

News from the Plains

Volume XII, No. 4

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

October 1998



New OCTA Board members, left to right, Chuck Martin, Reba Wells Grandrud and Robert Wier.

— Photo by Bill Martin

New OCTA Directors Elected

Victor Bolon, Reba Wells Grandrud, Chuck Martin and Robert Wier have been elected to the Board of Directors of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Bolon had been appointed to the Board in 1997 to complete the unexpired term of Doyle Reed, while Grandrud, Martin and Wier will be new to the Board. All four will serve three-year terms.

Bolon, a resident of Sequim, Washington, is director of the Northwest Chapter and is currently active in mapping and marking the Naches Pass Trail in Washington, updating the Oregon Trail using GPS data and developing trail programs for presentations to groups and organizations. He is retired from the staff and faculty of Olympic College in Bremerton, Washington.

Grandrud, a resident of Phoenix, Arizona, is a member of the Southwest Chapter and serves on the Advisory Board of the Arizona State Committee on Trails and the Board of Directors of the Arizona State Historical Society. She recently retired as Historian and Coordinator of the National Register of Historic Places for the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office.

Martin, a resident of Richmond, Indiana, is a charter member of OCTA and
(See OCTA Board on page 4)

Committee Will Study Trails Preservation Office

The OCTA Board of Directors has established a Special Committee on Trails Preservation to develop a definitive statement on the organization's approach to trails preservation issues.

The Committee will be chaired by Dick Ackerman of Salem, Oregon, a past OCTA President, who will also serve as National Trail Preservation Officer for 1998-99.

Other members of the committee include Frank Tortorich of Pine Grove, Calif., Al Mulder of Murray, Utah, Ken Martin of Oketa, Kansas, and Chuck Martin, of Richmond, Indiana. OCTA Vice President Dave Welch of Steilacoom, Wash., will serve as an ex-officio member.

The special committee was established after Welch, as chairman of the OCTA Nominations and Leadership Committee, told the Board at its annual meeting in Pendleton that an extensive search had failed to identify a candidate willing to take the NTPO position except on an interim basis.

Tom Hunt, who had held the position for several years and had been scheduled to serve until the 1999 Board meeting, resigned in May.

Issues to be addressed by the Committee include:

- A job description for the National Trails Preservation officer.
- A term of office for the NTPO
- Organizational relationship of the NTPO to the Board and other national officers and chapters.
- Trails preservation activity organizational structure from national to chapter level.
- Recommend candidates to the Nominating and Leadership Committee for the position of

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From the Editor's Desk . . .

The business of OCTA is trails. That's the bottomline, not only for the organization, but for most of us as individuals as well. We joined OCTA because of our interest in the trails. Maybe it's because we had a forebear or two who actually traveled the emigrant routes across the plains. Our interest now gives us a tangible link to the pioneering spirit that drove our forefathers westward. Maybe it's just a personal fascination with the history of the trails, with the lore and even the romance of the westering movement. We like the idea of our footprints in the same dirt trod by the pioneers 150 years ago.

Regardless of our reasons for joining, OCTA members share a common bond in our love of the trails and our desire to see them preserved for future generations. Many of us get downright incensed when we see them threatened. OCTA members are on a constant vigil against encroachment on our trails heritage.

Undoubtedly it's this sometimes fervent belief in the importance of the trails that has led to so much hand-wringing over the Comprehensive Management Plan now being finalized by the National Park Service. It's been called a wonderful tool for trails preservation by some, a low-impact paperwork exercise by others, and simply "cosmetic" by still others.

Even the NPS agrees that administration of the Plan will be a challenge because it is a *Parks Service* plan and there are real questions whether the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the individual states and private landowners will allow Parks to take the lead on trails preservation. It's a classic turf battle.

Most likely, the Comprehensive Management Plan will be a useful document, but it isn't the solution to preserving our trails. The real solution, we think, was pretty neatly summed up by the well-respected Frank Tortorich as he listened to a Parks Service presentation at the Board of Directors meeting in Pendleton. Representatives from the NPS National Trails Office noted that the implementation of the CMP would be "bottom up, not top down," and urged OCTA members to build grassroots contacts with local officials.

Tortorich agreed. One of the best things OCTA members can do, he said, is take an active role at the local level, working with their hometown Forest Service and BLM and state agency employees to "raise the level of awareness" of the importance of trails preservation.

And here's the key to what Tortorich said: "*We need to be out on those trails. We need to be talking to those local people. We need to sign up as volunteers on the trails. That's what OCTA is all about. That's what preservation is all about.*"

That makes a lot of sense and the beauty is in the simplicity. If you want to make a difference on the trails, get out on the trails. Get to know your local agency people. Most likely, they are as interested in trails preservation as you are. Regardless of whether you agree with the Comprehensive Management Plan or not, it's the people at the local level who will have the most direct impact on its implementation. Get to know them and, when a trails preservation issue comes up, you'll have friendly ears listening to your concerns – and OCTA's concerns.

If you care about the trails, that's a pretty clear solution.

– Bill Martin

Submission Guidelines

News From The Plains welcomes timely submissions of news, features and photos related to the work of the organization and its members and the preservation of our trails heritage.

Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates.

Material is best sent either on a computer disk (in DOS or text format but make sure you include a hard copy) or via e-mail.

Pictures are appreciated but cannot always be returned.

If you have any questions, please call Editor Bill Martin at (702) 747-2860 or e-mail at words@worldnet.att.net.

Next Deadline Is December 1, 1998

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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From The President . . .

by Roger Blair

Congratulations to Dick Ackerman and Lowell Tiller for putting together a wonderful convention in Pendleton. The fiery display during the Saturday night Awards Banquet was most spectacular! The annual convention, as usual, proved to be a great success, with interesting speakers and topics and terrific bus tours. The hikes across the Boardman Bombing Range and out of the Blue Mountains were particularly special since public access has been restricted for many years. Dick and Lowell accomplished the smooth functioning of all the convention activities through the Northwest Chapter, which recruited forty-five members to assist in some manner.

There were very few glitches during the convention. The most unfortunate was a fractured ankle by one of the Blue Mountain hike participants. Before leaving Pendleton following the accident, Elizabeth Thompson left a very kind letter concerning the transfer to the local hospital and the kindnesses offered by concerned OCTA members. I have asked the editor to print the letter in this issue, because it clearly shows the high caliber of OCTA members. I am very proud of our membership. The letter also reflects the excellent planning that went into organizing the hikes and tours. The convention planning team had the foresight to have evacuation procedures in place and those procedures worked effectively and well.

Many members expressed their enjoyment and appreciation of the Friendship Feast held in the new Tamastlikt Cultural Institute of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The Institute was brand new, having held its grand opening just the weekend before OCTA members arrived. The Confederated Tribes received OCTA's Meritorious Achievement Award for this and other efforts in creating a

better understanding of the emigration period and its importance to the nation and the indigenous peoples the trail impacted. I encourage everyone to write to the Tribes, thanking them for their hospitality at the Friendship Feast, opening the Institute for us to visit during the feast, allowing access to their lands for the hike "out of the Blues," and for the participation of Antone Minthorn and Armand Minthorn in the welcoming session. Letters should be sent to: Board of Trustees, CTUIR, P.O. Box 638, Pendleton, Oregon 97801.

In a previous report I asked for volunteers to fill the vacancies of the Publications Committee chair and the coordinator of the Challenge Cost Share Program. As usual, dedicated and well-qualified members stepped forward to volunteer. I have yet another plea for someone to assume the Awards Committee chairmanship. George Ivory, who has capably served as chair for the past two years, resigned following the convention. If you have an interest in serving as the Awards Committee chair, please let me know. The Awards Committee is a particularly rewarding assignment because its function is to recognize and reward the outstanding efforts of our members. Thank you, George, for your dedicated efforts.

Finally, look for two new OCTA publications this fall. Number three in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series, the Luark brothers' diaries, will be released very soon. Also nearing completion is the second edition of *Graves and Sites On The Oregon and California Trails*. This edition is substantially improved and expanded. Details concerning these publications are contained in other articles in this issue. With the number of days in which we can get out on the actual trails diminishing, we can at least look forward to pursuing the book trail.

News From Headquarters

Attending OCTA's annual convention is certainly one of the high points of my year. Seeing our members come together to explore, learn and just enjoy themselves is a priceless experience, indeed!

