

# OVERLAND JOURNAL

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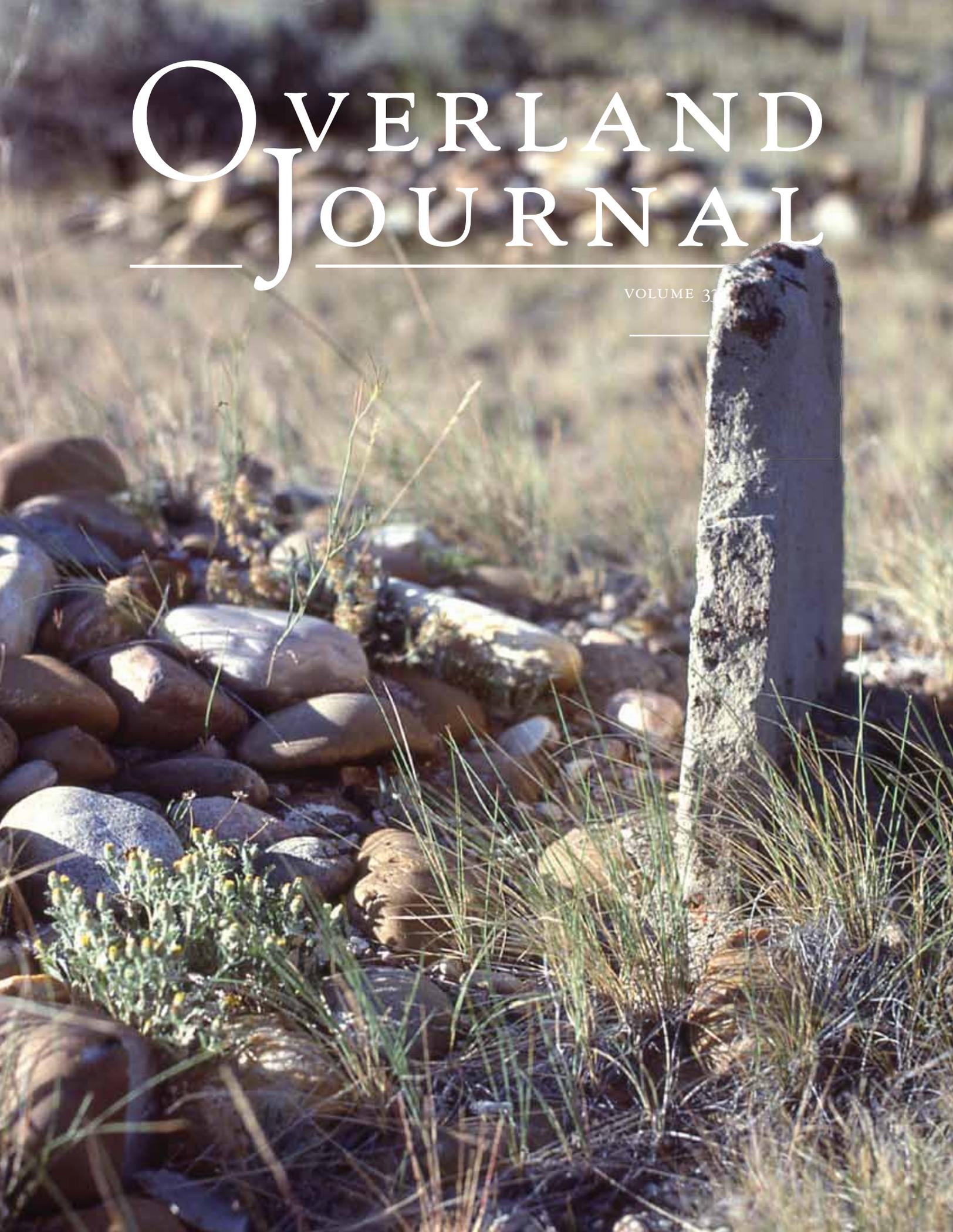
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 3  
FALL 2015

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they rushed together,  
one outfit crashing into the other

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A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there is a low wall made of smooth, rounded stones. To the right, a weathered wooden post stands vertically. The ground is covered with sparse, dry grasses and small, yellowish-green plants. The background is a blurred expanse of similar terrain under bright, natural light.

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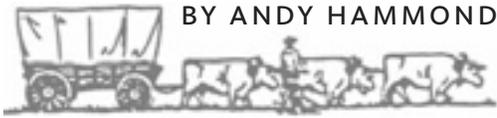
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VOLUME 30

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## THE LOOK OF THE ELEPHANT

BY ANDY HAMMOND



# DISASTROUS CROSSINGS

*Like the evil troll that lived under the bridge in the “Billy Goats Gruff” fairy tale, the Elephant often appeared at river and stream crossings. This has been touched on in previous columns, but here’s more:*

As the river is too steep to ford we this evening made arrangement for two canoes to ferry us over tomorrow. We have to pay eight dollars per day for them and to do the work ourselves . . . a platform was laid over the canoes with the plank we had sawed at “Santa Antonietta”, the Mexicans charging us 12½ cents each for 3 small poles to bind the canoes together, and this morning by day break all hands were in motion . . . The river for about 60 yards near the eastern bank was from 4 to 5 feet deep, and the current so rapid that it was utterly impossible for a man to keep his feet. The water was so thick with sand and mud that it swept everything with almost the force of a solid body. From this to the western bank, some 450 to 500 yards, it was shallower and we could get along very well. About the sixth or seventh wagon we were crossing over, the canoes, owing to a lack of force sufficient to manage them, drifted on a snag and immediately filled and sunk, upsetting the wagon into the river, the contents of which were soon drifting in every direction.

—WILLIAM HUNTER, AUGUST 16/17, 1849  
(THE RIO GRANDE, NEW MEXICO)

Our start is late & the road goes up the river between two dark & ragged looking mountains. We soon begin to cross & recross the darndest rough & rocky fords ever attempted before. The water swift, deep & full of round boulders from the size of a diner pot to that of a four foot stump. Here was cursing of the hardest kind. The cattle got astraddle of some & were completely on a balance for some time, then fell off our waggon on coupled the hind part & bed went

down the stream some of the donage floated off, Bill Morton lost his carpet-sack, Kinsey his bundle & Perin his gun. / We . . . cross over Sincer’s Hill & . . . through the Catterack of Hell, crossing the Trucky on a pile of rocks. The first plunge, under went the cattle, next came the waggon, driving them upon a thundering boulder, then a surge & the couplin broke. Here was hell again & the Elephant afloat. In jump the men & mored the wreck ashore away below the ford . . . We were some time righting our injured wagon.

—JOHN CLARK, AUGUST 23/24, 1852  
(TRUCKEE RIVER, NEVADA)

We came to a small creek which was bridged, but very narrow & sideling. Ed crossed safe & drove up the hill. Alexander came next with 4 horses & covered waggon, but did not come down on the bridge square & the horses got frightened. The wagon fell over into the drink but lodged on a fallen tree, which drew the horses all in also Ed had come back . . . & was there to witness the catastrophe . . . Water was 8 or 10 feet deep, besides the mud at the bottom. Ed seized the ax & cut the tongue off which assisted the horses some. They came to the surface. Kept their heads out, but got entangled in the harness. That was soon cut loose. Plunging & splashing was kept up. Ropes were procured & fastened round their heads. Wes & Ed were in the water up to their waists & In great danger of being drawn in by the kicking of the horses. One poor horse was so much encumbered with the harness & so far gone that before assistance could be rendered he had breathed his last. Blood rushed out of his mouth; he looked for help but it was impossible to relieve him . . . The others were saved after a few moments, but they were very helpless & bruised & cut.

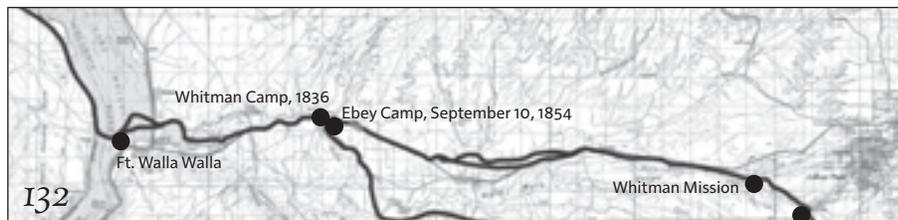
—MARY BURRELL, MAY 8, 1854  
(UNIDENTIFIED CREEK, NEBRASKA)

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ON THE COVER: Multiple graves located at the Platte River Crossing on the Overland Trail in southern Wyoming. *Courtesy of Mary Olch.* BACK COVER: A page from Sarah Jane Rousseau’s overland diary, 1864. *Courtesy of Mrs. Richard Molony.*

# OVERLAND JOURNAL

QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION  
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 3, FALL 2015



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SUBMISSIONS AND EDITORIAL CONTACT: Prospective authors should send queries or their articles to Marlene Smith-Baranzini, *Overland Journal*, P.O. Box 265, Tracy, CA 95378 (email: tealblue1@gmail.com). Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, without embedded illustrations, and with endnotes numbered consecutively. When possible, include suggestions for illustrations. Inquiries concerning suitable topics and author guidelines are welcome and should be addressed to the editor. Neither the editor nor the Association is responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, artwork, or other material sent for editorial consideration.

# THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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## PRESERVING THE TRAILS

OCTA's membership and volunteer leadership seek to preserve our heritage. Our accomplishments include:

- Purchasing Nebraska's "California Hill," with ruts cut by emigrant wagons as they climbed from the South Platte River.
- Protecting emigrant graves.
- Initiating legislation designating the California and Santa Fe trails as National Historic trails.
- Persuading government and industry to relocate roads and pipe lines to preserve miles of pristine ruts.

## CONVENTIONS AND FIELD TRIPS

Our annual convention is held in a different location with proximity to a historical area each summer. Convention activities include tours and treks, papers and presentations, meals and socials, and a display room with book dealers, publishers, and other materials.

Local chapters also plan treks and activities throughout the year.

## PUBLICATIONS

*Overland Journal*—Issued four times each year, *OJ* contains new research and re-examinations of topics pertaining to the history of the American West, especially the development and use of the trails.

*News from the Plains*—Also issued quarterly, *News* contains updates about members and the organization, convention reports, legislative action, genealogy, trail preservation, and special activities.

*Special Publications*—Periodic book publications in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series (numbered documentary editions) and the Special Publications Series (trail studies monographs).

## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- Developing instructional materials to help students understand the western migration.

- Marking the trails and maintaining weathered or damaged markers.
- Developing a computer-based census of emigrant diaries, newspaper accounts, letters, and other documents.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purposes for which the Association is organized are as follows:

1. To initiate and coordinate activities relating to the identification, preservation, interpretation, and improved accessibility of extant rut segments, trail remains, graves and associated historic trail sites, landmarks, artifacts, and objects along the overland western historic trails, roads, routes, branches, and cutoffs of the Trans-Mississippi region.
2. To prevent further deterioration of the foregoing and to take or pursue whatever measures necessary or advisable to cause more of the same to become accessible or more so to the general public.
3. To implement these purposes by acquiring either alone or through or jointly with other—federal, state, local, or private—title to the land or lands on which any of the same is located or a preservation or other easements with regard to the same—by purchase, gift, or otherwise—and by cooperating with or initiating, coordinating, and assisting the efforts of such others to do so.
4. To publicize and seek public exposure of the goals and activities of the Association so as to create popular awareness of and concern for the necessity of preserving the foregoing.
5. To facilitate research projects about the aforesaid and to publish a journal as a forum for scholarly articles adding to the sum of knowledge about the same.

It shall be the further purpose of the Association to be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

*Many people* THINK OF AUTUMN AS THE SEASON THAT ENDS THINGS—HOT SUMMER WEATHER, FAMILY VACATIONS, NATURE'S GROWING CYCLE—BUT IT ALSO BRINGS IMPORTANT BEGINNINGS.



October signals the start of OCTA's new fiscal year and new appointments to the Board of Directors. During our Lake Tahoe Convention, Board President John Krizek stepped down after his two-year term of strong leadership, and John Winner, of Placerville, California, became OCTA's new presi-

dent. Read his first message to members in the Fall 2015 "News from the Plains" (NFP), our quarterly newsletter.

NFP also listed the names of dozens of new OCTA members. Those who attended September's Lake Tahoe convention repeatedly saw that this is a friendly organization, and one seriously dedicated to protecting and preserving the overland trails in a variety of ways. Historic accounts of the emigrants who opened or followed these trails—and related articles—fill these pages each quarter.

In our first article, as reported by the late Peter D. Olch, M.D., the overland journey was treacherous for many. Peter drew on numerous emigrant diaries for his sobering study on illness, disease, and medical treatment on the trail. Roger Blair, M.D., who supervised the contract and trail documentation, tells how the report came about and participated in the trail documentation.

Many of us are old enough to remember the tv show "The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp."

It aired from 1955 through 1961, starred the tall, handsome Hugh O'Brian, and helped launch the American cowboy as a cultural archetype. According to the IMDb website (which would like someone to write a synopsis of the show), "most of the saga is based loosely on fact. . . ." In truth, when the Earp wagon train traveled from Iowa to San Bernardino, California, in 1864, it included the family of Mrs. Sarah Jane Rousseau. Author Nick Cataldo shares rare excerpts from Sarah Jane's overland diary. No shootouts on the trail, but Mrs. Rousseau recorded many an interesting, edgy moment.

Our book reviews include a summer best seller, Rinker Buck's *The Oregon Trail*, evaluated for us by Bill Martin, and *Battles and Massacres on the Western Frontier*, an insightful collection of historical and archaeological reports, reviewed by Bill Shanks. The four conflicts analyzed, including the Mountain Meadows Massacre, illustrate how modern archaeological excavations can support, expand, or challenge the historical record.

We close with congratulations to Randy Brown, winner of the 2015 Merrill Mattes Excellence in Writing Award for his article (Fall 2014), "Nebraska, June 1852: Death and Coincidence on the Trail . . ." On our expanded website, [www.octa-trails.org](http://www.octa-trails.org), new members can now read it online.

