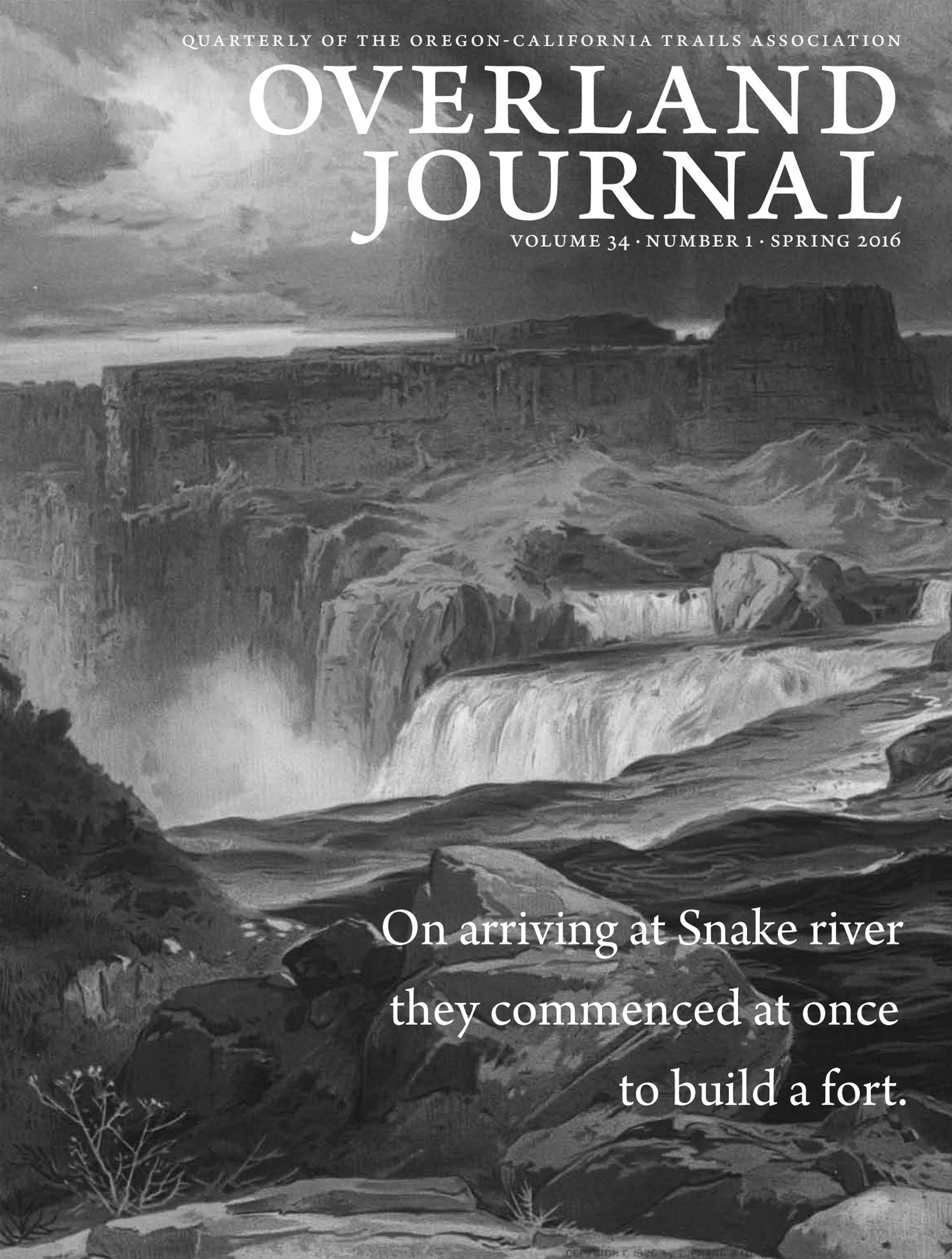


QUARTERLY OF THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

# OVERLAND JOURNAL

VOLUME 34 • NUMBER 1 • SPRING 2016

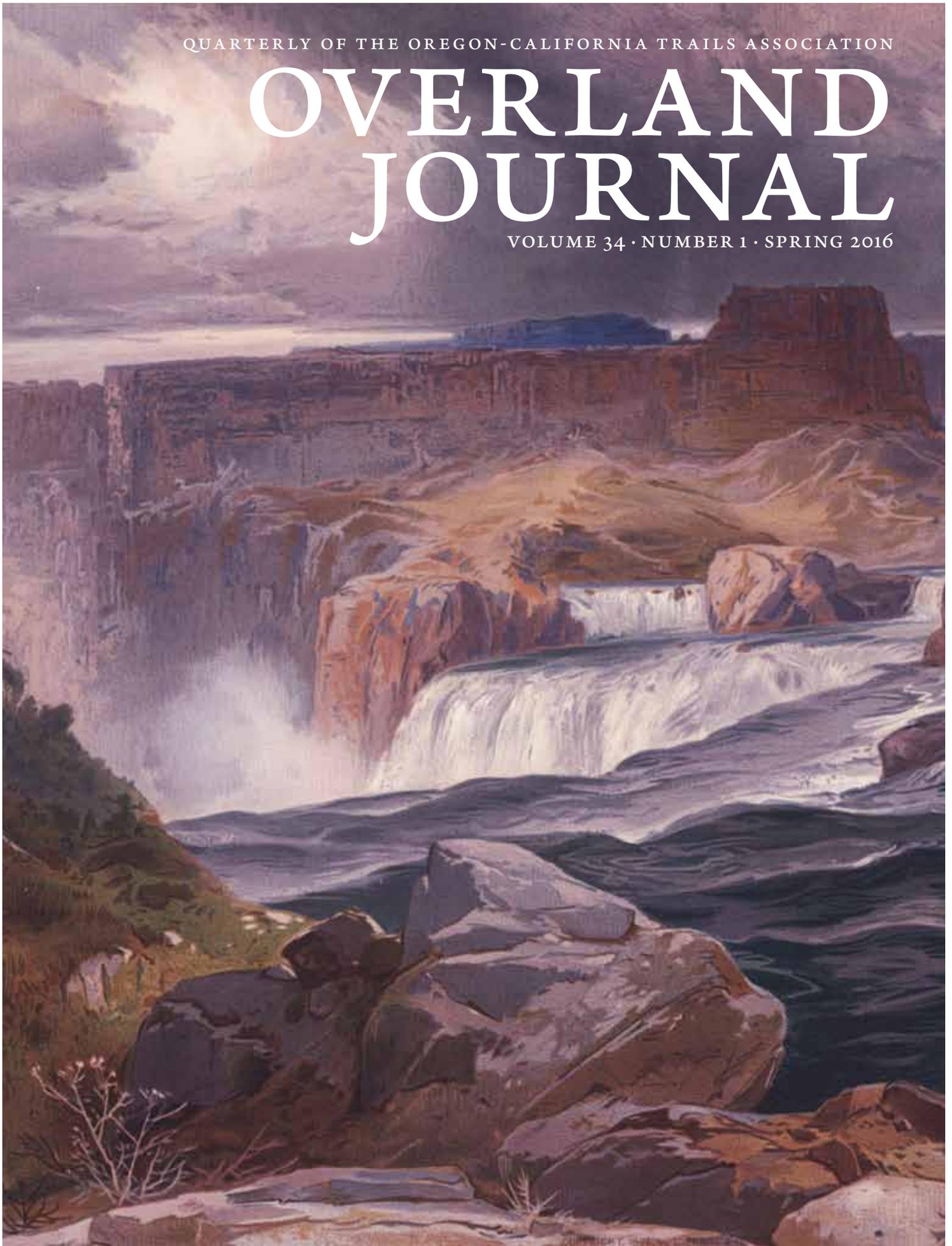


On arriving at Snake river  
they commenced at once  
to build a fort.

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## 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 August. 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, *O.J.* 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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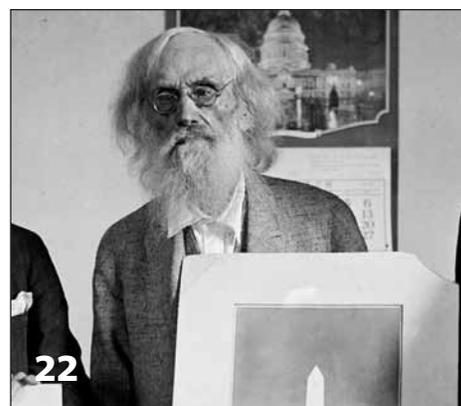
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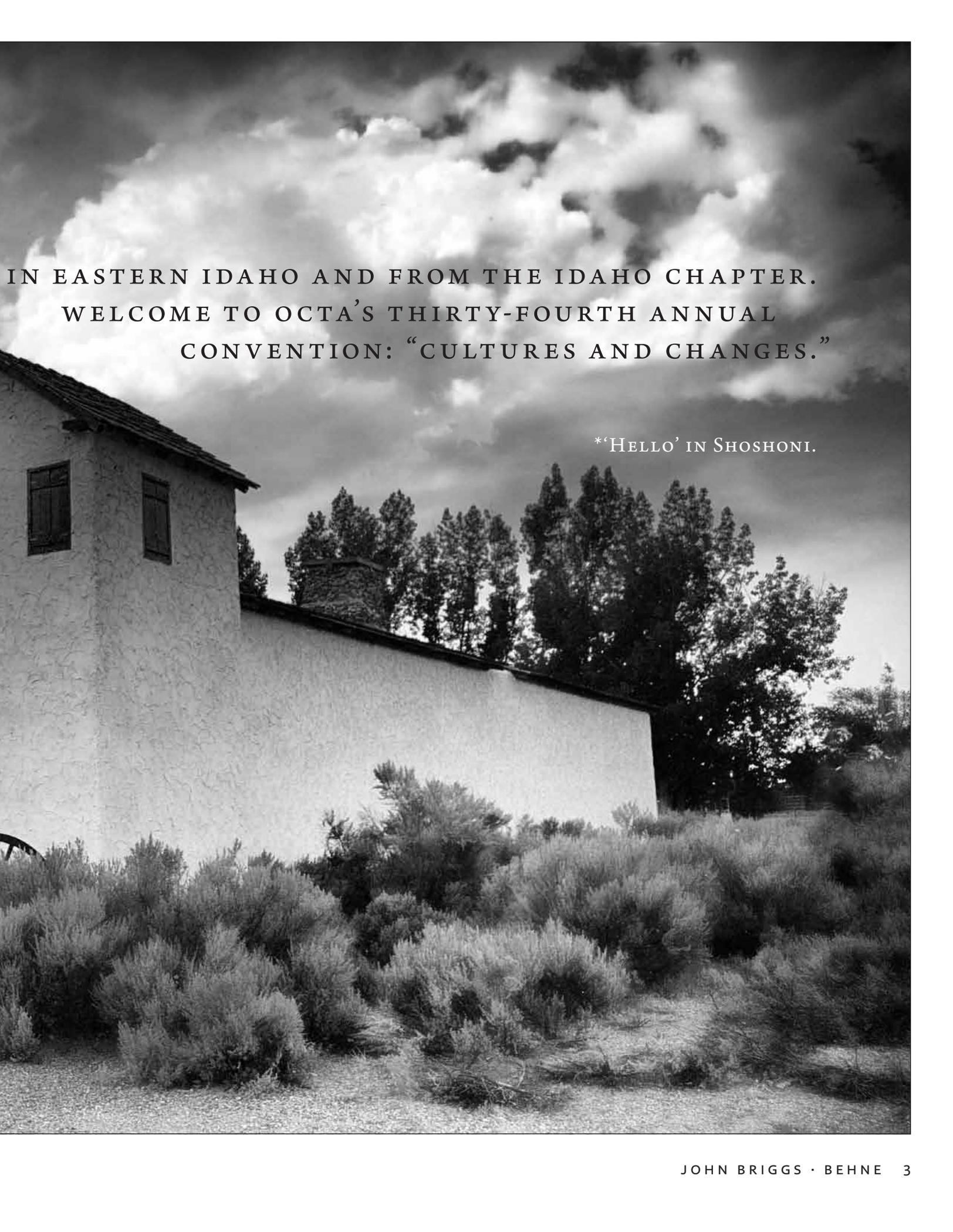
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Thomas Moran (1837–1926), *Great Falls of  
Snake River, Idaho Territory, 1876* (detail),  
chromolithograph on paper, 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>  
in. L. Prang & Co, and Thomas Moran.  
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CONGRESS, [HTTPS://WWW.LOC.GOV  
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# Behne\*

FROM FORT HALL

Built in Pocatello, Idaho, in 1963, this Fort Hall replica replaced the original Fort Hall Trading Post, which sat close to the Snake River and was destroyed by floods. The replica was built using the fort's original site plans and adobe-style walls. Within the fort's walls are a number of log structures.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN BRIGGS.



IN EASTERN IDAHO AND FROM THE IDAHO CHAPTER.  
WELCOME TO OCTA'S THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL  
CONVENTION: "CULTURES AND CHANGES."

\*'HELLO' IN SHOSHONI.

# *In the fractured land of the Snake River, You will see the impact of major geologic shifts that you may have never seen before.*

Tectonic plate collisions, fault mountains, volcanic eruptions, and massive floods molded it. They carved the geography and shaped especially the sinuous courses of the Snake, Bear, and Portneuf rivers. These rivers determined where the animals could go and the lava flows set where they could not, and thus the trails that animals forged were fixed. Native Americans followed those trails for thousands of years and in turn were followed by the great explorers. Fur trappers followed, and then missionaries. As they recorded and mapped their routes, the pioneers were able to follow. The pioneers were followed by the settlers and, soon thereafter, the military. They all used the same trails and passes and in turn were followed by the stage lines, roads, and railroads.

Come to OCTA's Idaho Convention, August 1–5, 2016, and you will be able to see many of these things. Just southeast of Fort Hall, on the Oregon-California Trail at Sheep Rock, the north-flowing Bear River was dammed by lava and turned back to the south. Instead of flowing as it once did into the Snake River and the Pacific Ocean, it now flows into the Great Salt Lake basin. The south-flowing Portneuf, meanwhile, was similarly dammed. It too was turned back, but into the Snake. The animals followed these new courses. Later, so did the Native Americans and, eventually, the pioneers strung together segments of these routes to form the Oregon-California Trail.

The animals also had their “wintering” spots—areas that were of milder climate than the surroundings. Fort Hall “bottoms” was one of these. It was natural for the Shoshone to gather here and for Nathaniel Wyeth to site his trading post where they were camped, close to the confluence of the Portneuf and Snake rivers. The Bannocks were a little farther north, but still close by, at the confluence of the South and Henry's Forks of the Snake. The site of Fort Hall was determined by the need for trading partners, and thus the route of the trails was predestined. The Oregon-California trails came in from the east and departed to the west. Lander's trail came in from the east and passed through to the west. Hudspeth's Cutoff was to the south and Jeffrey's or Goodale's Cutoff to the north. Fort Hall was a key to the western expansion of the United States of America, ultimately to the disadvantage of the Native Americans already in residence.

Join us at Fort Hall in August to hear the Shoshone-Bannock view of the fur trappers and pioneers. Hear about the trading that went on between the trappers and Native Americans. Listen to the words of the pioneers from their own diaries as they approach Fort Hall. Learn about the military effort to build the Lander Trail and about the discovery of South Pass. Appreciate the massive train of 338 wagons and more than a thousand people that Tim Goodale guided safely across his or Jeffrey's Cutoff in 1862. Hear how the popular press of the time portrayed the Native Americans.

There will be preconvention and post-convention tours. The preconvention tour from the east will cross Mount Putnam and pass along the trail on the reservation, a journey requiring the special permission of the Shoshone-Bannock and not available to everyone. Others will take in Hudspeth's Cutoff, the California Trail through City of Rocks National Monument, and Goodale's Cutoff winding its way around Craters of the Moon National Monument.

The five planned bus tours will take you to Pierre's Hole; Soda Springs and Sheep Rock; Massacre Rocks and Raft River Parting of the Ways; the ruts in Milner Recreation Area; or on a scenic tour of Eastern Idaho. You will be able to walk the ruts at Milner or on the Hudspeth or Goodale Cutoff. The scenic tour will take in unique Big Spring, a first-magnitude spring releasing over 120 million gallons of water each day, Upper Mesa Falls, and the dramatic western slopes of the Tetons. Take in the rifts and lava flows, springs, and cinder cones.

The Idaho Chapter and the Fort Hall Reservation are working hard to bring OCTA members and friends to southeastern Idaho. Please bring your partners and your kids, and join us at this unusual setting on the Fort Hall Reservation at the Shoshone-Bannock Hotel and Event Center, Fort Hall, Idaho. You should already have received your OCTA registration packet!

