



News from the Plains

Volume XII, No. 3

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

July 1998

OCTA Trails Point To Pendleton In August

By Bill Martin

One of the pleasures of an Oregon-California Trails Association Convention is the opportunity to share in the modern day discovery of historic places – And the 16th Annual Convention in Pendleton, Oregon, will not disappoint.

From the splendor and challenge of the Blue Mountains – “The Oregon Alps” – to the poignancy and tragedy of the Whitman Mission, the 1998 OCTA Convention offers lots to discover.

The Umatilla Valley, where Pendleton is located, is rich in history. When you wander the area with OCTA, you will be following in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark and the generations of westward seeking pioneers who followed after them.

The Northwest Chapter will make sure you discover as much of the area as possible and has built the annual

gathering of trails buffs and nut nuts around the theme of “Out of the Blues,” with a week full of fun, entertainment and education.

Pre-tours begin on Monday, August 10, and Tuesday, August 11, with a two-day four-wheel drive trip over the Whitman Route, a Joseph-Wallowa Lake tour and a Whitman Mission tour.

The OCTA Board of Directors meets on Tuesday and the convention begins officially on Wednesday, August 12, with the general membership meeting and a welcome by the Umatilla Tribes. The keynote address will be given by Stephen Dow Beckham, professor of history at Lewis & Clark College.

A traditional highlight of any OCTA Convention is the presentation of papers, offering an opportunity to learn more about the sites we will be seeing. Eight speakers are scheduled

on Thursday, August 13, with topics ranging from an overview of the Oregon Trail to Indian heritage.

Hiking and bus tours are scheduled on Friday and Saturday, August 14-15. Hiking tours include a descent of the Blues along the emigrant route and a trek along the Boardman to Well Springs route. Bus tours include the Blues to Well Spring, the Whitman Mission and Flagstaff Hill.

Of course, no OCTA Convention would be complete without opportunities to socialize and soak up the local culture. Pendleton won't disappoint you on that count either.

Wednesday evening there will be a special Friendship Feast hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian

Reservation at the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute.

Thursday evening will feature a Buffalo Stew (with Irish potatoes!) Trail Meal, followed by Fanny and Friends, Joyce

Badgley Hunsaker's living history portrayal, and the Marv Ross Trail Band, all at the Pendleton Convention Center.

The Book Room Author's Party will be held on Friday evening and the final official event will be the annual Awards Banquet on Saturday evening.

If you still haven't registered for this year's convention, it isn't too late, although some tours may be full. Call OCTA Headquarters at (816) 252-2276 or Dick Ackerman at (503) 581-0328 for more information.



OUT of the BLUES
in '98

*More convention stuff
See Pages 5-6*

From the Editor's Desk . . .

As most of OCTA prepares to focus on the National Convention in Pendleton, this is a good opportunity to think about the diversity of our growing organization. While there is no question that OCTA's membership is a little, shall we say, more mature than the general population, we do have a breadth of experience and interests that any organization would envy.

Many people get involved in OCTA in their retirement years, when they have the time and inclination to get out on the trails. And certainly walking the swales and ruts of the emigrant trails helps keep us all young in spirit!

People come to OCTA from every state in the nation and we even have international members in England, France, Germany, Japan, and Switzerland. Their backgrounds are tremendously diverse, as are their interests and philosophies.

The one common ground we all share is a commitment to preserving and protecting our trails heritage. We may approach preservation issues from different directions sometimes, and controversies and disagreements do flare up every now and again, but that's what makes an organization like ours vibrant and alive. Imagine what it would be like if everyone in OCTA thought exactly the same!

There's a good example of our diversity in a couple of articles in this issue of *News From The Plains*.

On page 12, you will find an update from Chuck Dodd on Burning Man, the somewhat unorthodox festival gathering which takes place each year on or near the historic Black Rock Desert in northwestern Nevada. Chuck is concerned about the

impact on the Applegate and Nobles trail sections in the area and has been trying to raise the consciousness of the BLM during its permitting process.

On the other hand, on page 14 we're pleased to print a letter from Frederick Osterhagen, a new OCTA member from Carson City and a participant in Burning Man. Frederick approaches the issue from a sharply different perspective than Chuck does and has some suggestions about how OCTA can take advantage of the event.

