

News from the Plains

Volume XI, No. 3

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

July 1997

Fort Hall: Origins of An Oregon Trail Outpost

(One of the highlights of OCTA's convention in Pocatello will be a chance to walk in the footsteps of fur traders who helped open the West. Fort Hall, during its short history, was a vital link in that effort. Barely 20 years after it was established, the original fort was abandoned. Its heyday was during the period from about 1843 to about 1849, after which the Hudspeth Cutoff opened to the south. The Fort was abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company in the mid 1850s and fell into disrepair. In fact, the original site was eventually lost and wasn't "re-discovered" until 1916. That the Fort was established at all was due to a failed business venture and a dramatic series of events which left Nathaniel Wyeth angry and vengeful. The following is excerpted from a story written by Bill Carnes for the Old Fort Hall Broadsheet, published in conjunction with the Rendezvous held each June at Fort Hall.)

About 1830, Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth, a young businessman in Cambridge, Massachusetts, became interested in Oregon. He borrowed heavily from business and personal assets to form his own trading company for the Columbia River fur trade. By 1832, however, William Sublette had exclusive rights to supply the Rocky Mountain Fur Company with the needed trade goods for the annual fur trader rendezvous.

Wyeth, not discouraged, attached himself to a Sublette expedition which left Independence, Missouri, on May 11, 1832, and reached the Pierre's Hole Rendezvous (near Yellowstone) on July 8. Reaching the Portneuf River in late July, Wyeth cached six loads of furs and goods, then followed the Portneuf to the Snake River Valley, but found it already trapped out by the Hudson's Bay Company.

After parting with Sublette near the junction of the Snake and Owyhee Rivers in southwest Idaho, Wyeth crossed the Blue Mountains to Fort Walla Walla and arrived at Fort Vancouver in October. Before leaving Boston, Wyeth had arranged for a supply ship to meet him on the Columbia River. Soon after arriving at Fort Vancouver he was told that the ship had been lost in the South Pacific. His initial trading venture has failed. Still certain of the commercial possibilities, Wyeth spent the

See "Wyeth & Fort Hall," Page 6



The Fort Hall Replica at Pocatello, Idaho

OCTA Points To Pocatello

Finishing touches are being put on plans for the 15th annual convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association, scheduled in Pocatello, Idaho, August 10-17.

The convention is planned around "Fort Hall - Hub of the West" and convention co-chairman Mike Bateman said total registration is expected to reach 500 people.

It's not too late to register, although there is a \$15 penalty for registration after July 1. For information, call convention co-chair Jim Allen at (208) 235-1326.

There will be pre-convention tours of the Lander Road (full as of June 2nd) and Hudspeth Cutoff on August 10-11-12 and a two-day archaeology field trip and workshop on August 11-12.

The OCTA Board of Directors meets on Tuesday, August 12, and the convention officially gets underway on Wednesday, August 13, with the annual membership meeting and papers and presentations.

See "Pocatello," Page 5

From the Editor's Desk . . .

For OCTA members, all trails lead to the Portneuf Valley and Pocatello, at least for the month of August.

By the time OCTA 15th annual convention ends, places like the Lander Road, the Hudspeth Cutoff, Soda Springs, Massacre Rocks, the Portneuf River, the Bidwell-Bartleson route, City of Rocks, Register Rock and, of course, Fort Hall will no longer be just words in books or on old trail maps.



We will have seen these historic locations with our own eyes, walked in the footsteps of the Hudson Bay Company and Nathaniel Wyeth, and learned a lot more about the role of southeastern Idaho trails in the

opening of the American West.

This issue of *News From The Plains* includes articles designed to help you increase your enjoyment of the convention and your trip to Idaho. There's a background piece on just how Nathaniel Wyeth came to establish Fort Hall and an article by Peter Boag which offers some insights into what it was like to travel across Idaho in the middle of the 19th Century. Our thanks to the Fort Hall Replica Commission for allowing us to publish these articles here.

If you haven't made up your mind about going to Pocatello, it's not too late and we highly recommend it. Our annual

gathering of trail buffs is a great opportunity to totally immerse yourself in the history of the westward movement, increase your own knowledge of trails, and meet a lot of people who share your interests in preserving our heritage. If you can't make it to Pocatello, mark your calendar for Pendleton, Oregon, in 1998.

Of course, the convention isn't all that OCTA members are up to this summer. We've also included articles about a pair of outings sponsored by the California-Nevada chapter, one to the 40-Mile Desert and another along the Donner Trail. A desert outing and a mountain outing, perhaps representing extremes of the emigrant experience.

OCTA chapters are also up to a wide range of activities, ranging from repairing and replacing trail markers to marking trails to working with local and federal agencies to preserve and protect historic landmarks and trails.

And because active OCTA members spend so much time with their eyes on the ground as they walk old trails, we've also included stories about the use of metal detectors to verify trails and the old question of what to do when you do find an artifact.

Finally, there's a good report on the important work that's being done by our National Trails Preservation Office. There are some enormous issues -- and threats -- involving trails that should be of concern to all OCTA members.

Enjoy the issue, let us know what you think of it, and we'll see you in Pocatello!

-- Bill Martin

Submission Guidelines

News From The Plains welcomes timely submissions of news, features and photos related to the work of the organization and its members and the preservation of our trails heritage.

Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates.

Material is best sent either on a computer disk (in DOS or text format)

but make sure you include a hard copy.

Pictures are appreciated

but cannot always be returned.

If you have any questions, please call

Editor Bill Martin at (702) 747-2860
or e-mail at words@worldnet.att.net.

Next Deadline Is September 1, 1997

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

Editor **Bill Martin**

Contributing Editors

Jeanne Miller

Lyndia Carter

Jackie Lewin

Mail Submissions To:

1908 Tuolumne Drive

Reno NV 89523-1228

(702) 747-2860

e-mail: words@worldnet.att.net

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Oregon-California Trails Association

P.O. Box 1019 Independence, MO 64051-0519

(816) 252-2276 Fax (816) 836-0989

e-mail: octahqt@gvi.net

OCTA is a 501(c)(3) Not For Profit Organization

From The President . . .

OCTA is a volunteer organization and functions so successfully because of the time, knowledge, and resources that its members donate.

In the last issue I placed a request for volunteer aid in the management and coordination of the National Park Service cost-share grant program. As a result, Sandra Waggoner and Sandra Dragoo, members from Indiana, volunteered to take this responsibility.

I want to thank them for their willingness and enthusiasm in helping OCTA. In addition, they will come to Independence for two or three days a year and help the headquarters staff with any task needed.

Perhaps some of you may be coming through Independence and could make arrangements to donate a day. Perhaps you would like to speak to area schools or groups about the trail. Or maybe you could spare a couple of hours during the convention to help with book sales at the OCTA table. Or maybe you could read articles from the *Overland Journal* and *News From the Plains* on to a tape for our visually impaired members to enjoy. Or maybe you have some ideas of your own as to how to help OCTA. Please share your volunteer ideas with me.

Eight or nine years ago the headquarters office staff created a OCTA handbook which was distributed to board members and chapter presidents. During the turnover of offices, some of these handbooks have been misplaced.

If you are not a current officer and have a handbook, would you please return it to headquarters. We are trying to collect all of the old ones in preparation for the development of a new, updated handbook.

Over the last few weeks I have been able to spend considerable time with Jeanne Miller and her staff at the headquarters office. They are an asset which one can fully appreciate by spending

time with them. I have talked with *News From The Plains* Editor Bill Martin, and he has agreed to feature our staff and headquarters in a special article in the NFP. I think you all will enjoy getting to know our headquarters staff.

This is my last message to you as president, and I have taken time to reflect about my six years as a board member and my two years as president. This is an experience I would not trade.

Sure, there have been ups and downs in handling organizational matters, but the ups far outweigh the downs. I have learned a tremendous amount from all of you. Of utmost importance are the wonderful OCTA members from all walks of life who join in their interest in learning about and preserving the trails.

Some of you have been able to devote a considerable amount of time to OCTA, and I certainly admire your dedication.

One of my priorities as president has been to encourage development of new long range goals for OCTA. Chuck Martin and the Long Range Planning Committee have been reactivated and are working on setting goals. They will be offering a report at the mid-year meeting. Their suggestions will continue to evolve during Roger Blair's term as president.

I am looking forward to my continued involvement in OCTA as immediate past president and then through activities as a member. Many of you I will see at the convention.

Over the years I really have continued to receive increased pleasure in spending the special week in August with my trail family. I have heard many of you express this same feeling whether at a convention, a chapter outing, or experiencing an unexpected meeting with an OCTA member out on the trail.

I urge you all to continue to work for recognition of the emigration trails and the preservation of what remains of these trails so our children can experience what we have. I look forward to seeing you in Pocatello.

— Jackie Lewin

Jeanne Miller To Retire As OCTA Executive Director

by Jackie Lewin

As president of OCTA, I have reluctantly agreed to accept the resignation of Jeanne Miller as Executive Director.

Jeanne symbolizes OCTA to all of us who know her -- whether it is visiting with her at conventions, being greeted at the headquarters office in Independence or communicating through telephone calls or correspondence.

She has brought not only a strong, wise character but also the many skills needed to help OCTA develop through its formative years.

Jeanne came to OCTA on May 1, 1988, and under her leadership, membership has doubled, book sales -- a major source of OCTA income -- have increased over 20 times, and OCTA has a headquarters office that many organizations envy.

