

# NEWS FROM THE PLAINS



THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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June 1988

## Convention Preview

By Jackie Lewin

Don't miss the 1988 Annual Meeting of the Oregon-California Trails Association. Besides the papers, workshops, and educational tours describing the eastern end of the trail, there will be plenty of time to visit with old and new friends.

One place for fellowship will be at the Iowa-Sac-Fox Presbyterian Mission just outside Highland, KS. The Trails West and the River Crossings field trips will converge there for an evening meal.

That meal will include barbecued beef and barbecued ribs, potatoes, baked beans, salads and relishes. Wouldn't the emigrants have loved such a meal as they camped near the site!

The mission, a three story red brick building completed in 1846, included a manual-labor boarding school for the Indians and was established by Rev. Irvin and his wife. Today it is a museum operated by the Kansas State Historical Society.

Many diaries and journals included notes on the mission, including this entry by Joseph Price in May, 1850: "... came to the Iowas mision or agency it is a beautiful place there is a large Farm in a high state of cultivation established by georvnament for the purpose of learning the Red men of the west to cultivate the Soil there is also a School or misionary establishment for teaching the children of those wild sons of Adam."

Don't miss your chance to visit the mission and attend the other events of the 1988 convention!

## Directors Adopt Changes



**TAKING A BREAK** at the mid-year board meeting are Dr. George Watkins III, Mary Martin, Tom Hunt, and Charles W. Martin, Sr.

The annual mid-year board of directors meeting was held March 19-20 in Independence, MO.

For the first time in OCTA's existence, many directors arrived a day early to hold informal discussions and exchange committee ideas.

Also for the first time the board worked to adopt a pro-active budget, designed to establish workable allotments to achieve each objective.

Don Buck, secretary, submitted a "Proposed Restructuring of the National Organization." Most of the provisions were approved.

A realignment of the chain of responsibility has been adopted to ease excessive demands on the role of the president.

Many areas of activity and projects have been clustered and assigned directly to other officers. Because of the urgency of its work, however, the Legislative Action Committee will report directly to the president.

Another recommendation called

for the study of how officers of the board are elected and formalization of the process with more input from the entire board.

Another significant change is broadening the focus and renaming the former Nominating Committee. To encourage more input from chapters in the future, the committee will become the Nominating and Leadership Recruiting Committee.

The Executive Committee plan, which had been adopted at Casper, was deemed unworkable at this time and was discontinued.

### Reminder

July 11 is the last day before late registration fees go into effect, and the last day that hotels have set aside rooms for OCTA. July 25 is the last date to cancel convention registration without a penalty.

## From the President's Desk

All directors, officers, and many committee chairpersons and local chapter representatives were present for the mid-year board meeting March 19-20 in Independence, MO.

A day or two of informal discussions preceded the official meetings.

During that time we visited the current OCTA Headquarters in City Hall and the future site of our Headquarters, the National Frontier Trails Center.

City Manager Bill Bullard gave us a good update on the current phase and future development of our location.

We had a full agenda for the day and a half of business sessions. We wrestled with the problems of budget: content, computerization, and CONTROL! We realized that a step long discussed now has to be implemented: a dues increase will take effect September 1 for some categories.

We dealt with the challenge of preservation and its legal ramifications. We discussed how best to build membership.

A proposal to reorganize our structure for better efficiency and shared responsibility among directors will result in an OCTA Policy Book. We hope to have ratification of these policies at the St. Joe convention.

One of the major steps we took was the hiring of our first paid office manager. This was critical to smooth operation of our Headquarters and in agreement with the understanding we have had with our volunteer office manager, Elaine McNabney.

We are growing and with that comes the usual growing pains. We face the task of keeping a grasp on where we are while planning for the future.

I wish to personally thank all those who took time from their busy schedules to participate in the mid-year sessions.

*Your president,  
Dick Ackerman*

## Changing of the Guard

### Thanks Elaine

Jeanne Miller has been hired as our permanent office manager and began working at Headquarters on May 2. The only change our members will notice is a new name and increased efficiency!

I have enjoyed my months here helping OCTA get the office open and running. Now I look forward to being a "real" volunteer.

*Elaine McNabney*

### Welcome Jeanne!

An Independence native, Jeanne Miller's background and experience seem tailor-made for our Headquarters position.

Vice-president of the Independence School Board for twelve years and president for four years, she has lobbied in Washington on behalf of public education for the School Boards Association.

For thirteen years Jeanne was affiliated with Herald House Publishing, merchandizing books. Her most recent post was Membership Services Coordinator at the Kansas City Museum, where her duties included working with volunteers.

In addition, she has served in leadership roles in many other non-profit and charitable organizations.

## Publications Committee Formed

A Publications Committee has been formed to coordinate the production of OCTA's two publications, the *Overland Journal* and the *News from the Plains*. This group will set editorial policy, advise on advertising, and confer on technical aspects.

The following have been chosen for the committee: Judith Austin of Boise, ID, coordinator of Idaho State Historical Society publications; JoAnn Levy of Woodland

Hills, CA, author of numerous history articles and a book on women in the California Gold Rush; and Dr. Harold Smith of Parkville, MO, Library Director of Park College.

*Chuck Dodd, Chairman  
Publications Committee*

## Legislation on Hold

Last fall the National Park Service completed its study and recommendation that the California Trail and the Pony Express Trail should be designated National Historic Trails.

In Washington it passed through all Park Service reviews quickly with flying colors.

