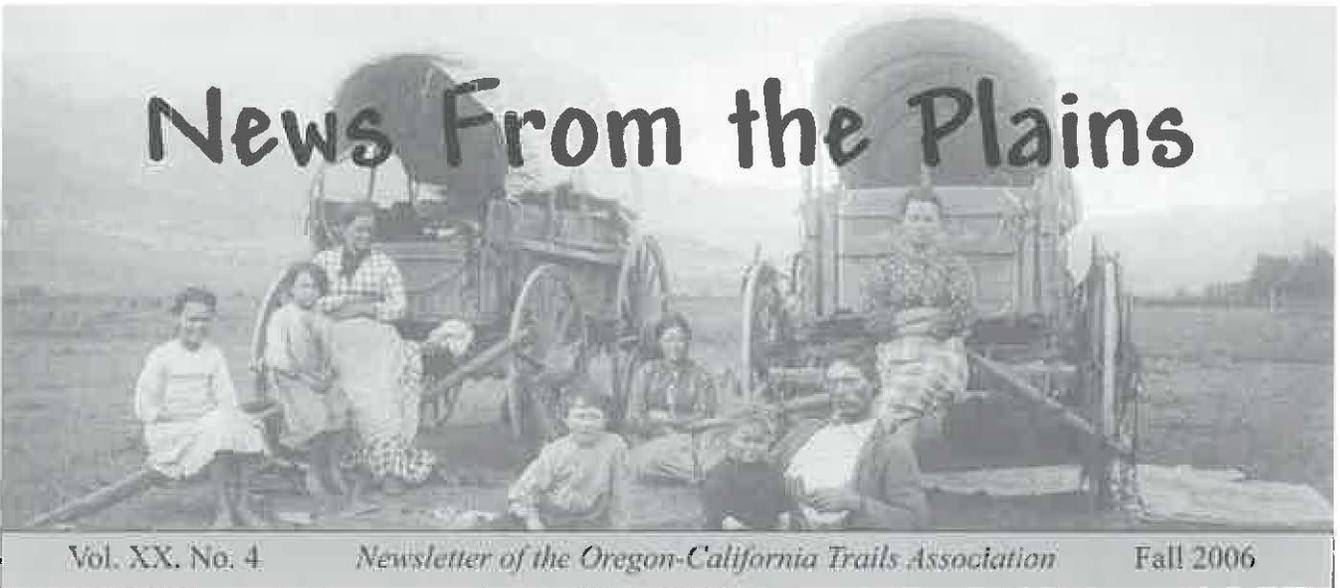


News From the Plains



Vol. XX, No. 4

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Fall 2006

Long-Range Plan Available for Review

By Travis Boley
Association Manager

The draft of the Oregon-California Trails Association's Strategic Plan is available for public comment. Members with an active e-mail address on file with OCTA Headquarters will be sent an electronic copy of the plan. It also will be posted on OCTA's homepage at www.octa-trails.org and on the National Park Service's website at www.nps.org. Those members

who do not have e-mail or access to the Internet can request a paper copy of the plan by calling OCTA toll free at 888-811-6282 or writing: OCTA, 524 S. Osage St., Independence, MO 64050.

Members are urged to take a few minutes to read through the plan and comment with a critical eye regarding future directions and organizational capacity. If something seems to be missing, please alert us to that fact. If something appears beyond our

reach, give us your thoughts on that as well. If you think of better methods to accomplish our goals, let us know. **Comments are requested by Friday, November 10.**

Once we've received comments, we will incorporate them into a report to the Strategic Planning Committee. This committee will then send a final draft to OCTA's Board of Directors in early February so that the members have a month to review the plan before taking any action at the association's board meeting in March 2007.

Four Board Members to be Chosen

OCTA Conducts New Election

By Candy Moulton
NFP Editor

The general membership of the Oregon-California Trails Association agreed to hold new elections for four vacancies on the OCTA Board.

Concern about the first ballot centered on the fact that there was no write-in line on the ballot distributed to members.

During the annual meeting in St.

Joseph, MO, some members said they did not receive a ballot.

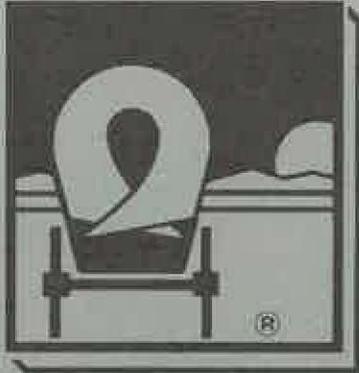
Members present at that meeting rejected a motion on a 74-68 vote that would have recognized the recent election with three candidates, and allowed a fourth board member to be seated based on the number of write-in votes received during the election.

The decision of the general membership opened the way for

a new election, with four board members to be determined and seated as soon as practical.

The general membership also adopted a motion that allows ratification of the election even if there are fewer than 50 percent of the ballots returned.

New ballots were distributed and were due back at Headquarters by Sept. 30.



News From the Plains

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Fall 2006 News From the Plains

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Dave Welch, *National Preservation Officer*, 4374 Vashon Dr NE Lacey, WA 98516; 360-923-0438; welchdj@comcast.net

Randy Wagner, *Past President*, 1007 Monroe Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82001-6617; rwagnerfoto@aol.com

2006-2007 OCTA Board

Jack Fletcher, Sequim, WA; jpletcher@olympus.net

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John Krizek, Prescott, AZ; JKrizek@aol.com

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Dave Welch, Lacey, WA; welchdj@comcast.net

Bill Wilson, Boise, ID; ma_bill@msn.com

Four additional Directors will be elected during the 2006 Elections. Nominees included Lethene Parks, Dave Vixie, Camille Bradford, Richard Pingrey, Bob Clark, and Duane Iles.



NFP Deadline
Winter Issue
November 25, 2006

Foundation Awards OCTA \$100,000 for Documentary

The Oregon-California Trails Association (OCTA) was awarded \$100,000 from the Malcolm E. Smith Jr. Foundation, Inc. of St. James, New York for the purpose of developing a documentary film focusing on the 500,000 emigrants who utilized the Oregon and California Trails in the 19th century, with a special focus on the hardships these emigrants endured as they crossed the plains of Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, and the mountains and deserts of Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, California, and Oregon. These emigrants comprised the largest voluntary emigration in American history as they sought out fertile farmlands in the Willamette Valley of Oregon after 1843 or instant riches in the goldfields of California beginning in 1849. The hardships endured and conquered are what ultimately made the United States a truly continental nation.

A very preliminary schedule for the film includes scripting, which is expected to begin in the next few weeks, with the culling of images, site selection, and interviews to commence over the winter of 2006-07. Filming is set to begin in the late spring of 2007 and continue through the late summer of 2007. Editing and post-production will occur over the fall of 2007 and the winter of 2007-08, with the debut of the film set to occur in the late spring or summer of 2008. OCTA will seek out several media outlets for possible broadcast upon completion, and plans to seek other funds to augment the Foundation's gift. Such funds will be applied to the production of the film as well the possible creation of a related website, educational materials, and DVD with extras not available in the original version.

Previously, OCTA was awarded \$10,000 from the Malcolm E. Smith Jr. Foundation for the purchase of California Hill, located just west of Brule, Nebraska near the northeast corner of Colorado. California Hill marks the spot where 19th century emigrants on the trails left the valley of the South Platte River and headed up the steep hill to cross a 23-mile-wide plateau before beginning the steep and dangerous descent down the half-mile-long grade into Ash Hollow in the North Platte River valley, which today is located just to the east of Lewellen, Nebraska. Upon purchase of California Hill, which still contains deep wagon ruts created by the tens of thousands of wagons that scaled the hill, OCTA donated the parcel to the Nebraska State Historical Society. The Society still manages California Hill today, and a sign on U.S. Highway 30 just west of Brule, Nebraska marks the turnoff for visitors to walk in the ruts of this national treasure and historic landmark.

News Bulletin...

Tabulations Just In !