Through my terms on the board and especially as president, I



Jeanne Miller

have relied on and respected Jeanne's advice which comes from the years of experience and her obvious love for OCTA. Jeanne shared that "the last nine years have been grand. It's such a worthwhile organization, and I have met so many interesting people."

Jeanne has agreed to stay in her position until September 30 and to help us through the transition until the end of the year. At the convention this year, I know you will all want to join in thanking and honoring this very special lady.

Fundraising**Fund Drive Complete**

As of May 31, 1997, OCTA had received \$11,931 from the Fourth Annual Fund Drive (1996-97). The results follow:

Endowment Fund	\$5,638
Annual Fund	2,037
Designated Funds:	
Preservation	758
Archaeology	319
Trail Marking, G&S	1,387
Trail Mapping	1,063
COED	166
Education	218
Special Publications	345
Grand Total	\$11,931

The success of this year's drive was made possible by the 197 donors (a new record). We extend a hearty thanks to those OCTA members who chose to help us "to move on."

Most recent donors include: Renee Sawyer, Virginia L. Stanton, Howard Dugger, Robert & Sheri Lee, Clara R. Mattes and Leroy E. Schrupp. A contribution was also made in memory of Lucille Markley by the friends of Dick Markley at Tahoe National Forest.

— James E. Budde

Pendleton Update

While most of you are turning your attention to Pocatello, some of us are planning for Pendleton in 1998. I just returned from a survey with Dick Ackerman and Lowell Tiller over the trail segments to be featured at the Pendleton Convention.

As currently planned, there will be five tours offered (plus three pre-convention tours, one being 4WD). There will be two hiking tours, one of which will be from the top of the Blue Mountains down to the Umatilla. The descent is not difficult if you do some training, but it is challenging since it is downhill over rough ground. If the day is clear, this will be one of the most spectacular of all tours. A second hiking trip will be across the Boardman Bombing Range. This one is a real challenge...no trees, no water, hot sun, no easy exits once you begin. A little live ammo is sprinkled about to add to the challenge! Remember Virtue Flats! The bus tours will probably include one to the Flagstaff Hill Interpretive Center with a narrated return to Pendleton, one from Hilgard Park (east of Pendleton) to Wells Springs (west of Pendleton), and one to the Whitman Mission.

Our survey helped to give us an understanding of the routes between the main trail in the Pendleton area and the Whitman Mission and Fort Walla Walla areas. It is more complex than as show on most maps with separate routes for the Hudson Bay Company, Whitman and Spaulding, early pioneers and later pioneers. We hope to have it all sorted out by next summer. The 4WD pre-convention tour will probe the Whitman 1836 route across the Blues just north of the main trail.

— Dave Welch

From OCTA**Ebey Diaries Available**

The 1854 Oregon Trail Diary of Winfield Scott Ebey, edited by Susan Badger Doyle and Fred W. Dykes is expected to be available at the Pocatello OCTA convention.

The publication is Number 2 in OCTA's Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series, following last year's publication of the diaries of Elijah Preston Howell.

Many OCTA members assisted the editors of the Ebey diaries. Mike Bateman, Roger Blair, Vic Bolon, Randy Brown, Reg Duffin, Lowell Tiller and Merle Wells contributed to the annotations and Rose Ann Tompkins produced the maps.

Publication of Ebey's superb diary this summer is particularly timely since it offers excellent descriptions of the trails in the region of the convention.

— Susan Badger Doyle

Mattes Book Planned

The late Merrill Mattes, one of the founders of OCTA, was also a charter member of The Denver Posse of the Westerners, a not-for-profit western history organization.

The Denver Westerners plan to publish a memorial book of papers related to Mattes and the subjects about which he wrote, such as Western trails, the fur trade and the military in the West.

The Westerners are soliciting original papers on these topics (4,000 words maximum,) with a Dec. 1, 1997 deadline. Also needed are personal reminiscences and photographs. For more information, contact Lee Whiteley at (303) 798-6546 or write to 6077 S. Elizabeth Way, Littleton CO 89121-2815.

New Books From OCTA

A number of new book titles are now available from OCTA. To order any of these, send the purchase price plus postage and handling (\$3 for the first book, plus \$1 for each additional book) to OCTA, 524 S. Osage Street, Independence MO 64050. OCTA members receive 10 percent off list prices.

Selected Diary Excerpts of Mormon Travelers, comp. by Levida Hileman, \$7
Lewis & Clark Expedition Coloring Book, by Peter Copeland, \$2.95
Indians and the Archaeology of Missouri, by Chapman, \$25.90
Paintings of George Caleb Bingham, by E. Maurice Block, \$59.95
Essential Aids - The Donner Party, by Charles H. Dodd, \$2.75
Story of the Gold Rush Coloring Book, by Copeland, \$2.95
Jackson Hole, Crossroads of the Western Fur Trade, by Merrill Mattes, \$4.75
Journals of Lewis & Clark, edited by Bernard DeVoto, \$14.95
News of the Plains and Rocks, Vol 1 - 1803-1865, compiled by David A. White, \$45.00
"Not Half The Troubles," a Letter from

Virginia Reed, May 16, 1847, edited by Charles H. Dodd, \$6.95
California Gold Country, by Stanley Paher, \$6.95
California's Gold Rush Country (1848-1998), by Leslie A. Kelly, \$29.95
The Gold Rush Video, narrated by John Lithgow, \$19.95
The Missouri, by Stanley Vestal, \$15
The Mormon Battalion, by Norma Ricketts, \$22.95
The Oregon Trail, by Francis J. Parkman, \$11.95
Overland, the California Emigrant Trail, 1841-70, by Greg McGregor, \$37.50
Path To Glory, by Jamison, \$29.95
Pioneer Women, by Peavy & Smith, \$14.95
Westering Man, by Bill Gilbert, \$18.95
Santa Fe Trail By Air, by White, \$14.95

1997 OCTA Convention - Pocatello, Idaho Fort Hall - 'Hub of the West'



Wagon train re-enactment crossing the Snake River. Photo courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce

Special Postage Cancellation Planned for OCTA Convention

OCTA Colorado Chapter member Ward Crowley is preparing a special pictorial postal cancellation for the 1997 OCTA convention in Pocatello. The U.S. Postal Service authorizes such special cancellations for use during major events such as this.

This year's cancellation will highlight "Fort Hall - Hub of the West." It will not be used on outgoing mail from Pocatello, but rather will be applied to envelopes submitted by stamp collectors, convention attendees or others desiring a nice souvenir of the OCTA convention.

If all goes as planned, the cancellation will be ready for the August 13 opening of the convention. The Pocatello post office plans to have a table in the convention hall to cancel envelopes with the special convention marking. Details will be announced during the general membership meeting at the convention.

Members not attending the convention can obtain an example by mailing a stamped, self-addressed envelope (preferably size 6 1/2) to: Convention Station, c/o Postmaster, 730 E. Clark Street., Pocatello, ID 83201-9998. A self-addressed and stamped #10 envelope should also be included for safe return of the specially canceled envelope.

Requests should be sent no more than one week prior to August 13 nor more than 30 days after that date.

**For Pocatello Late Registration
Information after July 1, contact
Jim Allen at (208) 235-1326**

Pocatello

(continued from page 1)

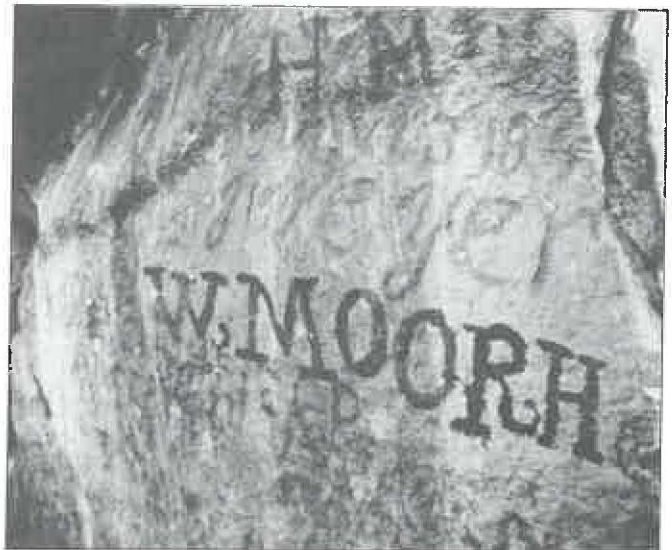
Tours of Fort Hall and a workshop on the Internet will be held on Thursday, August 14, while tours of Soda Springs and Massacre Rocks-California Trail are scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

Also on Friday there will be a four-mile walking tour along the North Portneuf alternate of the Oregon-California Trail and the Lander Road to Twitchell Meadows and the Big Spring area.

Social events include a Get Acquainted Social on Wednesday evening, "Authors Night" on Thursday, a barbecue at the Fort Hall Replica on Friday, and the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening. The convention will conclude on Sunday with a re-enactment of a Fort Hall religious service to be held at the Fort Hall Replica.

Topics for papers and presentations scheduled for the Wednesday session include "Fort Hall: A Western Crossroads," "Geology Along the Oregon-California Trails In Eastern Idaho," "'These Animals': Richard Grant and the Overland Emigration, 1842-1852," "Trails to Rails and Their Role in the Development of Idaho, Montana and the Pacific Northwest," "Fort Hall: The Indian Point of View," "The Hudspeth Cutoff," and "Frederick West Lander and the Lander Cutoff."

The Quality Inn Pocatello Park Hotel is the official convention hotel and all convention sessions will be held on site.