The bill slowed down in the Office of Management and Budget because of federal budgets occupying center stage.

In the meantime Congress has a nearly full agenda for their very short 1988 schedule of hearings and action in this election year.

With these delays we may not get the bill passed this year. If letters are needed later, members will be notified by an alert.

*Jeanne & Bill Watson  
Legislative Co-chairs*

## Dues Increase

Reluctantly your board of directors has approved the following increase in dues for several categories. Effective September 1, 1988 for all new members and all renewals:

Individual.....	\$ 25
Family.....	\$ 30
Life.....	\$750

## Deadline

**NEXT DEADLINE**  
for *News from the Plains*  
**AUGUST 30**

# Education Committee Gears Up

Fourteen members now comprise the Education Committee, which has embraced a multi-faceted program.

Originally designed to be a Curriculum Committee, the scope has broadened and will now focus on education for all, not just students.

Steps to reach its goals include developing a list of resources readily available for trail education, reading lists for various ages and groups, supplemental curriculum materials, a speakers bureau, and slide and video shows.

Your input is welcome. To give recommendations on books, the age level, or blatant errors you have discovered in publications, write: Mary Conrad, 3900 N. 55th St., Kansas City, KS 66104.

To join the speakers bureau, write: Robert L. Munkres, 170 Lowery Lane, New Concord, OH 43762. Provide areas of interest or specialization, previous experience, format/medium proposed, type of audience preferred, distance you are willing to travel, and honorarium or expenses required.

Ruth Anderson and Shirley Keran of Minnesota are compiling a list of books and articles written by OCTA members, relating to historic trails. To add information for their list, write to: Ruth Anderson, 330 S. Highland, New Ulm, MN 56073.

Working with the Adult Ed and senior high areas will be Mary Lou Lyon. She would like to hear from OCTA members who teach these levels and especially from anyone who has found a "decent text." Her address: 879 Lily Ave., Cupertino, CA 95014.

Other members on the committee include Maurice Burchfield, Colleen Curtis, Dr. Jack Holmes, Jack McGee, James Mecartea, Jack & Julia Simpson, Susan Wickum, and Nancy Wilson.

*Bill Hill*  
*Education Committee Chairman*

# Preservation Activity

Thanks to your letters and a joint visit to Parran Flat by representatives of OCTA, the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the Nevada BLM, the Nevada SHPO withdrew its previous concurrence with the Nevada BLM determination that this magnificent section of the Carson River 40-mile Desert Emigrant Trail was not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. They ruled it *is* indeed eligible.

The Nevada BLM has referred the matter to the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for its ruling as to eligibility.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to write. The importance of your letters cannot be overstated.

\* \* \*

Federal legislation to protect, at long last, City of Rocks by making it a National Reserve was introduced in the Senate by Idaho Senators McClure and Symms, and subsequently passed by that house. Unfortunately, some very controversial "water rights" language was inserted in the Senate bill which, apparently, makes the bill unacceptable to conservationists and many members on the House of Representatives subcommittee who must consider the bill. The National Preservation Office and the Idaho Chapter are working to find a way out of the present impasse. This may require another major letter-writing effort by OCTA members. You will be kept informed and notified if your help is needed.

*Tom Hunt*  
*National Preservation Officer*

\* \* \*

*(Note: The following excerpts came from a letter which Maurice Brett wrote from his home in England to the BLM in Nevada.)*

"I come from a country which has taken enormous pains to preserve for future generations those remains that are uncovered of our national heritage. Perhaps because of the heterogeneous nature of our ancestry, such preservation

is of interest not only to the natives but to those of many others who contributed to it—Angles, Saxons, Gauls, Romans, Vikings, and Norsemen to mention a few.

"And, yet, there is nothing to compare in all our history with the achievement of those modern pioneers who set out to settle the West. These were people who were not driven out by armed might but simply went because they saw it as their destiny to do so.

"Americans visiting this country, gazing in awe at some ruined pile of centuries old stones, will say they have nothing like it at home. Maybe, but what you do have, you will not have much longer if you allow it to be destroyed. There is so little left to preserve in the West—for the sake of future generations, not only in the USA, but worldwide, halt the decline now."

\* \* \*

On May 26th Karen Buck and Bob Rennells took part in a BLM meeting in Rock Springs, WY. The two OCTA directors have been named to an Oregon-Mormon Trails Preservation Committee.

In early June a cooperative management agreement was signed on behalf of OCTA with the Wyoming BLM on the Nancy Hill gravesite near Kemmerer.

As a follow-up, on July 6th a standard OCTA grave sign will be placed on Nancy Hill's grave by area Boy Scouts, a representative of the BLM, and a number of OCTA leaders. The sign was paid for by Hill descendants.

*Bob Rennells*  
*Asst. Preservation Officer*

## Learn About LEWIS & CLARK

Join an active group of historians, young and old, and follow the exciting Lewis and Clark Trail in study and travel. Annual dues only \$15.00. Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc. 2001 Upper River Drive/RR4433, Great Falls, MT 59401.

# Chapter Reports

## Arizona

Jack and Ruth Root journeyed to Independence, MO. to represent the Arizona chapter at the mid-year board meeting. They presented the request that the chapter be recognized formally. The board so moved.

Lured by the intrigue of the old road, Susan Badger Doyle and Jack Root joined in the California-Nevada chapter's Mojave Road Rendezvous, expertly led by Don Buck.

