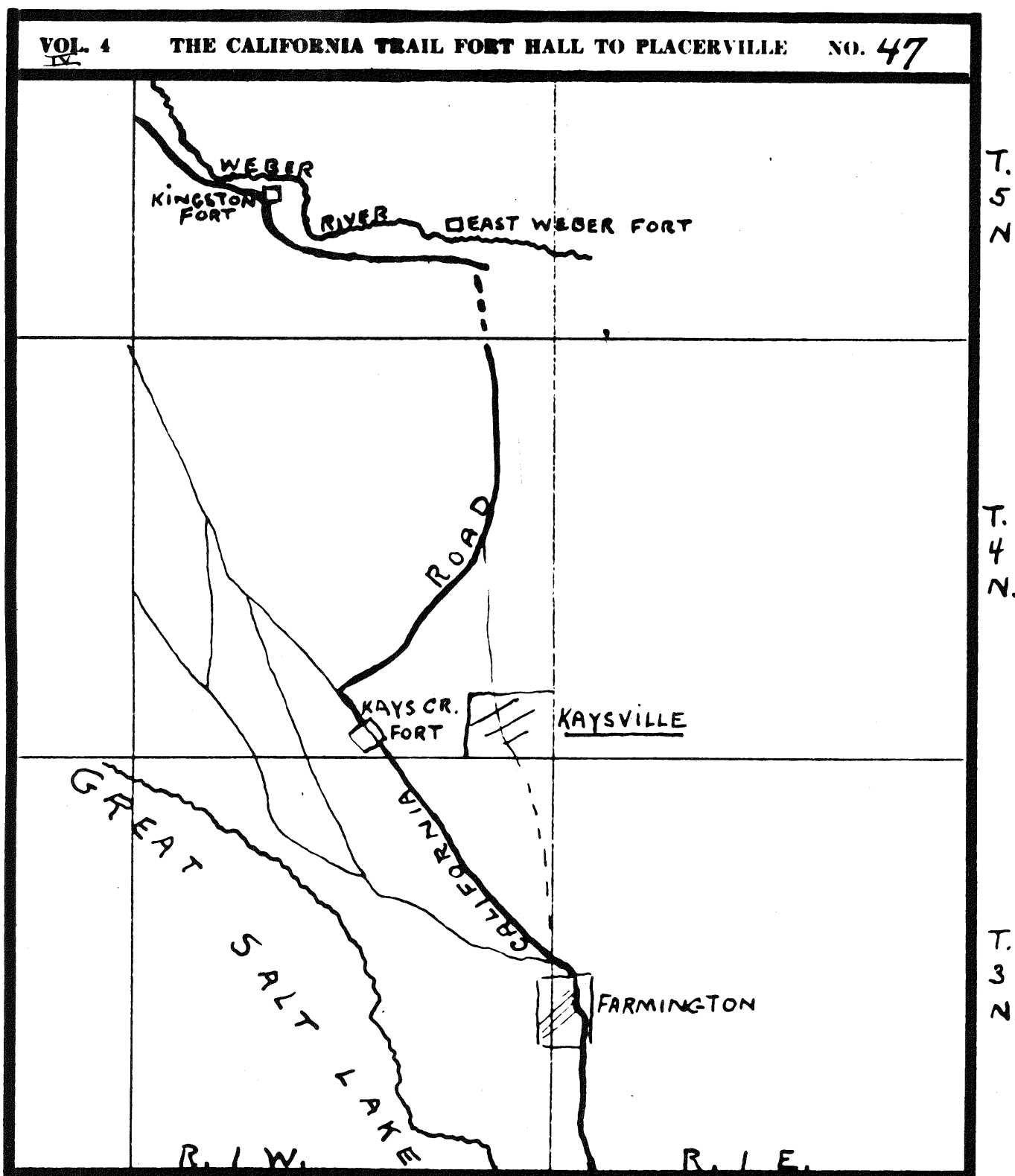
Branch from Salt Lake
City to Raft River* -



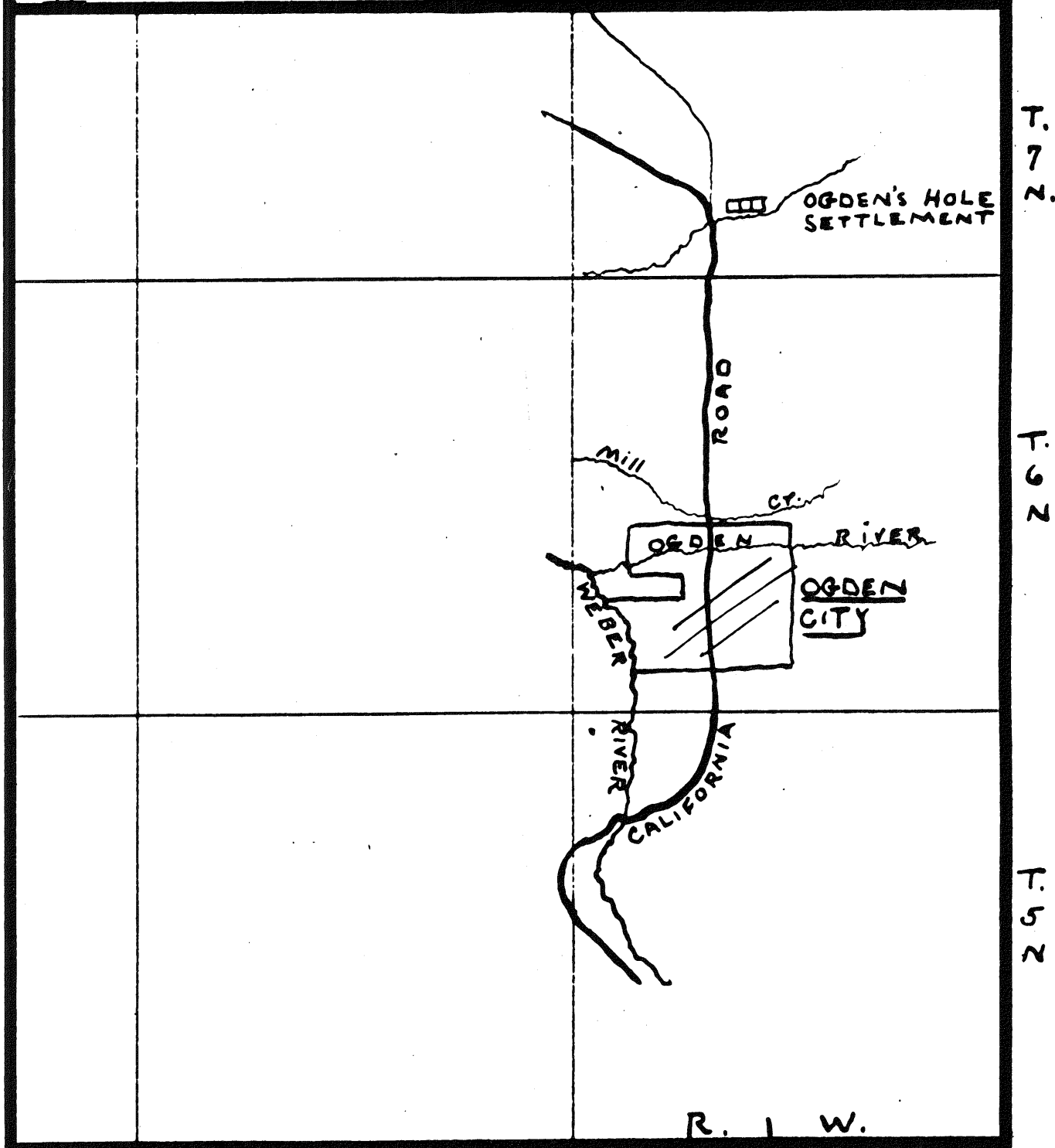
* Joining The California Trail in Map 10; Cf. Key Maps 5 and 6. The later historic mail and stage route from Salt Lake City went south and west of Great Salt Lake; see Simpson's Explorations and Root and Connelley, The Overland Stage to California.



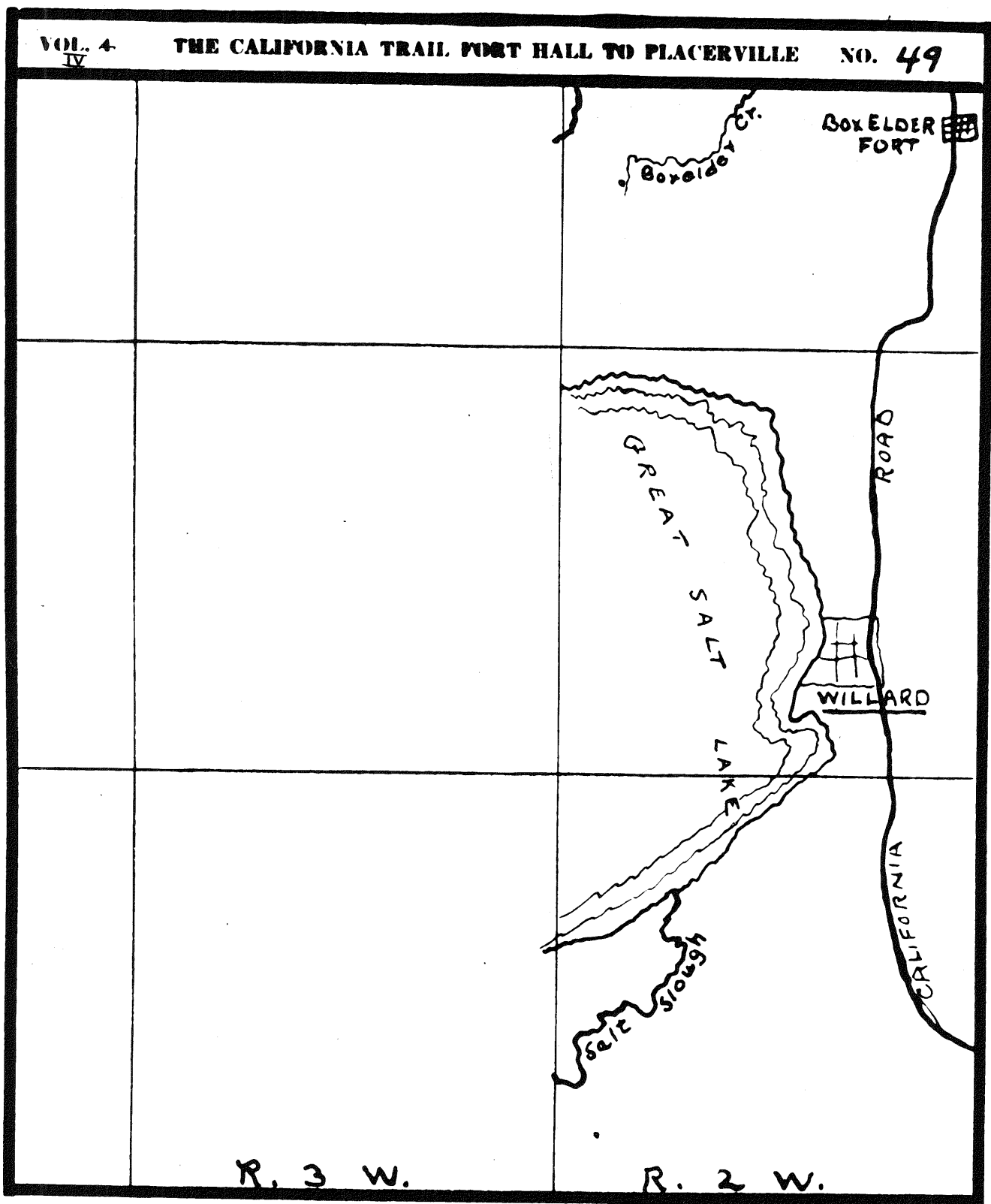
The old trail through present Salt Lake City leading northward To the Bear and Soda Springs (cf. Vol. III, map 11), To Fort Hall (map 6), or to the Snake via Raft River (cf. maps 7 and 9, also Vol. III, map 20) was of ancient origin. With the rush to California in '49 the latter (Raft Creek) branch became temporarily important. For comments on the trail northward To Farmington see Kelly, 166; cf. Lynde, 240-245.