Register Rock, one of the stops on the Massacre Rocks-California Trail tour at the Pocatello Convention. Photo Courtesy of Idaho Department of Commerce.

Wyeth & Fort Hall

(continued from page 1) winter determining the prospects for salmon packing and farming, then returned to the Rocky Mountains in hopes of selling the furs he had cached near the Portneuf River.

Late in May, 1833, Wyeth joined B.L.E. Bonneville's party traveling up the Salmon River and on July 17, 1833, reached the rendezvous on the Green River near Bonneville's fort. Seven days later, Milton Sublette (William's younger brother), Tom Fitzpatrick, and Wyeth left for the mouth of the Yellowstone.

Somewhere in his travels Wyeth convinced Milton Sublette and Fitzpatrick that he could supply the Rocky Mountain Fur Co. with trade goods much more cheaply than they were now being supplied by William Sublette. Wishing to break the stranglehold of an exclusive and expensive supply contract, some of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company members contracted with Wyeth to supply goods for the 1834 rendezvous.

Arriving back in Boston in November, 1833, Wyeth convinced Henry Hall and the firm of Messrs. Tucker and Williams to invest in his new venture of supplying the rendezvous of 1834. By mid-April, Wyeth was in Independence, but was delayed in continuing by the late arrival of a group of Methodist missionaries whom Wyeth had agreed to escort to the Columbia. He left Independence on April 28, 1834.

William Sublette was determined to reach the rendezvous, on

the Ham's Fork of the Green River, before Wyeth. Within a few days, Sublette had passed Wyeth in the night. Wyeth sent word ahead that he would arrive about July first, but he was too late and his goods were not purchased.

An angry Wyeth, convinced that Fitzpatrick and William Sublette had wronged him, promised he would "roll a stone into (their) garden that they would never be able to get out." That stone was to be the building of a fort on the Snake River from which he could operate his fur trade. He arrived at the site in mid-July and by August 5, 1834, the fort was enclosed. It was named Fort Hall in honor of Henry Hall.

Wyeth spent very little time at Fort Hall. After construction was completed, he left immediately for the Columbia, arriving at Fort Vancouver on September 14. He built Fort William at the mouth of the Willamette River and returned to Fort Hall only briefly during the winter of 1835-36. Virtually all of his business ventures were unsuccessful and he was back in Boston by the fall of 1836. Faced with expensive operating costs, Wyeth sold Fort Hall to the Hudson's Bay Company in October, 1837, for \$8,180. Along with Fort Boise, it gave the British a hold that they thought would keep the Americans out of the northwest. In reality, it formed an oasis which helped travelers reach their destinations and firmed the grip of the United States on the Western half of the continent.

Nathaniel Wyeth died at his Cambridge home August 31, 1856, at the age of 54.

Printed courtesy of the Fort Hall Replica Commission

CALIFORNIA'S GOLD RUSH COUNTRY

Text and photography by Leslie A. Kelly

California commemorates the Sesquicentennial of the discovery of gold at Sutters Mill on January 24, 1998. This new photo book, the first ever coffee table book on the Gold Rush, illustrates the towns and places that remain from the rush of humanity to the California gold fields and includes a segment on the California Trail.

494 current color pictures, 240 pages, fully indexed for research and library use. Hard cover.
ISBN: 0-9653443-0-4

Meet Leslie A. Kelly at
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August 12-15, 1997

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Nearly 150 years after the discovery of gold, the Gold Rush country of California has taken on an almost European-like ambience of time and history. Here is a region soaked through with the memories and surviving material culture of the heroic era which founded our state. Yet here as well remains nature in its vast beauty and unconquerable grandeur. As the Sesquicentennial of the Gold Rush approaches, Leslie Kelly's remarkable book reminds us that California was founded upon a vast and compelling expectation. In years to come, thanks in part to this wonderful book, the Gold Rush country of California will continue to evolve as a rich landscape of heritage and present-day enjoyment.

Dr. Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California

Your book is not only beautiful in every detail, it is informative and enjoyable. There is nothing in print to match its inclusiveness and range of photographs.

J.S. Holliday, Author, *The World Rushed In*

A fantastic quantity of Geographic quality pictures. Not the usual "tourist" pictures found in most books of this type. I was raised in Columbia, California. Your book, through the beautiful photos, brings back many wonderful memories.

George C. Hesse, San Jose

This book is an absolute triumph. Not only is it overflowing with striking images, but the text is extremely accurate and informed.

Will Bagley, Author and Historian, Salt Lake City

Les Kelly Publications (800) 880-1849
15802 Springdale Street, Suite 14, Huntington Beach, CA 92649-1765

The Oregon Trail In Idaho: Dry, Hot and Scenic

by Peter Boag

Of the estimated 300,000 people who traveled the Oregon and California Trails between 1840 and 1860, it is possible, though numbers are difficult to calculate, that about half of them wandered through a portion of Idaho's Snake River Plain on their way elsewhere. It proved, for many reasons, to be one of the most difficult stretches of the entire journey.

The Plain is essentially a desert. Overland travelers passed through it during the summer months, with the peak period of travel being the first weeks of August. As overlanders descended onto the Snake River Plains -- in about the spot where Old Fort Hall was located -- they generally reacted positively to the landscape they encountered.

One migrant wrote that "we have another splendid spring near us and the stream near it is full of speckled trout... The wild currants grow here in abundance...with yellow blossoms." Initial reactions such as these suggest that to overlanders the valley of the Snake was somewhat of a paradise.

But from this point of the journey, the overwhelming nature of the Idaho desert soon took its toll. Adverse travel conditions, such as boring scenery, excessive dust, oppressive heat, and the lack of grass and water certainly influenced the way travelers perceived their surroundings.

As early as 1836 Narcissa Whitman wrote, "but the same scene prevails, rocks & sandy plains covered with a species of wormwood...offensive both to sight & smell." In 1853, Rebecca Ketcham remarked, "The valley looks pleasant but the road is dreadfully dusty." Another confided that "This day is the warmest yet, the thermometer being one hundred & four. Felt today like giving up in despair." In 1852, John Spencer found "almost no water. Poor grass...Fear of alkalai. A nasty place."

By the 1850s, migrants were herding more cattle west to Oregon and California. The misery of desert travel also exacted a heavy price from these poor creatures. The loss of valuable animals and the resulting stench of decaying carcasses was another burden migrants had to endure in southern Idaho. In 1853, Amelia Knight "found the smell of carrion so bad, that we left as soon as possible."

One of the most difficult situations for overlanders to deal with was that although they crossed through a sun-parched desert and water proved scarce, the abundant Snake River flowed nearby. The problem was that migrants--and their stock as well--could not always get to it, for along most of its way the Snake is entrenched in a deep gorge. This situation set up an experience of utter frustration for migrants.

Polly Coon related in 1852, "This is one of the most singular rivers in the world, being for miles enclosed by a perpendicular ledge of rocks & the thirsty animals are obliged to toil for miles together in the heat and dust with the sound of water in their ears & neither man (n)or beast able to get a drop."

Under the various stresses and strains of travel, overlanders responded in different ways. Some engaged in wishful thinking.

Agnes Stuart wrote: "hard on man and beast very warm nothing but hills and hollows and rocks. O dear, if we were only in the Willamette valley or where we are going for I am tired of this."

In other cases, entire wagon trains broke apart. Jared

Fox wrote in 1852 that "At noon formed a company for mutual safety & at night broke up by our individual contraryness. Now in hostile Indian country where 30 wagons ou(gh)t to go together cant but 2 or 3 agree." More peace-loving travelers found solace from the hardship of the days travel in the rest of the camp which awaited the end of the day. Bernard Reid wrote, "Oh, how glad was everybody when the campfires of the trains ahead gleamed in our sight...we spread out our blankets at once and slept till day...."

For the Oregon-California Trail migrants who traveled west between 1840 and 1860, the Snake River Plain was a region with a double personality. On the one hand, it was a place which presented travelers with their greatest hardships. Indeed, these hardships took the lives of many and caused others to turn back.

On the other hand, the Snake River region provided travelers with some of the most spectacular scenery they encountered on their way west. This scenery buoyed spirits, helped them forget their troubles, and encouraged more to continue on to the West Coast than it caused to turn back.

In 1851, while on the Snake River Plain, Elizabeth Wood summed up the dual nature of the Snake's landscape and the significance it played in offering encouragement to many who continued westward, when she wrote:

"After experiencing so many hardships, you doubtless will think I regret taking this long and tiresome trip, and would rather go back than proceed to the end of my journey. But, no, I have a great desire to see Oregon, and besides, there are many things we meet with--the beautiful scenery of plain and mountains, and their inhabitants, the wild animals and the Indians, and natural curiosities in abundance--to compensate us for the hardships and mishaps we encounter."

Peter Boag, an Associate Professor of History at Idaho State University, will speak to the OCTA convention on "Fort Hall: A Western Crossroads."



Idaho's Snake River country. Photo courtesy Idaho Department of Commerce

Trail Artifacts: Finding Them, Keeping Them

by Thomas S. Fee

This article will focus primarily on issues related to trail verification with a metal detector on BLM managed land. It must be stated that the BLM does not have any general restrictions against the use of metal detectors on public lands. However, metal detectors may not be used to disturb or remove protected resources, including archeological and historic remains.

Under 43 CFR 8365.1-5, archaeological and historic resources are protected generally from defacement, disturbance, removal and destruction. It would be against the Code of Federal Regulations, for example, to detect, dig up (disturb), photograph and re-bury an ox shoe or wagon bolt. All artifacts should be left in place undisturbed.