Nine hardy members trekked to the El Morro National Monument in northern New Mexico on April 16 and held a meeting in Bob & Betty Lee's motor home. A surprise snowfall added an unexpected twist. Following the meeting the group viewed the historic inscriptions dating back to Onate in 1605. Aubrey Haines also gave a talk on Beale's Road.

On July 16th the group will meet at the home of Harland and Rose Ann Tompkins in Chandler for an important planning session for the chapter's future. There will be a pot luck meal, beginning at 2 P.M., followed by slides and video presentations on historic trails.

*Jack Root, Pres.*

## California

With two highly successful trail outings completed and one currently taking place, the chapter is looking forward to the next three.

July 15-17 there will be a back-packing trip for a dozen members, heading out from Caples Lake and camping for two nights. Leaders: Frank Tortorich and Steve Larmore.

Paved and graded roads that are compatible with family cars will be featured on the August 20-21 outing on the Mormon Route to West Pass. Leader: Tom Mahach.

A walking tour of the 1852-53 Johnson's Cutoff, 1850's Pony Express Trail and the Placerville-Virginia City Wagon Road will be the lure for the September 3 trip. Leader: Dana Supernowicz.

*Frank Tortorich, Pres.*

## Colorado

A meeting was held on Saturday, June 11 at which OCTA member Donald Hall gave a presentation on "Trail of Destiny, Oregon-California 1840-1850."

Two of Mr. Hall's great-grandfathers traveled the trail to California in 1850.

The meeting was held at the Westminster Municipal Center.

For information on this chapter, contact:

Marjorie Walker  
958 Valley Road  
Evergreen, CO 80439  
(303)526-9148

or

Barbi Dailey  
3588 S. Nucua St.  
Aurora, CO 80013  
(303)690-7814

## Gateway

The bi-monthly meeting, held in May, featured Dr. Harmon Mothershead, Chairman of the History Department at Northwest Missouri State University.

Dr. Mothershead presented a preview of his paper, "River Town Rivalries," that will be given at the OCTA convention. He also shared information on his research for the paper.

The evening of May 26 the chapter sponsored a ride on the "Spirit of St. Joseph" Riverboat. After a buffet supper, there was some interpretation of the Missouri River and crossings in the area.

The research committee has now collected over 100 diaries which are housed at the St. Joseph Museum, most of which describe the St. Joseph area as the jumping-off point. Chapter members have been reading these as background for the convention.

In addition, members are preparing to welcome fellow OCTAns and learning skills they will need to serve as hosts and hostesses during registration, meetings, and field trips, and as tour guides on tours.

*Dr. James V. Mehl, Pres.*

## Idaho-Montana

Signage work in cooperation with the BLM is continuing and is expected to be completed in the Boise district by the end of this summer.

Legislative efforts on behalf of the City of Rocks is continuing.

Committees are now being formed in preparation for the 1989 convention in Boise. Dry runs for timing and routes are taking place as a part of planning convention field trips.

*Larry Jones, Pres.*

## Nebraska

Serving as chapter officers for the next year will be: Bob Berry, chairman; Vice-chair East—Kim Naden; Vice-chair Southeast—Estaline Carpenter; Vice-Chair East Central—Russell Genung; Vice-chair West Central—Nellie Lydic; Vice-chair West—Joseph Fairfield; Secretary Betty Scheinost; and Treasurer "and everything else"—Charles W. Martin.

Plans for the 1990 convention in Omaha are getting underway and lots of help is needed. Contact Charlie Martin or Bob Berry to offer your services.

On July 16 Karl Barasel of Massachusetts will lead a tour of the South Platte River Crossings. It will set out from the west side of Sutherland at 9:30 A.M. This will be a prelude to the big event next day: dedication of the California Hill marker.

*Bob Berry, Chair.*

## Northwest

In early May a group of Northwest chapter members headed for the Gold Fields! These would-be Forty-Eighters retraced the route of the 1848 Oregon to California Gold Rush trips, later widely used by those coming from 'the states' to California.

On June 4 about forty descendants of Catherine Bonnett Butts gathered at a highway wayside park near the little community of Tygh Valley, Oregon. They were

met by a larger number of Northwest Chapter members, a television crew, and other invited guests. The family members took part in the dedication of markers recently placed at the grave of Catherine and three unknown pioneers who died on the Meek Cutoff in 1845.

After opening ceremonies at the park, a car caravan headed out the six miles to the gravesite. A drizzle had turned the roads to grease and cars slid everywhere until the decision was made to drive over the desert. That worked out well.

The group then returned to the park for the greatest and largest Butts family reunion ever held, according to the family. Many of them had never met each other. Besides those from the Washington-Oregon area, those attending included: Susan and Todd Reilly from California, Bob and Aletha Templman from Nebraska, and Barbara Nault who flew in from Anchorage, Alaska for the event.

Just being part of this dedication and preservation project certainly lifted the hearts and spirits of all Northwest Chapter people present.

*Dick Ackerman, Pres.*

## Southeast

Efforts are continuing to try to bring about a chapter in the southeastern part of the country. Any ideas on how to bring this about are welcome.

Regardless of the participation in such a chapter, if you are going to the St. Joseph convention, Clyde Welsh would like to hear from you.

Clyde Welsh  
706 Novarese St.  
Memphis, TN 38122  
(901)683-1254

## Trails Head

Charlie Martin, Sr. came down from Omaha on April 21 to present a program on the "Pony Express Trail." Charlie drew upon his extensive collection of slides to illustrate the talk.

