



October
1994

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

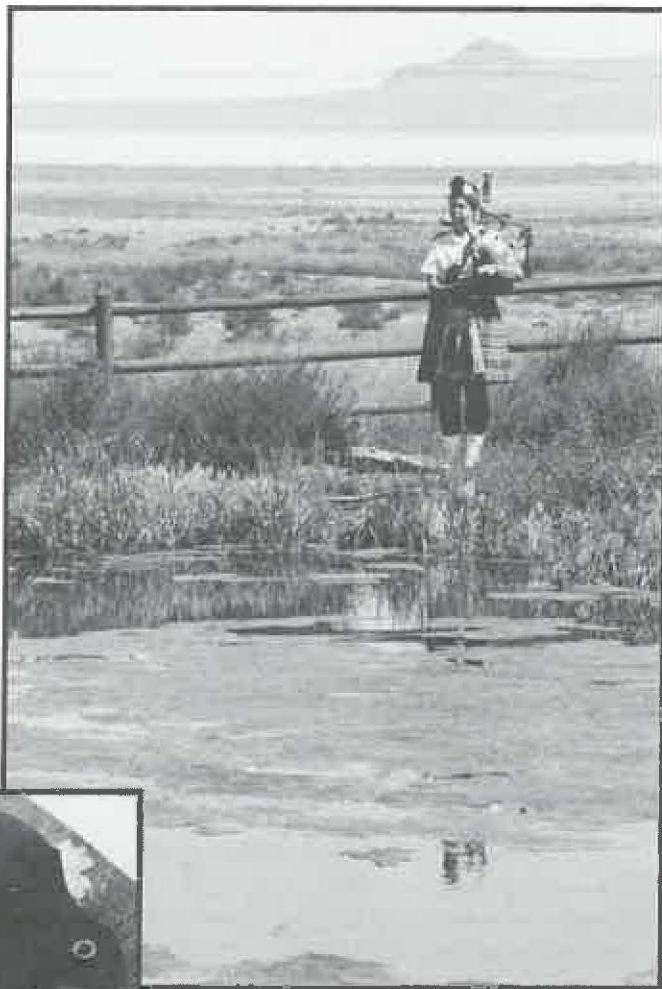
P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519 Phone and FAX 816-252-2276

Family Tribute Ends 1994 Convention

A fitting conclusion for many 1994 convention attendees was the dedication at Donner Springs. The long dusty drive was easy compared to that of the emigrants, but gave a small measure of what the trip was like on those hot summer days so long ago. At the conclusion of the dedication, Marta Lienhard Vincent's bagpipe rendition of "Amazing Grace" drifted across the desert. As she stood tall, with the waters of the spring before her and Donner-Reed Pass behind her, the music touched all who listened. Just as her great-great-grandfather, Johann Hienrich Lienhard had come to this spring after struggling across the Salt Desert in 1846, all who stood with Marta that hot afternoon could feel the unique quality of this spot.

This will long remain in the memories of members as a very special convention event.

Marta brought with her to the convention two Lienhard family heirlooms, which she proudly showed to anyone interested. One, shown on the right, below, was the firestarting magnifying glass that Lienhard used on his journey. His initials, "JHL," are engraved on the cover. The other item is a locket made from part of his California gold. In it is contained his picture that, in his later years, was a gift to his wife.



**Changes for
News From the Plains,
see page 3**

"Overland Emigrant Names" (OEN) Program Replaces Current Access to COED for Name Reference Reports

Kathy Roubal, COED Chair, has announced the development of the "Overland Emigrant Names" (OEN) program, to serve individuals who want to find references to ancestors who traveled the overland trails in the 19th Century. All references reported by the Overland Emigrant Names program will have been recorded in the diaries, journals, and reminiscences written by emigrants who traveled the trails.

People looking for references to an ancestor who traveled overland on the trails should find the Overland Emigrant Names program of value. Recent experience has shown that about half of those seeking references to a name receive a report with at least one mention of the name or a Soundex equivalent of the name. (The Soundex equivalent is a computer-derived "sound-alike" of the name.)

Use of the Overland Emigrant Names program for name reference reports replaces the temporary use of

COED (Census of Overland Emigrant Documents) for that purpose. With the Overland Emigrant Names program in place, COED can now be dedicated to serving its intended use as a tool for historians and researchers.

The volunteer work of surveying documents for COED, and entering those documents into the COED database continues at a good pace, with 1,742 documents surveyed as of July 4th of this year. The computer programs that allow data entry volunteers to enter data from the handwritten surveys into computer files and that allow Kathy to combine these files into a centralized database have been in use for several years, although a major revision of these programs is underway, to make them more convenient for use. Development of the program that will allow researchers and historians access to the COED database is progressing, with its completion anticipated sometime in 1995. COED will supply the information on

emigrant names to the Overland Emigrant Names program.

People who would like a report on references to an emigrant name can obtain the necessary forms and information by writing:

Overland Emigrant Names
OCTA Headquarters
P.O. Box 1019
Independence, MO 64051-0519

The fee for a name reference search will be \$10 per surname for people who are not members of OCTA, and \$8 per surname for members of OCTA, with an additional \$2 for shipping and handling. (The shipping and handling charge applies to any number of surnames requested at one time.) People who obtained reports of name searches from COED should wait until next year before requesting a new report from the Emigrant Names Program.

Revenue Enhancement Plan 1993-94 Final Report

October 1, 1994, marks the beginning of a new fiscal year for OCTA and brings the curtain down on our first annual fund raising drive. The final tally for the 1993-94 drive is:

Endowment Fund	\$ 1870
Annual Fund	2950
Designated Funds	8325
TOTAL	\$13145

These results are very impressive and they are a tribute to the one-hundred and fifty plus members who generously contribute to the Revenue Enhancement Plan (REP). The REP represents our first association-wide attempt at fund raising and these additional funds will help to build our fiscal security, to enhance our ability to educate the public about trail history, and to expand our efforts at trail preservation.

The funds will be transferred to the designated accounts quickly so that your contributions can go right to work in preserving this most important part of our national heritage. Plans are already underway for our second annual drive which will be initiated this fall. Thanks for your generous help and support!

Jim Budde, Treasurer

International OCTA Members Help Bring Convention Attendance to All Time High

With two members from Japan, Mr. Yuji Aisaka of Kyoto, and Mr. Hiko Oda, Tokyo, and Lynn Bate from England, Registration Chairman George Ivory reported a record seven-hundred fifty registrants had crossed the threshold of Salt Lake City's Hilton Hotel to participate in the 12th Annual OCTA Convention. There were many compliments for the warm, courteous, and well organized check-in procedures. As an officer in one of the area's most prominent real estate development operations, George fully utilized that organization's extensive computer facilities to record and track the registration process. Supplying constantly updated statistics to the various committee chairpeople, they in turn were able to order necessary supplies, lunches, transportation, even portable toilets, as dictated by the number of participants.

George recruited a most able crew of Nancy Andersen, Evah Bigler, Grant Eastwood, Jan and Eldon Fletcher, Dorothy Karas, Laura Mulder, Lois Olson, Betty and Alton Sorensen, and OCTA Convention Committee Chair, Mary Ann Tortorich to meet, greet, and direct the conventioners.

**More Convention Coverage
throughout this issue**

Changes Coming to *News From the Plains*

"Goodbye" from Rose Ann Tompkins:

This newsletter finishes five years (and 20 issues) as editor. It has been a rewarding, learning and interesting experience. I never claimed to be a trained journalist, but did have some experience producing small newsletters. It was a challenge to take on this large a job, and a way to contribute to the organization. With increasing submissions from members and chapters, it became both easier and more difficult to do the job. Easier in that I didn't have to work so hard for material to fill the pages, more difficult in that I sometimes had to make difficult decisions about what I could include. This final issue has been a case in point in terms of the latter.

I want to express my gratitude to all of you for sending me stories, reports, ideas and photographs. And, without the support and encouragement of Don Buck, Publications Chair during these five years, there were times when I might have thrown in the towel. Over the years, many of you sent me words of positive encouragement or gave me verbal thanks. Though not always acknowledged, that encouragement and thanks made a difference. Receiving OCTA's Meritorious Achievement Award in Salt Lake City also told me I must have made a difference. Thank you for that ultimate in support.

Just as I took OCTA's *News From the Plains* of 1989 and tried to make it grow into the organization's communication device, I think Will Bagley will take OCTA's *News From the Plains* of 1994 to continued growth. He is enthusiastic and has some great new ideas. Please give him the same support you have given me; we will all benefit. As the organization continues to grow and include more activities in its scope, the newsletter will become more and more important in keeping us in touch with all those activities.

I will continue to work in OCTA, serving two more years on the Board of Directors, continuing to survey documents for COED, and helping with the Emigrant Historical Studies Series, soon to make its debut. Also, I belong to a great chapter, Southwest. There is a lot of trail work ahead in this part of the country, and I plan to be in the thick of it!



"Hello" from Will Bagley:



Rose Ann Tompkins

As I face the prospect of taking over *News from the Plains* from the hand of Rose Ann Tompkins, I find myself envying her retirement. Rose Ann has handled one of the most demanding volunteer jobs in OCTA with class and enthusiasm. As I face the prospect of assuming this daunting task, the most mitigating factor is that Rose Ann has done such a good job working with the people who help put the *NFP* together: OCTA volunteers. While we (I use the "editorial we," since Robert Hoshide will join me as Associate Editor) might make some changes to look and design, I hope one thing won't change: *News from the Plains* will remain the voice of the chapters and individual OCTA members.