JOHN BRIGGS  
Chairman, OCTA 2016 Convention  
1OCTA2016@hotmail.com  
IDAHO CHAPTER OF OCTA 

JERRY EICHHORST is the president and webmaster of the Idaho Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association ([www.Idahoocta.org](http://www.Idahoocta.org)), as well as a Business Intelligence Analyst for the JR Simplot Company in Boise, Idaho. A longtime OCTA member, he enjoys researching emigrant diaries on the journey across Idaho. He has contributed articles to the *Overland Journal* and *Idaho Magazine*, and is compiling emigrant diaries for a book manuscript, "Diaries Across Idaho." He also regularly conducts classes on the Oregon Trail for Boise Schools Community Education and the Osher Institute at Boise State University.

DAVE WELCH served as OCTA's president and national trails preservation officer. He also has been Northwest Chapter president and a member of the national board of directors. He is currently chair of OCTA's mapping and marking committee and the investment advisory committee. Dave is a retired aeronautical engineer and lives with his wife Wendy in Lacey, Washington.

#### BOOK REVIEWERS

ROBERT CLARK, editor-in-chief of Washington State University Press, a past editor of *Overland Journal*, and former president of The Arthur H. Clark Company. He is a charter member of the Oregon-California Trails Association. He is the current editor of the Lewis and Clark Heritage Trail Association's journal, *We Proceeded On*.

MARTHA VOGHT, an author/historian/quilter who lives in Bishop, California. She has written numerous historical monographs and educational film scripts, plus seven historical novels. She is currently investigating western narratives as a literary genre.

JIM HARDEE, the Editor of the *Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Journal*, an annual, peer-reviewed publication of the Museum of the Mountain Man and the Sublette County Historical Society in Pinedale, Wyoming. He is the author of *Pierre's Hole! The Fur Trade History of Teton Valley, Idaho* and *Obstinate Hope, the Western Expeditions of Nathaniel J. Wyeth*. Jim lives in Pierre's Hole, Idaho. 

BY JERRY EICHHORST

# Building Fort Hall

A STORY TOLD BY MANY PEOPLE

IDAHO'S FORT HALL REGION SITS ON THE SOUTHEAST SIDE OF THE SNAKE RIVER A FEW MILES UPSTREAM FROM THE MOUTH OF THE PORTNEUF RIVER. THE AREA IS A FERTILE BOTTOMLANDS FILLED WITH LUSH GRASSES AND NUMEROUS STREAMS.

The great Bonneville Flood, which swept through the region thousands of years ago, changed the river's landscape as the massive volume of rushing water carved a deep canyon for much of the Snake River below the Portneuf River. Fossils of ancient mammoths found along the river near American Falls show the valley has long been a home to wildlife. Buffalo herds were once common. Trout, deer, elk, and other game were plentiful. It is a rich land with mild temperatures. Indians lived and hunted in the area for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Primarily inhabited by Shoshones, the area was visited by the Blackfeet tribe, often resulting in conflicts and battles. The westward migration of the white men changed the area forever, also frequently through conflicts as well.

Through the course of fifty years, there were several locations known as "Fort Hall." The original trading post was built in 1834. In August 1849, a small military post called Cantonment Loring was established three miles north of the trading post as a home for two companies of mounted U.S. riflemen. Less than a year later it was abandoned when the military moved west to The Dalles, along the Columbia River. A small

trading post was built a few miles south of the original trading post as new road traffic skirted the original site in the 1860s. In 1867, the Fort Hall Indian Reservation Agency headquarters were established here. Finally, in 1870, several miles to the east on Lincoln Creek, military Fort Hall was built. By 1883, it too was abandoned. Each of these establishments encompassed significant regional history. This article will focus on the original Fort Hall trading post built by Nathaniel Wyeth. A map of the Fort Hall area appears on page 9.

## THE NATHANIEL WYETH EXPEDITION

With a previous trip west two years before and a contract in hand with the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Company to sell his goods to the company's trappers at their annual summer rendezvous, Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth, a Boston ice merchant, convinced wealthy eastern investors of his ability to make much money acquiring furs from the Rocky Mountains and salmon from the Columbia River. Wyeth planned to purchase furs at the trappers' annual summer rendezvous, then take

them to the Columbia River where he would purchase salmon, and ship both back to New England. On April 28, 1834, Wyeth started west with a group of between fifty and seventy men, 250 horses, and \$3,000 in merchandise, headed for the Ham's Fork summer rendezvous in today's southwestern Wyoming. In his party were John Kirk Townsend, a physician and ornithologist; Thomas Nuttall, a botanist; Milton Sublette and his party of twenty trappers; and a small group of Methodist missionaries consisting of minister Jason Lee, his ordained nephew Daniel Lee, laymen Cyrus Shepard and Philip L. Edwards, hired hand Courtney M. Walker, and their herd of cattle. Milton Sublette would soon return to St. Louis because of medical problems with his leg, which eventually caused his death in 1837.

Unfortunately for Wyeth, his timing became his undoing. The group arrived at the Ham's Fork rendezvous a few days after his competitor and Milton's brother, William Sublette, arrived. William convinced the Rocky Mountain Fur Company trappers to ignore the contract with Wyeth, and trade with him instead. Sublette paid a \$500 forfeiture fee to Wyeth and even bought some goods from Wyeth.

Wyeth wrote numerous letters along the trip, which often provide personal information about the trip. The following letter describes his feelings after the failure at the rendezvous:

Hams Fork July 1st 1834

Mr. [M.] G. Sublette

Dear Sir

I arrived at Rendesvous at the mouth of Sandy on the 17th June. Fitzpatric refused to receive the goods. he paid however, the forfeit and the cash advance I made to you this however is no satisfaction to me. I do not accuse you or him of any intention of injuring me in this manner when you made the contract but I think he has been bribed to sacrifice my interests by better offers from your brother. Now Milton, business is closed between us, but you will find that you have only bound yourself over to receive your supplies at such price as may be inflicted and that all that you will ever make in the country will go to pay for your goods, you will be kept as you have been a mere slave to catch Beaver for others.

I sincerely wish you well and believe had you been here these things would not have been done. I hope that your leg is better and that you will yet be able to go whole footed in all respects.

I am Yr Obt. Servt. NJ. Wyeth

One of the laymen with Jason Lee, Philip Edwards, wrote a letter from the Ham's Fork rendezvous in which he said of Wyeth, "much credit is due to captain Wyeth, for the manner in which he has led us forward. This gentleman unites in his character, qualifications not always to be found, untiring prudence and circumspection, with unhesitating bravery and perseverance."

#### BUILDING A FORT

With a nearly full load of goods and no buyers, Wyeth deployed his backup plan to build a new trading post farther west, then continue his journey to the Columbia River. Wyeth sent word to numerous Indian tribes to the west to bring their furs and hides to the area of the Snake River near the Portneuf River. He loaded up his party and headed west to meet them at the fort he would build, hunting buffalo along the way. He planned to leave his trade goods and some of his men at his intended fort, then continue his journey to the Columbia River. Thomas McKay of the Hudson's Bay Company joined Wyeth on July 9 as they were camped along Bear River near Soda Springs. McKay's trappers would also join the party later, at the fort.

The Wyeth party reached the Snake River on July 13. After scouting and hunting for a day, on July 14 Wyeth selected a suitable site for his trading post. The location he chose was at the northern edge of a very large meadow, six miles upstream from the mouth of the Portneuf River.

Wyeth immediately set to work building a trading post. He named it "Fort Hall" after Henry Hall, the senior partner of the company that was backing him. Cottonwood trees were used to build a wooden enclosure 80 feet square and 15 feet high, with two small bastions at opposite corners providing unrestricted views in case of attack. Others of his party headed east to the headwaters of the Portneuf River to hunt buffalo, returning on Saturday, July 26, fully loaded with dried meat. With the fort's construction well underway and food supplies restocked, the group celebrated their good fortune that evening.

The following day, Sunday, July 27, Jason Lee conducted a church service in a grove of cottonwood trees near the river, the first Protestant sermon conducted west of the Rocky Mountains. Following the service, the celebration continued with horse racing, in which an accident killed one of McKay's

trappers, a Frenchman named Kanseau. He was buried the next day with Catholic services conducted by McKay's Canadians, a Methodist service led by Jason Lee, and an Indian service, as Kanseau's family was Indian.

The trappers began to move out the following week. Jason Lee and his missionary party, whose destination was Fort Vancouver in Oregon, joined them. Along the way, McKay stopped near the mouth of the Boise River at the Snake River and built a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company called Snake Fort. Jason Lee and his party continued on to the Columbia River.

Meanwhile, Nathaniel Wyeth and the men with him finished his fort. On August 5 they raised a patchwork-stitched American flag, making this the first raising of the American flag on a flagpole in the future state of Idaho. With the ministers having gone west, the day became a wild celebration. The next day, Wyeth and most of his men started west on their journey to the Columbia, leaving twelve men behind at Fort Hall. They hunted, trapped, traded furs with the Indians, and built several small log houses within the fort in preparation for winter. In geographic terms, when it was completed in 1834, Fort Hall was the second building located along the Oregon Trail west of Independence, Missouri. The first was Fort William (its name was later change to Fort Laramie) in southeastern Wyoming. It had been built a few months earlier than Fort Hall, to shelter men and store the supplies William Sublette left there on his way to the Ham's Fork rendezvous.

Two years after completing his trading post, Wyeth agreed to sell it to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The Fort Hall sale was completed in 1837. Wyeth sustained a financial loss of \$20,000 for his endeavor. The HBC replaced the wooden walls with whitewashed adobe walls, which could be seen from many miles away.

#### DIARY ACCOUNTS

The Wyeth expedition to Fort Hall was very well documented. Wyeth recorded his letters and a diary. Phillip Edwards wrote a general letter from the Ham's Fork rendezvous that was first printed in eastern newspapers in October 1834. Jason Lee, John Kirk Townsend, Cyrus Shepard, and Osborne Russell wrote journals of the adventure as well. In 1844 Daniel Lee published *Ten Years in Oregon*, providing a history of Oregon along with his reminiscences of the expedition. The stories of

Isaac Rose were published in 1884, although their reliability is doubted by many historians. HBC's employee Henry Hall compiled a letterbook, which, along with the Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company records—including letters, instructions, accounts, and ledgers—are held by the Oregon Historical Society.

The portion of Wyeth's journal that includes the building of Fort Hall follows:

12th. [July] Made W. 3 miles and came upon a small creek which was said to be Portneuf it may possibly be the same water as that we camped on last night but running S. by E crossed this and a high range of hills [Mount Putnam] and struck a stream which is said to be Ross creek this runs about W. after 9 miles more camped saw but few Buffaloe today.

13th. No Buffaloe saw elk on Snake River which we struck after 6 miles W. by N. in some small slew saw a great quantity of fine trout about 2 lbs. weight

14th. Went down the river about 3 miles and found a location for a fort and succeeded and killed a Buffaloe near the spot

15. Commenced building the fort and sent out 12 men to hunt to be gone 12 days and continued at work on the fort a few days and fell short of provisions and was obliged to knock off in order to obtain food sent out some men for Buffaloe they returned in two days with plenty. The 12 returned the 28th [26th] day at night. On the 26th [27th] a Frenchman named Kanseau was killed horse racing and the 27th [28th] was buried near the fort he belonged to Mr. McKays camp and his comrades erected a decent tomb for him service for him was performed by the Canadians in the Catholic form by Mr. Lee in the Protestant form and by the Indians in their form as he had Indian family. he at least was well buried.

30 Mr. McKay left us and Mr [Jason] Lee and Capt. Stewart with him

6th. [Aug.] Having done as much as was requisite for safety to the Fort and drank a bale of liquor and named it Fort Hall in honor of the oldest partner of our concern we left it and with it Mr. Evans in charge of 11 men and 14 horses and mules and three cows we went down the river S.W. 4 miles and found a ford crossed and made N.W. 7 miles to the head of a spring and camped in all 29 strong. Fort Hall is in Latt. 43deg 14' Long. 113deg 35'

Jason Lee's original diary account of his visit at Fort Hall is as follows:



Aerial map of Fort Hall region. GOOGLE EARTH,  
ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR.

July 14.—Forded some bad creeks and camped on Snake River, as it was called here, but on the maps Lewis River, and is one of the main branches of the Columbia.

July 15.—Arrived at the place Captain W. had chosen to build his fort.

July 16.—Twelve men went out to procure and dry meat for the journey to Wallahwallah, there being no prospect of finding buffalo below [down the Snake].

July 26.—The men returned laden with meat.

Sunday, July 27.—By request of Mr. M'Kay, whose party had now arrived, we repaired to the grove for public worship, which was the first we had on the journey. Mr. M'Kay's company, consisting of Indians, half breeds, and Canadians, attended, and many of Capt. W's. company. All behaved with the utmost decorum. Being unwell I did not preach, but gave a short exhortation. After service two of Mr. M'Kay's Canadians went out for a horse race, and while they were at full speed another, attempting to run in with them, came in contact with one of the former, who was thrown from his horse and so injured that he knew nothing after and expired before morning.

July 28.—Read the funeral service to all of both companies, who appeared very solemn. O that they would remember this, that they would think on their latter end. Two Indians from Capt. M'Kay's company came to our tent, and told us they wished to give us two horses. Suspecting that they intended to pursue the same course that the traders say they generally do, viz., give a horse and then require more than its value in goods, I told them if they gave us horses we had little to give them in return. They replied that they wanted nothing in return. Fearing they would be displeased, if we refused, and being in want of horses, I told them that I would gladly accept their favor, and accordingly they brought us two fine white horses. Captain M'Kay had told them that we were missionaries, and it was on this account that they presented the horses. In return I gave them a small present with which they seemed well pleased. Thus we were provided for just in time of need, for two of our horses were nearly worn out, and were able to do nothing after, and we were obliged to leave them in the prairie. The name of Capt. W's. fort is Fort Hall, its latitude 43° 14' north. The place is not pleasant, the sand being frequently driven about by the wind in as large quantities as snow in the east.

July 30.—Left Fort Hall with [Capt. Stewart and] Captain M'K., Captain W., not being yet ready, and we being under the necessity of pushing on with such rapidity that we should not be able to take our cows, we judged it best to leave his company.

Cyrus Shepard's diary is filled with praises to God and doubts about his ability to be a successful missionary. His daily prayers were often very rewarding to him. Shepard frequently provided great detail about events that occurred. Most of his Fort Hall account follows:

Saturday 12th July 1834—Still journey safe in the care of One disposing Power—some snow on the surrounding mountains—passed many excellent springs of pure water and encamped on Ross' creek a small chrystal stream abounding with fine trout of which W. Lee caught a large mess—Afflicted with severe headache.

...

Monday 14th July 1834—Continued our journey and in a few hours arrived at Lewis river a branch of the Columbia and encamped for the day—Am yet feeble in body—walked out about a mile from camp and found myself so weak as to be scarcely able to return — — —

Tuesday 15th July 1834—Removed about five miles down the river to where Capt. W. is going to build a fort—are to tarry here several days. Lat. 43° 14' North.

Wednesday 16th July Twelve of the men left camp this day to hunt buffalo and cure the meat for our future journey as we soon leave the buffalo country entirely—They are directed to stay Twelve or fourteen days if they should not succeed in obtaining a sufficient quantity for our future use—one of our company (Mr. Walker) is one of the party—O my God

preserve them I pray Thee and return them in due season that we may again rejoice together in the land of the living—Engaged in finishing my halters — — —

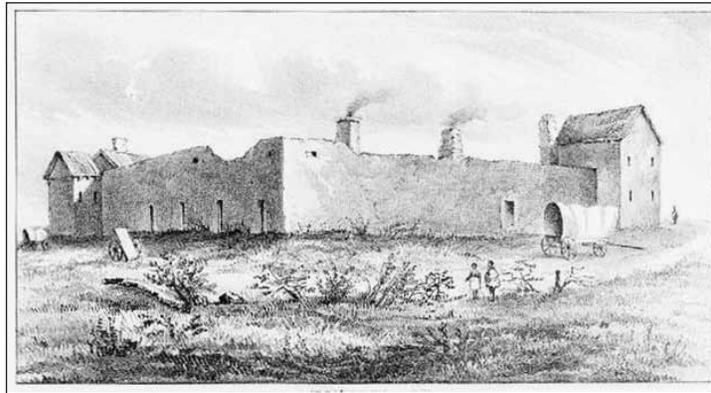
Thursday 17th July 1834—At work on my halters but being yet weak am able to do but little at once. Br. J. Lee has been out with a small party hunting for the immediate use of the camp, he has returned unwell having been wet & has caught a violent cold.