Results for the 2006 Special Election of Directors for OCTA's National Board are:

Number of Ballots Cast: 769

Camille Bradford	395
Robert Clark	593
Duane Iles	480
Lethene Parks	456
Richard Pingrey	413
David Vixie	524

Write In Votes: Eleven votes for nine candidates.

Letters...

Dear OCTA,

I recently returned from the St. Joseph OCTA Convention after a very enjoyable time. I enjoyed all of the lectures and field trips as usual, as I have attended many OCTA conventions through the years. But I want to let you know what was special about this last one, and that was the Day Camp that was offered for children at the Pony Express Museum. Because it was made available, I brought two grandchildren (ages 10 and 11) along who thoroughly enjoyed themselves at the Day Camp, as well as learning something about the Oregon and California Trail. Because they were the only California kids attending, they also had their horizons broadened by another part of the country, at the other end of the trail! They enjoyed meeting kids from other states also. Hopefully they will turn into future trail historians.

Hopefully another Day Camp will be available at future conventions. I urge all parents and grandparents to consider bringing some young ones along if OCTA does hold future Day Camps. I am enclosing a letter from my 11-year-old granddaughter Katie.

Sincerely,
Priscilla Van der Pas

Dear OCTA,

I had a really fun time in St. Joe. I loved going to the Pony Express Museum and learning about Missouri and Kansas. I liked exploring different parts of

Continued on Page 6

The President Sounds Off...

Vern Gorzitze
vergor@viawest.net

"No birds in last year's nest"

In a work entitled *"It Is Not Always May,"* William Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote the following lines which suggest some self searching:

"For time will teach thee soon the truth./There are no birds in last year's nest."

If you are like me, we often think of past decisions—of what we should or should not have done. We tend to dwell upon regret and spend valuable time brooding about it. Then the pendulum swings back and we think of what we should now be doing or are not doing. This makes us uneasy; we feel guilty for not doing enough. We consider opportunities gone by—honest mistakes and errors that might have been avoided— as manifested in our recent election. I am confident that a good, and very strong Board will emerge from all this.

Nothing from the past should keep us from now becoming what we can become— *The finest organization— dedicated to the preservation and appreciation and enjoyment of the Emigrant Trails of the West.*

In our conservation of the past, the present should not be ignored. Things we cannot change should not needlessly keep OCTA from looking and moving ahead.

In an effort at making forward strides, there are several new projects underway:

1) Under the guidance of John Krizek, a fast-moving, four or five member, "Marketing Task Force" is being established in an effort to showcase OCTA.

2) A mechanism has been put into place allowing OCTA members and others to reserve hotel rooms and do online shopping through OCTA's

website (see Travis Boley's report in this issue for easy instructions).

3) In a partnership with Elderhostel, we have in the past few months gained 55 new members, with more in the offing as the program moves forward.

4) A personal contact program has been organized, whereby current OCTA members make individual personal contact with former members who have not renewed their membership or have become delinquent. Headquarters identified several hundred such names and challenged Board Members and Chapter Presidents to make contact. Several have accepted the challenge and quite a number of contacts have already been made.

There are new decisions to be made every day, every hour, and new

reasons to improve. One decision we can all make, one way to improve is for each one of us to be active in seeking out potential new members. Whatever we are now, whatever we have been, is due to loyal members old and new. Each day there is an opportunity for us to accept what will determine OCTA's direction; whether it is through a new member, a new marketing concept, or new ways of doing things in our local Chapters or in the home office. All efforts help in the broad scheme of things. Only you—the members, the dedicated volunteers, can and will make the organization grow and prosper.

Whatever the past, whatever its losses, or its lessons learned or unlearned, we go on from where we now are—and we all must have faith in the future.

Trail Journal...

Candy Moulton
NFP Editor, nfpocta@aol.com

This organization will recognize a significant achievement in 2007, the 25th anniversary of its founding. From humble beginnings and a dozen or so members, OCTA grew to more than 2,500 members, only to decline during recent years. There is energy in OCTA represented by the people who monitor, mark and map the trails, and by those who write articles for our *Overland Journal* and this publication.

In this issue is an article that reminds us of OCTA's founding. Written by Gregory Franzwa, the man who led the way, it is the first of a series of articles I intend to publish over the next year

highlighting OCTA's achievements. The *Overland Journal* will publish a special edition next year as well, and there are plans in the works for special events in connection with the Annual Convention to be held in Gering-Scottsbluff, NE.

Do you have a special memory of OCTA? Jot it down and send it to me. I'd also be interested in "lists." What were the top Convention tours? Best Preservation projects? Outstanding Presentations at Convention?

Send your thoughts to: Candy Moulton, Star Route Box 29, Encampment, WY 82325 or nfpocta@aol.com.

From the Association Manager...

Travis Boley
Tboley@indepmo.org

Donations Bolster Organization; New Ways to Support OCTA

OCTA has recently received two significant donations. One is a grant of \$100,000 from the Malcolm E. Smith Jr. Foundation for production of a documentary film, see page 3 for details. The other is a gift of artwork from Joe Nardone. Initial information about that \$15,000 gift is on page 20 and we will have further details in the next issue of *News from the Plains*.

I want to tell you about exciting new membership benefits as well as ways in which you can help OCTA just by shopping online. As the Christmas shopping season approaches, you'll want to know about these incredible ways in which you can help OCTA just by spending money at stores you likely already frequent.

New Membership Benefit:

Time Travelers

Get free and reduced admissions plus reduced rates in museum gift shops and book stores at over 2,000 museums in 46 states. Visit www.mohistory.org and click on the "Time Travelers" link in the middle column of the home page. There you will find lists of museums around the country that partner with OCTA to provide OCTA members reduced or free admission and discounts in their on-site stores. Simply tell them you are an OCTA member taking advantage of the Time Travelers program.

New Ways to Help OCTA:

Make a Donation for Trail Preservation

Visit www.octa-trails.org and you can make a secure online donation

at any time. You can simply click on one of four links for the General Operations Fund, General Operations Endowment, Pat Loomis Preservation Endowment or the Charles W. and Mary C. Martin Legal Defense Endowment.

Network for Good

Visit www.networkforgood.org or click on the link on OCTA's home page at www.octa-trails.org. Simply enter "Oregon-California Trails Association" into the "Charity Name" box and make donations directly to OCTA anytime you like.

Book Your Hotel Rooms Online

Visit www.octa-trails.org and scroll down the home page until you see a gold box that reads "Looking for a hotel along the trail? Click here to book online." You can make a reservation at any major hotel located west of the Mississippi River AND contribute to OCTA's bottom line while saving yourself some money.

Here's how it works. Register for your hotel stay through our secure online portal and OCTA receives a \$3 booking fee plus 6 percent of your total bill. For example, if you book an \$80 a night room for three nights, your total bill would be \$240. OCTA would get 6 percent of this bill, or \$14.40 plus a \$3 booking fee for a total donation of \$17.70. I estimated that if everyone who attended the 2006 convention in St. Joseph, Missouri had used this service to book their rooms, OCTA would have received a total contribution of about \$5,000. Please use this service when booking your rooms – you'll help OCTA's bottom line immensely!

What's in it for you? You will typically see rates that are 10 to 15 percent cheaper than you'll find on the hotel's own websites. As a partner with a company called IHS Advantage that negotiates cheaper rates with all major hotel chains, OCTA members (and anyone else) utilizing OCTA's online reservation system are able to save money.

Benevolink

Visit www.benevolink.com or find the link on OCTA's home page at www.octa-trails.org and create a new membership account. Then, go shopping! Hundreds of companies, including Wal-Mart, Barnes & Noble, Home Depot, the Coca-Cola Company, Old Navy, Nieman-Marcus, Starbucks, OfficeMax, FTD, Best Buy and many others participate. By making your purchases through Benevolink's website, you can donate a portion of each purchase (usually in the 4 to 7 percent range) to OCTA!

