

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS



THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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

June 1989

OCTA and the Spirit of Volunteerism

An Appeal in the Grand Old Victorian Manner by No Other Than Himself.

Early on in the life of OCTA, your board of directors made the decision that our association was not going to be just another one of those organizations in which persons, sharing a common interest (in this case historic overland trails preservation), were going to come together periodically to enjoy each other's company and have a little fun. We still do manage to do those two things pretty well, but we felt that we had a mandate from our membership to make OCTA that national organization which was going to ensure the preservation, appreciation, and enjoyment of the heritage of the overland emigrant experience.

With this fundamental goal in mind, your national leadership has endeavored over the last few years to pursue not only a wide range of preservation projects involving the actual marking and fencing and acquiring of historic trail sites but also very serious and much-needed scholarly programs in the wider areas of research, education, legislation, and public awareness.

Much hard work has now been done by a relatively small number of very dedicated people within OCTA towards the formulation of our goals in these broader areas of legitimate concern; and, as is the case in any volunteer organization, a sort of central cadre of OCTA activists has come into being in order to accomplish this essential work.

OCTA most certainly has such a central cadre; but we are, for the most part, a weary, somewhat battered and

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Come to Boise!

With all the hikes and trips offered at this convention, we should be talking about Boise for years!

Come join us in Boise, August 9-13.



Photo by Chuck Dodd

Nearly 100 members of the California-Nevada Chapter helped fence and mark unknown emigrants graves at Gravely Ford, in Nevada, Memorial Day weekend. After they finished at Gravely Ford, they then went on to fence and mark the Susan Coon grave at Antelope Springs.

Editor Needed for *News From the Plains*

Director/Curator Wanted for
Trails Center

See Page 7 for details.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Spring is fast turning into summer and that means it's time to be making our plans for the Convention at Boise. By now everyone should have received their convention material. If for some reason or other you have not, contact our National Headquarters right away. The convention officially starts Wednesday, August the 9th in the evening with a reception at the Idaho Historical Museum. There is a pre-convention trip to the City of Rocks on Tuesday and it should be a dandy. Wednesday morning there is a Meet-the-Board Coffee and Committee Reports and Wednesday afternoon, work shops: COED, Publications, Publicity and Trail Mapping so there are lots of pre-convention activities including the meeting of the Officers and Directors of the Organization starting Sunday morning. There are lots of things to see and do and at this convention so there should be something for everyone's appetite. The committee has really done a fine job of planning.

As you know, the California Trail Legislation is in Congress. We should be wary of becoming too complacent feeling confident that this legislation will pass. It will pass all right but only if we keep working at it and that is something that each and every member can help with. If you haven't written your Congressman asking for support and asking them to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 1109, you should do so immediately. If your Representative or one you know has become a co-sponsor of this legislation, don't hesitate to write and thank them for their help and support. With a total team effort of all OCTA members we can make a difference. This is a big opportunity for OCTA and for Trail Preservation. We must be successful in this effort.

Thank you for your support; I look forward to seeing all of you in Boise.

Dick Ackerman
OCTA President

Chapter Reports

Arizona Chapter

Saturday, March 11th, dawned warm and bright in the little desert community of Borrego Springs, California. Fourteen Arizona OCTA members converged at the Anza-Borrego State Park Palm Canyon Campground to begin a day of exploring nearby pioneer trails. A local guide joined the group at the park museum and we were off to the historic "Scissors Crossing." It was soon apparent that Indians, Spaniards, military, Mormons, stage operators and others had crossed the desert in this area due to the presence of vital springs and occasional grasses.

We found our own latter-day oasis in the guise of the Butterfield Inn, where all took a leisurely lunch and slaked their thirst. After looking over the restored Vallecitos Stage Station and the Palm Springs, we returned to camp.

In the late afternoon our happy hour and simultaneous book auction (Betty Lee's idea) were followed by a short business meeting and dinner under the stars. A very full day.