The NWOCTA Chapter's hard work and planning culminated in a most successful week-long event. With the excellent tours, delicious food, and interesting speakers, the Pendleton OCTA Convention was not only memorable but exceeded our expectations.

Thank you NW Chapter, President Roger Blair and Susan Badger Doyle, Dick and Trudy Ackerman, Dave and Wendy Welch, Lowell Tiller, Carol Ann Buss, Jim Tompkins, Billy and Jacque Arends and countless others. My special thanks to Susan Badger Doyle for planning and managing a well-run book room; and, in addition, arranging to have Mary Bywater Cross present the contemporary quilt exhibit, providing beauty and uniqueness to our book room as well as wonderful backdrops to all the book exhibits.

Also a BIG thanks to our volunteers - Judy Budde, Mary

Martin, Larry Melton, Tom McCutcheon and Tammy Pruden - for making OCTA's book tables truly a fun and interesting spot to visit.

Now that the book tables have been mentioned, for those that left the convention wanting a bolo tie with the OCTA logo, but not purchasing one, we have a few left. The large bolo tie (1 3/4 inches in diameter) is \$24.95 and the small bolo tie (1 1/2 inches in diameter) is \$19.95. For those that did not attend the convention, we will be advertising them in the 1999 OCTA Catalog, due out later this fall.

Here at Headquarters, as our fiscal year comes to a close September 30, we are looking ahead with plans for continued success. With the addition of new OCTA publications to our catalog and bookshelves, we cannot miss. Look for more information in this issue of NFP about the new *Graves & Sites* and the third volume in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series, the Luark Brothers Diaries. Also to be released is the updated OCTA History by Ruth Anderson, Historian.

— Kathy Conway, Headquarters Manager

Third ETHS Book Enroute

The third volume in the Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series, *From the Old Northwest to the Pacific Northwest: The 1853 Oregon Trail Diaries of Patterson Fletcher Luark and Michael Fleenen Luark*, edited by Howard Jablon and Kenneth R. Elkins, will be available in November.

The 1853 diaries of two brothers traveling to Oregon are presented in parallel style. Both diaries complement each other, and together present a detailed and lively portrayal of the overland trail experience. Of particular interest to OCTA members, the Luark brothers took some unusual trail routes.

The maps are by Hans J. Stolle, and eleven contributors added to the editors' annotations. This comprehensively annotated volume will be a superb addition to the series. The OCTA catalog will be your first opportunity to order it, so please watch for the catalog.
— Susan Badger Doyle

Graves & Sites Update Planned

The second edition of *Graves and Sites On the Oregon and California Trails* by Randy Brown and Reg Duffin will be available in November.

This popular OCTA publication describes the markers at graves and sites installed by OCTA's Graves and Sites Committee and OCTA chapters. The second edition is greatly expanded, representing the numerous markers installed by OCTA since the publication of the first edition in 1991.

The exact texts of the markers are presented as well as nearly one hundred photographs of individuals, locations, and installed markers. In addition to general comments, the book provides ownership, access, and directions to each marker. Watch for this important publication in the OCTA catalog.
— Susan Badger Doyle

Work Begins At Three Island

Construction has started on a \$3.2 million Three Island Crossing Interpretive Center on the Oregon Trail at Glens Ferry west of Pocatello, Idaho.

Constructed is being paid for with \$600,000 from the Idaho Legislature, \$1.2 million from the Idaho Transportation Department, private contributions, and money from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

The facility will feature a multi-purpose room, research library and exhibits. It is expected to open in the spring of 2000.
— Courtesy Travel Idaho

Military History Papers Sought

The Council on America's Military Past (CAMP) has issued a call for papers for its 33rd Annual Military History Conference schedule May 5-9, 1999, in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Council is placing an emphasis on frontier western military history. Topics for 20-minute presentations should be sent to: CAMP '99 Conference Papers, P.O. Box 1151, Fort Myer VA 22211. The deadline is December 15, 1998. For more information, call (703) 912-6124.

Bozeman Trail Conference Set

The Bozeman Trail Heritage Conference will be held July 28-31, 1999, in Bozeman, Montana. The conference is sponsored by the Montana Historical Society and funded by the Wyoming Council for the Humanities, the Montana Committee for the Humanities, and the Montana Department of Transportation.

The co-chairs of the steering committee are OCTA's Susan Badger Doyle and Charles E. Rankin, Director of Publications at the Montana Historical Society. The conference will feature a stellar lineup of speakers, bus tours, and a presentation by Joyce Badgely Hunsaker, "Fanny on the Bozeman Trail."

The theme of the conference is the Bozeman Trail as the last great gold rush trail, which will effectively dovetail with the nationwide attention focused on the California Gold Rush in summer 1999.

The Bozeman Trail is a relatively understudied and little understood trail, yet it marks a defining period in the exploration and settlement of Wyoming and Montana. This conference will make a significant contribution to recognizing the Bozeman Trail as one of the major westering trails.

All OCTA members will be sent a brochure and registration material early next spring. On behalf of the steering committee, I hope to see many of you there.
— Susan Badger Doyle

NTPO

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NTPO beginning in August, 1999.

The committee will also be asked to develop a definitive statement on OCTA's approach to trail preservation, including resource requirements.

The Committee will prepare an interim report for the mid-year Board meeting in Independence, Missouri, in March, with a final report due at the Board meeting held in conjunction with the 1999 convention in Chico.
— Bill Martin

OCTA Board

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an expert in trails geology. He previously served on the OCTA Board from 1987 to 1992 and was Vice President in 1993-94. He chaired the Long Range Planning Committee and the Future Convention Sites Committee. He is Professor Emeritus of Geology at Earlham College.

Wier, a resident of Billings, Montana, is founder of the Overland Trails Internet mailing list and has been its administrator since its creation. He has been an OCTA member since 1986 and is currently teaching at Rocky Mountain College.
— Bill Martin

OCTA Presents Meritorious Achievement Awards

Six Meritorious Achievement Awards were presented at the 1998 Convention in Pendleton. The Award, which recognizes distinguished service in work to preserve the emigrant trails and educate others about the emigrant experience, is OCTA's highest honor. Here is summary information about this year's winners:

Chuck Dodd

Charles H. Dodd of Chilcoot, California, was recognized as "a man of many talents, always willing to offer help" and was cited for being "a tireless, self-directed worker for OCTA for many years."

His many activities within the organization include serving on the Board of Directors; editing and publishing two issues of the *Overland Journal*; establishing the first computerized membership program; implementing computerized accounting systems for the organization; developing a computer data entry program for OCTA's Census of Overland Emigrant Documents Program; and, tireless work on preserving the emigrant trails.

It is this last category for which Mr. Dodd may be best known within the organization. In 1990, Chuck became a member of the consortium working to protect the Applegate and Nobles Trails through the spectacular High Rock Canyon and Black Rock Desert. In this role, he has attended numerous meetings and guided countless tours of these trails for interested individuals and groups.

He has organized a number of activities of the California-Nevada OCTA chapter to assist the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in monitoring the impact of public events on the trails through the Black Rock Desert. During 1997, he produced a draft interpretive plan on the Black Rock Desert and High Rock Canyon for the BLM.

In October, 1997, Mr. Dodd organized a symposium in Reno, Nevada, to promote cooperative efforts to preserve the increasingly threatened trails in Nevada. At that meeting, the BLM presented him with their special volunteer award in recognition of his many hours of volunteer service with that agency.

Kathy Roubal

Kathleen A. Roubal of Chilcoot, California, was recognized for "the time, effort, and dedication" she has exhibited "in the continuing program to create a database of overland emigrants, place, dates, and events in the Census of Overland Emigrant Documents (COED) project."

The COED project, begun in 1985, has been a labor of love for Ms. Roubal, who also serves as the Support Services

Supervisor for the Truckee Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest. COED was inaugurated as a major effort to further the association's objective of preserving physical remnants of the trails while advancing our knowledge of the emigrants who traveled overland in the migration that settled the western United States during the second half of the nineteenth century.

COED is designed to guide historians and trail buffs in their research of available resources of the trails and emigrations. OCTA volunteers survey documents (diaries, journals, letters, reminiscences and autobiographies) written by emigrants to describe their journeys across the plains to build a database for use by researchers. As of late 1997, nearly 2000 documents had been surveyed for the database. From the inception of COED, Ms. Roubal has been its guiding force, rounding up volunteers, searching out emigrant documents, training volunteers, standardizing entries, and entering data.