Fundraising Solutions

In a similar vein as Benevolink, OCTA is also now signed up to participate with another organization called Fundraising Solutions. You can shop at Fundraising Solutions at vendors like Wal-Mart, Hallmark, Office Depot, Staples, Dell, Circuit City, Overstock.com, Orbitz, Travelocity, Barnes & Noble, Eddie Bauer, and more than 1,000 other nationally recognized companies to assist OCTA in raising money to help fulfill its mission. For every purchase you make, these cooperating vendors will contribute up to 25 percent of

Continued on Next Page

Headquarters' Manager's Report

Kathy Conway
Kconway@indepmo.org

An enormous thank you goes to the Gateway Chapter for hosting OCTA's 2006 St. Joseph, MO Convention. We want to express special appreciation to convention Co-Chairs John Atkinson and Jackie Lewin for coordinating and making this memorable event happen. Many members from the KANZA and the Trails Head chapters were also there to assist!

On seeing Ray Egan portray Ezra Meeker this summer during the "Ezra Meeker Centennial Trek," I wondered what it might be like to chat with the real Mr. Meeker and ask him, "how are we doing? Are we keeping your dream alive...that is perpetuating the memory of the trails and its pioneers?"

I'm sure he would smile and say to OCTA that there is no other association on the planet like us that has the desire and the expertise. He probably would urge us to increase our resources by adding members and acquiring additional funding.

I can't think of a better way to honor Ezra's wishes than to add more members to our organization. If you can, consider buying a gift

membership for a friend!

In addition, we can continue this year's excitement with the Ezra Meeker Centennial March well into 2007. Our upcoming 25th Anniversary can be the greatest celebration yet for our organization and the trails. Right now plans are in the works for special happenings during the 2007 Gering-Scottsbluff Convention. Mark your calendar for the week of August 6-12, 2007, and plan to be there with us!

Until then, your purchasing OCTA merchandise, such as the newly published educational workbook, *Here Comes the Pony--The Story of the Pony Express* by Bill Hill (Retail: \$7.95 + \$4.50 P&H) or the just-minted Ezra Meeker Coin (No. 3 in our Coin Series; Retail: \$29.95 + \$4.50) helps fund OCTA's programs and projects. When you visit our website, you will find other ways you can assist OCTA with additional funding. Did you know you can make a donation direct to our Endowment online? Or when you book your next hotel/motel stay through our website OCTA receives revenue?

I'm sure Ezra would be happy you helped!

Manager

Continued from Previous Page

your total to OCTA. Look for the link on OCTA's homepage to begin shopping.

American Road magazine

Visit www.octa-trails.org and scroll down the home page until you see the cover image for *American Road* magazine. Subscribe through our secure online server and *American Road* will contribute a portion of your subscription fee back to OCTA. *American Road* will feature an article about OCTA in an issue before the 2007 Gering/Scottsbluff Convention dealing with the trails and the Lincoln Highway.

Elderhostel

OCTA partnered with Elderhostel to present 15-day tours along the Oregon Trail from Independence, MO to Oregon City, OR, this summer. Each person on the trek received a one-year membership in OCTA. Current OCTA members who live along the trail helped to facilitate the tours this summer. OCTA also partnered with Off the Beaten Path earlier this year to provide one-on-one tours along the Oregon Trail from Independence to Ft. Laramie, WY, which resulted in two new life memberships. In addition to continuing these new relationships, I expect to have similar programs in place with *National Geographic*, the *Smithsonian* and others by 2008.

Although Elderhostel has completed its last trek of 2006, you can join Elderhostel in 2007 when it will offer two more treks. Please watch for the link to the tour registration on our website in Spring 2007 or visit www.elderhostel.org and enter the words "Oregon Trail" into the search bar.

Letters...

Continued from Page 3

the Oregon and California Trail. I also liked making dioramas. The thing I most liked was that on the last day we got to make biscuits and butter. They turned out to be really good. I also liked learning about Ezra Meeker and the oxen! The last thing I would like to tell you about is that I really liked the BBQ on Saturday night. I went to St. Joe with my grandma for the convention and I hope OCTA will have the day camp in Nebraska next year.

From,
Katie P. (age 11)
Livermore, CA

Board Action in St. Joseph

Actions taken during the OCTA Board of Directors meeting on Aug 8, 2006, St. Joseph, MO.

Motion 'A'... Meeker Coin

"I move that the Board authorize the preparation of an Ezra Meeker Coin." Motion by Harrison, second by WelchPASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 'B'...New Editors

"I move that Ariane Smith be selected as the Editor of the *Overland Journal* and Candy Moulton be selected as the Editor of the *News From the Plains* for the next three years." Motion by Harrison, second by Tortorich..... PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 'C'.. American Heritage

"I move that American Heritage Center Research Library at the University of Wyoming be approved as a branch OCTA Trails Library." Motion by Wilson, second by FletcherPASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 'D'... Board Election

"I move that the Board recommends that the membership not certify the recent election of members of the Board of Directors and that a new election be conducted (with) the six candidates." Motion by Welch, second by Wilson vote, 6 yes; 5 no...Motion PASSED

(Was presented to General Membership on Aug 9, 2006)

Motion 'E'... Unrestricted Fund

(from Turner Rivenbarks' Investment Advisory Committee report) "I move that The Unrestricted Fund be closed and the investments

transferred to an unrestricted certificate of deposit or other savings account with comparable yield until the IAC decides the best place to put the funds. Such certificate or savings account will be under the authority and control of the Investment Advisory Committee. If the IAC subsequently decides it is best to place the funds in one of the other three accounts at the foundation it will make a recommendation to the Board."

Motion by Martin, second by manyPASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 'F'... Gardner Junction

"I move that payment of \$6,000 for the Gardner Junction Park (KS) project be made from the Pat Loomis Fund." Motion by Martin, second by manyPASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Motion 'G'... City of Rocks

"I move that (we) receive an income distribution of \$2,084 from the Charles W. & Mary C. Martin Fund to reimburse the operating fund checking account for legal fees paid last year in connection with the City of Rocks matter." Motion by Martin, second by ManyPASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Actions taken during the OCTA General membership meeting on Aug 9, 2006, St. Joseph, MO.

Board of Director Election.

Motion H Election Motion From The Floor:

"I move to accept the 3 original ballot candidates as Directors and fill the 4th position by whoever received the

most write-in votes. Motion by John Winner, seconded by many. Main Motion standing vote: 64 in favor, 78 against...motion FAILED.

Motion 'J'... INVALIDATE THE ELECTION

"I move to invalidate the election, hold a new election with six candidates and space for a write-in." Motion by several, seconded by many. Passed by vast majority.

Motion 'K'... Ratify Directors Election

"I move that the General Membership waives the requirement to ratify the results of the special election for board members in the election to be held following the 2006 convention if less than the 50% of the eligible members vote. Further that the four candidates receiving the most votes be seated immediately after the votes are counted thereby filling the four vacancies created when the term of office expired for board member on Aug. 9, 2006. This waiving of the requirement to certify the election results applies only to this special replacement election this year." Motion by Dick Pingrey. Passed in the affirmative by the approx. 250 person audience, unanimously.

Submitted by
Bernie Rhoades
OCTA National Secretary

A new OCTA Membership Roster is being prepared.

Paper copies will be available soon for a nominal fee.

Contact Headquarters to order by calling
888-811-6282

Trail Sleuths Were Roaming the Land...

Story and Photos By Vince Correll

For two weeks in mid-June “flocks of volunteers,” both professional and civilian, under the direction of staff from the Bureau of Land Management and from the National Parks Service, snooped all over the greater South Pass area of Wyoming. The purpose was to do a thorough documentation of the many Emigrant

separated by dozens of yards, but close enough to be seen by travelers on each line of march). We saw for ourselves that the configuration of the land determined whether there was a single path, multiple spread-out paths or a wide spread of paths overlapping each other up to many yards wide.

For this city boy, who had seen many miles of sagebrush from his whizzing car, to walk among it for extended distances gave a much

might look for traces literally “out in the sticks.” Professional volunteer Sam Drucker of the BLM Pinedale Field Office had such a sharp eye that in one day he spotted a horse shoe (probably from a freighter’s draft horse), a fragment of harness, and a “prehistory” atlatl spear point. Just shows what professional training can do!