Friday 18th July—Br. Lee was in much pain and distress of body through the night attended with high fever—Applied hot water to his feet, etc., after which he gained a very little relief but could not obtain sleep—is unable to sit up today and has much pain in back, head & limbs—Finished my halters and find I am daily gaining strength for which I desire to be truly thankful—Enjoyed secret prayer unusually well this day.

Saturday 19th July 1834—Rather more unwell but able to attend to the labour devolving upon me—Br. Lee recovering slowly—had an invitation to dine with Mr. McCay [McKay] a gentleman in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, his camp is a little above ours. Brs. J. & W.

Lee took dinner with him—Although an entire stranger to us till within a few days yet he appears quite friendly to us and our enterprise & promises us any assistance in his power hereafter and present assistance of any articles in his possession that we may be in need of—Several men left camp this day to hunt game for the immediate wants of the camp—the former stock being nearly exhausted.

Sabbath 20th July 1834—Capt. W. does not work his men this day, the first instance of the kind since landing at Independence—Spent the day in calm retirement in our tent having none to molest or make us afraid—Have not passed so



FORT HALL, 1849

Sketch from the *Official Report of the Howard Stansbury Expedition* (1849). The trading post (and fort) was established by Nathaniel Wyeth in 1834 along the Snake River. Wyeth located the fort in an area near the river where he knew wintering buffalo would attract Indians, and thus, trade. COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.

quiet a Sabbath for months past. . . . Weather extremely hot in the middle of the day—one of the men that went out yesterday returned this evening with the flesh of a large grisley bear—Thus the Bountiful Giver of all good things provides for us in every extremity — — —

Monday 21st July 1834—Afflicted with headache—Our food this day consisted of bear meat and excellent fish caught from the river. . . .

Tuesday 22nd July 1834—Engaged in various domestic duties. . . . Br. Lee much more unwell — —

Wednesday 23 July 1834—. . . Mr. McCay has presented us a number of pounds of flour say fourteen or fifteen, an article so extremely necessary in sickness and this present came too in the time of greatest need as the little which we have been saving to use in case any of us should be sick is now nearly or quite exhausted, having been used to thicken porridge for the sick which at some times was the only sustenance we could take—The flour presented is from wheat grown at Vancouver on the Columbia river in the Oregon Territory. Thus we are permitted to eat of the fruit of the land even before arriving at the place of our destination. . . . Water boils here at a temperature of two hundred four degrees—have very warm days and cool nights—Thermometer over ninety degrees at noon some days and down to freezing point in the night — . . .

Friday 25th July 1834—Last night while alone on guard (The horses being shut up in a yard prepared for the purpose, my soul caught new fire by a glimpse of the Divine Glory and exulted largely in the God of my Salvation. . . . A number of the Snake indians called the diggers came to camp this day. They were meanly clad but otherwise appeared as intelligent as most other indians—. . .

Sabbath 27th July 1834—Sweet day of rest. . . . Retired about half a mile from camp to a willow grove, offered up prayer and praise to the Father of mercies, had a meeting and profitable season. . . .

After tarrying here a space returned to camp and passed the remainder of the forenoon in tranquility—mostly engaged in reading—P.M., Dined with Mr. McCay after which J. Lee by his request held a meeting in the grove near his camp and addressed the people from 1st Cor., 10th Ch., 31st V — — Felt my soul drawn forth in prayer before the meeting that good might be done in the name of Jesus—At the time appointed about Thirty indians and as many white

& French came together to hear the word of the Lord—Br. L. opened the meeting by reading the Fiftieth Psalm & afterward the hymn beginning with “This Lord of Sabbath let us praise, etc” which was sung to the tune of exhortation, prayer & address, followed by J. Lee—Br. L’s remarks were few but solemn and appropriate. The congregation gave the most profound and respectful attention, my soul was edified, comforted and quickened. . . .

Monday 28th July 1834—The unfortunate Frenchman mentioned as having been seriously injured yesterday lingered till two o’clock this morning, when his spirit returned to God who gave it—ever thing was done that could be by Mr. Mc and others—This day his remains were committed to their mother earth by his companions—being Catholics they placed a black cross on his heart, made of cloth sewed upon his shroud—he was buried without a coffin wrapped in a buffalo skin over his shroud—By request Br. Lee read scriptures and made a prayer at McCays camp and read the funeral service at his grave after which dust was committed to dust to await the morning of resurrection. . . .

Capt. W. and his men attended the service and general solemnity seemed to rest upon the assembly—May all improve this Solemn and awakening Providence to their present and everlasting good—The comrades of the deceased have erected an emplacement around his grave and placed a wooden cross over it, he has left an indian wife and three children—Two indians came to our tent and manifested a desire to give each a horse to the mission —

Tuesday 27th July 1834—Went fishing with J. & D. Lee about two miles down the river—were not very successful but became quite weary and were glad to make our way back to the camp—Expect to leave here tomorrow in company with Mr. McCay, Capt. W. being obliged to tarry longer at the Fort. . . .

Wednesday 30th July 1834 Breakfasted early, collected our animals and prepared for the journey—The two indians came and presented their horses, etc.—commenced our journey about 10 o’clock A.M. and proceeded Seven or eight miles and encamped on the Portneffe—Br. L. sick again with sever headache & pain in back and limbs which followed him severly most of the night but was somewhat mitigated in the morning. . . .

JOHN KIRK TOWNSEND WAS TRAINED AS A PHYSICIAN and pharmacist, and his keen interest in natural history and bird collecting is apparent. Townsend went with the hunting party to collect meat for the remainder of the journey. His journal, with its extensive descriptions of the journey, along with wildlife and birds, is much different from the typical emigrant journal:

This afternoon [July 23] I observed a large flock of wild geese passing over; and upon watching them, perceived that they alighted about a mile and a half from us, where I knew there

*I heard a sort of angry growl or grunt directly before me and instantly after, saw a grizzly bear of the largest kind erect himself upon his hind feet within a dozen yards of me, his savage eyes glaring with horrible malignity, his mouth wide open, and his tremendous paws raised as though ready to descend upon me. For a moment, I thought my hour had come, and that I was fated to die an inglorious death away from my friends and my kindred*

was a lake. Concluding that a little change of diet might be agreeable, I sallied forth with my gun across the plain in quest of the birds. I soon arrived at a thick copse of willow and currant bushes, which skirted the water, and was about entering, when I heard a sort of angry growl or grunt directly before me and instantly after, saw a grizzly bear of the largest kind erect himself upon his hind feet within a dozen yards of me, his savage eyes glaring with horrible malignity, his mouth wide open, and his tremendous paws raised as though ready to descend upon me. For a moment, I thought my hour had come, and that I was fated to die an inglorious death away from my friends and my kindred; but after waiting a moment in agonizing suspense, and the bear showing no inclination to advance, my lagging courage returned, and cocking both barrels of my gun, and presenting it as steadily as my nerves would allow, full at the shaggy breast of the creature, I retreated slowly backwards. Bruin evidently had

no notion of braving gunpowder, but I did not know whether, like a dog, if the enemy retreated he would not yet give me a chase; so when I had placed about a hundred yards between us, I wheeled about and flew, rather than ran, across the plain towards the camp. Several times during this run for life, (as I considered it,) did I fancy that I heard the bear at my heels; and not daring to look over my shoulder to ascertain the fact, I only increased my speed, until the camp was nearly gained, when, from sheer exhaustion I relaxed my efforts, fell flat upon the ground, and looked behind me. The whole space between me and the copse was untenanted, and I was forced to acknowledge, with a feeling strongly allied to shame, that my fears alone had represented the bear in chase of me.

When I arrived in camp, and told my break-neck adventure to the men, our young companion, Mr. Ashworth, expressed a wish to go and kill the bear, and requested the loan of my double-barrelled gun for this purpose. This I at first peremptorily refused, and the men, several of whom were experienced hunters, joined me in urging him not to attempt the rash adventure. At length, however, finding him determined on going, and that rather than remain, he would trust to his own single gun, I was finally induced to offer him mine, with a request, (which I had hoped would check his daring spirit,) that he would leave the weapon in a situation where I could readily find it; for after he had made one shot, he would never use a gun again.

He seemed to heed our caution and advice but little, and, with a dogged and determined air, took the way across the plain to the bushes, which we could see in the distance. I watched him for some time, until I saw him enter them, and then, with a sigh that one so young and talented should be lost from amongst us, and a regret that we did not forcibly prevent his going, I sat myself down, distressed and melancholy. We all listened anxiously to hear the report of the gun; but no sound reaching our ears, we began to hope that he had failed in finding the animal, and in about fifteen minutes, to my inexpressible relief, we saw him emerge from the copse, and bend his steps slowly towards us. When he came in, he seemed disappointed, and somewhat angry. He said he had searched the bushes in every direction, and although he had found numerous footprints, no bear was to be seen. It is probable that when I commenced my retreat in one direction, bruin made off in the other, and that although he was willing to dispute the ground with me, and prevent my passing his

lair, he was equally willing to back out of an engagement in which his fears suggested that he might come off the loser. . . .

On the morning of the 25th, we commenced baling up our meat in buffalo skins dried for the purpose. Each bale contains about a hundred pounds, of which a mule carries two; and when we had finished, our twelve longeared friends were loaded. Our limited term of absence is now nearly expired, and we are anxious to return to the fort in order to prepare for the journey to the lower country. . . .

At about 10 o'clock, we left our pleasant encampment, and bade adieu to the cold spring, the fat buffalo, and grizzly bears, and urging our mules into their fastest walk, we jolted along with our *provant* towards the fort. . . .

We travelled, this day, thirty miles, and the next afternoon, at 4 o'clock, arrived at the fort. On the route we met three hunters, whom Captain W. had sent to kill game for the camp. They informed us that all hands have been for several days on short allowance, and were very anxious for our return.

When we came in sight of the fort, we gave them a mountain salute, each man firing his gun in quick succession. They did not expect us until to-morrow, and the firing aroused them instantly. In a very few minutes, a score of men were armed and mounted, and dashing out to give battle to the advancing Indians, as they thought us. The general supposition was, that their little hunting party had been attacked by a band of roving Blackfeet, and they made themselves ready for the rescue in a space of time that did them great credit.

It was perhaps "*bad medicine*," (to use the mountain phrase,) to fire a salute at all, inasmuch as it excited some unnecessary alarm, but it had the good effect to remind them

that danger might be near when they least expected it, and afforded them an opportunity of showing the promptness and alacrity with which they could meet and brave it.

Our people were all delighted to see us arrive, and I could perceive many a longing and eager gaze cast upon the well filled bales, as our mules swung their little bodies through the camp. My companion, Mr. N., had become so exceedingly thin that I should scarcely have known him; and upon my expressing surprise at the great change in his appearance, he heaved a sigh of inanity, and remarked that I "would have been as thin as he if I had lived on old *Ephraim* for two weeks, and short allowance of that." I found, in truth, that the whole camp had been subsisting, during our absence, on little else than two or three grizzly bears which had been killed in the neighborhood; and with a complacent glance at my own rotund and *cow-fed* person, I wished my *poor* friend better luck for the future.

We found Mr. McKay's company encamped on the bank of the river within a few hundred yards of our tents. It consists of thirty men, thirteen of whom are Indians, Nez Perces, Chinooks and Kayouses with a few squaws. The remainder are French-Canadians, and half-breeds. Their lodges, of which there are several, are of a conical

form, composed of ten long poles, the lower ends of which are pointed and driven into the ground; the upper blunt, and drawn together at the top by thongs. Around these poles, several dressed buffalo skins, sewed together, are stretched, a hole being left on one side for entrance.

These are the kind of lodges universally used by the mountain Indians while travelling: they are very comfortable and commodious, and a squaw accustomed to it, will erect and



Successful Boston businessman, inventor, and explorer Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth (1802-1856) founded Fort Hall in 1834 as a trading post on the Snake River. He soon sold it, and from there went to Oregon, again set up a trading post. Unsuccessful once more, he returned to Boston, where he continued living a prosperous life. This portrait was made ca. 1832. WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

NARRATIVE

OF A

JOURNEY ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS,

TO

THE COLUMBIA RIVER,

AND

A VISIT TO THE SANDWICH ISLANDS, CHILI, &c.

WITH

A SCIENTIFIC APPENDIX.

BY JOHN K. TOWNSEND,

Member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA:

HENRY PERKINS, 134 CHESTNUT STREET.

BOSTON: PERKINS & MARVIN.

1839.

EH

prepare one for the reception of her husband, while he is removing the trapping from his horse. I have seen an expert Indian woman stretch a lodge in half the time that was required by four white men to perform the same operation with another in the neighborhood.

At the fort, affairs look prosperous: the stockade is finished; two bastions have been erected, and the work is singularly good, considering the scarcity of proper building tools. The house will now soon be habitable, and the structure can then be completed at leisure by men who will be left here in charge, while the party travels on to its destination, the Columbia. . . .

I think I never was more gratified by any exhibition in my life. The humble, subdued, and beseeching looks of the poor untutored beings who were calling upon their heavenly father to forgive their sins, and continue his mercies to them, and the evident and heart-felt sincerity which characterized the whole scene, was truly affecting, and very impressive.

The next day being the Sabbath, our good missionary, Mr. Jason Lee, was requested to hold a meeting, with which he obligingly complied. A convenient, shady spot was selected in the forest adjacent, and the greater part of our men, as well as the whole of Mr. McKay's company, including the Indians, attended. The usual forms of the Methodist service, (to which Mr. L. is attached,) were gone through, and were followed by a brief, but excellent and appropriate exhortation by that gentleman. The people were remarkably quiet and attentive, and the Indians sat upon the ground like statues. Although not one of them could understand a word that was said, they nevertheless maintained the most strict and decorous silence, kneeling when the preacher kneeled, and rising when he rose, evidently with a view of paying him and us a

suitable respect, however much their own notions as to the proper and most acceptable forms of worship, might have been opposed to ours.

A meeting for worship in the Rocky mountains is almost as unusual as the appearance of a herd of buffalo in the settlements. A sermon was perhaps never preached here before; but for myself, I really enjoyed the whole scene; it possessed the charm of novelty, to say nothing of the salutary effect which I sincerely hope it may produce.

Mr. Lee is a great favorite with the men, deservedly so, and there are probably few persons to whose preaching they would have listened with so much complaisance. I have often been amused and pleased by Mr. L.'s manner of reproving them for the coarseness and profanity of expression which is so universal amongst them. The reproof, although decided, clear, and strong, is always characterized by the mildness and affectionate manner peculiar to the man; and although the good effect of the advice may not be discernible, yet it is always treated with respect, and its utility acknowledged.

In the evening, a fatal accident happened to a Canadian belonging to Mr. McKay's party. He was running his horse, in company with another, when the animals were met in full career by a third rider, and horses and men were thrown with great force to the ground. The Canadian was taken up completely senseless, and brought to Mr. McKay's lodge, where we were all taking supper. I perceived at once that there was little chance of his life being saved. He had received an injury of the head which had evidently caused concussion of the brain. He was bled copiously, and various local remedies were applied, but without success; the poor man died early next morning.

He was about forty years of age, healthy, active, and shrewd, and very much valued by Mr. McKay as a leader in his absence, and as an interpreter among the Indians of the Columbia.

At noon the body was interred. It was wrapped in a piece of coarse linen, over which was sewed a buffalo robe. The spot selected, was about a hundred yards south of the fort, and the funeral was attended by the greater part of the men of both camps. Mr. Lee officiated in performing the ordinary church ceremony, after which a hymn for the repose of the soul of the departed, was sung by the Canadians present. The grave is surrounded by a neat palisade of willows, with a black cross erected at the head, on which is carved the name "Casseau."

On the 30th of July, Mr. McKay and his party left us for Fort Vancouver, Captain Stewart and our band of missionaries

OPPOSITE: Title page of John Kirk Townsend's journal, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River, and a Visit to the Sandwich Islands, Chili, &c: With a Scientific Appendix*, published in Philadelphia in 1839. Townsend (1801-1851) was trained as a physician and ornithologist; he left his Quaker family in Pennsylvania to travel with botanist Thomas Nuttall on the Wyeth expedition to the Pacific. His highly readable account of that journey (1839, and many later editions), is acclaimed as true adventure writing. COURTESY BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE LIBRARY ([HTTP://WWW.BIODIVERSITYHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.biodiversityheritage.org)), PUBLIC DOMAIN.

accompanying them. The object of the latter in leaving us, is, that they may have an opportunity of travelling more slowly than we should do, on account, and for the benefit of the horned cattle which they are driving to the lower country. We feel quite sad in the prospect of parting from those with whom we have endured some toil and danger, and who have been to some of us as brothers, throughout our tedious journey; but, if no unforeseen accident occurs, we hope to meet them all again at Walla-Walla, the upper fort on the Columbia. As the party rode off, we fired three rounds, which were promptly answered, and three times three cheers wished the travellers success.

