



MARCH  
1990

# NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER  
P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519 (816) 252-2276

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE --

### HOUSE BILL 1109 PASSES!

On March 7 an OCTA dream came true, at long last. On that date, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to pass HR-1109, giving National Historic Trail designation to both the California and the Pony Express Trails. The roll-call totaled 416 Aye votes. Please send a thank you note to your Representative and if a Co-Sponsor of HR-1109, add a special thanks.

This Congressional session was televised on the C-Span channel with debate on HR-1109 beginning during the noon hour [EST]. It was introduced immediately following a two-thirds voice vote to give similar status to the Juan Bautista De Anza Trail (H-625) from Mexico to California.

In his testimony, Congressman Norman Shumway of California, who introduced the trails legislation, pointed out that there were 42 co-sponsors for HR-1109, including every member whose district the trails cross. (See list on next page) It was also supported by six federal agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Energy. In addition, support came from 48 state and local government entities, 69 private organizations and approximately 615 individuals from a total of 35 states.

Also speaking on behalf of HR-1109, which amends the National Trails System Act, were Congressmen Bruce Vento of Minnesota; Bob Lagomarsino, California; Jim Slattery, Kansas; Tom Coleman, Missouri; Craig Thomas, Wyoming; Doug Bereuter, Nebraska, and Howard Nielson, Utah.

This does not end the OCTA quest, however, because the Senate has yet to pass similar legislation. We are grateful to the Senate for holding hearings on bill S-357 (Pony Express only) and adding the California Trail to it. They also have an Administration bill S-456 which includes both trails.

Members are requested to contact their Senators and urge that they amend S-357 to conform to the wording ap-

proved by the House or adopt HR-1109 to add the California National Historic Trail and the Pony Express National Historic Trail to the National Trails System.

The address for your Representative is:

**Congressman/woman (name)  
House Post Office  
Washington, DC 20515**

The address for your Senators:

**Senator (name)  
Senate Post Office  
Washington, DC 20510**

We want to thank each of you who helped this legislative campaign by writing to your Representative and/or Senators. And, a special thank you to the dedicated members of the Legislative Committee for their enthusiasm and support. The collective efforts of all of us were very effective in achieving this latest victory on the Legislative front. Please keep up the good work because our objective is in sight and is achievable in '90.

Jeanne & Bill Watson  
Legislative Co-Chair

**1990  
OMAHA  
CONVENTION**

**PRELIMINARY  
PROGRAM  
SCHEDULE  
PAGES 8 and 9**

# HR-1109 CALIFORNIA TRAIL AND PONY EXPRESS TRAIL CO-SPONSORS

Alphabetic by State

BEN ERDREICH	AL-6	BIRMINGHAM
NORMAN SHUMWAY - LEAD SPONSOR	CA-14	STOCKTON
CHARLES PASHAYAN, JR	CA-17	FRESNO
BOB LAGOMARSINO	CA-19	VENTURA
ELTON GALLEGLEY	CA-22	SIMI VALLEY
WALLY HERGER	CA-2	CHICO
TONY BEILINSON	CA-23	LOS ANGELES
VIC FAZIO	CA-4	WEST SACTO.
DON EDWARDS	CA-10	SAN JOSE
RICHARD LEHMAN	CA-18	FRESNO
GEORGE MILLER	CA-7	MARTINEZ
RON DELLUMS	CA-8	OAKLAND
BARBARA BOXER	CA-6	BREENBRAE
ROBERT MATSUI	CA-3	SACRAMENTO
HANK BROWN	CO-4	GREELEY
JIM LIGHTFOOT	IA-5	SHENANDOAH
RICHARD STALLINGS	ID-2	REXBERG
LARRY CRAIG	ID-1	MIDVALE
WILLIAM LIPINSKI	IL-5	CHICAGO
JAN MEYERS	KS-3	OVERLAND PK
JIM SLATTERY	KS-2	TOPEKA
PAT ROBERTS	KS-1	DODGE CITY
BEVERLY BYRON	MD-6	FREDERICK
DENNIS HERTEL	MI-14	HARPER WOODS
ALAN WHEAT	MO-5	KANSAS CITY
TOM COLEMAN	MO-6	KANSAS CITY
DOUG BEREUTER	NE-1	UTICA
VIRGINIA SMITH	NE-3	CHAPPELL
BILL HUGHES	NJ-2	OCEAN CITY
JIM COURTER	NJ-12	HACKETTSTOWN
JIM BILBRAY	NV-1	LAS VEGAS
BARBARA VUCANOVICH	NV-2	RENO
RALPH REGULA	OH-16	NAVARRE
PETER DE FAZIO	OR-4	SPRINGFIELD
DENNY SMITH	OR-5	SALEM
BOB SMITH	OR-2	BURNS
LES AuCOIN	OR-1	PORTLAND
AUSTIN MURPHY	PA-22	MONONGAHELA
TIM JOHNSON	SD-All	VERMILLION
JIM HANSEN	UT-1	FARMINGTON
HOWARD NEILSON	UT-3	PROVO
WAYNE OWENS	UT-2	SALT LAKE CITY
CRAIG THOMAS	WY-All	CHEYENNE

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Wish you all could have been with the 80 of us gathered in Salt Lake City on January 25th to charter the Utah Crossroads Chapter. Congratulations to Dave Bigler, Al Mulder, Dr. Jay Haymond, and the rest of the organizing committee for a job well done.

By the time you receive this March issue of NFP, the grand opening of the National Frontier Trails Center and OCTA Headquarters will have been a great success due to a lot of hard work and dedicated effort by many of our members. To avoid having NFP run further behind, we agreed not to hold it for this news story. The June issue will cover these exciting events.

Congratulations to Rose Ann Tompkins for that sharp looking December edition of News From the Plains with its wide variety of interesting articles.

Chuck Dodd has resigned as Chairman of the Publications Committee after several years of effort dedicated to defining what the roles of the Overland Journal and News From the Plains should (and should not) be and supporting the Editors in their efforts to achieve those standards. Many thanks to Chuck for all of his efforts on our behalf.

A recent OCTA letter from Ormie Lamson in California was a pleasant surprise. Her aunt, Helen Jane Snook, M.D., who recently died at age 90, left a preservation trust. Dr. Snook's grandmother traveled the Oregon Trail in 1852. Therefore, Ormie Lamson, as trustee, has offered OCTA the unique opportunity to establish the Helen J. Snook Memorial Fund with the proceeds to be used to support our activities. We gratefully acknowledge and accept this generous offer. Treasurer Jim Budde will set-up the appropriate accounting records.