Pauline Fowler, Trails Head member from Independence, has helped with the recent National Park Service map process of the Santa Fe Trail.

"Architecture & Landscape along the Oregon Trail," an exhibit of 60 photographs by Robert T. Mooney, professor of architecture at the University of Illinois, was co-sponsored during the month of May by Trails Head chapter and the Johnson County (Ks.) Museum. Robert W. Richmond, former president of the American Association for State and Local History, was the speaker at the opening reception at the Museum. The project was partly funded by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities. As a result of the project, Trails Head chapter is distributing free maps of the historic trails in Johnson County.

On June 18th Trails Head held a Trail Trek from the eastern Kansas State Line to the campus of the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Along the Oregon Trail they stopped to honor those who have helped to sign or promote the trail in the community. Stops included Lone Elm Campground and Blue Mound. On the K.U. campus the final program was given by David

Dary, noted western writer and instructor of journalism at K.U. Dary was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for his book *Cowboy Culture*.

*Ross Marshall, Pres.*

## Wyoming

Jude Carino of the Casper BLM office gave a program on trail archaeology for the chapter on May 11.

On May 7th a small but dedicated group turned out on a 40 degree day to do a mini-trip. Stops included Robert Stuart's cabin site, Sgt. Custard Cemetery, and the Gothberg swales, near where a plant was recently built.

June 25-26 there will be a tour by the State Historical Society just like the one for OCTA last year: Ft. Fetterman, Ayres Natural Bridge, and the Sun Ranch area. Many local OCTA people will join the tour.

A picnic is tentatively planned for August.

*Art Randall, Pres.*

## In Respectful Memory

William Bragg, Wyoming historian and author, passed away in May. Bill was the speaker at OCTA's gathering at Ft. Casper during the 1987 convention. He also donated the Pony Express medallion which we dedicated at First Interstate Plaza in Casper. Bill had written several books and many articles, winning the Western Writers of America's "Golden Spur" Award for a short work of fiction.

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Pauline Henderson Boyer, daughter of the legendary Paul Henderson of Nebraska, has passed away. She had assisted Merrill Mattes with planning the Henderson Memorial, one of the most significant aspects of the Scottsbluff convention.

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Buzz Eckenburg, who took part in the Old Mojave Road Rendezvous in early April, passed away April 29. He was active in OCTA

and the Pony Express and spent many years searching out routes across western states. He owned a large collection of relics which he hoped would one day be displayed in an OCTA museum.

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Word has been received of the recent death of David Turner. He was an OCTA member and owner of Yellowstone Books.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS
HIGH ROCK CANYON FUND: Pat Loomis
PRESERVATION FUND: Dick & Trudy Ackerman Helen & Jack Holmes Isabel & Bob Huntoon Blye & Jack McGee Peggy & Ted Montgomery Jean & Bob Pruitt Roy Schapler June & George Watkins Ella Mae & Bert Young.

# Johnson Ranch Archaeological Report Submitted

An article in the *Overland Journal* (Vol. 4 No. 1) by Jack and Richard Steed outlined their exploration of the Johnson Ranch at the east edge of the Sacramento Valley. In 1847 rescue workers for the Donner Party headed out from the ranch and survivors were brought back there.

The article generated widespread interest in their efforts and in September 1987 OCTA contracted for professional research at the site. Fieldwork was conducted October 16-20, directed by Jonathan C. Horn, co-owner of Alpine Archaeological Consultants of Montrose, CO.

Horn has a B.A. in history and recently concluded an M.A. in Anthropology. He has ten years experience involving projects in eight western states.

Assisting with research were Betty Lee, OCTA's Archaeology Committee chairman, and OCTA members Jack Steed, Ruth Allen, and Bill Knorr.

A comprehensive report, from which these brief excerpts are taken, has been submitted to OCTA. Major points include:

The adobe house at the Johnson Ranch was built in 1846 and was the first habitation reached by immigrants who crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains by the Truckee (Stevens-Donner) Route of the California Trail. The ranch signified the end of the trail for weary travelers.

Its historical significance is multiplied by its Donner Party rescue role. Reportedly nearly half of the 1849 gold-stimulated traffic into California passed through the Johnson Ranch.

John C. Fremont and Kit Carson camped there in 1846 on their way to the Bear Flag Rebellion in Sonoma. General Stephan Watts Kearney and his troops stayed there in 1847, heading back to Ft. Leavenworth at the end of the War with Mexico.

In 1850 or 1851 J.L. Burtis built a hotel at what was known as Johnson's Crossing of the Bear River. It may have been built because of use of Johnson's Crossing by the Nevada-Sacramento stage

in 1850. Unfortunately, the stage used a different route the next year. Carson Pass soon was favored over Donner Pass and the Johnson Ranch area declined.

Although it was reported that the Johnson Ranch house washed away in a great flood in 1862, recent research shows the house may have deteriorated prior to the flood and was uninhabited.

Hydraulic mining in 1853 resulted in great siltation of the river. It rechanneled itself about a mile south. Johnson's Crossing was reported as effectively abandoned in 1878 but artifacts appear to show activity at the Burtis Hotel into the 1920s.

The Johnson Ranch site is located on two low hills immediately north of the river's flood plain. A concrete irrigation ditch, built in 1972, runs east-west from Camp Far West Reservoir along the old river course. A gravel road follows this ditch, joining a levee-top road just southwest of the site. The levee and levee-top road then continue northeast about 225 feet. The levee ends at a hill slope and the road becomes a turnaround.