August 5th. At sunrise this morning, the “star-spangled banner” was raised on the flag-staff at the fort, and a salute fired by the men, who, according to orders, assembled around it. All in camp were then allowed the free and uncontrolled use of liquor, and, as usual, the consequence was a scene of rioting, noise, and fighting, during the whole day; some became so drunk that their senses fled them entirely, and they were therefore harmless; but by far the greater number were just sufficiently under the influence of the vile trash, to render them in their conduct disgusting and tiger-like. We had “gouging,” biting, fisticuffing, and “stamping” in the most “scientific” perfection; some even fired guns and pistols at each other, but these weapons were mostly harmless in the unsteady hands which employed them. Such scenes I hope never to witness again; they are absolutely sickening, and cause us to look upon our species with abhorrence and loathing. Night at last came, and cast her mantle over our besotted camp; the revel was over, and the men retired to their pallets peaceably, but not a few of them will bear palpable evidence of the debauch of the 5th of August.

The next morning we commenced packing, and at 11 o'clock bade adieu to “Fort Hall.” Our company now consists of but thirty men, several Indian women, and one hundred and sixteen horses. We crossed the main Snake or Shoshone river, at a point about three miles from the fort. It is here as wide as the Missouri at Independence, but, beyond comparison, clearer and more beautiful.

Immediately on crossing the river, we entered upon a wide, sandy plain, thickly covered with wormwood, and early in the afternoon, encamped at the head of a delightful spring, about ten miles from our starting place.

OSBORNE RUSSELL WAS ANOTHER OF THE MEMBERS of Wyeth’s expedition. He was designated to stay behind at Fort Hall and hunt to provide food for the fort. Inexperienced as a hunter, he was forced to learn. Russell’s account of the trip west and building of Fort Hall is sparse but sometimes provides details not found in other accounts. His account, considered one of the best journals of a mountain man in the field, continues recording his life as a trapper in the Fort Hall area for eight years:

The next day [July 12] we traveled in a westerly direction over a rough, mountainous country [Mount Putnam] about twenty-five miles, and the day following, after traveling about twenty miles in the same direction, we emerged from the mountains into the great valley of the Snake River. On the 16th we crossed the valley and reached the river in about twenty-five miles travel west. Here Mr. Wyeth concluded to stop, build a fort and deposit the remainder of his merchandise, leaving a few men to protect them, and trade with the Snake and Bannock Indians.

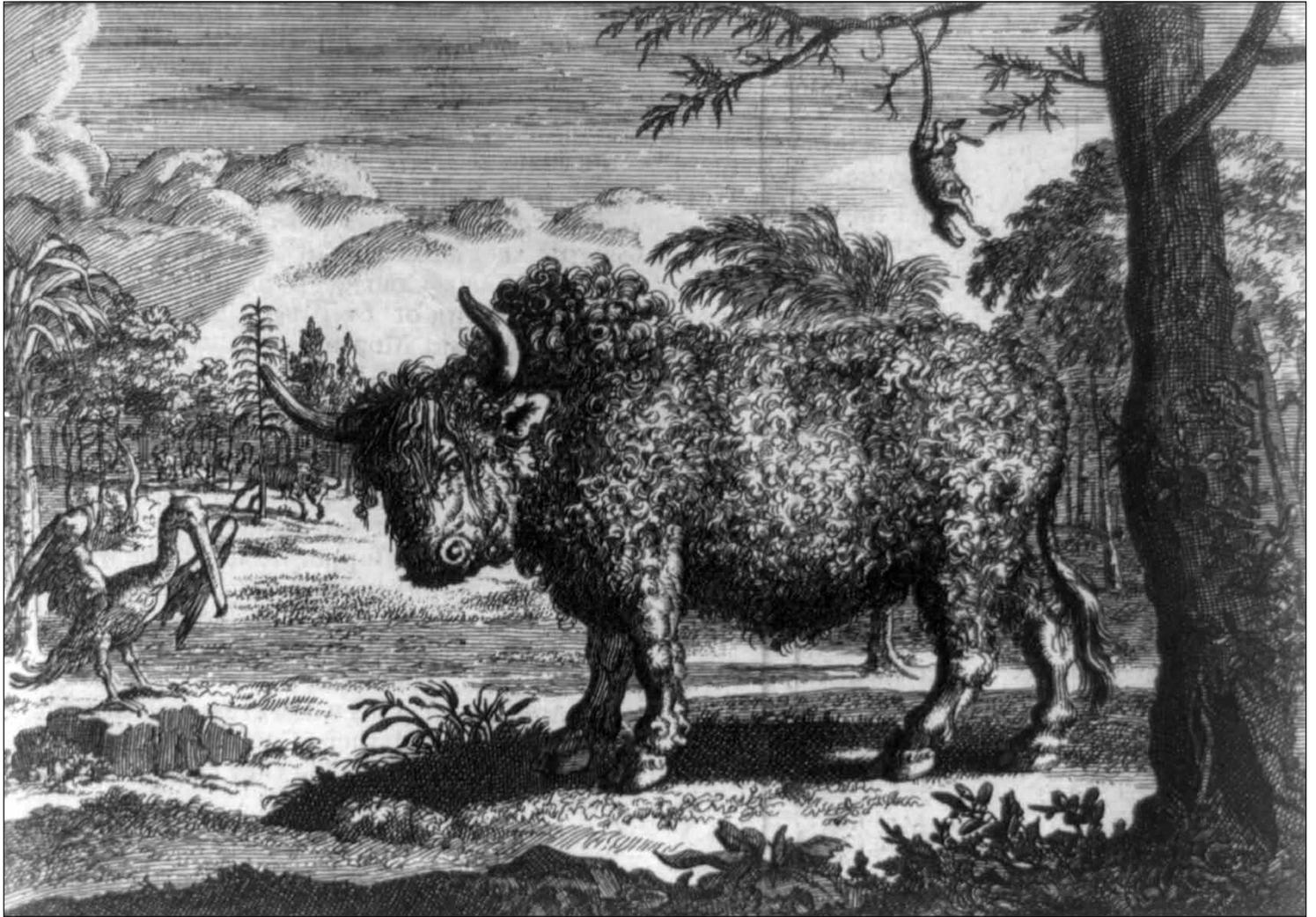
On the 18th [July] we commenced the fort, which was a stockade eighty feet square, built of cottonwood trees set on end, sunk two and one-half feet in the ground and standing about fifteen feet above, with two bastions eight feet square at the opposite angles. On the 4th of August the fort was completed and on the 5th the “Stars and Stripes” were unfurled to the breeze at sunrise in the center of a savage and uncivilized country, over an American trading post.

The next day Mr. Wyeth departed for the mouth of the Columbia River with all the party excepting twelve men (myself included) who were stationed at the fort. I now began to experience the difficulties attending a mountaineer, we being all raw hands, excepting the man who had charge of the fort, and a mulatto, the two latter having but very little experience in hunting game with the rifle, and although the country abounded with game, still it wanted experience to kill it.

Isaac Rose and his friend, Joe Lewis, joined Wyeth’s party in St. Louis to serve for fifteen months, for which they were to receive \$250 each. Both Rose and Lewis were also part of the group that stayed behind at Fort Hall to trap and hunt. Rose’s stories of his adventures during four years in the Rocky Mountains were published by James B. Marsh in 1884. A small portion is shared here:



Fort Hall Historic Marker, placed in 1962 by the National Park Service. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.



Nathaniel Wyeth chose the Snake River valley for the site of his new fort because Indians were drawn there by the herds of buffalo that wintered in the region. This rare, late-eighteenth-century engraving of a North American buffalo was made during another expedition—this one led by the French-born René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, exploring down the Mississippi River in the late 1600s. Drawn by Fr. Louis Hennepin, the buffalo image was published in France in 1698 and English in 1699, in *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS DIGITAL ID CPH 3A10787. PUBLIC DOMAIN.

On arriving at Snake river they commenced at once to build a fort. This was a big undertaking, as they had no wagons to haul their timber. Logs were cut and dragged or carried to the spot needed where they were placed in an upright position, side by side, and about three feet in the ground.

In this manner a large space was enclosed, and while part of the men were engaged in the outer palisade, others were constructing a log house in the enclosure in which to store the goods. They gave it the name of Fort Hall. As soon as the fort was built and the goods securely housed, Wyeth thought it high time to commence business, and a party of men were at once sent off, under the command of Joseph Gale, to trap Beaver in the Blackfoot country. Among them was Rose and Joe Lewis.

HAVING BEEN OUT-FOXED BY WILLIAM SUBLETTE AT the Ham's Fork rendezvous of 1834, Nathaniel Wyeth moved west and built Fort Hall, a trading post on the Snake River. He chose a suitable site a few miles above the mouth of the Portneuf River and a small stockade was constructed. Wyeth left twelve men behind to maintain the fort, trap, and hunt. The remainder continued west with Wyeth to the mouth of Columbia River, where they would arrange the shipment of their furs to the East Coast.

The passages by expedition participants presented here provide rich and intriguing details of the creation of Fort Hall. Although the fort was built as a contingency to the failure of Wyeth's primary plan to supply trade goods at the Ham's Fork rendezvous, Fort Hall became an important trading post on the Oregon and California Trails in the years to come. Many an emigrant party stopped there before continuing on, either to Oregon or California. A stone monument marks the location today.

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# Suggested Convention Reading

BY JERRY EICHHORST

*Many emigrant diaries* mention interactions with Indians along the trails in Idaho. These interactions have a wide range: passing groups along the trail; to Indians visiting their camps looking for food, offering fish for trade, and offering to trade for white children; to thievery, attacks, and killings. Many diarists had no encounters with Indians across Idaho, yet tribal histories tell us that all the wagon trains were watched from hilltops in the distance. Although there were several Indian attacks on wagon trains crossing Idaho, in the great majority of encounters, the Indians were friendly and helpful to the emigrants.

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The indefatigable Ezra Meeker appeared before the House of Representatives Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures in April 1926, urging the government to issue coins to raise money to install monuments along the Oregon Trail. (The effort was very successful.) Meeker is shown here on April 3, 1926, with (LEFT) Representative Addison T. Smith of Idaho and (RIGHT) Dr. David G. Wylie of New York, Secretary of the Oregon Trail Association. NATIONAL PHOTO COMPANY COLLECTION (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS), LC-DIG-NPCC-15576. PUBLIC DOMAIN.



# Speech at Old Fort Hall, Idaho

by EZRA MEEKER

July 27, 1921

INTRODUCTION · WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1921, marked the eighty-seventh anniversary of Methodist missionary Jason Lee conducting the first public worship service on the Overland Trail delivered by an American. To commemorate that occasion, Ezra Manning Meeker, standing beside waters flowing into the Pacific, spoke at the old Fort Hall site. In his speech, Meeker praised Jason Lee, and claimed Fort Hall as the most significant historical site along the Oregon Trail.

Meeker's original handwritten notecards of this speech are held by the Idaho State Archives in Boise.<sup>1</sup> The last card is signed by Meeker. Selected excerpts of his speech follow.

JERRY EICHHORST

<sup>1</sup> Meeker, Ezra Manning, "Speech at Old Fort Hall," August 27, 1921, MSS 2, Folder 0197, Idaho State Historical Society, Boise, Idaho. Ezra Meeker (1830–1928), an Oregon Trail pioneer, was a founder of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association (OTMA), organized in 1926. OTMA is considered the "spiritual predecessor" of the Oregon-California Trails Association. In 2015 Meeker was named the first honoree in OCTA's Emigrant Trails Hall of Fame. See Dennis Larsen, "The Emigrant Trails Hall of Fame: Ezra Manning Meeker," *Overland Journal* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2015–16): 166–67.

**I**N THE LAPSE OF YEARS AS LIKE WITH the greater part of the Oregon Trail the landmarks pointing to the site of Ft Hall had disappeared, while others were forgotten and passed out of memory as the pioneers one by one passed on to their reward. So, when I drove with my ox team into Pocatello in May of 1906, on my way over the Oregon Trail searching for suitable spots upon which to erect monuments. I naturally first queried to ascertain the site of Fort Hall, which I then and do now consider the most important historic point on the great trail. . . .

I made a third trip over the Oregon trail in 1916, this time in an automobile and on August 29 under the auspices and

*A people that fails to record its history  
falls short of fulfilling a destiny  
of highest civilization.*

guidance of Dr. W. [William] Howard and Dr. Minnie Howard with the interpreter Joe Rainey as guide we unmistakably found the exact spot where the old fort had once reared its formidable wall; Rainey had taken us straight to the old site; we need not rely on his recollection. Excavations made at once developed numerous relics of the old fort, which has

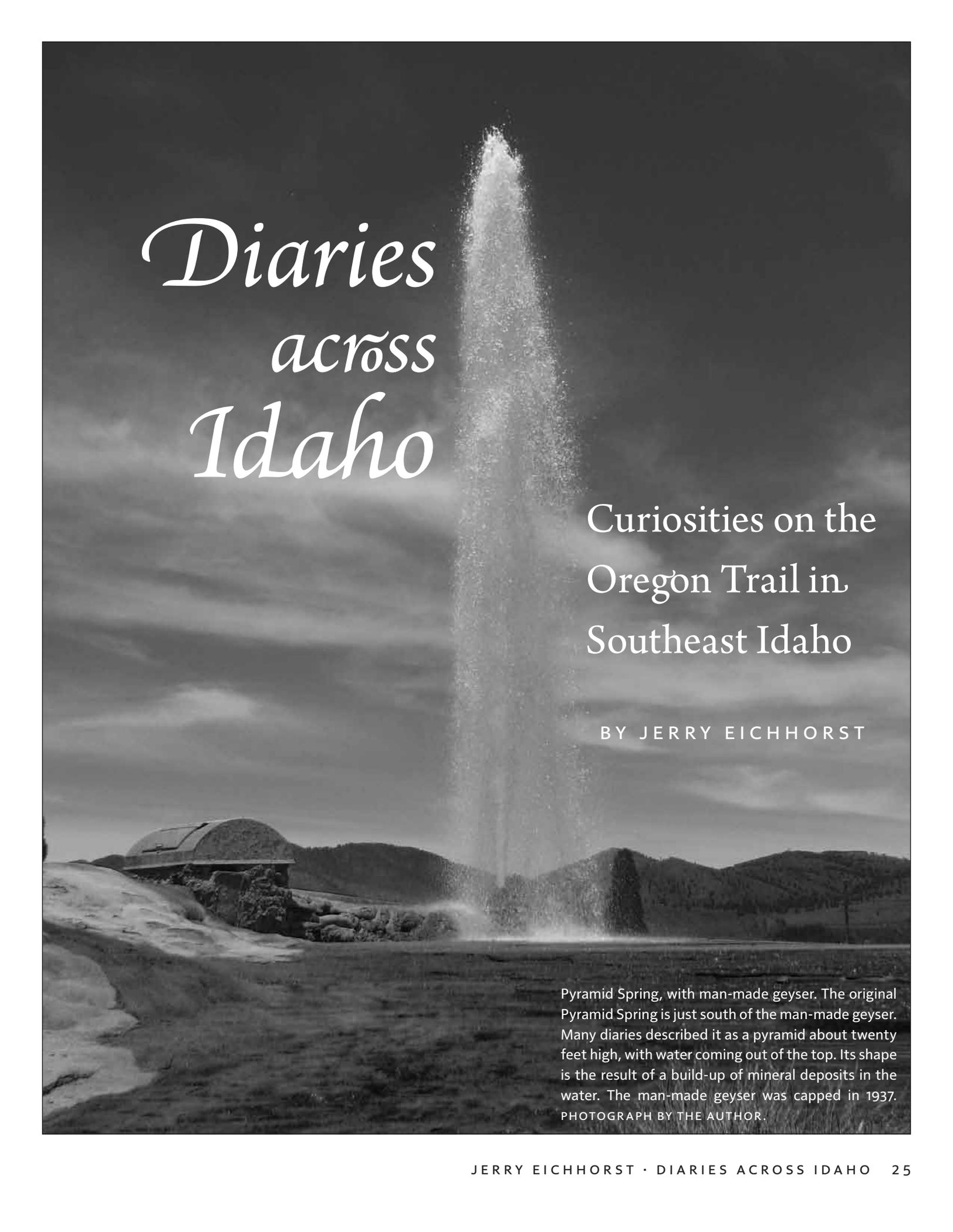
since been supplemented by further exploration resulting in a treasured collection in the possession of Mrs. Dr. Minnie Howard of Pocatello.

