

# News From The Plains



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Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

October 2002



OCTA's new Board members, left to right, Jack Fletcher, George Ivory, Andy Hammond, Fran Taplin and David Welch

—Photo by Bill Martin

## OCTA Elects New Board

Four persons have been elected to serve new three-year terms on the national Board of Directors of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

Jack Fletcher of Sequim, WA, Andy Hammond of Chico, CA, Fran Taplin of Eureka, CA, and Dave Welch of Steilacoom, WA, were elected in voting by the OCTA membership and took their positions at the 2002 Convention.

In addition, George Ivory of Midvale, UT, was appointed to serve the remaining one year of the term held by Tom Laidlaw of Vancouver, WA, who resigned.

Fletcher, a researcher who has specialized in the Cherokee Trail branch of the Oregon-California trail, based his candidacy for the Board on the need for OCTA to expand by learning from other organizations and getting involved in local activities, such as History Day observances across the country.

Hammond, a retired civil engineer and a charter member of OCTA, has researched and explored the trails for over 30 years, with an emphasis on Applegate, Lassen, Nobles and

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## NPS Grant Will Fund Association Manager

By Bill Martin

The Oregon-California Trails Association will move ahead with plans to hire an Association Manager with the help of a grant from the National Park Service.

The go-ahead came on a pair of 6-4 votes following a lengthy discussion at the annual Board of Directors meeting in Reno.

In separate motions, the Board voted to create the position of Association Manager and approved a five-year agreement through which the Park Service will provide \$85,000 annually for two years to help fund the new position.

Jere Krakow, Superintendent of the NPS Long Distance Trails Office, said some money could be available during the final three years of the agreement, but he could not commit to a specific figure.

Most of the discussion dealt with accepting the grant, with supporters arguing that it was an appropriate opportunity and opponents maintaining that it posed a risk to OCTA's independence.

"The National Park Service mission goes hand-in-hand with what OCTA is all about," said Board member Frank Totorich. "This is an opportunity we can't afford to miss."

"I am concerned that we are sacrificing our independence," said Board member Edna Kennell. "We lean on the Park Service, but I don't like to see it become an essential part of our organization."

Krakow said that the cooperative agreement contract was similar in scope to Challenge Cost Sharing grants between OCTA and the NPS.

He noted the shared mission of trails preservation and said providing funding for the Association Manager would not mean increased involvement by the agency in OCTA.

"As far as what assurances you have, I guess it's my word and our track record on involvement in other grants and

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## From the Editor's Desk . . . by Bill Martin



OCTA lives in the past. In fact, our attention to remnants of the 1840s and 1850s is building a legacy for future generations. If OCTA members weren't protective of the trails, who would be?

Without OCTA, there might be no National Trails System Act protecting the Oregon, California, Pony Express and Mormon trails. Travelers whipping across Interstate freeways might not pull off to read trail markers or visit interpretive centers to learn about the emigrant experience. Because OCTA members are watching, developers throughout the West think twice before they plan projects that infringe on the trails. Little-known trail segments might disappear forever without the efforts of OCTA researchers.

If OCTA wasn't around, there still would be a few voices yelling in the trail wilderness. But as a national organization our collective voices give us enormous impact at the federal, state and local level.

Yes, it's good to live in touch with our history. But protecting the past also means keeping an eye on the future.

OCTA is doing a great deal to preserve our trail legacy, but more needs to be done when it comes to telling people about the trails, getting them interested, and motivating more people to be pro-active in trails preservation.

We've taken a big step with completion of "Saving A Legacy," the new video produced by OCTA's John Krizek and Larry Fritz, with the help of a National Park Service grant. New Membership Chair Beth Finger has an aggressive but commonsense program for boosting OCTA's membership and we're enthusiastic about the potential. Similarly, Chapters Chair Ross Marshall is lighting a campfire under our chapters to get them more involved in recruiting new members.

Another important step for the future will be to guarantee

OCTA's long-term financial health. That's the purpose of an endowment drive now in the planning stages, with a goal of raising at least \$1 million. The funds will be used to more effectively manage our primary mission of trails preservation.

Importantly, the endowment won't be built on the backs of OCTA members. Certainly we all will be encouraged to contribute when the time comes, but the bulk of the contributions will be sought from outside sources, such as non-profit foundations and corporations.

It's a logical step for OCTA. Many non-profit organizations use interest income from endowment funds to help them achieve their goals. OCTA should do the same.

There was a great deal of discussion about details of the endowment drive at the OCTA Board of Directors meeting in Reno. The Board, traditionally protective of the interests of members, voted to support the endowment drive because it is in the long-term interests of the organization. That was crucial, because outside contributors will want to know about high-level organizational support before agreeing to donate. Endowment fund drive organizers can point to the Board's unanimous vote as evidence of that support.

The endowment drive is still being organized and it may be a year or more before it starts to pay dividends. When you are asking foundations and corporations for five and six-figure donations, there's an enormous amount of preparation and lead time involved. Organizers will use *News From The Plains* to keep the membership informed of their progress.

In order to keep its promise to the past, OCTA must continue to build its organization and blaze new trails. Adding members and building an endowment help point us in the right direction for the future.

-- Bill Martin



## News From The Plains

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Masthead Photo Courtesy of Denver Public Library,  
Western History Collection

## Submission Guidelines

*News From The Plains* welcomes news, features and photos related to the work of OCTA and its members and to the preservation of our trails heritage. Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates. Material should be sent either on a computer disk (in Word or text format; please make sure you include a hard copy) or via e-mail.

Pictures are appreciated and can be sent via e-mail, on a disk (.jpg format) or originals for scanning.

**Next Deadline Is December 1, 2002**

# From The President . . .

by Randall Wagner



OCTA took several giant strides into the future during the Reno convention. That says something for an organization whose entire focus is toward the past.

A majority of the Board of Directors voted to authorize the

hiring of a professional Association Manager to handle the business affairs of the association in the years to come. This position, or some version of it, has been discussed in Board meetings for more years than most of OCTA's leaders can remember. It is finally a reality, perhaps just in time.

OCTA is facing serious financial problems due to declining membership, reduced income and increasing expenses. The major, full-time responsibility of the Association Manager will be to grow OCTA through professional marketing programs, membership development initiatives and the identification of new income sources such as grants, gifts, donations, endowments, estate planning and sponsorships.

Initially the position will be funded entirely through a grant from the National Park Service Long Distance Trails Office. The grant continues the close working relationship that OCTA and the NPS have operated under for the past several years. It is not materially different from the many research and preservation programs that Challenge Cost Share Grants have funded, and will continue to fund.

The actual hiring of an Association Manager will proceed with deliberate caution. The Board will be expected to consider and approve a detailed job description at the March meeting. Following that, the job will be advertised and interviews conducted. When the right individual surfaces, the job will be filled.

The Directors also gave unanimous support to the concept of a Special Endowment Drive that will establish a restricted endowment fund to support OCTA's general operations budget. This fund's concept was first proposed and accepted at the March meeting in Salt Lake City but was moved forward at Reno. It will not replace the Annual Membership Fund Drive that is dedicated to raise money to pay for OCTA's many research and preservation programs. Rather, this new fund will seek to secure its major income from other than the usual sources. It's a bold move that is being developed by a committee that knows the business.

OCTA's membership recruitment program got a big boost at Reno on two fronts.

First, the new video, "Saving a Legacy, The Oregon California Trails" was premiered to a most enthusiastic audience. The video is the best tool any of us in the trails preservation business have yet had to tell the story of why it is that we do what we do. Everyone in OCTA can take pride in this truly professional production. Producers Larry Fritz and John Krizek deserve a large pat on the back from every rut nut and trail buff.

Now, all we have to do is use it. The video will be available this fall from the OCTA Book Store at most reasonable price. It is designed to be used at service club-type meetings and its 20-minute length leaves plenty of time to answer the questions it is sure to generate, such as, "How do I get involved in this OCTA organization?" Please buy the video and let every program planner for every service and history organization in your community know you have it. It will do us no good sitting on some dusty shelf.

Second, Membership Chair Beth Finger has developed several recruitment initiatives including a presentation at the Chapters Workshop at Reno. She presented a convincing case for membership drives and recruitment at the Chapter level and received a pledge from all attending that the Chapters would revive their membership programs and appoint Chapter membership committee chairs (if they don't already have one).

I am encouraged with the new attention being paid to this vital association function and am pleased with results already achieved. But it takes constant work and follow through. I challenge each Chapter to fulfill the promise of Reno and start rebuilding their membership base.

Finally, Vice President Dick Pingrey has suggested three simple things each member can, and probably should, do to help lift OCTA out of its current financial slump.

1. When it come time to renew your membership, upgrade at least one category: Individual/ Family to Supporting; Supporting to Patron, etc. Most of us can afford this small increase in annual dues and it would really help the organization.

2. Buy from the OCTA Bookstore. Think of the bookstore first when you are doing your personal shopping and, certainly, when you are doing your gift buying. Bookstore sales have been declining in recent years and all members need to support this worthwhile membership service. If we don't use it, we just may loose it.