About 120 feet up the levee road, a smaller levee was built, running north about 120 feet. Apparently it was built to allow vehicles to pass onto the main levee from a trace road. This trace is very likely the California Trail leading to Johnson's Crossing.

It is no longer evident where the trail actually crossed the river. However, a stone marker at the former river channel reads: "Donner Emigrant Trail, Bear River Crossing, 1844-1876, Erected by Wheatland Historical Society, April 1972."

## Artifacts

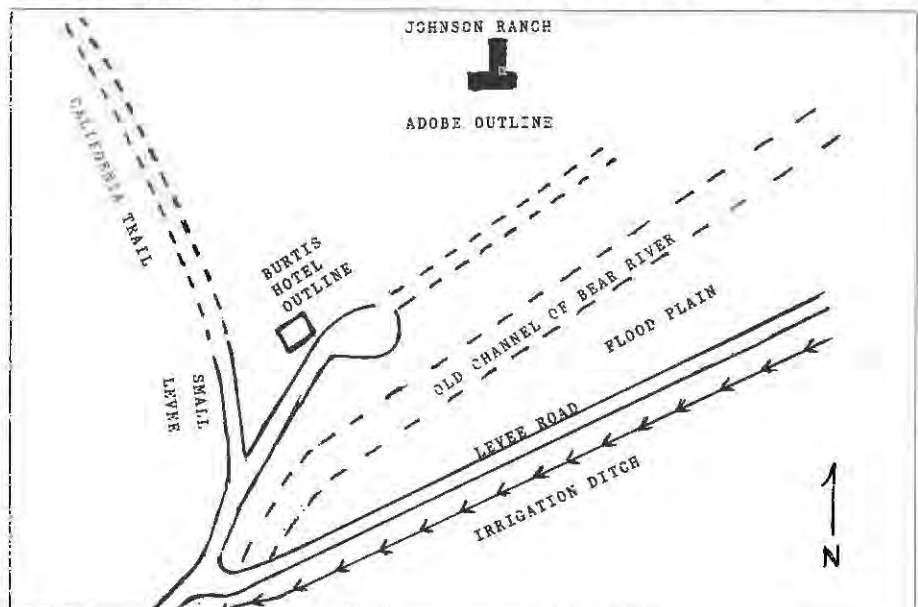
Artifacts evident on the surface were pinflagged and analyzed in place. A metal detector revealed distribution of artifacts around the house and hotel. Pinflags at these locations provided a visual impression of subsurface artifacts that were then mapped.

Artifacts were not extracted nor were surface items collected. Those removed earlier by the Steeds were photographed and analyzed. Information on these was recorded by the Steeds on a map at the time of recovery.

Objects collected by the Steeds before the site was recorded include tools and hardware, glass and pottery fragments, eating utensils and horse and mule shoes, along with many other items.

Artifacts noted at the Burtis Hotel area in October included many aqua, green, and blue-green glass fragments, glazed stoneware drain tile, canning jar fragments, and a hand finished bottle neck. Wire, nails, and a barrel hoop were also found.

Very few artifacts were located





**Oil lamp**

on the surface near the house. Most of those found appear to have been dislodged from the sub-surface during earlier probes. A metal detector indicated abundant artifacts within 150 feet of the adobe.

The house site is located about 250 feet northeast of the hotel, on another low hill. Remnants of two adobe walls have melted down to low, linear mounds 12 feet wide and a foot high, forming an 'L' or abbreviated 'T' about 50 by 65 feet. Historical records reveal the Johnson House was adobe and logs, probably adobe on the south and east and logs on the north and west.

Among items the Steeds recovered near the house are overall and suspender buckles including one marked "Patented March 7, 1871" and an 1840's style military belt buckle.

### Site Management

The Johnson Ranch site clearly meets criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, due to its role in early California migration and its association with famous people.

Shallowly buried items could add significant knowledge of early California history. Did miners use the Johnson Ranch as a point of supply? Is there any material evidence of the Donner Party and the rescuers?

OCTA alternatives include:

1) No action by OCTA to preserve or investigate. The secluded site

would probably remain relatively undisturbed for a while but some digging by collectors would certainly take place.

2) Protective agreement with landowner. Limited protection may be possible with an agreement that the site will not be developed, unsupervised digging halted, and visits by OCTA members with advance permission. Change in ownership may render an agreement invalid.

3) Obtain an easement. It may be possible to get an easement for the site which might also provide a tax break for the owner. A Preservation Easement could require the owner to contact OCTA prior to any action that might impact the historical integrity of the site. It could require present and future owners to honor the terms.

A 'Right of First Refusal Clause' or 'Protective Covenant' might be negotiated. Regardless of method, extensive legal advice should be sought.

4) Outright purchase by OCTA. If above named options are not possible, purchase might be considered. Cost would involve fair market value; all expenses and obligations as land owners would result.

5) Erection of a historical marker or signs. Most visitors would probably be OCTA members and

incidental members would probably be few. Signing the site may have an indirect effect of encouraging vandalism. This must be weighed carefully.

6) Preparation of National Register nomination. Simply showing that the site is National Register-eligible may be all that is needed for obtaining funds for OCTA's plans.

7) Future archaeological investigations. If OCTA decides to continue archaeological investigation, it will likely be costly. With dim prospects of state or federal funds, a well prepared research design might help with public or private funding. Most likely, OCTA will have to begin the funding.