The most contributing and convincing relics consisting of broken English decorated china, deeply rusted scrap iron; an old clay pipe stem, a broken hinge, an ox shoe, a broken stone grate, a broken beef bone, a quantity of lime all two feet or more under accumulated debris. The site of the old blacksmith shop with its tell tale story of clinkers within the walls is there. A temporary wooden post was set which subsequently has been replaced by a stone marker and so, you my friends, need have no doubts but this assemblage is on the memorable spot, where we have met to commemorate the memory of the great event, the preaching of the first sermon west of the Rocky Mountains by Jason Lee. . . .

A people that fails to record its history falls short of fulfilling a destiny of highest civilization. I am led to express these thoughts upon realizing that eighty seven years has passed since the enactment of this great historic event and as yet no tangible plan adopted to secure a recognition of the characters participating in this drama of life indelibly writ by heroism, suffering and death. . . .

Fort Hall was an integral part of the Oregon Trail, the greatest trail of history, that has contributed largely to the development of the nation by safeguarding its Pacific possession and that is destined to play a greater role in the future of preparedness for defense. It is destined to become the great thoroughfare from river to river from the great Missouri to the greater Columbia, from the Mississippi valley to the Pacific Ocean.

I do not expect to live to see it, but there are people within the sound of my voice that will, when the whole will be paved, when the passage of the trackless car will compete with the railroads both for passengers and freight. But time forbids pursuing this interesting subject further. 



# *Diaries across Idaho*

Curiosities on the  
Oregon Trail in  
Southeast Idaho

BY JERRY EICHHORST

Pyramid Spring, with man-made geyser. The original Pyramid Spring is just south of the man-made geyser. Many diaries described it as a pyramid about twenty feet high, with water coming out of the top. Its shape is the result of a build-up of mineral deposits in the water. The man-made geyser was capped in 1937.

PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.

**R**esearching historical emigrant diaries is a fascinating passion for me. A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION CAN BE LEARNED ABOUT THE PEOPLE, TRIPS, SITES, AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ERA BY STUDYING THEIR ACCOUNTS OF JOURNEYS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Hundreds of thousands of people loaded their essential possessions into wagons and trudged across the plains to build a new life in Oregon and California in the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of these emigrants kept journals of their trip that fortunately are available to study and enjoy today. Some are filled with detailed descriptions of sites and events they encountered on their westward journey. Others simply noted the miles traveled and the camping conditions—crossing the country in a few pages, so to speak. Women tended to add emotion and sensitivity in their writings, yet some men rambled on with great detail and opinions to produce extensive accounts. I find that all are interesting to read.

Much has been written about the mass migration of people across the country to the Pacific Coast. Books supplement an interesting journal, providing insight into the emigrant, his family history, and the route that he traveled. Groupings of journals by year or by gender have proven to be popular. Countless histories of the trails have drawn upon these journals as sources to document the great migration, often using short diary quotes to accentuate a point. Still other books follow the trails from their origins across the country, augmenting descriptions of the route with maps and selected journal entries.

Little has been published, however, that analyzes large numbers of journals in detail by a specific location. Previously I compiled more than fifty diaries by location to identify the true route of the North Alternate Oregon Trail across southwestern Idaho.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for the upcoming Fort Hall OCTA convention, I have attempted to compile several hundred journals across southeastern Idaho—a monumental endeavor. This effort, however, has yielded interesting new discoveries in the hundreds of diaries I have been able to process.

#### THE OREGON TRAIL IN SOUTHEAST IDAHO

The Oregon Trail followed the Bear River valley in western Wyoming before entering what is now southeastern Idaho

at Thomas Fork, a branch of the Bear River flowing from the north. Crossing the Sheep Creek Hills, it descended the largest of which is commonly called “Big Hill,” before again reaching the Bear River valley. It followed the Bear River northwest through a lush valley with many small streams flowing from the mountains to the river. As the Bear River turned west to make a large bend around Sheep Rock and run south to Salt Lake, the emigrants encountered the Soda Springs, an area of geothermal activity complete with effervescent springs of hot and cold water flowing from mounds of sediment. The most famous of these springs is Steamboat Spring, now under the waters of Alexander Reservoir.

A few miles west, the trail turned northwest up the Portneuf River valley, another broad valley of lush grasses. It was at this point that the Hudspeth Cutoff was first traveled in 1849. Farther north up the valley, the route turned west over a saddle on Mount Putnam before descending along Ross Fork to the Snake River plain. The Lander Road joined the trail in this section after its creation in 1858. The route then crossed the lush Snake River bottoms to the Hudson’s Bay Company outpost of Fort Hall.<sup>2</sup> This route was also followed by thousands of emigrants who followed the Raft River route on their westward journey to California.

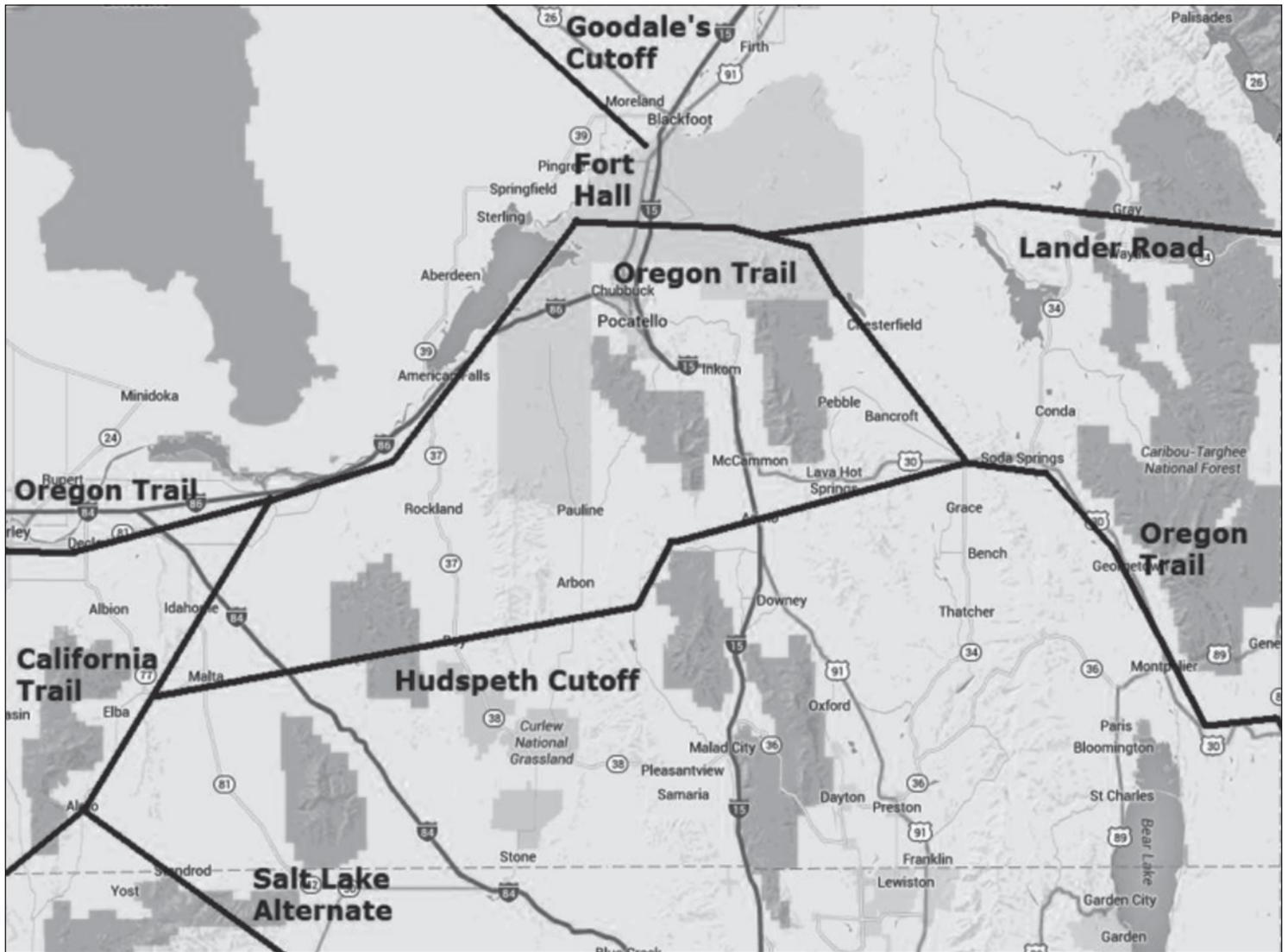
Compiling emigrant journals of the sites along this route provides fascinating descriptions of the sites, people, and events across this stretch of trail. In addition, a careful, detailed analysis has yielded a number of new findings that shed light on the Oregon Trail in southeastern Idaho.

#### SULPHUR SPRINGS

Five miles east of the town of Soda Springs and less than three miles northeast of the Oregon Trail route, is an area known as Sulphur Springs. Consisting of effervescent springs in a muddy basin, the area has the strong smell of sulphur from dozens of small springs bubbling up. Sulphur Springs is

<sup>1</sup> See Jerry Eichhorst, “Pieces to the Puzzle: Rediscovering Idaho’s North Alternate Oregon Trail,” *Overland Journal* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 48–67.

<sup>2</sup> Fort Hall Trading Post, built in 1834 by Nathaniel Wyeth, was sold to the Hudson’s Bay Company three years later. See Jerry Eichhorst’s fuller history of Fort Hall elsewhere in this issue.



MAP 1. Map of Southeast Idaho Overland Trail Routes. GOOGLE EARTH, ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR.

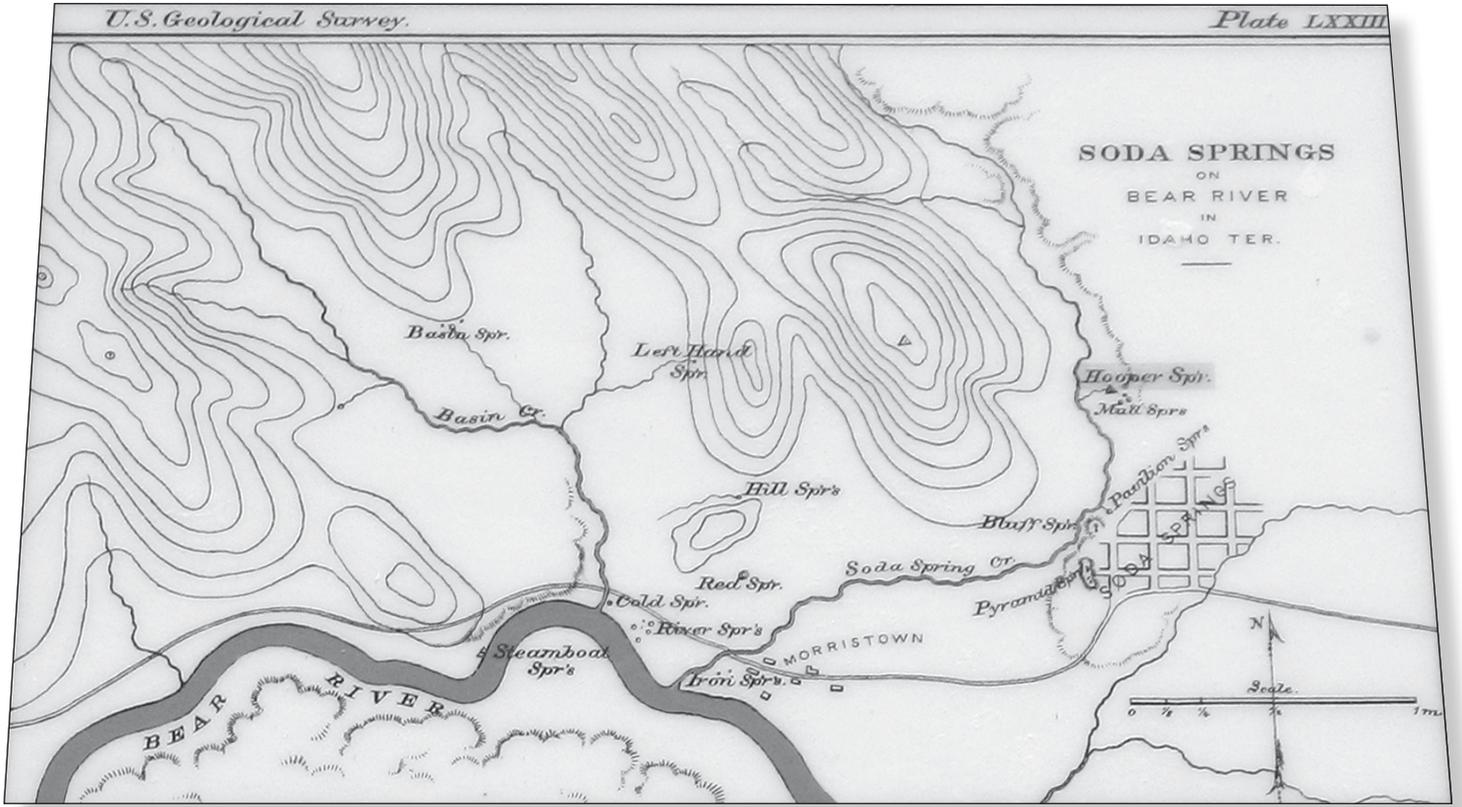
included in the Oregon Trail Bear Lake Scenic Byway website with a statement that it “was noted in numerous early explorer and emigrant diaries,” and showing an interpretive sign quoting Frederick Adolph Wislizenus, who traveled in the area in 1839.<sup>3</sup> Wislizenus traveled west to Fort Hall, then turned around and returned east. A study of his diary, however, reveals that Wislizenus never saw the Sulphur Springs. The quote used on the interpretive sign is taken from his diary entry for July 18 at Steamboat Spring along the Bear River.

After researching more than 550 diaries of emigrants

traveling on the Oregon Trail down Bear River valley, I was unable to find an account which describes a visit to these Sulphur Springs. Only one account, Eleazar Stillman Ingalls, even mentions the area, referring to a sulphur lake while he was camped near Steamboat Spring: “There are also Sulphur Springs, and springs containing other minerals, and five miles back in the hills is a Sulphur Lake.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, I distinctly

3 [http://www.seidaho.org/scenic\\_byway.htm](http://www.seidaho.org/scenic_byway.htm), accessed on March 6, 2016. Frederick Adolph Wislizenus, *A Journey to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1839* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1912).

4 Judge Eleazar Stillman Ingalls, *Journal of a Trip to California by the Overland Route Across the Plains in 1850–51* (Waukegan, Ill.: Tobey and Co., Printers, 1852, reprinted Fairfield, Wash.: Ye Galleon Press, 1979). Digital copy online at <http://archive.org/details/journalofatripto3178ogut>. Accessed on January 28, 2013.



MAP 2. An early U.S.G.S. map was used as the basis for this plaque, which stands at Hooper Spring, near the town of Soda Springs, Idaho. This detail includes a section of the Bear River and the early Soda Springs townsite. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.

remember having come across one account some time ago of a man who visited the Sulphur Springs in the evening. Maybe someday I will find it again.

It is not surprising to me that the site was not noted more often. There was no need to travel far from the trail to find good camping sites since the Bear River valley itself was lush. The aroma of sulphur is not overwhelming today and thus cannot be sensed at a distance. With the prevailing winds blowing away from the trail, it is unlikely that many travelers ever noticed the smell of sulphur.

#### NARCISSA WHITMAN, 1836

Narcissa Whitman traveled west in 1836 with her husband, Marcus, and three other missionary couples. The wives are often referred to as the “first white women to cross the Rockies.”<sup>5</sup> In her diary, Narcissa described visiting the Soda Springs:

July 30th Went today ten miles off our route with Husband Mr. McLeod & a few others, to visit Soda Springs. Was much delighted with the view of the wonders of Nature we saw there. The first object of curiosity we came to were several white mounds on the top of which were small springs of soda. These mounds were covered with a crustation made from the evaporation of the water which is continually running in small quantities from these springs. The next object we saw was a little singular. It consisted of an opening like a crater about three feet in diameter, by the side of a small stream. On some rocks a little below in the opening were dead flies & birds in abundance which had approached so near the crater, as to be choked with the gas which it constantly emits. On putting the face down, the breath is stoped instantly, & a low rumbling noise like the roaring of fire is heard beneath. Having satisfied our curiosity here we passed through a grove of juniper & pitch pine trees, & a small distance from them came to a large spring of soda water. Clear as crystal, effervescing continually. It appeared of great depth. At a considerable distance below the surface, there were two white substances, in appearance like lumps of Soda in a concrete state. We took with us some soda & Acid to try the effect

5 Narcissa Whitman, *Letters and Journals of Narcissa Whitman*, in Clifford M. Drury, ed., *First White Women Over the Rockies: Diaries, Letters, and Biographical Sketches of the Six Women of the Oregon Mission Who Made the Overland Journey in 1836 and 1838* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1963–1966), 76–77.

of a mixture & found that it effervesced with both, but the effervescence was greater with the Acid, than with the Soda. Drunk freely of the water, found it very pleasant. There were five or six other springs near Bear River which we did not visit, in consequence of loosing sight of part of our company & being obliged to hasten back. The ground in every direction was covered with lava. Gathered several fine specimens. We desired more time to visit other curiosities there but was unable to, for camp was moving from us continually. Rode in all thirty miles, & found them encamped under a bluff covered with black basalt.<sup>6</sup>

Several clusters of springs were concentrated in the area and are mentioned in many diaries. As Map 1 shows, the Soda Springs were along the Oregon Trail route and were easily visible to travelers as they moved along the Bear River. Yet Narcissa Whitman traveled ten miles off the trail to visit more soda springs.