3. Consider gift memberships for friends that share your interest in western history. I have to believe that they will thank you for thinking of them, especially when they receive their first issues of *Overland Journal* and *News from the Plains*.

-- Randy Wagner

## Mid-Year Board Meeting

The Mid-Term meeting of the Board of Directors of the Oregon-California Trails Association will be held March 7-9 at OCTA headquarters in Independence, MO.

More information on the meeting will be forthcoming in the January issue of *News From The Plains*.

## OCTA Approves Budget; Financial Challenges Continue

The OCTA Board of Directors has approved a break-even \$177,949 budget for 2002-2003, a reduction of about \$10,000 from the budget approved for 2001-2002.

The budget, approved at the Annual Board Meeting in Reno, predicts \$288,634 in total support and revenue, a number reduced by about \$109,000 by bookstore and convention costs and endowment donations. Net ordinary income is budgeted at \$178,834.

The biggest single expense category is administration, including headquarters and membership support, at \$77,020. Publications, including the *Overland Journal* and *News From The Plains*, are budgeted at \$64,236.

"We have serious problems because of lower memberships, rising expenses and fixed costs that can't be cut," said OCTA President Randy Wagner. "We have cut every line item we can."

The budget approved for 2001-2002 had a \$14,000 deficit, but a year-to-date statement of activities submitted by Treasurer Doug Brown showed that support revenues through July 31 were greater than anticipated because of increased donations, although membership dues were lower than expected.

"Though our situation is not as bleak as the original budget projected, this is mostly due to many committees not spending as much as original allotted by the budget or the fact that funds are normally spent in the summer," Brown said.

In other action, the Board of Directors:

- Unanimously endorsed continuing with plans for a major OCTA endowment drive, although several Board members expressed concern about how the drive was being communicated to the Board and to the membership. Endowment chair Dick Pingrey noted that close to \$20,000 has been donated or pledged from the officers and Board.

- Was told that 507 people had registered for the Reno convention, including 108 first-time attendees. Registrants represented 31 states, Japan and England. Virtually all bus tours were sold out.

- Was updated on plans for the Elko National Historic Trails Center. The facility is expected to be open in 2006 or 2007.

- Accepted the resignation of Ruth Anderson as OCTA Historian and invited interested individuals to express interest in the position.

- Approved a \$1,500 expenditure to re-produce and package the newly completed OCTA trails video.

- Heard a report from BLM Archaeologist Gary Bowyer on plans to monitor the Fernley Swales on the California Trail.

- Formalized Rules of Procedure to govern administration of an endowment established through a gift from Pat Loomis, specifying that up to 25 percent of the fund may be used each year for special preservation projects as long as a minimum balance of \$60,000 is maintained.

- Formally approved Douglas Brown as OCTA Treasurer, replacing Marilyn Bryan, who had resigned.

- Approved the proposed slate of OCTA Officers for 2002-2003, including President Randy Wagner, Vice President/President Elect Richard Pingrey, Secretary Lethene Parks, Treasurer Douglas Brown, Preservation Officer David Welch

and Past President Roger Blair. The officers are the same as those for 2001-2002.

- Heard brief reports on future conventions, including Manhattan, KS in 2003, Vancouver, WA in 2004 and Salt Lake City, UT in 2005, and said it was ready to entertain bids for the 2006 national convention.

- Was told that the 2002 special fundraising campaign netted \$19,944.

- Welcomed new Membership Committee Chair Beth Finger, who reported on the success of efforts to secure membership renewals from those whose memberships had lapsed in the past three years.

- Received reports from Graves & Sites, Mapping, Internet, Publications, Archaeology, Education, Chapters, Collections, and Future Conventions committees.

— Bill Martin

## COED For Christmas?

Progress is being made on a revised version of the *Names On The Plains* compact disk and the long-awaited product resulting from the Census of Overland Emigrant Documents project may be available by the end of 2003.

Bob Kabel, interim chair of the OCTA COED Committee, told the OCTA Board of Directors at its annual meeting that recent developments have delayed production but that the COED project itself is in good shape.

Initially expected to be available in time for the 2002 Convention, the timeline for production of the CD was altered when Kathy Roubal, chair of the COED Committee, and Chuck Dodd, who had been developing the CD, withdrew from the project in June.

"These two giants of COED, who have contributed so much to COED and to OCTA, have continued to cooperate with me in providing for a transition which we all hope will realize the dreams for which they worked for over 15 years," Kabel said in his report to the Board.

All COED files have been turned over to Kabel and, aided by a \$10,000 Challenge Cost Share grant from the National Park Service, he has started the process of scanning the voluminous COED files, a summer-long project.

Meanwhile, NWCSR, Inc., an Olympia, WA, firm owned by Kabel's son, Joel, has developed a prototype of the *Names On The Plains* CD, which was previewed at the Board meeting. The work is being done pro bono, without cost to OCTA.

Kabel noted that a major task still ahead is rebuilding of the COED team, including finding a new chair for the COED Committee. Kabel has agreed to serve as interim chair through the Mid-Year Board meeting in March, 2003.

"We hope to establish a realistic transition to near-term productivity and long-term viability of COED, one of OCTA's most powerful vehicles for trail research, family history, education and preservation," Kabel said.

— Bill Martin

## Keynoter Urges OCTA Partnership With Federal Trails Agencies

Members of the Oregon-California Trail Association were challenged to be working partners with federal agencies charged with managing national trails resources in the keynote speech to OCTA's 20<sup>th</sup> Convention in Reno.

Elena Daly, Director of the Bureau of Land Management's National Landscape Conservation System, noted that the trails have supported development of the very fabric of our nation.

"The trails of hope, of adventure, of dreams conjure up wonderful images and bind us socially, economically, historically and culturally," she said, adding that OCTA and federal agencies such as the BLM, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service have mutual goals.

"We work together to conserve, protect and restore the historical values of our landscapes," Daly said. "We honor the past through conservation, restoration and preservation for future generations."

Daly said that both BLM Director Kathleen Clarke and Secretary of the Interior Gail Norton are supportive of the national trails system, noting in particular that Norton wants to see more BLM involvement in the trails as part of a strong partnership with organizations like OCTA.

The NLCS director asked for the help of OCTA members in a number of areas, including land use planning at the local and state level, in order to guarantee a balanced approach to preservation and protection activities.

Daly also asked for a partnership based on two-way communication, citing OCTA as an organization that "understands

### New Board

(Continued From Page 1)

Beckwourth trails. He is the author of *Following the Beckwourth Trail*.

**Taplin**, a retired educator and also a charter member of OCTA, continues a position to which she had been appointed to fill a Board vacancy in 2001 and was elected to a full three-year term. Her candidacy emphasized the need to increase OCTA's membership.

**Welch** is a former OCTA President and currently National Preservation Officer, both non-voting positions. He said he planned to emphasize preservation issues and finances while a member of the Board.

**Ivory**, a former president of the Crossroads Chapter, is extremely active in Utah historical organizations, including serving as President of the Utah Pioneers and the Utah Museum Volunteers Association and as Chair of the Utah Historic Trails Association.

Leaving the Board are Randy Wagner, Bob Kabel and Suzette McCord-Rogers, none of whom sought reelection. Wagner will continue as OCTA President.

Results of OCTA balloting as reported by the Nominations & Leadership Committee were: Jack Fletcher 752, Andy Hammond 793, George Ivory 534, Fran Taplin 773, David Welch 838.

-- Bill Martin

the complexion of what we are charged to do and what we want to do."

She added that OCTA represents "people who love the resources and who are best equipped to help us preserve the West's landscape. You are the best people to tell the stories that need to be told."

Daly, who had been in her present position for barely two weeks when she keynoted the convention, noted that she has spent most of her BLM career in western states, including California, Oregon and Idaho, and called herself "a westerner by choice and by heart."

She said he had an appreciation for the overland trails experience because of a childhood spent in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, where she would wonder about the people who settled there.

"I asked who were these people, why were they here, where did they go, what did they do," she recalled, "the same sort of questions you ask today about the overland emigrants."

-- Bill Martin

### Manager

(continued From Page 1)

agreements," Krakow said in addressing concerns expressed by some Board members.

Because of OCTA's financial position, finding internal funding for the Association Manager would be impossible without the NPS grant, noted President Randy Wagner.

While funding is guaranteed for only the first two years of the agreement, "by that time, the Association Manager had better be raising enough money to be able to cover his or her salary," Wagner said.

The job description for the new position includes marketing the association, grant writing, membership development, liaison to other organizations, handling physical arrangements for OCTA conventions and meetings, and representing OCTA at the state, local and national levels.

A preliminary budget for the position includes a salary of \$45,000 to \$60,000, plus benefits and expenses.

Wagner said the organization would begin immediately to finalize a job description and start informal recruitment activities. There is no fixed timeline for filling the position.