I hope to develop an exciting feature that I think can become one of the newsletter's best and most widely read sections: Patty Reed's Page. Named for one of the children who survived the Donner party and carried a doll through the entire ordeal, the page will provide a "kid's corner" for *News from the Plains*. The notice posted in the last issue has already brought in poetry and pictures, and we encourage members and teachers working on overland trails to send the best work of promising artists, poets, writers, and puzzle-crafters to me.

We also hope to expand our letters section and will explore branching into book notices. Since many OCTA readers are involved in fascinating historical and genealogical research, we are considering a "Queries" section where curious members can "go fishing" for other OCTAonians expertise and help in solving historical puzzles. We're very interested in hearing any ideas you might have that would help *News from the Plains* provide better information and items of greater interest to OCTA members.

Mostly, however, the changes will be cosmetic. We certainly will have our hands full simply meeting the challenge of maintaining the standard Rose Ann has set through years of hard work. With your help, we hope to hit the mark.

Beginning with the December 1, 1994 deadline, please direct articles, photographs and ideas to:

Will Bagley, Editor
News from the Plains
1451 Kensington Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84105-2647
(801) 487-3727

If you create material on a computer, please submit the files on any size or format disk using any popular word processing or page layout program. (If possible, also provide a file in ASCII text.) Naturally, we'll be glad to accept typed articles and submissions in any format, but please send printed copy using the best quality settings available.

Letters

Questions:

In my travels these past two summers along the Oregon Trail many questions come to mind. Maybe some of the veteran trail buffs can help me out.

1. Between Oshkosh and Lisco, Nebraska, along the county road next to the trail on the south side of the North Platte River there are a series of rows of double fencing out in the field next to the road. There is a single barbed wire fence next to the county road and then about fifty yards out in the field are these double rows of fencing, 15 yards wide and sometimes 1/4 to 1/2 mile long. What are these?

2. At South Pass, just a few feet north of the monuments there is a large ditch which exists down the gully headed for Pacific Springs. Is this the trail? Someone told me this was the start of an irrigation ditch to drain water from the Sweetwater River west. Is this true?

3. In the field just south of the Henry Hill grave, on the Nebraska/Wyoming border there are five or six depressions coming up the hill. Are these segments of the trail or is the trail part of the ranch road heading up the ridge of the hill entering Wyoming?

I would appreciate a little help.

Ken Sosalla
1764 Blackhawk Trail
Waukesha, WI 53186

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Dear Editor:

I stumbled into the St. Louis Arch museum and the National Trails Center in Independence about four years ago, and got bitten by the trail bug — bad. I have since been doing lots of reading, and have managed a few side trips here and there along the Oregon Trail, but until just recently, I have never been able to set aside an adequate stretch of time to really visit and concentrate on the Trail. This month, though, I managed to reserve a whole week to explore the trail from Westport and Independence through most of Nebraska.

What a delightful experience! And I owe a lot of my enjoyment and excitement to the fine folks involved in OCTA.

NFP October 1994 - page 4

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Jeanne Miller, Executive Director

It was very nice to have so many of you stop by the bookroom at the convention. Judy Budde, Pat Jones, and I were glad to be able to put names and faces together. Judy and Pat have been faithful bookroom volunteers for the last several years, and their help is invaluable.

We are pleased to have Dr. Fred Gowans' new book for sale. The entire edition (150 copies) of *The Great Fur Trade Road, Discovery and Exploration, 1739-1843*, was sold out by the end of the convention. Each was individually autographed. There will be a second edition soon to be available through OCTA. This edition will have a mylar cover added.

210 pages, 11 x 17, photos and maps.	Price	\$49.95
	P&H	6.00

There is a new book by John Townley entitled *The Overland Stage, A History and Guidebook*. Although the stage lifetime was only eight years, the Overland hauled tens of thousands of passengers on its daily stages east and west. Included in this book are a table of distances between Atchison, KS, and Placerville, CA, the name and description of each station, many maps and illustrations. Part I is a history and evaluation; Part II contains maps of the Overland Road.

279 pages, 8 3/4 x 11, cloth bound.	Price	\$29.95
	P&H	5.00

A reprint, *West From Fort Bridger: The Pioneering of Emigrant Trails Across Utah, 1846-1850*, Edited by J. Roderic Korns and Dale Morgan. Revised and updated by Will Bagley and Harold Schindler. This is a classic history - some say the classic history of the opening of the western trails, as told in the words of the emigrants themselves. Compiled from original diaries and journals by Morgan and Korns, this book recounts a half-decade of important pioneer treks. New material on Hastings, Fremont's 1845 crossing of the Salt Desert, the Salt Lake Cutoff and the Golden Pass have been inserted by Bagley and Schindler.

30 maps and photos including two oversize maps in a pocket.

Cloth bound	\$29.95
P&H	3.00

Order from: OCTA, P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

A little hand painted sign here, a historic marker there, or a set of carsonite markers up a hill along a swale really helped me find the sites that make the Trail come alive. It was terrific to see the places I'd only been able to read about and to find out that through the efforts of a lot of hard working people, mostly volunteers, the trail experience still comes alive today.

I'm probably one of the younger rut nuts around, and living on the eastern seaboard, find it rather difficult to visit the Western trails. But again, because of everyone's hard work, my recent efforts were rewarded many times over.

Thanks so much to everyone that has worked to preserve, record, and pass on the history of the Oregon Trail.

Bucky Green, Arlington, VA

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

David Bigler

Our 12th Annual Convention and Board Meeting at Salt Lake City last August produced some memorable moments, like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's rendition of "Shenandoah" and Marta Lienhard Vincent playing "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes at the Donner Spring Dedication. They also saw changes in positions and some welcome new faces in OCTA's leadership.

Congratulations go, first, to Jeanne Miller who won an unqualified vote of confidence when the Board upgraded her title from Headquarters Manager to Executive Director. The action was highly merited recognition of dedicated and effective service.

The newest members of OCTA's leadership team are Jackie Lewin of St. Joseph, MO, who as Vice President/President Elect is now positioned to become OCTA's first female president in August, 1995, and Bill Bullard of Independence, MO, who now rejoins our management circle as Secretary.

Following this year's election, three new members take seats on the Board, Roger Blair, MD, of Sheridan, WY, Ross Marshall of Merriam, KS, and Jeanne Watson of Summit, NJ, while Kathy Roubal of Tahoe City, CA, begins a second term. Roger is an Association founder, Ross is Past President, Jeanne is former Secretary and chairwoman of Collections, and Kathy directs the COED Program.

Especially welcome to our management organization are the qualified friends who now take on important new duties.

Elaine McNabney of Kansas City, MO, rightly known as OCTA's "No. 1 Volunteer," will become Membership chairwoman and Peter DeLaFosse of Salt Lake City, UT, editor of *Trailing The Pioneers: A Guide to Utah's Emigrant Trails*, assumes the new responsibility of Publications chairman.

Finally, to a position of first importance comes Director Will Bagley, also



Bud Rusho, right, presents Dave Bigler with his Certificate of Service award at the banquet.

of Salt Lake City, who now takes over from Rose Ann Tompkins as editor of *News From The Plains*.

* * * *

Late in August, I signed our cooperative agreement with the National Park Service to cover eleven projects approved for total funding of \$43,074. By the time you read this, procedures should have been worked out to go forward on these projects.

There has been some delay on this, as most of us know, not of the Park Service's or our doing, and some impatience over the holdup, but I believe it will serve us well in the future to have taken the time to establish the right relationship at the outset.

One thing is sure — this agreement and those to come — will vastly expand the opportunity to carry out the goals for which OCTA was founded. They will also require more from us, individually and as chapters, to carry out these projects and account for the public funds entrusted to us in a manner that reflects credit on our Association.

* * * *

According to President Al Mulder, Utah Crossroads welcomes with an appropriate degree of modesty the praise of members who attended this year's convention, hosted by OCTA's newest chapter.

"It was truly a grand week for those of us who love the trails," said Tom Hunt, National Preservation Officer. "You and the chapter have done yourselves proud."

Don Buck, another old trails pro from California, was "struck by the genuine pleasantness and courtesy of all those working on the convention." His comment, "You have carried hospitality to a new height," was especially well received.

A new member, Larry Melton of the Department of History, East Central Community College, Union, MO, said the Salt Lake sessions "far exceeded my expectations." His only criticism was that the Book Room was so "well presented and supplied" that he "overspent three years of my book budget!"

Kind words all, and warmly appreciated by the Utah Crossroads convention team comprise of, but not limited to, the following: Al Mulder, Vice Chairman; Joyce Marsing, Secretary; Byron Anderson, Finance; George Ivory, Registration; Gregory C. Thompson, Program; Randy Wilson, Field Trips; Oscar Olson, Transportation; Jeff Carlstrom, Arrangements; Will Bagley, Publications; Curt Bench, Book Room; Shirlee Hart, Hospitality; Jack Shapiro, Publicity; Vern Gorzitze, Donner Spring Project; Peter DeLaFosse, Utah Trails Guidebook; Jerry Dunton, Raffle; and Glenn D. Foreman, Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake District, Designated Hitter.

By the way, Utah Crossroads is getting a little long in the tooth to be called much longer OCTA's newest chapter. Isn't it about time someone else laid claim to this honor?