Artifacts recovered would legally belong to the landowner. If OCTA wants to be custodian of artifacts, the owner's permission would be needed. Any excavation should focus on priorities outlined in a thorough research design that fits OCTA's budget. The ideal would be a detailed design with a predetermined amount not to be exceeded.

These management alternatives are simply suggestions. Any one or combination may be pursued by OCTA.

*Note: For more complete history of the land and details on artifacts, consult the Winter 1986 OJ.*



**Typical artifacts from Johnson Ranch area.**

# Our Foreign Correspondents

Cousins Urs Karlan and Edwin R. Kung, and six members of the Ehrenmann family replied to a letter Jeanne and Bill Watson wrote, prior to a trip to Switzerland recently.

As a result they gathered for lunch in Zurich, discussing their mutual interest: historic American trails.

The cousins had traced the Oregon Trail several years ago while touring the U.S., and heard about OCTA at the museum in Oregon City.

When they returned home, they told their friends, the Ehrenmanns. On their next visit, the Ehrenmanns traveled the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails.

In a previously written letter to the NFP, Kurt Ehrenmann wrote:

"I am and I always was interested in American history, especially the (western) trails. It is a 'must' to know the Oregon-California Trails.

"Being members so far away . . . is a way to learn more about the trails, maybe a reason to follow another part in a next trip to the U.S."

In 1986 the Ehrenmanns included stops at Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff, and other landmarks. All the Swiss members indicated an interest in attending the convention in Boise.

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OCTA member Yuji Aisaka of Kyoto, Japan spent 10 days in the states in June.

Invited to help dedicate a monument in Astoria, Oregon to the "first teacher of English to the Japanese," Yuji represented the people of Rishiri Island.

Ronald McDonald (1824-1894), a whaler, had gone ashore at Rishiri Island in 1848. He was imprisoned and in captivity taught English to the islanders. Some of his students served as interpreters when Commodore Perry visited Japan in 1853, four years after McDonald had returned to the U.S.

After the dedication, Tom Hunt met Yuji in San Francisco, helping

him find two historic sites from almost non-existent clues, with forbidding fog adding another hindrance.

They located a granite memorial to the first Japanese Embassy to the U.S. (1860), at the edge of a cliff near the Golden Gate Bridge. They located graves of 3 Japanese sailors who died in the 1860 voyage and were buried in California. The graves had been moved to the Japanese Cemetery in Colma, CA. Tom Hunt, Preservation Officer, was the perfect partner for our Kyoto member.

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Our English members who flew the Oregon Trail in 1986 have written with good news.

Brian Hargraves, flight navigator and sometimes ground driver, sent a spiral bound booklet. Originally designed as a family story, Brian's employer later ran 100 copies for friends and co-workers at British Aerospace.

"Please bear in mind," Brian wrote, "that it was such an eventful holiday that this is only a *very* compressed account."

Among those thanked for their help are several individual OCTA members, the OCTA organization, and the Whitman Centennial committees in New York and Washington state.

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In his eloquent letter, Maurice Brett, who conceived the plan to fly the Oregon Trail, relates some of his fascination:

"I find anything that will help explain how mankind lived and conducted itself in the past, and how we came to be in the muddle we are today, is of great appeal. For this reason I have traveled to where our civilization began: Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and Rome.

"If I were faced with a choice of only one era and area to pursue, it would be the trails of the West.

"It is history on the grand scale—the greatest natural migration of people, the largest numbers, traveling the farthest, under perhaps

the worst conditions, and doing so voluntarily. And yet they were all ordinary folks—generals and politicians only played shadowy roles on the periphery.

"It spans one of the most colorful and romantic periods of any nation's history: exploration of the vast unknown, the fur trade, the cowboy era, the Indian wars, Pony Express . . . the unprecedented, comparatively peaceful growth of a world-ranking, new nation from a handful of ex-colonies.

"It was perhaps the last great opportunity for ordinary people to be in control of their own destiny—no mollycoddling social security, no do-it-all gadgets—they were on their own resources. They lived or died, sank or swam on their own ability to cope with unbelievable hazards.

"Almost all European and Scandinavian countries can take pride in the role their nationals played, and none more so than the English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh.

"There is hardly a county in the British Isles that has not seen sons and daughters taking part, not a family that has not had distant relatives 'gone West.' My grandmother's uncle and my wife's great-grandfather had a brother who did, with whom contact was subsequently lost. It is truly an International Heritage!"

## OHS Has New Exhibit

"Oregon: Land of Promise, Land of Plenty" is an exhibit which opened this spring at the Oregon Historical Center in Portland.

More than 1,000 objects are included, some for the first time, while more familiar ones are showcased in newly designed, sophisticated lighting effects and dramatic settings.

A textbook with the same title will be released this fall. A companion teacher's guide has been prepared in cooperation with the Oregon State Department of Education.



# Paden Recollection

In Irene Paden's classic about following the Oregon Trail, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, in the Introduction she tells of her family's support including:

"... our son Bill was plunged unenthusiastically into the project at the age of ten and, at nineteen, still goes along from habit... a son who grew from a small boy into a junior in college."

That boy, now William W. Paden, D.D.S., recently retired in Alameda, was given a copy of the December 1987 News from the Plains. The article about California Hill prompted this story for our readers:

"The events surrounding the week of our visit to California Hill are some of the most vivid of my memories of eight years on the trail. I recollect on August 15, 1935, after a hard day's drive on unmarked cow paths in South Pass, we came upon a branding camp.