*Margie Smith-Danajic*

BY PETER D. OLCH, M.D. ✧ WITH COMMENTARY BY ROGER

# *Plenty of Doctoring to Do*

HEALTH-RELATED PROBLEMS ON



P. BLAIR, M.D.

## THE OREGON TRAIL



A REMARKABLE AMOUNT OF DISEASE AND TRAUMA PLAGUED THE EMIGRANTS ON THE OREGON TRAIL.

It is estimated that in 1850 alone, 55,000 individuals traveled the overland route through South Pass. Such vast numbers of animals and humans passing over the same trails and camping at the same locations with minimal sanitary precautions made contamination of water and soil inevitable. In addition, many persons were drowned while fording rivers and streams, and deaths and injuries from a variety of causes were common. An examination of the journals kept by overland emigrants clearly demonstrates the hazards of life on the trail.<sup>1</sup>

A few wagon trains included a physician, but the great majority of emigrants relied on a supply of patent medicines and domestic medicine texts, such as the popular books written by William Buchan and John Gunn.<sup>2</sup> Wagon trains without a physician often endeavored to keep near those trains that did have doctors. By most accounts, physicians on the

1. The information for this segment of the report was derived from the examination of 276 diaries gathered by the Idaho State Historical Society. One hundred seven of the diaries contained information dealing with health, disease, trauma, and death. The reporting of the same event by two or more diarists in the same company or caravan made it difficult to tally exact numbers for the various conditions, but relative frequencies could be readily determined.
2. William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, first published in Edinburgh in 1769 and in Philadelphia in 1772, went through innumerable editions. John C. Gunn's *Domestic Medicine, or Poor Man's Friend* was first published in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1830 and was still popular in 1870.

(left) THE FULKERSON GRAVE

Cholera, accidents, drownings, mountain fever, gunshot injuries, and a host of other causes took hundreds of lives on the trek west. *All photographs are courtesy of Mary Olch.*

trail were most generous with their time, even when overworked, though occasionally a physician was all business and charged hard cash before treatment. Some physicians painted signs on rocks and gravestones advertising their services. Compared to westbound wagon trains of previous years, the gold-rush caravans of 1849 and 1850 included a proportionately high percentage of physicians. In those same years cholera was especially prevalent, and several physicians noted in their journals and letters that they prescribed for as many as three hundred cases on the trail.

Military posts along the Oregon Trail frequently became havens of medical care. Sick emigrants were often abandoned along the trail and had to be brought in by the soldiers; others were left at the posts without means or friends to tend them. In 1852 the surgeon general commented in his annual report on the strain these practices placed on the medical personnel at the frontier posts:

It is needless to say that additional men can be detailed to meet these extreme cases, for at the little frontier stations there are not men to spare from other indispensable duties to attend upon extra sick men, and, besides, the commandant of the post will not, if he can, detail soldiers for hospital attendants beyond the number allowed by regulation for the military command proper; so that, if the emigrant or other citizen receives proper nursing, he must obtain it from the extraordinary exertions of one or more soldiers, who have already their full measure of irksome and sometimes loathsome duty to perform.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century on the Midwestern plains, cholera, typhoid fever, malaria, pneumonia, and smallpox were the prevailing diseases.

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3. U.S. War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* (Washington, D.C., 1852), 137.

In addition, diphtheria took a particularly heavy toll of children; hardly a family escaped it. Malaria was the most prevalent disease and caused many deaths among the young. Pneumonia was a common cause of death among older people. Typhoid epidemics were very common, and most communities had typhoid fever every fall. One factor contributing toward illness was lowered vitality, brought about by improper clothing, exposure, and unbalanced rations.

Many of the emigrants were farmers from the Midwest. Others, particularly the Mormon emigrants, came from overseas and began their cross-country trek after a prolonged and crowded ocean voyage. Many were in poor health even before they started their hazardous overland journey. Citrus fruits and vegetables, as well as eggs and milk products, were in very short supply on the trail. There were, of course, cases of scurvy and other forms of malnutrition. One physician in 1850 suggested five factors contributing to poor health: the high saline and alkaline content of the water; consumption of fish; poor preparation of camp food—"often a perfect mass of indigestible filth, too crude even for the stomach of an ostrich"; chilly night watches and sleeping on cold, wet ground; and constant hard and exhausting toil.<sup>4</sup> Other reasons for poor health frequently mentioned are eating boiled beans and rancid bacon, buffalo meat eaten immediately after the chase, lack of fruits and vegetables, and lung-choking dust.

The dust generated by the moving wagons certainly had to be one of the most irritating experiences endured by the travelers. The alkali dust was said to blister and blotch the lips and irritate

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4. Quoted in Merrill J. Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road: The Covered Wagon Mainline via Fort Kearny to Fort Laramie*, 2nd edition, Nebraska State Historical Society Publications, Vol. 25 (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979), 82.



THE BEAR RIVER DIVIDE

Trek members consult maps in the Bear River Divide in Wyoming. Left to right are Bruce Keating (of the BLM WSO), Larry Jones (ISHS), Russ Storbo (BLM Kemmerer), Merle Wells (ISHS), John Latschar (NPS), and Peter Olch.

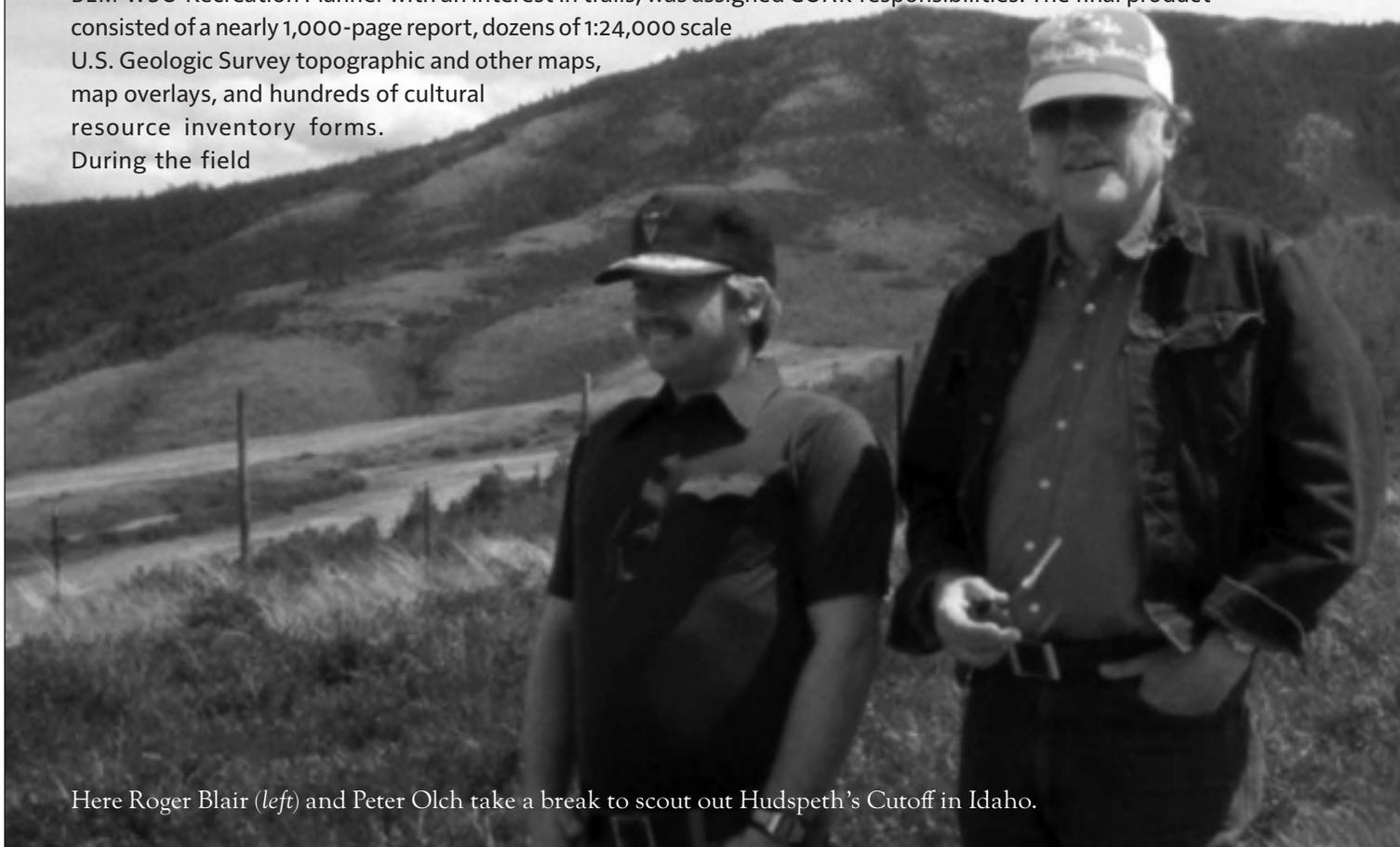
THIS ARTICLE, "HEALTH-RELATED PROBLEMS ON THE OREGON TRAIL," by the late Peter D. Olch, M.D., was included in a 1979 study of a section of the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails. At the time, Peter Olch was Deputy Director of the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. He learned of the project, described in detail below, and voluntarily contributed a report on health-related issues on historic trails, based on analysis of 276 trail diaries.

As many readers recall, the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, P.L. 95-625, designated the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer trails as National Historic Trails. In early 1979, to fulfill its management responsibilities under that act, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) to study a 10-mile-wide corridor along the alignment of the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails, including the various branches, cutoffs, and associated activities, such as Pony Express, fur trade, telegraph, stage lines, military activity, and prehistoric utilization. The study area extended from Casper, across Wyoming to the Wyoming-Idaho state line, and then across Idaho to Boise.

The contract (YA-512-CT9-268) was awarded to the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) in late 1979, in the amount of \$194,998. Merle Wells was the Principal Investigator for ISHS, assisted by Larry Jones. Daniel J. Hutchison, archaeologist in the BLM Wyoming State Office (BLM WSO), initially was designated the Contracting Officers Authorized Representative (COAR). The contract called for a Class I archaeological inventory of the entire corridor, including all cutoffs and variants, regardless of land ownership; a photographic inventory; mapping; and a field inventory to provide information needed to conduct Class III cultural resource inventories of selected areas in the trail corridor. As I recall, more than one thousand, forty-acre sites were inventoried to Class III standards, with emphasis at sites of important events such as Martin's Cove, Burnt Ranch, Pony Express stations, and others.

Before the contract work began, Dan Hutchison transferred to a BLM district in northern Idaho and I, as BLM WSO Recreation Planner with an interest in trails, was assigned COAR responsibilities. The final product consisted of a nearly 1,000-page report, dozens of 1:24,000 scale U.S. Geologic Survey topographic and other maps, map overlays, and hundreds of cultural resource inventory forms.

During the field



Here Roger Blair (*left*) and Peter Olch take a break to scout out Hudspeth's Cutoff in Idaho.



season, I made several field trips to review work being completed in Wyoming, as well as an overview trip along the entire two-state study corridor.

The contract did not call for a report on health-related aspects of trail travel. However, while completing a portion of his research at the ISHS, Peter became interested in the larger study and proposed adding his findings on diseases, accidents, and other aspects of health and safety of trail travel. Long-time OCTA members may recall his talks on other trail-related health topics at the 1984 Oregon City and 1990 Omaha conventions.

From June 15 through 19, 1981, Peter and his wife Mary accompanied Merle Wells, Larry Jones, and me on a field reconnaissance trip of the entire route from Casper, Wyoming, to Boise, Idaho. We were accompanied at various points in the trek by several BLM field employees as we traversed the two states. John Latschar, OCTA co-founder and National Park Service (NPS) historian, joined us for much of the Wyoming portion.

The Wyoming portion of the study has never been published. When Hutchison again transferred, this time to the BLM Idaho State Office in Boise, he and Larry Jones collaborated in preparing *Emigrant Trails of Southern Idaho, Idaho Cultural Resource Series, Number 1* (January 1993), a joint endeavor of the Idaho State Historical Society and the BLM, based upon the findings of the Idaho portion of the contract. Peter's contribution was included in that document. That publication, however, did not receive wide circulation among the trail community, despite being in the public domain. I submitted Peter's report to the *Overland Journal* for publication consideration and am pleased that it now comes to light for a more widespread trail audience, unchanged except for minor corrections of misspelling or alterations to conform to *Overland Journal* editorial standards. I am indebted to Mary Olch for sharing her and Peter's notes of our outing, for copies of her photographs taken during that week, and for sharing her favorite image of Peter for this article.

COMMENTARY BY ROGER BLAIR



GRANITE PASS

Here members search for emigrant grave sites on the eastern slope of Granite Pass in Idaho. Left to right are Mary Olch, local rancher Bob Ward, Larry Jones, Merle Wells, and Peter Olch.

the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs; emigrants had to eat, drink, and breathe it. Another great source of discomfort, to both man and beast, were the mosquitos.

. . . and the dust . . . how can I give any idea of it? We are almost blinded by it. My eyes are very sore. We all have to wear veils or goggles, some wear handkerchiefs over their faces and with all we are almost choked and blinded. It tries my patience more than anything else! . . . We are near being eaten alive by the mosquitos! There are thousands of them buzzing about your eyes which makes one almost frantic. . . . [Near Goose Creek] Never saw such dust! In some places it was actually to the top of the forewheels! Fine white dust, more like flour. Our men were a perfect fright, being literally covered with it. Our poor animals staggered along through the blinding dust, coughing at every step.<sup>5</sup>

Trail accidents were plentiful. The diaries examined indicate that being crushed by wagon wheels was the most common accident. Then came accidental shootings, injury or death from stampedes, and drownings. After these four causes of maiming and killing, there were death(s) from Indian attacks and murder among the emigrants themselves.