Scotts Bluff National Monument Celebrates 75 Years

OCTA Cofounder and Director Emeritus Merrill J. Mattes, who will be 84 on November 16, was delighted to receive from Larry Reed, Superintendent of Scotts Bluff National Monument, an invitation to become the prin-

cipal speaker their 75th anniversary ceremony. The date was set for July 16 in order to coincide with the annual community celebration in nearby Gering, NE called "Oregon Trail Days." The event at the monument was sched-

uled for 2:30 PM, following the annual parade and barbecue in town.

Merrill was the first paid Superintendent (then called "Custodian") from 1935 to 1946, thus beginning his National Park Service career at age 24. Subsequently he became Regional Historian for the Midwest Region in Omaha, park planner for the western United States in San Francisco and finally chief of Historic Preservation at the National Park Service Center in Denver.

He researched and wrote *Great Platte River Road* during his leave times at the Park Service. After retiring in 1975, he undertook research contracts with the state of Nebraska and the National Park Service. Finally he embarked on the biggest challenge of his career, a nationwide search for all known overland emigrant diaries, funded by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. This search resulted in publication of his landmark book, *Platte River Road Narratives*, used by OCTA members and others as the best resource book available on emigrant diaries of the Oregon and California Trails.



Joseph Fairfield

Setting of the July 16 celebration at Scotts Bluff National Monument.

An Excellent Beginning

Scottish men with bagpipes have won wars, but it took a lady with a bagpipe to win hearts. The official opening ceremonies of the convention were solemnly enhanced by a uniformed color guard from the Mormon Battalion Association who carried and posted the colors with great dignity and pride.

The guard was led down the center aisle through an audience of several hundred by the soul-penetrating tones of the bagpipe as played by Marta Lienhard Vincent. Mrs. Vincent is a direct descendant of Heinrich Lienhard who had passed through Utah over the Hastings Cutoff in 1846 and left one of the most descriptive journal accounts of the area. Dressed in full Scottish high-

land attire, she played "Hail Columbia," the first music Lienhard heard upon arrival in California. She had transposed the music for use on the bagpipe especially for this ceremony. Many eyes were moistened and emotions stirred during the proceedings.

Following the flag ceremony, Albert Mulder, president of the Crossroads Chapter, welcomed the OCTA membership to Salt Lake City and the Convention. His witty remarks expressed the goal of the Convention Committee that everyone have a relaxing and fun time while learning about the westward trails passing through the "crossroads of the West" and the emigrants who used these trails.

Next, Olene Walker, Lieutenant Governor of Utah, greeted the conventioners. She spoke on behalf of Gover-

nor Leavitt, herself and the citizens of Utah when she expressed the honor it was to have the Convention in Salt Lake City. Lieutenant Governor Walker spoke briefly of Utah's great historical heritage and early Mormon emigration to Utah and Utah's significant place in trail history. Ms. Walker, a descendant of an 1847 pioneer, is a great lover of history and looks forward to retirement when she, too, can give in to the addiction of studying the past as rut-nuts do.

The beautiful strains of the bagpipe, the solemnity of the flag ceremony, the honor of having in attendance Lienhard's great-great-granddaughter, the warmth of Mulder's welcome and the gracious greeting by Lieutenant Governor Walker combined perfectly to make an impressive opening to OCTA's 1994 National Convention.

1994 Convention News

Convention articles and photographs by
Lyndia Carter, Floyd Garn Hatch, W. R.
Rusho, Jack Shapiro and Carl Woolsey.

Talks and Tours Make for Difficult Choices

There was something for everyone in the presentation of papers, as well as the mix of convention tours available.

Lecture rooms were filled with those eager to add to their knowledge by listening to scholars of the trails and the emigrants who used them. Greg Thompson and Bud Rusho are to be congratulated for arranging and managing this magnificent array of papers.

Fortunately, no choice had to be made on two occasions. The plenary speakers, Dr. Fred Gowans on Wednesday morning, and Dr. Stanley B. Kimball on Friday, were available to all listeners. Fred Gowans told of fur trappers and traders who opened up various segments of the Great Fur Trade Road that eventually became the Oregon and California Trails. Too often the root of trail exploration has been neglected and Gowans had done an excellent work of filling the gap. Stan Kimball focused on the impact of the emigration experience on the people who used or were associated with the trail. Kimball detailed various factors or changes involved in Mormon Trail history and the Mormon migration.

Wednesday morning and throughout the day Friday, papers were presented to accommodate every type of interest. For those who enjoy the nitty-gritty of locating and mapping the trail there were many talks that took the listener right along with the modern trail explorers. These presenters used slides, maps, journal accounts, and their own experiences searching for the trail to make the trails come to life. Roy Tea led his listeners along the 1841 Bartleson-Bidwell trail from Soda Springs to Pilot Peak. Few people really know this trail that was used only once. LaMar Berrett took his followers mentally over the Mormon Trail from Fort Bridger to the Salt Lake Valley. Rush Spedden guided those in his audience over the Hastings Cutoff through the Salt Desert. He shared his many years of

experience searching out the trail and his vast knowledge of trail accounts. Steven Madsen traced the Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles. Madsen, with his beautiful photography and interesting narrative, led his rapt audience along this early, much-used trail. William B. Smart took his audience through some pretty rough country as they followed him on the "Hole-in-the-Rock" wagon route across the Colorado Plateau. Patricia Fletcher opened up the Cherokee Trail for her audience across Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming to Salt Lake City. This little known 1849 trail is a fascinating bit of history. John Townley took his audience on a slide-filled modern excursion over the Overland Trail via his fast-paced and lively presentation.

For those who love trail history because of the people who used the trails, there were many excellent presentations. Will Bagley opened a real kettle of worms when he addressed the perceptions of Lansford W. Hastings. Bagley presented his research conclusions that Hastings was indeed a man pursuing his own promotion. Barbara Sullivan gave her audience delightful insights into Women's History with her research regarding the women on the trail striving to maintain Victorian expectations of femininity and trying to hold on to familiar roles. Lorin Hansen enlightened his listeners about the activities of the Mormon colony at Mission San Jose during the Gold Rush days of California. Kenneth Owens blended trail and people history very well in his treatise on the "Gold-Rich Saints" who opened the Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail in 1848. Lyndia Carter used slides of art work depicting the Mormon handcart experience as she recounted the daily drama and drudgery of those who came west pulling a cart behind them. Mel Bashore spoke of the awful tragedy that befell two Mormon wagon companies when they were snow-bound in Wyoming in 1856. Their ordeal is often overlooked as people often focus only on the handcart companies

who met the same fate. Brigham Madsen, one of Utah's most respected historians, took his audience with the freighters and stage drivers on the trail from Salt Lake to Montana.

Some of the speakers delved into issues more than either people or trails, but used both to build their presentations. Floyd O'Neil spoke about the impact of the floods of gold-seekers passing through or wintering over in Salt Lake City and other places in Utah. Michael Landon's topic also addressed the gold rushers' trip through Utah along the Hensley's Salt Lake Cutoff and the impact of those travelers on the quiet Mormon communities along the route.

Totally in classes by themselves were the papers by Norman Wright and David Madsen. Wright fascinated his audience with a history of odometers to measure the miles along the trail. He solved for his audience the riddle of knowing "how far we went today." David B. Madsen, an archaeologist of high repute, "dug" into the subject of the abandoned Donner Party wagons and discussed the excavation of artifacts on the Great Salt Lake Desert.

The papers presented at the convention were indeed of exceptional quality. With the many topics and viewpoints, there was always something to learn. The only difficulty was that it was extremely tough to make a choice when all were equally enticing.

Always a convention highlight, the tours to trail sites offered a wide variety and the guides were excellently prepared authorities.

Going northeast were the Mormon Trail tours, following the course of not only the Mormon emigrants but also the Donner Party, the Pony Express, the U.S. Army, and countless emigrants California-bound via Salt Lake City. LaMar Berrett was the intrepid leader of two buses simultaneously via an intricately connected speaker system. His lively commentary and great knowledge and experience reconstructed the traffic along the trail. The tour passed

continued on next page • • • • •



Convention faces included Crossroads President Al Mulder in his western finery, Vice President/President Elect Jackie Lewin at the banquet, and speaker Norman Wright explaining the various historical odometers.

• • • continued
through much of the beautiful Wasatch Mountains and Echo Canyon, giving tour participants a view of Utah's greener and rugged side.

Buses under the able leadership of Jack Tykal, Jerry Dunton, and Bud Rusho also travelled a shorter portion of the Mormon Trail but had the added experience of a 4.6 mile hike down the verdant Big Mountain to Mormon Flat on East Canyon Creek. The groups had the unique opportunity to walk on a pristine and beautiful segment of trail. The weather cooperated wonderfully and the tour guides enriched the experience with colorful tidbits of history. It was a memorable experience.

The Hensley Salt Lake Cutoff headed north from Salt Lake City toward City of the Rocks. Buses for this tour traveled as far north on the Cutoff as Snowville, UT. This trail was used primarily by gold-rushers who sought a respite in Salt Lake City before continuing to California. Highlights of this tour included stops at Miles Goodyear's Fort Buenaventura, Hampton Ford crossing the Bear River, and a visit to Golden Spike National Historic Site. The tour experts were Kent Malan, Mike Lunt, Jay Haymond, and Will Bagley who kept up a lively commentary.