James Renner

James A. Renner of Molalla, Oregon, is a past president of the Northwest Chapter of OCTA. He was chosen by the Governor of Oregon to be Wagon Master for that state's 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial celebration. In that capacity, Mr. Renner worked tirelessly, beginning in 1991, to plan and coordinate that most successful celebration of the emigrant trail experience.

Following the Sesquicentennial celebration, Mr. Renner joined the Oregon Trail Coordinating Council. As Director of that state organization, Renner was instrumental in funding

Oregon Trail and other trail projects. He was largely responsible for the serious of fabulous roadside kiosks along the route of the Oregon Trail which depict, in text, illustrations, and diary quotes, the great migration and the experience of the people involved.

Mr. Renner was also responsible for the development of the specially designed Oregon Trail state license plates. He is currently involved in developing funding for the refurbishment of many Oregon Trail related Historical Markers.

Marv Ross Trail Band

The Marv Ross Trail Band of Lake Oswego, Oregon, was organized in 1991 by Marv Ross for the 1993 Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial celebration. The nine-piece group, dressed in old military uniforms, uses many old and unique instruments to recreate the music of the nineteenth century.

Originally scheduled for one special performance, the Trail

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James Renner, left, with his Meritorious Achievement Award, which was presented by Steve Elkington of the National Park Service. — Photo by Bill Martin

Huninghake, Swaggart Named "Friends of the Trail"

Rachel Huninghake of Frankfort, Kansas, and Gerald Swaggart of the Pendleton, Oregon, area have been honored with "Friend of the Trail" award by OCTA in recognition of their "outstanding service in the maintenance and preservation of the Oregon-California Trail."

Rachael Huninghake

Ms. Huninghake, a member of OCTA, owns lands through which key segments of the overland emigrant trails pass. The National Park Service has recognized the pristine quality of this region by naming it a "high potential site" in the Comprehensive Management Plan for the California National Historic Trail.

Ms. Huninghake has always been extremely cooperative with the Park Service as they have sought access to her land to chart

the course of the trail. In addition, she has welcomed members of the KANZA chapter of OCTA, allowing them to visit the trail sites on her property, mark the trail through this area, and also to mark the site of the S. M. Marshall grave.

In addition to this grave, the Huninghake property includes noticeable trail swales, the creek crossing at Coon Creek, and a spring utilized by the emigrants. Ms. Huninghake has also made herself available to talk with groups about the trail sites on her property.

While the Huninghake family is eager to share the extraordinary heritage of their lands, in order to preserve this national treasure for future generations, they do ask that visitors obtain permission before visiting the trail sites.

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Meritorious Achievement

(Continued from previous page)

Band has performed thousands of concerts since 1993 across the United States as well as touring Japan. Well known throughout the West, they have produced five albums as well as the sound tracks for two television specials.

By using diary quotes as well as period music, costumes, and instruments, the Band has enlightened many people about the westward emigrant experience while providing exceptional entertainment.

Joyce Hunsaker

Joyce Badgely Hunsaker of Baker City, Oregon, a member of OCTA's Northwest chapter, is a fourth generation Oregon Trail pioneer descendant and a fifth generation California Trail descendant. But to those who have seen her perform, she is best known simply as "Fanny."

Ms. Hunsaker's unforgettable living history portrayals of the western emigrant experience have won her critical acclaim nationwide as both an actress and historian. She has appeared on stage coast to coast as well as on national television. In addition, she has performed by special invitation for the Smithsonian Institution, National Geographic Society, Congressional leaders, and many others. Joyce Badgely Hunsaker's performances have brought a very poignant story of the pioneers as they crossed the plains to life for thousands.

Tamastlikt Cultural Institute

The Tamastlikt Cultural Institute of Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton, Oregon, is

located on the route of the Oregon Trail at the base of the Blue Mountains.

Tamastlikt provides an Indian perspective on the impact of Manifest Destiny and the overland migration. As the only

Indian interpretive facility on the Oregon National Historic Trail and the only one which presents the Indian story in their own words, Tamastlikt offers a different view, provokes new ways of thinking about the Oregon Trail experience, and gives voice to a story which counters many commonly held ideas about early contact between the emigrants and Indians.

Through the center's three main themes -- *We Were, We Are, and We Will Be* -- the stories of the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla peoples give a more complete understanding of the historical context which shaped Indian and Euro-American relationships

and which continue to influence us today. Tamastlikt was developed to reverse the loss of tribal culture and to educate people in the history, culture, and traditions of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla.

With its creation, Tamastlikt has fulfilled two goals for the tribes: to preserve and teach the native population their own history, culture, and traditions; and, to educate visitors about the unique culture and community of the tribes. The Tamastlikt Cultural Institute is more than a museum or interpretive center. It is a multi-faceted facility serving tribal members, visitors, and scholars.

— Information compiled by Leslie Wischmann



Roberta Comer, executive director of the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, accepts a Meritorious Achievement Award from OCTA President Roger Blair.

— Photo by Bill Martin

Bob Wier Named OCTA "Volunteer of the Year"

Dr. Bob Wier was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award at the 1998 OCTA Convention in Pendleton, Oregon.

Though a Texas native, Wier now calls Ouray, Colorado, his home. He retreats there for cool summers and school term vacations. Bob received his Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Texas at Arlington in May 1983. Following this, he became an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Texas Christian University before leaving academia to become a Macintosh Consulting Specialist at Computer Systems in Ouray. In late 1988, Bob returned to teach computer science at Northern Arizona University and five years later, assumed a position at Texas A & M University - Commerce, in Commerce, Texas. In August, 1997, Dr. Wier relocated to Billings, Montana, to assume a position with Rocky Mountain College. For Bob, this is a terrific new opportunity as it puts him in closer proximity to the trails that he loves.

Bob's interest in the overland emigrant trails probably began with his general interest in things geological and geographical. Also, as a child, Bob watched all those Saturday morning and primetime TV shows which were saturated with "Westerns," good guys versus bad guys, etc. Then, on his first trip to Yellowstone, he literally stumbled across the Oregon Trail at Devil's Gate in central Wyoming and saw the place where the REAL pioneers had actually traveled the REAL trail. People had actually made this journey more than 100 years ago, with all the attendant dangers, privations, and disease for the promise of a better life. This was so far beyond Bob's 20th century experiences that he became entranced with seeing the actual places and learning the real stories.

In 1994, Bob met Lesley Wischmann on an Internet mail-

ing list for genealogists. They were both members of OCTA and shared an interest in the Overland Trails. Bob already had much experience running mailing lists, as the moderator of the Photo-3D (stereoscopic imaging) Internet mailing list, Motorola micro-controller Internet

mailing list, and the ICOM radio Internet mailing list. Bob suggested the Overland Trails Mailing List to Lesley and, soon after, they began the list which, in the spring of 1996, became an officially sanctioned activity of OCTA. In 1996, Bob conducted a workshop on the Internet at the OCTA national convention in Elko, Nevada.

Bob is the technological wizard (although he wouldn't call himself that, the rest of us know the truth!) who keeps our mailing list operating and our website on-line. He is currently working on putting OCTA's manual, Mapping Emigrant Trails, on-line as well. This is a project of special interest to Bob whose passion for geography has only increased with the advent of global positioning system technology. In 1997, Bob received a Certificate of Appreciation from OCTA for his work with this website and the Overland Trails Mailing List.

— Lesley Wischmann



Volunteer of the Year Bob Wier, right, with OCTA Awards Chairman George Ivory. Photo by Bill Martin

"Friends of the Trail"

(Continued from previous page)

Gerald Swaggart

Mr. Swaggart is descended from pioneers who traveled the Oregon Trail in 1853. A highly respected citizen of eastern Oregon, he is known for his vast understanding of the Oregon Trail, history of the area's early pioneers, and their various modes of transportation. He has homesteaded on the north fork of the John Day River, ranched at Butter Creek near the trail, and managed land which contained segments of the trail.