The work (fun) was divided up daily into three teams. The membership of the teams rotated every day so all got to work with nearly all participants. It was a great mixer. Our tasks also varied from day to day. Besides the tasks listed above, someone photographed 360 degree sweeps of various important locations, (called Photo Points, creative, eh?) such as existing concrete or wooden trail markers, special trail junctions, etc., determined Geo position of the Points, and determined and recorded the longitude and latitude and special characteristics of each Photo Point, while other photos were taken [i.e. – faint trail segments, etc.] Sometimes the wind was so strong that controlling the measuring tapes was a real challenge.

Our teams assembled each day at the South Pass Rest Stop on State Highway 28. Two “Sage Hopping” capable 4WD SUV’s brought us from Rock Springs (70 miles away!) and one down from Lander. In spite of the fact that the local folks could name the various landmarks, I could appreciate how much the early travelers must have depended upon their trail guides. The land humps and bumps all looked quite similar to me.

The lower elevations (5,750’ above sea level!) were dry but the high parts of the Lander Cutoff were



Checking for trail resources away from the marked main branch.

Trails in this key part of the 2,000-mile overland transit path. All this activity was under the direction of Dr. Terry Del Bene, lead archeologist of the Bureau of Land Management, assisted by Colleen Sievers and Jo Foster, all of the BLM Rock Springs Field Office.

We examined rocks for rust (the wagon tires were steel and bits of steel on the rocks rusted!), measured rut widths and depths and looked for traces of “braided” trail segments (that was a new one for me – it means short segments of trails that joined main lines of trail progression which were

more impressive feeling for what our intrepid ancestors experienced. In the best sense of the word we were detectives. All the professionals were most patient with we greenhorns. In addition to the previously mentioned folks the teams were led by Russ Tanner, of the Rock Springs Field Office, Lee Kreutzer and Kay Threlkeld of the National Park Service, Karina Bryan and Craig Bromley of the BLM Lander Field Office and Don Bailey. They all shared their thought processes as some “obvious trails” were rejected as not being original, and where we

...Finding Ruts, Documenting Trail Conditions

still quite green.

Almost half of us “rut rompers” were volunteers who were not a part of any governmental organization. We came from California, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Colorado, Washington, Nebraska and Wyoming. We had our own Professional Historian, Will Bagley, from Utah. OCTA was represented by Dave and Wendy Welch, Bill and Gail Robinson, Tom McCutcheon, Vince Correll, Don Hartley, John Murphy, Barbara Netherland, Gail and Gerry Carbiener, and Ed and Ann Bagne. Doug Guse volunteered just because he understood the importance of what is in his backyard. That also explains why Don Bailey, Andy Blair and Don Riddle were participating.

None of us were “lost on the trail.” The BLM folks took very good care of us. Sack lunches were provided each day and loads of soft drinks and “gallons” of water. We were supplied with hats to moderate the powerful sunshine and compasses and whistles just in case we got lost in the sagebrush. (There really were some thickets along the Sweetwater and Lander streams and we did meander far afield at times verifying that there were or were not collateral trail segments “just over that ridge.”)

I am happy to report that there were a goodly number of young people participating. Most were interns of various conservation type groups: Mike Frankus of Current

Archaeological Research; Katie Maley, Jamison Miner and Lacey Anderson of Chicago Botanical Gardens. It is super that the young folks are enthusiastic for their heritage!

Speaking of getting involved, Cory Daly of the *Lander Journal*

our grandchildren can get a sense of just what the mid-19th century migration was all about.

One of the “teasers” we came across were arrays of stones near the trail that just might define a grave. As you trail buffs know, there were many deaths along the route. Only a very few are known. We documented “suspected locations” to be verified at some future time when non-invasive analysis techniques are more advanced. At least two of our participants, Tom McCutcheon and Bill Robinson, got out their “bent wires” and “gaussed or witched” the sites to add emphasis about the likelihood that a pile of rocks really was a grave.

Terry Del Bene informed us that he will place the photos and accompanying

data onto a web site. That will make what was recorded by our teams available to all interested parties. Just think how fine it will be for students of the Great Migration to the West to see photos of what a central part of the trail looked/looks like. If you can’t kick the clods, hop the sagebrush and smell the smells, seeing it will be so helpful. What a resource for teachers.

This “happy camper” would recommend participation in any future Documentation Projects that may be mounted by the BLM or National Park folks. They know what they are doing, and are so patient in teaching we “know nothings” so we can really be of service to the great task of the Preservation of Our Heritage.



Volunteers document trail conditions near South Pass in Wyoming.

participated to see what it was all about and two Field Representatives of Wyoming’s three Congressional office holders visited us on the trail and listened to what we had to say about why we were volunteering: Pati L. Smith for Senator Craig Thomas and Bonnie Cannon for Congresswoman Barbara Cubin. Bravo!

One of the duties of the Archaeology division of the BLM is to work with businesses that have leases for use of BLM managed land. The goal is to help the potential users avoid cluttering up the beautiful vistas with tanks and pumping stations and to make piping disappear so no trace scars the landscape. They have done a good job so far, but it is an ongoing challenge. It is out here that we and

Trail Preservation Officer

Dave Welch
Welchdj@comcast.net

Meeker Centennial Celebration

On August 21 the 2006 Meeker Expedition drew to a close with the return of the last of the traveling group to Puyallup, WA. And what a journey it was!

Visits to the 22 planned venues were successfully completed with only one exception: the afternoon visit to the park in The Dalles was cancelled by the sponsors due to high temperatures (111 degrees). While we Puget Sounders were a little soft at the beginning, we probably could have handled it after our initiation at other "warm" sites like Alcove Springs. While we traveled in air-conditioned comfort, our daily outdoor program subjected us to the reality of the Western and Midwestern summer. It was a small sampling of the pioneer's journey.

By our own reckoning, the expedition was a great success and a wonderful experience. Our goals were the same as Ezra Meeker's in 1906, to promote preservation of the trails and the memory of the pioneer's great undertaking. This centennial celebration of Ezra Meeker's 1906 Old Oregon Trail Monument Expedition was the means to achieve these goals.

We estimate that we had direct contact with a few thousand people in the course of the trip. We also reached additional thousands through media coverage at each location. Our program of the Meeker wagon display, re-enactor Ray Egan as Ezra Meeker



and Dennis Larsen's slide show on Meeker's markers was well received at each location. However, it was Dixon Ford's oxen, Thor and Zeus, which drew the greatest attention. They draw TV cameras like the flies that often bothered them.

Perhaps some of you are asking what this all has to do with the National Preservation Officer and

trail preservation. The answer is everything. We cannot expect to preserve the trails if there is not a general recognition of their important place in our history. Ezra Meeker knew that and set out to remind the nation of that fact in 1906. Merrill Mattes knew that when he reminded us at the first OCTA convention in 1983 of the importance of Meeker and his work. Our current mapping and marking efforts are a continuation of Meeker's early efforts.

Special thanks to all who hosted and attended our events and to my fellow travelers: Andy and Ruth Anderson, Pat Ziobron and Dennis Larsen, Wes and Suzy Perkinson, Maura and Ray Egan, Dixon and Blake Ford, and my wife, Wendy. As the cliché says, "A good time was had by all."



Meeker Reenactors visit South Pass. (Photos courtesy of Dave Welch)

Contract Award for Elko Trail Center

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) National Business Center in Denver awarded a \$9.45 million contract in late September for the construction of the California National Historic Trails Interpretive Center. A Reno-based company, West Coast Contractors of Nevada, Inc., was the successful bidder. The center is to be constructed on land donated to the federal government by the Maggie Creek Ranch about 10 miles west of Elko, in northeastern Nevada.

Site grading and construction of the facility is expected to begin in the next few weeks. The center will occupy an 11-acre footprint and will include 16,000 square feet in the main facility and a similar-sized interpretive plaza east of the building.

The center will tell the story of the '49ers traveling west to the gold fields and broad well-watered valleys of California between about 1841 and 1869.