The Hastings Cutoff tours took Convention participants west across the Great Salt Lake Desert. Trail authorities Rush Spedden, Roy Tea, and Art

Wilder were highly informative directors on the buses, bringing to the trip a wealth of scholarly knowledge and trail experience. Robert and Lyndia Carter also helped provide "color commentary" on Roy Tea's bus. Primary emphasis on the tour was placed on the 1846 groups that followed Lansford Hastings across the "fearful long drive," but commentary also included the explorations of John C. Fremont, the mountain men, the Bartleson-Bidwell group of 1841, and the goldrushers of 1849 and 1850. The trail across the forbidding desert ended up at the oasis at Donner Spring. Tour participants walking down to the Salt Flat trail could only get a small idea of the suffering experienced by the emigrants as they crossed the white-wasteland. The various buses stopped to allow short walks along sections of the trail, thus giving an "in their footsteps" feeling.

For those who wanted a part of a day just for themselves, there was the half-day tour of historic sites around Salt Lake City. Ron Anderson was tour guide to places such as Brigham Young's Lion House, the Brigham Young Cemetery, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum, the University of Utah, the "This is the Place" Monument, and other history-laden places. Eyes and ears were kept busy on this tour.

The died-in-the-wool rut-nuts also had pre- and post-convention 4WD tours on which to spend their time and maybe

even sacrifice a tire or two to Utah's sometimes unfriendly terrain and vegetation. Vehicles bounced their way behind Rush Spedden and Art Wilder over the Hastings Cutoff from Skull Valley to the Grayback Hills. Other rutnuts joined LaMar Berrett from Fort Bridger to the Wyoming border as they beat their way through sagebrush, conquered steep hills, and splashed through several creeks. Hopefully the scratches will bring back fond memories.

As if that still wasn't enough, Roy Tea had a large following on the Hastings Cutoff from Floating Island to Donner Spring. After a lot of bumping over dirt roads and a couple of short hikes, the tour group ended up at Donner Spring just barely in time for the dedication of the presentation project. (A few people were a bit nervous since Marta Lienhard Vincent and her bagpipes were on that tour and had a flat tire!) In addition, Signa Larralde of the Bureau of Land Management and members of the Pony Express Association led their followers over some lonely stretches of the Pony Express Trail through Utah's West Desert. Highlights of the tour included Camp Floyd, Lookout Pass, Simpson Springs and Riverbed stations.

Obviously, Convention participants had abundant opportunities to see the trails through the Crossroads of the West. Many memories were built, friendships made, and plans conceived for coming back someday.

Donner Springs Preservation Project

The stillness of the oasis at the edge of the Salt Desert near the base of Pilot Peak was broken by nearly 350 people, braving desert heat and sun, who had come to participate in honoring the emigrants who had sought relief from thirst at this spot in 1846. Members of the Crossroads Chapter have spent nearly two years on a fencing and interpretive kiosk project to preserve this landmark on the Hastings Cutoff. The dedication ceremony was well-attended, evidence of the concern that OCTA members have for preserving the westward trails and significant landmarks associated with them. In modern times, it takes approximately three hours to make the trip over the desert from Salt Lake City to the spring, the last hour of which is over a dirt road, but for the emigrants of 1846 and the gold-seekers who followed in 1849 and 1850, it took many days, with approximately the last 80 miles devoid of water and grass. It was an ordeal relieved by the life-giving waters of Donner Spring. The project was undertaken to not only preserve the spring, but to preserve the memory of

those who camped there as they followed their dreams to California.

Al Mulder, Crossroads president, welcomed OCTA members and special guests, which included members of the McKeller family who owned the ranch for many years, the Dean R. Stephens family, current owners, Ruth Mathews who directs the museum in Grantsville, UT which contains many salt desert artifacts, and Marta Lienhard Vincent, descendant of a member of one of the first emigrant companies to cross the desert.

Following Mulder's brief greetings, Dr. Fred Gowans, professor of western history at Brigham Young University, spoke of the historical significance of Donner Springs prior to 1846 and the importance of the spring to all who passed through this area. Dean R. Stephens, owner of the TL Bar Ranch on which the spring is located, spoke next. Stephens has been consistently supportive and cooperative in the preservation project. He gave a more modern history of the spring and the associated ranch site, recounting the various owners and important events there.

After reading the legal agreement to allow Crossroads access to the spring

for maintenance, Al Mulder presented Dean Stephens with an attractive plaque for his cooperation in the project. Portions of the Lienhard journal were read which described the company's arrival at the spring and their joy of at last reaching water. Olive Donaldson played on her fiddle a medley much like the songs a Mr. Rhodie played at the spring, as mentioned in Lienhard's journal.

Vern Gorzitze, project manager, then came to the microphone. He paid tribute to all who helped with the project financially or by giving of their talents or donating physical labor. All 68 fence post holes had to be dug by hand, many weekends were spent in fence construction, oiling and in building the kiosk. Six thousand dollars were raised to meet expenses, with the Utah Westerners being a major contributor. Many people outside of the Crossroads membership donated time and materials as special favors. And although "it's done," Gorzitze added that Crossroads will continue to maintain the site.

David Bigler closed the program section of the ceremony with remarks indicative of the long term value of the project. The project is symbolic of the way that the past should be valued. These people who came here in times long past were using their freedom to dream their dreams and taking the risks to fulfill them. Bigler finished his remarks with an appeal for us to rededicate ourselves to the values and ideals of our pioneer ancestors and to strive to pass those ideals on to generations to come.

The audience then moved to inside the fence where the impressive interpretive plaques in the wayside exhibit were unveiled. The climax of the ceremony came when Marta Lienhard Vincent paid tribute to her ancestor and the thousands of other emigrants who passed this way. Standing at the edge of the spring, with back to the desert and face to Pilot Peak and onward to California, Vincent lifted her bagpipes to her lips to play "Amazing Grace." The plaintive sounds of the instrument reverberated in the desert air, stirring the souls of the living and turning their hearts to join with the hearts of the pioneers who made the trek so long ago.



Pre-convention tour vehicles cross Skull Valley on the Hastings Cutoff. The dust drifts away, giving the feeling to viewers of a scene from long ago.

Three OCTA Books Spark Book Room

One of the most popular convention features through the years has been the book-room. This year it was as alluring as ever and especially attractive with the availability of three books published for the '94 convention.

The revised edition of the long out of print, *West from Fort Bridger*, was accompanied by the all new, *Trailing the Pioneers*.

West from Fort Bridger, properly known as Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. 19, '51, has an intriguing history of dedication, loyalty, and friendship. It was originally conceived and researched by J. Roderic Korn's whose name adorns the title page. Over the years, Korn's had worked with Dale Morgan and Charles Kelly, bouncing ideas and exchanging research information with them. Ill health had prevented his writing, but Morgan promised that the book would be published and it was. Morgan gave all credit to Korn's.

Harold Schindler, a friend and disciple of Morgan, owns many of Morgan's annotated books, manuscripts, and documents. In coauthoring *West From Fort Bridger*, Schindler was fulfilling Morgan's own revision plans. Coauthor Will Bagley also holds Morgan as one of the greatest western histo-

rians. Beyond Morgan's notes and projections, the two men did extensive additional research. One significant find was the 1845 journal of Fremont's artist, Edward M. Kern, which had been lost since 1860.

Trailing the Pioneers, covered in detail in the July issue of NFP, is a guidebook for the convention tours and an outline to the development of the western trails. The books were published by the Utah State University Press in a boxed, autographed, two volume, 300 copy, hard bound edition. *West from Fort Bridger* is also available as an individual, hardbound edition and both books are printed in a soft cover, unlimited, trade edition.

The third book is a limited, 150 copy, special convention edition of Dr. Fred R. Gowans' *The Great Fur Trade Road*, with forward by OCTA President, David Bigler.

The Crossroad Chapter's raffle table, manned by Jerry Dunton and David Westley drew a great deal of attention; over 2,000 tickets were sold. Among the prizes were an Apollo Global Positioning System donated by II Tomorrow Inc., a sculpted-metal Indian peace pipe crafted by David Westley and 27 early railway spikes rescued from the abandoned transcontinental railway bed near the "Joining of the Rails" location at Promontory, UT.

Agency Cooperation Good

If credit for a good convention goes to anyone, it must include those in the Bureau of Land Management and other governmental bodies. The cooperation of the BLM under the guidance of Public Information officer, Glenn Foreman, was outstanding. The BLM provided communications and emergency backup for all field trips, including those in the planning phase. Their assistance and recommendations were invaluable over the entire three-year planning process. BLM provided a staffed information booth during the convention, a workshop and a field trip. But more important was the opportunity to exchange information and explore the mutual concepts of maintaining the traces of our heritage. The officers and members of the Crossroads Chapter wish to publicly express their sincere thanks.

The chapter is additionally fortunate in being headquartered in the Utah's capital. Assistance from Utah Parks and Recreation, the State Historical Society, the University of Utah Marriott Library and other agencies added tremendously to the entire program, as did cooperation from the LDS Church.

This was an opportunity to make influential agencies intimately aware of OCTA's functions and goals, and to discover areas of mutual assistance.



The Mormon Trail bus tour made a stop in Echo Canyon to hear about Mormon War fortifications still visible.



Sunny, blue sky weather made for great picnics. These tour participants enjoyed their box lunch on the grass.

Workshops Met a Variety of Interests

One of the best things about OCTA Conventions is the opportunity to learn new skills or improve old ones through workshops designed to meet a variety of interests. The afternoon of Wednesday, August 10, was occupied by classes taught by OCTA experts in the fields of trail marking and mapping, convention planning, trail preservation, researching trail diaries, journals, and reminiscences for the COED program, COED data entry, and genealogy, which was a special addition this year. What promised to be an excellent archaeology field study at Camp Floyd was regrettably rained out on Tuesday.