Friend of the Trail Winner Gerald Swaggart with OCTA's Carol Ann Buss
— Photo by Bill Martin

Mr. Swaggart discovered a forgotten segment of the Oregon Trail and a pioneer grave in the Blue Mountains. He helped mark the Oregon Trail through the Blue Mountain for OCTA and, during the Sesquicentennial celebration, he scouted areas of the trail for filming of television spots. He was a member of the core group that planned the official Oregon Trail Sesquicentennial Wagon Train, riding the trail, helping drive the teams, and assisting with the stock and wagons. He served as resident trailmaster for the ten week Pioneer Living History Encampment in Pendleton during the Sesquicentennial, making sure that every exhibit was historically accurate.

For 27 years, Mr. Swaggart has cared for and repaired the collection of old wagons, buggies, carriages, and carts stored at the Round-Up grounds in Pendleton. He has charted the routes taken by the Pendleton Round-Up's annual wagon train for 17 years in addition to sharing stories of the Oregon Trail with many groups, including children. He has also taken members of the Umatilla County Historical Society on various outings to trail sites in the area.

Committee Recommends *OJ*, *NFP* Remain Separate

An ad hoc committee has recommended that the *Overland Journal* and *News From The Plains* remain separate publications and not be combined.

That recommendation and others were accepted by the OCTA Board of Directors at its meeting in conjunction with the OCTA Convention in Pendleton.

The ad hoc committee, chaired by William E. Hill, had been asked to address several questions concerning OCTA publications and compensation for the editors. Committee members reviewed extensive correspondence and other background information concerning the publications.

Specific to the question of combining the *OJ* and *NFP*, the committee noted that the publications serve two different functions and should remain separate.

"The *News From The Plains* should continue to be the main publication for chapter and membership information, and the *Overland Journal* our scholarly publication," Hill said in the committee's report. "However, this does not mean that changes could not be made to improve either of the publications."

The Committee said a number of changes can be considered by the Publications Committee for the *Overland Journal*,

including expanding its size, expanding sources for articles, adding more book reviews, adding a letters to the editor section, and being less rigid in insisting on "new" research topics.

"While the *OJ* is a professional historical journal, it must be remembered that not all the readers/subscribers/contributors are professional historians," the committee said. "The goal of the *OJ* should be to keep a good mix of articles, from the narrow to the broad, from the general to the very specific."

The Committee also recommended that Marilyn Holt remain as editor of the *Overland Journal*, noting that "many of the criticisms leveled at her were based on factors that either were beyond her control – partially, or completely, by the nature of her job, or by a misconception of what her job is. The number of articles, the quality of the writing, (and) the scholarship of the articles are not the sole responsibility of the editor."

The Committee also recommended, and the Board approved, a \$4,000 annual salary for the editor of the *News From The Plains*.

-- Bill Martin

KANZA Chapter Awarded 2003 OCTA Convention

The OCTA Board of Directors has officially awarded the 2003 convention to the KANZA Chapter, to be held in Manhattan, Kansas.

Meanwhile, the Board asked all chapters to consider hosting the 2002 convention, which has yet to be awarded.

Other conventions scheduled include 1999 in Chico, California, 2000 in Kansas City, 2001 in Casper, Wyoming.

Chapters interested in submitting a bid for 2002 should contact Chuck Martin, chair of the Future Convention Sites Committee.

Certificates of Appreciation Presented

William White of Logan, Utah, and Walt Tegge, of Baker City, Oregon, were given OCTA Certificates of Appreciation at the national convention in Pendleton.

William White

White was cited for providing "invaluable aids for aviator explorers doing further research on the western migration."

Mr. White is a licensed pilot who has explored the western emigrant trails by air, resulting in the publication of two books, *The Santa Fe Trail By Air: A Pilot's Guide to the Santa Fe Trail* and *The Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails By Air: A Pilot's Guide to the Immigrant Trails*.

Both are invaluable aids for aviator explorers, providing accurate identification of historical trail points using the satellite technology known as global positioning systems (GPS).

He is also president of the Trail Pilots Association, otherwise known as the "Flying Rut Nuts."

Walt Tegge

Tegge, Chief of Interpretation for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, has been with the facility for nearly seven years, arriving some six months before the facility opened.

In short order, he put together a first class interpretive program that enabled the Center to achieve a remarkably high level of success from the very beginning. With more than 20 years in interpretation, his expertise was crucial in bringing the facility on line, developing and implementing interpretive standards, and maintaining a high level of community involvement.



News & Notes From the Pendleton Convention

Broken Ankle, But No Hurt Feelings

Just about everyone who came to the 1998 OCTA Convention in Pendleton, Oregon, came with solid intentions of having a good time. Unfortunately, good times can sometimes be tempered by misfortune. But, as the following letter sent to OCTA President Roger Blair shows, OCTA spirits are hard to dampen.

Dear Roger,

Yesterday (Friday, August 14), my husband, Andrew, and I took part in the Blues Hike, one of the highlights of our stay here. It was a moving experience to walk in the steps of the pioneers and still be able to see traces on the ground of their passage. The heat of the day was made bearable by the breeze, the view was spectacular and the company excellent.

Unfortunately, my participation was abruptly ended by a false step and a broken ankle. However, my disappointment and pain were helped enormously by the kindness and concern of our fellow hikers who gave me ice, candy, a scarf to wrap around the ankle, and many encouraging words. Thanks to the efficiency of our leaders, Wendell Baskius and his wife and that of the emergency services, it seemed very little time before I was receiving treatment at the hospital in Pendleton.

We have decided to return to Portland today to give us more time tomorrow morning before our flight back to Cincinnati. It is very disappointing to miss today's trip to Flagstaff Hill and the rest of the convention.

If you could find some way to pass on our thanks to everyone who helped us yesterday, we should be very glad.

We were told this morning that you had called at the hospital, but we had already left. Thank you so much for your concern; we really appreciate it.

Although we have to miss part of this year's convention, we greatly enjoyed the rest and will be looking forward to the next one, and, of course, to learning more about the history of the Oregon Trail.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Thompson
Cincinnati, Ohio

A Hot Time In The Old Town

It may not qualify as a convention highlight, but it certainly was the topic of considerable table talk the last night of the Pendleton Convention. As the Awards Banquet went on, a wildfire raged on the rangeland near Pendleton, barely a mile from the Convention Center. The Center's manager, in fact, was pacing the floor waiting for OCTA to conclude its business so the facility could be turned into a fire command post. OCTA member Keith May of Pendleton filed this report on the fire on the Overland Trails list-server.

A total of 50,000 acres were burned with the loss of only one home (that was located at the Pendleton airport about a mile from the convention center), along with several other unoccupied structures. We feel very fortunate that the fire was stopped from entering the town proper.

We had to leave the awards banquet early to gather our boys from various activities in town and check on some friends. One has a house that is located behind the airport. They had plowed a fire break around their home. Another friend used a water canon to keep the flames from reaching his home located along Birch creek. The fire came to within 100 yards of their house.

Several interesting stories have come out since the fire. It was actually two fires - both thought to have been human-caused. The Governor of Oregon declared the Conflagration Act and firefighters from all over the state and Washington state arrived to help control the flames.

Beryl Grilley - aged 89 - has a barn and horses located 1/2 mile from the convention center on old Airport Hill Rd (the Oregon Trail) and rescued her animals by riding them out.

One motorist described his encounter with the fire on I-84 as a "three-story wall of fire and headed for Pendleton." The emergency broadcast system was activated and three of the five highways from town were closed at one point. One scheduled flight at the airport actually landed in the middle of the flames and smoke. The Weather service had to evacuate and the NOAA weather radio went off the air.

All in all it was an exciting evening.

Kudos to those who organized and put on the convention - a massive effort and very appreciated!

Everyone, please return to Pendleton someday when you have time to explore the Underground, Woolen Mills, and witness the firemen sitting around doing nothing! Of course, feel free to stop by the May House for a chat. We'd love to talk trail with you all.

Postcards From Pendleton



Convention attendees enjoyed a Buffalo Stew Trail Meal following a day of hearing papers presented



A performance by The Marv Ross Trail Band was a highlight of the convention



President Dr. Roger Blair welcomes OCTA conventioners during the opening ceremonies



The OCTA Trail Band is a fixture at convention time.