An impressive number of men, women, and children were severely injured or died as a result of being caught in or falling under the large wheels of the emigrant wagons. A sampling of diaries and letters captures some of these unimaginable injuries and deaths:

A child fell from one of the wagons and it ran over his breast and one arm, but the ground being

soft underneath the wheel, he was not killed though taken up senseless.<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Collins' son George, about six years old, fell from the wagon and the wheels ran over his head, killing him instantly.<sup>7</sup>

(Near Deer Creek) Robert Gardner's boy died from injury received by being run over by a heavy loaded wagon.<sup>8</sup>

We stopped our teams for those who were ahead of us as Joseph was in the act of jumping out of the wagon. He fell down in front of the forward wheel and it grazed his hip and run over his arm between the elbow and his shoulder. It broke his arm short off. We set it to the best of our ability.<sup>9</sup>

A child about three years old . . . while in the act of taking it out of the wagon, was let fall and both wagon wheels passed over its body. It died in about eight hours.<sup>10</sup>

(Near Independence Rock) About this time an old Scotch man, named Higgis in getting out of a wagon while in motion fell and the wheel went over his leg breaking it. He was put back in the wagon. We fortunately had a man with us who had been a doctor in Liverpool, who set the fractured limb, but he was unable to walk the rest of the way.<sup>11</sup>

5. Eleanor Allen, *Canvas Caravans* (Portland, Ore.: Binford's & Mort, 1946), 57, 70, 79.

6. James Field Diary, May 27, 1845, Oregon Historical Society (hereafter cited OHS).

7. "Diary of Virgil K. Pringle," August 3, 1846, in Dale L. Morgan, editor, *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California-Oregon Trail* (Georgetown, Calif.: Talisman Press, 1963), 178.

8. William Carter Staines Diary, 1847, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter HD-LDS).

9. Joseph Grafton Hovey Diary, September 20, 1848, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited BYU).

10. Ruben Miller Diary, 1849, HD-LDS.

11. Stephen Forsdick Autobiography, 1853, HD-LDS.



THE HEMBREE GRAVE

The earliest identifiable grave site on the trail is that of Joel Hembree, who could not be saved by the famed Marcus Whitman after being run over by a wagon wheel in 1843.

Word was passed that a woman had been accidentally run over and killed instantly. . . . The woman was getting down from the moving vehicle, her clothing caught on the brake-rod and she was thrown forward beneath the wheel.<sup>12</sup>

The emigrants were heavily armed with rifles, shotguns, and revolvers to defend themselves against the Indians and to shoot wild game, particularly buffalo. Far too often, however, they injured or killed themselves instead. Many were not accustomed to the use of firearms, and the weapons most of them carried were of poor quality and deficient in safety mechanisms. Several diaries report briefly:

Baley shot while walking through camp by accidental discharge of a gun from a wagon. He lived about one hour.<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Frederick Jones of our company was accidentally shot in his lower parts as he was trying to melt the ball in his gun. . . . Frederick Jones died in the afternoon.<sup>14</sup>

There was a man shot himself through accident by taking his gun out of the wagon. It shot him through the head with two barrels and he died instantly.<sup>15</sup>

When Bovee stooped to scalp the animal, his revolver fell from the holster hitting a rock and shooting him through the heart. He lived only a few minutes. He leaves a wife and two children.<sup>16</sup>

12. Ellen James Bailey Lamborn Autobiography, September 3, 1864, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

13. *Journal of Medorem Crawford* (Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1967), 11.

14. Peter O. Hansen Diary, July 4, 8, 1849, BYU.

15. Martin L. Ensign Diary, May 9, 1857, HD-LDS.

16. Hamilton Scott Diary, July 4, 1862, Idaho State Historical Society.

Stampeding livestock also took their toll of lives and physical property:

Traveled six miles to the grave of Sister Hawkes who was killed by a stampede of the teams in a company in advance of us.<sup>17</sup>

. . . one day there came a stampede and our oxen became frightened and they rushed together, one outfit crashing into the other . . . some of the wagons were broken and a few of our number hurt and one man killed.<sup>18</sup>

(124 miles west of Green River) Between eleven and twelve o'clock our cattle scared at some loose horses belonging to another train. About twenty five teams ran away upsetting and breaking wagons, running over men, women, and children. Mrs. Townsend from Monroe, Iowa was dangerously wounded. Wilson Scott had a broken leg. Mrs. Hoover's head was bruised. . . . Thomas Paul's child died last night and Mrs. Townsend who was so seriously hurt in the stampede died about twelve o'clock today.<sup>19</sup>

Drownings were common at the river fords. In attempting to swim the stock across, emigrants often got entangled with their animals and were pulled under by strong currents.

Two soldiers and a horse were drowned trying to cross the river [Platte]. Several others had drowned before and a number of wagons had been lost.<sup>20</sup>

There was a man drowned in Buffalo Creek, he

was intoxicated—drove in where the banks were full and horses and wagon and man went down.<sup>21</sup>

There was a man drowned [in the Platte River] yesterday belonging to the train ahead. He was attempting to cross on a mule but lost his balance and fell in. The water was shallow and the current swift; he became frightened and sank before help could reach him.<sup>22</sup>

The extent of Indian attacks on overland travelers has been greatly exaggerated. Notwithstanding the fact that nearly four hundred emigrants were killed by Indians in the first twenty years of overland travel, and that Indian begging and thievery were traveling nuisances, Indian tribes provided travelers with information, foodstuffs, clothing, equipment, horses, and canoeing and swimming skills.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, on those occasions when a violent encounter did take place, there was certain to be a lengthy diary entry.

I looked up the crick and saw ten or fifteen Indians after this same old man that had joined our train at Julesburg. He was with some of the others of our men herding cattle. He was about 300 yards away and running towards camp and motioning us to come to him. I called to some of the men to come with me and we would go to the rescue . . . but by this time the old man had emptied his revolver at them, and when he could shoot no more, they run up close to him and shot him in the back with an arrow, and one of them run up and hit him on the head with his tommie hawk and knocked him down and scalped him.

17. Silas Richards Diary, August 22, 1846, HD-LDS.

18. Personal History of Andrew Madsen [1856], typescript, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

19. Hamilton Scott Diary, August 2, 3, 1862.

20. Peter O. Hansen Diary, July 4, 1849.

21. Maria Parsons Belshaw Diary, June 4, 1853, OHS.

22. Eva S. Morse Diary, July 24, 1859, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

23. John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 386.

By this time we were getting closer to them and shooting all the time as we went, and could see our bullets raising dust amongst them when they began to get away from there. The last one of them that went past the old man who was lying on his side shot him in the butt of the ear, the bullet coming out of his mouth. We gathered the old fellow up and carried him back to the corral and gave him what care we could. The dirty brutes had driven the arrow into his body as far as they could and broken the steel off the head inside his ribs and then broken the shaft off even with the surface of the skin. We got the wood out of his body but could not get the steel. It was the 13th of August and hot weather, so mortification soon set in and he died two days after he was hurt.... In the meantime we had slung a hammock to the bows that held the wagon sheets up and put the wounded man into it so the jolt of the wagon would not hurt him. He came to shortly after we brought him to the corral and wanted to know if he had been scalped, and if we had gotten the arrow out of his back. We answered no to the first question and yes to the last—he was hurt so badly that he could not tell, and we knew he could not get well. . . . He lived until the next day—in the evening just after we corralled for the night, he passed away. His name was Bennet, and about 55 years old.<sup>24</sup>

The most common causes of mayhem and murder on the trail were robbery and unleashed antagonism caused by small personal differences that were greatly magnified by the strain of overland travel. Frontier justice was rapid.

A man was killed by one of his own men that he was taking. He cut his throat most from ear to ear and took his money. After they caught him . . . he

had his trial and was hung the next day. He was swung off a mule under the gallows.<sup>25</sup>

(Along the Sweetwater) Gave prisoner he had killed another emigrant his choice to be shot or hanged. He preferred to be shot. Twenty-five armed men marched him one half mile to where his grave had been prepared. Fourteen of the guns were loaded with bullets and the rest were blanks. When the signal was given they all fired the prisoner falling backwards and dying within one minute.<sup>26</sup>

Other trauma cited in the diaries included deaths by lightning and gunpowder explosion, fractures from a variety of causes, and burns.

It is useful to understand the disease theories that prevailed in the early nineteenth century. Most infectious diseases were considered miasmatic diseases, that is, produced by the accumulation of bad smelling, decaying animal or vegetable matter that poisoned the atmosphere. Human excreta and other human wastes were thought hazardous because of the accumulation of odoriferous matter in which pestilential material fermented. Specific agents of infection were unknown, as were the concepts of transmission of infection through water and contamination of food through handling. No one yet understood the role of intermediate hosts such as mosquitos, flies, body lice, and ticks.

The main cause of morbidity and mortality on the Oregon Trail was infectious disease. Not surprisingly, gastrointestinal problems headed the

25. *The Diary of George Belshaw. Oregon Trail, 1853* (Eugene, Ore.: Lane County Pioneer-Historical Society, 1960), entry for May 14, 1853.

26. Hamilton Scott Diary, July 8, 1862.

24. Jonas Myers Reminiscence, 1865, typescript, HD-LDS.



Cholera was the greatest killer on the trail, and “ceteries,”  
such as this site of multiple graves, cropped up virtually overnight.  
These are located at the Platte River Crossing on the Overland Trail in southern Wyoming.

list. The diet, and particularly the primitive sanitary conditions that affected food handling and water supply, led to numerous cases of unspecified diarrhea, dysentery, and “fever and bowel complaint.” One can be certain that typhoid fever and bacillary dysentery were well represented.

Giardiasis was probably among the infectious diarrheas suffered by the emigrants. This protozoan parasite can cause an acute or chronic gastrointestinal infection that mimics the bacterial diseases. It is the most common parasitic disease in the United States today and is prevalent among the residents of and travelers to the Rocky Mountain states.

On a number of occasions cholera swept along the trail and laid waste the caravans. Most likely transported from New Orleans to the jumping-off places via Mississippi and Missouri river steamboats, it was the most dramatic and terrifying disease on the trails. An individual could develop the first symptoms in the morning and be dead by evening. Entire families were exterminated. A classic case of cholera was a dramatic event for all involved. The patient first noticed a slight fullness in the abdomen and loss of appetite. Then his hands and feet became cold, and in some cases he vomited. Shortly thereafter he began to have large numbers of liquid stools that soon became almost clear and contained small flecks of mucus that are classically described as “rice water” stools. In severe cases, a stool volume of up to twenty-four liters per day could occur. Death from severe dehydration and shock due to low blood volume occurred within hours or a few days. Even today, in the acute stages of the disease, between 50 and 75 percent of patients will die if not properly treated. Dr. David Maynard noted several cholera fatalities:

Was called to visit three cases of cholera. One died, a man leaving a wife and child, from Illinois, poor. He lived seven hours after being taken.

Fleming and Curtis taken with cholera. Wake all night. Called upon just before we stopped to see a man with cholera, who died soon after.

[On the Platte River] A man died of cholera in sight of us I was called to see him but too late.

One death, a Missourian, from cholera Two more of the same train are ready to die I earn \$2.20.

Find plenty of doctoring to do. Stop at noon to attend some persons sick with cholera. One was dead before I got there and two died before the next morning. They paid me \$8.75.<sup>27</sup>

Jno. Cidin of Shelby Co. Mo taken with cholera after dark. I went for Dr. Brown at his camp, took him to see him in night early. He cramped and purged very much during the night. Night rainy and stormy. I lay outside tent all night in rain. Next morning I breakfasted with Dr. Brown and took him to see patient again. Dr’s charge [was] two dollars. . . .

Jno. Cidin very bad. I had no hopes for him. Travel along thinking it not prudent to stay . . . 3 or 4 died on the road in this day’s travel, said of cholera.<sup>28</sup>

A Mormon company reported devastating losses:

Left camp near Mormon Grove about the 15th Inst. (June). On the 18th the cholera broke out in camp. Bro. M. R. Jones’ daughter was attacked first in the night and Bro. Jones in the morning. Bro. Jones died about 2 o’clock p.m. and Mary East about sundown and Bro. and Sister Langford

27. “Diary of Dr. David S. Maynard While Crossing the Plains in 1850,” edited by Thomas W. Prosch, *Washington Historical Quarterly* 1 (October 1906): 51, 52.

28. William H. Frush Diary, June 2, 1850, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

died the same evening. The four men buried during the night without coffin or box. . . . On the following day the Co. moved on as early as possible and during this day Eliza Josh, Mary York, and Susan Greer died. Next day Martha Allison, Sarah Jones, James Jones and Elizabeth Langford all were buried at the same place. On the next day Sister Middlemass, Eliza Geer, and A. Priestly died. On the same day S. Gabley, M. A. Jones, Julia A. Bagley, Fanny Philips, Emma S. Middlemass, Hugh Philips and John Geer. . . . There were 30 deaths in the camp from the time the Co. left Mormon Grove—29 died of cholera.<sup>29</sup>

The incidence of malaria was surprisingly small in the diaries examined. Known by a variety of names, including intermittent and remittent fever, bilious fever, and ague, it was one of the more common maladies on the overland trails. The chills and fever of the ague may have been so common that little note was made of them in the diaries. The disease was generally believed to be caused by air pollution from dead and decaying animal and vegetable matter.

When the emigrants reached the Rocky Mountains they began describing a new set of symptoms that they called “mountain fever.” It is quite likely that those cases characterized by excruciating headache and severe muscle and joint pain were actually Colorado tick fever. Some writers have suggested that the emigrants’ mountain fever was Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Such a diagnosis seems unlikely, however, because no rash was described in the cases of mountain fever, and the painful backs and limbs suffered by the mountain



Larry Jones and Peter Olch, above, photograph the trail route north of Jeffrey City, Wyoming.

29. E. W. East, “The Texas Company of Latter-day Saints [1855],” in *Daughters of Utah Pioneers Lesson for September 1955*, compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1964), 37–45.





fever patient are far more characteristic of Colorado tick fever.

Colorado tick fever is an arbovirus infection transmitted by tick bite from small animals to man. It is endemic in the Rocky Mountain states and prevails from spring through the fall. Following a tick bite and an incubation period of three to six days, there is a sudden onset of fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, and severe muscle pains. There may then be a brief remission, followed by a second (and sometimes third and fourth) bout of fever. What stands out in diary reports is the terrible head pain:

(Along Portneuf) Was exercised with so much pain in my head and back that it was with difficulty that I could compose myself to sleep.<sup>30</sup>

A great number of men have been taken sick within a few days. The symptoms are violent pain in the head and limbs but generally does not last long until they recover.