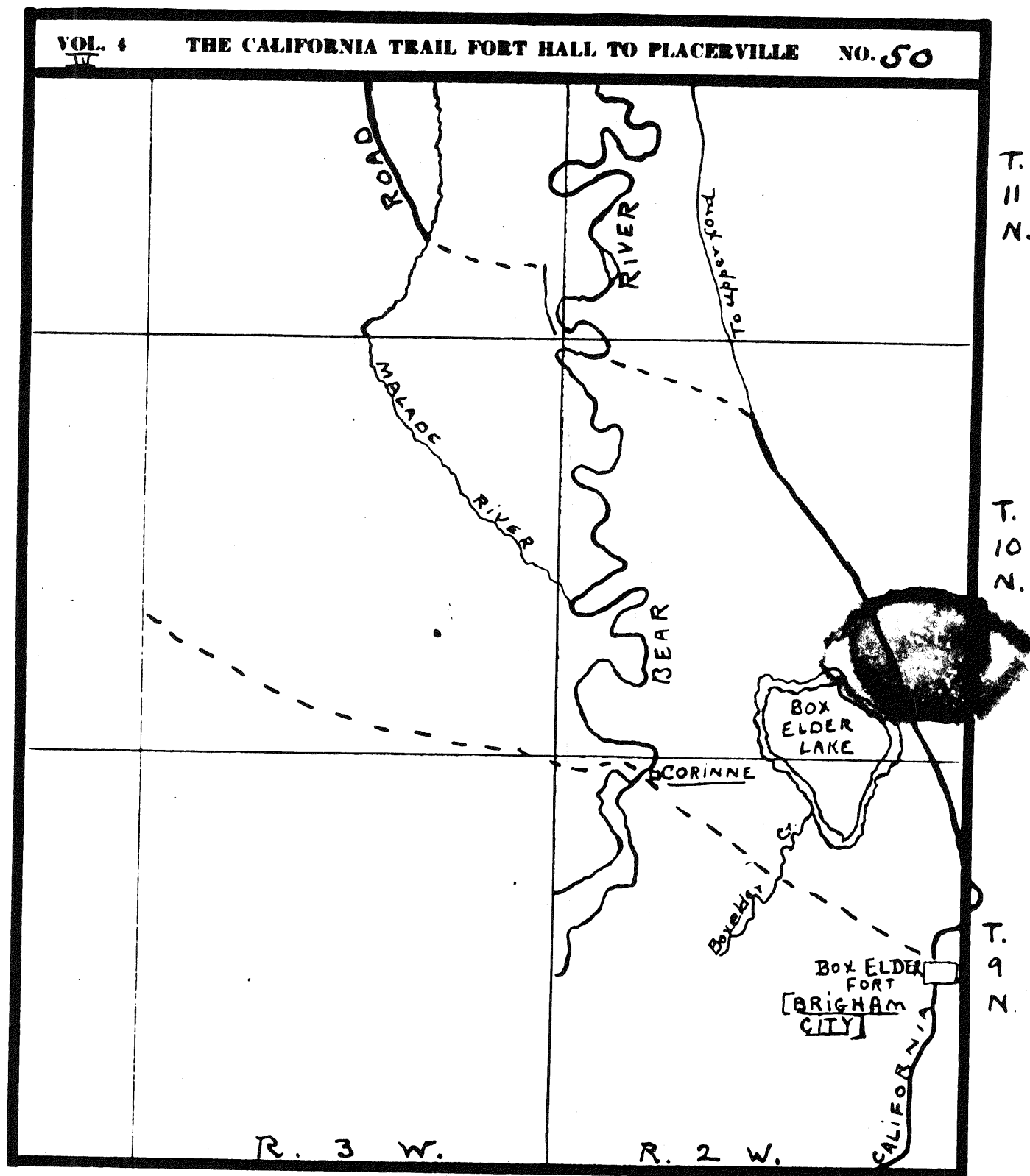
No '49er who traversed this track left so minute account as did Kelly; our quotations are from him, giving only page references: beyond Farmington "our trail took a decided bend towards the mountain in the direction of . . . The Weber . . . which we reached in good time, but were taken aback by seeing, from the lofty, overhanging bank, that it was both deep and rapid" (170). Cf. Ingalls, 161.