On Sunday morning, most of us joined the Stebbings in nearby Julian. Gordon acted as guide through the historic Eagle Gold Mine, dating from 1870. Later, Gordon and Shirley served the group their homemade apple pie. A nice close to a pleasant weekend. Many thanks to Gordon and Shirley Stebbings for planning it.

Jack Root
President

Gateway Chapter

The Gateway Chapter has a membership of 47 and has been having monthly meetings or field trips.

Past events have been:

March—Regular meeting with 31 present. The program was a mapping working presented by John Leamon. Plans are underway by the research committee, led by Larry Bunse, to begin the actual field work of mapping the St. Joe Road this summer.

April—A field trip was taken by approximately 40 members of the Gateway and Trails Head Chapters to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. John Relchley, of the Fort Leavenworth Historical Society, led the tour.

May—Regular meeting with 23 present. Ron Koehler, editor of the Hiawatha, Kansas, *Daily World* shared his research on the trails in Nemaha County. Linn Hoyt, COED chairman, also held a workshop in May for new members interested in surveying diaries and journals.

Upcoming events are:

June—Field trip is scheduled for Saturday, June 17, to track down the trail in Nemaha County, Kansas.

July—Riverboat ride on the Missouri River is being planned. Interpretation of the river crossing will be given as a program on the ride.

(If anyone would like to join in the upcoming events, please contact Francis Peniston, President, or Rich Nolf, Program Chairman for more information.)

Gateway Chapter members are also pleased to announce that Dr. Harmon Mothershead, history professor at Northwest Missouri State University, has agreed to serve as their Preservation Officer.

Jackie Lewin
Vice President

Northwest Chapter

Approximately 60 OCTA members met in the parking lot of the Tapedera Motel in Ontario, Oregon on April 29th for the first of the chapter's outings for '89. This outing was for two days, Saturday and Sunday, covering the trail from where it crossed the Snake River entering the present State of Oregon at Old Fort Boise through to just east of Baker, Oregon at the future "Flagstaff Hill Interpretive Location." Mary Oman was historian for this trek and did an outstanding job. Jack Albright, manager of the Baker BLM Resource Area was the speaker for the banquet Saturday night. He filled us in and brought us up to date on the Bureau's plans for the interpretive center to be located

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Hasting's Cutoff Rendezvous

By Pat Loomis and Doyle Reed

Although it has been nearly a century and a half since emigrants followed Lansford Hasting's cut-off mountains and deserts from Fort Bridger to the Humboldt River in Nevada, it is still possible to find and re-trace the route.

Seven members of a scouting party spent six days in May following maps and diaries to re-discover the still visible traces.

Led by Doyle Reed and his wife, Fiona, Ormie and Baldwin Lamson, Mary Mueller, video-photographer Barbara Dorr and Pat Loomis bounced over three-foot sagebrush, slid sideways through rain-slick alkali, shoveled a dugway through a desert wash, ignored the cold winds and hungry insects and discounted the many false leads and deadends.

The memories make it all worthwhile...the memories and the anticipation of sharing such highlights as Mormon Flat at the mouth of Little Emigration Canyon in the Wasatch mountains of Utah, battling tumbleweeds choking the trail across Skull Valley to Redlum Spring, climbing into windswept Donner-Reed Pass, circling Pilot Peak to Donner Spring and finding the trail through Silver Zone Pass to Johnson's Ranch.

Those who make the rendezvous in September will see the campsites at Bridger Butte, Mount Springs and Cave Creek in beautiful Ruby Valley and experience the thrill of viewing the perpendicular cliffs of the canyon of the South Fork of the Humboldt from the spot where the emigrants camped that September 147 years ago.

The Hastings Cutoff Rendezvous will be September 11 to 16. (A rendezvous is a special outing available to all OCTA members.) The trip will start at Fort Bridger, Wyoming and end near Elko, NV. The trip is being limited to fifteen cars due to space limitations at many of the places visited. If sufficient interest is indicated, consideration will be given to repeating the trip in 1990.