If a trail verification team found an ox shoe on the surface of the ground, the team would be allowed to photograph or sketch the ox shoe and leave it there. To take it would constitute a violation of federal regulations. All historic and archaeological resources, (even ox shoes, nails and wagon hardware) are the property of the US Government and may not be disturbed or collected without a permit.

A permit would be required if digging up buried artifacts would help verify a trail. In order to obtain a permit, someone with appropriate qualifications (a degree or appropriate experience) must be in charge. The application would include a summary of experience and an agreement between OCTA and BLM of what would be done with the artifacts found (a curation agreement).

The head archaeologist of Nevada BLM recommends, instead of obtaining a permit, we consider entering in a cooperative or volunteer agreement with BLM to work together recording and verifying trails. An agreement would be developed and someone from the appropriate BLM district would be assigned to work with the OCTA Trail Verification Team.

The information in this article pertains to Nevada Public Land managed by BLM and is not relevant to private land. It may possibly not pertain to public land managed by other federal agencies.

The Code of Federal Regulations was developed to carry out the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) of 1979.

The author acknowledges OCTA member Don Buck for suggesting this article and appreciates the valuable contribution of Pat Barker, Ph.D., Head Archaeologist for Nevada BLM, who supplied thorough answers to our questions, which were the basis of this article.

Any member of OCTA who wishes a five-page copy of the nine questions submitted to BLM in regard to metal detecting the Emigrant Trail on BLM managed land and the in-depth answers provided by the BLM, please send a self-addressed, business envelope with a 55-cent stamp to: Tom Fee, OCTA/BLM, P.O. Box 5819, Reno NV 89513.



Not all artifacts, like these wagon remains on the 40-Mile Desert, are as easy to find

— Photo by Tom Fee

Leave Them Or Lose Them?

So you find the artifact, either through naked eye observation or with the use of the metal detector. What then? Take it and give it a good home? Or, leave it lay? Long-standing questions for trail buffs.

"It is no secret that most of us in OCTA comply with the policy of not removing trail artifacts," noted OCTA member Gail Carbiener of Sunriver, Oregon. "However, I have often wondered if that was really the best policy for future generations of trail and history buffs."

Carbiener wondered how many artifacts were lost because they were being taken by home collectors.

"Does it make sense that those that are trained pick up the items, marking the location, and deliver them to the nearest BLM, Forestry or Museum?" Carbiener asked. "In this way our grandkids could see and appreciate what little is left. I know the rule -- but something in me feels it is such a shame that the rust will forever take these items from our future generations."

A response came from Mike Polk, a historical archaeologist who owns Sagebrush Consultants in Ogden, Utah. Polk said he appreciated the apprehension about the potential for loss that Carbiener voiced, but maintained that a "leave it lay" policy was best.

"Materials found along historic trails represent an incredibly important source of information in our efforts to better understand the trail experience of travellers," Polk notes, including how emigrants lived on their journey.

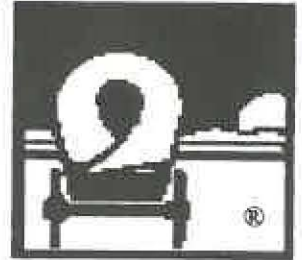
"While the artifacts themselves are very important," he adds, "perhaps even more important is the LOCATION AND ARRANGEMENT of materials along the trail...(T)he arrangement of artifacts, the number and types of artifacts and other clues associated with them become incredibly important in understanding who was there and what they were doing. Add many pieces of information together and we can begin to better understand many aspects of the pioneer experience that is not available or only poorly understood in diaries and other documents."

— Bill Martin



WAGON WHEELS ON THE INTERNET

Visit the Oregon-California Trails Association website
<http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/>



HOT LINKS ON THE INTERNET TRAIL

It's time to forsake your computer and head off to Pocatello (although you'll probably want to take advantage of the Internet workshop presented by Bob Wier and Lesley Wischmann on Thursday, August 14).

If you still need details on the convention, you can check it out on the OCTA website. The convention page is:

<http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/pocat.htm>

Also, to help you plan your trip to Idaho, Lesley sends along these suggested websites as sources of interesting information:

<http://www.visitid.org>

Idaho Travel Guide

<http://www.ioga.org/>

Idaho Outfitters & Guides

<http://www.ifcvb.net>

Idaho Falls Convention & Visitors Bureau

<http://www.sisna.com/idaho/pocycoc>

Pocatello Chamber

<http://www.boise.org>

Boise Convention & Visitors Bureau

<http://www.state.id.us/fishgame/fishgame.html>

Idaho Dept of Fish & Game

<http://www.idoc.state.id.us/irti/stateparks/spdir.html>

Idaho Dept of Parks & Recreation

Other Internet sites suggested this issue from various sources:

www.sltrib.com/contents.htm

Suggested by Merry Stahel, Editor, *Calico Trails*: "This is the Salt Lake Tribune site - they are giving a day-by-day account of the Mormon Trail Re-enactment and using diaries and letters, denoting what the original pioneers went through on the day-to-day journey."

Several Mormon Trail Sesquicentennial sites recommended by Lesley Wischmann:

<http://www.ksl.com/TV/pioneer/frpio.htm>

A daily video feature as well as archived text of each day of the journey.

<http://heritage.uen.org>

A Utah Heritage page being updated regularly.

<http://bobcat.etsu.edu/octa/mormses.htm>

The OCTA website page dedicated to the Sesquicentennial. Includes many other links.

For genealogy buffs, here's a pair of useful sites:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaquery.html>

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/>

From William Disbro: "In the depression the WPA sent out many young folks to gather up family stories all across this county. The Library of Congress has all these stories compiled on a webpage with a searchable data base to call them up. I have found many first hand accounts of Overland Trails experiences...and some that were written by the sons and daughters of these pioneers. You can run into a lot of folklore and tall tales, but also get a feel of the times and some interesting facts about these pioneers."

Adds Bob Weir: "Now this is a great site! It could be highly addictive though. Anyone doing genealogy research might get REAL lucky and find an ancestor described there. The nice thing is that it's totally keyword searchable. Highly recommended."

<http://www.melvyl.ucop.edu/>

From William Disbro: "Just found a wonderful site for all of you doing research on the California Trails. The state of California Library system has a site up that has a listing of all their holdings in a searchable data base. If you type in the subject field OVERLAND JOURNALS, 1849, you will get a listing of all journals held in the California library system and in which library it is held. A great help in pinpointing where these documents are and in getting an inter-library loan of them."

*Got a tip on a hot Web site for trail buffs? Send it to us at
words@worldnet.att.net. We'll share it in the next issue of News From The
Plains.*

40 Miles of Bad Road: Across The Pioneer Desert

by Bill Martin

The next time you are tempted to get caught up in the romance of the Overland Trails experience, may we suggest the Forty Mile Desert as a wonderful reality check?

OCTA members are well aware, of course, of the hardships faced by emigrant wagon trains and the individuals and uprooted families who made the sometimes harrowing 2,000 mile journey in search of new lands, new beginnings, new hope.

Yet, beneath the reality of the hardships suffered is the occasional fanciful vision of life traveling the plains and the mountains, crossing rivers and streams, camping under the stars, ultimately reaching a new home in California or Oregon. If any one of us had the opportunity to make such a trip, wouldn't we do it?

The Forty Mile Desert will make you re-think the question.

Consider this: You jumped off at Independence in early May. After months of sometimes monotonous traveling, your animals are fatigued, your family is tired, your supplies are getting low. Now, in September, some 250 miles from Sacramento, you are camped at the Humboldt Sink and preparing for the hard pull just in front of you. And a devastatingly hard pull it would be.

"There was no grass anywhere on this whole leg," described George Stewart in *The California Trail*. "In addition, there were some stretches of very hard hauling. All around, this desert presented by far the most difficult test which you had as yet had to meet."

Stewart probably understated it, judging by what was written by E.S. Ingalls in 1850:

"Imagine to yourself a vast plain of sand and clay; ... The desert! You must see it and feel it in an August day, when legions have crossed it before, to realize it in all its horrors. But heaven save you from the experience."

Framed by such foreboding words, a total of 26 trail buffs joined Jim McClain on an unseasonably warm mid-May weekend for a two-day trip sponsored by the CA-NV chapter of OCTA. McClain, a retired Grass Valley, Calif., school teacher,



Guide Jim McClain explains the significance of a 40-Mile Desert gravesite to OCTA trekkers.

— Photo by Bill Martin

has been visiting the Forty Mile Desert for 40 years and leading early spring trips like this one for about eight years.

For those unfamiliar with the area, the Forty Mile Desert is a virtually waterless stretch between the Humboldt Sink on the east and the Carson or Truckee Rivers on the west. The desert runs from west of Lovelock, Nevada, to near Fernley, Nevada. At the eastern edge of the desert, the original trail split, with a northerly route headed for the Truckee and the southern route headed for the Carson.

It is a high plains desert and the lack of vegetative growth, a hardship for emigrants, is a benefit to today's trail seekers. The general terrain is probably not much different that it was in 1850 and, where trail traces can be found, artifacts and other historic evidence are in plentiful supply.

McClain was to start at Fernley on Saturday morning and work westward across the Truckee River Route, camp for the night on the eastern edge of the desert, then travel the Carson River Route on Sunday, ending up at Soda Springs near what pioneers knew as Ragtown (close to today's Fallon, Nevada).