The disease spoken of still continues in camp but not fatal. They have nearly all had it.<sup>31</sup>

(Fort Bridger) On Monday last I was taken violently sick with the Mountain Fever. I do not know as I have ever experienced such excruciating pain in my life before as I did through Monday night. It was mostly in my back and hips.<sup>32</sup>

The following diary entry suggests that it is possible other arbovirus infections, such as Western

30. "Diary of Rev. Jason Lee," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 17 (September 1916): 243.

31. Charles Alfred Harper Diary, July 1, 3, 1847, BYU.

32. Levi Jackman Diary, July 7, 1847, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

(left) Peter Olch photographing inscriptions at Holden Hill, Wyoming.

equine encephalitis and St. Louis encephalitis, may have been also present.

Something very astonishing—a general sleepy drowsiness has invaded the camp ever since we came on Big Platte River, and since we came on Sweetwater our men have been subject to severe pains in the head and back and other parts of the system with colic, cramps, sore mouths, and lips.<sup>33</sup>

Numerous other ailments and diseases plagued the emigrants. Headaches, toothaches, ear infections, sore lips, and general lameness were mentioned at least once in the diaries sampled. Diseases that affected adults and children included scurvy, whooping cough, measles, and smallpox. Deaths of newborn children and infants, as well as deaths in childbirth, were not uncommon. Respiratory infections, bronchitis, lung fever, and consumption were also recorded, as was one case of juvenile cancer and one of drug overdose.

While strange and gruesome fatalities were the exception, they too occurred. For example, several unfortunate stragglers were attacked by wolves:

(Near Fort Laramie) Caught in a severe snow-storm. . . . An elderly man and young girl tried to catch up to wagon train in snow at dusk, got lost, apparently froze to death and were partially devoured by wolves.<sup>34</sup>

(Near Hams Fork) Sister Shanks . . . being unable to keep up with the carts, was left behind and the next day was found mostly eaten up by the wolves.<sup>35</sup>

When there were several deaths at about the same time, two or more bodies were often buried in the same grave. Generally every effort was made to protect corpses from marauding animals, as these writers reveal:

(Near Bear river) . . . here another of our party died . . . we took him out of the wagon, sewed him up in a sheet to bury him. We dug quite a deep hole or grave and finished filling it with dirt and left him to sleep the sleep of the dead.<sup>36</sup>

The grave is duly wide at the top with several shelves of earth as we pass down. The bottom is formed in the shape of a coffin and a board above and below the body clothed in befitting garments formed its only protection from the damp earth—while above the graves are generally piled with rocks to save them from the ravaging wolves which inhabit these mountains.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, however, shallow graves were too often the norm, and were easily uncovered:

We saw several places where the dead had been dug up by the wolves, which had picked from the bones what flesh the pestilence had left. Here and there lay a skull lost from the frame to which it belonged. Out of some graves a hand or a foot would project.<sup>38</sup>

On some occasions, emigrants expressed fear that Indians would ransack graves for clothing.

A number of our company have died . . . the burials have all been at night on account of the Indians robbing the graves for wearing apparel. The graves were concealed by building a fire over

33. "Diary of Jesse Herritt, 1845," in *Transactions of the Thirty-eighth and Thirty-ninth Annual Reunions of the Oregon Pioneer Association . . . 1910 . . . 1911* (Portland, 1914), 513.

34. *Personal History of Andrew Madsen, 1857*.

35. "William Atkin Journal" in *Heart Throbs of the West*, 12 vols., compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1945), 6: 380–94.

36. Stephen Forsdick Autobiography.

37. Bartlett Tripp Diary, September 27, 1861, HD-LDS.

38. "Mary Minerva Dart Judd, Pioneer of 1850," in *Our Pioneer Heritage* 7, compiled by Kate B. Carter (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1964), 284.

them and then driving the entire train of wagons over them when we broke camp in the morning.<sup>39</sup>

Standard medical practice in the early and mid-nineteenth century consisted of a relatively small number of treatments distinguished by their immediate, visible, and drastic impact on the patient. Active and vigorous therapy was the hallmark of regular medical practice. Patients were dosed with purgatives and emetics, bled (often to the point of exhaustion), and blistered with a variety of skin irritants. It is not surprising, therefore, that sectarian medical groups which decried such violent therapy were as familiar on the overland trail as they were in the East. Similarly, the practice of self-doctoring, the reliance on home remedies, and the use of domestic medicine texts were often popular for reasons other than the inaccessibility of a physician. In the diaries examined, one enthusiastic hydro-therapist treated fever and diarrhea with packing in cold wet bandages, baths, sitz baths, and cold-water injections.<sup>40</sup>

Regrettably, the therapy administered to the patient was not often cited in the emigrant diaries of either laymen or physicians. Among the medicaments mentioned were the common purgatives calomel (mercuric chloride); calomel pills (a combination of calomel, castor oil, and antimony); and blue pills, which also contained mercury. Camphor was mentioned as a sedative, and laudanum (an extract or tincture of opium) was cited in a case of drug overdose. Surgical procedures were not numerous. One arm amputation is mentioned, many fractures were set, an occasional arrow was removed, and some bleeding and cupping occurred.

PETER D. OLCH, M.D. (1930–1991) was a scholar and authority in the history of medicine. After graduating with an A.B. degree from Pomona College, California, he received his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1955. He spent the next nine years in surgery and pathology residencies at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a fellowship at the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine. In 1964 he joined the staff of the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland, becoming Deputy Chief, History of Medicine Division in 1966. Peter's research interests included the work of William S. Halstead, the first Professor of Surgery at Johns Hopkins and preeminent surgeon of his generation, who made epic contributions to modern surgery techniques and post-surgical treatment. From Halstead, Olch's interests expanded to surgery and medicine on the American western frontier.



Following his retirement in 1981, Olch became an adjunct professor for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in the Section of Medical History. He made two presentations at OCTA conventions, *Treading the Elephant's Tail* at Oregon City in 1984, and *Bleeding, Purging, and Puking* at the 1990 convention in Omaha. He was a former Sheriff of the Potomac Corral of the Westerners. Peter was highly respected in the field of medical history. One author eulogized him as "physically and intellectually vigorous." Peter D. Olch died in 1991. In 1995, the Peter D. Olch, M.D. Memorial Scholarship was established in his honor for medical students at Johns Hopkins. □

39. W. A. Hockett *Reminiscence*, July 7, 1847, University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore.

40. *Diary of Mrs. Byron J. Pengra . . . Kept by Her on a Trip Across the Plains from Illinois to Oregon in 1853* (Eugene, Ore.: Lane County Pioneer-Historical Society, 1966).

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THE *Rousseau* Diary  
 AND  
 THE  
 Earp Wagon Train  
 to San Bernardino  
 1864

BY NICHOLAS R. CATALDO

# When

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION  
WENT INTO EFFECT ON JANUARY 1, 1863, WAVES OF  
JOY AND CELEBRATION TOUCHED MANY AMERICANS,

both black and white. However, not everyone was happy with this presidential announcement granting freedom to the nation's slaves.

While members of this latter assemblage may have supported the Union, many remained steadfast in their opinions that blacks were not ready—and perhaps never would be—for full citizenship, toward which freedom would certainly lead. Among this group were four Iowa families, the Earps, Curtises, Hamiltons, and Rousseaus, who had heard that California had a less liberal attitude toward political diversity than they witnessed where they were living in Iowa. As a result, throughout 1863 and into the early months of 1864, these four families prepared for a move out west.<sup>1</sup>

A decade before, Nicholas Porter Earp (1813–1907), patriarch of the legendary Earp clan that would include his sons Virgil, Wyatt, and Morgan, had already made his way to California and back. In later years he told the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers (a group of former trappers, miners, and grizzly hunters who banded together for the purpose of preserving the history of San Bernardino County) that back in 1851 he had left his growing family in Iowa and joined the

gold rush in northern California with the hope of bringing some of the “riches” back home.<sup>2</sup>

According to his testimony, after months of co-running a trading post near the mines at Hangtown (known today as Placerville), Earp was more than ready to return to Iowa. On the return trip he started out by taking an indirect route through southern California and crossing through the beautiful San Bernardino Valley, vowing that someday he would make it back to this wonderland of lush fertile fields, boundless timberlands, and deep, clear water streams.

Back in Iowa, Earp served as town marshal and later as assistant provost marshal. During 1863 and '64, the Earps and the other three families named above made plans and prepared to set out for California. Having made the journey before, Earp was selected captain of their wagon train.

The Earp family included Nicholas Porter, his wife, Virginia, their four sons James, Wyatt, Morgan, Warren, and their daughter Adelia. Another son, Virgil, was still serving in the Union army and would join them a short time later.

The Curtis clan made up the largest of the four family divisions in the wagon train. It consisted of the Reverend and Mrs. Israel C. Curtis; a married son, William Jesse Curtis, his wife, and their small son, Holman C. Curtis; and the unmarried children of the clergyman, including Richard, Emerine, Eliza A., Louis F., Alan V. Israel Jr., and Penelope. Also traveling with them were Stephen Thomas Hays and Mary Curtis Hays.

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1. Nicholas Earp to James Copa, Letter, April 2, 1865, 4. The names of the families and individuals who made up the Earp wagon train (see p. 2) were recorded by Israel Curtis and his son William Jesse Curtis, both of whom traveled in the party. They, in turn, passed the names on to the Hon. Jesse W. Curtis Sr. (their grandson and son), who later confirmed them.

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2. San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers, Record Book “A,” January 21, 1888, through February 28, 1888.



Sarah Jane Rousseau. *Courtesy of Mrs. Richard Molony.*

The other two families were Mr. and Mrs. John Hamilton, their daughter Jane and their son Oscar; and the Rousseau family, consisting of Dr. James A. Rousseau, his wife Sarah Jane (née Daghish), their daughters Elizabeth and Mary Ann, and their sons John and Albert.<sup>3</sup>

Sarah Jane Rousseau kept a diary of their journey, writing diligently each day for seven long months—describing tales of adventure, hardship, courage . . . and sometimes boredom. Of the hundreds of diaries written by pioneers traveling west during the nineteenth century, the “Rousseau Diary,” as it has come to be called, is among the most eloquent, in my opinion.

Born into a well-to-do English family in 1816, the highly educated Sarah Jane Daghish was “home schooled” by accomplished tutors. The classical composer Ludwig Van Beethoven, for example, had mentored her music instructor.

Few details of her emigration to America are known, except that after her arrival she lived for a time in Michigan. It was there that Sarah Jane met her future husband, a promising young physician named James A. Rousseau. As newlyweds, in 1839 the couple moved on to Kentucky before finally settling down in Knoxville, Iowa, where they raised four children.<sup>4</sup>

Sarah Jane Rousseau suffered from a debilitating case of rheumatism and was eager to escape from the bitterly cold Iowa winters. Perhaps she could find relief from her crippling disease when she reached her new home.<sup>5</sup>

On May 12, 1864, when the four families embarked for their seven-month trek to southern California, they rendezvoused out of Pella, Iowa,

3. William Green Romans, *Journal of Overland trip to California by William Green Romans in 1852*, n.p., 1852.

4. Sarah Jane Rousseau, *Rousseau Diary*, 1864, n.p.

5. Richard Molony, oral interview with author, May 14, 1998.

where wagon master Nicholas Earp and his family lived. According to Jesse E. Curtis Sr., grandson of one of the party, the train started out with thirty people. Three children were born during the journey: Charles Hayes to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hayes; a boy to Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton; and Jenny, a daughter to Reverend and Mrs. Israel Curtis.<sup>6</sup>

The journey started out along the Oregon Trail, following the Platte River across the plains, through the rugged Rocky Mountains, and across the barren plains. The caravan then headed southward along the Old Spanish Trail through and across the Mojave Desert before reaching San Bernardino, California, on December 17, 1864.

Sarah Jane Rousseau was nearing fifty years of age. Virtually unable to walk now because of her crippling arthritis, she began her wonderful journal of the group's experiences. Each entry was detailed with descriptions of their day-to-day lives.

After spending the first two nights in the Rousseaus' former hometown of Knoxville, Iowa, the travelers expressed their euphoria as they prepared to cross country new to most of them. Early in her diary, Rousseau wrote:

Monday May 16th: Got up and prepared breakfast. After eating all confusion getting ready to start. I can't describe the appearance of all things

as they really are. But the weather is indeed beautiful. All nature seems smiling. The birds singing their lively song of praise unto Most High God

We started and went through Sandyville, then as far as the lower River, about ten miles from Pleasantville.

So here we camped for the night. Just done eating supper and getting ready for bed. The girls are talking of fishing some tonight. Elizabeth and Mattie have been riding horseback most of the day. John has been riding his mare most of the time and Albert most of his.

Elizabeth, John, and Albert were the writer's children. "Mattie" may have been a nickname for Sarah's daughter Mary Jane, or perhaps was a young woman accompanying the family on the trip.

Tuesday, May 17th: We did not get off this morning as I thought we should. We were detained on account of Jesse Curtis's cow running off. I hope he will be here tonight. Jesse has come. Could not find his cow and now one of his horses has run off. Tom has started after her. He had to go to the other side of Pleasantville about one mile before he got her. Some man saw her and put her in a stable.

Later during the journey, men they encountered along the trail were not always so apt to be honest and obliging.

Rousseau noted in her diary that after they made their first night's camp, seven more wagons

I  
*can't describe the  
 appearance of all things  
 as they really are.  
 But  
 the weather is  
 indeed beautiful.  
 All nature seems smiling.*



6. Ibid.



Israel Curtis, patriarch of the Curtis family that came west in 1864. *Courtesy of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.*

had straggled in late and joined up with them. By the time the wagon train reached its California destination, there would be about a dozen wagons total. Rousseau noted that when the caravan reached Council Bluffs, Iowa, they'd made 163 miles, an average of about twelve miles a day.

Soon the party's first major mishap occurred. As they crossed the Missouri River, little Allen Curtis fell from a mule wagon, which then ran over him. Such accidents could be fatal. Fortunately, the lad survived.