Bonaventura Books

is proud to announce its acquisition of more than 300 case-bound books from the collection of the great trails historian

Paul Henderson

Many of the books have Mr. Henderson's comments and notations penciled in the margins; some include copies of trail-related material collected by Mr. Henderson.

For your copy of the Henderson Collection catalog write:

Bonaventura Books
Box 2709
Evergreen CO 80439
(303) 674-4830



A portion of the revenue from sale of books in the Henderson Collection will be donated to OCTA's Paul Henderson fund for trail preservation.



Photo by Mary Mueller

*West to East over Redlum Sprint to Stansbury Mt.
(Photo taken during the Hasting's Cutoff Exploration.)*

Participants will have a choice of camping on the trail or detouring to nearby motels at night. Participants will be responsible for their own food, water, and beverage.

Four wheel drive, high clearance vehicles will be required. Please do

not apply if you can not meet this requirement.

There will be a \$15.00 charge per person, \$10.00 going to the OCTA Preservation Fund and \$5.00 to cover costs of organizing and conducting the tour.

Chapter Reports

Continued from page 2

at Flagstaff Hill. He concluded by inviting us all to the site for an interpretation there Sunday afternoon.

We all had a welcome surprise when Mary Oman informed us the next morning we were all invited to a picnic lunch on arriving at Baker. Needless to say, everyone on the tour accepted the invitation. Shirley Jennings, Executive Director of the Baker County Visitors and Convention Bureau, welcomed us and made us feel right at home during a picnic. Everyone on the outing wishes to thank her and the others who participated in such a thoughtful gesture. After lunch we proceeded to Flagstaff Hill where Jack Albright gave the participants an on-site interpretation of the BLM development plans.

At a meeting of the Officers and Directors of the Chapter, prior to the outing reminded themselves that we wouldn't even be here for this gathering if it were not for our National Organization. In addition, our National Organization provides administrative services that assists our very livelihood so Officers and Directors felt the chapter should not only thank our National Headquarters for these services but provide economic support to them for services rendered. A motion was made and passed unanimously that the Northwest Chapter donate to the National Organization's General Fund approximately August 1, 1989 an amount equal to 30% of the Chapter annual dues. This year it is estimated this will be around \$300.00 and hopefully the Chapter will be able to continue this contribution year after year. This contribution will be paid from the donations collected by participants of the chapter outings. This way it is more a users fee and hopefully the Chapter will not have to increase its dues whatsoever.



*Participants in the Northwest Chapter outing stand in the swale of the Oregon Trail in Eastern Oregon.
Chapter reports start on page 2.*

*Dick Ackerman
President*

Trails Head Chapter

In conjunction with Gateway Chapter, Trails Head members held a re-run of the 1988 preconvention tour to Ft. Leavenworth on April 8. The tour of the Fort, its history and its relationship with western trails were provided by John Reichly, a man widely regarded in this area for his devotion to the fort and its history.

Trail Trek III will be held June 3 (raindate June 10) from eastern Jackson County, to New Santa Fe (122 & State Line, K.C., Missouri). Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. at the William Chrisman H.S. at Noland Road and US Highway 24 in Independence, Missouri. This trek will be led by Wagonmaster John Leamon and trails historian Polly Fowler.

Trail Trek IV will be held in September, date TBA, to cover the Santa Fe Trail from near Arrow Rock, Missouri to eastern Jackson County.

Trails Head has held a MET and a COED workshop for local members interested in working on either OCTA project.

We are ecstatic to report that in this nearly totally plowed, asphalted or in some fashion disturbed delta of trails beginnings has appeared RUTS! On March 11th, Ross Marshall, Henry Boppart and John Leamon planned a day's jaunt west to Topeka, Kansas, following the "trail." Using maps and giving MET a practice, they were looking for a farmer who was said to have trail ruts on his property. Stopping to ask two men along the highway if they knew the farmer, they did not, but in learning what our OCTA members were after they said, "If you want to see Oregon Trail ruts just look back up there." John Leamon describes these ruts as being just where they should be and "three of the most beautiful pristine ruts one could hope to see east of California Hill. They are only about a hundred yards or so in length, but they are a magnificent sight for trail trampers in eastern Kansas!"