The California/Nevada/Hawaii Chapter's unexpected gift for our new headquarters building arrived in Independence just in time for the dedication. It is a beautiful 30 by 40 inch full color mosaic of the OCTA logo by Tom Hunt. Jeanne Miller has already made arrangements for it to be mounted on an inside brick wall on the first floor. Many thanks to CA/NV/HI Chapter for such a beautiful gift and special thanks to its artistic creator, Tom Hunt.

After you read the highlights of activities planned by Bob Berry and his 1990 Convention Committee, I am sure you will want to join us in Omaha on August 8-12. Come along and enjoy these exciting programs.

Bill Watson

# NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

## CALIFORNIA-NEVADA-HAWAII

Several committees are hard at work on the 1991 Convention plans. Among this early work, the call for papers has gone out and tour guides are being recruited.

A brief outline of planned outings follows along with a contact person and phone number if you wish more information.

- June 2-3: 40 Mile Desert Trail Tracking, with overnight camping.  
Jim McClain - (916) 273-7320
- June 10: Hennes Pass Road  
Doyle Reed - (916) 753-2759
- June 21-24: Massacre Ranch-Upper High Rock Canyon, an archeology outing with camping  
Tom Hunt - (415) 941-0815
- July 22-23: Mormon-Carson Route to train guides for the 1991 pre-convention tour.  
Tom Mahach - (916) 644-4384
- July 28: Johnson's Cutoff Road and Pony Express Trail visiting recent discoveries.  
Dana Supernowicz - (916) 622-5061
- August 4-5: Sonora Pass, a backpack trip limited to 12 people.  
David Johnson - (408) 274-3718
- Sept 8-9: Donner Trail - Verdi to Donner Summit, limited to 12 cars  
Chuck Graydon & Charlie Harrison - (916) 273-4081
- Sept 15: Sonora Pass, driving with short hikes.  
David Johnson - (408) 274-3718

## TRAILS HEAD

May 19, 1990 is the date of the next chapter meeting. It will be held at Watts Mill, and will include dedication of signs in Overland Park and Olathe, KS.

Watts Mill was originally built in the 1830's. It was once owned and operated by descendents of Daniel Boone. It was torn down after WW II but local civic leaders would like to see it reconstructed near the original site. The master plan involved in this also discusses the possible reconstruction of the home of Jim Bridger, located nearby.

## ARIZONA

Eight chapter members and two guests attended the annual "Hole-in-the-Rock" commemoration on Jan. 27-28. HIRC is a remembrance of the 1879-80 trek of 250 Mormon pioneers who left Escalante, Utah and crossed the Colorado at this point on their way to found the community of Bluff, Utah. The trip to the site is made each year by boat on Lake Powell.

What began as a six week journey by the settlers ended some six months later, with all surviving and three babies born. The precipitous chasm by which the wagon train descended 1000 ft to the river is still highly visible, though several hundred feet of the cleft is now below the lake surface. The site was mind boggling to the latter day trail buffs. On the return journey to Wahweap Marina, there was a stop at Rainbow Bridge, the largest natural arch on earth.

Jack Root

### Schedule

April 7-8 Beale Road Field Trip, Kingman, AZ. Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning will be spent visiting sites and road traces in Kingman and the Sitgreave's Pass area. Saturday evening will be a slide program at the Mohave County Museum by Loren Wilson, local historian, related to the Beale Road in the county.

June 16 2nd Annual Trails Symposium. The call for papers has gone out to the chapter. A proceedings will be published after this all day event.

## WYOMING

The chapter cosponsored two activities in January; the 1990 Humanities Festival at Casper College entitled "The Western Movement: Changing Faces of Wyoming"; and the local showing of a traveling exhibit by the National Endowment for the Humanities entitled "Trails Through Time".

The exhibit was shown from January 3 to 26. Chapter members served as volunteer guides to classes of elementary school children viewing the exhibit and they later received hand-made cards of thanks from the children.

Historians of national stature participated in the Humanities Festival held from January 24 to 26. The name OCTA was heard frequently in the local media. Among presentations of particular interest to trail buffs were:

"The Experience of the Oregon/California Trail Travellers in Wyoming" by Dr. Michael Cassidy, Associate Professor of History, Univ. of WY, and an OCTA member.

Slide lecture on "What They Found: What the Immigrants Thought of the Wyoming Landscape" by Dr. Bruce Richardson, Assistant Professor of English, Univ. of WY.

Reading of excerpts from the "Empey Diary" by Tom Empey, Instructor of Drama, Casper College. Mr. Empey's great-great grandfather was stationed at Mormon Ferry in 1847.

Lecture and dramatic reading "Pioneer Women Tell Their Story" by Dr. Barbara Chatton, Associate Professor of Education, Univ. of WY.

### Schedule:

April 21 - Tour of the Bessemer Bend Area, Custard Cemetery, Avenue of the Rocks and Stuart Cabin Site.

May 12 - Tour of the Douglas area, including LaBonte.

July 14, 15 - Overnight trek from Bridgeport, NE to Laramie WY, including Courthouse and Jail Rock.

MORE CHAPTER NEWS ON NEXT PAGE

UTAH CROSSROADS

More than seventy members and friends of OCTA'S newest chapter, turned out for its first meeting on Jan. 25 at the Utah State Historical Society in Salt Lake City. At that time President Bill Watson personally presented the official charter and reported on national activities.

Since a committee was formed to establish Utah Crossroads last October, OCTA membership in the state has increased more than four times. It now numbers 80 members in 59 individual or family memberships.

At the January meeting, members heard a presentation by LaMar C. Barrett, on the Mormon Trail from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake Valley, opened in 1846 by Lansford Hastings. Dr. Barrett has traveled some 8,000 miles, much of this distance by foot, to complete research for a new book.

Rush Spedden reported on plans for a two-day field trip on October 12-13 over the Hastings Cutoff from Salt Lake Valley to Pilot Springs, north of Wendover, NV. All OCTA members and chapters are invited to participate.

Jay M. Haymond presented to President Watson a copy of the book, "Excavation of the Donner-Reed Wagons: Historic Archaeology along the Hastings Cutoff", published this year by Univ. of Utah Press, autographed by charter members of the chapter.

The chapter elected officers for 1990, including president, David L. Bigler.  
Linda Thatcher

GATEWAY

Schedule

April 21: Sat. Field Trip -Visiting trail sites in the Marysville, KS area.

June 12: 6 pm - A picnic on the grounds and a tour of the Highland Mission in Highland, KS.

July 10: 7 pm - Riverfront Park, St. Joseph, MO. The program will concern the Missouri River. David Mead, President of the Midland Empire Audubon Society, will speak about the area wetlands and the natural history of the 19th century Missouri River. Marilyn Taylor, Lary Bunse, Kathy Bunse and Jackie Lewin will present a trail perspective of the Missouri River.