Despite their differing approaches to this issue, we think it's healthy to have this discussion and there is room in OCTA for a variety of opinions. Dodd is right in raising concerns about the impact on the Black Rock Desert and Osterhagen is right in pointing out that "rut nuts" come in all flavors.

Elsewhere in *NFP*, we've included information about the Pendleton Convention, as well as a couple of background pieces that we hope will help prepare you for your trek into Oregon in August. Convention time is always exciting for OCTA members, since it's an annual opportunity to renew old friendships, make new ones, explore trails and learn more about our heritage. We hope you will make plans to join us.

Finally, you may notice that this issue of *NFP* is slightly briefer than normal. Apparently the somewhat spotty spring weather has been kind to our chapters. Everyone has been so busy on the trails they didn't find time to send in too many chapter reports! We'll do better in the future.

See you in Pendleton!

— 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) or via e-mail.

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, 1998

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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From The President . . .

Warmer weather is finally here, ushering the busiest time of the year for OCTA and its historic trail enthusiasts.

The annual convention will soon be here, chapters are sponsoring treks, and several groups and individuals are leading work sessions for projects made possible through the National Park Service-administered Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP).



In a previous report I mentioned the need for a volunteer to coordinate OCTA's participation in the CCSP. I am pleased to announce that Suzette McCord-Rogers from the Gateway Chapter has agreed to fill this important role.

Suzette is curator at the Iowa, Sac, and Fox Mission in Highland, Kansas, and has served a term as Gateway Chapter president. She demonstrated enthusiasm for the assignment and I am confident she will do a wonderful job.

Another key vacancy that I had reported previously has also been filled. Candy Moulton, of Encampment, Wyoming, will chair the Publications Committee beginning in August.

Candy brings an excellent and extensive background in writing, publishing, and editing that will be invaluable in this role. She has a strong interest in history, including trails as

evidenced by her recently released book co-authored with Ben Kern, *Wagon Wheels: A Contemporary Journey on the Oregon Trail*. The efforts of Candy and her committee should help to fill the trail void when we are house-bound during the winter months.

The satisfaction of filling these two positions with enthusiastic, well qualified people is offset by the recent resignation of Tom Hunt as National Historic Preservation Officer.

I want to publicly thank Tom on behalf of OCTA for his devoted advocacy for trails preservation over the years. I expect him to continue to speak out on behalf of trail preservation issues. Indeed, I encourage all individual members to get involved in preservation matters.

As I write this the Northwest Chapter convention planning team is in Pendleton finalizing plans for the August convention. It promises to be a good meeting.

I hope you have already made plans to attend since some of the treks will be to areas long closed to public access. The location of this meeting may be as close as any convention has ever come to being sited on the actual trail. One of the early trail variants through the Pendleton area passed right through the site of the headquarters hotel. Another variant passed through the Convention Center location. Come spend a few days on the trail!

— Roger Blair

News From Headquarters

By Kathy Conway

It's good to see the steady flow of Convention Registrations coming in. Our members will enjoy renewing old friendships and making new friends while they experience a memorable week in the Oregon "Alps".

We are happy to announce the hiring of a new employee, Mary Jo Todd. Mary Jo brings to OCTA work experience as Regional Director of the American Red Cross in Independence and rate-adjustor/analyst for the Independence City Power and Light. Mary Jo works part-time two days a week handling some of the bookkeeping.

Summer always brings numerous visitors to our office, including some of our OCTA members. If your vacation plans bring you to the Kansas City area, we hope you will take a short detour and visit us in Independence. The National Frontier Trails Center next door to our headquarters office also should be included in your plans.

Speaking of OCTA members, Sandy Dragoo and Sandy Waggoner made their annual visit to headquarters. The ladies are such wonderful friends of OCTA to stay several days and do volunteer work.

Meanwhile, OCTA played a role in helping a young trail buff win first place in the McKenzie, Tennessee, History Fair

with an exhibit entitled "Westward HO! The Oregon Trail."

Headquarters had received a call from Karen Allen, the mother of Jadrea Allen, asking for help in finding pictures of a wagon encampment and some other information about the trek westward.

We suggested several back issues of the of the *Overland Journal*. In addition, we sent a set of Jackson prints, *The Oregon-Trail: Voyage of Discovery*, along with an OCTA Teacher's Packet.