On both 6-4 votes, Board members Vern Gorzitze, George Ivory, Bob Kabel, Stan McKee, Tortorich and Wagner voted in favor of the motions, and Board members Charles Martin Jr., Suzette McCord-Rogers, Fran Taplin and Kennell voted against. Board members Jim Denney and Bob Weer were absent.



Elena Daly

## From the National Trails Preservation Officer

*By David Welch*

*National Trails Preservation Officer*

In the July *News From The Plains*, I wrote an opinion piece that ran alongside of my preservation officer's report in which I noted the need for well-reasoned discussions of trail locations without casting aspirations on the ancestry of those with other views.



I also noted that the evidence, which consists of physical remnants and primary and secondary source material, is usually not entirely conclusive and, therefore, we should be considerate of other interpretations.

At the convention in Reno, papers were presented on the two views of how emigrants entered and crossed the Truckee Meadows area. Clearly, these papers were begun before my article appeared so I can take little credit for the improved quality of the debate. Nevertheless, the papers were excellent and I am sure the audience benefited from the discussion.

Also, Leroy Johnson presented a paper on the hazards of jumping to conclusions without exhaustive analysis of apparently conclusive (but faulty) evidence. The presentations were what I had in mind when I wrote my opinion piece.

I have received many favorable comments on the column, but there is one criticism that I would like to address. It was felt by some that I was questioning the use of diaries (and other documents) as a means of identifying the routes followed.

I stated, "Diary quotes can be notoriously vague," which is true. However, that does not mean that they are not useful. In fact, trail documents are an essential research tool when combined with other information in an objective and systematic manner. At the same time, we should recall Leroy Johnson's warning against seeing only that data which supports a predetermined conclusion. It is an easy trap to fall into.

My point is this: With much historical research, conclusions must be drawn based upon imperfect evidence. The author might state that the most reasonable conclusion to be drawn from the evidence is such and such. However, this does not make the conclusion indisputable. So it goes with trail research.

The methodology for conducting trail research is described in OCTA's *Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Manual*. The fourth edition was recently published and reproducible copies were provided to each chapter president. The manual exists in two versions. The first is the "field manual" that documents research and mapping techniques. The second is an expanded version contains appendices on preservation laws and regulations.

All serious trail researchers should have a copy of the MET Manual. U. S. Government agencies and many private consulting firms have adopted the methodology as the standard for finding and documenting the trail. Copies may also be obtained from headquarters, the mapping chair (Frank Totorich) or me.

I would like to close with thanks to all of you who do trail research. Trail preservation begins with locating and identifying the trail. Without this information preservation (or conservation) is impossible. Keep up the good work!

## From Headquarters . . .



OCTA conventions are always a celebration!

This year we celebrated our education and preservation endeavors by recounting some of our successes and milestones.

Unique this year, our achievements range from producing a landmark video "Saving A Legacy: The Oregon-California Trail,"(see page 22); to creating and marketing a new sales item like the *Overland Trail* throw, (see page 23), to launching a new fund raising program that will reach outward to the world of corporations and foundations.

Special thanks to convention chair, **Chuck Dodd** and his sixty plus CA/NV OCTA committee members for orchestrating this year's 2002 celebration!

Looking ahead to another holiday season, we will be adding some new items to the catalog and our on-line "store."

Just to name a few:

"Saving A Legacy" video - \$12/copy (P&H \$3.95).

**"Overland Trail"** throw - \$60 (P&H \$8).

*Disaster at the Colorado (Beale's Wagon Road and the First Emigrant Party)*, by Charles W. Baley, 216 pp., \$19.95 (P&H \$3).

*2000 Miles to Oregon (The Kansas City Star)* by James Fisher, photography by Don Irock. (Based on a series of newspaper articles marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first large body of emigrants to make the journey; information supplemented and updated; new photographs added, 118 pp., \$24.95 (P&H \$3).

*Bus Tour Notes for OCTA's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention* - \$5/copy (P&H \$2).

Give us a call toll free 888-811-6282, we'll be happy to "zip" an order to your door!

**Kathy Conway, Headquarters Manager**

## Chapters Hold Key To OCTA Membership Growth

*By Ross Marshall  
OCTA Chapters Chair*

With a focus on the theme of membership growth, various chapter leaders and OCTA officers gathered for the annual Chapters Workshop at the recent Reno Convention.

The workshop was jointly chaired by OCTA President Randy Wagner and Chapters Chair Ross Marshall. OCTA's new Membership Chair Beth Finger and Headquarters Manager Kathy Conway were also key participants.

Our membership totals have leveled off in recent years. From about 300 charter members in 1983, organizational memberships increased rapidly to 1500 in 1988. The growth continued to over 2500 in 1994 at the close of the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oregon Trail. Since that time, membership has slowly declined to about 2200 at present. About half these members are also chapter members.

Membership growth is important to OCTA because:

- Membership dues are one of the key revenue streams that support OCTA.
- We need to offer opportunities for people to be involved, which fulfills one of the key visions of the National Trails System Act that created the Oregon and California National Historic Trails that our organization supports.
- We need manpower to accomplish our trail preservation objectives.
- Organizational growth increases our influence with Congress, public agencies, etc.
- Growth is always needed each year to replace members who do not renew (about ten percent, which is about 200, do not renew every year).
- New faces are always healthy for an organization: new ideas, new energy.

All were excited about the new video "Saving A Legacy" shown as the convention opened and developed jointly by the National Park Service and OCTA's Public Relations Chair John Krizek. Copies of the video will be available this fall, offering exciting opportunities for membership growth as OCTA members show it to groups for years to come.

Since not only chapter members were present, but also Kathy from Headquarters, Beth as Membership Chair, and even some members of the Board of Directors, we examined the roles each of these entities play in growing our membership. Ideas were generated that gave each of us some action plans as we headed home. Briefly, some of the ideas discussed were:

**Headquarters:** Monthly notification to each chapter of new national members in their area, exchange mailing lists with other organizations, coordinate distribution of OCTA brochures, track membership and renewals, disseminate information and respond to inquiries.

**Membership Committee:** Will facilitate membership efforts with both headquarters and chapters, help to train a functioning membership chair in each chapter, develop a membership kit for each chapter that would include the new video, develop an information packet for chapters, encourage distribution of brochures and promotion with museums and historic sites.

**Chapters:** Enlist a functioning membership chair who will accept the challenge of focusing on membership, use the new video in local programs, do regular renewal reminders, develop and distribute their own membership brochure/application, partner with other local trails/historical organizations on events and activities, invite new prospects to every chapter event, prepare for their attendance, and ask them to join. There is no substitute for personal invitations - share the excitement!

In addition, maintain an active chapter calendar of activities and trail preservation efforts, use chapter web pages and email, offer opportunities at the chapter level to serve on committees or in leadership roles, participate in distribution of OCTA brochures, and even host an OCTA convention!

**Board and Officers:** Recognize their ultimate responsibility for the organization's membership growth, help on corporate memberships, provide funds for advertising, and have personal involvement to bring in a certain number of new members per year.

Overall, Chapter leaders felt there is a good story to tell because:

- OCTA's purposes are sound and of great value; attractive to new members. We have something exciting to tell people about! Personal invitations work!
- Beth Finger's enthusiasm, commitment and skill toward membership growth.
- The new video, which is really exciting and will be a valuable tool.
- President Randy Wagner's commitment to growing our membership.
- A lotta hard working and dedicated chapter members in OCTA. A personal invitation at the local level is still the best way to grow membership.

**Manhattan, Kansas**

**August 10-16, 2003**

**Watch >[www.KANZA-OCTA.org](http://www.KANZA-OCTA.org)< for details.**

## Martin, Hollecker Win Top OCTA Awards

By Bill Martin

**Charles Martin Jr.** was presented with the Meritorious Achievement Award and **Dave Hollecker** was honored with the Distinguished Volunteer Award at the annual Awards Banquet held during the 2002 Convention in Reno.



Meritorious Achievement Award winner  
Charles Martin Jr., left, with OCTA Awards  
Committee Chair Roger Blair

term impacts on OCTA and its goals," said OCTA Awards Committee Chair Roger Blair.

Blair also noted that Martin has exerted significant influence in charting OCTA's future through his lengthy chairmanship of the Long Range Planning Committee and has long been chair of the Future Conventions Committee.

After the death of their parents, Charles W. and Mary C. Martin, Charles and his sister, Julie Videon, helped established a restricted endowment within OCTA to provide funds to pay for legal costs incurred in preserving and protecting trail sites.

Hollecker, of Reno, NV, was nominated by OCTA member Don Buck, who described him as "the perfect volunteer. Ask him to help or give him a task and he quickly and quietly does it. He always gets results, too. That's what volunteering is all about."

Hollecker's award notes his roles in helping plan OCTA conventions in Elko and in Reno, as well as his activities in trails preservation on the Beckwourth Trail in Nevada and on the Southern Trail and Apache Pass Trail in

In receiving OCTA's highest and most prestigious award, **Martin**, of Richmond, IN, was recognized for his long years of service to OCTA and its goals, including two separate terms on the Board of Directors and one year as OCTA Vice President.