I believe that Narcissa and Marcus Whitman and the others traveled up Soda Creek to Hooper Spring. Since Hooper Spring is about five miles from Bear River by way of Soda Creek, going to the spring and returning would account for Narcissa’s statement “Went today ten miles off our route with Husband.” The “several white mounds” are likely the pyramid mound area noted as “Pyramid Spr” on the survey map to the southwest of the small community that existed when the map was created. This pyramid area lies close to the creek. It remains today, located immediately to the south of the man-made geyser in the town of Soda Springs, Idaho, as shown in Map 2.

Continuing up Soda Creek, the Whitman party “passed through a grove of juniper & pitch pine trees & a small distance from them came to a large spring of soda water. Clear as crystal, effervescing continually.” The Whitmans would have seen trees on the mountain to their left as they neared Hooper Spring. It is possible that in 1836 those trees came down to the creek. A short distance north of the small community on Map 3 is Hooper Spring, a clear, effervescent spring which constantly bubbles. The spring has been modernized over time with a concrete surround and pavilion being built. Just as Narcissa “Drunk freely of the water, found it very pleasant,”<sup>7</sup> today, people still fill containers with the water.

6 *Ibid.*, 1:76–77.

7 *Ibid.*, July 30, 1836, 1:77.

The numerous springs near Bear River, which the missionaries did not have time to explore on their return trip, are likely those located to the west of the mouth of Soda Creek.

#### A GREAT CURIOSITY

Just as Narcissa Whitman's did, many of the emigrant diaries used the term "curiosity" in describing the Soda Springs and Steamboat Spring. The number was so great that it appears out of proportion. Thinking that usage of the word may have come from popular guidebooks using the term, I searched fifteen trail guidebooks that described Soda Springs. I found only one that used the term. In 1841, on his journey to California, John Bidwell wrote, "This is a noted place in the mountains and is considered a great curiosity."<sup>8</sup> Bidwell's journal was later published as one of the first guidebooks to California. The route he followed to Soda Springs became a primary route of the Oregon Trail. I was surprised to find that none of the other guidebooks I examined used the term "curiosity" when describing Soda Springs, yet travelers' accounts frequently did.

Emigrants often wrote interesting descriptions of Soda Springs and the nearby Steamboat Spring. Some accounts are extensive, filling several pages of their typescript diaries. More than 25 percent of those accounts that were analyzed used the term "curiosity" in their writing. A small sampling of "curiosity" descriptions used in accounts written before 1850 follows:

A few yards from our camp is a curious spring called the Soda Spring.

JASON LEE, JULY 8, 1834<sup>9</sup>

The continual ebullition which the gass in escaping causes renders them an object of much curiosity

CYRUS SHEPARD, JULY 8, 1834<sup>10</sup>

- 8 John Bidwell, August 10, 1841, *A Journey to California with Observations about the Country, Climate and the Route to this Country* (ca. 1842; San Francisco: John Henry Nash, 1937), 13.
- 9 Jason Lee, July 8, 1834, "Diary of Rev. Jason Lee" [April 20, 1834–August 7, 1838], ed. by F. G. Young, *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 17, no. 2 (June 1916): 116–46; 17, no. 3 (September 1916): 240–66; and 17, no. 4 (December 1916): 397–430.
- 10 Cyrus Shepard, and Gerry Gilman, *Diary of Cyrus Shepard, March 4, 1834–December 20, 1835* (Vancouver, Wash.: Clark County Genealogical Society, 1986), 40.

This is indeed a curiosity.

SARAH GILBERT WHITE SMITH, JULY 24, 1838<sup>11</sup>

Of all the curiosities that I ever Saw this Spring Surpasses all them.

SYDNEY SMITH, AUGUST 29, 1839<sup>12</sup>

Some places on Bear river exhibit great natural curiosities.

FR. PIERRE-JEAN DE SMET, AUGUST 10, 1841<sup>13</sup>

The greatest Natural Curiosity I ever saw.

MEDOREM CRAWFORD, AUGUST 11, 1842<sup>14</sup>

A number of springs . . . which cannot fail to excite the curiosity and interest of the traveler. These singular natural curiosities are known among the trappers as the Beer and Soda springs. A few hundred yards below these, is another remarkable curiosity, called the Steamboat spring.

RUFUS SAGE, 1843, REMINISCENCE<sup>15</sup>

The soda springs are a curiosity but I was very much disappointed from reports.

JOHN HOWELL, AUGUST 5, 1845<sup>16</sup>

But *the* greatest curiosity is the "Steam Boiler Spring" hard by the river. . . Here are Petrifications and geological curiosities, evidences of Volcanic nature are plenty here.

PETER DECKER, JUNE 25, 1849<sup>17</sup>

- 11 Sarah Gilbert White Smith, *Diary of Sarah White Smith, First White Women over the Rockies* (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1966), 3:61–125, quoted on 99.
- 12 Sydney Smith, *To The Rockies and Oregon, 1839–1842*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen (Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1955), 67–93, quoted on 80–81.
- 13 Pierre-Jean Smet, Hiram M. Chittenden, and Alfred T. Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801–1873: Missionary Labors and Adventures Among the Wild Tribes of the North American Indians, Embracing Minute Description of Their Manners, Customs, Games, Modes of Warfare and Torture, Legends, Traditions, Etc., All from Personal Observations Made During Many Thousand Miles of Travel, with Sketches of the Country from St. Louis to Puget Sound and the Altrabasca* (New York: F. P. Harper, 1905), 302.
- 14 Medorem Crawford, *Journal of Medorem Crawford: An Account of His Trip across the Plains with the Oregon Pioneers of 1842*, in *Sources of the History of Oregon*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (Eugene, Ore.: Star Job Office, 1897).
- 15 Rufus Sage, *Rocky Mountain Life, or Startling Scenes and Perilous Adventures in the Far West* (Boston: Wentworth & Company, 1858), n.p.
- 16 John Ewing Howell, "Diary of an Emigrant of 1845," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (April 1907): 138–58, quoted on 147.
- 17 Peter Decker, *The Diaries of Peter Decker: Overland to California in 1849 and Life in the Mines, 1850–1851* (Georgetown, Calif.: The Talisman Press, 1966), quoted on 107.



Not until July 1845, when emigrants began traveling along the east side of the Portneuf River valley did they come upon, sample its water, and describe Soda Pool, shown here. The pool is still fed by a small spring that emerges from an outcropping of basalt rocks. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.

we arrived at the famous Bear & Steamboat Springs & real curiosities they are

ELISHA DOUGLAS PERKINS, AUGUST 8, 1849<sup>18</sup>

Today about noon we arrived at a cluster of springs some of them of a very curious natuere. This [Steamboat Spring] is the greatest natural curiosity that I have ever seen.

ALEXANDER RAMSAY, JULY 12, 1849<sup>19</sup>

This [Steamboat Spring] is the greatest curiosity of the kind I ever saw.

SAMUEL MURRAY STOVER, JULY 26, 1849<sup>20</sup>

#### PORTNEUF RIVER VALLEY ROUTES

West of the Soda Springs about five miles, the Oregon Trail turned north around the point of a hill across Bear River from Sheep Rock. The current definition of the trail shows that it followed the east side of the valley for about eight miles before heading northwest to cross the Portneuf River near the present community of Chesterfield. The route then followed the river upstream. According to emigrant diaries, however, this is not the original route.

In August 1841, Joseph Williams crossed the Portneuf valley and tried to follow the Portneuf River downstream through the canyon to the west. This proved to be impossible for wagons so he returned to the valley and turned upstream the following day. He wrote,

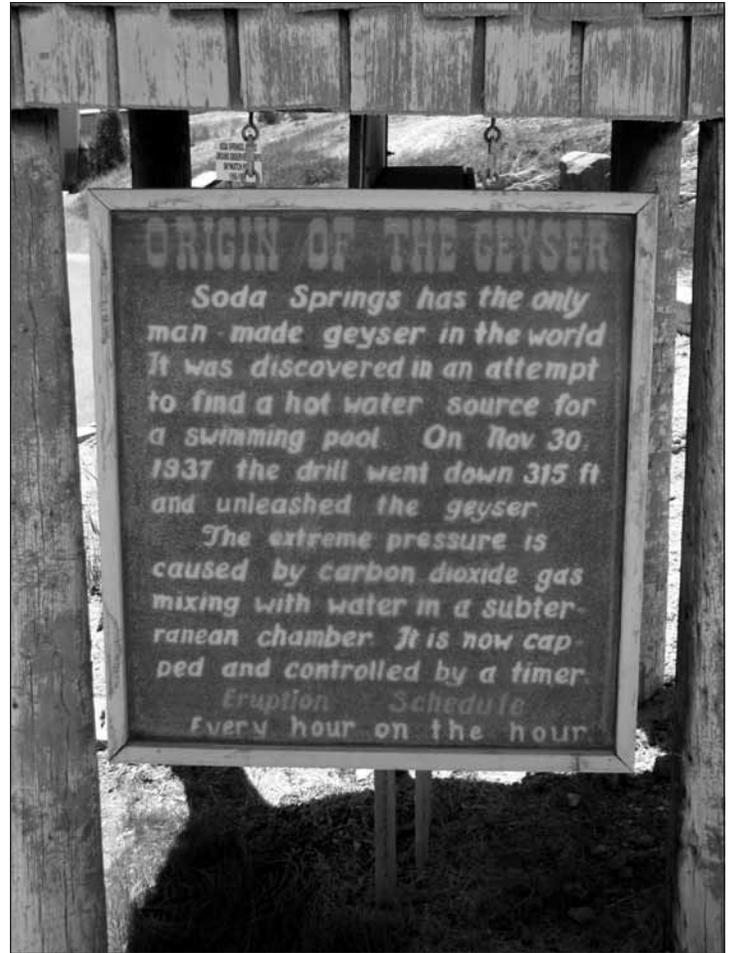
We turned off from the Bear River and struck over on to the waters of Snake River, Next morning we started down one of its branches [Portneuf River], but found that we could not get along with the wagons. We therefore turned back again, and stayed near where we encamped the night before. The next day we continued on up [upstream to the north], and fell over on Snake River.<sup>21</sup>

18 Elisha Douglas Perkins, *Gold Rush Diary: Being the Journal of Elisha Douglass Perkins on the Overland Trail in the Spring and Summer of 1849*, ed. Thomas D. Clark (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), quoted on 91.

19 Alexander Ramsay, "Alexander Ramsay's Gold Rush Diary," *Pacific Historical Review* 18, no. 4 (November 1949): 437–68, quoted on 453–54.

20 Samuel Murray Stover, *Diary of Samuel Murray Stover Enroute to California 1849* (Elizabethtown, Tenn.: H. M. Folsom, 1939), quoted on 18.

21 Joseph Williams, August 1841, *Narrative of a Tour from the State of Indiana to the Oregon Territory in the Years 1841–2* [1843] (1843; reprinted in LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, eds., *To the Rockies and Oregon, 1839–1842*, Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1955).



This plaque at Soda Springs explains how “the only man-made geyser in the world” came into being in 1937. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.

James Willis Nesmith described the route across the valley to the Portneuf River: “Leave Bear River; traveled twenty miles over to a creek running into the Snake River, by the name of Portneuf [River].”<sup>22</sup>

Overton Johnson stated that “At this point, we left the [Bear] River, and bore off to the right, across the valley, which is about ten miles wide. . . . We passed, on the left, a large, hollow mound, the crater of an extinguished Volcano.”<sup>23</sup> If

22 James W. Nesmith, August 25, 1843, “Diary of the Emigration of 1843,” *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 7, no. 4 (1906): 329–59.

23 Overton Johnson and William H. Winter, September 7, 1843, “Route Across the Rocky Mountains with a Description of Oregon and California,” *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 1906, v. 7:1, 62–104; 7:2, 163–210; 7:3, 291–327.

Johnson had turned to the right and immediately gone up the east side of the valley, he would not have been close to the volcanic crater. Traveling west would have placed him on the north of the crater after one and a half miles of travel.

As they traveled north up the Portneuf River valley, early travelers did not mention crossing several small streams or seeing other features, such as the Soda Pool, that later travelers on the eastside route would mention.

A new route, which turned sharply to the right and followed along the base of the hills on the east side of the valley, was created in July 1845. Carlos W. Shane reached Sheep Rock on July 26, 1845. He noted the road going west across the valley, but he turned to the right instead. Shane appears to have been the first to travel this route:

Here we leave the waters of Bear River. . . . On the opposite side of the river are the Sheep Bluffs [Sheep Rock], and on this side to our right are the Bear River Mountains. Instead of taking the road leading directly forward and leaving the B. R. Mountains, we hugged them close, turning to the right. Made about 8 miles and nooned. . . . No one had gone this rout before us and so we had the best of it.<sup>24</sup>

Two days later, James Field's company hired a guide to lead them on a new route that was supposed to have saved nine or ten miles. They left the regular road "not far from Soda Springs to take a nearer cut." After traveling only ten miles from Soda Springs, they camped that evening at what appears to have been Soda Pool, thus indicating that they took the new route on the east side of the Portneuf River valley. James Field wrote:

Mon July 28 Went about 10 miles today leaving Bear River on our left and camping near a spring [Soda Pool] slightly impregnated with soda. About a mile from camp [Soda Springs] we passed a spring the water of which tasted more like soda water than any I have tasted of. The trail from the States to California, parts from the Oregon road at Bear River, down which it follows while the Oregon Road strikes over onto Snake River near Fort Hall.

Tues July 29. . . . I omitted mentioning yesterday that we had left the regular road again not far from the Soda Springs to take a nearer cut under the pilotage of a Frenchman. Our

company found and employed him at the springs but we had not proceeded far before we found the Greenwoods were conducting Teatherows company by the same route and as they made a plain road for us to follow, our pilot returned. We have not yet got into the old road but we have thus far had an easy level way and from the relative bearings of the two roads, we must cut off at least 9 or 10 miles. We had an excellent camp with plenty of grass and water. These Greenwoods are an Old man and Three sons whom he has raised in the Indian country. They are well posted on the route.<sup>25</sup>

Solomon Tetherow, whom Field referred to above, was captain of one of the wagon trains that left St. Joseph in the spring of 1845 on their way to Oregon. This would not be the last time Tetherow used a guide to follow a new shortcut. He later followed Stephen Meek across central Oregon in their attempt to find a shorter route to the Willamette valley.

CALEB GREENWOOD WAS AN EARLY TRAPPER IN THE west, working for numerous trapping companies for nearly twenty years. At the age of sixty-three, he married and had five children. Greenwood guided the first wagon train in 1844 on what would become known as the Sublette Cutoff and over the Sierra Nevada mountains to California. He would have been eighty-two years old when he guided Tetherow's company from Soda Springs. A few years later, he took part in the rescue of the Donner party in the Sierra.

A few days after James Field took the new route to the east, Joel Palmer wrote of the two roads across the valley and his choice to turn north.

Five miles brought us to where the road leaves the river, and bears northward through a valley. The river bears to the southward and empties its waters into Big Salt Lake. The range of mountains bounding the north side of the river here comes to within a half mile of it, then bears off to the north, leaving a valley of about seven or eight miles in width between it and a range coming from Lewis river, and extending south towards Salt Lake. The range bounding the south side of the river comes abruptly to the stream at this point, presenting huge and cumbrous masses of basaltic rock, but it is generally covered with heavy timber. At this point two trails are found:

24 Carlos W. Shane, July 26, 1845, "Oregon, Being an Account of a Journey to the Territory of Oregon, with Some Account of the Soil and Climate," in *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* (1943-1961) 21, no. 1, 1-33.

25 James Field Jr., July 29, 1845, "Crossing the Plains Diary," Typescript, MSS 520, Portland: Oregon Historical Society.

one striking west, across the valley, to the opposite side; the other, which is the nearest and best, follows around the point, hugging the base of the mountain for several miles.<sup>26</sup>

The original Oregon Trail route from Sheep Rock went west across the valley to the Portneuf River before turning north to follow the river upstream. This route was apparently used until 1845. This route has been extensively farmed for many years, and I have found no trail remnants.