Volunteerism

Continued from page 1.

fast-aging group—a slim shadow of our former robust and ebullient selves, as rueful a bunch of would-be, self-perpetuating petty bureaucrats as you might ever wish to see.

It is obvious that the Darwinian Imperative is in play here and that the next stage in OCTA's evolution now needs to take place.

It is a stage that needs and welcomes the contributions of any and all OCTA members. There is much needful work to be done, and that needful work will only get done to the extent that each one of you members out there is willing to put some of your time and effort into these established programs.

There are three major programs already in place and functioning: COED (Census of Overland Emigrant Documents), MET (Mapping the Emigrant Trails), and Trail Marking. We also have an Education Committee working to define our goals and implement programs in that area of concern: a speaker's bureau, videos, school programs, etc. Beyond this, we have our standing committees: Graves and Sites, Awards, Legislative Action, Rancher, History-Archives, Membership, Public Relations, Photography, Finance, Archaeology, and Publications.

In each and every one of these areas, OCTA needs your active participation.

At Boise, there will be workshops on COED, Trail Mapping, Publicity, and Publications. They will be your opportunity to indicate your willingness to participate in the OCTA cause by attending one and becoming directly involved. These workshops will be held on Wednesday, August 9, from 1:00-5:00 p.m., and will cost \$5.00 (for materials and preparation costs). The final hour of most of the training sessions will be devoted to an open discussion of that particular program, its needs and the way in which you can contribute to it most effectively.

Most of our programs are carried on through our various chapters, but you do not have to be a member of a chapter to take an active part in

these programs. These are national programs involving national goals. We realize that a sizable number of you live in areas without chapters or at distances which preclude you from participating in chapter activities; and, while we most strongly urge all members who do live in areas with chapters to join and participate actively on that level, we realize that some of you cannot or simply don't wish to do so. Such a decision does not preclude you from joining in the overall OCTA effort.

What we ask of you is that you take the time to find out which programs interest you and then volunteer to help in any area in which you have expertise or the desire to participate.

And please do remember that those with whom you are dealing are also volunteering their time and efforts and that you must be willing to take the initiative and do a little "pushing" to see that your talents are recognized and utilized fully. The flip side of volunteerism is this need to take initiative. If you have some project that you can do and that you wish to do, make that be known. The danger that any active volunteer organization faces that members too often come forward and say "Yes, I am most willing to help and do my part, now what do you want me to do?" And that, unfortunately, places the onus right back on the other volunteer to do your thinking and to make your decision for you. The result far too often is that the would-be volunteer doesn't get an answer and feels rebuffed and discouraged.

I know that I speak for all of the so-called "activists" in OCTA when I say that it is not our intention to rebuff or discourage any of you from participating. We have serious, worthwhile, productive programs in place that need to be nurtured, maintained and implemented by an enthusiastic membership. We cannot do all that needs to be done ourselves. We don't want to do all the work. We want each and every member of OCTA who has the desire and interest in actively participating to feel welcome and to have that great satisfaction that comes of knowing that his or her work is directly contributing to the cause of historic trails preservation

and to the enrichment of our national heritage.

Plan to attend a workshop in Boise if at all possible. Bring your ideas and your enthusiasm. Help us to turn OCTA into that vital, working, participatory organization that it has to be in order to be most effective. The opportunity is there for us to do great things.

If you are not planning to attend the Boise convention, then write to national headquarters and ask that you be put in touch with that committee or program which most interests you. And don't just ask what you can do; tell us what you would like to do: Are you willing to search out and read documents for COED? Can you enter data in computers? Do you wish to do mapping? Are you interested in marking trails? Do you have fund-raising abilities? Can you work in public relations or on publicity? Can you help us solve our liability insurance dilemma? Could you compile information on the various state land trust statutes for us? Can you help us with our finances?