"Cowboys were herding about 500 head of potential steers, uncorraled, with outriders circling the herd 24 hours a day. My father, born and raised on his father's

cattle ranch, knew better than drive into camp, as dust was always a problem and the cattle could be easily spooked. We walked into camp.

"We found the hands celebrating the end of a long roundup. They invited us to stay. The food was good and during the evening the cowboys entertained themselves and us by playing old tunes on the harmonica and mouth harp.

"About 7:30 their radio, a 6 volt Motorola, was brought out. The wet battery was dead. My father volunteered the battery from our 1932 Dodge. At 8 P.M. we tuned into KSL, Salt Lake. The news was flashed that the wreckage of Wiley Post's Lockheed Vega had been found in Alaska. Post and his passenger, Will Rogers, were both dead. The cowboys' hero was dead and within minutes the camp was empty.

"The next morning we awakened to the smell of bacon and eggs. We retrieved our battery, cleaned up camp and set out for our next stop, California Hill, several days drive.

"Original diaries stated that most of the wagons emigrating to California and Oregon were forced

to pass this area due to the topography. The South Platte seemed to be a great obstacle.

"We parked our car and started to walk, following the telltale signs of the trail. We were delighted to find deep ruts from the passing wagon wheels. Hubs engraved their own milestones in history on the outer sides of the ruts. Faint trails on either side of the ruts showed where many people had walked, following the wagons.

"Without question, this was one of the most exciting days of the nine years of investigation undertaken by my parents and (California Hill) is a fitting place for a plaque bearing my mother's name."

## California Hill Marker Program

On July 17th at 1 P.M. OCTA will reach a milestone.

A dedication ceremony will be held and an official OCTA marker will be placed on the land that OCTA purchased at California Hill near Brule, NE.

Merrill Mattes will come from Denver to deliver the address. All interested OCTA members are invited.

For more details write or phone Bob Berry (402)333-3522 or Charlie Martin (402)392-2158 in Omaha.

## The Bookshelf

*The Donner Party Rescue Site—Johnson's Ranch on Bear River*, by Jack and Richard Steed. Hardback, 127 pages, with 35 pictures and maps, the book may be purchased direct or at the St. Joe Convention. \$14.95 plus \$1 postage. Californians add 6% sales tax. Order from: Jack Steed, 1669 Bowling Green Drive, Sacramento, CA 95815.

Jeanne Watson's book, *To the Land of Gold and Wickedness, the 1848-59 Diary of Lorena L. Hays* will come off The Patrice Press in time for the convention. It chronicles the experiences of a 26 year old Illinois schoolteacher, a distant cousin of President Rutherford B. Hayes (difference in family spellings). With 496

pages and an index, it is \$27.95 and will be available in St. Joe.

\*\*\*

F.D. Calhoun, OCTA member and California publisher, suspects that a mailing to OCTA members last November was not received.

If you want a copy of *The Lassen Trail*, send a statement that it was not received, plus \$1.50 check or stamps to cover handling and postage to: F.D. Calhoun, Cal-Con Press, Box 541, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670.

\*\*\*

*Platte River Road Narratives*, Merrill Mattes' monumental book, is bringing him much deserved praise in the press. There will be a raffle at the convention for an autographed copy, which usually would cost \$95.

## Wanted: Riders and Trail Buffs

Five day scenic horseback trip along the trails in South Pass Region: Oregon, California, Mormon and Pony Express.

Aug 21-27 \$300 includes meals and extras

We also offer custom designed family trips for people of all ages, wagon trips, and photography outings, spring through fall.

Write or call: Wyoming Rendezvous, Judith Otte Regan, P.O. Box 821,

Lander, WY 82520  
307-332-2638 (evenings)

## A Plea for Decorum

*From a letter received by the Chairman of the Archaeology Committee about cemetery decorum:*

... (During the Casper Convention) we visited several pioneer graves on the Oregon Trail. These graves were properly fenced. I have visited many graves along the Trail but never once did I go beyond the fence and step directly on the grave.

Therefore I was shocked, to put it mildly, to observe a few persons who, their zeal to obtain photographs, actually climbed over the fences and stepped directly on the graves. To me this is highly unacceptable.

It indicates disrespect for the deceased and their families.

It violates the principles of preservation, one of the major objectives of OCTA.

If everyone acted similarly, these graves would quickly disappear.

I urge you to bring this before the Board of Directors in the hope they can discreetly set forth a code of manners for visiting such grave sites.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Donald S. Groves  
Lakewood, Colorado*

### Study/Travel Offered

A Santa Fe Trail journey from Ft. Osage, MO to Santa Fe, NM will be held Aug. 5-14. Led by Leo Oliva, history instructor at Ft. Hays (KS) State University, the Cimarron Route will be taken outbound and the Mountain Route on the return.

Cost is \$475, plus tuition (if desired), with college credit given by the university. For details: Heritage Tours, P.O. Box 1, Woodston, KS 67675 or phone 913-994-6253.

\*\*\*

A 4 credit hour trip is offered by Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville Aug. 15-24. Route includes parts of the Santa Fe, Oregon, and Mormon Trails.

Cost is \$525 with tuition and fees extra. Tour is led by Dr. Stanley B. Kimball. For details: Office of Continuing Education, Box 1084, SIUE, Edwardsville, IL 62026-1084.

### Life Members

Upgraded to Life Members are Baldwin and Ormond Lamson.