After the new route on the east side of the valley was established in July 1845, it soon became the only road traveled after leaving Sheep Rock until the opening of the Hudspeth

*I was born in Omaha and lived with my grandparents for a couple of years who were just up on the hill above where the Mormon Trail Center is now. We moved to Raytown, Missouri, a suburb of Kansas City, when I was five and lived about a mile from Blue Ridge Boulevard, which was the old route to Westport and crossing the Missouri River. Lived there until sixth grade when we moved to Phoenix. Grew up there and still have family there. Now I am in Boise, still on the Oregon Trail. It must be fate.*

JERRY EICHHORST

Cutoff four years later. This route includes a number of trail remnants remaining today. Many diaries described the Soda Pool, springs, and hills along the route that are visible today. My compilations include no other accounts of emigrants who appeared to travel the original route after 1845, as well as no other accounts that reference the choice of routes at Sheep Rock until the opening of the Hudspeth Cutoff in 1849.

26 Joel Palmer, Reuben Gold Thwaites, and Henry Harmon Spalding, August 5, 1845, *Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains to the Mouth of the Columbia River: Made During the Years 1845 and 1846* (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906).

## SODA POOL

Four miles north of Sheep Rock, on the east side of the Portneuf River valley a spring bubbles out of a small cave at the base of a basalt wall. The clear water flows a few yards into an oval pool before spilling into a larger meadow pool. I stumbled across this spring many years ago when exploring the valley in search of remnants of the Oregon Trail. The water tasted good, not nearly as strong or effervescent as the water at Hooper Spring, seven and one-half miles over the mountains to the east. I showed the spring to trail friends and to an Oregon Trail expert, but all were previously unaware of the location and did not consider it an Oregon Trail site. I found the spring interesting, but considered it insignificant at the time.

One can still see the spring, Soda Pool, and immediately below, a small meadow reservoir that sometimes dries up on the edges and leaves a salt residue. The Soda Pool has been changed because of ranching through the years. A cattle or sheep dip and fence were built near the pool, indicating the area was apparently once heavily used. Only recently has studying the compilation of diaries by location turned up a number of them that clearly identify this spring as a site often visited along the Oregon Trail. A sampling of these diary accounts follows. Carlos W. Shane's description of the Soda Pool is one of the best that I have yet found. As noted earlier, Shane appears to have been with the first wagon train to travel the east side of the valley:

Here we concluded to correll. Hard by our camp is the Soda Pool, a body of soda water 18 feet long, 10 feet wide and about 3 feet deep. It is very clear and beautiful, but not so strong tasted as those at the [Bear] river. Just below it is a small Salt Spring, which formed a light crust of salt as it ran off from the spring.<sup>27</sup>

Other diary accounts note that the soda pool is close to the trail. It appears that there must have been multiple paths for the trail in this area, as some accounts describe the Soda Pool on the left side of the road, some on the right. As shown in Map 6, possible trail remnants appear close to the pool above and below the basalt bluff.

Joel Palmer also provides a good description of Soda Pool:

Two and one half miles distant, and immediately beneath a cliff of rocks by the road side, is to be found a soda pool.

27 Carlos W. Shane, July 26, 1845, "Oregon," 20.

A little spring of cool soda water runs out at the base of the rock, and a basin of eight or ten yards in extent, and about two and one half feet high has been formed. Inside of this, is a pool of water;—the material composing the bank around, is of a white color.<sup>28</sup>

Other diarists include details of traveling past Soda Pool:

Advanced twenty-one miles and camped on a small stream [Portneuf River], good camp. In four miles travel we came to an excellent soda water just to left of road.

DR. BENJAMIN CORY, JULY 15, 1847<sup>29</sup>

. . . Two miles farther we leave the Bear River which turns south. We make about 5 miles and stop near another spring of mineral water that we use for drinking. It is not as strong as the previous ones.

RT. REV. A. M. A. BLANCHET, AUGUST 3, 1847<sup>30</sup>

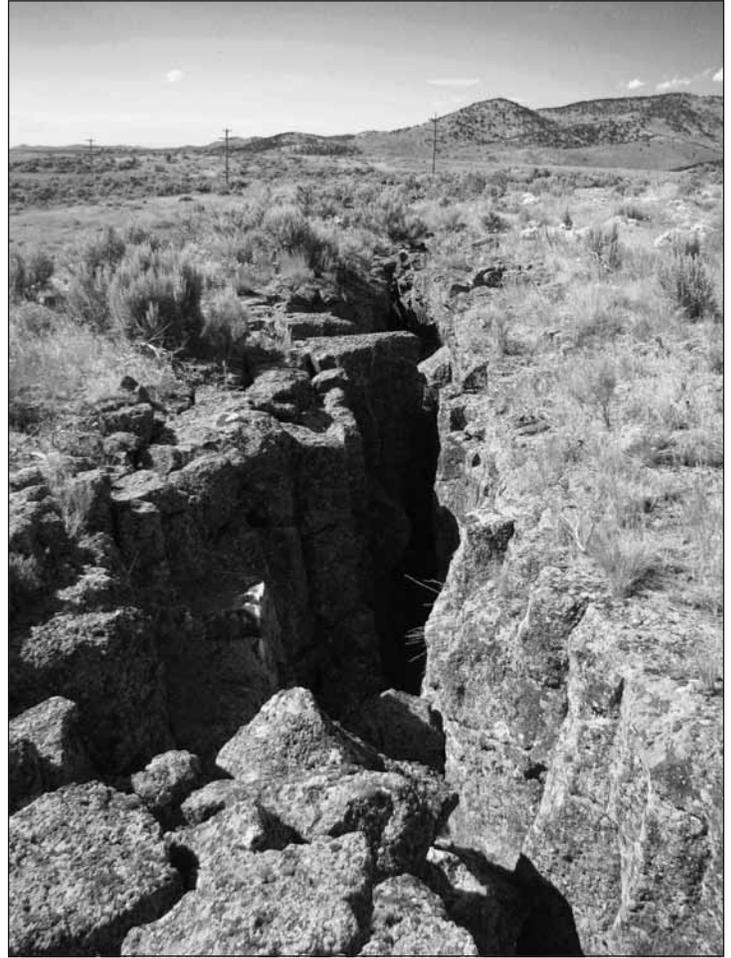
Geared up and rolled out down Bear River some 6 miles where we left it, turned the spur of a mountain and came to another soda spring, not of equal celebrity of those we had left, but very good.

RICHARD M. MAY, AUGUST 4, 1847<sup>31</sup>

Ten miles [from Soda Springs] brought us to another spring of the same sort. It was on the right of the road coming from a high bluff. This is some times called Soda Pool. The water from the spring runs into a basin which has formed by the crystallisation of the water at its edges. It is 25 ft. in diameter & the wall around is 2 ft.

VINCENT GEIGER AND WAKEMAN BRYARLY, JULY 11, 1849<sup>32</sup>

In two or three miles from our camp the road left Bear River. After a few miles travel we came to another Beer Springs. It



Emigrants who left the original route turned northwest across Bear River from Sheep Rock to travel up the east side of the Portneuf River valley. They would have encountered volcanic rifts in the earth such as this one, as well as “curiosities” such as Soda Pool. Some emigrants believed this area was close to Hades and wanted to leave immediately. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR.

did not boil like the others but was rather sour. It tasted like the bottled soda of St. Louis shops.

ISRAEL FOOTE HALE, JULY 20, 1849<sup>33</sup>

2½ ms brought us to Soda Pool on the right handside of the road This is a basin the sides of which are about 2 feet above the surface of the ground and composed of rock of the Soda formation. It is about 15 feet long and 9 feet wide a constant

33 Israel Foote Hale, July 20, 1849, 93.

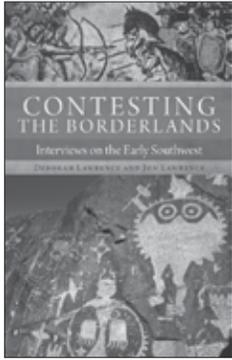
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supply of water flows up at the foot of a perpendicular ledge of rock close by which keeps the basin nearly full.

JOHN BROWN, JULY 28, 1852<sup>34</sup>

Clearly, the “curious” Soda Pool was visited by many emigrants traveling the east side of the Portneuf River valley. Their diary accounts describe it much as it still is. It remains an interesting site to visit today.

FINDING AND COMPILING EMIGRANT DIARIES BY A particular location takes a great deal of work. But it often yields interesting insights into the journeys. My compilation of diaries that describe traveling through the Soda Springs area of southeast Idaho helped identify the original route of the Oregon Trail in the Portneuf River valley and the Soda Pool site. It also helped clarify the route Narcissa Whitman took while sight-seeing near Soda Springs, and revealed the frequent use of the term “curiosity” in emigrant accounts that describe Soda and Steamboat Springs.

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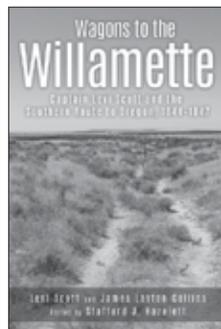
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**TRAIL REVELATIONS**

**Wagons to the Willamette**  
*Captain Levi Scott and the Southern Route to Oregon, 1844–1847*

Levi Scott and James Layton Collins  
Edited by Stafford J. Hazelett

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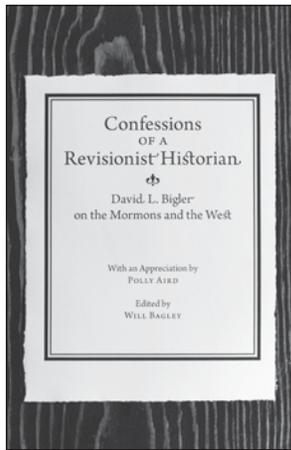
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# REVIEWS FROM THE TRAIL



CONFESSIONS OF A  
REVISIONIST HISTORIAN:  
DAVID L. BIGLER ON THE  
MORMONS AND THE WEST

*Edited by Will Bagley*

*With an Appreciation by Polly Aird*

Salt Lake City: Tanner Trust Fund, 2015.  
286 pp., photographs, maps, notes;  
selected bibliography, index.

ISBN 13978-0-692-37120-6.

Hardcover in dust jacket, 6 × 9. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Robert Clark.

Let's start with credentials. David Bigler's business career culminated as director of public affairs for U.S. Steel. His involvement in the celebration of Western history has been constant. A native of Provo, Utah, he is a descendant of a number of notable Mormon ancestors (though no longer a Mormon himself). David actively pursued research and writing following his retirement from business. He has published seven books and numerous articles on early Utah, California, and Western history.

He is a Fellow and Honorary Life Member, Utah State Historical Society; a former director, Utah Board of State History and Friends of the Marriott Library at University of Utah; a charter member and first president of the Utah Westerners; and a past president of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

And, I'm proud to say, a valued friend. I was privileged to edit and publish several of his books while with the Arthur H. Clark Company and the University of Oklahoma Press. I am biased in writing this review. I admit to also being friends with the editor, and with the author of the Appreciation that serves to open the work. However, I strongly advise that not deter you from reading and learning from this excellent collection of essays.

Editor Will Bagley has gathered eighteen of David's shorter works and conveniently organized them chronologically to present the sweep of Great Basin history from 1846 to the turn of the twentieth century. In addition to this broad survey, distilled into easily consumed textual treatments on specific themes, the book offers an introduction to the Lincoln Highway in Utah, an appreciation of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, and a lovely tribute to the late journalist/historian

Harold Schindler. The book concludes with a selected bibliography of David's books, articles, and awards.

Bigler's approach to history has always been iconoclastic. The history of Utah, and of the Mormons, has long been skewed to the extremes. On the one hand are faith-promoting biographies and celebratory accounts of the long-suffering and eventually triumphant pioneers. On the other are vilifying condemnations and reactionary exposés. Until recently it was difficult to find a middle ground. David Bigler has attempted (and succeeded) in separating himself from the fortified positions of historical adversaries, and instead looked at and reinterpreted the facts left to us in the documentary record.

In doing honest historical work in a straightforward manner, David was called out as a "revisionist historian" by a senior Mormon scholar some years ago. No com-

*"If ever there was a revisionist  
historian, I'm it."*

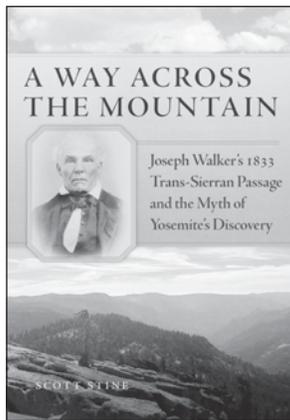
pliment was implied. David, however, assumed the mantle with pride and humor. "If ever there was a revisionist historian, I'm it," he replied. And, he continued, "if ever a chapter of our nation's history needed revising, it is this one."

The conflict between a theocratic rule and democracy, between non-Mormons and those faithful to Brigham Young, between the United States government and a rebellious territory, is a tale both fascinating and enlightening. The sweep of events and their often unappreciated but momentous impact

on the history of the West needs telling and retelling: the Mormon Battalion's unique and laudatory role in the Mexican War in the Southwest and California, the role of the Mormons in the Gold Rush and the great tide of immigration that followed, the widespread impact of the Mormons on Indian affairs throughout the Far West, the opening of the Overland Trail to the military, the stagecoach, and the Pony Express.

This is history that shaped who and what we are. David Bigler is one of its best narrators. Bagley modestly understates the quality of his writing: "crisp, lively prose, with its sprightly transitions and wry asides." The influence of his work is only beginning to be felt. Our understanding of Western settlement in the nineteenth century has been changed by David Bigler, and a new standard set.

Buy this book. It belongs on the shelf of every library, and every Western historian worth his or her salt. 



A WAY ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS:  
JOSEPH WALKER'S 1833  
TRANS-SIERRAN PASSAGE  
AND THE MYTH OF  
YOSEMITE'S DISCOVERY  
By Scott Stine

Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company,  
University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.  
317 pp., with photos, maps, illustrations,  
appendices, index. ISBN 978-0-87062-432-2.  
Hardbound, 7½ × 10 inches, \$39.95.

Reviewed by Martha Voght.

For more than a century, readers of western history have been enthralled by *Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard*, an account of a fur trapper's adventures in the 1830s, a manuscript combining elements of field notes, diary, and recollections. Of particular interest to historians is the portion recording a trip to California led by Joseph R. Walker.

Walker had come to the Rocky Mountains as part of Captain Benjamin Bonneville's fur trading and trapping enterprise, and in the summer of 1833 he set out to explore the way to California. Zenas Leonard, whose trapping forays had been unfortunate and unprofitable, joined Walker as secretary.

Numerous investigators have attempted to establish Walker's exact route over the Sierra Nevada using Leonard's *Narrative* as a guide. All have been constrained by a popular "fact": that Walker had passed near Yosemite Valley. Now Scott Stine, closely following Leonard's journal, credibly challenges the "myth of Yosemite's discovery." He depends upon the dates Leonard recorded, descriptions of landforms and vegetation,

and possible rates of travel, carefully parsing every entry to establish a detailed route, starting in the Carson Valley. Stine concludes that Walker's party crossed from the Carson drainage, into the headwaters of the North Mokelumne River, to finally exit the Sierra through Stanislaus Canyon.

Stine interrupts his tracing of the Walker route with "excursions," short essays on such diverse topics as the Holocene ice age, Bonneville as spy, and the pace of horseback parties. He also includes a very informative appendix on the publishing history of Leonard's *Narrative*. His lengthy footnotes are often small monographs in themselves, usefully gathering material from a variety of sources.

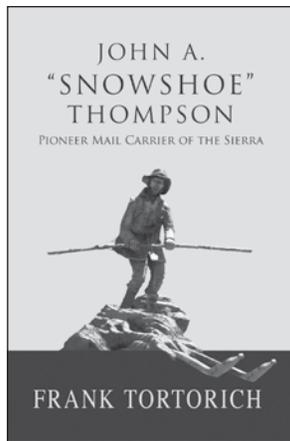
Stine's account of Walker's journey east to rejoin Bonneville is less convincing. He seems unfamiliar with either Walker's interview published in March 1860 in the *Visalia Weekly Delta* or the examination of this route in the 1990s by Bill Horst. According to Horst, Walker had joined the crowd of prospectors heading for the mining excitement around Mono Lake. Most of the men intended to cross the Sierra through the gap we know as

*a rut nut might spend  
two or three happy weeks  
in and about the Sierra*

Walker Pass. Walker told the *Visalia* reporter he would take the route he used in 1834 and subsequent years, farther north, passing the Sierra crest "opposite Owens Lake."