"He has been a calm voice of reason, giving careful thought to every issue and assessing the short and long-

Arizona and New Mexico.

**Distinguished Service Awards**, OCTA's highest honor for non-members, were presented to Peggy McGuckian, Susan Lynn and Gary Bowyer.

**McGuckian**, a senior archaeologist for the Bureau of Land Management office in Winnemucca, was recognized for activities in protecting and preserving emigrant trails in northwestern Nevada, especially the Applegate Trail in the Black Rock Desert.

**Lynn**, of Reno, was honored for her pivotal role in helping create the Black Rock Desert/High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area. "I feel very confident that the legislation would have never been introduced if it had not been for Susan," nominator Chuck Dodd said.

**Bowyer**, an archaeologist with the Carson City office of the Bureau of Land Management, has been actively engaged in protecting the California Trail, especially the Great Sand Swales on the Forty-Mile Desert.

Long-time OCTA member **Pat Loomis** of San Jose, CA, was awarded a **Certificate of Appreciation** for her constant involvement in OCTA activities, including as editor of the California-Nevada chapter newsletter, at conventions, on tours and treks and in overall trails promotion.

The **Friend of the Trail Award** was presented to **Art and Lorene Pacha** of Bremen, KS, for efforts in preserving wagon ruts and emigrant graves near the junction of the Independence Branch and the St. Joe Road of the Oregon-California Trail.

OCTA member **Jim Tompkins** of Beavercreek, OR, received the Merrill Mattes Award for Outstanding Writing in the *Overland Journal* for his article "The Law of the Land: What the emigrant knew that historians need to know about claiming land at the end of the Oregon Trail," which appeared in the Fall, 2001, issue.



Distinguished Volunteer Award Winner  
Dave Hollecker, right, with OCTA  
President Randy Wagner



Pat Loomis with her  
Certificate of Appreciation



*Distinguished Service Award  
winner Peggy McGuckian*



*Distinguished Service Award  
winner Susan Lynn*



*Distinguished Service Award winner  
Gary Bowyer, left, with Reno Convention  
Chair Chuck Dodd*



*Outgoing OCTA Board members, left to right,  
Suzette McCord-Rogers, Randy Wagner and Bob Kabel*



*Ken Martin, left, with Awards Chair Roger  
Blair, accepted the Friend of the Trail Award  
on behalf of Art and Lorene Pacha*

*All Photos Pages 8 and 9 by Bill Martin*

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*Jim Tompkins with the Merrill  
Mattes Award for outstanding  
writing in the Overland Journal*

## Educator of the Year Awards Presented



*Educator of the Year Award recipients, left to right, Beverly Walker, Arlinda McLaughlin, Edward Hodges, Judi Wollenziehn, Janet Basso, Kristin McCaman, Barbara Johnston and Kay Kvenvold (representing the Westward Ho! Program at History San Jose) and OCTA Education Committee Chair William E. Hill*

Six educators from various points on the Oregon-California trail were named winners of the 2002 Outstanding Educator Awards during OCTA's annual Awards Banquet.

The annual awards recognize excellence in teaching about the westward overland migration in a variety of grade levels, from elementary school through museums and institutions.

**Arlinda McLaughlin** and **Beverly Walker**, both of Pineydale, WY and fourth grade teachers in the Sublette County School District, were recognized in the elementary category.

Nominated by the Sublette County Historical Society and the Museum of the Mountain Man, they were honored for a curriculum that teaches about the Trail and its influence on Wyoming history. It is designed to help students understand the hardships and joys that were encountered by families on the trail. Classwork includes reading, role playing and field trips.

**Judi L. Wollenziehn**, a teacher at the Jim Bridger Eighth Grade Center in Independence, MO, and **Edward L. Hodges**, a teacher at Hoover Middle School in San Jose, CA, were recognized for their middle school efforts.

Wollenziehn, nominated by the Westport Historical Society, teaches a segment focusing on Jim Bridger's role in the westward migration, including formation of a group of "Jim's Angels" to help raise awareness of the pioneer and explorer.

Hodges, a science and math teacher, is the advisor to a school bicycle club whose expeditions have included riding and hiking on the Carson Pass and over 300 miles of the Nevada desert along the California Trail.

**Janet Basso**, a history and civics teacher at White Pine

High School in Ely, NV, won the Outstanding Educator award for high schools.

Her curriculum focused on the Donner Party and allows students to become active participants in history by assuming the roles of various Donner Party members. The segment includes studies of the Bidwell-Bartleson, Chiles-Walker and Stevens-Murphy-Townsend parties.

**Kristin McCaman** is part of the Westward Ho! Program as part of History San Jose in San Jose, CA, and was honored in the Museum/Park/Institution category.

Westward Ho is a curriculum targeted to fifth and sixth grade teachers through which their students get a hands-on experience of the California Trail.

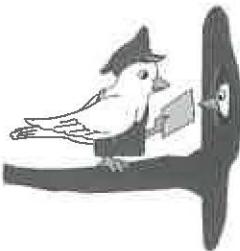
-- Bill Martin

### OCTA Wins Writing Award

D. Robert Carter, of Springville, UT, a charter member of the Crossroads chapter, has received a distinguished award from the Utah State Historical Society.

The award was for the best article about Utah history published outside of the Utah Historical Quarterly. The article, "Fish and Famine, the Utah Lake Fishery and Famine of 1855-56," was published in *The Journal of Mormon History*.

Robert is a retired teacher. His history of Provo's first year is soon to be published. His wife, Lyndia Carter, is a frequent contributor to *News From The Plains*.



# News From The Chapters

## Crossroads

Crossroads members attending the OCTA convention in Reno had a great time and we congratulate and thank Chuck Dodd and the convention committee for hosting a very enjoyable and well-planned convention.

The ringing, dinging and flashing lights of slot machines didn't seem to distract the 24 or so chapter members attending the convention activities. It was good to see **Dave Bigler** again and have him join us at the chapter meeting. **Richard and Ffion Wilkes**, our chapter members from Ringmer, England, attended the convention and renewed friendships with all their OCTA friends.

Crossroads member **George Ivory** was selected by President **Randy Wagner** to fill the Board of Directors vacancy created when Tom Laidlaw resigned. Four members of Utah Crossroads are now on OCTA's Board of Directors. **Matthew Ivory** recently returned from an LDS Mission and attended the convention with his grandfather. Matt has been a member of Utah Crossroads since he was eight years old.

In July, **Kay Threlkeld, Jack Root** and his son, new chapter member **Tom McCutcheon, Vern Grits** and I joined chapter members **Lee Underbrink and Mary Mueller** on the Wyoming chapter's trek on the Sublette Cutoff.

The trek began at the False Parting of the Ways and ended at Cokeville, WY. Guides **Randy Brown and Karen Rennells** led 21 vehicles on a well-planned tour of the route opened up by Caleb Greenwood in 1844 when he led the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party to California.

Also in July, several Crossroads members attended the dedication of the Traders Rest Pony Express station marker in Midvale, UT, and the Snyder's Pony Express Station marker near Kimball's Junction. Both markers were placed by Joe Nardone's Pony Express Trail Association.

In June, several Crossroads members visited sites on the Bozeman Trail while participating in a Utah Westerners field trip. **Oscar Olson** and I also were able to visit several graves and historic sites in the Farson, WY area, including the possible site of a supply wagon burning during the Utah Military Expedition of 1857. A spring or fall field trip in this area may be planned for the chapter next year.

The fall chapter field trip was planned for early October. It was to be a tour of Mountain Men rendezvous sites in Wyoming, Idaho and northern Utah. Our tour guide will be **Dr. Fred R. Gowans**, noted writer, speaker and premier historian of the American Fur Trade.

The fall membership meeting and barbecue was held at



*OCTA members at the Nancy Hill grave on Dempsey Ridge during the July 2002 Sublette Cutoff Trek*

— Photo by Al Mulder

Washington Park in Parley's Canyon on September 14. It was a memorable evening with good food, music, and a talk by chapter member Jeff Carlstrom, who spoke on the history of Emigration Canyon. Jeff and his family live in the canyon and he is writing a book on the canyon's colorful history.

— Al Mulder

## Trails Head

The Summer has been unusually hot and dry in the Midwest so Chapter activities have been few these past couple of months.

The members of Trails Head that attended the Reno Convention had a fine time going on tours, hearing speakers, and renewing old friendships with other OCTA members who were there. The barbecue was especially enjoyed by all who attended.

A mapping workshop was held on August 31 to get started with the field work that will require many man hours to make this project a success. A trek is planned for October from Liberty, MO to Weston, MO and possibly some other activities as we enter the fall season and hopefully cooler temperatures.

— Dick Nelson

## Northwest

The NW Chapter sponsored two exceptional outings on the Oregon Trail near Pendleton.

### Trails Day

Keith May put together a trail-filled National Trails Day weekend event. On Friday, May 31 there was a buffet dinner for 25 followed by Roger Blair discussing "Romance (and other relationships) on the Trail."