Enjoying a leisurely lunch at the Whitman Mission National Monument

All Photos by Bill Martin



OCTA members took advantage of the opportunity to get a Pendleton OCTA postage cancellation stamp

OCTA Board Meeting

Financial Condition Is Termed "Highly Favorable"

The Oregon-California Trails Association is in excellent financial condition and should consider potential uses for its growing endowment fund, Treasurer Jim Budde told the OCTA Board of Directors at its annual meeting in Pendleton.

"It would be quite a feat to try and describe OCTA's short term financial condition as anything other than highly favorable," Budde said. "One of the reasons for this solvency is the continuing under spending of the annual budget allocations."

With an annual budget of about \$165,000, unused funds were a little over \$11,000 for fiscal 1996-97 and are expected to be about \$27,000 in fiscal 1997-98.

While that may sound good, Budde warned that it may be evidence of what he called "organizational dry rot," adding that "long term it is indicative that OCTA is not as vigorous as it once was in preserving and protecting the emigrant trails."

Meanwhile, the Board of Directors approved transferring \$103,794 from money market accounts to the OCTA Endowment Fund, boosting the Fund to in excess of \$330,000.

Now is the time to decide what OCTA wants to do with the Endowment Fund, Budde noted, indicating he would ask OCTA members who have experience in endowments to contact him to help him make recommendations to be presented to a future board meeting.

In other actions at its Pendleton meeting, the OCTA Board:

Partnership: Voted unanimously to accept an Administrative Committee recommendation that OCTA join the Partnership For the National Trails System, an organization working to secure federal funding for national historic and scenic trails programs.

In urging membership, the Committee said that the Partnership "will continue to be a significant player in the National Trails landscape whether OCTA is in it or not. Without OCTA, its agendas inevitably will more and more reflect the interests of its other members. We will have lost much of our voice at the national level."

Headquarters: Heard from Headquarters Manager Kathy Conway that OCTA's membership totaled 2,597 at the end of July, 1998, and increase of 222 since October, 1997. There are members in 48 states and 17 international members in Canada, Japan, Germany, Switzerland and England.

Conway also reported that headquarters handled over 3,100 mail orders during the past year, including memberships and library subscriptions, merchandise sales and other items.

"The OCTA Store continues to yield excellent revenue for our organization," she said. "With our inventory of good, solid trail-researched books, the OCTA Store is an enormous success."

Mattes: Received a report from John Mark Lambert, Director of the National Frontier Trails Center, that the Mattes Research Library collection now totals 2,875 volumes. During 1997, 124 researchers used the facility, a 55 percent increase over the previous year.

Attorney: Approved a proposal from President Roger Blair to have Steve Corey, an OCTA member and an attorney in Pendleton, Oregon, act as legal counsel to the Board of Directors. Corey will serve in a pro bono capacity and will not be paid.

Corey is Preservation Officer for the Northwest Chapter of OCTA and past president of the Oregon Historical Society. He managed Pendleton Ranches and Cunningham Sheep Company for his family and received OCTA's Rancher of the Year award at the 1993 Baker City Convention.

California Hill: Was told that the Nebraska State Historical Society is interested in acquiring and preserving the California Hill property currently owned by OCTA. The Board asked Treasurer Jim Budde to investigate further and provide a report.

— Bill Martin

NPS Says Management Plan To Be Implemented "Bottom Up"

Implementation of the Comprehensive Management Plan for the California and Pony Express National Historic Trails will be a "bottom up, not top down" process, Jere Krakow of the National Park Service Long Distance Trail Office told the OCTA Board of Directors at its August meeting.

The plan, now undergoing final revisions (the deadline for final public comment was set at October 19), will guide federal policies and procedures in managing western emigrant trails. Krakow said the most important people in the process are professionals working at local levels.

For example, he said, state directors for the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management or the National Park Service may not even be aware of the day-to-day impact of the plan, but the men and women working out in the field will be.

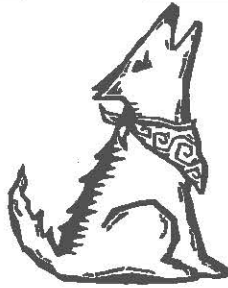
Krakow, in fact, said he wasn't even sure there would be a sign-off on the National Park Service's final document by top-level USFS or BLM administrators. "We hope to get their signatures, but there may be great difficulty in getting that," he told the Board.

In order to assure that the Comprehensive Management Plan is an effective document, it is "incumbent for anyone interested in the trails to develop grassroots contacts wherever you live," Krakow said. "Develop those relationships with public employees, private landowners and others."

Susan Boyle of the National Park Service said the Comprehensive Management Plan "focuses on partnerships" and the need for diverse interests "to develop positive working relationships... that's what the plan tries to do."

The plan also has "built in flexibility," she said, making it a document that can evolve and be updated, especially as regards to high potential sites and segments.

— Bill Martin



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Southwest

For those not familiar with the on-going project of mapping the Southern Trail to California in New Mexico, Arizona and California, this status report will bring you up to date.

The project got its start in October 1993 when Don Buck led a mapping seminar in Flagstaff, AZ to a group of chapter members. This included both classroom and field work, learning to map trail according to OCTA's Mapping Emigrant Trails manual. The Southern Trail Mapping Committee is co-chaired by Reba Grandrud, in charge of building relationships with agencies and landowners, and Rose Ann Tompkins, in charge of field work.

The chapter attempted to combine mapping and weekend chapter outings with trips in November 1994 and February 1995. Realizing that weekends did not get us much return for the travel time and distance involved, a decision was made to separate mapping from outings, lengthening the mapping into week-long trips. Of course, this meant that fewer members would be able and willing to commit to the expanded times.

The plan was to have two of these week-long trips per year. Beginning with a trip in October, 1995, the chapter has now completed seven weeks of mapping. Those who attend the weeks come with self-contained, 4WD, travel units; we usually camp along the trail. This has involved 37 person-weeks of field work, not to mention the hours spent researching trail diaries and old maps, plus traveling to and from our homes.

The project has been a learning experience for those involved: researching historical documents and maps, becoming more adept at finding trail signs, forming good working relationships with private landowners and government agencies, and learning what works best for living and working in the often rugged areas. We have been able to incorporate some of the newer technologies into our work which does make it go faster, but in order to properly do the job as outlined by the Trails manual, each mile needs to be walked at least once.

Lest you think we must be about finished with this project, it has hardly begun. Don Buck has estimated there are about 6,000 miles of emigrant trail in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and California that comprise the southern trails complex. We have only worked on trails in Arizona and New Mexico so far, and have not finished those. There are many years of work ahead of us.

In the past year, two week-long field trips were held:

October/November 1997 - New Mexico. This was an intensive week of mapping from Hunter's Draw on the Rio Grande to an area between Round Mountain and Ft. Cummings. Although we had been to this area before, we had new information to use and feel we have now completed this portion of the trail. In fact, most of the trail has now been mapped between the river and Soldier's Farewell. Don Buck completed the relevant topographic maps from this week of mapping, using the methods as outlined in the Mapping Emigrant Trails manual. In addition, an extensive report was produced, using additional information and photographs.

April 1998 - New Mexico and Arizona. Mapping was begun in an area visited before on trail outings. The area runs from Whitmire Pass in extreme southwest New Mexico to Guadalupe Canyon in extreme southeast Arizona. We classified this as a surface look of the area, with little actual mapping done. A number of problems confront us, including rugged terrain in the latter part, past cultivated areas in places, historical flooding in the Animas Valley, and a private landowner that would not give us permission to enter their land. We plan to return after more research.

The trails mapping project is continuing with a small but dedicated group of field mappers. This past year the group included Don Buck, Tracy DeVault, Marie Greene, Richard Greene, Dave Hollecker, Neal Johns, Rose Ann Tompkins and Cam Wade. It is difficult and exhausting work, though it has its rewards. The use of multiple GPS (Global Positioning System) units and the new FRS (Family Radio Service) units have aided the work. It should be said that all these units have been purchased by those participating; the chapter has not been financially involved. One new mapper, Cam Wade, is also working on his own in the Rio Grande Valley, the area between Socorro (where he lives) and Hunter's Draw.

We would like to personally thank those who have been involved in the mapping project. It is a large investment of personal time and money.

The next mapping week is scheduled for the latter half of October 1998 when we will return to the Apache Pass/Ft. Bowie, Arizona, area.