Sarah Jane wrote lyrically about almost everything she observed throughout the trip: the rivers, birds, grass, thunderstorms, the wind, distances they traveled, Indians, even members of the party who fell sick, and more. Her diary says that on June 6 the group met up with a Pawnee Indian who wanted soap and matches. The next day, they encountered quicksand for the first time, and before long, they began to encounter a number of graves—a common sight that most plains travelers commented on.

While the Earp wagon train was cautiously working its way through Lakota Indian country, Sarah Jane described using buffalo chips for fuel for the first time. By then she also had reported a

murdered body discovered by Nick Earp, a drowning, and an eighteen-year-old boy who had been killed during a horse stampede.

The balance of the long trip was frequently a nasty ordeal. Lack of discipline between the families often led to endless bickering and little cooperation. Captain Nicholas Earp, meanwhile, proved to be a tough, no-nonsense individual who wasn't always so easy to get along with. Sarah Jane's comments emphatically shed some light on the abrasive personality of the wagon master throughout the trip.

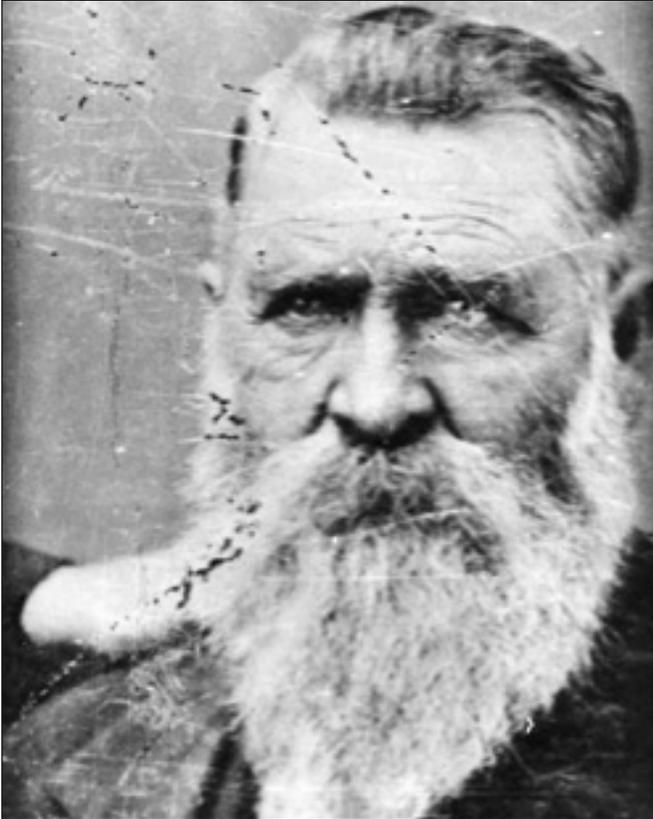
In one instance, while resting at Fort Laramie on July 7 and 8, she wrote,

We have to keep close watch day and night over the stock. Mr. Earp went out to see about the [military] guards and found they had got up a dance. And he told them they must quit their dancing and be on duty. One of the soldiers told him to mind his own business and ordered him off. It made him awful mad and he was for killing. He used very profane language; he could hardly be appeased. But he cooled down after awhile and all was quiet.

As the long and exhausting wagon trip met up with the dead heat of summer, dissension within the traveling party reached new heights. Of course, the cantankerous demeanor of Nicholas Earp did not help.

Prior to stopping at Fort Bridger, the Rousseau Diary for July 30 reported,

Earp got angry with the whole train because they passed him, he took it as an insult, talked pretty hard to all, some thought he had taken a little too much liquor. He used very profane language and told the whole train that he would give up his Captaincy unless they would adhere to the rules he gave. After being detained an hour or more very unpleasantly we rolled on.



Wagon master Nicholas Earp. *Courtesy of the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.*

By mid-August, the emigrants had moved south through Idaho and Utah to reach Salt Lake City. Mrs. Rousseau lamented that it didn't live up to the hype she had heard. On August 22, she noted in her diary, "Instead of seeing a valley covered with luxurious grass, nothing but wild sage and sandy soil. The city did not come up the least to my expectations. The houses were mostly low adobe buildings . . . some miserable looking places to live in."

The company spent several days at Corn Creek, south of Salt Lake City, strengthening their stock and preparing for the desert crossing that lay ahead. While there, they were told that Brigham

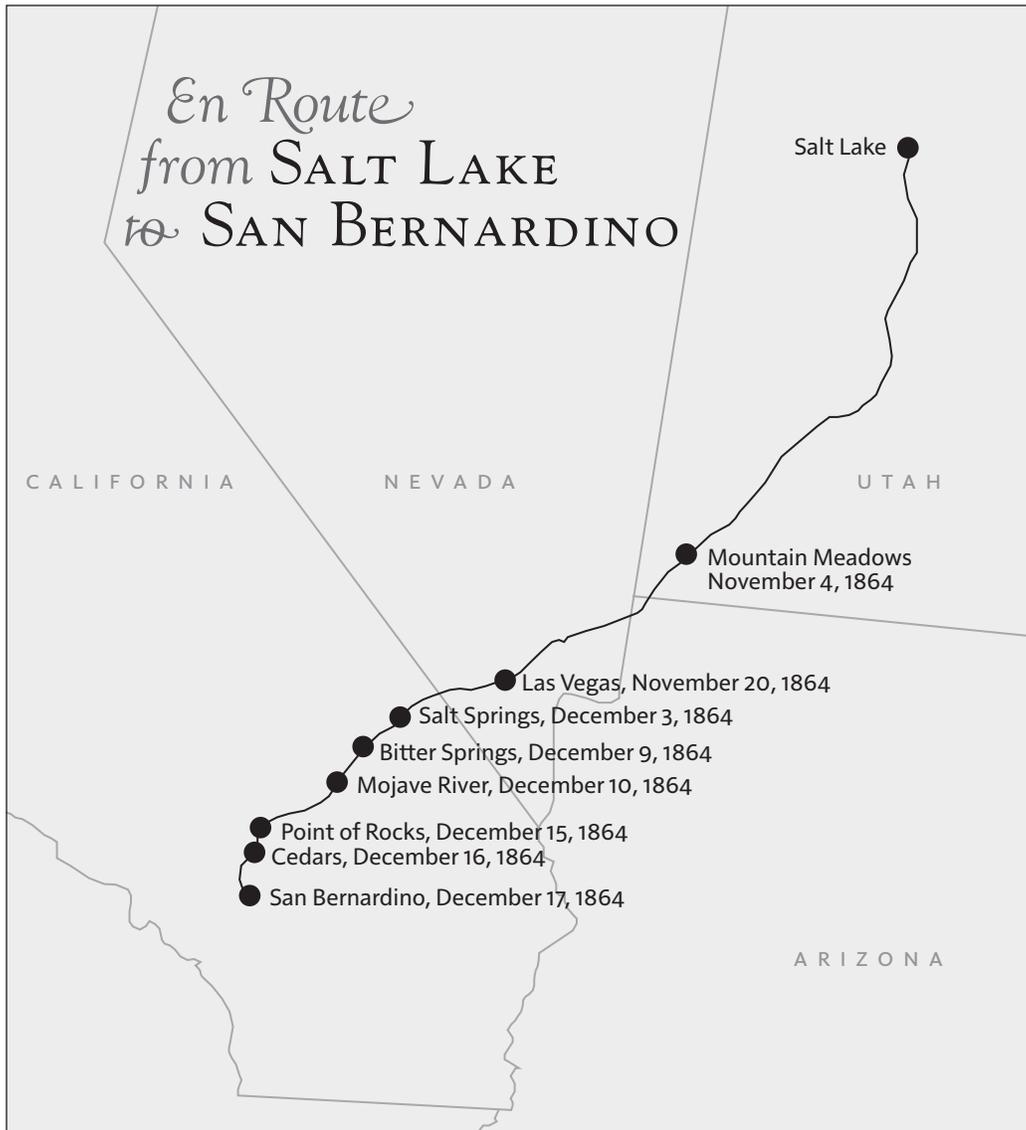
Young would be passing near them. Sarah Jane Rousseau described the encounter on September 23:

A pleasant bright morning, expected Brigham Young with his escort last evening. They didn't come until this morning. There was a number of waggons and carriages. The president, as the people call him, was in a four-horse carriage, . . . He touched his hat and bowed very politely to me as they passed by. . . . He appeared to be a good looking fleshy gentleman.

The next morning before daybreak, a band playing some "pretty tunes" awakened Rousseau and a short time later "Brigham Young and his Harem" left on a twelve-mile trek to Fillmore, to have breakfast.

By mid-October, the oxen and horses pulling the wagons were generally worn out. On the 23rd of that month, Earp got into an argument with Mrs. Rousseau's husband, James. Earp wanted to dump the doctor's medical books because the weight was straining the weary animals. Eventually, the books were transferred to the wagon of a Mormon teamster heading south, for delivery in San Bernardino.

On November 4, the Earp wagon train reached Mountain Meadows in southern Utah the site of a massacre of 120 pioneers in 1857 by a group of Mormons who blamed the attack on Indians. Mary Jane wrote that an initial monument commemorating the crime had been torn down: "This spring, sometime in May, some soldiers came through from California and erected (a new) monument and dared any of the Mormons to touch it. There was 150 cruelly butchered men, women and children, were suffered to live. . . . I cannot



A contemporary map showing the Earp wagon train route from Salt Lake to San Bernardino in 1864. Bold dots highlight places and dates where the train stopped, according to Sarah Jane's diary entries. *Map by Ariane C. Smith.*

for a moment suppose that such barbarism will be buried in oblivion.”<sup>7</sup>

After passing over the summit between the Clara and Virgin rivers in the southwestern section of Utah, they camped in a nearby canyon on November 9.<sup>8</sup> Sarah Jane wrote that some Paiutes who escorted the wagons by day were held captive at night for fear they might take the stock.

The next morning Sarah Jane recorded: “Last night the Indians were prisoners again. We fed five [Indians] among us. All were willing to do so but Mr. Earp. He swears and cuts up about it, although he derives the same benefit as the rest of us.”

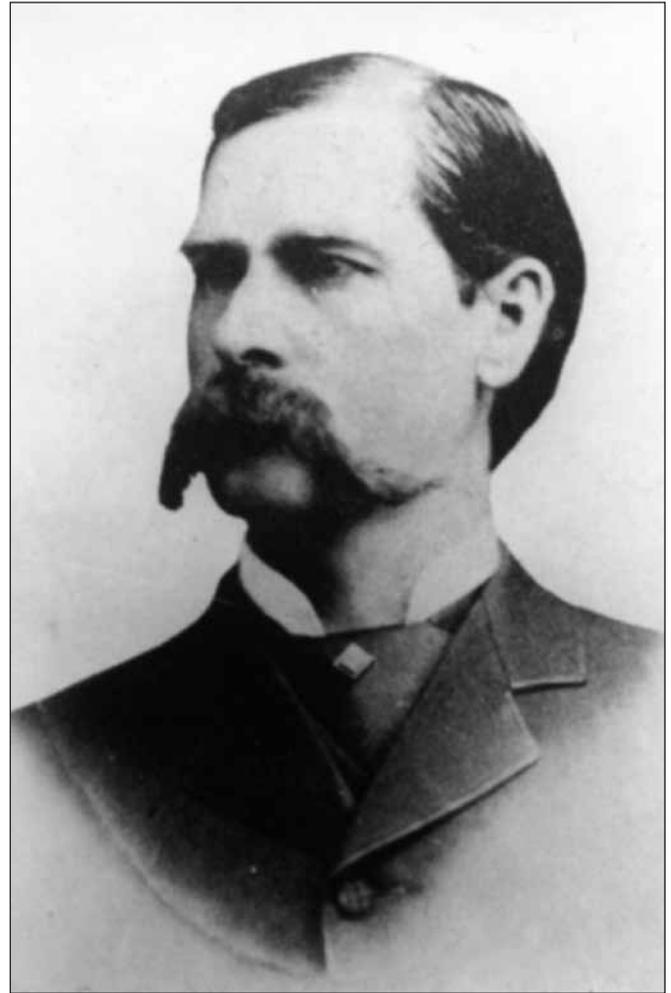
The weary party reached Las Vegas, Nevada, on November 21, 1864. “Las Vegas is a barren desolate looking place,” Rousseau wrote. “I saw one farm house and field fenced. A place walled up for a fort.”<sup>9</sup>

Her husband having become sick, and the wagon train’s provisions running low in the days before they crossed the Mojave Desert, Sarah Jane felt a sense of desperation. “We are pretty near out of all kinds of provisions, our means nearly exhausted,” she wrote. “In a strange country, almost out of money and but few friends. Oh how dreary and desolate things appear to me.”

They would get worse.

Just three days later, on November 24, she described some unpleasantness involving Mr. Earp, the children in the wagon train, and their parents:

This evening Mr. Earp had another rippet with Warren [Warren Earp, Earl’s youngest son] [for] fighting with Jimmy Hatten. And then he commenced about all the children. Used very profane



WYATT EARP, 1887

This photo was taken twenty-three years after he made the journey from Iowa to California. *Courtesy of the author.*

7. Rousseau Diary, November 4, 1864.

8. *Ibid.*, mid-November.

9. *Ibid.*



San Bernardino, 1864 (*above*) and 1880s (*below*).  
*Courtesy of the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.*



language and swore if the children's parents did not correct their children he would whip every last one of them. He still shows out more and more every day what kind of man he is.

One aspect of the journey did become uplifting again for Sarah Jane. She happily noted in her diary that while traveling farther west and reaching hot, dry weather, she was finally feeling better. In fact, the pioneer woman was now able to walk again without the help of a chair that she had been forced to use while enduring the cold weather of the more northerly trails they had followed.

The wagon train was finally nearing its destination. As the party reached Resting Springs (today's Tecopa), Grapevine (Barstow), and Point of Rocks (Helendale), they were bolstered by being able to acquire additional animals and to restock their provisions. Sarah Jane's diary entry for December 2 described their surroundings at Resting Springs. The improved climate was not without drawbacks: "In looking around me I seen nothing but mountains and broken country. . . . Oh, how dreary and desolate!"