Francis Peniston, President of the Gateway Chapter, recently wrote the following in the chapter newsletter. *"Upon reading of other chapters' activities, it is easy to envy their immediate access to many historic sites associated with the trails and the emigrants. However, we should not forget our recent experiences with the discovery of a trail segment near the Stallbaumer property in Nemaha County or the other historic sites visited during our June 1989 field trip, Larry Bunse's find of old military road traces east of St. Jo and even a recent Overland Journal correspondent's reference to traces of a diary notation of a road near Grinnell, Iowa. In addition, there is John Leamon's recent discovery of road segments in the Trails Head Chapter area and Cecil Schneider's identification of Doniphan County sites."*

NORTHWEST

The chapter has set up a steering committee to start the planning for the 1993 OCTA Convention in Baker City, Oregon. The committee consists of chapter president, Dick Ackerman, plus Lowell Tiller, Maurice Burchfield, Mary Oman, and Shirley Jennings.

The chapter's annual membership meeting was planned for January 27 in Oregon City. After the business meeting and box lunch, there were to be two presentations. Keith Clark and Lowell Tiller planned a presentation on the Meek Cutoff, including remarks about the "Blue Bucket Mine". Dick Ackerman was to present a slide program and orientation of some of the events which took place between the Indians and the Pioneers at Bloody Point.

For those who didn't receive the last issue of NFP until after the Feb. 28 deadline, I can only say that I hope it doesn't happen again. I did not realize that it could take up to a month for a bulk mailing to reach all of us. Another lesson for me as I struggle to learn the ropes. I hope future issues will arrive before deadlines!

I am doing the text and layout for the newsletter on a Macintosh SE, using PageMaker. If you have access to a Mac, you can send copy to me on disk, thereby saving keystroking time. Files should be sent as text only, allowing me to incorporate them into PageMaker directly.

I take all the information I receive here, put it together into camera ready copy and send it to Jeanne Miller at the Independence office. She has it printed there, and takes care of getting it mailed. Apparently, from the time it leaves my hands until it is in your hands, a month or more may pass.

I think it is important that you be able to count on material getting to out in a timely fashion. As I stated before, this is the way we communicate. For most of us, it is the only way we get the "news". Keep the information coming to me (pictures too if possible), and I will try to pass it on as best I can.

The deadline for the June issue is May 15. Hopefully you will have the issue in your hand before the end of April. It will be the last issue before the convention.

The deadline for the September issue will be August 31. I am moving this deadline back to give more time for convention related stories to be written and pictures to be done.

The deadline for the December issue will be November 15.

I am always open to suggestion, and remember that this is your newsletter.

Rose Ann Tompkins  
1125 W. Mission Dr.  
Chandler, AZ 85224  
(602) 963-3565

# PRESERVATION REPORT

by Tom Hunt, Preservation Officer

## THOUSAND SPRINGS, NV

The draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Thousand Springs Coal-fired Electricity Generation Complex has been issued. This will be a major power generation facility, and it will have great impact on this area of northeastern Nevada. The proposed siting of the eight plant complex will be in Toano Draw approximately 20 miles northeast of Wells, Nevada. It will require a major land exchange between BLM and the power consortium which is making the proposal.

OCTA's concern is with the impacts that this facility will have on the emigrant trail through Thousand Springs Valley and on the important emigrant camping sites at the great thermal springs. Almost without exception all travelers along the California Trail stopped and camped in the vicinity of these springs, and there is hardly a diary which does not mention them. The draft EIS offers several alternatives concerning such items as railroad access, road access, water requirements, etc. OCTA's policy is to see to it that there is as little negative impact upon these historic trails and sites as is possible. One item which is not addressed in this draft is the routing of the power lines out of the area after the plants are on line. This will be watched very carefully.

## BLACK ROCK DESERT-HIGH ROCK CANYON, NV

OCTA has been on record as supporting the concept of an Emigrant Trail National Historical Monument along the Black Rock Desert and High Rock Canyon portions of the Applegate-Lassen Trail in northwestern Nevada. The proposal has been on the back burner while OCTA worked in Congress to get the California Trail included under the provisions of the National Trails Act. Now that it looks as if there will be positive action on the California Trail in this session of congress, preliminary meetings are going on with other interested groups to arrive at a consensus on the Monument proposal which can then be considered by OCTA's national board at its March mid-term meeting.

## PARRAN FLAT, NV

OCTA's appeal of the Nevada BLM's decision to allow the construction of a sodium salt processing facility on this important stretch of the Forty-mile Desert Carson River Route is still under consideration by the National Advisory Council staff. Even if the Council's decision is favorable, there is a good possibility that the BLM will proceed to grant the lease (the Council's decisions are purely advisory). A decision will then be made as to whether to appeal the matter further.

## DONNER TRAIL, CA

The State of California has authorized the expenditure of \$10,000 by the State Parks and Recreation Department to study the Donner Trail and to report back to the legislature with recommendations as to what the state can do by way of trail preservation and coordinating state efforts with federal efforts. OCTA was instrumental in getting this legislation passed, and the CA-NV-HI Chapter is undertaking to provide the maps and other assistance necessary for the state to survey the route and arrive at its recommendations.

## ALTAMONT GAS TRANSPORTATION PROJECT, WY

The EIS on this project is scheduled to be issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission sometime this spring. At that time, OCTA will be able to comment on the proposal. The proposal is of major concern to OCTA as this natural gas pipeline from Canada would be routed through historic South Pass.

## AMOCO CARBON DIOXIDE PROJECTS, WY

The final EIS for these carbon dioxide pipelines has been issued. Several of the proposed pipelines would impact the emigrant trails in Wyoming. The BLM's preferred alternative is to allow the construction of the pipelines contingent upon such adjustments as might be called for after various site-specific surveys. OCTA has requested that these site-specific surveys result in those sorts of adjustments which will protect the trails to the fullest degree possible.

**SEE YOU  
IN OMAHA  
August 8-12, 1990**

---

## COED CONTINUES ADDING DOCUMENTS

Shann Rupp, Documents Assignment Coordinator for COED, recently sent out a listing of surveyed documents to those working on the project. This gave those involved a look at the completed documents as well as those which have been assigned. The list had 316 documents on it, and this was as of the end of 1989. She was asked at a California chapter meeting how many surveys had been done by those in California. She made a tally by state and it is included here for your interest.

### DOCUMENTS SURVEYED, PER STATE:

Arizona	23
California	35
Colorado	13
Illinois	125
Kansas	1
Missouri	10
Nebraska	3
Oregon	3



## OREGON PLANS FOR 1993

The 1989 Oregon legislature declared 1993 to be the 150th anniversary of the Great Migration of 1843 on the Oregon Trail and appropriated \$225,000 in support of the celebration. The Oregon Historical Society was given the responsibility of administering a comprehensive program for the development of the Oregon Trail as a major historical attraction. The state Tourism Division was given the responsibility to promote the Oregon Trail and the 1993 sesquicentennial celebration.