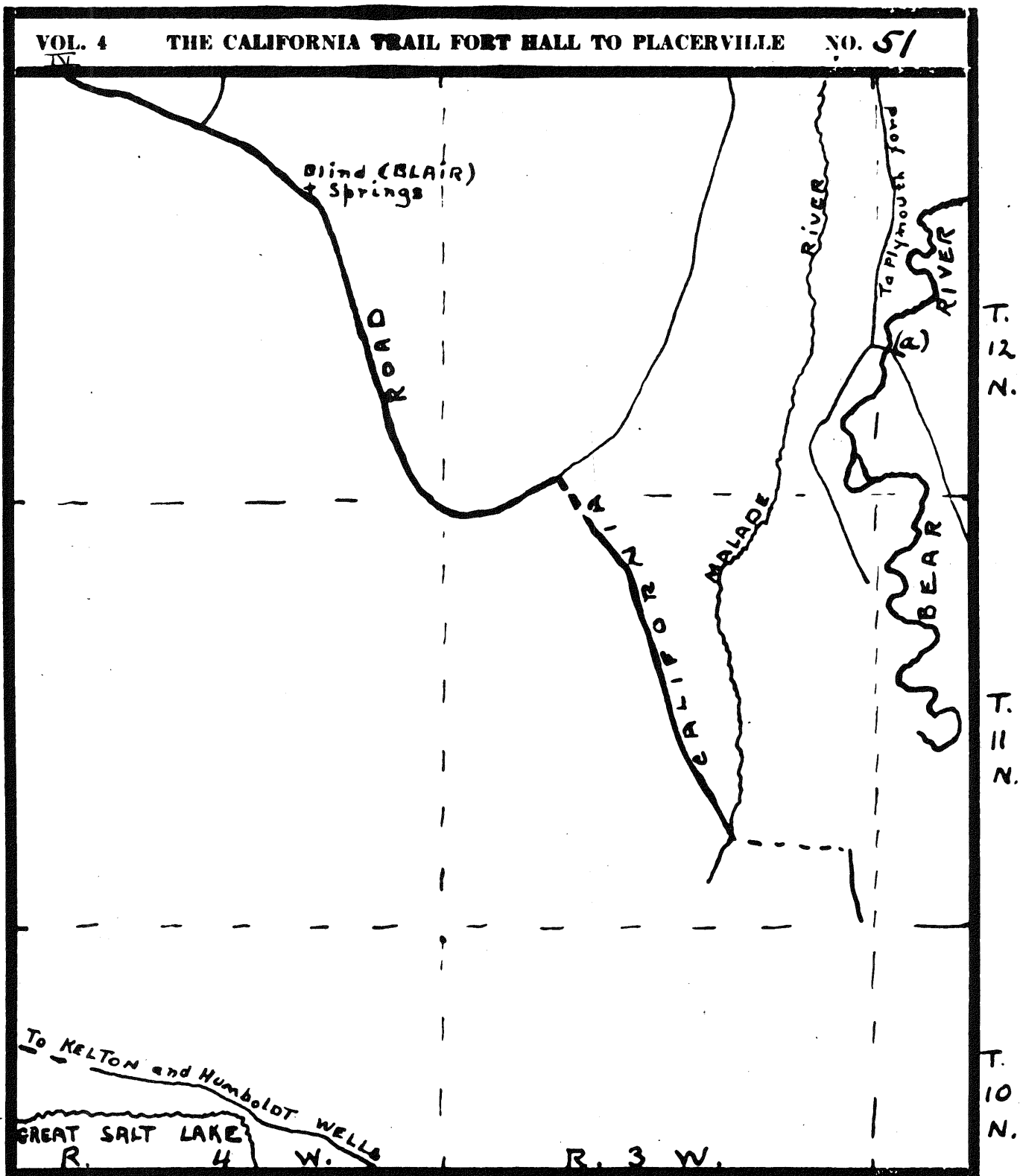
"There was a . . . low, gravelly island [in the Weber] that we were enabled to get to . . . and we were not more than two hours getting across. . . . The ground [north of Ogden] over which the trail lay was soft and swampy, with banks of thick jungle that had never before [?] been penetrated" (170). The crossing of the "Ogden" in Ogden's Hole was not difficult; the pathway beyond was deflected by a tule swamp.



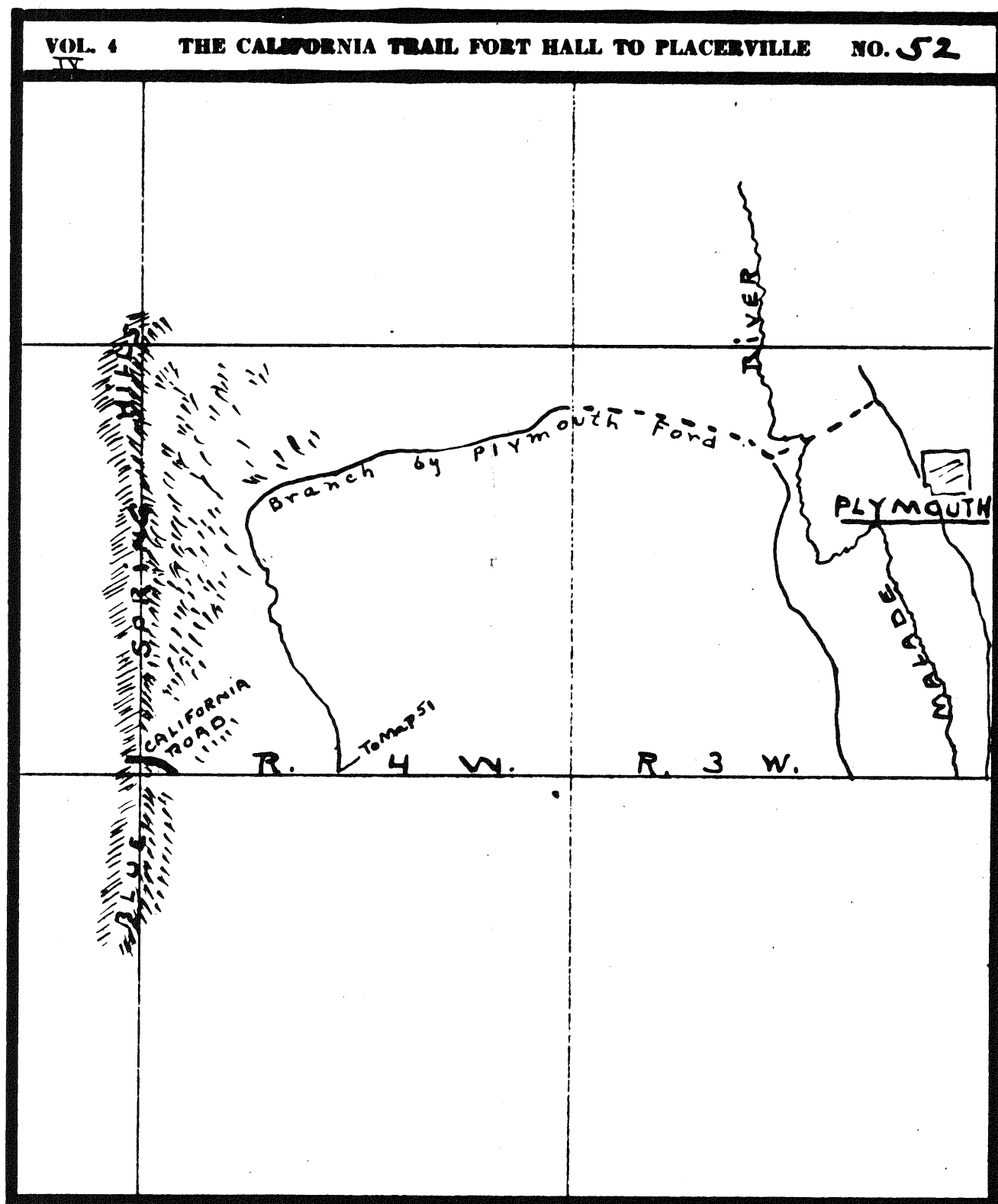
Intense heat and a species of "gigantic fly" gave this pioneer party trouble. Two men suffered sun stroke and were placed in the wagons; the flies forced the travellers to have recourse to their "nice Mormon butter" as salve for protection. The views of the lake from the site of the present Willard attracted attention.