More than 650 miles of the California Trail traverses Nevada. Much of the trail is on lands managed

by the BLM in the Elko, Winnemucca and Carson City Field Offices. Future plans include the development of way-sides across the state on both public and private lands.

The California Trail Center was conceived by local businessmen in the Elko area some years ago. In 2000, these community leaders met with city, county, state and federal officials to gain support and funding for the project including \$2 million from the City of Elko, \$1 million from Elko County and \$3 million contributed by the State of Nevada. The Nevada Congressional delegation has been supportive of the project, with \$7.8 million being added to Congressional appropriations since 2000 by Senator Harry Reid.

Thus far about \$3.6 million has been expended on the project for a feasibility study, site selection, and building and exhibit design.

The construction of the facility is expected to take 18 to 20 months with opening scheduled in the late summer of 2008.



Recording a Photo Point during the survey of South Pass in June. (Photo by Vincent Correll)



Houts Book Wins Award

A book by OCTA member Joe Houts Jr. of St. Joseph, MO, has won the prestigious 2006 Governor's Award from the Missouri Humanities Council. The award is to be presented at the Missouri Governor's Mansion in Jefferson City on October 25.

A Darkness Ablaze: The Civil War Medical Diary and Wartime Experiences of Dr. John Hendricks Kinyoun is based on the medical diary of Houts' great-great-grandfather, surgeon of the Sixty-Sixth North Carolina Infantry Regiment.

Houts, vice president of business banking at Commerce Bank, is a member of OCTA's Publications Committee. He previously authored *Quantrill's Thieves* about the guerrilla campaign led by William C. Quantrill and his Raiders during the Civil War.

A Darkness Ablaze, described as "a chilling, detailed account of American medicine during the Civil War," was published by Platte Purchase Publishers in St. Joseph.

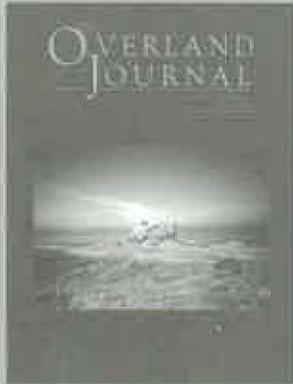


2006 OCTA Awards

Merrill Mattes Award

"The Limitless Plain: The Great Salt Lake Desert"

By Roy Tea



Meritorious Award

Jim McGill

An incredible hard-working sleuth, Jim McGill spent most of last fall marking phase one to preserve the Goodale Cutoff northwest of Boise and Eagle, ID, also marking the remaining swales and ruts from Homer road to Freezeout Hill. After extensive research he went back and found the great ruts down the northern ridge to Jackass Gulch Road, placed two southern markers on land managed by the U.S.

Bureau of Land Management, added two markers at Willow Creek Road and 13 new markers across the whole area. He is satisfied that this is the route of the Goodale Train in 1862 and many other emigrants who soon followed Goodale.

He has been involved in OCTA for many years, marking trail, mapping trail, and preserving the wonderful areas of Idaho. He currently serves OCTA as the National Mapping Chair.



Distinguished Service: Anadarko Petroleum

The Distinguished Service award is granted to organizations, businesses, government agencies, individuals, or others who contribute or participate in furthering OCTA's programs directly or provide substantial support in a non-affiliated way to trail preservation and education.

Anadarko Petroleum has surveyed and GPS'd more than 70 miles of the Overland Trail and has assisted with the costs to rebuild the Point of Rocks Stage Station in southern Wyoming.

Anadarko Petroleum has taken a pro-active stance in determining where the trail remains are located in areas where they may have development projects either ongoing or forthcoming. They have worked with professional archaeologists and trail enthusiasts to locate the trails to allow the planning process to proceed with the benefit of comprehensive studies of the trails in areas where the existing information was not complete. They have ensured, in areas of adjoining private and public lands, that their activities have been accomplished in a manner that protects the trails.

Accepting the award for Anadarko Petroleum were Tom Clayson and Kathy Lansburg.



Tom Clayson and Kathy Lansburg

Outstanding Superintendent Jere Krakow

OCTA gave a special "Outstanding Superintendent Award" to Jere Krakow of the Long Distance Trails office in St. Joseph. The custom award was made by Ken Martin and presented by Ken and by Bill and Jeanne Watson.

Among the accomplishments during his tenure are the following:

1987 – Eligibility & Feasibility Studies of California and Pony Express Trails are sent to Congress.

1992 – Congress Authorizes the California and Pony Express National Historic Trails.

1993-94 – Historian Jere Krakow heads the team to develop the California and Pony Express Comprehensive Management Plans (CMPs) in Denver.

1995 – The National Park Service establishes the Long Distance Trails Office in Salt Lake City and names Jere Krakow as the Superintendent.

1998 – Nine public meetings are held on the California and Pony Express Draft CMPs, plus updates for the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails.

1999 – The Final Comprehensive Management Plans are issued.

A ruling by the Solicitor General excluded some Routes and Cutoffs

that are later recommended for further study. That recommendation is basis for S-54 which has been passed by



Jere Krakow, left, and Ben Kern, recipients of the Outstanding Superintendent and Distinguished Service Awards.

the U.S. Senate and which is now awaiting House action.

During his tenure, Krakow helped implement a NPS Geographic Information System, an Images Digital Database and library is now being developed, and a joint OCTA/NPS mapping, marking and monitoring project provides equipment, supplies and technical training to all OCTA Chapters and is based on OCTA's Mapping the Emigrant Trails Manual. Funding was provided for OCTA's Census of Emigrant Documents and for the OCTA Association Manager position.

Distinguished Service Ben Kern

For more than 50 years Ben Kern of Evansville, WY, has been involved with the Western Trails. In the 1950s and 1960s, he organized a wagon train club in Prairie City OR, leading wagons to the Pendleton Roundup and along other segments of Oregon's pioneer trails.

In 1993, he drove a wagon from Independence MO, to Independence, OR on the Oregon Trail. The following two years he traveled the Goodale Cutoff in Idaho. In 1996 he traveled the Mormon Trail from Nauvoo, IL to Winter Quarters in Florence, NE, and in 1997 he was one of four wagon masters to lead the Mormon Trail Sesquicentennial Wagon Train from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake City.

In 1999 he led one of the three wagon trains that followed the gold rush trail to California. Two years later he suffered a broken neck when a load of hay bales fell on him, but within four months he took a wagon train over the Bozeman Trail starting at Fort Laramie and ending in Virginia City, MT.

In 2002, 2003 and 2004 he made his way along the South Branch of the Cherokee Trail and this year he followed the Overland Trail from Laramie, WY to Washakie Station, south of Rawlins, WY. He is now making plans for a wagon train in 2007. He has done numerous film documentaries promoting the trails.



Visit the OCTA Store
www.octa-trails.org



2006 OCTA Awards

Elaine McNabney National Volunteer Award

Jim and Sally Riehl Bill Martin

Distinguished Service

St. Joseph Museums Inc.



For more than 20 years, the St. Joseph Museum has supported OCTA and the Gateway Chapter. Its former director, Rich Nolf, served as the convention chair for the 1988 convention, in addition to researching the St. Joe Road, donating items and planning for that convention.

The museum staff continued its trail research and education by sponsoring field trips, conducting a graduate class on the trails for teachers, presenting numerous programs and developing exhibits about St. Joseph's role as a jumping off town.

They hosted National Park Service officials to research the exact route of the St. Joe Road and provided staff to research and map the route of the trail.

The St. Joseph Museum continues to donate meeting space and supplies to further trail preservation and education. Accepting the award for the museum was Dr. Phil Acuff.



Jim and Sally Riehl

The Elaine McNabney National Volunteer Award goes to an OCTA member who contributes significantly to achieving OCTA goals and projects.

Jim and Sallie Riehl have been very visible in the COED project since soon after they joined OCTA. They have scanned documents, chaired the committee, accepted the responsibility of computer data management and spent time, effort and money to ensure the high standard of the database.