These are only a few of the areas in which we need your help.

When you offer your help, we will do our very best to put you in touch with the right committee or program or national officer so you will have the opportunity to learn what preservation or organizational work there is to be done. Once an undertaking has received proper approval at the national or chapter level, the initiative will then come back to rest on you.

There is not one area of OCTA's work that cannot benefit from your active, self-motivated participation. Our strength is truly in our membership. Your leadership here in OCTA realizes this and wishes to take advantage of the great reservoir of talents which we know to be out there but somehow have not yet been able to tap.

Participation! Youth! New Blood!
(For that matter, any blood!)
Dedication! Enthusiasm! Initiative!
— those are our cries.

Oh Sons and Daughters of Truth, Virtue, and Preservation, do not fail to heed the cry!

By Tom Hunt

GREETINGS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Fall Creek, Wisconsin
March 10, 1989

May 2 was my first anniversary as Headquarters office manager. It has been a fast and interesting year. Everyone has made me feel welcome and has given me much support.

Just a reminder—the office is open 8:30-12:30 daily, and the phone is answered and a message taken through 5 p.m.

Recently a new member from the San Francisco area and her husband dropped by to look over the office. They had come to Missouri to confirm genealogical information about the member's family. She brought a typed copy of a diary written by a Mr. Mothersead as he traveled in the Day and Lineville Wagon Train from Gentry County, Missouri. The diary began Thursday, May 17, 1855 and ended Thursday, October 11. Copies were sent on to COED.

I toured the National Frontier Trails Museum construction project with Bill Bullard, liaison for the City of Independence with the contractor. OCTA's office, which will be a part of the Museum complex, is being refurbished. The two-story brick building has 28 windows and will be retained in its original style, including restoration of the narrow oak flooring on the second floor. This was originally the lab building for the Waggoner-Gates Flour Mill.

The old mill building itself, which will house the Museum, is being restored and will have two additions: a theater and a wing for temporary exhibits. The opening is scheduled for March 1990.

Headquarters has a valuable volunteer staff. Elaine McNabney does all the computer work for us, including membership and library subscription records and provides labels for mailing the *Overland Journal* and the *News From the Plains*, ballots and other correspondence with members.

Francis and Darlene Peniston, John Leaman, Bill and Donna Bullard, Polly Fowler, Peggy Smith, Ona Gieschen, Carolyn Dawson, and Gale Fulghum have all helped with labeling, sorting, tying and loading mail bags for delivery to the post office. They have become so experienced that we complete a mailing to members in less than a day.

By now you have received the report of the Nominating Committee, including ballots for electing Board members. Be sure to return your ballot, postmarked no later than July 24, to be sure it is included in the count.

Hope to see you in Boise.

Jeanne Miller
Headquarters Office Manager

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Education Committee's projects are moving slowly ahead. Bob Munkres now has seventeen people signed up for OCTA's Speaker Bureau. We have six on the West Coast, two in the Rocky Mountain Area, seven from the Plains and Mid-West and two on the East Coast. Anyone interested should contact Bob Munkres.

Ruth Anderson is compiling a resource list of all members of OCTA who have produced or published materials about the trails west. The list includes bibliographical information concerning the works produced. If you have produced something and not been contacted by Ruth, please send all pertinent information to her.

For those of you who have a favorite book about the westward migration that you found both interesting and informative, Mary Conrad is compiling a list of books appropriate for different levels of school and interest. Once the lists are complete, we hope to make the recommended reading lists available to all interested parties.

Anyone who has developed appropriate materials for teaching about the westward migrations is encouraged to contact Jack McGee. This could include anything from lessons to projects to puzzles. All materials or even ideas would be welcome.

By Bill Hill

To the Editor

News From the Plains

According to the nineteen eighty eight OCTA roster, we have about ten Wisconsinites listed as members. By now, the list perhaps has been added to. It would be great if the Badger Folks could organize our own Wisconsin "Badger" chapter of OCTA.