On Saturday part of the group gathered for breakfast. Then there were options - Underground Tour, Umatilla County Historical Museum, Cruise-In car show on Main Street), visit Antique shops, tour of the May house. The afternoon was filled with a trip to the Blue Mountains.

We walked the two loops at Blue Mountain Crossing, visited the covered wagon with trail items and heard Billie McClure dramatically tell of one family's 1852 trail experiences. We then viewed the ruts from the Mt. Emily Road and the Birchfield marker. We drove through Meacham (the 1848 encampment of Major H. A. Lee following the Whitman Incident) past the Oregon Trail markers. At Emigrant Springs State Park we observed the Meeker Marker and the trail marker dedicated in 1923 by President Warren G. Harding relocated to the kiosk last summer when the road was widened. Continuing on old US 30 we traveled to the Squaw Creek Overlook filled with a variety of wildflowers. Passing Deadman's Pass, we drove to Riley Root's "Prospect Hill." Then it was back to Pendleton in time for a buffet dinner where Christina May discussed and showed "Pioneer Clothing Worn by the Emigrants" and Jenny Miller showed her Oregon Trail slides. On Sunday we visited Tamastslikt in the morning then had a picnic at Echo near the replica of Fort Henrietta stockade. We paused at the David Koontz Grave and viewed trail ruts at Corral Springs that chapter members

had marked. Crossing the Umatilla River, we walked to the site of the Umatilla Indian Agency. Then it was on to view another trail rut site and walk to the ruts on Echo Meadows.

### Flyover

The following weekend, Richard Pingrey led our second fly-over outing. Thirteen people gathered for dinner and a briefing on June 7 in Pendleton. The following morning, 17 OCTA members and nine pilots from the Yakima Pilots Association met at the Pendleton Airport. We were assigned to the small planes and took off in single file following the trail at 300 feet or less all the way to The Dalles at 120 mph. The return flight was at about 1000 feet above the ground. Trail ruts were plainly visible. With others contributing Jim Tompkins put together an eight page 'special edition' of the flyover for those on e-mail. Also see the color version of the Chapter Newsletter for July.

### Free Emigrant Road

On October 5 & 6 NW Chapter members will have a joint outing with the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council in the Cascades as the trail headed to Eugene. We will carpool and caravan from Oakridge to the starting point on FS 6020 west of Ulmi. There are some variations on the hiking - four miles, seven miles or short walks to view the route. The vehicles will be moved to pick up locations. Then on Sunday, there will be a OHTAC meeting at the Oakridge Pioneer Museum. There will also be a PIT project in the area.

Chapter Treasurer/Membership Chair Joyce Bolerjack reported that as of July 1, 2002, chapter membership had reached 275, an increase of 11 in the past year. We still have 26 of the original Charter members and 18 memberships from out of state. There was \$9,604.05 in the Chapter treasury.

-- Glenn Harrison

## Federal Trails Bill Progresses

Final approval is expected by year-end for federal legislation allowing feasibility studies of additional routes and segments which might be give national trails designation.

"We're in good shape," said Bill Watson, co-chair with his wife, Jeanne, of OCTA's Trails Liaison Committee. "We just need to bide our time and we will get approval before the end of the year."

The Watsons reported at the OCTA Convention that the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee completed markup of the supplemental study routes bill proposed by Congressman Doug Bereuter of Nebraska before it adjourned for August.

The bill calls for the study of designated additional routes and cutoffs for possible addition to the California, Oregon, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express Trails network.

About 6,000 miles of trails would be subject to feasibility studies to determine if specific routes qualify under the National Trails Act.

## Marguerite Griffin Passes

OCTA Charter member Marguerite Griffin of Reno, NV, passed away following a short illness. She was described by OCTA member Tom Hunt as "one of the most important persons in the cause of historic trails preservation."

She and her late husband, Bob, were leaders for more than 40 years in the effort to protect the Black Rock Desert and High Rock Canyon sections of the Applegate-Lassen Trail. When the Black Rock Desert/High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trail National Conservation Area was passed, Nevada Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan paid special tribute to the Griffins for their efforts.

"Those of us who had the pleasure of personally knowing Bob and Marguerite over the years and who enjoyed their company, friendship and good humor on and off the trails, consider the NCA to be a fitting and lasting tribute to their lifetime of work on behalf of historic trails preservation," said Hunt, a former OCTA National Trails Preservation Officer.

## Oregon, California OCTA Members Combine Efforts On Trails

Thirty-one hardy trail enthusiasts spent up to two weeks in June (17-27) working on the Applegate Trail/South Road to Oregon near Alturas, CA.

The volunteers spent first week conducting an archaeology survey along Fletcher Creek in the Modoc National Forest. The study was supervised by Forest Service archaeologist under their Passport In Time (PIT) project. During the second week NW-OCTA members marked and surveyed the trail from Pothole Springs (Goff Springs) to the Oregon Border south of Klamath Falls.

Under the PIT project, participants spent four days, some using metal detectors, to locate and document over 50 artifacts, most of which were related to the mid-1800 era. Among the many artifacts were hand-forged horseshoes, ox shoes, square nails and boot nails, miscellaneous wagon parts, a broken Dutch oven, a 36-caliber bullet mold and several round lead balls. As artifacts were unearthed, the archaeologist recorded their location by a laser survey instrument. On the last day of the PIT work the artifacts were catalogued at the Forest Service office in Alturas.

The second week's work was under our National Park Service Challenge-Cost Share Project (CCSP). We surveyed the area where emigrants descended to Fletcher Creek from the rocky plains. Nearby we unearthed an ox shoe and a forged

wagon step, leading us to believe there was at least a second descent. All artifacts located during the CCSP work were returned to their hiding places awaiting detection by future trail enthusiasts. The last three days of the week 49 Carsonite markers were installed west of Pothole Springs. Like the main Oregon Trail, remnants of the Applegate Trail are quite visible in some locations and difficult to find in others.

I believe we all agreed June in the high desert of northeastern California is hot and overpopulated with mosquitoes and no-see-ems, both of which are vociferous diners and totally oblivious to insect repellent!

Eighteen of the 31 PIT participants were not OCTA members and several asked for membership applications. Participants in the CCSP trail marking work were Bill Bishell, Bob Black, Gail Carbriener, Chuck Fisk, Stafford and Nancy Hazlett, Chuck and Suzanne Hornbuckle, Dick Klein, Bernie and Janie Rhoades, Roger Riolo, Jim and Sallie Riehl and Richard and Orsola Silva.

Participants logged over 2,000 hours of volunteer work in marking and documenting the Applegate Trail in the two northeastern California counties. This was a cooperative project with the NW and CA-NV Chapters.

-- Chuck Hornbuckle

## Contractor Selected For California Trails Historic

The Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office has announced the selection of EDAW, Inc. as the prime contractor for design and engineering of the future California National Historic Trails Interpretive Center and the network of wayside exhibits planned for construction near Elko, NV.

In announcing the decision, BLM Elko Field Manager Helen Hankins commented, "EDAW is a well-known national and international landscape architecture and environmental planning company. EDAW has been actively involved in the California Trails Center project thus far, producing the Feasibility and Siting Studies in 2001. We're pleased with their work to date and the high level of public involvement they have incorporated into the project."

Hankins continued, "We're on a tight schedule to build the Trails Center and plan to have construction completed in late 2005 or early 2006. In selecting a contractor, the BLM carefully weighed the factors of widely distributing or advertising the project contract, meeting local demands for an accelerated schedule, minimizing administrative processes, and selecting a contractor with considerable knowledge of the project."

For more information about the California Trails Interpretive Center, contact Don Cushman at the BLM Elko Field Office (775) 753-0246.

-- Mike Brown

## Spring Creek Prairie Gets Historic Place Designation

The Spring Creek Prairie Trail Ruts, located at Audubon Spring Creek Prairie three miles south of Denton, NB, were officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July. The National Register is the nation's inventory of historic properties considered to be worthy of preservation.

The wagon ruts are from the Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cutoff to the Oregon Trail and are among the oldest (1860 to 1864) of the major alignments of the Trail.

The Cutoff created a transportation corridor that greatly increased travel efficiency for both freighters and emigrants traveling west to Fort Kearny and beyond, and the Spring Creek Prairie Trail Ruts are the longest contiguous sequence of ruts still in existence along the road.

They are also noteworthy because they display the manner of wagon descent from ridge tops.

The ruts can be viewed at Audubon Spring Creek Prairie, a 626-acre nature preserve that is open to the public. The Spring Creek Prairie won a national Friend of the Trail Award from OCTA in 2001 for its efforts to preserve the tallgrass prairie area.

-- Audubon Nebraska

## RutNuts Take Manhattan (Kansas) In 2003



*On duty in Reno and ready to share information on the 2002 Manhattan Convention were KANZA Chapter members, left to right, James Forst of Marysville and Della and Ernest White of Westmoreland, KS*

*— Photo by Bill Martin*

### Call For KANZA Papers

The KANZA Chapter has reiterated its call for papers and speakers to be presented at the OCTA National Convention scheduled for August 2003 in Manhattan, Kansas.