They have both proofed and arranged publishing of the new Emigrant Names 2 (EN2) program, encouraged people with skills to be a part of COED, traveled to

conventions to publicize COED and the Emigrant Names disk set and developed the web site and brochure.

The new OCTA Trails Map saw publication in large part due to the efforts of **Bill Martin**, a second recipient of the Elaine McNabney National Volunteer Award. This map was a topic of



Bill Martin

discussion for several boards, but no one would undertake the project. Bill Martin, serving as chair of the OCTA Publications Committee, grabbed the oxen by the horns, and finally made it happen. He spent hours and much effort, in addition to his board duties, volunteering to ramrod this project.

Friend of the Trail Award

The Friend of the Trail Award is presented to groups, individuals, or organizations that have direct ties to lands over which historic trails pass. Emphasis is placed on preservation of trail remnants, education of the public about their historic resources, and allowing responsible public access to the historic resources.

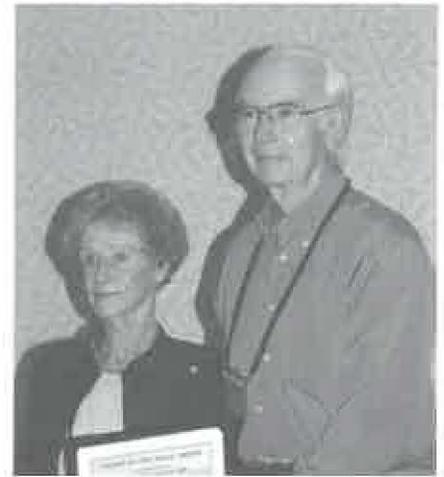
Bill and Gail Robinson, Fred and Fern Linton and Tom McCutcheon were nominated by the Wyoming Chapter. These five OCTA members are the backbone of the preservation activities in the southwestern corner of Wyoming as well as resident experts on the Overland and Cherokee Trails. They have dedicated their retirements to serve as guides and authorities for national OCTA members, as well as energy explorers.

Tom, Bill and Gail, and Fred and Fern drove many 500-mile round trips during the winter months for the planning of the Casper convention in 2001 to put together the many details and they led a pre-convention trek. They also work with the energy companies as leaders and educators

keeping those valuable connections, which have enabled the basic preservation of the Trails.

Tom knows every inch of the Cherokee and Overland Trails, The Lintons are experts on the Lander Cutoff and Fern is an advisor for the PAWG, (the Pinedale Anticline Working Group). The Robinsons volunteer at conventions, assist with tours, and are involved in trail work activities in addition to distributing OCTA brochures to area chambers, motels and other public places.

A retired judge and his wife, **Fred and Lilian Six**, built their home about a quarter mile east of a crossing some years ago. This crossing, known by some as the Upper Walk-a-rusa Crossing and by others as the Blanton Bridge Crossing, flooded some years ago and most of the evidence of the crossing was washed away. Fred did considerable research on both the location and the history of the bridge. The Sixes have also warmly welcomed visits by both Trails Head and KANZA chapter members, talked to visiting groups, and have had archaeologists and historians do research at the property in an attempt



Fred and Lillian Six

to authenticate the resource.

A half mile from the Big Blue River Crossing lies the property of **Pat and Jamie Ellenbecker** and the grave of Thomas Mastin. The gravestone located at the gravesite had been vandalized many times, leading the Ellenbeckers' to install a new, engraved stone and place the original in a safer place on their property.

The Ellenbeckers also have protected two sets of swales located in virgin prairie on their property near Marysville, KS. One of the swales is three travel lanes wide, thus multiple trails are being preserved by these second generation landowners, who allowed access to the Mastin gravesite and the swales during the 2003 convention.

William and Dorene Whetstine have lived along the trail for several generations. They have swales on their property made by wagons as they ascended the hill from the Mosquito Creek Crossing. They have allowed OCTA to place markers in the trail, and welcomed visits by Gateway Chapter members and convention attendees.



Wyoming Friends of the Trail, from left, Fred and Fern Linton, Bill and Gail Robinson and Tom McCutcheon.



2006 OCTA Awards

National Certificates of Appreciation

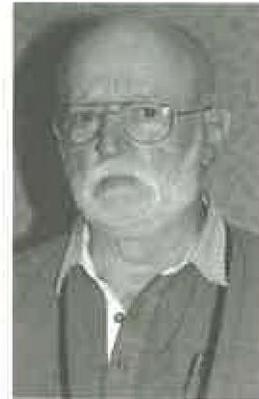
Jackie Lewin and John Atkinson received recognition for their willingness to co-chair the 2006 Convention committee, and for all of the hours and hours of work, effort, patience and dedication it takes to do this tremendous job. It takes hours of work coordinating volunteers, working with other businesses, and refining details.



John Atkinson and Jackie Lewin, 2006 Convention Chairs.

Mary Conrad, not shown, a long-time member of the Gateway KANZA and Trails Head Chapters, chaired the Speakers Committee for the 2006 Convention, served as Trails Head Newsletter editor and currently, is the copy editor for the Santa Fe Trails Association local chapter newsletter. She has attended a number of conventions and is always enthusiastic whenever asked to perform a task.

An original member of the Gateway Chapter, past president, and an active past board member of his local chapter, **Robert Hamilton** has been a familiar face at conventions videotaping and photographing. You also see him loading and



Robert Hamilton

unloading busses, transporting OCTA members to and from the airport, and using his muscles to pour concrete for trail markers. He has shown constant enthusiastic support and a willingness to help with any job no matter how tedious or difficult.

The **St. Joseph Convention and Visitor's Bureau** helped with the planning of another OCTA convention in St Joseph. The CVB developed



Receiving Certificates of Appreciation for their services as members of the National OCTA Board of Directors were Glenn Harrison, above left, and Frank Tortorich, above right.



St. Joseph CVB honorees.

the convention website, provided an assortment of promotional giveaways at last year's convention, and

Continued on Page 18

Young OCTA Award

Kit Washut, Zach Cuevas

The Young OCTA Award is presented to children and youth between the ages of six and 21 who have demonstrated particular interest in OCTA and the history and/or preservation of historic emigrant trails. This year, two young people are recognized for their interest.



Kit Washut of Casper, WY, has the ability to involve young people in the trail history of Wyoming. She researches and authenticates her own materials, unselfishly donates her time at the National Historic Trails Center, and is a re-enactor of Company I, 3rd U.S. Reorganized Galvanized Yankees. She is a charter member of the Casper Kids Trail Team, a seamstress who makes all of her own costumes and a peer advocate inviting kids to be a role model and a bright light for promotion of Trail History.

Zach Cuevas, a volunteer working under direction of BLM Archaeologist Terry Del Bene, earned his Eagle Scout Award for his trail work. His project was to research, document and place seven miles of markers on the Cherokee Trail in Southwest Wyoming. He also assisted other Eagle prospects in the Rock Springs, WY area. A re-enactor since he was four years old, he participated in Ben Kern's 2002 Cherokee Trail wagon train.

For his interest in American history, his involvement in ongoing education projects through re-enacting, and his 2002 work on the



Kit Washut, left, takes direction from Boston Productions Inc., director Bob Noll for a film production used at the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, while Zach Cuevas, front above, places a marker on the Cherokee Trail. Assisting Zach are Ben Kern and Terry Del Bene. (Photos by Candy Moulton)

Cherokee Trail, OCTA presented the National Young Octan Award to Wisconsin resident, Zach Cuevas. He was unable to attend the convention in St. Joseph because he is presently serving with the Wisconsin National Guard in Iraq.

Education Awards: Now It's Time to Start Again

Outstanding Educators: Bonnie Epstein, Gary Noy, National Frontier Trails Museum/Richard Edwards

By Bill Hill Education Awards and Publications Committee

August brought an end to the Education Awards & Publication's Committee's work for the year 2005-6. The results of the culminating efforts of the committee occurred at the St. Joseph Convention. First, the Outstanding Educator Awards were presented. The recipients were: Gary Noy, Sierra Nevada

Community College, Loomis, CA; The National Frontier Trails Museum, Independence, MO, Richard Edwards program director; and Bonnie Epstein, Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH.