### Take Two Aspirins

Roger Blair, one of OCTA's early directors, stunned members with his announcement in 1984 at the close of the convention that he was entering medical school.

Well, he made it! Last month he finished at Creighton in Omaha and is now headed for Spokane.

Congratulations, Roger. Glad you're still in Trail Country!

### Steamin' Along

Just as the trails yielded to the iron horse in the old days, so John Latschar's career is headed.

He is now superintendent of a new National Park Service project, Steamtown, in Scranton, PA.

John wants to keep ties with his friends on the trail. Here's his latest: Steamtown National Historic Site, Federal Building, P.O. Box 1280, Scranton, PA 18501. (717)343-0760.

### OCTA Honored

Pat Loomis of San Jose was chosen "Woman of the Year" by her legislator, Assemblyman Dominic Cortese.

A former columnist with the *San Jose Mercury News*, Pat is a very active member of the California-Nevada-Hawaii Chapter.

The award was given by the state in honor of Women's History Month, with one person selected from each legislative district.

## Genealogy Ads

Would like to contact any descendants of the RUCKER-CAMPBELL-LOVELL-FINLEY wagon train of 1852. Lorraine Vail, 3100 Dartmouth St., Bakersfield, CA 93305

\*\*\*

Need information on MARK CAHOON and family on the Oregon Trail. Family history states Mark was a train captain. Hope Cahoon Wale, 3314 Pine St., Longview, WA 98632.

\*\*\*

HALLETT POTTER BEMISS. Does anyone have a reference on the trail? M.D.? Epidemic? Trail marker? Born Ohio 1823. Daughter born Colusa Co., CA 1854. He died San Francisco 1905. Ancestor Search, Marjorie Nefstead, 1250 Viscaino Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93103.

\*\*\*

PINER FAMILY: STEPHEN, CHARLES A., DAVID via Lassen's Trail, arr Oct. 8, 1849. Also G.W. MADDOX, GARD FAMILY, THOMAS HUDSON. (Grigsby-Ide party). DAVID and WM. HUDSON. 1850, ROBERT SEN-SIBAUGH. All from Dade Co., Mo. Interested in anyone from Dade Co., including HENDERICK, HAND, SNELL, and HUDSPETH. Beverly Blum, P.O. Box 608, Cambria, CA 93428. (805-927-8172).

*Note: some resources for such searches may be located in Merrill Mattes' Platte River Road Narrative, University of Illinois Press, \$95. If your library does not have it, ask to have it purchased.*

### Family Ad Policy

We will assist your search by allowing a maximum of ten lines per ad (370 characters) for \$10 or five lines (185 characters) for \$5. Please type clearly and proof before sending. Mail to: *News from the Plains*, c/o OCTA Headquarters.

# Get Involved in COED: You'll Like It

by Don Buck and  
Lynne Sinclair

As you may have read in your registration booklet, the COED Committee is offering a workshop at the St. Joseph convention on Sunday morning, August 14. Still undecided about participating in COED? Like to know more about what you'll learn in the workshop? Read on . . .

The COED workshop will give you the opportunity to get involved in the exciting work of surveying emigrant documents to compile information for a computer database. We hope the database will become an important research tool for historians, genealogists, and trail buffs.

COED stands for Census of Overland Emigrant Documents. After almost two years of planning, the COED Committee has produced a program designed to record information in these categories:

- Basic bibliographic data (author, title, date, publication information, manuscript description, library location)
- Information about the emi-

grant's journey (place and date of departure and arrival, routes taken, and places mentioned along the way)

- All names mentioned in the document, with vital statistics (place of births, deaths, graves, marriages, origin, gender, party they traveled with).

COED volunteers will survey a wide variety of emigrant documents, published and unpublished, including diaries, journals, logs, guides, reminiscences, autobiographies, letters, and newspaper accounts. We estimate that there are over 3,000 documents relating to overland journeys, dating 1840s through 1860s, and covering not just the main corridor through South Pass to Oregon and California, but also the Mormon route to Salt Lake City and southern trails to California.

To implement the COED program, we need volunteers—that's where you come in. We are already training volunteers in California, but we need to draw in people from other states. The purpose of the convention workshop is to train a cadre of OCTA volunteers who will

form the nucleus of a self-sustaining, national COED program.

The workshop will cover two phases of volunteer work: 1) extracting the information from emigrant documents and recording it on survey forms, and 2) entering the information from the survey forms into a computer database. The workshop will be a hands-on session. We'll provide survey forms, instructions, computers, and representative documents for practice. You'll decide which phase you'd like to work on.

For planning purposes, the COED Committee needs to know how many volunteers intend to participate in the convention workshop. We'd also like to know how many people are interested in volunteering for COED but are unable to come to St. Joseph or to the Sunday workshop. If you fall in either of these categories and have not already notified us, please fill out the COED Volunteer form below and return it as soon as possible to Lynne Sinclair, 460 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

## COED Volunteer

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_

OCTA Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

- I intend to participate in the convention workshop.
- I cannot attend the convention workshop but would like to attend a training session at the nearest chapter, after the convention.
- I would like to work on extracting information from documents and recording it on survey forms.
- I would like to work on entering data from survey forms into a computer database. (For the time being, this requires access to an IBM PC or compatible.)
- I would like to work on both activities.

Return to: Lynne Sinclair, 460 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

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Barbara Magerl, Editor  
Pauline Fowler, Asst. Editor

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**Deadline for ballots  
July 24**



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