Tom Hunt taught his group how to get the most out of a preservation project, showing them how to carefully plan the steps necessary for a successful preservation effort. David Johnson and Don Buck, true experts at mapping, led a discussion of the Mapping Emigrant Trails manual and provided much information regarding organizing mapping outings and using the latest mapping techniques. Mary Ann Tortorich presented a "how to" workshop on living through planning an OCTA convention. She provided handouts and worksheets to make the learning experience most valuable. Shann Rupp taught those who attended the COED workshop how to locate and utilize trail documents and prepare the information

Awards Banquet Well Attended

A unprecedented 370 members attended the 12th Annual Awards Banquet in the Three Seasons Room of the Salt Lake Hilton Hotel. Following dinner and introductions, W.L. Bud Rusho, Chairman of the Awards Committee, made the following award presentations:

Certificates of Service:

Outgoing directors - Gregory M. Franzwa, Jacqueline Lewin and William C. Watson

Convention Chairman David L. Bigler.

Friend of the Trail Awards:

Idaho - Lester Brodie

Kansas - Mr. and Mrs. David Gage, and Mr. and Mrs. John Gage

Wyoming - Joseph Ray Broadbent Jr. and Joseph Siddoway Broadbent

National Certificate of Appreciation Awards: Tom Bell and Peter DeLafosse

Volunteer of the Year Award: Vernon Gorzitze

Meritorious Achievement Awards: Betty Lee, Rose Ann Tompkins and James E. Budde

gleaned from those documents for inclusion in the COED data base. Kathy Roubal, the power behind COED for many years, offered a first-time since 1988 workshop on entering the information from the COED survey sheets into the data base. The computer-oriented workshop shed much light on getting the researched data to where it can be accessed by trail researchers.

The attendance at the Genealogy Workshop was truly gratifying. Arranged by Michael Landon and conducted by Ken Nelson, the workshop focused on the massive amounts of genealogical research materials available at the LDS (Mormon) Family History Library in Salt Lake City. Nelson discussed research methods and materials and how to get started in using the available resources. Participants in the workshop received useful handouts and resource lists and then had time after the lecture to browse through the Family History Library. Much valuable trail information is found within the many documents and resources that are housed in the library.

Whichever workshop OCTA members attended they were well rewarded by the many things they learned and new resources with which they became acquainted. Indeed, OCTA has something for all the various divergent interests involved in trail history.

Barbecue Dinner Wrap-up

The barbecue dinner on Saturday night marked the end to an event filled week, and Pioneer State Park was the ideal place. With its mid-nineteenth century setting and breathtaking overview of Salt Lake City and the Lake, it offered the perfect ambience. Horse drawn wagons and surreys carried diners from the parking lot to the barbecue area adjoining a reconstructed pioneer village. The aroma of barbecuing chicken and ribs set the juices flowing and all were fed without a hitch or a wait or a want. A blue grass band filled the air with its happy strains which seemed to aid the animated conversation rather than get in the way. In the midst of the friendly activity a Pony Express rider arrived with an invitation to the Statehood Centennial in 1995.

The high-spot of the evening, the final prize drawing arrived, and more than a score of beautiful, donated prizes found homes. The most valuable prize, the Apollo GPS receiver was won by the most logical person, Ken Malin, Crossroad Chapter's Mapping Chairman. Yes, the drawing was legitimate.

The evening ended with a perfect sunset and great memories.

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

is published quarterly by the
Oregon-California Trails Association
P.O. Box 1019
Independence, MO 64051-0519

The Association disclaims any responsibility for statements or facts or opinions expressed in signed contributions. The Association is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, artwork, or other materials submitted for editorial consideration.

The Association is fully responsible for its content, except as indicated. The entire contents of *News From the Plains* is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without permission.

Rose Ann Tompkins, Editor

Sierra Peak Named for Melissa Coray, 1848 Pioneer

Jeanne H. Watson

A previously unnamed Sierra Nevada mountain peak near the 9,600 foot summit of the Mormon-Carson Emigrant Road has been dedicated to Melissa Burton Coray, the first woman to cross this trail in 1848. In a July 30 ceremony, attended by nearly 200 persons including a number of Coray descendants, members of the Mormon Battalion that opened the route eastward from Sutter's Mill were honored.

Mrs. Coray, the 19-year-old wife of Sgt. Wm. Coray, was the only woman to accompany these trail blazers. The journey is commemorated by the grave and markers at Tragedy Springs. She had volunteered to serve as a laundress in order to go with her husband when he enlisted in the Army of the West.

The naming of Melissa Coray Peak, located just south of West Pass with this section of the California Trail crossing a meadow at the foot, also honored all pioneer women. The peak itself can be identified from a distance as a remote weather station is located at its top.

The dedication, sponsored by the Sierra Chapter of the Sons of Utah Pioneers, included the unveiling of a roadside plaque at a new Silver Lake Overlook on Highway 88 between Tragedy Springs and the Plasse resort road. Wearing pioneer dress, eight-year-old Melissa Richmond, a fourth great-granddaughter of Melissa and her second husband William Kimball, removed the cover from the plaque on a granite boulder. Her family came from the Washington, DC area for the occasion.

Gary Kimball, a great grandson of Melissa, from Park City, UT, outlined Melissa's story, and concluded by pointing out that Melissa's mountain "is almost as big and beautiful as her heart."

The program began with the presentation of colors by the US Mormon Battalion Color Guard. Ben E. Lofgren, president of the Sierra chapter, introduced the speakers. Michael Landon, archivist with the LDS History Department in Salt Lake City, explained the importance of such emigrant records while traffic roared up and down the two-lane highway separating audience from speakers.

Bill Watson relayed greetings from OCTA's Dave Bigler and Tom Hunt. He then outlined the 20th century history of the Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail.

In the afternoon at the Cal-Trans Maintenance Station above Caples Lake, with a view of Melissa's Peak in the distance, a commemorative program was held. Keynote speaker was Norma B. Ricketts of Mesa, AZ, whose new book, *Melissa's Journey with the Mormon Battalion*, has just been published this summer. Mrs. Ricketts recalled Melissa's 1846-48 "western odyssey" and introduced descendants from Utah and California.

Also participating in the ceremony were descendants of the James Clyman company, the first to follow the new route west. The Clyman company met the east-bound Mormons in the Nevada desert and learned about the just opened trail at that time. Lillian Butterfield of Napa, CA, a direct descendant of James Clyman spoke as did Evelyn Van Noy, of West Sacramento, whose ancestors were also members of the same emigrant company.

Melissa Garff Ballard of Salt Lake City, third great granddaughter of Melissa and William Corey, responded on behalf of the family, whose members presented a medley of pioneer songs. A Mormon Trail song was also sung by

the Fair Oaks (CA) Stake Youth Chorus.

Judy Yandoh, US Forest Service District Ranger for the Amador District of the El Dorado National Forest, welcomed everyone to the area. She and Ben Lofgren also reassured the audience that approximately 200 members of a Mormon Youth Battalion, recreating the opening of the route and pushing handcarts, had successfully completed the 21-mile trek, camping out for two nights.

Michael Landon spoke again, explaining the importance of diaries and reminiscences in telling the story of the trail.

Lofgren acknowledged help in making arrangements for the July 30 event by the US Forest Service; California Department of Transportation; Kirkwood Ski and Summer Resort; Oregon-California Trails Association; International Society, Daughters of Utah Pioneers; El Dorado National Forest Interpretive Association, and the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers.

He also thanked the United States Board on Geographic Names, explaining with help from this agency and the California Board, the official name of this Sierra mountain peak, as recognized on all future maps, will be that of Melissa Coray.

Overland Trails Now Accessible from Information Superhighway

Bob Wier, working with Lesley Wischmann and Will Bagley, has established an Internet mailing list devoted to overland trails. OCTA members interested in exploring the electronic frontier can join the mailing list by sending E-Mail to this address:

listserve@hipp.etsu.edu

The initial message should read:

subscribe overland-trails "your_full_name" your_e-mail_address

(Make sure to enclose your name in quotation marks.)

Messages to be distributed to members should be sent to this address:

overland-trails@hipp.etsu.edu

The system has built-in safeguards to screen out unwanted electronic junk mail and should provide a lively forum for the discussion of all aspects of overland history.

Mattes Library Continues to Expand

John Mark Lambertson, NFTC director and archivist

It was only three and a half years ago that the Merrill J. Mattes Research Library was created at the National Frontier Trails Center, next door to OCTA's headquarters in Independence, MO. Yet in that time the collection has grown so rapidly, in both size and acclaim, that it is believed to already be the largest research library in the nation devoted to the overland trail experience and America's western expansion.

The collection, jointly owned and operated by OCTA and the National Frontier Trails Center, was born out of Merrill Mattes' generous donation of his extensive personal library to OCTA. In the past three years that core collection has been nearly doubled in size by other donations and purchases. Most notable among the additions has been George Watkins' gift of his large library, the transferral of 23 cubic feet of Mattes manuscripts from the Nebraska State Historical Society, and Marge Waitman's donation of working maps and periodicals of her father's, the late Paul Henderson.

Other sizable donations of books have come from Paul M. Edwards, and Ross Marshall, while the Trails Center has been adding one to two hundred volumes each year from its limited book budget. Additional personal files and books continue to be donated periodically by Merrill Mattes (see below). The collection now totals about 1,800 books, besides the manuscripts, maps, photographs, and periodicals.