The convention Theme is *Trails, Tall Grass and Trials*. The convention will emphasize the miles of trail remnants, the role of the tall grass prairie, and the trials of the emigrants on the journey.

Suggested topics include emigrant diaries, geography and ecology of Eastern Kansas, historical personages, prominent trail sites in Kansas, Native American relations, women's daily activities, wagon camp culture and life, early Kansas settlers and other historic Kansas trails, or other topics appropriate to the theme. A typical presentation will be forty minutes in length. Presenters will be invited to submit their papers to the OCTA magazine *Overland Journal* for publication after the convention.

Speakers and authors are invited to submit a one-page abstract of their topic and biography to the Speakers and Papers Chair, P.O. Box 104, Waterville KS 66548. Abstracts should be submitted as soon as possible. Selection of speakers and papers will be in late November 2002. Contact the Speakers and Papers Chair for further information.

*- Glenn Larson, Speakers and Papers Chair*



### OCTA CONVENTION

A tour of historic Fort Riley will be one of the highlights of the 2003 OCTA Convention hosted by the KANZA chapter in "The Little Apple," Manhattan, KS, the second week of August.

Convention Chair Vern Osborne provided an update on the convention during the Annual Board meeting in Reno.

The theme of the convention will be "Trails, Tall Grass and Trials."

The convention will be held August 10-16 and the convention headquarters will be the Holiday Inn Holidome in Manhattan.

"The schedule of tours will be exciting since our chapter has mapped nearly 200,000 lineal feet of pristine ruts and we'll be attempting to show you as many of these ruts as possible," Osborne promised.

Three convention tours are planned, highlighting the many Kansas river crossings, including the Kaw, Vermillion and Blue rivers, plus Alcove Spring, Cottonwood Creek, the Marshall gravesite and Westmoreland.

Pre-convention tours will be to the east of Manhattan, one covering the Wakarusa and Kaw River crossings and the second on a portion of the St. Joe Road to the junction with the Independence Road.

The visit to Fort Riley will coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legendary frontier post and will include museums, the residence of General George Armstrong Custer, tours of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century military equipment and a presentation by Fort historian Scott Price. Organizers are even promising a cavalry charge.

Other future OCTA conventions include Vancouver, WA in 2004 and Salt Lake City, UT 2005.

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## Trails Head Places First Marker at Elm Grove

On National Trails Day, June 1, Trails Head Chapter dedicated an OCTA marker near the site of the Elm Grove Campground on the Westport Route of the Santa Fe-Oregon-California Trail, just southwest of Olathe, KS. This was the first such marker erected by the chapter and the first one in Kansas.

OCTA member Shirley Coupal, Historian for the Kansas Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, reviewed the marking of the Santa Fe Trail by the DAR in 1906-08 with 95 red granite stone markers in Kansas, including five in Johnson County. Similar granite markers were also placed later in Missouri, Colorado and New Mexico on the Santa Fe Trail.

OCTA member Craig Crease reviewed the history of the Elm Grove Campground. In brief, this history is summarized by the text on the marker:

For over three decades starting in 1827, Elm Grove Campground, one mile east of here near the bridge on Cedar Creek, was an important frontier trail camp site. Thousands of Santa Fe traders, Oregon and California emigrants, missionaries, mountain men, soldiers and '49ers camped at Elm Grove, including such frontier notables as John Fremont, William Bent, Tom Fitzpatrick, Francis Parkman and Philip St. George Cooke.

Elm Grove Campground, originally named Caravan Grove, began in 1827 as a result of the Sibley survey of the Santa Fe Trail. Sibley was seeking a more direct route through present-day Johnson County, bypassing Lone Elm Campground, known then as Round Grove, which was 2½ miles southeast of Elm Grove on the same Cedar Creek. These two campgrounds were often mistaken for each other.

Elm Grove was often used as a camp on the first or second night out from Westport. On July 2, 1841, Richard L. Wilson, bound for Santa Fe, recorded in his diary ".....just at sunset on the second, we descended a precipitous declivity to a place of which nothing remained but the name Elm Grove, and one solitary logan of a stricken tree 'To mark where an Elm grove had been.' A beautiful rivulet bubbled forth from the base of the hill, and as we wound our way down, we spied a single campfire.....of an old Mexican hunter."



*OCTA member Craig Crease speaks at ceremonies prior to the unveiling of the Elm Grove marker. The marker at the left was placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1907*

—Photo by Ross Marshall

In that same year, the famous Bidwell-Bartleson party, the first emigrant wagon train to California, came through Elm Grove, as did a portion of the Great Migration of 1843 to Oregon. The Mexican War brought the Laclede Rangers and other frontier military units through Elm Grove Campground in 1846-48. Many '49ers seeking California gold came through Elm Grove as well.

By the mid 1850s the stagecoach from Westport crossed at Cedar Creek, and by 1857 David P. Hougland had bought the land and raised a cabin at Elm Grove. The land remains with the Hougland family today.

Trails Head Chapter President Dick Nelson unveiled the marker. A good crowd was on hand for this National Trails Day event, including several civic leaders and descendants of early area settlers.

—Ross Marshall

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## Northeastern Nevada Volunteers Mark 400 Miles of Trail

By Mike Brown

A group of local historic trails enthusiasts have recently completed a decades-long trail marking project on public and private lands in northeastern Nevada.

Using donated materials and volunteer labor, the Humboldt Highroaders, a group of Elko trail enthusiasts, wrapped up the final phases of a massive undertaking to mark about 400 miles of California National Historic Trails and Cutoffs in Elko County.

The various phases of the project included marking actual trail ruts with Carsonite posts; installing the steel rail markers and interpretive plaques on the markers; and installing California Historic Trail signs along I-80 across Nevada and on county roads in Elko County.

The roots of the trail marking project go back to the 1960s when Trails West (headquartered in Reno) began installing rail markers at historic sites across Nevada and California. The virtually indestructible steel markers are railroad rails welded into a T-shape and set in concrete.

The first priority during the 1960s to 1990s was to install the steel markers and Carsonite posts on the main California Trail. By 1996, when the Oregon-California Trails Association national convention was held in Elko, the main trail Carsonite post marking was wrapped up.

Once the main trail was completely marked, local volunteers turned their attention to the cutoffs and variants of the California Trail. For the past five summers with help from Trails West, the local Highroad group installed rail markers and plates on the Hastings Cutoff from Pilot Peak on the Nevada/Utah border to the Hunter site just west of Elko where the Hastings Cutoff rejoins the main California Trail.

In addition to the primary Hastings "wagon" route, the "pack train" variants were marked as well. In July 2002, the Humboldt Highroad members and other volunteers completed installation of the steel marker interpretive plaques on those pack routes used by John Fremont, the Bidwell-Bartleson party, and others. The pack train routes crossed Secret Pass, Harrison Pass, and the Pequop and Toano ranges.

In 2001, the Nevada Department of Transportation funded and installed about 75 auto tour signs on I-80 and other state highways across Nevada. The signs are at intervals of 18 to 20 miles in both the east and west-bound lanes where the highway is near the original California Trail. In some cases the highways are right over the top of the trail. The purpose of marking the Interstate is to let the public know they're traveling the same route as the 49ers and the emigrants to California.

The last of the auto tour signs are being installed this year. In addition, the 2002 official Nevada State highway map now shows the California Emigrant Trail. The project's fourth and final stage - marking the trail along Elko County roads - was done this spring and summer. The Nevada Division of Tourism, Nevada Department of Transportation, and Elko County Road Department donated the signs, posts, and hardware needed. Local volunteers installed 25 of the signs at sites



*Members of the Humboldt Highroaders, mostly OCTA members, at a new trail marker near the Ruby Mountains in northeast Nevada*

—Photo by Randy Brown

across the County where the California Trail and Hastings Cutoff are near the County roads.

Humboldt Highroad member and trails marking organizer Paul Sawyer commented, "This has been a tremendous project. The historic trails in Elko County are now marked as well or better as anywhere in the California Trail system. This trail marking is tied to the future California National Historic Trail Interpretive Center scheduled to be built just west of Elko. Once the Center is open, people will want to see the trail and know where it goes. The next step will be to produce maps so people can take self-guided auto tours to the various trail-side sites."

Sawyer continued, "Most everything used for every stage of the trail marking project was donated. Union Pacific donated steel rails and then Tricon Metals, Elko cut and fabricated the rail markers. We had enough markers to give 65 of them to the trail volunteer group in Utah who marked the Hastings Cutoff across the entire state. Our goal is to mark the length of the Hastings Cutoff from its beginning at Fort Bridger to its end at the Hunter Exit, 8 miles west of Elko."