By mid-day Sunday, we would have examined traces of original trails and would have received a taste of what many say was the most punishing segment of the California Trail. The taste, we discovered was a lot like dust and alkali.

The first stop was at the Promontory Turning Point just east of Fernley. It was here that the pioneer wagon trains turned a corner and first saw a line of cottonwood trees along the Truckee four miles away, signaling fresh water and the end of the 40-mile struggle. Here, OCTA trekkers viewed what is believed to a pioneer gravesite and walked traces of the old trail

The next stop was at Boiling Springs, a significant mid-point on the Truckee Route because it offered steaming but drinkable water (after it cooled, of course). The springs have vanished because of development in the area, but traces of steam still escape from the rock-lined collection basins.

The party stopped for lunch at the White Plains-Hot Springs Plateau, a natural pass through a low range of hills, then headed



OCTA trekkers at the site of the old Boiling Hot Springs on the 40-Mile Desert

—Photo by Tom Fee

to the Humboldt Dike, a natural barrier which marked the eastern start of the Forty Mile Desert. It was from this point, just west of the Humboldt Sink, that emigrants had their first view of the desert.

Trekkers spent the night camped not far from the Humboldt Slough near Parran (rhymes with "barren," of course), an old railroad siding, then headed off early Sunday morning to visit the Forty Mile Desert Memorial Monument erected by the Nevada Corral of Westerners International in 1979-80.

After that it was off to a trail trace at the edge of an alkali where some impressive remnants of the original Carson Trail were found, including evidence of wagons being burned and plenty of pottery shards. Emigrants came straight across the flat and there are easily visible signs of their wagons coming up into the hills.

From here, the trekkers completed their route through the desert, past Upsal Hogback with a stop at Soda Lake and then into Ragtown, so named because emigrants, tired from the frequently non-stop desert crossing, would rest at the Carson River and hang their well-worn and tattered garments on the sagebrush to dry.

Two days in air conditioned vehicles, drinking designer spring water out of plastic bottles, makes it difficult to relate to the travails of the emigrants. But we knew that after months of traveling across the plains, to have to face the Forty Mile Desert was undoubtedly disheartening, discouraging and often deadly.

The sagebrush desert changes virtually in 100-yard sections at times, ranging from soft sand, to mushy alkali flats, to springy soil covered with small pieces of lava rock. It is empty of edible vegetation and it must have been excruciating for the animals who, with little or no water, had to pull wagons through such terrain.

Many journal-keepers tell of dead animals lining the trail and Edwin Bryant writes of struggling animals "wading through these hills, or heaps of dry ashy earth, rather than walked over them, sinking in many places nearly to their bellies, and manifesting the strongest signs of exhaustion."

We were on the desert in unseasonable 90 degree heat in May. Think of it at 100-plus in September! The heat, the lack of water, the trudging nature of the trail and it is not hard — even from a vantage of 140-plus years — to imagine the agony of the crossing.

The Contrast of the Donner Trail

If the Forty Mile Desert stands today as a tribute to the perseverance of the emigrant pioneers, the Donner Trail from Verdi to Truckee may be a fitting salute to the searching nature of today's trail buffs.

Historians know that emigrants turned away from the Truckee River near present day Verdi, Nevada, on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada, climbed northwest to Dog Valley, south through Hoke Valley, across the Little Truckee River, and on to Truckee and Donner Lake.

This general route was the main emigrant road into California from 1845 until 1854, when most traffic shifted to the Lassen Trail. During the 1850s, many other routes opened to California, including the Carson Route, Beckwourth Pass, Johnson's Cutoff and the Nobles Trail.

On May 31, a dozen OCTA members from California and Nevada joined guide Don Wiggins of Reno on a day-long exploration of Greenwood's Bypass, the route laid out in 1845 by mountainman Caleb Greenwood. Much of Greenwood's trail followed the route of the Stephens Party in 1844 and was used by the Donner Party two years later. The OCTA outing including travel by vehicle and opportunities to hike what is believed to be traces of the original trail.

The contrasts between the tree-lined, meadow-rich Donner Trail country and the sagebrush-laden, barren Forty-Mile Desert could not be greater. After enduring the harsh dryness of the desert, emigrants made more than two dozen crossings of the Truckee River before starting the long pull over the Sierra.

Wiggins, who has been exploring the area for more than 20 years, enriched the outing for participants by providing narratives from pioneer journals and diaries, noting that much



*Don Wiggins, center, explains the Donner Trail to OCTA trekkers near Dog Valley in the Sierra Nevada
— Photo by Bill Martin*

of the original trail between Verdi and Donner Lake has yet to be positively identified.

The confusion is due to the fact that the area saw a considerable amount of commercial wagon and stagecoach traffic in the 1800s and later was used by railroads and automobiles. As a result, many old wagon roads and even modern utility lines cross, coincide or otherwise commingle with the emigrant trail, frustrating trail seekers.

So while the route across the Forty Mile Desert is relatively distinguishable, much of the route to the summit of the Sierra Nevada remains shrouded in speculation and mystery. But the effort to unravel it, by Wiggins and others, preserves.

— Bill Martin



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Northwest

Two spring outings were completed with the considerable assistance of Mother Nature. The Meek Cutoff Auto Tour was held on April 20 in the sunshine of Eastern Oregon and the Cowlitz Trail Auto Tour was held on May 17 in Western Washington.

The Meek tour, led by T. L. Matylinski, covered the cutoff from Madras to Sherars Bridge and on to The Dalles and the Deschutes River Crossing. The highlight of the trip was the visit to Sherars Bridge, an historic (in fact, pre-historic) Deschutes River crossing point.

The river narrows to perhaps fifteen yards as it cuts its way through a lava flow. On each side a basaltic ledge formed the foundation for ancient log bridges as well as the modern bridge. Just upstream the falls provided Indian dip netters a place to harvest the salmon. The Meek Cutoff, Sherars Road, a shortcut to the Barlow Road, Indian trails and modern highways all converge on this unique site.

The Cowlitz Trail Auto Tour, researched and led by Chuck and

Suzanne Hornbuckle, covered the emigrant road from Cowlitz Landing to Tumwater on the Puget Sound. Like many others, this road began as an Indian trail that was exploited by fur trappers, in this case the Hudson Bay Company beginning in the mid 1820's.

The road first went to Cowlitz Prairie, an HBC farm just north of the Cowlitz River. The road was quickly extended to New Market (Tumwater) and Fort Nisqually, just south of Steilacoom. First recorded use by American emigrants occurred in 1845 with the Simmons and Bush party. Mr. George Washington Bush, a mulatto, was banned from Oregon and his friends, the Michael Simmons family, chose to settle with the Bushes north of the Columbia.

While the weather on the west side of the Cascades is not conducive to the preservation of unused trails, some segments can be found. The remains are far from pristine, but nevertheless they illustrate the old route. About twenty OCTAns enjoyed the tour, a park lunch near Centralia and a visit to a pioneer home in Tumwater once owned by Bing Crosby's great grandfather. And the sun also shown.

— Dave Welch

Trails Head

Trails Head hosted an evening of entertainment for the OCTA national board during the mid-year board meetings in March. Bill Worley, a professor of history from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, portrayed Isaac McCoy, an early political figure in the development of Jackson County. On the same day, Trails Head also hosted a third book review lecture. Ann Reinert, a reference librarian, reviewed one of the volumes from *Covered Wagon Women*, at Park College in Parkville, Missouri.

In April, Trails Head joined the Gateway Chapter for a tour of Independence led by Ross Marshall. Stops on the tour included the Frontier Trails Center, OCTA Headquarters, the Upper Independence River Landing site, Independence Square, Brady Cabin, the site of the Weston Wagon and Blacksmith Shop, and the 1831 proposed site for a Mormon Temple.

On the third Saturday in June, Trails Head was scheduled to sponsor a trek between the Westport Landing site and the town of Westport, with stops at Andrew Drips Park, Lewis and Clark Point, the site of the landing, River Market area, Liberty Memorial, the trials marker at St. Mary's Hospital and Union Cemetery. The trek also was to include a walking tour of Westport.

— Mary Conrad

California-Nevada

The California-Nevada Chapter will sponsor a fall symposium entitled "Opportunities and Frustrations: OCTA's Relationship with the Bureau of Land Management." The symposium will be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 4-5 at the Nevada State BLM office in Reno, Nevada.

Three topics will be covered during Saturday's session, including understanding how the BLM manages public lands, a review of current issues involving the BLM and western trails, and ways OCTA can work with the agency do help it do its job.

On Sunday, a field trip is planned to the Applegate-Lassen and Nobles Trails in the Black Rock Desert north of Reno, including Rabbit-hole Springs, Trego Hot Springs, Black Rock and the "Great Boiling Springs" first described by John Fremont in 1843.

Also planned is a Saturday night dinner, with entertainment focusing on trails and western history. The registration deadline is September 17 and registration fees are \$35 or \$40 per person (depending on the dinner entrees). For details, contact Chuck Dodd, Route 1, Box 9, Chilcoot CA 96105. The registration deadline is September 17.

— Mary Mueller

MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Colorado

A meeting co-hosted by the Colorado Chapter and the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society was held at the Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library on May 3. The schoolhouse, located on the Smoky Hill Trail, was built in 1922 and moved twice, having been restored at its present location through the efforts of the CCVHS and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Petitions for designation of the Smoky Hill Trail-Butterfield Overland Despatch as a National Historic Trail were distributed to those members of both organizations who were in attendance, for their signatures, by Clarice Crowle, co-coordinator of the Smoky Hill Trail Project. Members were urged to write to their legislators to press for this designation.