The library's focus is, of course, on the overland trail experience, especially the diaries, journals, letters and recollections of those who made the trip

west. Its broader scope, however, stretches from the explorations of Lewis and Clark to the coming of the transcontinental railroad. There are therefore sections on such diverse subjects as Indians, trail guides, artists, mountain men, transportation, women, mining, biographies, Mormons, forts, railroads, pony express, military, and the Southwest among others.

Thus far in 1994, a computerized list of all of the diaries and recollections in the library has been made and also a computerized catalog of every volume on the shelves. These two monumental tasks, requiring hundreds of hours of labor, were accomplished by National Frontier Trails Center volunteers, led by NFTC staff. Both lists are currently being added to and corrected for errors.

With the growth of the collection, 1994 has also brought the construction of additional oak bookcases, expanding the previous shelving by about 60 percent. A new wall at the entrance has also been constructed and bears the name "Merrill J. Mattes Research Library" in raised letters. The Trails Center's new brochure also includes a description of the library and publicizes OCTA.

Additional good news from the library: visits by researchers is up dramatically in 1994. Fifty-seven persons, from high school students to doctoral candidates, have used the collection in the first eight months of this year. The figure is especially remarkable since the Trails Center has waited to actively publicized the facility until some of the organizational work and finding aides are complete this fall.

The library does have needs. Besides always welcoming donations of books or entire personal libraries, the Mattes Library is seeking back issues of western historical periodicals. Fairly extensive runs of several midwestern state historical society publications have been received, such as those from Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. Yet very few periodicals have been gathered from the western states. The library has only small collections of Wyoming and Utah historical society publications, a handful of Nevada Historical Society Quarterlies, and a grand total of four Oregon Historical Society Quarterlies. There is nothing here at all from the California, Washington, or Idaho state historical societies.

As the scope of our collections includes the southern trails to California and the Santa Fe Trail, we are also in need of Arizona and New Mexico publications. Back issues of many other historical journals would also be welcome in our effort to make our holdings as complete as possible. Granted, some of these periodicals are of better quality than others, or have more articles related to the overland trail experience and other related western themes. It is more logical, however, to try to acquire complete runs of such series than to play a complicated "pick and choose" game of acquisition of individual issues.

We would be delighted to hear from OCTA members who have books, periodicals, or other materials they would like to donate. Please write or call me at the National Frontier Trails Center, 318 W. Pacific, Independence, MO, 64050; (816) 325-7577.

Merrill Mattes adds to the Library

In 1992 Merrill Mattes donated to OCTA personal files relating to the origins and early growth of OCTA. In May, 1994, he donated non-OCTA files consisting of research, reports, and correspondence relating to themes that impinge on Western American history. Subjects range from "Alaska History"

to "Western Women," and include "Indian Interviews," the "Rocky Mountain Fur Trade," "Lewis and Clark," and "Famous Friends" (Wm. Henry Jackson, Thomas Hart Benton and James Michener).

The largest file relates to Fort Laramie, namely research on the "three

Fort Laramies" of Fort William, Fort John, and the military occupation 1848-1890. The second largest file relates to the Pony Express, being extensive records of Pony Express history and records of the Pony Express Centennial Association which was authorized by Congress.

Four Markers Placed by Graves and Sites Committee

by Randy Brown

The Committee has installed four Nova-Color markers this summer: "The McAuley Cutoff" in Idaho, two in Nebraska at Robidoux Pass, and one that marks a recently identified grave in Idaho.

The McAuley Cutoff marker was placed at a highway rest area on U.S. 30 about eight miles east of Montpelier, ID. This marker was proposed several years ago, but finally went up this Memorial Day weekend. This site is not a major Oregon-California Trail landmark, but in placing this marker we salute the young Americans who paused to construct a detour around "Bib Hill" so that companies following them would not have to make that arduous climb and descent. The marker commemorates that effort.


Near Gering, NE, at Robidoux Pass, in this case a famous and important Oregon Trail site, two markers were installed and fenced late in May. The first, titled "Robidoux Trading Post," was placed overlooking the trail where it turns to cross a large ravine that blocked the straight-ahead course. OCTA members and other who have visited this site will recall the old marker located there that incorrectly identifies that site as the actual location of Robidoux's post. The second OCTA marker is in the pass itself where the trail begins its descent to the prairie below. Visitors are encouraged to investigate the huge swales in this vicinity that were made by the covered wagon travelers who crossed this pass, all the emigrants who were heading west prior to 1850.

These plaques were dedicated on July 16 with a ceremony attended by officials from the National Park Service and dignitaries from the town of Gering. OCTA's director emeritus, Merrill Mattes, was the principal speaker. OCTA's marking of these sites is part of Merrill's longtime efforts to obtain greater recognition of Robidoux Pass' historical significance. The dedication of OCTA's markers was part of Scotts Bluff National Monuments' 75th anniversary celebration. As to the impor-


tance of Robidoux Pass, Merrill Mattes ought to know. He became the first superintendent at the National Monument when he took that post nearly 60 years ago.

The fourth OCTA marker was placed in Idaho along the Hudspeth Cutoff near the town of Malta, not far from Sublet Reservoir. It marks the

continued on next page • • • • •



THE MCAULEY CUTOFF



On April 7, 1852, seventeen-year-old Eliza Ann McAuley, with her older brother Thomas and sister Margaret, left Mount Pleasant, Iowa, to travel overland to California. For a time they were accompanied by the "Eddyville Company," led by William Buck and Ezra Meeker.

Eliza Ann left a notable diary account of the journey west and here on July 15 she wrote:

Traveled ten miles today and camped on Bear River. Just before coming to the river we had the hardest mountain to cross on the whole route. It was very steep and difficult to climb, and we had to double teams going up and at the summit we had to unhitch the teams and let the wagons down over a steep, smooth sliding rock by ropes wound around trees by the side of the road. Some trees are nearly cut through by ropes. The boys fished awhile then took a ramble around the country and discovered a pass, by which the mountain can be avoided by doing a little road building.

On July 17 the Meekers went on toward Oregon, but William Buck remained behind with the McAuleys. Here they stayed for fourteen days building a road around Big Hill. On July 24 Eliza wrote: "We have 5 or 9 hands today to work on the road. The boys want to get it finished to save people from having to cross that dreadful mountain."

One hired hand, William H. Hampton of Galesburg, Illinois, wrote on July 24: "Still laying over and waiting we get \$2 per day. Hot and sultry working at the foot of the mountain."

The road was completed by July 29 and the McAuleys continued west leaving Thomas McAuley and William Buck to "remain on the road a week or two to collect Toll and pay the expenses of making it."

On present-day maps the cutoff begins on private ranch land on Sheep Creek, about five miles east of here. From there Highway 30 follows the approximate route of the cutoff around the south base of Big Hill, some seven and one-half miles farther west.

On August 7, 1852, John McAllister took the cutoff: "by going it you avoid a long ascent, a long steep & rough & dangerous descent."

On August 13 Cecelia Adams wrote: "the new road is two miles farther but saves some very high mountains."

No references can be found of use of the cutoff in subsequent years. Rising waters of the Bear River may have washed the road away or perhaps nature, unchecked, took control again with a new growth of thickets and brush.

The McAuley or "Eliza Ann" Cutoff will never rank among the great shortcuts of the Oregon-California Trail, but it does reflect the initiative and thought of a group of young Americans in the year 1852.


The McAuleys reached California on September 18. Two years later Eliza Ann married Robert Saseley Egbert. She died in Berkeley, California, November 16, 1919, at the age of eighty-three.

Research, Funding, and Signing by the
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
1992


This is a part of your American Heritage. Honor it, protect it, preserve it for your children.

Above: Text of OCTA marker placed at the McAuley Cutoff.

Below: Text of OCTA marker placed at the gravesite near Malta, ID.



SHEPHERD-WRIGHT MASSACRE



On July 27, 1859, a wagon train consisting of twenty men, women, and children, was attacked by Shoshone Indians in a canyon on the Hudspeth Cutoff, thirteen miles east of here. Four men were killed. This is the probable site of their grave.

The Shepherd-Wright company of Fayette, Missouri, was en route to California when it arrived at the Twin Springs campground about twenty miles east of here on the evening of July 26, 1859. The company was captured by Thomas Furgeson Shepherd, of Lone City, California, who was accompanied by his two brothers, William and James, and their families. Traveling with them were James D. Wright, his wife and their three children. Several hired men were also in the company.

Indians had been harassing the emigrants at Twin Springs, and on the morning of July 27 Captain Shepherd was advised to remain in camp. He ignored the warnings and ordered his company forward. They were attacked after they had traveled seven miles into a deep canyon, and Captain Shepherd, William Shepherd, Claiborne Raines, and William Diggs were killed. The Wright family, three of whom were badly wounded, was left at the wagons, while the other survivors fled back to Twin Springs. On July 28 several combined companies moved forward to the attack site, rescued the Wrights and gathered the dead. Late that afternoon they camped near here on Sublet Creek and buried the four men.

Mrs. William Shepherd wrote: "My husband and his brother Furgeson were laid side by side, and Claiborne Raines and William Diggs, the four, were buried in one grave. A wagon body sheltered them from the cold earth."

Emigrant Henry Pomeroy wrote: "At dusk this evening a wide grave was dug by the roadside & the four bodies consigned to it in silence & sadness. The lamentations of Mrs. [William] Shepherd over her dead husband was heartrending & touching. A headstone was placed at the grave with the facts of the affair & the names of the deceased on it."