My wife and I are senior, but we still travel through the west each year. We enjoy the *News From The Plains* and also the *Overland Journal*.

This past October, one of the places we visited was the Alcove Springs in Kansas, but we were a little disappointed because the drought had dried the springs to a trickle. This, I'm sure, was observed also by the many that visited the spring at the time of the St. Joseph convention in August.

We also visited many of the more accessible points of interest along the Oregon Trail, including Flagstaff Hill, about six miles east of Baker, Oregon, where there is a grand view of the wagon trail down through the valley from the top of the ridge. Another place we visited was the Ward massacre site near Caldwell, Idaho.

We find the old trail so intriguing, and with a growing interest with every mile.

One of our last stops on our fall trip was the Pony Express Station at Gothenbury, Nebraska. This old station was formerly located on a trail on the banks of the North Platte River and was moved to this location, and refurbished to a genuinely authentic condition, as it is today.

Cleo D. Drake

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DIRECTOR/CURATOR WANTED FOR TRAILS CENTER

The City of Independence seeks a proven professional to direct The National Frontier Trails Center, commemorating the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails, scheduled to open March 1990. The successful candidate is expected to assume the position on or about October 2, 1989 and must have proven

fund-raising, fiscal-management, public-relations skills and will serve as collector and interpreter of artifacts, exhibits and archives. Reports to City Manager and will coordinate with strong local and national support groups. Prefer advanced degree in western American history, museum administration or

allied field. Send resume, including five work-related references, desired salary and ten year work and compensation history, to City Manager, 111 East Maple, Independence, Missouri 64051 by July 31, 1989.

Editor Needed for News From the Plains

News From the Plains brings OCTA members news of the organization and of the people in the organization. The publication has been in the hands of a temporary editor since last fall, but we need a permanent editor. If you have edited a chapter, company or organization newsletter and would like to become editor of News From the Plains, please send a brief description of your skills and experience to Chuck Dodd, Publications Committee Chairman, P.O. Box 6598, Tahoe City, CA, 95730. A modest budget is available to cover out-of-pocket typing and desk-top publishing expenses.



Photo by Chuck Dodd

Emigrant Graves Marked and Protected by OCTA Volunteers

COED Workshop at the Boise Convention

The COED Committee is offering a workshop at the Boise convention on Wednesday afternoon, August 9. If you are interested in learning about COED, please plan to attend.

COED (Census of Overland Emigrant Documents) is a national OCTA program whose goal is to survey all known emigrant documents to compile information for a computer database. This database will become an important research tool for historians, genealogists and trail buffs.

COED volunteers locate emigrant documents, read them and fill out survey forms with information about the document, about the emigrant's journey and about names and places mentioned by the emigrant. Other volunteers with access to personal computers assist by entering the sur-

vey data onto floppy disks so it can be loaded into the central database.

As a result of three previous COED workshops, we have a number of active volunteers and have made some progress in collecting survey data. But there is much work to be done, and many volunteers are needed. We hope to establish committees in each chapter to coordinate the work of COED volunteers in that chapter. So far, the Gateway and Trails Head chapters have established local COED committees, under the leadership of Linn Hoyt and Ross Marshall. (The COED pilot project began in the California-Nevada-Hawaii chapter, so we also have quite a few active volunteers from California.) We especially need volunteers from other chapters who are willing to devote time and energy to establishing a local COED

committee and mobilizing volunteers in your own chapter.

The first part of the workshop will be devoted to learning how to fill out the COED survey forms. For those interested in doing data entry, we will have a computer available to demonstrate the data entry programs. The last hour or so (starting at about 4 p.m.) will be reserved for a general discussion of how COED is doing and what can be done to improve the effectiveness of the project. If you want to participate in this discussion, please feel free to stop by the workshop room, even if you can't attend the earlier part of the seminar. We want to hear your ideas—and we need them! COED, like all other OCTA endeavors, depends on energetic and imaginative volunteers.

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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