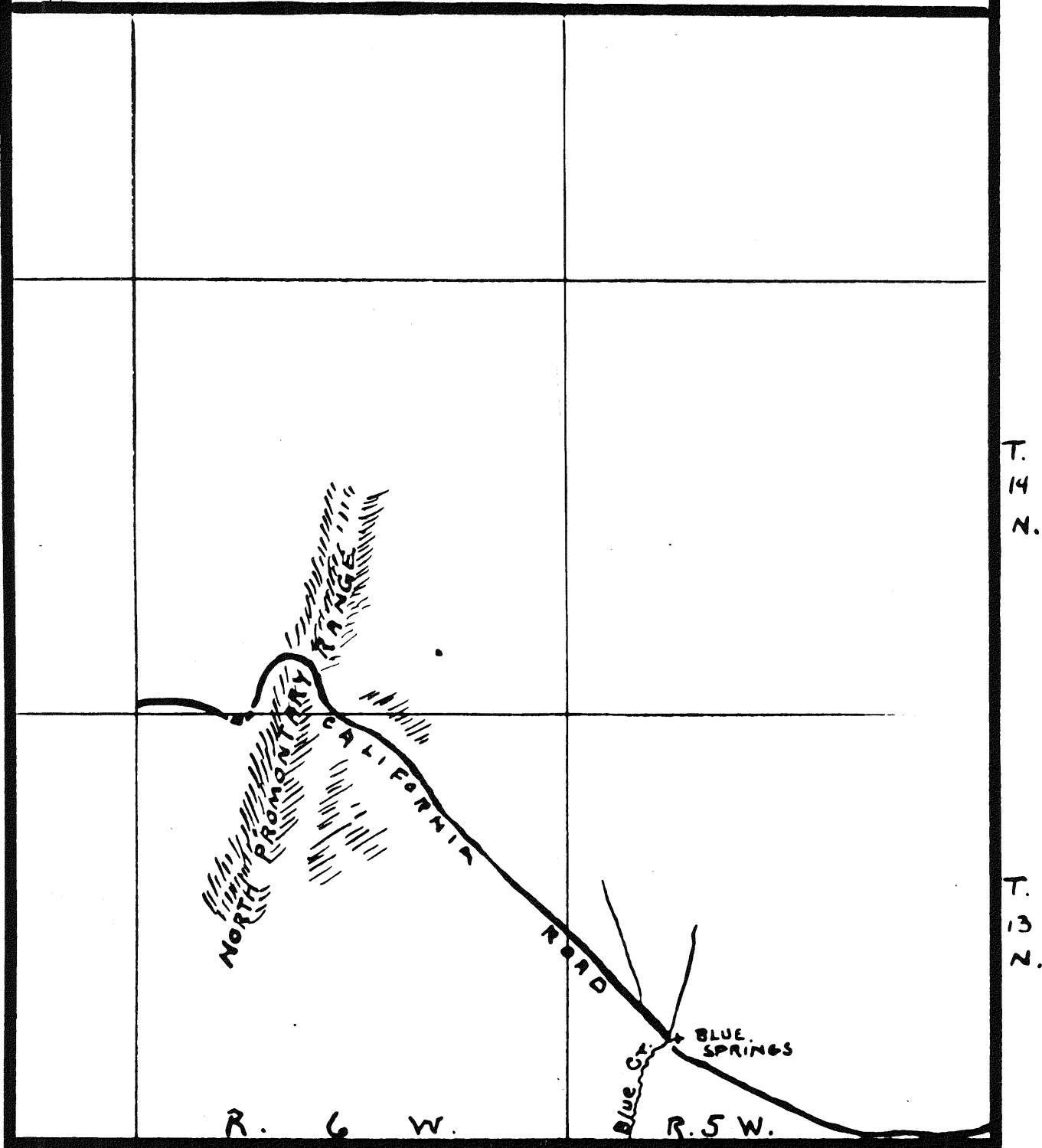
The Box Elder was a rendezvous for redskins of various clans who plundered all these western trails, Forney, 239-240; cf. Stoleman, 440. The rush to the gold fields led to establishing the Mormons of a ferry across the Bear, Kelly's party being the first served (173). A better crossing was found by later comers on the present site of Corinne; Ingalls, 162. At five miles from the Bear Kelly found the Malade a "narrow, deep stream" (174).