While crossing this "dreary and desolate" terrain, it quickly became clear that the livestock were not up to the task. By December 6, about twenty-six miles beyond Amargosa Springs, near Death Valley, the horses could no longer pull the wagon. "They look like skeletons," she wrote, "and so pitiful, begging something to eat."

Sarah Jane sent her two boys out, with another traveler and the horses, to Bitter Springs where they might find some food. She and her husband stayed with the wagon: "Charlie Copley and Richard Curtis have gone on foot traveling night and day till they reach Mojave River, get a team if they can and some provisions to help us through." Their situation felt even worse when some of their

fellow travelers who had been behind them caught up and drove on by, saying they had no provisions to spare as they were barely making it themselves: "None of the women came near me to ask how I got along, but passed by as if I had done something amiss," she wrote.

On Friday, December 9, Mrs. Rousseau described the heartbreaking ordeal the animals underwent: "Went to Bitter Springs where we saw poor Flit down and couldn't get up. The Dr. [her husband] tried to raise her, but she fell down on her mouth. She tried to raise again but fell on her side, she fairly tore ground and tried to bite it. The Dr. then took his revolver and shot her to put an end to her misery."

On December 15, two days before finally reaching their San Bernardino destination, Mrs. Rousseau wrote:

A clear, frosty morning. Got up between 3 and 4 o'clock. Got up between 3 and 4 o'clock [sic], want to start from camp early, there is a Prussian keeps the ranch, his name is Jacob, he lives most of the time alone. It is a lonesome looking place. I suppose we will get with our train tonight. . . . There is a cold wind blowing. This is Nicholson's ranch. The old woman got drunk on whiskey. It is called Point of Rocks [today's Helendale], a desolate looking place.

The next morning, December 16, Sarah Jane noted in her diary that the weather was cold and cloudy when her family broke camp before daylight. "The roads were rough and hilly, went to a ranch 14 miles from where we started in the morning. Ate our luncheon and fed the horses. Started on to the Cedars, where we camped. Very cold and cloudy. Very soon it commenced raining and turning into snowing. The wind blew very hard . . . a real stormy night."



H. M. Willis, Judge	W. J. Curtis, Dist. Att'y	J. J. Rousseau, Surveyor	John Mayfield, Sheriff	Harden Yager, Treasurer	Henry Goodcell, Supt. Schools
Sydney P. Waite, County Clerk	John Garner, Supervisor	Cornelius Jensen, Supervisor	James W. Waters, Supervisor		

W. J. Curtis, James Rousseau, and other civic leaders.  
*Courtesy of the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.*

The following day, Saturday, December 17, 1864, the wagon train approached the 4,200-foot summit of the Cajon Pass—which Rousseau mistakenly called the “Sierra Nevada Mountains”—and began the descent into San Bernardino. After crossing nearly two thousand miles of wilderness, barren plains, and desert; contending with harsh weather; and encountering countless unpredictable “visitors” in a period of slightly more than seven months, the Rousseaus—in fact the full wagon train—were about to reach their destination at last.

With her final entry, Sarah Jane Rousseau’s overland diary was complete:

A very cold freezing morning. The ground covered with snow. Started up from camp about an hour before day, got to the top of the Sierra Nevada Mountains by daylight. From the foot of the mountain to the top is 22 miles. Then we went down a very steep hill, it is down hill all the way to San Bernardino. We were away before the clouds this morning. It looks quite singular. We are now at Martin’s ranch [near Glen Helen Park in Devore], the appearance of the country is quite different from what it has been for some time back. Everything has a green lively look. The grass growing nicely, it looks like spring instead of the middle of winter. Got into San Bernardino about sun down. We heard Mr. Hamilton is 15 miles in the country on a farm. I don’t know yet if we’ll remain here or not. I haven’t seen the town yet. Don’t know how it looks. I wish to get settled down.<sup>10</sup>

Before reaching San Bernardino, the travelers set up a temporary camp near what is today Meadowbrook Park, a spot that was then just east of town. The Hamilton family did not stay in the

**RELATES STORY OF EARLY DAYS**

**Judge W. J. Curtis Ox Team Pioneer**

**FIFTY YEARS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY**

JUDGE W. J. CURTIS



**Y**ESTERDAY, December 19, was the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival in San Bernardino of W. J. Curtis, for a great part of that time one of the city’s leading attorneys.

The occasion was made the central feature of the weekly meeting of the Pioneer Society. A large sign was placed on the wall announcing the anniversary date, while Judge Curtis himself had been invited to address the Pioneers on his trip across the plains and his impression of the early days in San Bernardino.

The address of Judge Curtis was a great treat and when he had finished all wished for more, and he promised to continue the talk at a later meeting.

The trip by ox team across the plains was told in great detail, of the fights with the Indians, nights and days of constant watchfulness, how the red men drove off much of their stock, and other details of that perilous journey. They were six months on the road and

arrived in San Bernardino without an overabundance of this world’s goods. Their entrance to this struggling little colony was on the afternoon of December 19, 1814, the first camp being made on what is now lower E street.

In the party were the Curtis, Earp, Hamilton, Rousseau and other families. How the San Bernardino of those days looked to him, the business houses and the people here, the streets then laid out and many other things of vital interest to the old timers were told in great detail by Mr. Curtis. He then reverted briefly to his own struggle for a livelihood in the early days, how he taught school for a time and later studied law.

Judge Curtis was the object of a host of congratulations on the part of the pioneers and others because of his long life in the community, all giving expression to the wish that he may be spared yet many more years to the community of which he has been a vital part for a half century.

W. J. Curtis, member of the Earp Wagon Train in 1864, was featured in this article from the *San Bernardino Sun*, on December 20, 2014, marking the fiftieth anniversary of that journey from Iowa to California. *Courtesy of the San Bernardino Sun.*

10. *Ibid.*, mid-December 1864.

area long. To date, the author has learned that John Hamilton, the family patriarch, died in Howard County, Kansas in 1871.<sup>11</sup>

The Rousseaus did “remain here,” as Sarah may have hoped, settling in San Bernardino. They, and several other members of the wagon caravan from Iowa, in fact, would become celebrated in the early history of San Bernardino County.

Dr. and Mrs. Rousseau and their children lived in a house on Rialto Avenue, between “D” and “E” streets. The Earps initially took up residence a few miles east of San Bernardino (at today’s Redlands and in the Loma Linda area), in what was then called “Old San Bernardino.” Years later, family patriarch Nicholas Porter Earp served as city recorder and justice of the peace in the young town of Colton.

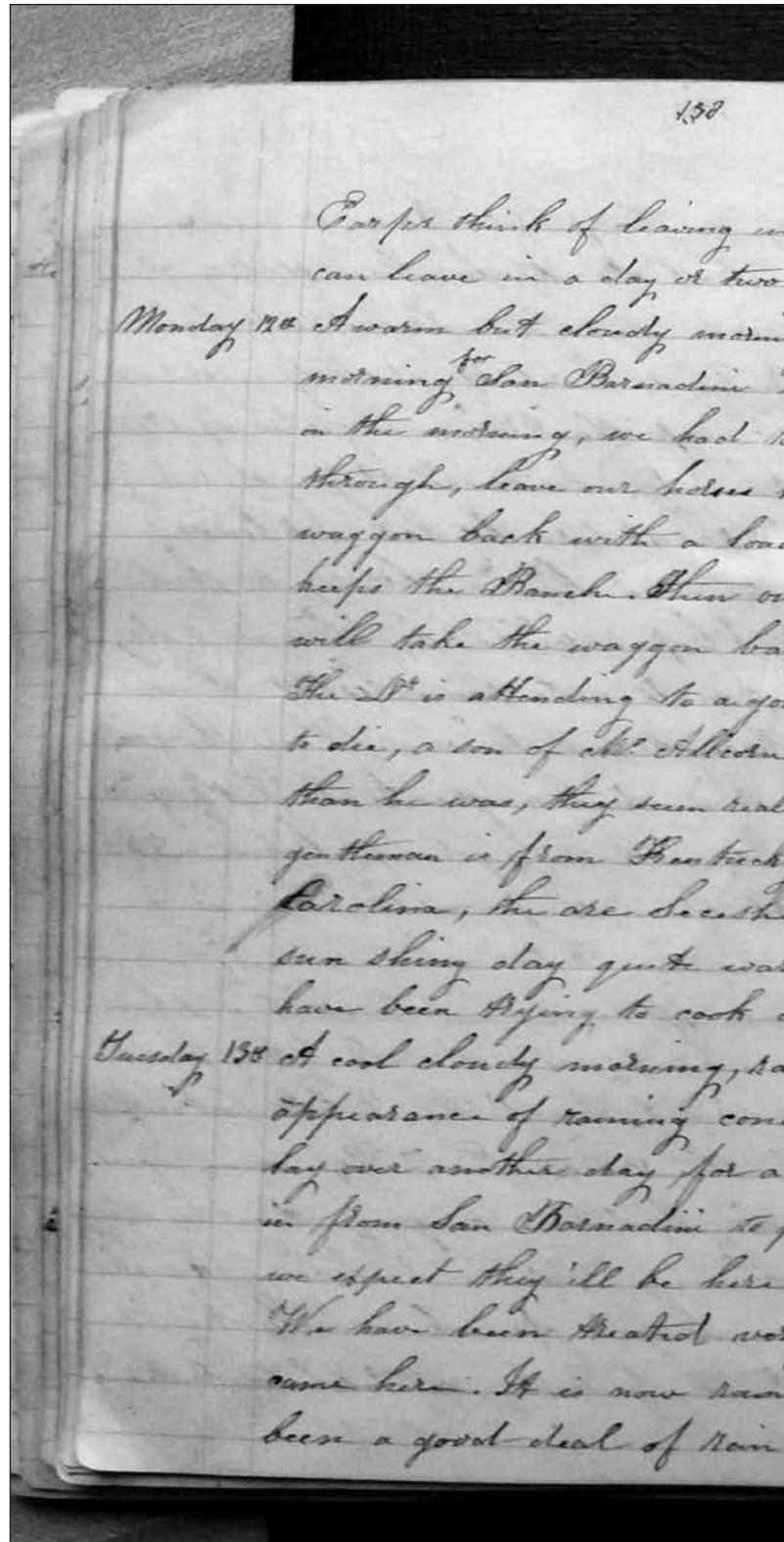
While most of the Earp family remained in the San Bernardino/Colton area, Wyatt, who would become perhaps the most legendary of the brothers, often stopped by to visit his family. From 1905 until shortly before his death in 1929, he and his wife, Sadie, split their time between Los Angeles and their Mojave Desert mining claims, which were located in the remote southwest corner of San Bernardino County.<sup>12</sup>

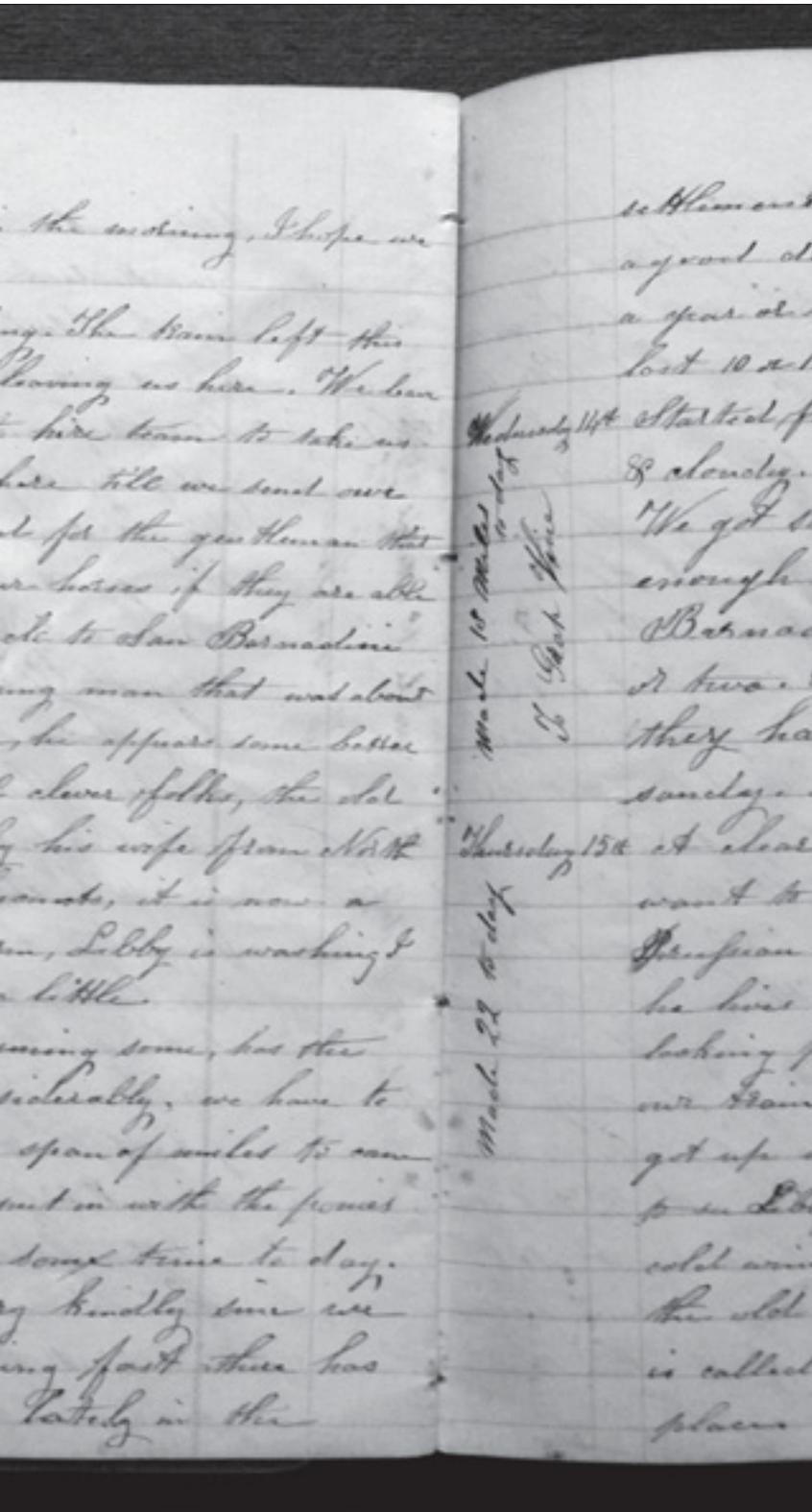
Regarding the fourteen-member Israel Curtis family, patriarch Israel founded the First Baptist Church in San Bernardino. Both his grandson and great-grandson became prominent attorneys and federal judges in the area.