Without this evidence, Stine places Walker's first camp east of the Sierra at about latitude 35° 38' north (near present-day Inyokern), rather than latitude 36° 16' north (Olancho), a distance equivalent to three days' travel. This calls into question Stine's time table of Walker's progress through the Owens Valley, and his identification of landmarks.

So the puzzle lingers. With *A Way Across the Mountains* in hand, and a dog-eared copy of Leonard's *Narrative*, a rut nut might spend two or three happy weeks in and about the Sierra. 



JOHN A. "SNOWSHOE" THOMPSON,  
PIONEER MAIL CARRIER  
OF THE SIERRA  
By Frank Tortorich

Greybull, Wyo.: Pronghorn Press, 2015.  
304 pp., with illustrations, notes,  
appendices, bibliography, index.  
ISBN 978-1-941052-10-5. Paper, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Jim Hardee.

*the extraordinary story of  
Snowshoe Thompson will surely  
intrigue those who pick it up*

John Thompson was ten years old when his family emigrated from Norway to America in 1837. Soon after gold was discovered in California, Snowshoe sought his fortune in the Golden State. Over the years, Thompson worked as a farmer, rancher, guide, trader, Indian agent and politician, but is best known for reliably carrying the mail over the mountains between Placerville, California, and Genoa, Nevada. More notably, he made that trek on longboard skis he built himself. Unfamiliar with the wooden slats strapped to his feet, people called them "snowshoes," providing Thompson with the now familiar moniker.

Author Frank Tortorich, well known to Overland Trail enthusiasts, is conversant about the American West in the mid-1800s, the period in which the events surrounding the life of John Thompson occurred. Tortorich used myriad primary sources to compile and separate the facts from the many fictions written about Snowshoe. The result is a detailed examination of Thompson's life.

Having backpacked throughout the mountains of northern California, this reviewer anticipated verification of several tales heard around campfires about Snowshoe's escapades. Allegedly, Thompson once carried needles and a kerosene lamp's glass chimney to Widow Franklin so she could continue her winter sewing, and fiddler Richard Cosser supposedly got new strings packed in over the snow. The story was told that Snowshoe carried the mail from Cisco to Meadow Lake City during the severe winter of 1867–68, when three thousand people were forced to winter there under thirty feet of snow. These anecdotes were not included in the book, leaving this reviewer to wonder if such reports were merely legend, and ignored.

The author employed a nonconforming combination of both footnotes and endnotes in this book. Brief source citations, as typical, can be found at the back of the book, saving casual readers from distraction. Immediate explanations and/or complimentary text is conveniently inserted at the bottom of appropriate pages. This unique approach works fairly well but would have been improved if the footnote icons used to

differentiate from endnote numbers were larger.

The book would also have benefited from editing to reduce repetition and awkward wording that strings quotes together. Some of the maps are too small to be useful, even with a powerful magnifying glass. In addition to several maps, the book also includes nearly sixty pages of plaques, monuments, and dedication events commemorating Thompson.

This is certain: by the time one finishes this book, readers will know *Sierra* is a plural Spanish noun. The author emphasizes this by inserting "[sic]" wherever another writer has used "Sierras" in a source or quote. Mountaineer and historian Francis P. Farquhar (1887–1974), who would concur with the author's careful usage, nonetheless conceded that the plural form is "so frequently found in the very best works of literature and science that it would perhaps be pedantic to deny their admissibility. It becomes, therefore, a matter of preference."

With Anglicized pronunciations adopted for so many place names of Spanish origin throughout California, this reviewer finds it useless to quibble about Spanish grammar when talking about the Sierra/Sierras. The Spanish word *sierra* means "range of mountains," and the Sierra Nevada contains many ranges: the Ritter, the Sherman, the Insoluble, the Carson, the Cathedral, etc. Thus *Sierras* also seems grammatically correct. Having lived in California for nearly forty years, this reviewer will lovingly refer to the Sierra Nevada Mountains as the High Sierras—once a rebel, always a rebel.

Nevertheless, readers curious about the history of California, Nevada, and the West in general during the 1850–70 Gold Rush era and beyond will likely find interest in this book. There is enough background about the U.S. Postal Service that those inquisitive about the back story of mail delivery will undoubtedly discover new information in Tortorich's work. With 342 pages that include 37 illustrations, footnotes, several appendices, endnotes, a bibliography, and an index, the extraordinary story of Snowshoe Thompson will surely intrigue those who pick it up. 



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## LOOKING WEST

### Mapping and Trail Inventory Projects

*A* COMMON MISCONCEPTION IS that the emigrant trails have been mapped thoroughly and that there is little left to be done.

In fact, *little* has been mapped at the level prescribed by OCTA's Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Manual. The most comprehensive maps were completed by the National Park Service at a scale of 1:100,000 (one inch on the map representing 100,000 inches on the ground), but this scale cannot be regarded as definitive with regards to the trail's actual location. The late Gregory Franzwa's maps use 1:50,000-scale county maps. When the data from these maps is plotted on 1:24,000-scale maps, conflicts with the route as it would have been dictated by topography are obvious. For example, ridges or ravines not obvious on a 1:100,000 map may appear on 1:24,000 scale maps.

Mapping as defined in the MET manual is a time-consuming task. Typically, a workable project area is defined by a single USGS 1:24,000-scale quadrangle. This includes five to ten miles of trail. When we consider that the total

length of the Overland Trail, including all routes and cutoffs, is more than ten thousand miles, the size of the overall mapping project becomes apparent. We should be selective and target segments that contain surviving, high-quality trail. A Trail Inventory Project (TIP) is a means of surveying resources to determine where priority for MET surveys should be placed.

A TIP includes the following:

1. A survey (Form TIP1) of each township, range, and section containing a trail segment (typically about one and a half miles). A standard form is used to record the character of the section and the classification of the trail within. However, the survey does not record data at the level defined by the MET Manual. Classifications are aggregated over the section.
2. A survey (TIP2) of sites within the section that contain trail-related

resources, including a series of photographs from one or more observation points.

3. An evaluation of the trail setting (TIP3). Is the setting evocative of the emigrant's experience?
4. A USGS 1:24,000-scale map of the trail in each section using Terrain Navigator Pro software.
5. Entry of all of the above into a Microsoft Access TIP database.

Once completed, the database permits generation of summary reports identifying those sections appropriate for a MET-level survey and those that may be ignored due to the level of development that has altered that section of the trail. A TIP covering the entire Oregon Trail in Oregon has recently been completed. It was found that about 18 percent of more than 591 sections contain Class 1 or 2 trail and Class I setting.

TIP surveys in Oregon were conducted by four teams that covered four



**TIP1 REPORT - TRAIL SEGMENT** 30380 003N-029E-36

Sequence No 30380 TWP 003N R9G 029E SEC 36 Trail Name Oregon Trail  
 Team Leader David Welch Survey Date 5/11/2015  
 County/State Umatilla, OR USGS Quad Name Noim and Echo

NPS High Potential Seg?  NPS Seg No. NPS Seg Name  
 NPS High Potential Site?  NPS Site No. NPS Site Name:  
 Reference Maps Bell, Haines, Frances, CMLP, USGS  
 Ownership Private  
 General Description Descent to the Umatilla River, Coral Springs

Trail Classification % MET 1 or 2: 40 % MET 3 or 4: 60 % MET 6:  
 % MET 6: % Undetermined: Setting Class: III

GPS Brand and Model Garmin GPS Map 62 etc

KOP1 Description Entrance to Coral Springs site  
 KOP1 Latitude N 45.65794 KOP1 Longitude W -115.13231

KOP2 Description T1P3(020)  
 KOP2 Latitude N 45.6933278 KOP2 Longitude W -115.13232

KOP3 Description  
 KOP3 Latitude N KOP3 Longitude W

KOP4 Description  
 KOP4 Latitude N KOP4 Longitude W

Photos 1: T1P3(020) Highway sign, T1P3 (21) Interpretive panel "Coral Springs"  
 2: T1P3(022) "Trail" looking east toward descent to Umatilla River  
 3: T1P3(023) Trail over ridge heading NW, T1P3(024) View of valley toward descent  
 4: DJV4633-DJW4610: Complete survey of Coral Springs area (5/11/15)

Notes  
 T1P2 Completed?  T1P3 Completed?

Friday, February 5, 2016 003N-029E-36

The Pendleton survey team gathered at Echo Meadows. (LEFT TO RIGHT) Brian Runyan, Ray Egan, Roger Blair, Susan Doyle, John Cannella (NPS), and Chuck Hornbuckle. PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE WELCH. INSET: An Oregon TIP.

separate lengths of the Oregon Trail: Snake River crossings to Farewell Bend, Farewell Bend to Deadman Pass, Deadman Pass to The Dalles, and the Dalles to Oregon City via the Barlow Road. The work was conducted over two years.

The survey teams are a great way to introduce new OCTA members to the physical trail. Survey skills are basic (observing, photographing, research, computer data entry) and do not demand a high level of physical fitness. Surveys are often conducted from

roads with supplemental information from aerial photos. Forms and the database are available from the Northwest Chapter's project for projects by other chapters.

At the 2016 Fort Hall convention, I will be presenting a paper on the Oregon TIP and how it could be applied to the Idaho chapter's trail areas. I hope you will be able to attend the convention and my presentation. Each chapter can benefit in many ways from a TIP.





## THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL CENTER FOUNDATION

*"Our mission is to enhance the California Trail Experience through education, interpretation, and care of the California Trail for our community, visiting public and future generations."*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Western Heritage Festival – August 4-7, 2016**

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DEAR MARLENE,

MY COPY (OF WINTER 15/16) ARRIVED yesterday [March 4] and I read the entire article, which looks great. I noted only one significant problem: somehow the two footnote to Twiss's comment I sent in the December update disappeared. They should be:

Footnote 11. Thomas Twiss, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1856 (Serial 875), 12, 87, 99.

Footnote 12. Ibid., 100–101.

Might be nice to put them in the pdf version.

Again, thanks.

Will

*Will, I'm sorry for the omission. The notes have been corrected in the pdf on our website. Thank you again.*

Marlene

DEAR EDITOR:

IN July 2011, I was in Wyoming, assisting my brother and his wife on their hike along the Continental Divide Trail. With a few days off between trail heads, I visited the National Trails Interpretive Center at Casper and then followed the Oregon Trail route of my 1846 and 1852 ancestors to South Pass.

I encountered a broken, two-wheeled, covered wagon or cart a short distance west of the South Pass monuments with Pacific Springs in view. Having traveled in intermittent thunderstorms that afternoon, I waited a few minutes for the clouds to break so I might get good light for a photograph. The wind continued as the sun broke through and made a double rainbow over the wagon and its bright American flag. I took my photos and then I continued on my journey. [See next page, bottom photo.]

I returned to the area the next day in full sunshine and light breezes. The wagon was still there. As I was leaving, two men with a pickup and flatbed trailer pulled up. I met the driver, Nick Buck, and learned that he was crossing the Oregon Trail with his brother in their covered wagon and cart pulled by a team of mules. If I was told the name of the other man, I did not record it in my journal entry for the day, and assumed it was Nick's brother. I helped the two men get the cart onto the trailer. I sent a copy of the photo to an e-mail address that Nick gave me and heard nothing more.

In 2015, I saw announcements about Rinker Buck's book, *The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey*, describing the journey he took with his brother across the Oregon Trail. I planned to meet him at Powell's Books in Portland, near where I live. I wanted to give him a printed copy of the photo of the cart with the rainbow, in exchange for his signature.

I was committed to a survey of the Meek Cutoff Trail which was scheduled for the week before Buck's appearance at Powell's. Circumstances required the survey to be postponed, and it was rescheduled for the same time as Buck's visit. I figured my opportunity to meet the author had passed.

At the OCTA Convention at South Lake Tahoe last September, I talked with some folks who had met the Bucks and who had read Rinker's book. The *Overland Journal* (Fall 2015) published a review by Bill Martin that compelled me to read it. I discovered by reading the book that Rinker Buck was not the second man I met at South Pass, and I suspect he had never heard of me nor seen my photo.

In the book, Rinker commented several times on the coincidences that kept occurring, as if the hand of God were somehow bringing people to assist the brothers at crucial moments on their journey. I had two of those incidents with the Buck wagon: the first with the storm, wind, and double rainbow; and the second having driven back there on a different errand and being in the right place with the vital equipment that was eventually required to recover the wagon without more damage.

I think the book is well worth the time to read and compare with the diaries and reminiscences of the nineteenth-century travelers over the same country. It is still a fantastic experience for those of us who get off the paved road and walk in our ancestors' footsteps.

Sincerely,

Stafford Hazelett

Editor, *Wagons to the Willamette: Captain Levi Scott and the Southern Route to Oregon, 1844–47*  
(Washington State University Press, 2015) 

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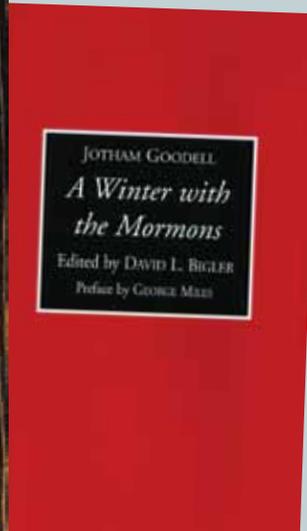
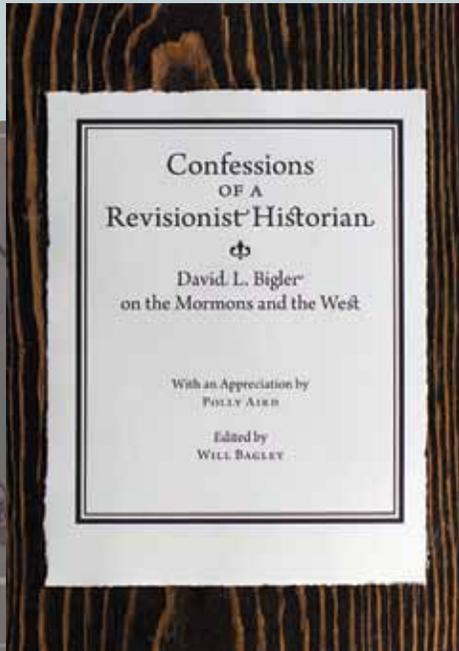
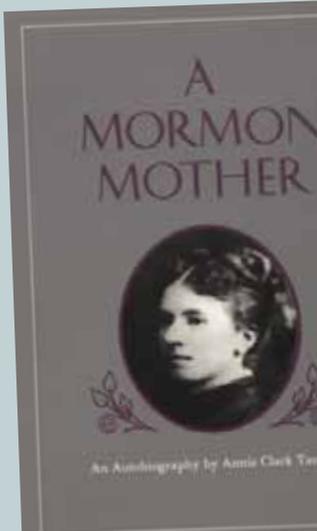
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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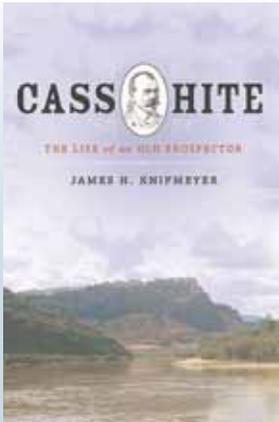


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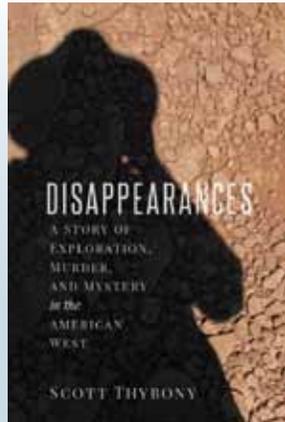
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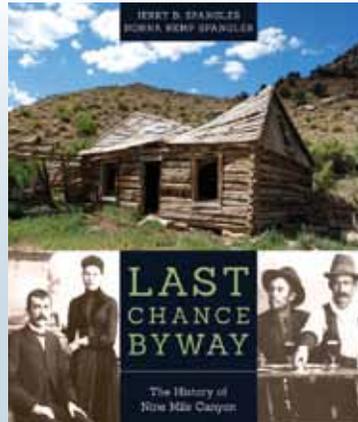
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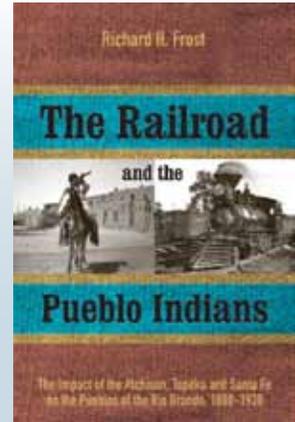
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