*Rose Ann Tompkins and Reba Grandrud, Co-Chairs
Southern Trail Mapping Committee*

MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Northwest

The Northwest Chapter would like to thank the almost 550 attendees at the Pendleton convention. In addition to an excellent total attendance, the participation in each event was remarkable, often exceeding 80 per cent.

Highlights were the great speakers and, of course, Fanny and the Marv Ross Trail Band. One disappointment was that the Boardman hike had to be trimmed to five miles from over eight miles, but mid-summer is just not a good time to be in that area. We hope you can join us for a spring outing on Boardman in the future.

The next chapter outing will be a meeting at The Dalles on October 17 and 18 to discuss work accomplished under our Challenge Cost-Share Grant and future trail preservation efforts. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to visit the Discovery Center, a new interpretive center in The Dalles, and check out facilities for a future (2004?) OCTA convention.

Thanks again to those who traveled to Pendleton. We hope to see you on the trail soon!

-- Dave Welch

Upcoming Activities

Selected events sponsored by OCTA Chapters or of interest to OCTA members. Schedule subject to change.

If no contact name is provided, contact individual chapters for details.

October 17 – Trails Head Chapter Trek, Westport Landing to Westport. Contact: Ross Marshall (913) 262-6445

October 17-18 – (Tentative) Northwest Chapter meeting to discuss trail marking and trail preservation at The Dalles. Contact: David Welch (253) 581-7444

October 24 – CA-NV Chapter Chico Convention Planning Meeting, Canterbury Inn, Sacramento. Contact: Bill & Shann Rupp (209) 984-3401

November 8 – KANZA Chapter General Membership Meeting, Blue Rapids. Contact: Ken Martin ((785) 744-3333

November 17 – Trails Head Chapter Annual Meeting. Contact: Judy Budde (816) 941-0728

February 20-21, 1999 – CA/NV Chapter Winter Symposium, Redding. Contact: Charles Little (916) 221-8646

Wyoming

Long-time OCTA members Bob Rennells and Karen Buck Rennells of LaBarge, Wyoming, or more accurately of the Upper Green River Crossing on the Sublette Cutoff, shared their expertise with travel writers from Wyoming, Colorado, and California in July.

Bob and Karen along with OCTA member Randy Wagner of Cheyenne, who is the Historic Trails Coordinator for the Wyoming Division of Tourism, took the journalists across the Sublette Cutoff as part of a tour to familiarize the writers with the California Trail in Wyoming.

Sponsored by the Wyoming Division of Tourism, the trip began in Cheyenne and included time in Western Nebraska before crossing Wyoming. Wagner and OCTA member Candy Moulton provided historical information for the travel writers, with various local officials adding detail.

Among the stops included Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff and the Robidoux Trading Post recreation in Nebraska, Fort Laramie, Register Cliff, the Guernsey ruts, Unthank Grave, Independence Rock, South Pass and Fort Bridger.

Wagner led the way in his Subaru Outback sticking primarily to two track roads, county roads, and even heading right down the trail ruts in a few locations. One highlight of the trip was the opportunity to climb Independence Rock (on July 3) and another included visiting South Pass itself on July 4.

The travel writers got a taste of the trail--literally--when Karen and Bob took over as guides across the Sublette Cutoff. Though some of the vehicles had air conditioning, Karen's didn't so the dust literally boiled in through the windows and air vents. Upon completing that trail section by automobile, the writers certainly had a better appreciation for what the pioneers had experienced. Also assisting with the trek that day was OCTA member Mike Brown, a U. S. Bureau of Land Management employee in Rock Springs. He noted it was his first crossing of the Sublette Cutoff.

The travel writers were from such publications as *Destinations*, *Trailer Life*, *Roads to Adventure*, *Persimmon Hill*, and *Motorhome*. Look for their articles in 1999.

Two of the participants from that trip — Candy Moulton and Bill Graves, a columnist for *Motorhome* — were subsequently invited to travel with Nevada Tourism over sections of the California Trail between Elko and Dayton. They will be checking out ruts again in early October.

-- Candy Moulton

California-Nevada

If you attended the OCTA Convention in Pendleton, you know by the bright blue and gold T-shirts (Gold! Chico 1999) worn by California-Nevada Chapter members that they will host the 1999 convention in Chico, California.

Timed to coincide with the California Gold Rush and its Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary), the yearly convention is scheduled for August 11-14, 1999.



Ca-NV Chapter President Bill Rupp outlines plans for the 1999 Chico Convention during a session at the Pendleton Convention.

—Photo by Bill Martin

Chico was founded by California Trail emigrant John Bidwell who came to California in 1841 as part of the Bidwell-Bartelson Party. He worked first for John Sutter at Sutter's Fort in New Helvetia (now Sacramento). In the

late 1840s, he bought Rancho Chico and in 1861 built his home, now the Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park, and founded the City of Chico there.

Now a city of 65,000 (counting students from California State University-Chico), Chico is the center of a rich agricultural area. Chico is located on Highway 99 about two hours north of Sacramento. It is readily accessible by car, bus, rail and air.

According to Chapter President Bill Rupp, in announcing plans for Chico 1999, OCTA members will enjoy the fruits of the end of the "other" trail, the California Trail, in the Golden State.

Pre-convention and convention tours will highlight the numerous trails that fed into California from the east and the north and sites and landmarks that remain from the Gold Rush.

The convention site is the Elks Club. There will be limited motor coach spaces and camping on site. Nearby motels and trailer parks/campgrounds are available with ample rooms and spaces to accommodate members during the convention. Additional lodging info will be available in the future. Members may also find information at

<http://Chico.com/business/lodging.html>

Billed as the "Nine Routes to Chico in 1999," with non-

chapter members given tour registration priority, the pre-convention tours will cover the Oregon to California Trail (2 days, passenger cars), Truckee River Route (3 days, 4WD), Applegate Trail (4 days, 4WD), Carson River Route (2 days, passenger cars), Lassen Trail (4 1/2 days, 4WD), Beckwourth Trail (3 days, high clearance vehicles), Nobles Trail (3 days, high clearance vehicles), Applegate and Yreka Trails (3 days, passenger cars) and the Sonora Trail (3 days, backpacking). More information will be available in subsequent editions of the *NFP*.

The pre-convention bus tour (Tuesday) will travel through scenic Lassen National Park and a portion of the Noble Trail (hike 0.3 mile). A special tour of the Bidwell Mansion may be available on Tuesday before it opens to the general public.

Convention tours are planned for California's Northern Mines areas and several of the nearby trails. At this time, bus tours are planned for the Beckwourth Trail, Noble/Lassen Trail and the Empire Mine/Grass Valley.

There will be two post-convention tours, one by caravan (high clearance vehicles) on Sunday which will begin at Deer Creek Meadows and follow the Lassen Trail by way of Bruff's Camp into Chico, and a second, a two-day trip, starting in Marysville and traveling through Henness Pass (with overnight in Reno) and ending at Virginia City, Nevada (4WD, high clearance vehicle).

The speaker program, being developed at this time, will feature experts on the various California Trails and the California Gold Rush. Scheduled to participate at this time are Dr. J.S. Holliday, author of *The World Rushed In* and *Gold Fever*, and JoAnn Levy, author of *They Saw The Elephant* and *Daughter of Joy*. Additional speakers will be announced in the future.

Mark your calendar and plan to be a part of the Gold Rush to Chico in 1999! Please visit the California-Nevada Chapter's website for updates to the Chico Convention Program. The website address is

<http://www.sonnet.com/usr/ca-nv/index.html>.

Additional information will be available in the National OCTA website and future *News From The Plains*.

Mattes Award Winner Named

The Merrill J. Mattes Award for the best article to appear in the *Overland Journal* in 1997 was presented at the Pendleton Convention.

The award went to "Draft Animals on the United States Frontier," by Kyle D. Kauffman and Jonathan J. Liebowitz.

The article appeared in Volume 15, Number 2, of the *Journal*.

More Postcards From Pendleton



OCTA members reading a plaque at the location of the Hudson's Bay Company Farm (1821-1856) near Pendleton.



In Milton-Freewater, OCTA members saw a monument marking the spot where Ezra Meeker placed a monument in 1910.



As always, the OCTA book room was crowded with buyers.



The OCTA convention had an international flavor. Here are Heiko Rupp, left of Germany, and Shinya Yuasa of Japan



Out-going Trails Preservation Officer Tom Hunt receives a special award during the closing banquet.