Lee Whiteley presented flyers outlining tentative plans for the chapter's fall rendezvous, a long-anticipated "Smoky Hill Trail Field Trip," on Saturday, September 6. Starting at the Elbert County Historical Society Museum in Kiowa, participants will continue to the intersection of the Smoky Hill Trail North Branch and the Texas-Montana Cattle Trail located on the Bev

Bledsoe Ranch for a trail hike.

Ward Crowley, who has worked tirelessly in spite of frustrating setbacks to obtain OCTA pictorial postmarks for members, promised that these will be available at the convention in Pocatello.

OCTA members Richard and Mary Ann Gehling presented their meticulously researched slide show on the Cherokee Trail, specifically the Jimmy Camp Road.

The chapter continues its negotiations with the E-470 Authority regarding the Smoky Hill Trail; unfortunately, the existing ruts just east of the new interchange were adversely impacted by the construction. Some ruts which are in very good condition still remain on adjacent private land which hopefully can be preserved, perhaps through purchase by the county in anticipation of future expansion of Smoky Hill Road. Meantime, the E-470 Authority has committed to placing an interpretive marker and two identifying markers at original Smoky Hill Trail locations.

OCTA members are invited to attend a reception and tour of the Aurora History Museum's Smoky Hill Trail Exhibit on July 20 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

— Margaret Bowers

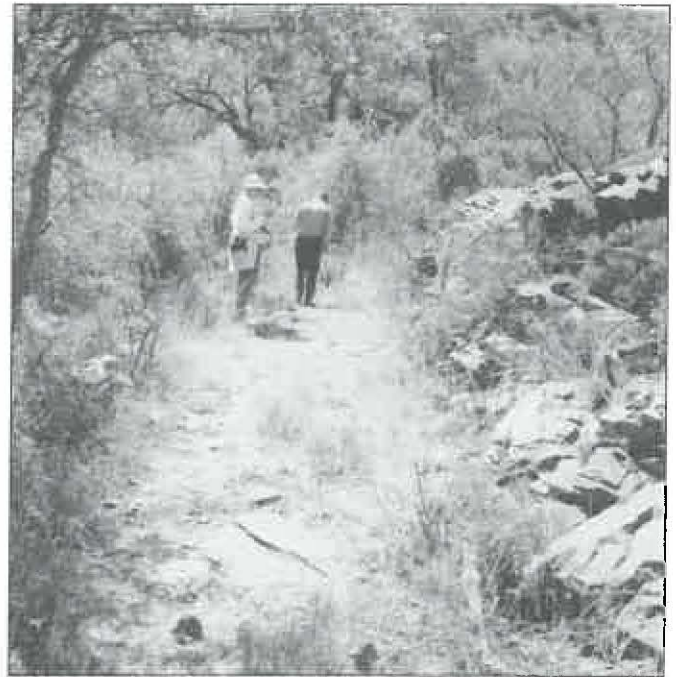
Southwest

Chapter members and one guest traveled to southeast Arizona on Sunday April 20, to do a portion of the Apache Pass Trail. The Trail is an alternate route of the Southern Trail across the southwest to California. The Apache Pass cutoff left the main trail at Soldier's Farewell, northeast of Lordsburg, N.M., and rejoined it at Tucson, AZ.

The group met at the Fort Bowie National Historic Site and was given a great tour by Superintendent Larry Ludwig. Besides a general history of the vicinity, he got us oriented in terms of the trails through the area. Because there is no campground in the area, Superintendent Ludwig allowed us to use the parking lot at the administrative facility as our staging area. This made life a lot easier as there was water available, and a bathroom with a shower. Such luxury was certainly appreciated. The superintendent was extremely helpful through the week, showing us several locations with trail remnants and allowing us to look through his files and maps for additional documentation of the area.

Mappers taking part were Marie and Richard Greene of Angel Fire, NM; Dave Hollecker of Reno, NV; Tracy DeVault of Prescott, AZ and myself. (Chapter member and mentor, Don Buck, was not able to join us, so we were on our own for the first time.)

Monday morning we mapped Siphon Canyon from the site boundary up to the hiking trail. The trail through this canyon has been marked with posts, and that was helpful. However, in places we found parallel trails and rust marks, and Larry pointed out other features we might have missed like a possible



Southwest Chapter President Marie Greene and Ft. Bowie Superintendent Larry Ludwig on the trail in Siphon Canyon.

grave. The Greens and I saw a beautiful gila monster right in the middle of the trail at one point.

In the afternoon, we attempted to map across an open, flat area where a stage station, cemetery, etc. is located. This was a heavily used area over the years, probably was a camping area for emigrants, and later saw a variety of use by the military and stage lines. We decided this maze of trails could not be

STILL MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

definitively mapped. Going west out of this flat area, a definite trail is again evident as it goes on up to Apache Pass. We had intended to map down from the pass in both directions, but did not get that done.

On Tuesday, Larry took us out onto the flats to the east of the site to show us trail traces. This was somewhat of a surprise as one can see Stein's Peak (a trail landmark on the present New Mexico/Arizona border) on the horizon easily and we had assumed the trail came straight across the valley towards Apache Pass. In talking to Larry and relooking at the documentation we have, it would appear that the early emigrants did not come by Stein's Peak and through Doubtful Canyon, but came further south, even further south than the present I-10 freeway. By Butterfield stage days in the late 1850s, the trail was pretty well defined as using Doubtful Canyon.

Wednesday we spent working east from the mouth of Siphon Canyon (the point where we had started west up the canyon on Monday) towards the area that Larry had shown us on Tuesday morning. It was a long day of tramping around, looking for and losing the trail. By the time we quit, we were all hot and tired and the wind had become increasingly worse. Trying to keep our

hats on, our maps under control, and sometimes just stand up, was very tiring.

That evening we continued to fight the wind, trying to eat dinner etc. All night the wind howled, buffeting our cars where we were attempting to sleep. One cooler blew over, its contents scattered over a hillside. Thursday morning, the forecast was for the wind to get worse (!!) and continue through Friday, with possible rain. There was no way we could have worked that day and we made the decision to leave. The group seemed to be in a sort of "we are camping and doing some fun stuff at the same time" mode. I want that feeling to continue.

One of the best parts of this mapping week was to have established a good working relationship with Larry Ludwig. I think he sees us as a serious group, and we can go back to continue anytime. We gave him one of our chapter t-shirts, and it was approved to send Fort Bowie a donation from the chapter.

We plan to return to this area in the fall for our next mapping week. Hopefully, we will actually map to Apache Pass and get across the Wilcox playa to the Dragoon Springs area. And perhaps we can solve the mystery of where the early trail came into the area from the east.

— Rose Ann Tompkins

Wyoming

The Mormon Pioneer trail sesquicentennial celebrations are well underway in Wyoming. The state, especially the Casper to Farson corridor, is expecting visitors numbering well into the tens-of-thousands.

The big public event is the unofficial wagon train that left the old Winter Quarters earlier this spring and is making its way to Salt Lake City. The train is composed of a variety of wagons and people with handcars. It is a well-organized affair that went through Casper June 12-15 and then on to Independence Rock and the new Mormon Handcard Visitor Center at Sun Ranch. The wagon train projects arrival in Salt Lake City in time for the Days of '47 Celebrations commemorating Brigham Young's arrival in the valley in 1847.

The impacts to trail resources in Wyoming will be measured by the thousands of people who have already scheduled handcart reservations through the visitor center. Officials of the center reported in May that they had 16,000 reservations through August. The State of Wyoming has established some temporary camping facilities at Independence Rock. Impacts will be felt; it is hard to judge how severe they will be.

Speaking of Independence Rock State Historic Site...some thoughtless and brainless folks took it upon themselves to write with wax pencil or crayon on the inscriptions in the cave at the southeast end of the rock. We don't know at this time if the damage can be repaired. The state parks division still needs our financial support.

We're looking forward to pre-convention visitors coming into Wyoming before going on to Pocatello...hmmm? Hope all have a great summer and see you in Idaho in August. — Tim Monroe.

Upcoming Activities

Selected events sponsored by OCTA chapters. Schedule subject to change. Contact chapters for details.

July 17-19 — CA/NV Chapter, Trail Clearing Carson Pass Area.
Contact: Frank Tortorich (209) 296-7242

July 25-27 — Trails West Outing on the northern Lassen Trail.
OCTA members contact Mary Mueller (408) 268-7389.

August 10-17 — OCTA National Convention, Pocatello, Idaho.
Contact: OCTA Headquarters (816) 836-0989

August 23-24 — Crossroads Chapter, Salt Lake Mormon Trail Tour. Contact: Roy Tea (801) 943-5891

September 6 — Colorado Chapter fall rendezvous, Smoky Hill Trail Field Trip. Contact: Lee Whiteley (303) 798-6546.

September 11-13 — CA-NV Chapter, Big Trees Road mapping from Hope Valley to Blue Lakes. Contact: Frank Tortorich (209) 296-7242

October 4-5 — Northwest Chapter, excursion to Walla Walla-Whitman Mission. Contact: Lethene Parks (509) 722-6161

October 4-5 — CA-NV Chapter Fall Symposium, Reno. OCTA's Relationship with the Bureau of Land Management. Sunday Field Trip to Applegate-Lassen and Nobels Trails. Contact: Chuck Dodd (916) 993-1425.