The governor-appointed Oregon Trail Advisory Council proposed a wagonmaster position to coordinate local, regional, and national efforts to develop the Oregon Trail. James H. Renner was appointed as wagonmaster and works out of offices at the Oregon Historical Center, 1230 S.W. Park Ave., Portland, OR 97205.

### NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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

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

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

Rose Ann Tompkins, Editor

# OREGON TRAIL INTERPRETIVE CENTER TO BE BUILT IN BAKER CITY, OREGON

OCTA is planning its 1993 Convention for Baker City, Oregon. That is the year that Oregon will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail. The Oregon Trail Preservation Trust in Baker City plans to open an Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill on May 25, 1992.

Much work has already been accomplished in the planning of this new 23,000 square foot center, with construction scheduled to begin about a year from now.

Several exhibits will be presented at the center. Quoting from the brochure prepared by the Oregon Trail Preservation Trust:

*"—you will encounter the artifacts, photographs, diaries, and memories of the Oregon Trail gathered here. They will draw you into the lives of the ordinary people who, with their extraordinary courage, transformed and still inspire a nation.*

*"As you step outside into the sunlight, you will see with different eyes the panorama of the Blue Mountains, Lone Pine valley, and remnants of the Oregon Trail itself. The view is little changed since the pioneers first saw it. Farther down Flagstaff Hill, you will step back into time at a living history recreation of a Pioneer Encampment. Through Interpretive demonstrations of emigrant life, you will get an upclose view of what it was like to be living and journeying on the Trail.*

*"—At last you will come to the Trail itself. Walk along it. You will be in the footsteps of those who came before; with an understanding of how, step by step, they opened the way for us to blaze our own trails."*

Joyce Badgley Smith, Executive Director of the Oregon Trail Preservation Trust, says the project is moving right along its timeline and Baker City and all those connected with the project are looking forward to hosting the OCTA convention in 1993.

The Trust is offering commemorative bricks for sale to individuals and organizations interested in preserving America's pioneer heritage. These commemorative bricks will be engraved with purchasers' names and will be built into the actual facility at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center at Flagstaff Hill.

If you or your chapter wish more information on being a part of this project through the commemorative brick sale, contact:

Joyce Badgley Smith  
P.O. Box 854  
Baker City, Oregon, 97814  
Phone (503) 523-6391, Ext. 289.

# FUND DRIVE IN NEBRASKA FOR CHIMNEY ROCK VISITOR CENTER

The Nebraska State Historical Society has announced plans for a financial drive to raise funds to build a permanent visitor center at Chimney Rock on the Oregon California Trail near the town of Bayard, Nebraska.

The estimated cost of the project is \$474,200. It would include a visitor center building, a paved hiking trail to Chimney Rock, space for parking 50 cars and other purposes.

As OCTA members know from reading Merrill J. Mattes' book, "The Great Platte River Road", Chimney Rock was the most famous "of all landmarks on the Great Platte River Road". It was mentioned in more diaries of trail travelers than any other landmark.

The center will contain 5,000 square feet of public and administrative space. The bulk of the space will be used for exhibits interpreting the significance of the landmark within the context of overland travel 1841-1866. The exhibits will focus on trail travelers: who they were, why they went west, the kinds of transportation they used, and the possessions they carried.

Pertinent artifacts depicting western migration of the 1840s and 1850s will be displayed. They include the only known original photographs of travelers on the Nebraska portion of the Oregon Trail and a dress worn by a woman on her way to California in 1849. An original set of 1846 maps, made from field notes and journal entries of Capt. John C., Fremont during his 1842-43 exploration of the Oregon Trail, were purchased for the Nebraska State Historical Society by a support group known as "Californians for Nebraska". These 1846 maps will be displayed.

The geological significance of Chimney Rock will also be interpreted in exhibits. The University of Nebraska Museum has agreed to develop displays on the geology of Chimney Rock

and will provide specimens collected around the landmark.

The center will have a small amphitheater and a large electronic map, the latter to illustrate a prerecorded program on trails and the westward movement. By following the map, a visitor will be able to observe where the wagons traveled en route to the west coast.

In addition to the map, there will be two multi-screen presentations of approximately 10 minutes' duration. Appropriate narration will be based on original diaries of travelers.

In 1866, Perry Burgess called Chimney Rock "a great monument of nature", and so it remains. An observation deck on the top of the building will offer spectacular views of Chimney Rock, Scott's Bluff, and the North Platte River Valley.

Since 1967, the Nebraska State Historical Society has maintained a small trailer at the Chimney Rock site. During the summer months in 1989, the trailer, which contains a tiny museum, drew more than 28 thousand visitors. There were numerous days when visitation reached nearly 400, not including many people who did not register because of waiting lines and overcrowding. A permanent visitor center and museum operated the year around will provide an opportunity for thousands of people to learn about this most famous landmark.

The Nebraska State Historical Society currently is accepting funds for the construction of the visitor center through its Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

Remember, all donations to the Nebraska Historical Society Foundation are tax deductible. The Foundation is recognized as a public non-profit organization exempt from income tax under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3).

James Denney

President of the Nebraska chapter of OCTA, Bob Berry, adds the following:

The Nebraska chapter vigorously supports this project and urges all OCTA members to make a contribution so that we can demonstrate the importance of this site on the trail.

OCTA member and recently retired Omaha World-Herald newspaper reporter, James Denney, has volunteered to head up this fund raising project.

OCTA members wishing to contribute can do so by sending their donations, marked "For Chimney Rock Visitor Center", addressed and payable to:

Nebraska State Historical  
Society Foundation  
100 N. 56th Street, Suite 21  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68504

All donations will be recognized in an appropriate way in the interior of the center.

## PRESERVING OUR HISTORIC OVERLAND TRAILS:

The Story of OCTA  
by Ruth Anderson,  
39 pages, 8 1/2" x 11"

Written by OCTA's Historian,  
this soft-cover book tells the  
story of the founding of OCTA  
and the growth and preserva-  
tion activities during the first  
five years.

**\$5.00**

plus \$1.50 P&H

Order from:  
OCTA Headquarters  
P.O. Box 1019  
Independence, MO  
64051-0519  
(816) 252-2276

## PRELIMINARY

### PROGRAM OUTLINE OCTA CONVENTION OMAHA, NEBRASKA, AUGUST 8 - 12, 1990

Wednesday, August 8, 1990

#### MORNING

Symposium covering prerequisites for taking the trail, including, selection of animals, wagons or other means, food and provisions, weapons, medicines, clothing, organizational arrangements and methods of travel.