Tamastslikt Cultural Institute was the site of the opening night Friendship Feast

**Rupp-Yuasa photo by Betty Eberhardt
All other photos by Bill Martin**

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Trail Marking: What Really Goes On Out There

We've all been on the trail at one time or another, but how many of us have been involved in the work of actually marking segments of the trail? OCTA member Don Popejoy of Spokane, Washington, took part in a marking expedition last Spring and shares his experiences with NFP readers. It is, he says, "both fun and hard work."

By Don Popejoy

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers along the Oregon Trail? Sure you have; we all have. We've all seen the wagon ruts, the traces left behind by thousands of wagons and tens of thousands of people, cattle, oxen and horses. We've marveled at the beautiful swales left behind and marked by nature for all of us to enjoy over 150 years later. RUTS! We've seen them, walked them, heard about them and even dreamed about them. But have you ever experienced them? I mean really experienced them? I have!

Led by the undaunted Vic Bolon, a group of eight NWOCTA members followed the 1843 Oregon Trail from Hilgard State Park to Meecham, Oregon. Along with myself (Don Popejoy), Bill Arends, Gail Carbiener, Chuck Hornbuckle, Tom Laidlaw, Dick Pingrey, Roy Schafer, and Bud Shoaf spent five days from April 24 to April 28, 1998, following, searching for, and marking this often elusive trail. Interstate 84 parallels the Oregon Trail from the Snake River near Ontario to its end in Oregon City. The segment we focused on started on a bluff at the southern end of Hilgard State Park, which overlooks the trail crossing of the Grande Ronde River. There was no easy way up to the bluff as the highway cut through this area and destroyed any sane access to the top.

First let me tell you about a typical day as a volunteer trail marker. It's up at 6 a.m., then breakfast at Denny's at 7 a.m.. After a hearty breakfast it's back to the Super 8 and our headquarters in the parking lot. Plans are carefully made - and then just as quickly forgotten. National Park Service or topographical maps are consulted once, twice, and three times before someone realizes the maps are upside down! We quickly race to our assigned vehicles and form a caravan of 4x4's to our starting point. We feel the excitement begin and sense a kinship with our ancestors as we jockey for position on the freeway, speeding ahead at a mind-boggling 65 mph (the emigrants were lucky to make 8-12 miles a day!) with V-8's thundering, thermos bottles of hot coffee, cold packs of beer and pop and hearty lunches laden with Rice Krispie Treats,

apple granola bars and the ever-present Coffee Nips waiting at our finger tips. The pioneers should have had it so easy! The only hardships we faced were every couple of hours rotating carrying the pounder, which weighed about 40 pounds and fit very nicely in its own backpack. What is a pounder? Visualize a modern fence pounder and you've nearly got it. Everyone also carried about 5-6 carsonite markers approximately 6 feet long and each weighing about 6 pounds. The weather was great, as usual, going from slightly cool the first day to slightly warm on the fifth day. On the sixth day we rested - and we needed it by then!!!

With three GPS receivers to guide us and a compass to chart the way, we covered about 10-13 miles a day. A GPS is a gift from technology called Global Positioning System. It is linked to Department of Defense satellites which were originally launched for military purposes. The system is now used worldwide in hundreds of applications, including marking trails. The handheld GPS receiver is no larger than your television remote control.

With exact longitude and latitude

coordinates fed into the system prior to trail marking, it tracks as many as eight satellites and is accurate within several feet of the trail. Hunters, hikers, and boaters can use the GPS system to prevent being lost in the wilderness; and many cars are beginning to use the GPS system for emergency-help response. Shortly it will be used with dashboard-mounted maps showing drivers their exact location. How does the GPS work? I have no idea — ask Chuck Hornbuckle.

Okay, back to the actual trail marking experience. After struggling up the face of the escarpment to the bluff and literally clawing our way above the clouds (Not really, it just seemed like it) we could see across to where the 1843 trail crossed the Grande Ronde River into what is now Hilgard State Park. A lot of weary travelers camped by the river overnight or at least "geared up" for the ascent into the Blue Mountains on the way to OREGON. With the going becoming easier for us at least, someone called out, "Hey, Vic, how much further to Pelican Creek?" "Just a half mile ahead," Vic heartily responded. Well, several hours later and a number of trail markers behind us, we gratefully came into the Pelican Creek Valley; and there before us roared the cool water of Pelican Creek. Were we thirsty? No. Were we tired? Yes. So what's the big deal? Ah ... end of the day! Three p.m., and little did we know this was to be our shortest day — by an average of about three



Vic Bolon points the way for a band of intrepid trail markers.

— Photo by Don Popejoy

hours. About an hour and a half later we had hiked back to our caravan to end the first day.

On day two it took about one and one-half hours to 4x4 into the area where we could hike back to our last marker of the previous day. We made it to the opposite side of Pelican Creek without having to cross it! — Thanks to Vic Bolon and Chuck Hornbuckle who had reconnoitered the area after 7 p.m. the night before even though dead-tired and weak in the knees! These two could have been in the Great Migration - all they would have needed was a handcart between the two of them! After a very rugged day of climbing the steep hillsides of the Blue Mountains we were very happy and excited to follow and mark the trail into the back side of the absolutely beautiful Oregon Trail Interpretive Park at the Blue Mountain Crossing. After crossing, and re-crossing Pelican Creek, Five Points Creek, and California Gulch, the trail into the interpretive park was refreshing and exhilarating. It was 5 p.m. and the day was over. But several diet Pepsi's and semi-cold beers later, our excitement turned into hunger and we raced back to the Super 8 for a hot shower and Italian dinner at Palmero's. That's really roughing it!

The morning of the third day broke early with a loud alarm. Little did I know that my roomie, Roy Schafer, had set the alarm clock next to my pillow. I jumped out of bed and fell to the floor as my stiff sore calf muscles failed me. I then rolled over onto my shoulders which cried out for mercy! Too weak and weary to crawl back into bed, I lay crumpled on the floor, dazed but not out! Fifteen minutes later a second alarm went off and Roy leaped out of bed like a pronghorn antelope and sprinted into the bathroom, calling over his shoulder, "It would be more comfortable if you slept in bed." Soon we found ourselves back at the Blue Mountain Crossing area, where though loaded down with our equipment (which somehow seemed much heavier today!); we were in high spirits. We pushed our way through forests of pine, fir and spruce. We clambered over rocky terrain which was so hard it took 4-5 attempts to pound in a single marker. The trail at this point goes through US Forest Service land and private property, whose owners had granted permission to mark the trail. A sight I found to be most significant was that of several elk carcasses and scattered remains. I thought of Parthenia Blank as she traversed this area in October 1852. In her diary she says that "many cattle are failing and all are very poor." Others also speak of cattle and oxen strewn along the trail. Then we found ourselves in a clearing at the beginning of Forest Service Road #31 that heads up to Mt. Emily and the Whitman Overlook view. We followed the double trail on the northern side of the road cut for a mile or two. Before we knew it this day also ended. As we climbed into our rigs (it seemed like we were always climbing!) someone mentioned how good

a 20-ounce steak would taste and it's a race to Haines Steak House a few miles north of Baker City, Oregon.

The last two days have become somewhat of a blur. Day 4 was a blend of fatigue and frustration. It was the most grueling terrain that we had covered as yet; and of course the "pounder" now weighed twice as much! The carsonite markers became more difficult to carry and now made a very irritating clattering sound as they banged against trees, snagged the heavy brush, and especially when they were dropped to the ground for the all too infrequent rest periods and during pounding sessions. I remember the last day we were high on a ridge line and followed the trail through a beautiful meadow. The view was fantastic and must have lifted the spirits of every struggling emigrant - I know it did mine. We were in the heart of the Blue Mountains, with the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to the south and the Umatilla National Forest to the east. I fell behind the group to soak in the grandeur of the moment; my senses reeling from nature's majestic beauty. I couldn't help wonder - how did the emigrants feel when they stood in this same meadow over one hundred and fifty years ago? Think about it. How incredible this situation was. A few minutes later I caught up to the others, curious as to what they were looking at. There it was - the Interstate! The trail led down the hillside, gently winding the emigrants towards Lee's Encampment, an open upland area only a few miles ahead, for a much needed rest



The trail marking crew spent a lot of time carrying around carsonite markers.