The gravesite was preserved by landowner Wes Adams in whose family the story of the grave had been handed down since earliest settlement times. Although names and exact dates had been forgotten, this grave was traditionally known as the final resting place of "four men who were killed by Indians," now identified as Diggs, Raines, and the two Shepherd brothers who died July 27, 1859.

Researched and Placed by the
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
1994

This is a part of your American heritage. Honor it, protect it, preserve it for your children.

•••• continued

grave of four men killed in an 1859 Indian attack. The current landowner, Lyle Adams, gave much needed assistance to the committee chairman in installing this marker. A few days later, Mr. Adams constructed the fine fence now surrounding the grave. Interested visitors are asked to call the Adams

family for permission to visit the grave which is located alongside undisturbed ruts of the Hudspeth Cutoff.

(Editor's note: See the Summer, 1994 issue of Overland Journal. Randy Brown's article "Attack on the Hudspeth Cutoff" tells the story of the Shepard-Wright Company.)


Robidoux Pass Marked by OCTA

by Merrill J. Mattes


It is ironic that when Scotts Bluff National Monument was created in 1919, Robidoux Pass was omitted for the simple reason that nobody but one or two old "Oregon Trail nuts" understood that Robidoux Pass was an alternate pass through the bluffs, the other being V-shaped Mitchell Pass, cutting through the giant bluff of the present national monument. What has not been fully understood until publication of *Platte River Road Narratives* is that emigrant testimony from 1843 through 1850 proves that during this period Robidoux Pass was used almost exclusively by wagons. The V-shaped gap known today as Mitchell Pass was, until 1851, inaccessible by four-wheeled vehicle. It was too narrow and too winding to permit their passage.

Concrete evidence that Mitchell Pass was not used by emigrant wagons until 1851 onward is provided by the

continued on next page •••••



ROBIDOUX TRADING POST



In 1849 Joseph Robidoux III of St. Joseph, Missouri, licensed in the Indian trade, ordered removal of his outfit from the vicinity of Fort Laramie to this strategic pass over Scotts Bluff, where there was ample wood and water. Evidence from several emigrant diaries, together with artifacts found at the site, confirm the location of his new post at a point about 300 yards north-northeast of here at the intersection of the big spring-fed ravine to your right, flowing north, and the smaller drainage descending eastward from the crest of the pass.

The trading post and its relation to the two ravines is noted in the 1850 journal of Capt. Howard Stansbury while traveling eastward: "Scotts Bluffs—at a small rivulet, row of old deserted houses. [Also] spring at foot of the Sandstone Bluffs, where the [emigrant] road crosses the ridge."


The ruts of the Oregon-California Trail approaching from the east are still clearly visible as they ascend toward the head of the ravine, at the foot of the bluff behind you. However, erosion has obliterated evidence of the actual crossing of the ravine.

In 1850 Robidoux's place is described by James Bennett as "a row of rudely constructed huts composed of cedar logs and mud," serving as a trading post or store, blacksmith shop, and dwellings, usually surrounded by tipis occupied by Indian families of the Robidoux clan. The principal ones identified by emigrants were son Joseph Robidoux IV and nephew Antoine Robidoux.


Since the original intention of the Robidoux family was to trade with the Indians for buffalo robes, they were probably at first dismayed by the sudden invasion of their domain by a large army of covered-wagon emigrants bound for the California goldfields. However, they seem to have adjusted rapidly to this development. The traders did a land-office business with the emigrants, principally in providing blacksmith services, though there was also a brisk trade in staples and whiskey. Another bonanza for the traders was the frequent abandonment of wagons and surplus gear and supplies by overloaded emigrants, which added to the Robidoux inventory.

Despite this unexpected prosperity, for whatever reason, in late 1850 the Robidoux family abandoned their trading post here and built a new one about one mile to the southeast, over the bluffs, in a place now called Carter Canyon, which was rarely visited by emigrants and probably soon abandoned. A famous visitor to the Carter Canyon site was Father Pierre Jean DeSmet in the autumn of 1851, following the great gathering of Indian tribes at Horse Creek during negotiations for the first Fort Laramie peace treaty. During the early 1851 emigration season the Robidoux Pass post was reopened to trade with the emigrants. However, later that season the Robidoux family finally abandoned the Pass altogether and established posts on the trail at points both east and west of Scotts Bluff, the former at the fork in the trail near present Melbeta, the latter where the two trail branches rejoin at Horse Creek, near present Lyman, Nebraska.


Research, Funding, and Signing by the
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
1994




This is a part of your American Heritage. Honor it, protect it, preserve it for your children.



Text of the two OCTA markers placed at the Robidoux Pass area.



ROBIDOUX PASS



Robidoux Pass was named for Joseph Robidoux III of St. Joseph, Missouri, who established a trading post and blacksmith shop here in 1849, just in time to witness the beginning of the great California gold rush.


This pass is an integral part of the original historic U-shaped Scotts Bluff, described by forty-niner William Kelly as being in the form of a horizontal shepherd's crook, with the present Wildcat Hills as the straight staff, Robidoux Pass as the top of the crook, and the climactic formations within present Scotts Bluff National Monument as the flair at the end of the crook.

This pass was used by Rocky Mountain fur trappers and traders who, in 1830, took the first wheeled vehicles westward along the Platte River, and by emigrants bound for Oregon beginning in 1843. It was also the classic route during the first two years of the California gold rush, 1849-50. However, evidence given by Capt. Howard Stansbury of the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers proves that, beginning in 1851, the great majority of emigrants along the south side of the North Platte River switched from Robidoux Pass to the V-shaped gap now called Mitchell Pass, within the present national monument, northeast of here.


Despite the preponderant use of Mitchell Pass in the later period, the evidence supported by emigrant diaries and military observers is that the Robidoux Pass route was never altogether abandoned. The eastern junction of these alternate routes was at a point this side of present Melbeta. They rejoined at Horse Creek, near present Lyman, Nebraska. Despite the apparent impression that the Mitchell Pass route was shorter and therefore preferable, measured tracings of the two routes on USGS quadrangle maps indicate that they were nearly equal in length.

Several factors make Robidoux Pass historically unique. The eastern approach, surrounded by picturesque bluffs, seemed to the struggling emigrants like an "enchanted valley." In the pass itself there were copious springs, described as among the best along the entire route to California, and nearby trees for firewood and wagon repairs. From the pass looking east is a spectacular view of the North Platte Valley and distant fairy-like Chimney Rock. From the summit of the pass the emigrants, looking west toward the sanctuary of Fort Laramie, got a magnificent panoramic view climaxed by Laramie Peak, mistakenly thought by some to be their first view of the Rocky Mountains.

Research, Funding, and Signing by the
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION
1994



This is a part of your American Heritage. Honor it, protect it, preserve it for your children.





Joseph Fairfield

Merrill Mattes speaks at the dedication of the new OCTA markers in the Robidoux Pass area. Here he stands next to the trading post marker shown in the lower photograph on page 16.



Randy Brown

Two of the markers recently placed by OCTA. At the left is the Shepard-Wright Massacre marker, with the fence placed by the land owner, Lyle Adams. Below is the Robidoux Trading Post marker explaining the correct location of the former trading post.

• • • • continued

eye-witness evidence offered by Captain Stansberry, a U.S. Survey Engineer. In his diary of travel to and from Salt Lake, 1849-1850, the inference is that late in 1850 or early 1851 somebody (soldiers from Ft. Laramie?) did some pick and shovel work to widen Mitchell Pass for wagon use. This means that, with the initial great years of the gold rush to California, Robidoux Pass was crossed by approximately 125,000 cover wagon emigrants.

This revelation, coupled with our knowledge of the exact location of Robidoux's famous trading post plus distinct wagon trails across the Pass, requires serious consideration of Robidoux Pass as a National Historic Site, possible added eventually to Scotts Bluff National Monument.

In June OCTA's Randy Brown of Douglas, Wyoming installed two interpretive markers, with my wording, one at the head of the north-south ravine that wagons had to cross first, and one at a point beyond the rim of the pass itself, commanding a magnificent view of distant Laramie Peak. On July 16, following the 75th anniversary ceremonies at Scotts Bluff National Monument, Clare and I, along with SBNM Superintendent Larry Reed, went to



Lee Underbrink

Robidoux Pass to dedicate the new OCTA markers. Public attendance at the dedication was small, but all in attendance shared our knowledge and enthusiasm.

It was gratifying to note that after this event the Omaha World-Herald as well as the Gering and Scottsbluff newspapers carried stories, not only about the OCTA dedication, but also quoting various other Nebraska historians about the neglect and hopeful resurrection of

historic Robidoux Pass. The present three Robidoux Pass landowners are agreeable to visitors parked along the road, plus access to the area of the spring crossing but, understandably, exploration of the grassland is forbidden. (This includes the site of the Robidoux trading post.) Artifacts from this site were donated many years ago to the Scotts Bluff National Monument by old-timers, and are now on display at the monument museum.

Ross Marshall Speaks at Marker Dedication

OCTA's Past President, Ross Marshall, was the guest speaker on July 16 at the dedication of a new historical marker at the historic town of New Santa Fe, MO. The marker is located in the New Santa Fe Cemetery. Ross spoke on the historical significance of the site and quoted from several colorful diaries to illustrate his point.