Panelists include: Dr. Peter D. Olch, M.D.; James Potter, Historian, Nebraska State Historical Society; Michael A. Capps, Historian, National Park Service, Jefferson Memorial; Dorothy Devereux Dustin, Historian.

#### AFTERNOON

Orientation by Joseph Porter, Curator of Western Studies, Joslyn Art Museum, regarding the prized collection of Alfred Jacob Miller and some Karl Bodmer trail related paintings.

Bus Tour to Joslyn Art Museum to view Miller and Bodmer works; followed by crossing of Missouri River and tour of Kaneshville (Council Bluffs) sites, campground areas, American Fur Traders post, trail routes in the area, and river crossing sites.

EVENING - Reception.

Thursday, August 9, 1990

MORNING - Symposium continues.

River and creek crossings - techniques, problems, ferries, fording, and steamboats. Ross Marshall, Engineer and OCTA Vice President.

"The Northern Route of the Non-Mormons: Rediscovery of Nebraska's Forgotten Historic Trail," Merrill J. Mattes, Historian of note.

The Mormons and the trails in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area; their routes to and from, settlements, and river crossings and ferries. Stanley Kimball, Professor, Department of Historical Studies, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

#### AFTERNOON

Bus tour following Old Military Road from downtown Omaha used by emigrants; visit to sites of Winter Quarters of Mormons; following Mormons' route westward to Old Military Road; continuing west to Elkhorn River crossing site and Rawhide Creek crossing on North Side Route. Planned dedication of Marker at Elkhorn River site and demonstration of river crossing on a raft or ferry.

EVENING - Annual Dinner Meeting (Nebraska filet mignon), with presentations of awards and citations.

Friday, August 10, 1990

#### ALL DAY

Bus tour to Kansas border picking up Oregon-California Trail and following same through Jefferson County, NE. Viewing trail remnants and optional short hike (easy and gentle downhill most of the way) along trail to Rock Creek State Park and crossing site. Orientation talk by Wayne Brandt, Park Superintendent. Viewing of deep swales in Park, demonstration of use of wagon and oxen, and cooking of a typical trail meal with buffalo chips. Buffalo chip hunt. Viewing exhibits in Visitors' Center.

Visit to Winslow grave site and trail remnants. He was a member of the Boston-Newton Company. Dedication of new OCTA marker at Winslow grave. Then following trail along the Little Blue River before returning to Omaha.

Saturday, August 11, 1990

MORNING - Symposium continues.

Historical activity and locations which were forerunners of the westward migration, including, Lewis and Clark's Council and Site, Manuel Lisa's Fort, Cabanne's trading post, Major Long's Engineers Cantonment, and Fort Atkinson - at the time the westernmost fort of the U.S., all in the area north of Omaha, along the then location of the Missouri River. Steve Kemper, Superintendent of reconstructed Fort Atkinson.

The artifacts recovered from the steamboat "Bertrand", sunk in the Missouri River in 1865,

*continued* •••••



• • • *continued*

which are typical of the clothing, utensils, food, and equipment available during the time of the westward migration will be discussed by Leslie Peterson, Museum Curator of the Bertrand Collection, Desoto National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Bertrand was located in 1968 and subsequently excavated and its contents removed and preserved.

Interesting and informative film on the trails and the discovery and salvaging of the Bertrand.

#### AFTERNOON

Bus tour of historic sites discussed by Superintendent Kemper. Viewing of reconstructed Fort Atkinson, drill by troops "stationed" at the Fort, living history demonstrations of cabinet making, barrel making, weaponry, blacksmithing, and typical pioneer weapons, and unique exhibits in Visitor's Center. Tour continues to Bertrand Museum to view exhibits and artifacts and recovery site at Desoto Bend.

#### EVENING

Informal dinner, followed by musical program of pioneer era songs and music, then THE RAFFLE.

**Sunday, August 12, 1990**

#### MORNING

Chapter meetings

Annual Meeting of Members of OCTA, the Board of Directors will meet to elect officers and conduct such other business as may be necessary or advisable. Adjournment.

**An Official Program will be included in your registration packet, which you will receive soon.**

Questions: call Charles W. Martin, at 402/392-2158 or write him at 202 S. 71st Street, Suite E, Omaha, NE 68132.



*How many feet walked through South Pass?*

photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

## FORT HALL ENDANGERED BY RIVER EROSION

The OCTA Archeology Committee has learned that Fort Hall, a well known Oregon Trail historic site, is in danger of being destroyed by erosion from a nearby river. This site, built in 1834 as a fur-trapper's trading station, later became a rest stop and trading station for emigrants on their way west. It is now an enrolled National Historic Landmark. It is located in SE Idaho near Pocatello, along the banks of the Snake River. The site was originally located along the river for convenience, but that decision by early traders has now left the Fort in the way of the Snake River's ever-changing march to the sea. Fort Hall is being encroached upon by channels and tributaries of the River and is now surrounded on three sides. Already some of the site has been lost, and it appears that the erosion is moving in the direction of the Fort.

This situation was brought to the OCTA Archeology Committee's attention last year by the National Park Service. The NPS, which oversees National Historic Landmarks, was concerned that if something was not done quickly, the site could be lost. NPS first discovered that a serious erosion problem was occurring at Fort Hall in 1984, and using aerial photographs from several earlier decades, they discovered that the erosional trend toward Fort Hall had been going on since at least the 1940's. The Park Service soon raised alarm of what was going on, but to date only limited work has been done to protect the site.

However, recent developments may lead to the actual preservation of Fort Hall. The Federal Bureau of Reclamation (BuRec), apparently reacting to pressure from the Park Service, has proposed to do archeological and stabilization work in order to save Fort Hall. OCTA has sent a letter to BuRec asking for details on their plans while encouraging them to quickly proceed in the preservation of Fort Hall. Major concerns the Archeology Committee has at this point are 1) that proper arche-

## THE SANTA FE TRAIL GREAT BICYCLE TREK 1990

The Santa Fe Trail Bicycle Committee, with the help and endorsement of the Santa Fe Trail Association and the City of Santa Fe, is organizing a bicycle tour of the Santa Fe Trail corridor for the last week of September and the first two weeks of October. They expect this to be an annual or bi-annual event.

The route will follow the trail as close as possible using only paved public roads. No unpaved or private sections of the trail will be used. Only a limited number of cyclists and motor homes (family and/or friends of cyclists who wish to accompany them) will be allowed on the tour, on a first-come first-serve basis.