— Photo by Don Popejoy

and grass and water for the animals.

Here a great decision was made. As we had driven our 161st marker just below the hilltop, we were out of carsonite markers and Oregon Trail decals. So this was it. We could proceed on and mark the rest of the trail segment with ribbon streamers tagged to trees or come back another time and pick up the trail on the northeast side of Interstate 84. Vic and Gail went down to the fence line and tagged the barbed wire so the trail could be seen on the opposite side of the highway. Vic, not one to let any obstacle get in his way, decided to call a halt to this week-long expedition, as the thought of becoming road-kill was too much even for him. Anyway, as sore as Vic's legs and feet were, running across the Interstate, challenging semis going 70-80 mph and drivers suffering from road-rage was out of the question! When Vic and Gail came back to the group and Vic announced his monumental decision to call it a day, he, of course, received a rousing ovation!

So, why did we do this? One reason: We all love the Oregon Trail and wanted to really experience it first-hand. Plus we wanted to do something to help future generations find the trail and learn something from it. Will we do it again? Are you CRAZY?! Of course, we will! I can't wait to hear someone call out to Vic, "Hey, Vic, how much further," and I know Vic will call back, "Just a half mile ahead!"

Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters

Letters are always welcome, but are subject to editing due to space considerations. Letters should be sent to Editor, News From The Plains, 1908 Tuolumne Drive, Reno NV 89523-1228. They also may be sent via e-mail to: words@worldnet.att.net

Editor, NFP:

I thought this would be the best way to let the membership that attended the OCTA Convention in Pendleton, Oregon know that many compliments were received in the registration room for them.

The hotel management said that they had never had a group meeting there where the people seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves and have fun. We would be welcome back any time.

Several came into registration to inquire what and who we were as they noted there were a great many people wearing name tags who were genuinely having such a good time. One couple in particular were from Canada and were very interested in our convention. I spent some twenty minutes with them and they left with a membership application and will send a magazine which their group puts out about the Hudson's Bay Company. Their group is researching their records and finding many fact not recently known or published.

Trudy Ackerman, Salem, Oregon
1998 Convention Registration Chair

The following letter was sent to Dick and Trudy Ackerman after the Pendleton Convention and is being printed here because it likely to be of interest to OCTA members.

Dear Dick and Trudy,

I wanted to write you while last night (August 13) was still fresh in my mind . . . not that I will soon forget the events of the evening, mind you. I'll remember them every time I look at the beautiful plaque that OCTA gave me.

To say that I am honored to receive the Meritorious Achievement recognition would be an understatement. To say that I am humbled would likewise be an understatement. Truly, there are *so many* in OCTA who have done far more than I to raise the public's collective consciousness about the Oregon and California Trails. But I doubt if any of them have had more fun that I at doing it. Old "Fanny" has taken me from Washington D.C. to Alaska, across the nation and back — many times — on behalf of the Trail, and I've met some fantastic folks along the way. I wish I could project on a Big Screen for all OCTA members the "light" that goes on in children's eyes when they realize *they* are the keepers of the legacy — that Fanny's stories belong to everyone with "pioneering spirit" — that the *real* stories of the Trail are those that live in our hearts (and they're 1,000 percent better than any Hollywood adventure story). That "light in the eyes" is the magic that makes the work worthwhile. Every OCTA member is a keeper of that light.

As a representative of all of them, I gratefully and humbly thank you.

Joyce Badgely Hunsaker
(and Fanny and Maybelle, too)
Baker City, Oregon

Publications Committee Update

Candy Moulton, a freelance writer based in Encampment, Wyoming, has taken over as chair of the OCTA publications committee.

Her eight nonfiction books include *Roadside History of Nebraska*, *Roadside History of Wyoming*, and *Writer's Guide to Everyday Life in the Wild West* from 1840-1900. She co-authored *Wagon Wheels: A Contemporary Journey on the Oregon Trail* with Ben Kern.

She has won both state and national awards for her books and articles. She writes regularly for the *Casper Star-Tribune* (for which she did extensive coverage of both the Oregon Trail and Mormon Trail sesquicentennials), *Persimmon Hill*, the official publication of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, *Sunset*, *Wild West*, and *American Cowboy*, and she edits *Roundup Magazine*, the official publication of the Western Writers of America.

Also new to the publications committee is Harold L. James, of Seely Lake, Mont. He served for 17 years as editor/geologist with the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology in Butte. A native of New Mexico, he has authored historical and photo-

graphic books on Southwestern Indian subjects and history, in addition to scientific books in Montana. He is an honorary member of the New Mexico Geological Society, past president of the Association of Earth Science Editors, and recipient of two national awards for publication design and layout. He was recognized by the Geoscience Information Society in 1996 for the Best Guidebook of the Year award for his publication, *Geologic and Historic Guide to the Beartooth Highway*.

The other committee members include Robert Clark, of Spokane, WA; Mike Brown, of Rock Springs, WY; Marilyn Holt, editor of the *Overland Journal*; Bill Martin, editor of *News From the Plains*; Susan Badger Doyle, editor of the *Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series*.

Individual articles and information for *News From the Plains* and the *Overland Journal*, should be sent to editors Martin and Holt respectively. Holt planned to provide information about the OJ — and a call for article submissions — for distribution at the annual Western History Association Conference slated for Oct. 14-17 in Sacramento, Calif.

Outstanding Educator Awards Presented

Each year OCTA honors educators who have enriched appreciation of emigrant trails for students in their classrooms. This year's honorees were:

Bradley Kohl

Bradley Kohl lives in Casper, Wyoming, and teaches mathematics to grades 9-12 at Roosevelt High School in Casper. He received a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a Master of Science in Mathematics from the University of Wyoming. He previously was the National winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, as well as a Medallion of Excellence from the Natrona County (Wyoming)



Brad Kohl, right, with OCTA Education Chair William Hill
— Photo by Bill Martin

School District.

Kohl developed a series of high school cross-disciplinary activities uniting History, English Home Economics, Art, Science, and Physical Education with Mathematics. Using the Oregon Trail as a backdrop, these projects and labs emphasized core mathematical concepts such as data collection, computation, measurement, ratio/proportion, graphing, conversions, and problem solving.

Also students had an opportunity to explore the trail firsthand. An Oregon Trail field trip and a Mountain Man camping trip were held for students to see places they had studied about and to have their own adventures on the Oregon Trail.

Educational tools included "Math Along the Oregon Trail;" the Oregon Trail computer game; bicycling on the Oregon Trail in which students rode a stationary bicycle and logged their mileage on a map of the Trail; "Big Wheel Keep on Turning...Wheel Rotations" in which students calculated distances based on wheel circumferences; "Finding the Trail," in which students learned basic orienteering that may have been useful to settlers, and "Food For Thought," in which students calculated costs for provisions in 1843.

Brian Buntain & Anne Kelleher

Brian Buntain teaches social studies to Grade 9 and Anne Kelleher serves as the Library Media Specialist for Grades 7 and 8 at Tumwater Middle School in Tumwater, Washington. Together, they offer a living history course known as the "Homesteaders Program."

Homesteaders is a living history program with a twofold purpose: a) the education of eighth grade Homesteader students in the early history of their community and state; and, b) through the interpretation of the pioneer experience, the building of a sense of self, family, and community connectedness.

The program was created in 1988 as a Washington State



Outstanding Educators Brian Buntain, left, & Anne Kelleher.
— Photo by Bill Martin

Centennial project and during its ten year existence, has brought the pioneer story alive for over 500 Homesteaders, 6,000 fourth graders, and countless community members.

Homesteaders are a group of 60 eighth grade students who apply and are selected at the end of their seventh grade year to participate in the program. The Homesteaders classes study the same basic Pacific Northwest history curriculum as all other eighth graders, but with special emphasis on the early history of Tumwater, with additional hands-on workshops designed to teach the pioneer life skills, and with a commitment to participate in community events throughout the year. Each Homesteader must also supply his or her own pioneer clothing which is worn at all public events.

An early major component of the Homesteader program is a simulation of the arduous trek over the Oregon Trail. During the simulated 2,000 mile trip, students study the westward expansion of the United States. Students develop a trail persona, form families, make family decisions about which supplies are crucial to the success of their journeys, pack their wagons, and head out across the plains.

— Information compiled by Leslie Wischmann

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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