STILL MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Crossroads

It has been a very busy spring for the members of the Utah Crossroads chapter. Many have been involved in activities related to the Mormon Pioneer Sesquicentennial, such as the wagon and handcart train re-enactments, trail tours, lectures to local history and church groups, sharing information on the internet, and many other programs and services. The highlight of spring activities was the general membership meeting on April 4 in Salt Lake City, which featured OCYA member Michael Landon, co-author of the companion book *Trail of Hope*, speaking about the non-Mormons who passed through Utah along the Mormon Trail and the Salt Lake Cutoff.

His sterling presentation described the impact that the non-Mormon goldseekers had on Utah's early Mormon population. It was an insightful and thought-provoking lecture and put many subsequent events in Utah's history in perspective. Landon used a vast number of sources and quoted frequently from diaries, journals and reminiscences of both Mormons and gold-rush travelers to demonstrate what was happening as the gold-seekers passed through Utah, detouring off the regular California Trail. This stream of newcomers burst the bubble of isolation that the church leaders had hoped would insulate the Mormons from outside influences.

After the discovery of gold, many California-bound wagon trains shared the trail with Mormon trains and a large number of gold-seekers streamed through Utah to rest and resupply. The gold rush crumbled the walls of refuge, according to Landon. While Mormon wagon trains traveled under strict discipline, California-bound wagons hurried west, sometimes needing supplies and recruitment for their animals by the time they reached western Wyoming, necessitating a detour through Mormon county. Salt Lake City became a safety-valve for them.

Despite the disruption of their culture, the Mormons benefited

from the intrusion. They made large profits at ferries they operated; they gathered up discarded property along the trail; they capitalized on the newcomers' need for produce, grain and animals by charging high prices. Landon supplied quotes rich in the reactions from both sides of the pricing situations. Despite the high prices, the California-bound emigrants were glad to resupply and receive needed services from the Mormons since they really had no other alternative. Some gold rushers who were too ill to continue on were left among the Mormons to recuperate. Other chose to spend the winter among the Mormons rather than risk the Sierra Nevada late in the season.

The greatest benefit of such traffic to the Mormons was the boost it gave to Utah's economy. A fund to assist poor Mormon converts who wanted to emigrate to Utah was established through profits made by selling to the gold rush emigrants. The Utah Mormons gained a profitable market for their produce and services and found access to inexpensive clothing and goods which the gold seekers no longer wanted to carry or would trade for repairs and food. Despite the economic advantages, major problems were created for the Mormons. Their attempt at isolation was ruined, prices became inflated, the heavy traffic destroyed forage, difficulties with Native Americans increased and health problems rose. The influx of people not of the Mormon faith created social problems and cultural clashes as well. Some Mormons grew restless to go to the goldfields which the church leadership discouraged. Interaction with non-Mormons produced temptations the Mormons wished to avoid. Outside influences were coming in, whether they liked it or not.

The pivotal years of 1849 and 1850 ended forever the Mormon hope of seclusion from the world. As Mormon emigrants gathered to their Zion, they would have to share the trail and their newfound homeland with others whose dreams were focused farther west in the goldfields. The interaction between the two groups had a profound effect on early Utah history. It was a highly informative lecture.

—Lyndia Carter

Trails West Outing

"Striking the river this morning, I noticed a cluster of singular shaped rocks sticking up in spires of a conical shape 20 to 30 feet high," Andrew L. Murphy wrote in his diary Sept. 26, 1849.

On June 7, 1997, more than 50 members of Trails West, Inc., saw those same spires beside the Pit River in Northeast California, and placed this quote on one of the heavy steel railroad rails that serve to mark the Lassen Trail. The two-day field trip covered more than 70 miles of Peter Lassen's 1849 trail, including part of the 1846 Oregon-bound route known as the Applegate Trail.

Trails West, which began planting the familiar heavy signposts (it takes four strong men to lift one) before OCTA was born, has in recent years been joined by members of the national trails organization.

On the June outing, new plates containing quotes from the

diaries of Murphy, Elijah Preston Howell, J. Goldsborough Bruff, Israel Lord, Simon Doyle and other 49ers replaced the old brass plates. Also, two markers were relocated because of recent research on the trail.

Crew were selected by team leader Don Buck to dig holes for the heavy rails, drill and rivet the new plates, and to paint the finished markers. The group was the largest volunteer work party in the history of Trails West, according to the organization's president, Dorothy Amos.

New research through the use of diaries and contact with descendants of early settlers and those who came over the trail has necessitated many of the changes.

On the Lassen trail work project, the group met Carrol Cloud, whose great-grandfather, Jefferson Glidden, settled on the shore of Goose Lake along the Lassen Trail in 1869. Cloud has been interviewed by Richard Silver of Trails West, who along with Buck, Amos, Milt Otto and others are working toward publication of a new trail book next year.

—Pat Loomis

How Did They Do That?

Emigrants faced an exhausting 1500-foot climb from the Grande Ronde valley on their way to crossing the Blue Mountains in northeast Oregon. "How did they do that?" might be a frequently asked question. Forty-one determined trail buffs found out during the Northwest Chapter's National Trails Day outing.

Led by local historian Gerda Brownton, the group hiked from La Grande to the Grande Ronde River crossing at Hilgard, a distance of about five miles. The trek began on the east slope of Table Mountain overlooking La Grande. Enroute to the Grande Ronde River, missing trail markers were replaced and new ones installed to maintain line of sight between the markers.

While the rest of the group installed new markers, Chuck Hornbuckle took GPS readings at each marker and known gravesite. That documentation is part of a National Park Service grant over the next two years. Under Vic Bolan's leadership, the chapter will identify and mark missing sections of the trail and locate existing markers between Ladd Canyon east of La Grande and Cecil near Boardman. After completing five miles on National Trails Day, the chapter may have its work cut out to complete the remaining 110 miles.

The weather was crystal clear with a cool breeze which was



Anna Frutchev and Alica Jennsen install a new trail marker during a Northwest Chapter outing.

appreciated with the intense sunshine. While most of the participants were from Oregon and Washington, one member was from Canada. The oldest member was 78 years young and the youngest was 7-year-old Amice Frutchev of Hermiston, Oregon. Upon completing the trek, participants gained a new appreciation for the obstacles overcome by the emigrants.

— Chuck Hornbuckle

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From the National Trails Preservation Office

by Tom Hunt, Preservation Officer

My primary focus during the mid-term board meeting (Independence, MO, March 22, 1997) was a very crucial session which I had requested with the National Park Service concerning the **Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP)** process for the **California Trail**. It was the strong consensus within OCTA that this process was not leading to results which were acceptable to us and we therefore felt it necessary to face the problem head on.

From the very beginning of the CMP process, OCTA has been cooperating and providing the NPS with its expertise. Very recently, the NPS submitted for review a draft CMP of which we were very critical. The consensus was that most of our considerable input up to that point was not appearing in the plan. The draft was seriously flawed, inadequate, historically inaccurate and totally unacceptable to us. I asked for a meeting with the NPS officials to attempt to address and resolve these very critical issues and the NPS quickly agreed to meet with us during the mid-term meeting.

In this meeting, OCTA was represented by myself and by Bill Rupp, president of the CA-NV Chapter and a member of the national board. The NPS was represented by Tom Thomas, team lead on the CMP, Jere Krakow, Superintendent of the Long distance Trails, and Pat O'Brian from the NPS Denver Service Center. We informed the NPS that OCTA wasn't interested in assessing blame for what had gone wrong in the planning process but that we simply wanted to have a fresh start and get the plan written and put in place as soon as possible.

The NPS agreed that the process wasn't working, that they, too, wanted the best possible CMP, and that they weren't going to hide behind excuses. The atmosphere was thus most conducive to working out our difficulties and establishing a mutually acceptable agenda and a timetable for completing the CMP. That process is already underway.

I want our OCTA members to know that all of the complaints which we presented to the NPS concerning our frustrations and our disillusionment with the CMP process to date were received in a very open and responsive manner. I personally feel for the first time in a long time that we are on the way towards getting the best CMP which can be written. The tentative date for the publication of the final CMP is the summer of 1998. While this is not as soon as we would have liked, it is realistic in light of all the work which still needs to be accomplished. Of course the publishing of the CMP is only the first step in the ongoing process of preserving the heritage of the California Trail. That work will go on for years and years to come.

The CMP has been expanded to include not only the California Trail and Pony Express route, but also the Oregon and Mormon Trails. This reflects the fact that oversight for all four of these historic overland routes has been consolidated in the NPS Long Distance Trails Office in Salt Lake City. OCTA has long argued for this sort of unified approach to the management of the trails. Our job now is to assure that the Long Distance Trails Office is funded adequately and that its

authority is expanded to the point that it can effectively manage and protect this nation's overland trails heritage. It is hoped that this issue will be directly addressed in the CMP and that something meaningful will come of it.

There are a number of other preservation issues:

City of Rocks, Idaho: The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has supported the NPS decision in the City of Rocks Comprehensive Management Plan to close the historic Twin Sisters formation to recreational climbing. This closure decision has been vigorously challenged by the Access Fund, a rock climbing organization, which had appealed to the Council. OCTA had formally responded to the Access Fund's challenge and expressed its strong support for the decision to forbid climbing on Twin Sisters. We are now waiting to see what the decision of the State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department is on this issue -- the management of City of Rocks having been turned over to the state by the NPS. The Access Fund still could go to court over this matter. OCTA feels that the federal legislation establishing the City of Rocks National Reserve gives very explicit priority to the management of the reserve for its historic trail values. We are not opposed to recreation climbing as such -- and, indeed, there are literally hundreds of other recreation climbs which are readily available to rock climbers in the City of Rocks -- but we want the Twin Sisters formation to be off limits to such visually intrusive activities.