It will be organized into three weekly segments of about 300 miles a week, or 50 to 60 miles a day, using the northern route. The first week will cover Santa Fe to Lamar, CO; the second week Lamar to McPherson or Council Grove, KS; and the third week from McPherson or Council Grove to Franklin, MO.

The group will stop each afternoon at a historic place along the trail. Local citizens and SFTA members will conduct brief tours of historic sites related to the trail and present a brief talk about

ological and preservation techniques are used, and 2) that funding is quickly made available. If BuRec cannot get funding through their regular channels, it might be necessary for OCTA to generate public support for special appropriations or for private donations to save Fort Hall.

We are now awaiting a reply from BuRec. The Archeology Committee will continue to monitor the situation and keep the OCTA membership up to date. For further information on this subject, please contact:

OCTA Archeology Committee  
16500 6300 Rd.  
Montrose, CO 81401.

their community's role in trail history.

This is a camping tour with personal gear transported by truck to each camp site. Some motel accommodations are available but must be arranged by individual participants. Camping will be at such places as campgrounds, school grounds, public parks, and private property. Cyclists are responsible for their own food and preparation, though some local help with meals may be arranged.

This is a non-profit project. All camping fees, transportation, food, and other expenses are paid by a fee charged each cyclist, though some communities may help with the donation of camping facilities, entertainment, and perhaps a pancake breakfast or group dinner. Tour leaders, maps, and sag-wagon support will be available.

A commemorative plaque will be given to those cyclists who complete the entire route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Franklin, Missouri.

Volunteers will be needed at each stop to help arrange receptions, local camping and bathing facilities, food, and assist with historic presentations.

To get more information on either participating or volunteering contact:

Willard Chilcott  
Santa Fe Trail Bicycle Committee  
855 Camino Del Este  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
telephone - (505) 982-1282

## OREGON TRAIL PIN

Lapel tack in  
official colors.

**\$4 each**

**\$1 P&H**

Order from:

OCTA  
PO Box 1019  
Independence, MO  
64051-0519

## **NOMINATIONS FOR OCTA AWARDS REQUESTED BY LARRY JONES**

To ensure recognition of members and organizations who make exceptional contributions in furthering OCTA's objectives, nominations are requested for OCTA's Meritorious Achievement Award and National Certificates of Appreciation.

The Meritorious Achievement Award, which is OCTA's highest accolade, is presented for outstanding achievements of lasting significance in the service of the organization and trail preservation. Recipients of the award may be individuals or organizations (such as agencies, cities, or private groups).

National Certificates of Appreciation are given to those who have contributed significantly to the achievement of an OCTA goal.

Nominations for these awards should be sent to:

Larry R. Jones  
6230 San Luis Way  
Boise, Idaho 83709

**prior to June 1, 1990**

## **CALL FOR PAPERS AND PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS 1991 CONVENTION SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**

The 1991 Annual Convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association will be held at the Radisson Hotel, Sacramento, CA from August 14th through the 18th, 1991. Theme for presentations will be The Gold Rush and the Trail. Papers or other, possibly group, presentations on any aspect of the Gold Rush or its transportation network are welcome. Presenters or topic Chairmen are asked to contact:

John M. Townley, Program Chairman  
1555 N. Sierra, #142  
Reno, NV 89503-1723

**by August 1, 1990**

## FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT & THE TRAILS

by Jan A. Roberts  
5706 236th SW  
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043  
phone (206) 778-8503

Many are probably familiar with the "American Guide Series" of books on the individual States in this country. They were prepared and written by people on the 1930's Federal Writers Project (FWP) (after 1939 called the Writers Project). These guide books were issued during the time period 1937 to 1941 and may be the most visible legacy of the FWP/Writers Project.<sup>1</sup>

The popularity of these FWP books is remarkable; book collectors and antiquarian book dealers conduct a lively trade in the used first and second editions. Recently I saw a first edition (1937) of the FWP's Idaho State guide book at an antiquarian book fair priced at \$500; the second edition (revised - 1950) of this Idaho guide had a price tag of \$65!

Not too long ago, I discovered another FWP guide book in the "American Guide Series" for which I was completely unfamiliar with. This guide book, THE OREGON TRAIL, was published in 1939 (under the sponsorship of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association, Inc.) and is one of three books published in a sub-series that can be labeled as the "main-highway guidebooks". As I was to discover, there were about seven highway guides planned for publication before the intervention of controversy about the FWP, and World War II, brought an end to the literary goals of this portion of Roosevelt's "New Deal" program; the employment of Depression era writers, researchers, historians, etc.<sup>2</sup>

THE OREGON TRAIL guidebook attempts to cover the history of 19th Century travel over the Oregon Trail, its branches, and its cutoffs, with 20th Century travel (by automobile) over highways following and/or paralleling the Oregon Trail. For an Oregon Trail scholar the book appears to suffer from the inclusion of too much irrelevant "modern" (1939) material. It is impor-

tant to remember that this guide book - and all other FWP guides for that matter - were intended to be travel guides for automobile tourists at that time (1930s and 1940s). Later research by this writer revealed that these "highway" guides were still largely experimental and that there would be attempts to improve the planned fourth volume, THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL.<sup>3</sup> Whatever faults, perceived or real, THE OREGON TRAIL guidebook does give an interesting perspective of trail history wherever that history related to the experiences of the "modern" auto tourist traveling the same general paths. The guidebook thus provides a "time machine" to the reader that is still of some interest today. On page 101 of THE OREGON TRAIL guidebook there is mention of a companion guide to THE OREGON TRAIL, THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL. Unfortunately this companion guidebook was never published. Even former FWP staff member, Jerre Mangione, author of a book on the FWP, said this was a guidebook that he had no recollection of.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately the National Archives in Washington, DC has a large, well indexed collection of FWP material; one file, labeled "Special Publications", contained a sub file on THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL. A copy of this sub file revealed about 16 pages of correspondence (but no manuscript) regarding the form and content of this planned guidebook, THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL, as well as information on several other planned FWP highway guidebooks.<sup>5</sup>

According to the file material, THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL guidebook would have described the California and Mormon Trails from a point near Fort Bridger (near Granger, WY), in the southwest corner of Wyoming, southwest to the Wyoming/Utah state line then onwards through Utah, Nevada, and ending at the City of San Francisco. Specifically, the highways that would be followed were: U.S. 30-S from Granger, WY, to Echo Junction, UT, then U.S. 189 to Kimballs, UT. From Kimballs, U.S. 40 would be followed westwards through the Great Salt Desert, into Nevada (via the famed

Humboldt River portion of the California Trail) and on to San Francisco. (Today those highways have been entirely supplanted by InterState 80.) The primary side routes to be covered in THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL would mainly be those that led into and out of U.S. 40 in California and Nevada. These routes were those in southern Idaho (the "Cassia City of Rocks" area) and the branch trails leading into northern California, according to the material contained in this file.