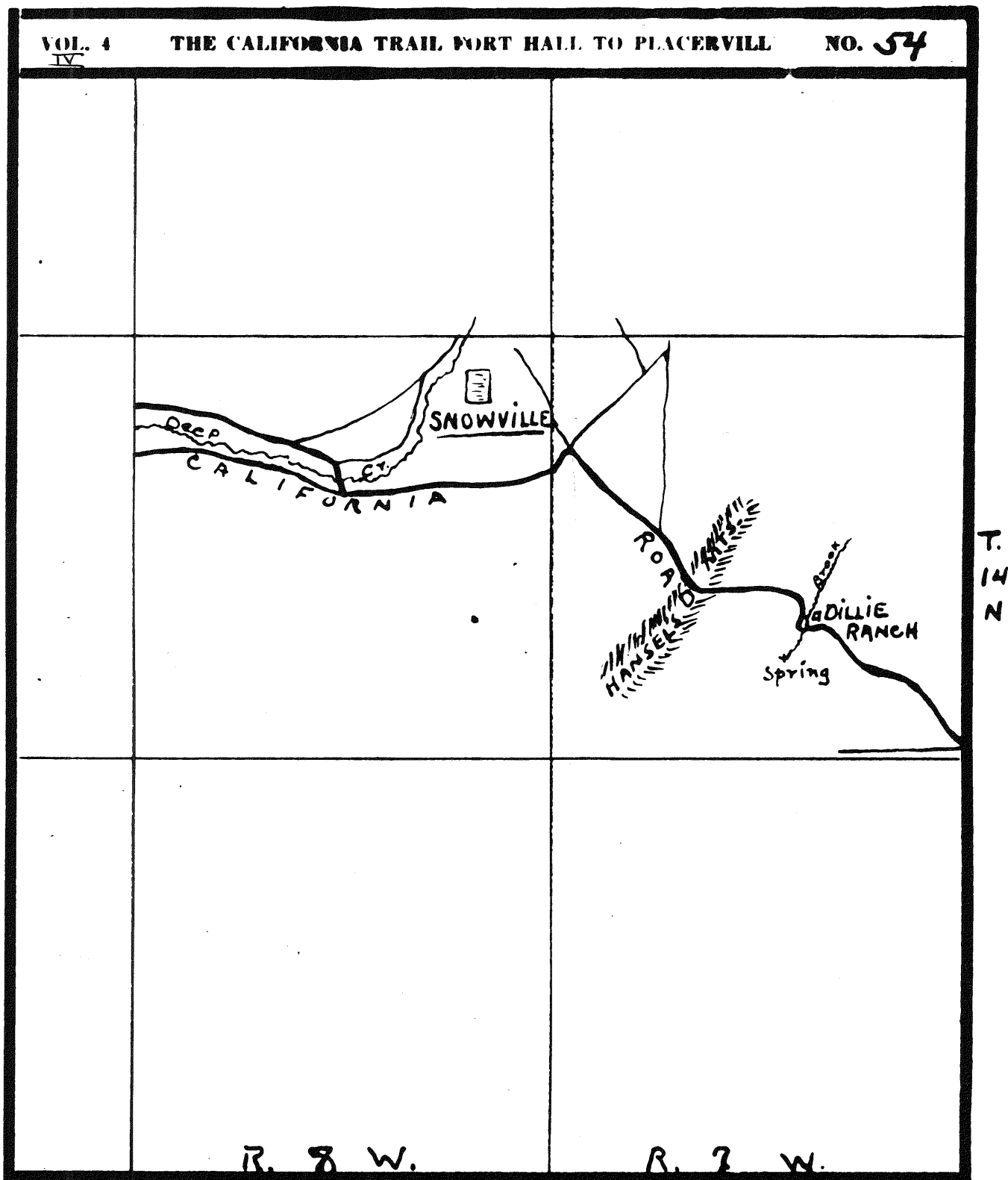
At times the stage of water drove emigrants far up the Bear before a crossing could be effected, taking them well out of the direct route; cf. Ingalls, 162; Lynde's crossing is indicated as at (A) or two and a half miles from the Malade; 246. Blind, or Blair, Springs offers a watering place on the "smells of the bounding ocean" (174) on the plains beyond the Malade; Ingalls, 162; Lynde 246.



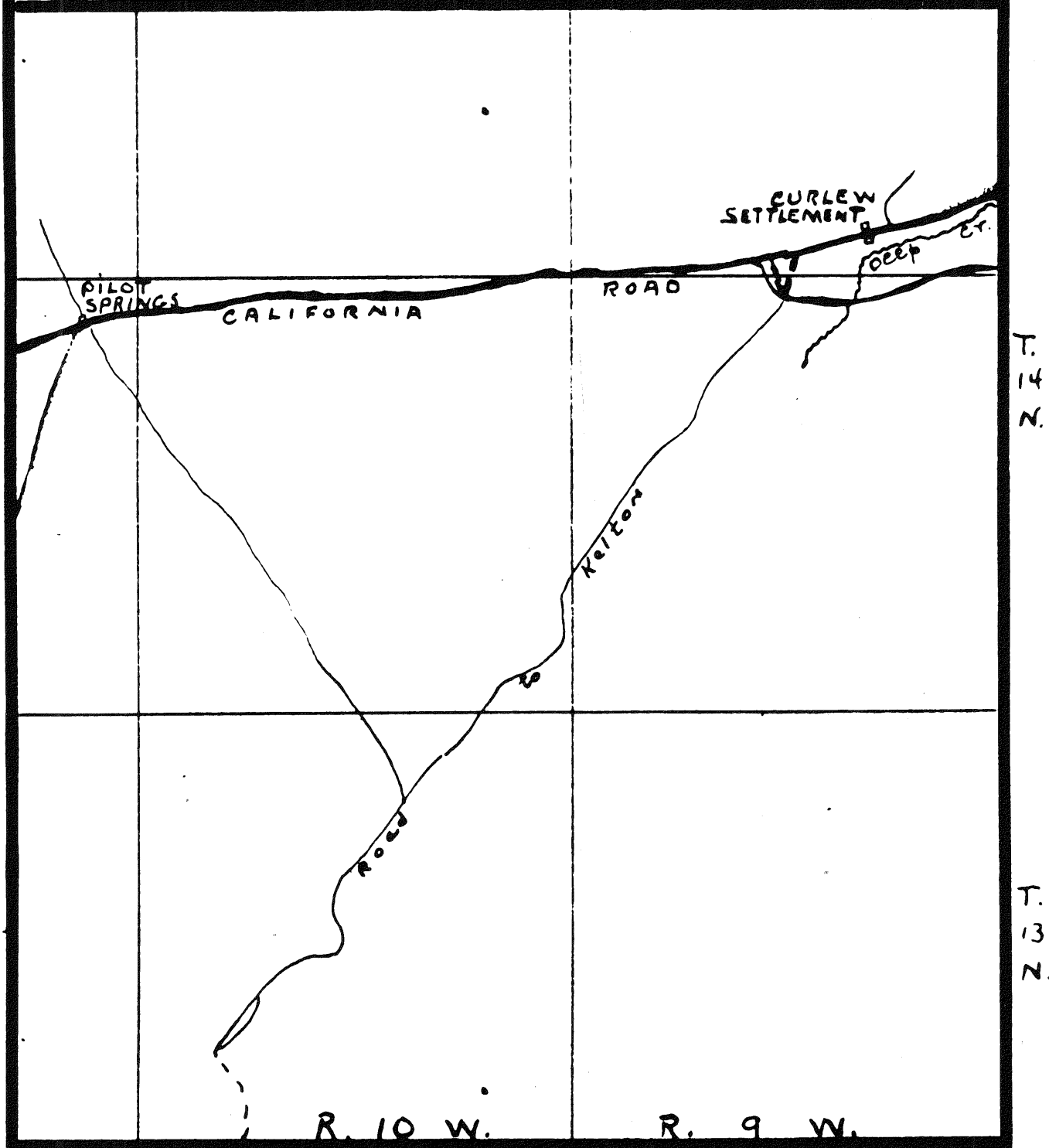
The ford of the Malade near Plymouth was safer in bad seasons than those lying further down the river, Lynde, 243. This officer