Sawyer said a number of people across the state helped with the project – Tom Stephens, Director of the Nevada Department of Transportation; Bruce Bommarito, of the Nevada Division of Tourism; Otis Tipton, Elko County Roads Supervisor; Steve Dondero, BLM Elko Field Office; Cashman Equipment; Architect J.D. Long; Don Wiggins of OCTA; all the private land owners along the trails who gave us unlimited access to their lands. He especially thanked "the local volunteers for all their sweat and blisters."

He added, "Finally, we're highly indebted to Trails West who furnished the engraved interpretive plates for the rail markers and to Don Buck of Sunnyvale, California, for years of research and assistance."

## Eagle Scouts, OCTA Combine Efforts to Mark Cherokee

By Candy Moulton

Emigrants traveling across the West a century and a half ago used a variety of routes, leaving behind indelible evidence in the form of trail ruts and swales. Efforts by federal land managers, Eagle Scouts, organizations, volunteers, and industry are underway in Southwest Wyoming to mark those routes better in order to preserve them and raise awareness of the role they played in the settlement of the West.

In June two young men working toward their Eagle Scout rank, marked eleven miles of the Cherokee Trail south of Green River. Their efforts supplement earlier trail marking projects on Cherokee Trail routes that began three years ago so that now about 45 miles of Cherokee Trail in Southwest Wyoming has been marked, according to Terry Del Bene, archaeologist for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Rock Springs [and an OCTA member].

Nathaniel Nelson of Green River and Zach Cuevas of Muskego, WI., worked with BLM to organize the trail marking effort. They involved participants from the Cherokee Trail Wagon Train, members of the Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA), and other local volunteers.

The Scouts work with local BLM officials as they plan their projects. "Basically we lay out the project and they have to organize all the resources, pull it all together and write a report on how it was all done," Del Bene said. In doing the work the Scouts, "have to demonstrate their leadership ability and also this one has a heritage preservation component that plays into the program as well," he said.

Nelson and Cuevas worked with BLM to identify the trail segments that would be marked, they dug holes for the 150-pound concrete markers, and then they found volunteers who would help them actually place the markers. With the new sections of Cherokee Trail marked this year, about 45 miles of the three Cherokee Trail routes are identified, of approximately 250 miles of trail in the region, Del Bene said.

Other trail marking efforts are also ongoing on six trails that cross Southwest Wyoming. Other Eagle Scout projects are planned for this year that involve replacing broken markers on the Sublette Cutoff of the California Trail, marking a previously unmarked trail segment near Mormon Knolls, and marking some sections of the Overland Trail south of the town of Bitter Creek, Del Bene said.

In addition to BLM support, OCTA provided \$5,000 for trail markers as well as volunteers to help with the work. The trail marking projects also have received funding from industry in the form of mitigation payments made in situations where there has been damage to trail resources or where current or future projects will have an impact on the trails, Del Bene said.

"Some of our larger projects have been done by the local Mormon Church stakes," he said. The Green River Historic Preservation Commission has been involved. Green River plans to install markers through town to identify the route of the Overland Trail as it passes through the city.

"The markers do provide a lot of protection out there as far



*Cherokee Trail markers, left to right, Wagon Master Ben Kern, BLM Archaeologist Terry Del Bene, Eagle Scout Zach Cuevas, and OCTA members Pat and Jack Fletcher*

— Photo by Candy Moulton

as awareness of where things are and where to be careful," Del Bene said.

Such marking projects are necessary in order to let people know where trails are located, Del Bene said. "You need to make people aware of where things are if we're going to preserve them. Because you'd be amazed at how many times when industry is out there and they are not careful on a dirt road that they would be if they recognized that it was a trail." But in some situations trails are damaged simply because workers don't recognize them, he said.

By placing markers on trail routes, the public will be more aware of them and that leads to protection. And there are efforts to involve young people in order to provide for future protection.

The concrete markers "have an average lifespan if they're not vandalized of 30 years," Del Bene said. "Every Scout that takes one of the projects is asked to come back in 30 years and replace these markers, and have his kids do it so hopefully we're passing the torch on to folks who will take care of the trails."

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## OCTA's 25th Annual Convention Reno 2002



(Reno Convention Chair Chuck Dodd says he lost 11 pounds during the Convention, attributed to "missed lunches and running around like a crazy person." But, he notes, "I doubt I can keep it lost." Chuck provided this brief postscript to the 2002 gathering of rutnuts.)

I missed the convention!

One of the disadvantages of being the convention chair is that you don't get time to relax and enjoy it. I really would have liked to have had time to chat with everyone there. I did get to sneak away from the business to have Thursday and Friday lunches with the people doing the South Branch hike, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I really hope every one of the 523 people who attended had as much fun as those of us who put it on did. We had a lot of fun, even though it was a lot of work. And we didn't lose anybody out in the desert.

We had 620 seats available on our bus tours, and filled all but seven of them, which was better than we had even hoped. The interpretation provided by Carrie Smith, Phil Sexton and Rene McFarland of the Forest Service; and Peggy McGuckian, Chris Miller, and Gary Bowyer of the BLM was great and was greatly appreciated.

Thanks to them, and thanks to those of you who came to the convention. See you all next year in Manhattan.



Apparently lost emigrant Tom "Amos" Dougherty badgers Convention Chair Chuck Dodd during an opening convention session



Dr. Guy King, left, answers questions following his Convention presentation on "Trials of the Forty Mile Desert"



Membership chair Beth Finger, right, of Santa Rosa, with OCTA member Theodore Jones of Sacramento



LeRoy Johnson, right, who spoke on "Death Valley 49ers' Trails and How Artifacts Confound Historians," talks with Larry Hill of San Jose



*CA-NV Chapter President Bill Webster displays the new OCTA trails "throw."*  
— Photo by Doug Crary



*OCTA President Randy Wagner presides over the General Membership meeting*



*Convention Chair Chuck Dodd deals with an uncooperative computer during the OCTA Awards banquet*

*All Photos Pages 18 and 19 by Bill Martin except as noted*

**Don't Miss The Fun.  
Mark Your Calendars Now  
For Manhattan, Kansas,  
August 10-16, 2003.**



*OCTA's Rose Ann Tompkins during her presentation on the Southern Trails Complex*



*True "OCTA"-genarian Doug Crary of Modesto, CA, celebrated his 89th birthday on the Big Tree Road pre-convention tour on Monday, August 12*  
— Photo by George Ivory

## More Scenes From Reno 2002



The OCTA Trail Band, left to right, Olive Donaldson, Bob Iverson, James McGill



Eloise Crary, left, enjoys a pleasant moment with Mary Ann Tortorich



Author and convention lecturer JoAnn Levy



Left to Right, Ted Gobin, Norine Kimmy and Pat Loomis



OCTA trekkers enjoy a lunch break at Prosser Reservoir on the Truckee-Truckee tour  
— Photo by Bill Robinson



OCTAns get a trails lesson from a Forest Service employee at Sheep Camp



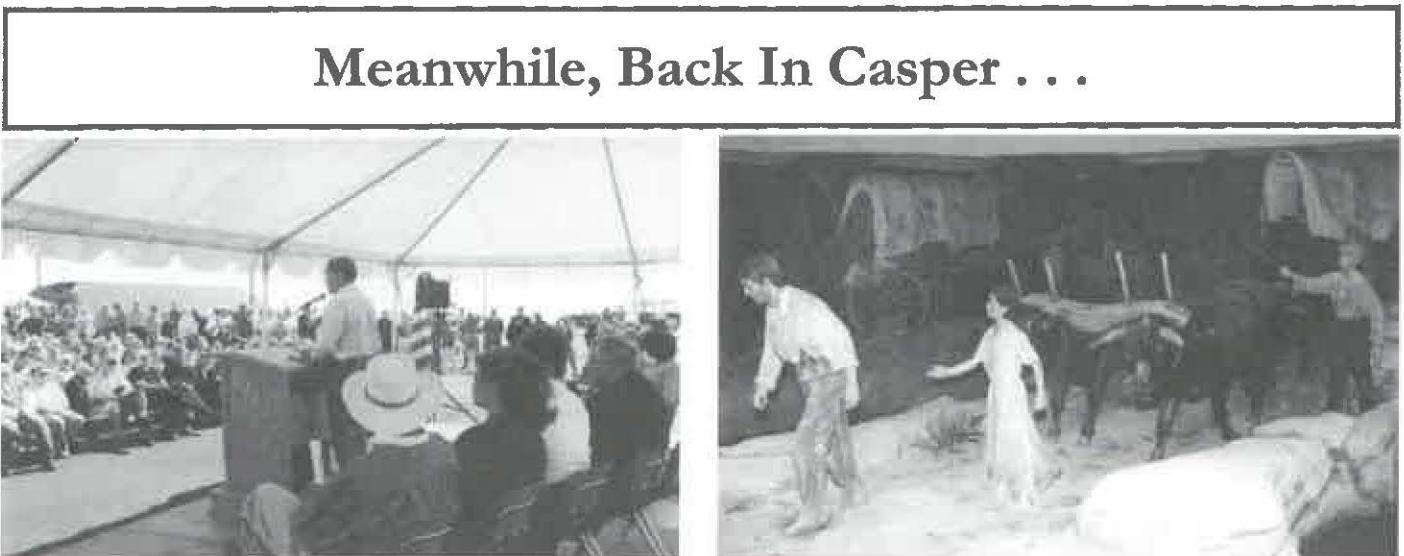
Bernie Scoles, left, and OCTA Board member Frank Tortorich



Heading up the hill—hard work with or without wagons!