Since THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL guidebook was not published there was a suggestion that some of that material was utilized in the FWP/Writers Project state guides published after 1939. Those guides on Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming were examined closely but nothing unusual was noted, yet, clearly there were elements of 19th Century trail travel included in the route descriptions of U.S. 40 and the other highways mentioned above. The correspondence in the file on THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL guide clearly indicated that the use of overland trail journals/diaries would have been far more extensive than the material used in the state guides on this subject.

Although THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL and the other planned highway guidebooks were not published for several reasons ( the oncoming World War II, plus Congressional alarm at leftist/Communist activities of some of the FWP employees) there is a good possibility that the manuscripts survive in the FWP collection at the Library of Congress, and/or the FWP collections that reportedly exist in California, Nevada, Utah, and repositories (the Idaho FWP collection was not saved in toto except for some material that went to the Idaho State Historical Society). I believe it would be worth the effort to try to locate the surviving manuscript (or remnants) of THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL for publication, just to see what kind of guidebook was intended. I suggest volunteers from OCTA's membership in the states of California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and in Washington, DC spend some time searching the remaining FWP records

continued •••••

for material on THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL. It may be that other material (emigrant diaries, etc.) will turn up in these various FWP collections. (This is something I would do myself but it is a job beyond any one person.) The best place to look first is the Library of Congress where the lion's share of the FWP collection (plus numerous unpublished book manuscripts) is held. The latest word has it that the Library's FWP collection is now largely available to the public for examination. If any other OCTA members in the states I mentioned in this article wish to dig into their respective FWP data collections, just let me know and I will provide you with the locations of the other repositories.

NOTES:

1. - For information on this series and the Federal Writers Project, read Jerre Mangione's book, THE DREAM AND THE DEAL, (1972, 1974, and 1983 editions - the 1983 edition was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press); pages 376-396 of this book give a comprehensive list of FWP/Writers Project publications.

2. - The three published FWP highway guides are: THE OCEAN HIGHWAY (1938); THE OREGON TRAIL (1939); U.S. ONE (1939).

3. - National Archives' file on THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL.

4. - Personal communication between Jerre Mangione and Jan Roberts in June 1988.

5. - Guidebooks on U.S. 101, U.S. 91, and U.S. 50 were in the process of being prepared and/or considered in 1938/39. The correspondence in THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL file indicated that U.S. Highway 101 was in preparation and next in line to be published after THE CALIFORNIA TRAIL guide was published; the U.S. 50 guidebook was planned to cover the Overland Mail and Pony Express routes through Nevada; the guidebook on U.S. 91 was planned to be a "border to border" guide but little else has turned up on this planned book other than that Vardis Fisher, the Idaho FWP Director, was asked to consider to do the U.S. 50 and U.S. 91 highway guides. And he may

## UNMARKED GRAVES AND THE LAW

by Mary Conrad, Archeology Committee

In the last two decades native peoples throughout the world have been calling for societies to be cognizant of their beliefs about death and burials.

Many Native Americans feel that Indian skeletal remains have been viewed for too long as archeological specimens. They feel that the remains have not been accorded proper respect. Many Native American cultures exemplify the belief that the dead cannot continue their journeys in the afterlife as long as the journeys have been interrupted. Thus many American Indians would be opposed to the permanent curation of their ancestors' skeletal remains and any burial goods which were intended for use in these long journeys. The journey is complete only when the flesh, bones and burial goods have all returned to dust and thus have rejoined Mother Earth.

Over the years American laws and customs have been developed by a society which is largely non-Indian. Mainstream America, like other parts of the world, often has not been concerned about what the native populations would want. However, times are beginning to change. Some governments have instituted laws which require the reburial of excavated human remains and the accompanying burial goods. The federal government of the United States is considering a reburial law, but, in the meantime, over two dozen states already have passed laws governing procedures to follow when unmarked graves are discovered.

Why should this reburial issue be of concern to OCTA members? Even though the impetus for the passage of reburial laws has come from Native

---

have; Mangione reported in his book on the FWP that Fisher complained to him that three of Fisher's book manuscripts prepared for the FWP apparently were lost in the FWP bureaucracy in Washington, DC. The FWP material sent to Washington, DC, went mostly to the Library of Congress.

Americans, these state laws usually pertain to any unmarked burials that are encountered. As OCTA has had and continues to have a very active program of marking graves and sites along the trails, this exemplifies OCTA's dedication to historical preservation. OCTA wishes to continue to support these activities which are completed in appropriate ways.

Trails enthusiasts who are interested in preserving emigrants graves need to become familiar with the unmarked graves law in their own state, so that they are assured that they are operating within the law. These state laws vary considerably. As more states adopt unmarked graves laws, what was legal in one state last year may not be legal this year. This is true for Kansas, which adopted a reburial law in 1989.

When preservationists "fix up" emigrant graves by adding fences, signs, etc., state authorities charged with upholding an unmarked graves law likely would not be concerned. However, if human skeletal remains and/or burial good are exposed, a state grave site law more likely could be violated. I repeat that these state laws vary greatly, so an individual needs to become familiar with the local legalities. Even if the exposed bones and/or goods are old enough to be considered archeological in nature, the appropriate authorities need to be contacted. The preservationist who wants to cover up the exposed bones himself, out of respect, may or may not be able to do this legally, depending on the particular state law. If exposed human bones appear to be quite old, Kansas law now would require that the local authorities contact the Kansas State Historical Society, which would assume jurisdiction.

If your state has an unmarked graves law, you need to become familiar with the state's definition of an "unmarked grave." Emigrant graves may or may not be considered unmarked graves depending on the circumstances and on the local law.

As preservationists, we may need to be aware of the laws of each state.

# STATUS OF RICE-TREMONTI HOME IN RAYTOWN, MO

*The following article is taken from the Trails Head chapter newsletter.*

Sylvia Mooney, the founder of the Cave Springs Association, now is promoting restoration of the Rice home on Blue Ridge Boulevard in Raytown, about three miles south of Interstate-70. The Rice-Tremonti Association needs to raise \$300,000 within ten years to pay the remaining portion of the mortgage. Purchase of the home is the first phase toward restoration.

The present Rice house was built in 1844 on land bordering the Santa Fe Trail. Coffee Rice, a farmer, believed that trade on the Santa Fe Trail would prosper, so he placed his farm right beside the trail. After the decline of Fort Osage, Independence did increase in importance on the trail. There were

springs on or near Rice's farm, as well as the springs south at Cave Springs. A spring in the area of the original farm does run year round, but no longer is drinkable due to pollution.