James A. Rousseau was a very active civic leader in the San Bernardino area. In addition to

11. *San Bernardino Sun*, December 23, 1914.

12. List of mining claims and deeds, transcribed from the original *Index to Mines and Index to Deeds*, San Bernardino County Archives; “A Golden Wedding,” *San Diego Union*, August 2, 1890. Nicholas R. Cataldo, *The Earp Clan: The Southern California Years* (San Bernardino, Calif.: Back Roads Press, 2006), 76, 77, 81, 82, 90, 95.





# Discovering THE Diary

I first became acquainted with the Rousseau Diary when my friend, the late B. Richard Molony, shared with me his great-great grandmother Sarah Jane's wonderful journal.

During the past thirty years I have done extensive research on the Earp family's lives in southern California. At a San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society board meeting "Dick" Molony learned about my passion for researching and writing about the Earps, and especially the little-known story of the family's years in this area. Unaware that Molony was a descendant of the one of the Earp wagon train participants, I happened to mention that the Earp clan had arrived in this region in 1864, and told him that in 1958 the San Bernardino County Museum Association's quarterly had published "The Rousseau Diary: Across The Desert to California From Salt Lake City to San Bernardino in 1864."

In reply, Dick told me that the museum had reprinted just a *portion* of the diary and that he had the original, which begins with the journey in Pella, Iowa.

After seeing my obvious excitement about the diary, Dick loaned me a complete copy of the transcribed original diary, done by Jesse W. Curtis II, another descendant of the wagon train party. In it I found the rich detail that became this article.

NICK CATALDO

Rousseau Diary. Courtesy of Mrs. Richard Molony.



Richard Molony (1926–2015), Rousseau descendant and native of San Bernardino (left) and author Nick Cataldo. *Courtesy of the author.*

working as a physician, he established a successful career as a surveyor and teacher, and for a time he was San Bernardino County’s Superintendent of Schools.<sup>13</sup>

13. Gerald A. Smith, “Rousseau Diary: Across the Desert to California from Salt Lake City to San Bernardino,” *San Bernardino County Museum Association Quarterly* 6 (Winter 1958): 1–17.

Sarah Jane Rousseau became a well-known piano teacher in San Bernardino, giving lessons until her passing on February 20, 1872, at the age of fifty-six. Perhaps the most dramatic pioneer exploits of all belong to this English-born pioneer woman who has been gone now for well over a century, but whose wonderfully descriptive and captivating diary of that seven-month-long wagon trek from Pella, Iowa, to San Bernardino, California, has been transcribed and lives on for researchers in the archives of the San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society.<sup>14</sup>

*A native of Somerville, New Jersey, NICHOLAS R. CATALDO, M.A., has lived in San Bernardino, California, since 1966. He was a special education teacher in the San Bernardino Unified School District for thirty-five years, and one year in the Rialto school district. As a young boy he developed an interest in TV shows about the Old West, which took off when he discovered that his new home, San Bernardino (also home to the Earp family), figured in the history of the Western frontier.*

*His books and other writing include Images of America: San Bernardino (Arcadia, 2002), co-author of Pioneers of San Bernardino: 1851–1857 (San Bernardino County Museum Association, 2001), co-author of The Earps of San Bernardino County (San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society, 2002), and a local history column for the San Bernardino County Sun. His most recent book is The Earp Clan: The Southern California Years (Back Roads Press, 2006). Nick and his wife, Linda, have been married for twenty-nine years and have one son, John (Jay) Cataldo. □*

14. *San Bernardino Guardian*, May 23, 1868, page 2, column 1, reports that Mrs. S. J. Rousseau is giving piano lessons. On February 24, 1872, it reports the death of Mrs. Sarah J. Rousseau, wife of Dr. J. A. Rousseau, on February 20, at age fifty-six.

# REVIEWS FROM THE TRAIL

*Books for review should be sent to the editor with all bibliographical details and ordering information:  
Overland Journal, P.O. Box 265, Tracy, CA 95378*

THE OREGON TRAIL: A NEW AMERICAN JOURNEY  
By Rinker Buck

New York: Simon & Shuster, 2015. 449 pp., including index, illustrations. Hardback, ISBN 978-1-4516-0, 6½ × 9½, \$28.00; Kindle edition, \$14.99.

*Reviewed by Bill Martin.*

First of all, this is not your grandfather's Oregon Trail book. There are several reasons, beginning with the fact that it is a subjective account of the writer's experiences and perceptions; it makes no pretense of being an objective review of the Oregon Trail today. The prospective reader also needs to know that the text comes with a hard PG rating. The language is colorful and the text is peppered with four-letter expletives not found in most of the trail literature residing on OCTA-member bookcases.

Second, Mr. Buck is a journalist, not a researcher or an academician. As a result, *The Oregon Trail* reads like a novel rather than a textbook and the book benefits greatly from his skills as a writer. He knows how to tell a story, although you may not agree with the way he tells it. His political point of view and his feelings about organized religion come across quite clearly, although he has good things to say about individual church members, but you will not disagree that the story is entertaining.

We should state that the book has generated some controversy in OCTA circles. In particular, Buck describes an encounter on an isolated ranch in Wyoming with an OCTA "Friend of the Trail" Award winner that is highly unflattering. (Buck clearly was trespassing and OCTA officials have called Buck's description of the incident "unconscionable.") In addition, OCTA predecessors like the Oregon Trail Memorial Association and the American Pioneer Trails Association are not given adequate credit for their roles in trail marking, commemorations and preserving the legacy of Ezra Meeker.

There also may be a few statements that those especially knowledgeable about the trail will disagree with. But, again, it's not an objective account. On balance, Buck is very positive about his "trail family," the people, many of them OCTA members, whom he and his travel companion (his



brother, Nick) encountered during his four-month journey from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Baker City, Oregon.

This is a personal journey, and *The Oregon Trail* is filled with flashbacks of Buck's father, a flawed man whom he loved but about whom the author had often unpleasant memories. The passages in which he struggles to come to grips with his father's influence on his life are understandable, but some might believe they detract from the story of the trail.

Nearly the first quarter of the book concerns Buck's planning to get ready to leave, not unreasonable when you consider the preparation that emigrants put in 165 years ago. He sums up leaving his home this way: "I had never felt departure as strongly as this, as if I were leaving

one form of existence for another.” It’s not hard to imagine emigrants in the 1850s having similar thoughts.

Once on the trail, guided by maps rather than GPS, suffering through summer thunderstorms, dealing with a team of sometimes-cranky mules, facing challenging landscape and trail, Buck was indeed in another world, far from the comforts of home and hearth. It was a trip not without difficulties, but it was worth every dusty, rock-strewn mile.

Camped at Emigrant Springs in Western Wyoming, he says, “We saw no one and at night the only sounds we heard were the wind whistling through the wagon cover and the mules placidly grinding their molars on high mountain grass, which filled me with a sense of complete isolation and freedom.”

There are marvelous chapters about the development of the mule and the history of wagon building, and some delightful vignettes about Ezra Meeker, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and others. Narcissa, in fact, holds a special place in his heart. “Her ultimate mission was unsuccessful, but her journey getting there, and writing about it, was epic and changed her times, opening the gate for women and families to join the largest land migration in history. . . . [S]itting beside her grave, I felt settled about making Narcissa Whitman my heroine as I crossed the trail.”

*The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey* is not for everyone. OCTA members used to more objective tomes that are heavily footnoted and attentive to detail and accuracy may not want to read it. But because of the mainstream exposure that the book has received, earning a place on a few best seller lists and heavily promoted by the author and the publisher, it’s going to be read by a lot of people who might not otherwise hear the stories of the trails today.

That’s a good thing. Outside of the trails community, there is only the barest of recognition of the history of Overland emigration and the threats the trails face today. If someone gets their ears opened because of reading this book, so much the better. And Rinker Buck makes it clear that he loves the trail and he loves the West and its people:

The Americans today who like to whine all the time because they say that taxes are too high and that government costs too much should leave their television sets behind for a while and go out and see the country they live in. For a change in their lives they could educate themselves about America by reading

a book. They would learn by such activities that nothing happens by accident, and that the cordiality of the American West exists because real Americans with real problems willed over more than a century that it be so.

*Bill Martin is a Past President of OCTA and current Editor of “News from the Plains.”*

BATTLES AND MASSACRES ON THE SOUTHWESTERN FRONTIER: HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

*Edited by Ronald K. Wetherington and Frances Levine*

Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. 248 pp., with photos, maps, illustrations, extensive references, index. ISBN-13 978-0806-1-4440-5. Paper, 5 × 8 inches, \$24.95

*Reviewed by Bill Shanks.*

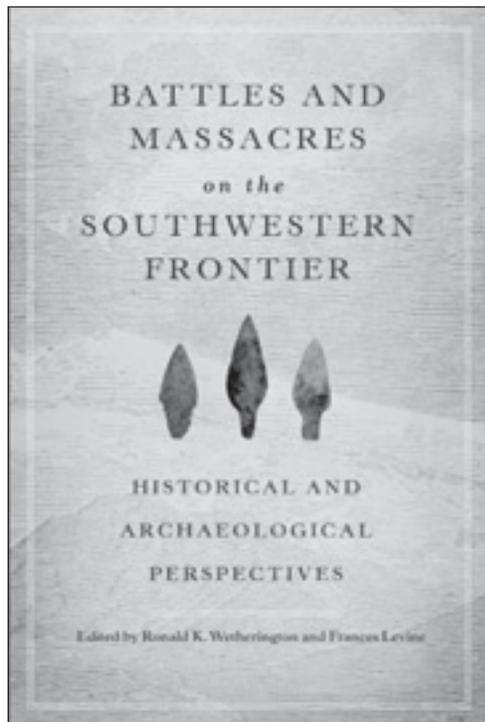
*Battles and Massacres* looks at several battles or massacres in the mid-nineteenth century from the perspectives of historians and archaeologists. This is important because the historical record is usually written by one side of the conflict. The archaeological record does not engage in cover ups, obfuscation, or have a political agenda.

The book examines four nineteenth century events in the American southwest involving Native Americans and Euro-Americans and the conflicts rising from westward expansion. The encounters are the Battle of Cieneguilla in New Mexico (1854), Adobe Walls in Texas (1857), the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado (1864), and the Mountain Meadows Massacre in Utah (1857).

The first three were direct conflicts involving Indians and soldiers or buffalo hunters. Mountain Meadows was between Mormons of Southern Utah and a train of emigrants headed to California. Some Paiutes acted with the Mormon militia.

This book is important in illustrating how modern archaeological methods can apply objective information to a historical record that can be essentially accurate, as at Adobe Walls, or what amounted to a cover-up at Cieneguilla.

Adobe Walls was a trading post in the Texas Panhandle occupied by a number of hide hunters engaging in killing as many Bison as possible for profit, while destroying the Native Americans’ livelihood. A large group of Cheyenne



warriors, believing that their medicine would protect them from the hide hunters' bullets, attacked twenty-eight men and one woman. The medicine did not work. The big buffalo rifles were able to outrange the attackers' weapons and many Indians were killed. Three of the defenders were wounded.

The archaeological data showed that the majority of the Indian weapons were relatively short range rifles like the Henry and Spencer carbines, easily outranged by the big Sharps rifles of the hide hunters. There were bullets from muzzleloaders and steel arrow points as well.

The recent archaeological investigations at Sand Creek have established the actual location of the massacre and validated the conclusion that there was a slaughter of people who were not able to effectively defend themselves, believing that they were under the protection of the U.S. government. Almost all of the recovered artifacts were from Army weapons. The massacre was the result of John Chivington deciding that the Indians should all be killed.

Mountain Meadows is different, mostly Euro-Americans killing other Euro-Americans. The essay in this

book is unusual in that it comes from a Mormon Church historian and places culpability on the Southern Utah Mormon leadership for the massacre. Given the tensions prevailing between the Utah Mormons and the U. S. Government, it was understandable there would be some conflict between the Mormons and a wagon train from Arkansas, but how it escalated into the slaughter of all the migrants over seven years old remains obscure.

Archaeological investigation at Mountain Meadows is difficult because of repeated disturbances over 150 years and the resistance of the Utah political leadership. A study that was halted by the then Utah governor, a descendant of one of the attackers, did provide forensic information that reinforced the conclusion that the emigrants were disarmed and slaughtered.

The studies of the battle of Cieneguilla in 1854 illustrate how an archaeological survey can refute the historical accounts dating from the time of the battle. Of sixty troopers of the First Dragoons led into battle by Lt. John Davidson, twenty-four were killed and twenty-three wounded by about 100 Jicarilla Apaches.