Second, our newest activity book, *Here Comes the Pony! The Story of the Pony Express* was introduced. It is now available through OCTA's bookstore for \$7.95.

But now it is time to start

work on our goals and continuing programs for 2006-7. We have three projects about which we are seeking your assistance, participation and cooperation. First, we are starting our drive to identify and nominate those teachers and museums to be considered for the 2007 Outstanding Educator Awards. Nomination/application forms are available from

Continued on Next Page

OCTA Hires Editors

Ariane Smith has been hired as the new editor of the *Overland Journal* for a three year term. She replaces Robert Clark as *OJ* Editor, who did not reapply for his position. Clark recently sold The Arthur H. Clark Company to the University of Oklahoma Press and he has relocated to Norman, OK to run the company, where he continues to serve as publisher and editor for the publishing enterprise started by his grandfather.

Smith has worked with Clark at the Arthur A. Clark Company in Spokane, WA, and has assisted him with the *Journal* for the past several years.

The OCTA Board also renewed a contract with Candy Moulton to edit the *News from the Plains* for another three-year term. She makes her home near Encampment, WY and has been editing the *NFP* for the past three years.

National Certificates of Appreciation

Continued from Page 16

donated funding for the busses of the city tour and busses for the children's day camp.

The Children's Day Camp was possible because of the assistance of the **Pony Express National Museum**. They usually have a day camp in July, but this year agreed to move their camp to August, coinciding with the OCTA convention. Through shared volunteers, an excellent array of activities are offered to the children of OCTA and the St. Joseph community.



From left, Education Committee Chair Bill Hill and the 2006 Outstanding Educators, Bonnie Epstein, Richard Evans and Gary Noy.

Education Awards

Continued from previous page

headquarters, chapter presidents and the Education Awards & Publications Committee. If you know of a teacher or museum program that does an outstanding job of teaching about the westward expansion, don't put it off, start the process by giving them an application. The deadline for nominations/applications is March 31, 2007.

Secondly, we are continuing our activity book raffle. We will provide a class set of one of OCTA's activity books to the teacher whose post card is selected from all those cards received by December 11, 2006. The books are appropriate for secondary students and may be adapted for intermediate students. Teachers may select from the books: *Reading, Writing, and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trails*, *Finding the Right Place*, *Following Lewis and Clark's Track*, or *Here Comes the Pony!* In order to enter, teachers must send in a postcard to: OCTA-Book Raffle, P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519. The postcard must have: 1) teacher's name, 2) level & subject taught, 3) school, 4) school address, 5) school telephone number, and 6) trail or title of book desired. Help us by telling your local school

about the program, or having your children ask their teacher to enter.

Our third project is designed for elementary school students. We will be producing a 2007-8 calendar featuring original student artwork. The 12-month calendar will cover August 2007-July 2008. This year's theme is Chimney Rock throughout the year. The artwork must reflect a specific month or aspect of the particular month and include Chimney Rock. The artwork must be original. No computer generated work or photographs will be accepted. The work should measure 8 1/2" x 11" and be in color. On the back of the entry should be the child's name, age, grade, school and contact information for the individual. The artwork should be sent to OCTA-Calendar, P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519. One drawing will be selected from the entries for each month. The twelve will be combined to make one calendar, which should be available for purchase by July 2007. Deadline for submissions will be April 15, 2007. Each selected child artist will receive a gift certificate (minimum \$25) and a copy of the calendar for both the child and the school.

New Members

George & Sandy Abernathy
843 Organ Rd.
Mesilla Park, NM 58047

Francis & Claudia
Asselmeier
4107 Asselmeier Estate
Columbia, IL 62236

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Hallandale, FL 33009

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Ephrata, WA 98823
509/754-1042

John & Linda Quimby
24 Fox Chapter Ct.
Williamsville, NY 14221
716/631-5433

Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter

From the Chapter Newsletter

Camille Bradford was elected president of the Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter in July. Serving with her are Carolyn Moree, vice president; Winnie Burdan, secretary; and Timothy Kelly, treasurer.

The chapter had a summer trek that took in locations on the Overland Trail including Overland Park Station marker, Old Barlow House, Stonewall Canyon and a hike down to the Cherokee/10 Mile/Stonewall Station Site. The day also included a visit to the Virginia Dale Stage Station and Roberts Ranch to view trail ruts to Signature Rock.

Another trek to Cherokee Trail sites south of Denver took place in June, conducted by Pat and Jack Fletcher.

In October the chapter plans a trek along the Cherokee Trail including sites near Pueblo and at Bent's Fort. Lee Whitley is expected to serve as a tour leader on this outing.

CA-NV Chapter

2007 Symposium in Yreka, California

By Mary Mueller

Yreka, CA will be the site of the California-Nevada Chapter Spring Symposium April 21 and 22, 2007 at the Miners Inn Convention Center and Siskiyou County Museum.

Yreka is located in the most northern section of California along Highway 5, just 22 miles from the California-Oregon border and is rich in trapping, gold mining and emigrant history. The Symposium will feature many speakers and trail events that highlight the history and geology of Yreka and Siskiyou County.

The planning committee includes Bob and Cherie Evanhoe and Richard and Orsola Silva.

Where Wagons Climbed-or Crashed!

By Howard Dugger

A sobering new definition of the word "steep" was learned by all of the OCTA members who climbed to the three passes over the Sierra near Donner summit and Truckee, CA.

On July 22, 2006, D.W. McKenzie and his two sons led a group of about 15 excited OCTA members and friends to observe old Donner Summit, Coldstream Summit and the downright frightening Roller Pass.

Some had been there before, but it was my first visit. I had read articles about the novel way in which the emigrants had used cut logs laid flat on the ground at the top to act as "roller bearings" for the cables stretched across the summit. Livestock straining against those cables or chains going down the western slope hopefully pulled up the wagons attempting to climb the eastern approach. But as we looked over the eastern edge I was taken aback by how steep - really steep it actually was!

Although I am a longtime member of OCTA, I have not participated in outings and have been content to pay my annual dues and read *Trail Talk* and *The Overland Journal* at home. Like a dummy!

I wonder how many other passive members are making the same mistake that I did? I have a new appreciation for our emigrant forbearers and for the hard-working OCTA volunteers who make these trips available.

Roller Pass-whew-awesome-Steep!!

Joe Nardone Donates Artwork to Benefit OCTA

Joe Nardone of California donated to OCTA one hand-colored (by the artist) limited edition "Brockliss Bridge" print, featuring the span over the American River in California utilized by the Pony Express. The artist, Carol Mathis,

was commissioned by Mr. Nardone in 1990 to paint the scene circa 1860 in a black-and-white medium. She hand-colored and signed 250 of these; Mr. Nardone gave OCTA print #2, which OCTA plans to hang in the Mattes Library at the

National Frontier Trails Museum. He also donated to OCTA additional prints, which will be available for sale. Visit www.octa-trails.org/store for details. Additional information also will be included in the next issue of this newsletter.



The Founding of OCTA

**By Gregory M. Franzwa
OCTA Founding Member**

Editor Moulton has asked me to prepare a short piece on the founding of the Oregon-California Trails Association, on the occasion of the silver anniversary of the event. I wrote *The Oregon Trail Revisited* in 1972, and shortly thereafter I began receiving reports that historic sites and ruts of the Oregon Trail occasionally were being lost.

It seemed to me that in some cases it was done with the thought that the ruts were historic, but not really very important. But inquiry disclosed that the destroyers simply were unaware that the ruts were impressed in the earth by the courageous pioneers who took the Oregon Trail to wed the American West to the United States. Now that's pretty historic.

As the years passed, the instances of devastation seemed to increase, and as they did, I kept complaining about it to the destroyers. My concerns sometimes were answered, usually politely, but it was obvious that I was being regarded as a nutcase rut-hugger from Missouri of no real consequence. That was true. In the spring of 1982 I decided it was time to do something about that.