gives the only detailed description and itinerary of the Salt Lake - Raft River route known to the editor; it is dated, however, in 1859; Lynde, 245-255.



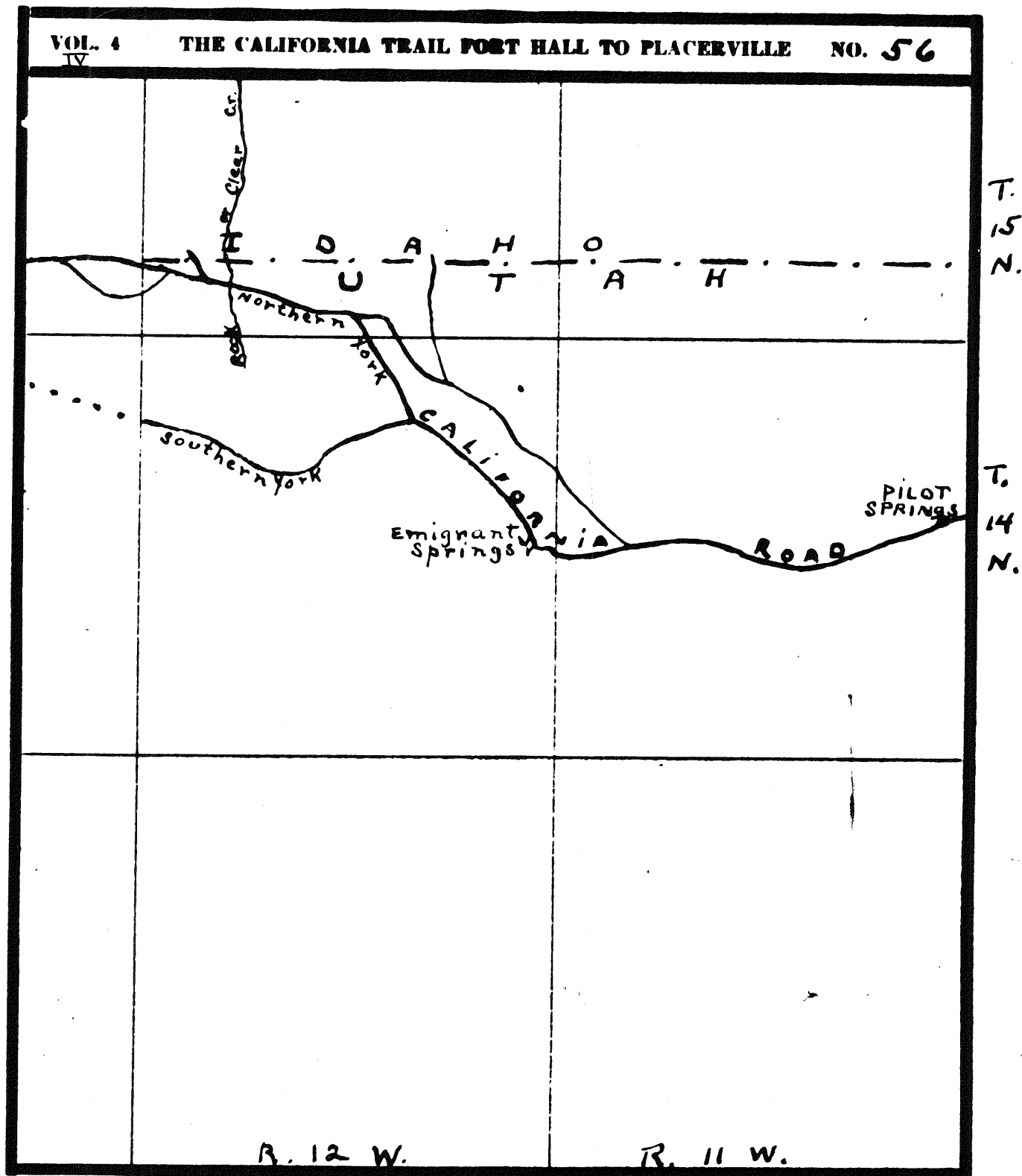
The hard pull over the waterless (but well grassed, Lynde, 253) prairie to Blue Creek made even its slightly saline contribution ~~most~~ welcomed. "Next morning we launched out [from Blue Spring] upon the desert of sage and sand . . . the bushes being so close and strong . . . as to call our axes into requisition" (176). For Blue Spring Cf. Map 2, Pacific Railways; Lander map in Pacific Wagon Roads; Macey, 274.