Independence Rock, Wyoming: I reported on an appeal which had gone out to the public from the Wyoming State Superintendent for Independence Rock for financial contributions to ensure that the ever-growing problem of vandalism at the rock would not get out of hand during the heavy visitation expected in the area this year due to the Mormon Trail Sesquicentennial celebration. The immediate emergency apparently has now been taken care of, but the ongoing problem of adequate protection for this great historic resource remains a serious and troubling problem. If the State of Wyoming can't or won't afford the site adequate and permanent protection, then certainly some other solution must be found. We were urged by Jere Krakow of the NPS to do whatever we could to ensure that *all* of the historic resources along the Mormon Trail corridor were not simply overwhelmed by use during the sesquicentennial.

I have also expressed to the board my growing concern over a whole series of little incidents along the trails in which the managing federal agencies have been failing to provide the protection which the law requires. Each one of these incidents may not be all that important in itself, but, taken together, they become quite significant. They also reflect a very troubling pattern. My office will be keeping a very close eye on this trend and we will work very closely with the NPS Long Distance Trails Office out of Salt Lake City to see that it doesn't get out of control. The various federal agencies have the authority and the responsibility to protect our national trail resources and we are going to see that they do just that.

“Donner Party Chronicles” Book Planned

The Donner Party Chronicles: A Day By Day Account of a Doomed Wagon Train, 1846-47, will be published by the Nevada Humanities Committee in September.

The book is based on the highly praised series of articles written by Frank Mullen Jr. and originally published in the Reno Gazette-Journal (for details, see *News From The Plains*, January 1997).

Between May of 1996 and April of 1997, the Gazette-Journal ran almost daily articles marking the 150th anniversary of the Donner Party tragedy, all based on extensive and painstaking research by Mullen.

The 300-plus page book, with 16 pages of color photographs by Marilyn Newton and graphics by Mark

Bartley, will be available in both hard and soft covers. The over-sized book will measure 9 1/2 by 11 inches and will be printed on archival-quality paper..

In an exclusive offer for OCTA members, a July 15 deadline for advance orders has been extended to August 1. The advance order price is \$35 for hard cover and \$25 for soft cover, including shipping and tax. Advance order copies will be autographed by Mullen and will be shipped by the end of September.

To reserve an advance copy of *The Donner Party Chronicles*, send check or money order to the Nevada Humanities Committee, 1034 North Sierra Street, Reno NV 89503, or call (702) 784-6587.

Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters

Letters are always welcome, but are subject to editing due to space considerations. Letters should be sent to Editor, News From The Plains, 1908 Tuolumne Dr., Reno NV 89523-1228. They also may be sent via e-mail to: words@worldnet.att.net

Editor, NFP:

I'm writing a book about the California Gold Rush and am wondering if any readers of the OCTA newsletter know of any authoritative estimates as to the number of wagons that took the California Trail in the years c. 1848 to c. 1856. I'll be very grateful for any information.

William Holden
8115 Sacramento St.
Fair Oaks CA 95628

Editor, NFP:

Your article on "Stolen Women" (*NFP*, April, 1997) is right on target. Not long ago we saw a documentary about the California Trail in '49 in which a gold miner was using a modern plastic gold pan. There is no mistaking the molded riffles in the bottom!

In the same issue is a reference to a book for children *Westward Ho! An Activity Guide to the Wild West*. We have not seen the book but in another publication's review was excerpted from it a recipe for "Son of a Gun Stew." This hearty dish, better known by its less genteel name, was customarily made up of the innards of a freshly slaughtered young beef before they could spoil. It included heart, tongue, kidney, brains, sweetbreads, some of the liver and maybe a few onions, but always the one indispensable ingredient marrow or milk gut for which the Spanish term is *trips de leech*. We enjoy it at slaughter time, though it is an acquired taste. The one in *Westward Ho!* is a politically correct vegetarian stew with the

only suggestion of meat the use of chicken or beef bullion cubes. Now, how is that for perverting history?

Dick Chamberlain
Flournoy, Calif.

Editor, NFP:

Good show on the newsletter. It does what it is supposed to do, which is report. I'd leave off anything from the Internet, however. Kids should not be fed easy answers for school projects. Give them a source to look up, not an answer.

Pat Etter
Mesa, Arizona

Editor, NFP

Congratulations on your first issue of *News from the Plains*. I like it all! The format is excellent, type face very readable and articles timely. I look forward to reading subsequent issues.

Recently I had a phone call from Carol Smith, a founding member of the Utah Cornish Association, concerning efforts to compile a list of Cornish Mormon pioneers who came to America, mainly to Salt Lake City. A group of Cornish members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints are building a replica of a handcart to be given to the Royal Cornwall Museum upon completion. They are putting together a list of Cornish Mormon pioneers to accompany the cart. Perhaps there are OCTA members who could contribute information to this project.

If so, the contact person in Cornwall is: Rosalie West, 11 Dozmere, Feock, Truro, Cornwall TR3 6RK, Great Britain.

Judy Chamberlain
Flournoy, Calif.

The Reading Trail



by Lyndia Carter

The reading trail this month takes young readers down a variety of trails, showing the many types of literature available for learning about life on the way west. One is a history magazine written expressly for kids. Another is an information book that kids could read and use for research for a report or find enjoyable enough to read purely for pleasure. The third is an absolutely delightful reminiscence of a woman pioneer who shares her experiences of the journey west.

Many of our readers are familiar with the history magazine for young people, *Cobblestone*. There have been previous issues dedicated to the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail and all issues are highly informative and lavishly illustrated. The writers and publishers of this magazine gear their work to readers between the ages of nine and fifteen years. The May 1997 issue is entitled "The Mormon Pioneer Trail" and focuses on the Mormon experience on the journey to Utah. Several OCTA members contributed to this issue, with Stan and Violet Kimball being the lead teamsters. The articles are informative and objective and written for the national audience. The issue certainly sheds an interesting light on this particular phase of the westward movement. Besides nine great, information-filled articles, the magazine includes activities for kids to do. I have found *Cobblestone* to be a wonderful asset in teaching history in the school classroom; it is equally effective in the home for kids and families to use for learning history. Most public and school libraries carry *Cobblestone*, but unfortunately few book and magazine shops (at least in my area) do, so if you want copies of "The Mormon Pioneer Trail" you will likely need to write to the publishers: Cobblestone Publishing Company, 7 School Street, Peterborough, NH 03458-1454 (phone 1-800-821-0115). If your family loves history, you may want to subscribe to the magazine.

Brides, Midwives, and Widows by Judith Bentley is a fun-to-read information book, part of the "Settling the West" series published for young readers by TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BOOKS. The most marvelous thing about this book is the balance it achieves in representing the many cultures and peoples involved in the settlement of the West. This well-illustrated, small book—very non-threatening for children who must (or like to) do research or who enjoy reading about history—summarizes the various roles women played on the trail and in the settling of the vast western wilderness. Many brief quotes from the participants are used throughout the text, giving the book authenticity. This book presents a realistic look at what it was like to be a woman in the west in the mid-to late-nineteenth century and how women had to be strong, determined and independent to survive. Among the many "types" covered are

midwives, missionaries, wives (both of love or convenience), prostitutes (very discretely addressed), widows (the trail made many), and women of many races and ethnic backgrounds. One chapter deals with the importance of female friendships for women in the male-dominated West. Throughout the book, the author gives just enough information to make the teen-aged reader hunger for more and ask important questions. It is a great learning tool. For this one check your public library or contact Twenty-First Century Books, A Division of Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 115 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. (copyright 1995)

A Pioneer Woman's Memoir, the reminiscence of Arabella Clemens Fulton, edited by Judith E. Greenberg and Helen Carey McKeever, is an excellent trail account, one of the best I have read. Arabella wrote with a charming story-telling style that brings the trail experience to life for the reader. She filled her pages with incidents that take the reader right down the trail with her. She had an eye for detail and a sharp memory for the happenings around her. It is a highly personal view of the journey. Twenty years old and single, Arabella Clemens decided to go West in 1864, part of the great mass of people who had become tired of the Civil War raging around them and disrupting their lives. With her two younger, but married, sisters she started out for Oregon. She wrote of the challenges of weather, dangerous river crossings (you'll love Benty's adventure!), death, encounters (both positive and negative) with Native Americans, shortages of food and water, the terrain, and her own exploits (she was quite independent!). Arabella never makes it to Oregon, deciding to settle in the Boise Valley of Idaho after meeting some miners and realizing the livelihood that could be made, not by mining but by homesteading. The latter part of the book deals with her settling, marrying, and raising a family. Her narrative is absolutely fascinating reading. Greenberg and McKeever have added rather general and simplified commentary between the chapters as background, have provided biographical material about Arabella, especially her later years, and have prepared the document for the reading audience. They have a wealth of experience in writing for young people. This book is a must! Every lover of emigrant history (most especially women) will be enthralled by Arabella's her experiences. The book is part of the "In Their Own Words" series, originated by Greenberg and McKeever. I discovered this wonderful little treasure in our small town public library. It is published by FRANKLIN WATTS, A Division of Grolier Publishing, Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06813. (copyright 1995)

Have a great time on the reading trail

—Mrs. C.

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