Just what I did is revealed in a letter that somehow popped out of the files recently. It was written to a St. Louis journalist/reporter,

Dr. Betty Burnett, on June 17. Here is the text:

Congress memorialized the Oregon Trail in 1978, when the route was designated a National Historic Trail. It ordered the National Park Service to prepare a study for submission to Congress on October 1, 1981. (Three other trails were also involved in the effort by the National Park Service.)

I was called to Denver in May 1979, along with three other people, to counsel two rangers on the trail. They were to travel it from Independence to Fort Bridger (Wyoming) that summer. Their job was to examine the condition of the trail and the historic sites along it, to determine land ownership, to isolate hiking segments, and to make recommendations for preservation and use of the trail and its historic sites.

I was called to Boise a year later, along with another set of consultants, and we did essentially the same thing for the western half of the trail, to Oregon City, Oregon.

The National Park Service report to Congress was in three parts. The first part is a general summary. The second is a book of maps, which is very poorly done but it does show land ownership. The third is an analysis of the historic sites, rut segments, and hiking segments. This book is similar to our Haines book, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail*, which we published on the last day of 1981.

The National Park Service acceded to our suggestion that The Patrice Press issue the map book commercially. This book is due in St. Louis in early August 1982.

Absolutely nothing has happened relevant to the Oregon Trail report since it was submitted to the Congress, despite the fact that the recommendations called only for a coordinating office within the National Park Service. There has not been one line of publicity, to my knowledge, about the report or the need for action on the part of the American people to preserve the trail while there is still some



The founders of OCTA, photographed on Saturday, August 14, 1982. Standing, from left: Gregory M. Franzwa, Merrill J. Mattes, Troy Gray, Billie Gray, James P. Johnson, John A. Latschar and Bob Rennells. Kneeling: Bob Tucker, Bertha Rennells, and Jim Bowers. (Photo by Roger Blair)

The Founding of OCTA

trail to preserve.

Therefore, I have taken action to cause some of the leaders in this little field to meet in Denver on August 12-14, for purposes of forming an association which would assume a leadership role in the preservation of the trail and its historic sites. We should know in a week or two whether enough individuals will be able to attend to make it worthwhile. I have called for input from a dozen people on a set of ideas relevant to this organization which I have tentatively named Western Trails Association. It is designed to encompass the Oregon and California Trails, and hopefully we can pull in some Santa Fe people.

The first person contacted was Dr. John A. Latschar, one of the National Park Service people who surveyed the trail in 1979-80. John was on staff at the Denver Service Center, and we agreed that Denver would be most convenient for most of the people I had in mind. John felt that one day ought to do it, so we settled on Saturday, August 14, 1982.

I went down the Patrice Press customer list and found several who I thought would make good contributors to such an organization. James F. Bowers, of the Denver metropolitan area, certainly would be a good person. So would Troy Gray, who I knew had been exploring the Sublette Cutoff for a decade. Merrill Mattes, the prolific author and scholar, also of the Denver area, would be a natural. Bob Rennells, of Oregon, worked on a study of the trail with the Oregon State Highway Department back in the 1940s. Dr. Merle W. Wells, a fine scholar with the Idaho State Historical Association, was invited.

Charles A. Martin, Omaha, would be a good addition to the group, as would Frenchy Chuinard, M.D. Frenchy was a founder of the Lewis

& Clark trail association, so he could provide some solid start-up counsel. I wanted Dr. Stanley B. Kimball in the mix—he was the leading Mormon Trail scholar. James P. Johnson, the Fort Collins attorney from Colorado's Fourth Congressional District, who sponsored the legislation establishing the Oregon National Historic Trail while he was in Congress, would round out the group.

Latschar suggested we invite Robert D. Tucker, recently retired from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. I seem to recollect that Tom Hunt, of Palo Alto, CA, was invited to attend, but I'm not sure of that. At any rate, ten people came to the founding meeting at the NPS offices in Denver. They included Mattes, Troy and Billie Gray, Johnson, Latschar, Bob and Bertha Rennells, Tucker, Jim Bowers, and myself.

We arrived at the center about 9 that morning. Latschar asked a friend of his, Roger Blair, to monitor the proceedings. Roger was a young ranger with the Bureau of Land Management.

I had prepared a suggested statement of purpose and an outline for a set of bylaws. Jim Johnson had the procedure in hand for incorporation in the state of Colorado, including the Articles which govern OCTA to this day. He offered to establish a not-for-profit corporation at his own expense. Troy Gray didn't like my name for the organization, feeling it should be more specific. Somebody suggested The Oregon Trail Association. Somebody else (I think Troy) thought the California Trail should be included, so the resolution was offered to name the new group, Oregon-California Trails Association.

Next came the matter of the board of directors. Elected unanimously: Merle Wells, Merrill Mattes, Charlie Martin, Bertha Rennells, Jim Bowers, Frenchy Chuinard, John Latschar, Jim Johnson, Bob Tucker, Troy Gray, Stan Kimball, Tom Hunt, and myself. Also elected as an ex-officio was Russell Dickinson, director of the National Park Service. (I had already contacted Russ and he agreed to serve if elected.)

Then we elected officers: I was elected president, and Merrill took the vice-president post. Latschar was elected secretary, Bowers the treasurer, and Johnson, naturally, legal counsel. Other minor posts were also established, to theoretically give all those attending a job.

I offered to edit a quarterly journal without a fee, which I proposed to call the *Overland Journal*, and also to prepare a brochure to be mailed (again at my own expense) to the 2,500-plus customers of The Patrice Press.

Then we talked about conventions, and agreed that they should be offered annually, the charter one being in Independence, the city the NPS team selected to be the eastern terminus of the Oregon Trail. I felt they should be held alternately in eastern and western cities, each June. Since I lived in the Mississippi Valley I knew about the oppressive heat and humidity in the Midwest in summer. While the new board bought everything else offered at the table, they balked at the date, citing the possibility of rain in June. I caved, but I was right.

I contacted Barbara Magerl, who lives in the Kansas City area, and she readily agreed to chair the charter convention.

The meeting ended before noon, with all objectives achieved.

The Founding of OCTA

Blair, who came equipped with a camera, moved all of us outside for a photograph. Then we adjourned to the Black Angus steakhouse in Denver for lunch.

By February, 1983, we had fifty-six charter members, and forty-five of these committed to attend the Independence gathering. That gave Barbara something to go on. But the following month saw the membership jump to 100, and by the end of July the roster stood at 301, with 183 planning to come to Independence. Barbara was simply unflappable, and the convention came off with but one flaw. Not one of those August convention days saw the high temperature less than 100 degrees. There was some consolation—by

nightfall it usually dropped to 95.

I am often asked what specific instance caused all this to come about. There were lots of them, but the one I recall most vividly was destruction of the fine rut swales on private property near Echo, OR. Now you can complain all you want to, but there is no way to bring back ruts that have been plowed up for a potato field. About all one can do is pray the potatoes won't grow, which I did. And they didn't. But I was told that the farmer was unaware that those were the ruts of the Oregon Trail. Obviously, an education campaign was needed.

There were many other instances, both before and after the founding. Tom Hunt was named National

Preservation Officer after Dick Ackerman was elected president, and Dave Welch now serves in that post with distinction.

These are the recollections of the founder, now in his eightieth year, and with a memory dimmed through the mists of a quarter-century. My friends and co-founders Mattes, Troy Gray, Bob and Bertha Rennells, and Jim Bowers, are now gone. (Tucker hasn't been heard from since the founding day.) The organization has survived despite bitter political wars, but with good, tough leadership it can weather all that to carry on the good fight for preservation of the Oregon-California Trail, and the education of the American people of its importance.

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The National Frontier Trails Museum presents the story of the exploration, acquisition, and settlement of the American West. An award-winning film prepares visitors for the interpretive exhibits which guide them along the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails. Quotations from trail diaries are extensively used, allowing pioneer travelers to tell their experiences in their own words. The museum has an authentic covered wagon, relics and artifacts, activities for kids, wagon train swales, and museum store. For more information on the Trails Museum and upcoming special events, please call 816-325-7575, or check our website at www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org.

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See Page 3

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