OCTA members consult their guidebooks at a Trails West sign post



The grand opening of the new National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, WY, was held on Friday, August 9.

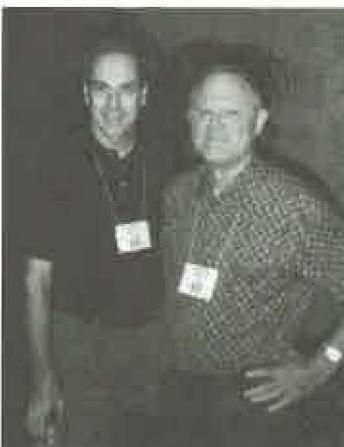
In the photo on the left, U.S. Senator Craig Thomas of Wyoming speaks to the dedication audience.

On the right is one of the state-of-the-art, life-sized exhibits, this one representing an Oregon Trail experience.

The Trails Center represents a cooperative effort between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the National Historic Trails Center Foundation and the City of Casper. Photos by Randy Wagner.

## Saving A Legacy: OCTA Video Now Available For Showing

*Saving A Legacy: The Oregon-California Trail*, the new OCTA video, was accorded a standing ovation by the opening session crowd at the Reno convention in August. The program is now available for use as an educational and inspirational tool, according to John Krizek, OCTA public relations chair who served as executive producer.



Larry Fritz, left, and OCTA Public Relations Chair John Krizek

Written and directed by CA/NV chapter member Larry Fritz, the 20-minute video features many well-known OCTA members, including Frank Tortorich, Andy Hammond, Randy Wagner, Ken and Arleta Martin, Levida Hileman, Wally Meyer, Jere Krakow, Russ Tanner and Gaynell Park. It takes the viewer on a tour of several trail locations from Kansas to Idaho and California.

Designed to provide an overview of trail status and examples of preservation advocacy, the program was produced through a Challenge Cost Share grant from the National Park Service.

Nearly two years in the making, the 20-minute end result represented quite an editing challenge, Krizek told the crowd, as it was distilled from over 17 hours of footage, and was still getting finishing touches two nights before its debut.

The length is short enough so that any OCTA showing it to a school class, service club, historical or other group can "book-end" it with comments about any specific issue, and answer questions. At the same time the content is general enough so that it can "stand on its own" as an informative and educational piece.

Copies of *Saving a Legacy* are available in VHS format through the OCTA bookstore at \$12 per copy, plus a \$3.95 shipping charge.

The hope is that every chapter will be inspired to establish a "speakers' bureau" to show the video to local community organizations. In addition, every member with an audience – be it family members, friends, neighbors, professional colleagues, educational institutions or community organizations – can seize this opportunity to tell the trails story in a dramatic and interesting way, and elicit support for the preservation cause.

— John Krizek

## Chapter Events Calendar

One of the most frequently requested items in the *News From The Plains* is a calendar of chapter events. But we can't provide it without the help of the chapters.

The Editor receives most chapter newsletters in a fairly timely fashion, but the lead time involved in producing NFP handicaps our efforts to pass most events along.

For example, the issue you are holding today was at the print house in Independence the week of September 16. Given a week's turn-around time, it likely was delivered into the capable hands of the U.S. Postal Service by the end of September. Because of bulk mail requirements, OCTA members probably won't see it showing up in their mail boxes until mid-October, sometimes later.

We have in front of us several chapter newsletters with information about outings and treks in September and early October. Obviously, putting those in a calendar after they happen doesn't do anyone much good.

We would like to start running a regular calendar of chapter events, but in order to make it effective, we need to know about the events well in advance — like two or three months in advance.

Most effective would be to e-mail them to OCTANFP@aol.com. You send us the event, we promise we'll run them.

Thanks for your help.

— The Editor

### OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION



P.O. Box 1019 / Independence, MO 64051-0519 / (816) 252-2276

Dr.  Mr.  Mrs.  Ms. (Please check)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone(\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

### NEW MEMBERSHIP

#### Membership Categories

(Check One)

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting	\$75/year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Patron	\$125/year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Institutional	\$300/year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Life	\$1000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate	\$1,250/year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student*	\$15/year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gift	

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ OR

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### Clip & Use

#### For New

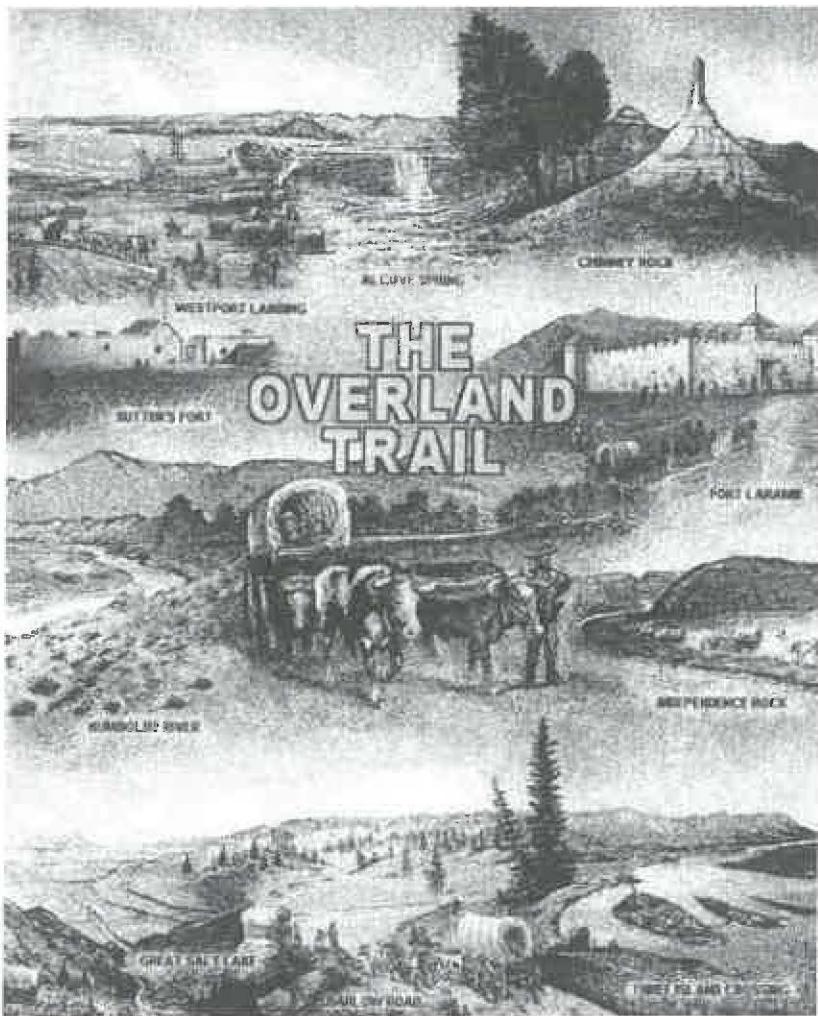
#### Members

\*Memberships are available for full-time students at accredited colleges/universities, with verification. Student memberships are limited to four years.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO OCTA ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE TO THE FULL EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW.

## Great Gift Idea

# The Overland Trail Throw



Made in the USA by Riddle & Company, LLC

All tapestry illustrations except for Humboldt River and Sutter's Fort are drawn from original paintings in the William Henry Jackson Collection of the Oregon Trail Museum at Scott's Bluff National Monument, Gering, Nebraska, and are reproduced by permission of the National Monument.

### A Warm Memento

The Oregon-California Trails Association is pleased to present this tapestry throw commemorating one of our nation's great historic experiences: The Overland Emigrant Trail. The tapestry is comprised of a large central medallion depicting an oxen-drawn wagon surrounded by smaller panels illustrating ten of the most memorable landmarks along the overland trail. These ten panels include Westport Landing, Missouri; Alcove Spring, Kansas; Chimney Rock, Nebraska; Fort Laramie, Wyoming; Independence Rock, Wyoming; Three Island Crossing, Idaho; the Barlow road, Oregon; Great Salt Lake, Utah; the Humboldt River, Nevada; and Sutter's Fort, California.

Jacquard woven in 100% full color cotton.  
Machine Washable, 50" x 65", and fringed.  
Available for only

**\$60.00**

Return order form with payment to:  
Oregon-California Trails Association

524 South Osage Street  
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Please send me  Overland Trail Throws @ \$60 each.  
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## **Inside the News**

- New OCTA Board Elected
- Association Manager To Be Hired
- Photos From Reno Convention
- COED For Christmas?
- OCTA Award Winners
- News from the Chapters