Jadrea used all of our information to construct a pint-sized campsite complete with handmade wagons and people appropriately dressed for the trail. Later Mrs. Allen called to let us know that Jadrea had won her local event, and that her exhibit was so impressive that it was going to be displayed at a local history museum. Jadrea sent us an electronic thank you card, as well as a note and pictures of her winning exhibit. We are happy for her success and glad to have helped.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, it's not too late to register for the Annual Convention in Pendleton. After July 1 there is a \$15 late registration fee. If you need registration information, call OCTA Headquarters at (816) 252-2276. Or you can address your convention inquiries to Dick Ackerman at (503) 581-0328. See you in Pendleton!

OCTA Fund Drive Complete

As of May 31, OCTA had received \$14,829 from the Fifth Annual Fund Drive (1997-98). Results included:

Endowment Fund	\$ 7,566
Annual Fund	3,294
Designated Funds	
Preservation	799
Archaeology	255
Trail Marking, G&S	802
Trail Mapping	242
COED	42
Education	125
Special Publications	1,704
Grand Total	\$14,829

The success of this year's drive was made possible by a record 207 donors. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to those OCTA members who helped us dispel all that talk "about going home."

Several recent donors included Roy & Hazel Acker, Larry Bafus and Sharon & Hal Manhart.

—James E. Budde

Western Trails Center Open

The Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs, Iowa, opened its doors on October 5, 1997. It is designed as "an educational reminder of those who pioneered the west and how the westward trails they traversed relate to travel today."

The Center houses a collection of resources from western migration along the Lewis & Clark, Mormon, Oregon and California trails. There are interactive photography and video exhibits, sculptures and films detailing the pioneer travelers and Indian tribes across the Great Plains, the experiences they endured, sacrifices made and legacies they left behind.

Located along the Missouri River, the Center includes a "Path of Names," a granite structure etched with the names of pioneers and Native Americans who crossed the plains. There is also a 75-foot-long granite sculpture depicting a cross-section of North America from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean.

The Western Historic Trails Center is operated by the State Historical Society of Iowa and is located at 3434 S. 34th Street, just off Interstate 80. It is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is free. For more information, call (712) 366-4900.

Silva Wins DAR Award

The Daughters of the American Revolution has presented a National History Award Medal to OCTA member Richard Silva of Yreka, California for his mapping of the southern Emigrant Road to Oregon (Applegate Trail) and the Yreka Trail.

Through research and the use of a GPS, a computer and mapping software, Richard Silva was able to complete an accurate mapping of these two trails.

The purpose of the D.A.R. National History Award is to honor a man or woman who studies and promotes some aspect of American history on the local, regional or national level, and a person who significantly advances the understanding of our nation's past.

The nomination for this prestigious award was submitted by the Siskiyou County Chapter of the D.A.R. to the State Society and then to the National Historian General for approval before the award was given.

Moulton Heads Publications

Candy Moulton has been appointed chair of the OCTA Publications Committee, which oversees *News From The Plains*, the *Overland Journal* and OCTA's Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series. She officially assumes her duties after the convention in August.

"I am excited to have someone with Candy's qualifications fill this important OCTA position," President Roger Blair said. "She has extensive writing, editing and publication experience."

Moulton, who lives in Encampment, Wyoming, writes regularly for the *Casper Star Tribune*, *American Cowboy* and *Persimmon Hill*. She is editor of *Roundup Magazine* and author of several books, including *Legacy of the Tetons: Homesteading in Jackson Hole*, *Roadside History of Wyoming and Roadside History of Nebraska*. She also co-authored *Steamboat: Legendary Bucking Horse and Wagon Wheels: A Contemporary Journey on the Oregon Trail*.

Moulton succeeds Rose Ann Tompkins, who resigned earlier this year.

OCTA Board Meeting Will Be Held In Pendleton

The annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Oregon-California Trails Association will be held on Tuesday, August 11, in Pendleton, Oregon.

The meeting will start at 8 a.m. in the Cayuse Room of the DoubleTree Hotel, headquarters for the 16th Annual OCTA Convention.

The Board meeting is open to all OCTA members. For more information, contact OCTA Headquarters at (801) 252-2276.

The End of the Trail: Welcome Relief For Travelers

The end of the trail in Oregon brought welcome relief to travelers who were at the end of a six-month journey across the plains. Many arrived in Oregon short on provisions. Here, they received a heart-felt welcome from many settlers. The following was submitted by Weldon Rau, an OCTA member from Olympia, Washington.