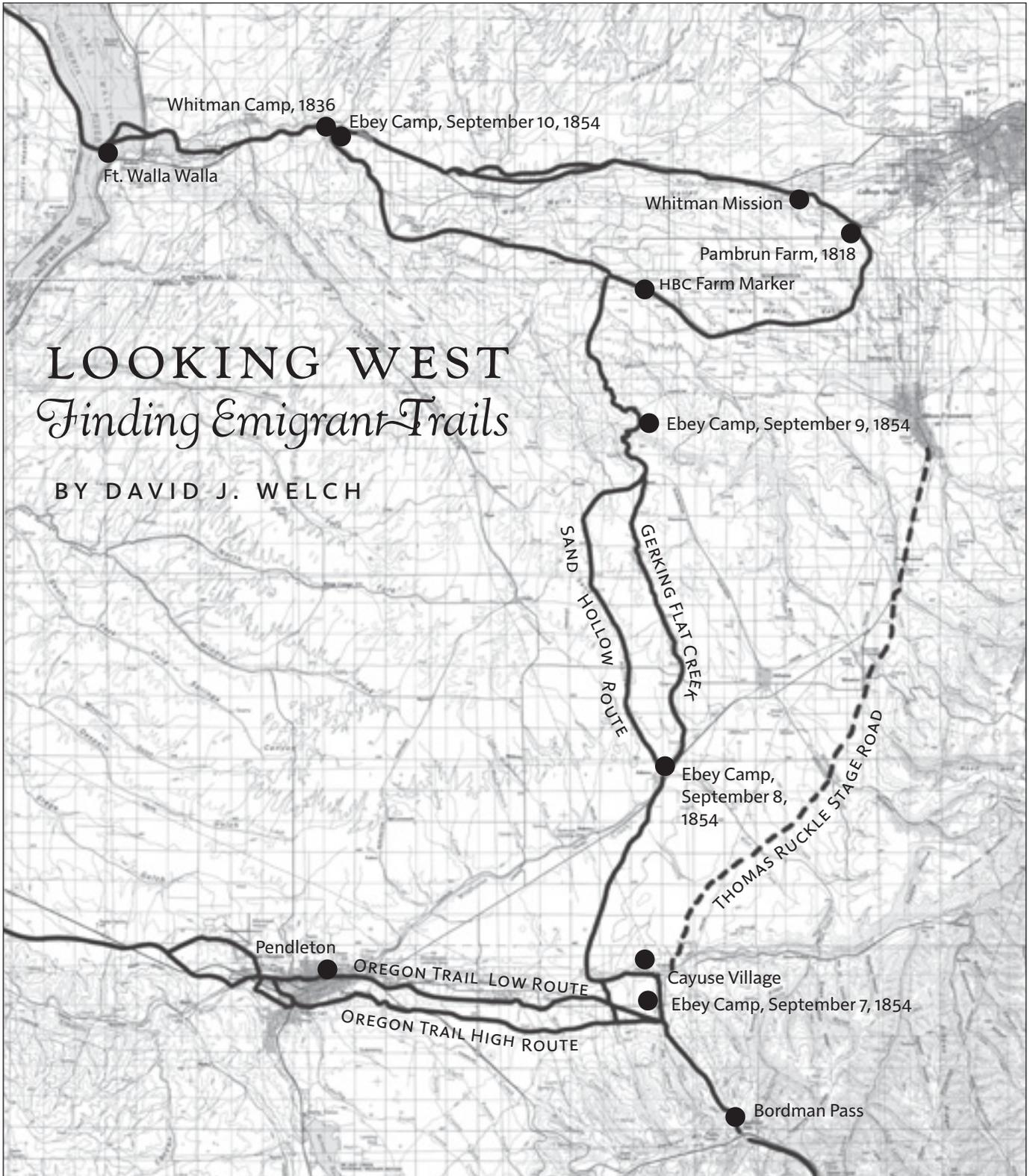
The official report by Lieutenant Davidson is a story of a gallant attack by Dragoons against a superior force. In fact, the troopers, after leaving their horses in a canyon bottom, attacked uphill and were outflanked and hunted down by the Apaches as they tried to retreat. A Lieutenant Bell attempted to correct the report, but never received a hearing and was subsequently killed in action.

While the Cieneguilla study is important, there are some flaws. The archeology is well done; the maps are not, making it difficult to visualize the entire battlefield and the movements of the combatants. In addition, both essays explore the Battle of Cieneguilla, but fail to mention that what was Cieneguilla in 1854 is now Pilar, not far south of Taos.

The real tragedy of Cieneguilla is that the Apaches were then hunted down, starved, and sent to a reservation.

Overall, the book does an effective job of showing how history and archaeology can come together to provide a more accurate picture of events that occurred more than 150 years ago.

*Reviewed by Bill Shanks, vice president of the Cherokee Trail chapter of OCTA and a member of the Old Spanish Trail Association. He works part time as an Interpretive Specialist at Four Mile Historic Park in Denver. ☐*



# LOOKING WEST

*Finding Emigrant Trails*

BY DAVID J. WELCH



## OCTA TRAIL PEOPLE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR ABILITY TO

LOCATE AND VERIFY MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY EMIGRANT TRAILS. WE USUALLY START WITH SOME PHYSICAL EVIDENCE, BUT WHAT CAN BE DONE WHEN NO

TRACE REMAINS? OCTA'S MAPPING EMIGRANT TRAILS (MET) MANUAL, PART A,

LAYS OUT A PROVEN APPROACH, BUT UNCERTAINTY PERSISTS WHEN ATTEMPTING TO VERIFY 150-YEAR-OLD EVIDENCE.

For more than fifteen years I and others have been researching the trails linking the Pendleton, Oregon, area with sites in the Walla Walla Valley, including the Whitman Mission and Fort Walla Walla (Nez Perce) on the Columbia River. These routes are some of the earliest "Oregon Trail" routes, pre-dating the trail to Echo, west of Pendleton, and beyond, by at least ten years. Unfortunately, the routes to the Walla Walla Valley are not included in the congressionally designated Oregon National Historic Trail, probably reflecting a lack of confidence in their location.

No verified trail ruts or swales have been found between the Walla Walla Valley and Pendleton. This is because of extensive cultivation in the area over the past 120 years on what is exclusively private land. The General Land Office surveys (1860 and thereafter) resulted in new section line roads to clear and organize contiguous areas for farming that erased earlier roads and trails. In other similar areas the old trails sometimes appear as traces in fields in the early spring when crops are sprouting, but that has not been documented in this area.

Greg Franzwa, a founding member of OCTA, punts on the routes north to the Walla Walla Valley. In the second edition of his *Maps of the Oregon*

*Trail* (Patrice Press, 2003) he shows an incomplete route leading northeast from the Columbia River crossing at Cayuse, near the base of the Blue Mountains below Deadman Pass. This is almost certainly the later (1864-65) Thomas & Ruckle Road, but it has misled researchers for years into believing the early Oregon Trail route passes through the town of Milton Freewater.

The Pendleton and Walla Walla areas had extensive Indian populations for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Also, the Hudson Bay Company and others established trading posts and farms in the area in 1821. The nature of trails in the area is indicated by James Nesmith on October 6, 1843, at Wildhorse Creek. "This morning I joined Otey and Haggard and went with the *carriages* to Dr. Whitmans." It seems likely that the emigrants used well-established routes and did not blaze new roads.

As the area was settled by Euro-Americans in the 1860s more roads appeared. Later, early highways were built, and then the federal highways. How do you sort it all out to find the emigrant trail?

First, we need to start with the known. There are five locations that we know were connected by early trails: (1) Deadman Pass, (2) the base of the Blues (Cayuse area), (3) Pendleton, (4) the Whitman Mission, and (5) Fort Walla Walla. The starting point is to join these known points with a "crow flies" route connection. Three considerations permit refinement of the paths: (1) geographic references

FIGURE 1. Probable Oregon Trail Routes in the Pendleton and Walla Walla Valley area. Map overlay by Ariane C. Smith.

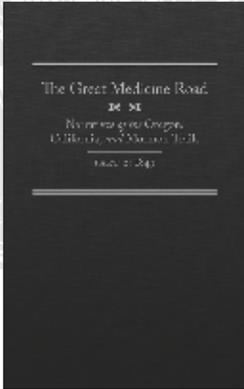
from journals and diaries, (2) early maps (explorers, General Land Office surveys, and other), and (3) the topography itself. The process is one of fusion of fragmentary information from many sources to build a case for the trail's location.

This process can be started with detailed topographic maps (paper or computer based) such as the USGS 1:24,000 scale maps. Field surveys and archaeological research can add to (or reduce) the level of confidence. At the very least this process will lead to a narrowing of prospective route locations and possibly the definition of a high probability corridor. The process is iterative: postulation, examination, conclusion and then revision.

Figure 1 shows the results of research to date for the Pendleton–Walla Walla area. The broken

lines represent the Thomas Ruckle Stage Road. The suggested route locations are supported by comments in emigrant journals. Also, the terrain has been analyzed for consistency with the limits of wagon travel and distances traveled as documented in the journals. A fully documented article on these routes is planned for the near future.

DAVE WELCH has served as president of OCTA, president of the Northwest chapter, national trails preservation officer, and is currently the chair of OCTA's mapping and marking committee and the investment advisory committee. A retired aeronautical engineer, he and his wife Wendy live in Lacey, Washington. 📍



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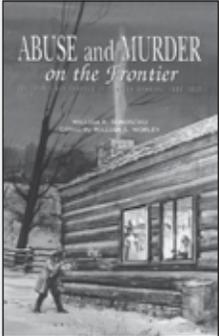
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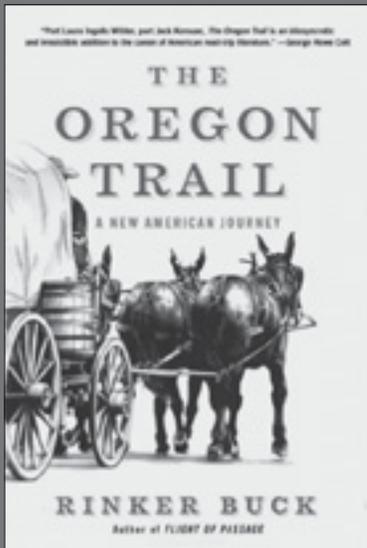
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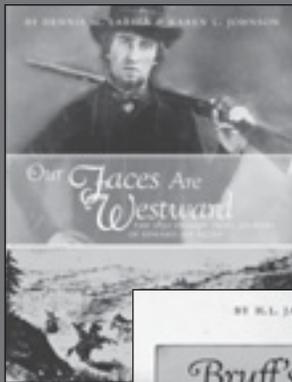
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# Letters

## THE READERS RESPOND

Marlene,

Another great issue. That article on oxen ["Oxen: Engines of the Overland Emigration," by Dixon Ford and Lee Kreutzer, volume 33, no. 1, Spring 2015] will long be a popular reference piece. We met Thor and Zeus at the St. Jo convention.

When I was doing the "Forgotten Journey" film 15 years ago it was a challenge to come up with decent photos of oxen pulling wagons. Photography was in its infancy in the 1840s. By the time it was more common, it was 1860+ and wagon trains were being pulled by horses and mules.

Part of the story of the Death Valley pioneers (I never got that one finished) had to do with "Old Crump," a favorite ox that survived all the hardship. After the party abandoned their wagons in Death Valley in the winter of 1850, Old Crump carried a couple small kids on his back, strapped on with their legs in old shirt sleeves. Old Crump had one horn pointing down instead of up. It would have been a real challenge to replicate in a reenactment. Years later a couple of the survivors of that trip had a reunion with Old Crump in some pasture in California.

JOHN KRIZEK  
*Immediate Past President,  
Board of Directors, OCTA*  
June 10, 2015

Marlene,

I was out of the office . . . last week and just returned today to find our library copy of *OJ*. I am so very pleased. Thank you and your staff for

the marvelous job. I'm receiving lots of compliments on our combined efforts.

LEE KREUTZER  
*Co-author, "Oxen: Engines of the  
Overland Emigration," Spring 2015*  
June 15, 2015

Marlene,

I appreciate the Journal, and always enjoy the many great articles that you publish. Keep up the good work.

MIKE LASALLE  
June 20, 2015

Hi, Marlene:

Kudos on the Spring 2015 issue of *OJ*. I'm a charter member of OCTA, having had the good fortune to have lived in suburban St. Louis when Greg Franzwa was putting the organization together in the early 1980s, and have retraced the trail to Oregon three times, to California once. The lengthy article on oxen in this issue is the first comprehensive piece I've seen—in *OJ* or elsewhere—of how oxen were trained and used in the mid-19th century—on the trail, or anywhere, for that matter. Toss in Ariane's usual tasteful design and excellent photo selection, and, for me, at least, this is one of the best issues of *OJ* ever. If Dixon Ford had been in period costume on the cover, I might have had to frame it—alongside the cover for Vol. 25, #3, Fall 2007, which features my own photo of Scott's Bluff. . . .

Best wishes,  
RAY SCHOCH  
June 23, 2015

Dear Editor,

In Ellen Osborn's article about John Calhoun Johnson [vol. 22, no. 2, Summer 2015], the Delaware Indian named Fall Leaf is credited with a role in locating the Johnson Cutoff of the California Trail and has a lake named for him. Apparently he had been working for J. C. Fremont on a ranch. This caught my eye because Fall Leaf much later was the lead scout for Nelson Miles's Fort Dodge-based column in the Red River War, and was ambushed (but apparently unharmed) at the beginning of the battle of August 30, 1874. I wrote about the Miles column long ago in an effort to locate routes and battle sites. My location of that battle site, off by a couple of miles, has since been corrected by archaeological investigation. It is on the JA Ranch, not far from the headquarters, southeast of Canyon, TX. Most of Miles's routes were "trails" for only a short time, and so we do not hear of them today.

I knew Fall Leaf was old and experienced in 1874 but I did not know he had had such a transcontinental career. As tribes were forced from their native lands the Delaware became among the most widely dispersed, many of them serving as scouts for the United States Army. One wonders how Fall Leaf came to be in California so early. Had he been with Fremont during the War With Mexico?

JERRY L. ROGERS  
Santa Fe, NM  
September 1, 2015



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Made 35 miles today

Mr. Parley said the reason they hurried so the gunther was at the Ranch and there was danger of the Indians making an effort if they should find out we were there alone.

as quick as possible, they told us they saw Mack & the boys they were getting along very well, they had four horses along, the other three they could not get along. They brought horse feed along with them, left them some bread, & barley for the horses they had along. They stopped at Bitter Springs & saw the horses Charlie & Het, but they they did not see, they gave them a good feed and started. When they got within eight miles of where we camped they saw poor Het dead on the desert starved to death, if we had only have had a little feed we could have saved our horses.

Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> Got up at four, a very pleasant morning, got ready by sun up, & started from camp, passed by poor Jan, she was pretty much eat up with the wolves. Went on to Bitter Springs, where we saw saw poor Het down & could not get up, the D<sup>r</sup> tried to raise her, but she fell down on his mouth. She tried to raise again but fell on her side, she fairly tore the ground and tried to bite it. The D<sup>r</sup> then took his revolver and shot her to put an end to her misery. Oh how bad I felt for the poor things to think what a hard summer they had & then starve to death. We did not know but Charlie would have to meet the same fate, he looked awful bad, we fed

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