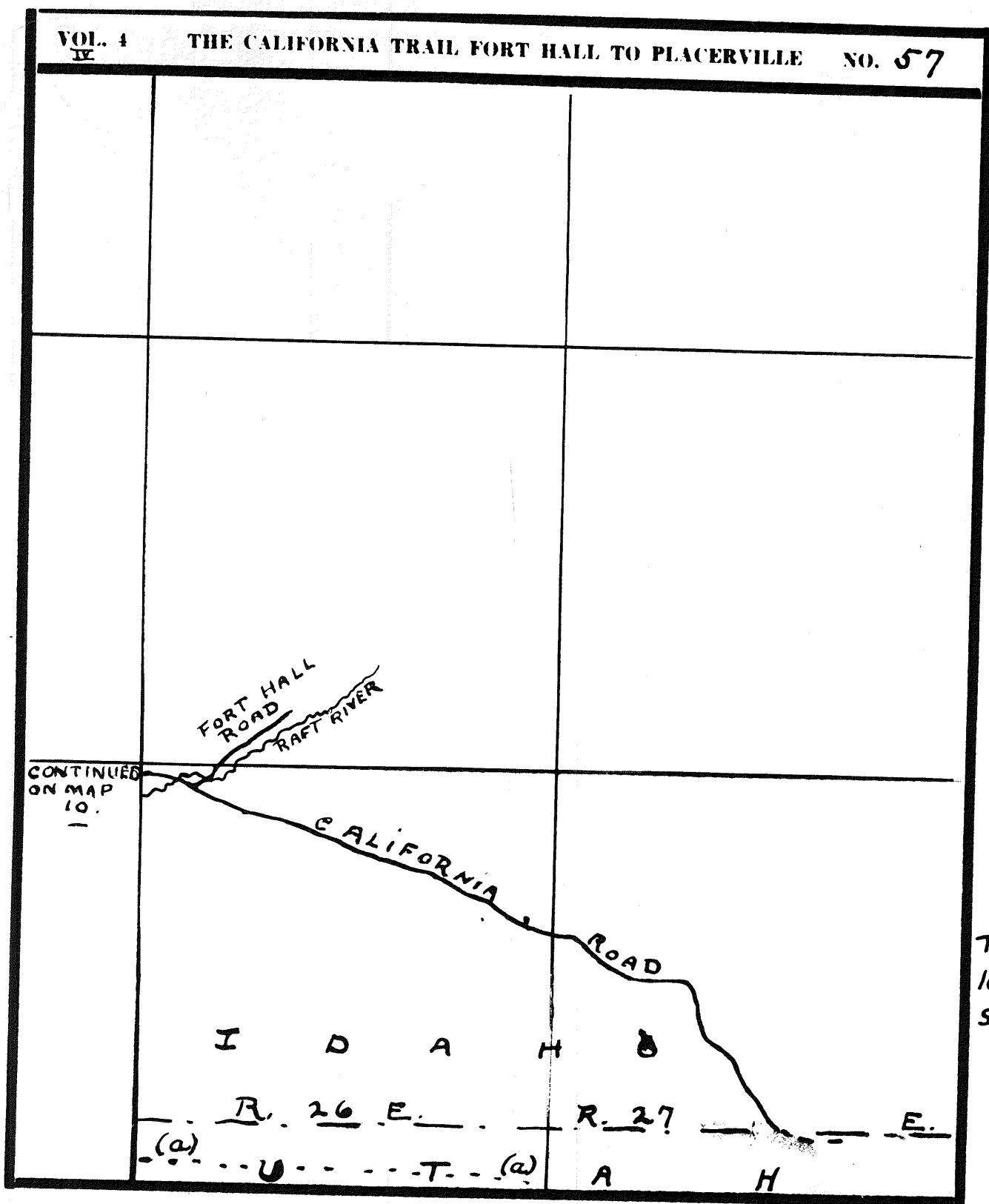
Heavy sage, but better water, was found on the site of the later Dillie Ranch, at Hansel's ("Hazel") Spring and on Deep Creek; cf. Lander map, *Pacific Wagon Roads*; Lynde, 253; Mary, 274. Divergence even from a "blind" trail was found by Kelly to be costly; after cutting a new roadway for two miles, hereabouts, his party was forced to return to the main pathway: 177.



"Next day the sun was oppressively hot, and we toiled on through sage and sand . . . We had [carried] plenty of water, which, running without shade through those hot lands, was at blood heat and not very agreeable to drink while smothering ourselves in the solar fire" (179). Cf. Marcy, 274; Lynde, 246.



Reaching the foothills of the Raft River Mountains
The desert gave way to "a fine range of green hills" (180).
Emigrant Spring, called Cedar Springs by Morcy (274),
ten miles from Rock or Clear Creek, marked the end of
the long pull from the Bear to the head of Raft River.
"The trail now led into a grassy ravine, wooded with
gnarled cedar, which was twisted into most (con't.)



fantastic shapes . . . where we had a cool, delicious spring . . . On getting through this the next morning, we struck the trail from Fort Hall, which, winding down a defile, merged into ours just on the verge of a descent into an open valley" (181). The alternate route from Cedar Springs (preceeding map) must have approximated the dotted line (a); see continuation on map following.