When the house was built, the Rice family moved from the original log cabin, which was replaced with an ice house. Coffee Rice was a slaveholder who built at least three slave cabins. These cabins probably dated to the 1830s when the family moved to that location. These slave cabins fell into disrepair. Dr. Tremonti, a later resident, rebuilt the presently standing slave cabin from the remains of the original slave cabins, which were described as forming a circle.

When Coffee Rice died on October 14, 1849, he left the home to his son. According to family legend, the parents gave the son a slave named Aunt Sophia (or Sophie). Hence the reconstructed cabin sometimes is called Aunt Sophie's cabin. Aunt Sophia fled with the family to Texas during the Civil War. The Rice home is one of the few slaveholders' homes in the area that was not burned. In 1863 Sophia was freed, but stayed with the Rice family.

In 1906 a new family took ownership of the farm. Dr. Tremonti bought the home in 1930, where he lived until his death in the 1940s. Mrs. Tremonti continued to live there until she moved to a nursing home in recent years. She is now in her mid 80s.

The Rice-Tremonti Association would like to restore the home to its 1840s look as much as is possible. The roof has not been replaced since the Tremontis replaced it in 1931. The upstairs had not been completed until the 1930s when the Tremontis put in dormers and more bedrooms. The extra bedrooms were needed as Dr. Tremonti was an abortionist, when abortion was illegal under any circumstances. The kitchen probably would not be included in the authentic restorations as it also was added by the Tremontis. The present kitchen possibly could become an office area. The association is purchasing almost five acres surrounding the home. The total purchase price for the house and land is \$370,000. The association hopes to stop any further encroachments. When Blue Ridge Blvd. was widened, the stone wall which had been built by slaves was torn down, according to Mrs. Tremonti. The association hopes that the Rice home can become a viable tourist attraction. If you would like more information or would like to make a donation, contact:

Sylvia Mooney  
7120 Harecliff Drive  
Kansas City, MO 64133

## AWARD GOES TO SUSAN BADGER DOYLE

The Montana History Conference met in Helena on October 26-28, 1989. Among their activities were the awarding of four special awards. The 1989 Merrill G. Burlingame-K. Ross Toole Award for the best article-length manuscript submitted by a student of Montana or western history was presented to Susan Badger Doyle. Her article, "The Bozeman Trail, 1864-1868: Tribal Perspectives," appears in the winter 1990 issue of MONTANA, THE MAGAZINE OF WESTERN HISTORY.

Susan is on the Board of Directors of OCTA and is also our Secretary. She is a doctoral student in American Studies at the University of New Mexico and holds master's degrees in anthropology and library science from the University of Michigan. The article is part of her dissertation research on the Bozeman Trail. Susan lives in Albuquerque and is an active member of the Arizona Chapter.

### CLOSE-OUT SALE

William H. Jackson  
Prints

Reproductions of water color paintings of legendary landmarks:

**CROSSING THE  
SOUTH PLATTE**

13"x20" was \$100

**APPROACHING  
CHIMNEY ROCK**

10"x15" was \$85

**INDEPENDENCE ROCK**

13"x15" was \$85

**NOW:**

All three for

**\$29.95**

plus \$3.50 P&H

Order from:  
OCTA Headquarters  
P.O. Box 1019  
Independence, MO  
64051-0519  
(816) 252-2276

# TRAIL BUFFS RENDEZVOUS ON HASTINGS CUTOFF

by Pat Loomis

The caravan of 4WD vehicles met at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, September 11, 1989 to follow the Hastings' route over the mountains, across the salt flats and desert, down around the Ruby Mountains, finally reaching the main California trail west of Elko, Nevada. The OCTA group of 25 took six days to cover the nearly 500 miles, an almost lost segment of the California Trail which takes its name from Lansford Hastings.

Hastings, a 23 year old lawyer with aspirations for becoming president of California, laid out a route he said would cut 300 to 400 miles off the longer route via Fort Hall. He published a guide and personally persuaded several wagon trains to try the new route, much of which he had not been over himself. It was no shortcut for the 87 member Reed-Donner Party in the summer of 1846.

Diaries kept kept by several on the route, including James Frazier Reed, were followed by our caravan. Led by Doyle and Fiona Reed of Davis, CA, the motorized caravan followed much of the original trail, driving in the faint wagon traces over mountains and desert and hiking short sections impassable for vehicles (including three miles

up to the summit of Big Mountain from Morman Flat in the Wasatch Mountains).

The cutoff climbed over the nearly 8,000 foot Bear River-Great Basin divide west of Fort Bridger, then up through willow-choked canyons of the Wasatch range to Salt Lake Valley. From Salt Lake, Utah, we crossed Skull Valley to Redlum Springs and climbed Hastings Pass—from which the emigrants got their first view of Pilot Peak, seventy miles away across the salt flats. We drove through Reed-Donner Pass and had lunch at Donner Springs, at the base of Pilot Peak where the Reed-Donner party rested to recruit their oxen.

From Big Springs, west of Highway 80, the four-wheelers visited Flowery Lake, climbed over the Pequop Mountains and churned through sand and sage to Mound Springs, then on to beautiful spring-fed Ruby Valley, with its spectacular mountain backdrop. Following the Hastings' trail and the later Pony Express route around the Rubys, the OCTA caravan drove north along Huntington Creek to its confluence with the South Fork of the Humboldt River. We crawled down to the mouth of six-mile canyon to the campsite of the Reed-Donner party. From the rim of this

canyon, we looked north to the spot where the South Fork joins the main river...the end of the Hastings cutoff.

We modern travelers—equipped with CB radios, ice chests and air-conditioned vehicles—nonetheless experienced some of the problems which beset the wagon trains. No wagon wheels had to be replaced, but flat tires had to be changed, and dust frequently forced our caravan to spread out more than a mile through the desert and salt flats. While the emigrants had to double team to get out of the steep gullies, our leader had to be winched out of a seemingly bottomless wash. Whereas the Hastings cut-off consumed weeks of precious time for the ill-fated Reed-Donner party, the OCTA "wagon train" spent only six long days covering the route. It was a memorable trek. We four-wheelers came away with renewed respect for the pioneers of 1846, and perhaps a better understanding of why Lansford Hastings chose this seemingly circuitous route.

Now that the Hastings cutoff has been found passable for gas-powered wagons, OCTA plans to produce a driving guide so other history buffs may have the experience these adventurers had this summer.



*Virginia Hammerness, Ruth Root, Pat Loomis and Jack Root picnic on the trail at Morman Flat, a Donner Party campsite near Henefer, Utah.*

*photo by Mary Mueller*

**OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION**  
P.O. Box 1019 / Independence MO 64051-0519

---

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