This site is significant to OCTA and the whole westward movement. The village began in the 1820s and thrived for decades because it was on the border of the United States and Indian territory between 1821 and the 1850s. The village was located on three of our National Historic Trails, Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail and California Trail. The cemetery is virtually the only thing remaining of the original community, and has visible wagon ruts in it.

The cemetery is located at 940 W. Santa Fe Trail, Kansas City, MO, 1/2 block east of State Line Road.

Tabernacle Choir Wins Applause

OCTA Convention goers were treated to a memorable experience in the Mormon Tabernacle on Thursday evening. Following the Author's Night doings, many OCTA members streamed into buses and crowded into the Tabernacle to hear the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir rehearse for their Sunday morning broadcast. Then at 9:00 p.m., the Choir thrilled the OCTA audience by singing the moving hymn "Come, Come Ye Saints," the ballad most often associated with the Mormon emigration. Afterwards, the mellow refrains of "Shenandoah" filled the Tabernacle, carrying all the emotions of the great westward movement. Few who attended can forget the rich experience of well-blended voices, the haunting tones of the huge Tabernacle organ, and this highly appropriate performance by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir especially for OCTA.



Ross Marshall is shown speaking at the New Santa Fe marker dedication. On the left is OCTA member, Esther Kreek, who entertained the attendees with dulcimer music. The marker can be seen in the center of the picture.

Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA)

OCTA members will be interested to know that in early 1994 the Old Spanish Trail Association was established at Del Norte, Colorado. The purpose is to study, preserve and protect the historical integrity of this trail. An OSTA Reference Center at the Rio Grande County Museum and Cultural Center at Del Norte will make available the latest research.

This trade route linking Santa Fe and Los Angeles had its heyday between 1830 and 1848. Later, the western portion of the trail was used by Mormons and emigrants going south from Salt Lake City.

To receive more information about this new organization, contact the historian:

Phil Carson
1117 School St.
Pueblo, CO 81006
phone (719) 544-1666



CHAPTER NEWS

GATEWAY

Alcove Spring was the focus of a June 25th field trip for 13 Gateway members. The primary purpose of the trip was to meet with Duane Iles who told the OCTA members about the Alcove Spring Historic Trust's plans for the site. At this time, the group owns 300 acres surrounding Alcove Spring and the Big Blue River crossing. Short range plans include enlisting volunteers to serve as guides, identifying sources of funding for site development, and improving visitor parking and trails. Long range plans call for an interpretative center in Blue Rapids, KS.

The Alcove Spring Historic Trust hopes to create a visitor area where diarist Edwin Bryant's descriptive feelings can be experienced again. On May 26, 1846, Bryant wrote:

"About three-fourths of a mile from our camp we found a large spring of water, as cold and pure as if it had

been melted from ice... Altogether it is one of the most romantic spots I ever saw."

The Donner-Reed party camped in the Alcove Spring area in 1846 while preparing to cross the Big Blue River. Mrs. Sarah Keyes who was traveling with her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. & Mrs. James F. Reed, died while camped near Alcove Spring. According to Bryant, she was buried, "A short distance from the camp, under an oak tree on the right-hand side of the trail."

Two weeks prior to the Gateway members' visit, what may be Mrs. Keyes tombstone was mysteriously left behind some bushes in front of the

Marysville Advocate. The field trip participants had the opportunity to view the Keyes tombstone. It appeared to have been well cared for over the years.

If the stone is authentic, it will be a truly significant find. Research by local historians from Blue Rapids and Marysville has been intensive. They are hoping to locate the site where the stone originally stood. In addition, they are trying to determine the route of the trail as it crossed the bluffs into the valley of the Big Blue River.

Gateway members have encouraged these researchers to record their findings and report them in a future *News From the Plains*.

Jackie Lewin



NEBRASKA

Preview of a 1995 Pre and Post Convention Tour

On June 4, 20 OCTA members and visitors met in Oak, Nebraska to enjoy a day on the trail with trail guides, Gwen Samsula, Russ Genung and Kim Naden. Stops included the Robert Emery marker, Bowie and Comstock ranch sites, and the Narrows, where the Little Blue River then flowed close to the bluff, leaving space for a single wagon to traverse the trail.

Following the river, trail trekkers walked on the ruts near Little Blue Station. Afternoon stops included Liberty Farm Stage and Pony Express Station at Deweese, the junction of the Fort Riley and Oregon Trail, where a deep swale is visible, Pawnee Ranch, and lastly, the Spring Ranch site.

This marked the end of our trail tour along the Little Blue River as well as for the emigrants who left the river to head northwest over the prairie to the Platte River. At the 1995 Grand Island convention, a pre and post convention tour will follow their trail from the Susan Hail grave, where they first sighted the Platte back to Oak, NE.

Helen Sundell.

SOUTHWEST

The chapter will begin a long-range task of mapping the Southern Trail with three mapping weekends planned this year. All will be in southwest New Mexico. Dates are: Nov. 11-13, Feb. 4-5, Mar. 25-26.

Proceedings of our 1994 Symposium, held last March are now available. Presentations included are:

Don Couchman: A Road of Many Names: Development of the Southern Emigrant Route

Lynda Hatch: Sharing The Love of Trails with Children

Gordon Owen: New Mexico's Mystery Rock

Harland Tompkins: A Little Road of our Own

Jack Root: Search for Tres Alamos

Susan Badger Doyle: Emigrants and Soldiers on the Northern Plains, 1860s

Sheri Lee: Tales of a Frontier Town: Las Vegas, NM

The cost, including postage, is \$4 to chapter members and \$5.50 to others. Order from:

SWOCTA

Harland Tompkins, Treasurer

1125 W. Mission Dr.

Chandler, AZ 85224



Jackie Lewin

The original Sarah Keyes tombstone? Trail buffs in the Marysville-Blue Rapids, Kansas, area are intensively researching the possibility. See story above.

WYOMING

Chapter members have had a busy spring and summer. In late May 19 members made an overnight trek to Scotts Bluff and Courthouse Rock. Most of the members hiked down the north bluff of Scotts Bluff and were thrilled with the beauty of the area on a perfect day. Joe Fairfield of the Nebraska Chapter led the group around Courthouse Rock showing the inscriptions that still remain. At the Rebecca Winters grave, member Marguerite Christopherson sang verses of "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

On June 11, 47 members and guests enjoyed the Trail Day Covered Wagon ride from Fort Laramie to Guersey. This was a statewide event aimed at providing a trek experience for our far flung members. Everyone seemed to have a good day despite some sore muscles. Our members used great originality in dressing the part in various forms of "trail garb." We made stops at various trail sites along the way and the hike down to the deep ruts on Mexican Hill was a highlight of the day for many. It was good to see members from all over take part in the ride. Randy Wagner, Roger Blair, and Levida Hileman acted as wagon guides for the group. They furnished each wagon with trail background and diary excerpts along the way. Gene Potter presented a short talk on the Pony Express at our lunch break at Register Cliff. Kay Threlkeld of the Fort Laramie Historic Site was very helpful in assisting us at Fort Laramie. The trip was 13 miles, mostly on gravel roads and yet it took us most of the day. This gave us a good idea of how the trip had to have been for the pioneers on very poor roads.

In mid-June the chapter hosted a barbecue for a group of mountain bike riders from San Jose, CA. This group was organized and led by Ed Hodges, a teacher and OCTA member. The riders were making a week long bike trip along the Oregon Trail between Casper and Rock Springs. The meal was held at the picnic area of Fort Caspar, a major crossing spot on the North Platte. Gordon and Mary Holden furnished elk and moose meat for the barbecue which was a new experience for the bike riders.

Other members furnished food for a very filling meal. Everyone enjoyed visiting with the bike riders and felt this was a very successful function.

Also in June the Natrona County Historical Society had a day trek over the Deadwood Stage Road. Since many of our OCTA members also belong to the historical society, a good many members participated in this event. The group visited a long segment of ruts on the Deadwood State Trail. These ruts were impressive.

In late July, 15 members met to walk the new Platte River Parkway section that goes from Crossroads Park to Bryan Stock Trail. Much of this section of the parkway parallels the trail on the north side of the river and starts just below the site of the proposed Historic Trails Center. Those in attendance enjoyed the walk and were very impressed with the parkway trail. The BLM will be putting up interpretive panels on this section in late August.

Tentative treks scheduled this fall include a visit to the Mary Kelly grave along the trail on the Bill Barber ranch, a visit to Devil's Gate to view and catalog recently found inscriptions, an inventory of legible names on Independence Rock, and a possible trek over Rocky Ridge.

Levida Hileman

TRAILS HEAD

Recently our Treasurer, Judy Budde, sent out a mailing to 40 or so OCTA members who live in our area but were not members of our chapter. This produced eight new members for the chapter, an increase of over 10%!

Our officers have been busy planning a full fall schedule: a day long bus trek to the Nebraska border; a special public ceremony in Lawrence to present the "Friend of the Trails" awards to the Gage families; a symposium on October 29 with some attractive speakers; and our annual meeting in November.

Ross Marshall

Future OCTA Conventions

1995
Grand Island, Nebraska

1996
Elko, Nevada

1997
Pocatello, Idaho

1998
Pendleton, Oregon

1999
Chico, California



Newly posted Carsonite marker locates Hastings Cutoff on Salt Desert. Hikers head west through Donner-Reed Pass in Silver Island Mountains. Famed Pilot Peak is in background.

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 1019 / Independence MO 64051-0519

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Indep. MO
Permit No. 244