By Weldon W. Rau

Umatilla Valley, the site of this year's OCTA National Convention, was a place tired and hungry emigrants began to receive assistance.

Not only did the native people freely trade for food and supplies, but relief from the Willamette Valley began to reach "late comers" as far east as the Blue Mountains. The following briefly relates that story of compassion.

It was in the Umatilla Valley and late in the season that much needed relief began to arrive from the Willamette Valley for hungry and weary travelers of the Oregon Trail.

Early arrivals at Portland, Oregon City and other communities of the Willamette Valley brought news that many emigrants were yet on their way and that conditions for them had become grim.

For "late-comers" during peak years of emigrant travel, particularly 1852, grass for cattle had become scarce, thus stock were becoming sick and dying. This caused many emigrants to leave behind wagons because they no longer had cattle to pull them.

Provisions were becoming dangerously low and of poor quality, while sickness was prevalent throughout the trains. Even though there were trading establishments along the route, many simply could not afford the inflated prices.

Early in September, 1852, Enoch Conyers, while camped on the John Day River, predicted that "Many of the emigrants will without doubt suffer for want of food if help does not reach them in time."

When the alarming news was received in the settlements, an amazing effort was made to assist these destitute travelers. The press, particularly *The Oregonian*, publicized the need and encouraged contributions resulting in gifts of thousands of dollars from commercial establishments, churches and individuals.

Besides what this money could purchase, large quantities of supplies, particularly flour, were donated. In 1852, the generous and compassionate John McLoughlin, then retired from the Hudson's Bay Company, donated a thousand pounds of flour.

The distribution of these supplies was carried out by other kind-hearted individuals and commercial establishments. A steamboat company, plying the Columbia River, transported supplies to the Cascades and The Dalles free of charge. From there, individuals continued the transport overland by wagon as far as the Blue Mountains.

Prominent among such caring persons was Lot Whitcomb, who, drawing upon his personal funds, traveled as far as these

mountains, bringing assistance and supplies to those desperately in need.

In mid-October of 1852, while camped at Well Spring, Cecelia Adams wrote, "Here we met Lot Whitcomb direct from Oregon....He had provisions but not for sale but gives to all he finds in want and are not able to buy."

Among others who generously assisted was William S. Torrence, the Umatilla Indian Agent from 1851 to 1855. He made repeated trips to his claim in the Willamette Valley and returned with loads of produce and supplies to meet weary travelers in desperate need of provisions.

Assistance to late travelers was also rendered by relatives and friends who had settled earlier in Oregon. Learning of the need for assistance on the trail, many loaded up wagons with produce and supplies and drove out to meet their friends and relatives.

In mid-September, having just crossed the John Day River, the John Tucker Scott family was elated by the arrival of relatives from the Willamette Valley with much needed provisions.

Abigail Scott wrote "...to our inexpressible joy, [we] met Mr. Lawson Scott, a cousin of father's and our cousin Foster Johnson... They were just from the Garden of the World and we were all much rejoiced to meet each other, in this wild and romantic spot our hearts were filled with gratitude to know that these estimable young men would leave their pleasant homes and undergo the toll and privations of this laborious and toilsome journey and for pure friendship without expectation of pecuniary fee or reward."

Martha Read, after having completed the journey in 1852, summarized in a letter to a friend, "...a great many would have suffer for want of provisions if the people of Oregon had not gone out with provisions to meet the emigrants. Those that were not able to buy, they gave it to them."

1998 Convention Highlights

Monday, August 10

Pre-Convention Tours

Tuesday, August 11

Pre-Convention Tours

Internet Workshop

Board of Directors Meeting

Tamastlikt Institute Tours

Underground Tours

Wednesday, August 12

Presidents Breakfast

Chapter Meetings

General Membership Meeting

Happy Canyon Luncheon

Opening Reception

Umatilla Tribes Friendship Feast

continued, next page

Pendleton, Oregon:

Umatilla River, Underground Secrets, Woolen Blankets

Pendleton, Oregon, a community of about 15,000 located in northeastern Oregon, is host city for the 16th Annual OCTA Convention. OCTA member Keith May lives there and offers this historical introduction for those attending.

By Keith May

The area we now know as Pendleton was the site of the first crossing of the Umatilla River on the main Oregon Trail.

One of the first settlers was Dr. William Cameron McKay, son of Thomas McKay and step-grandson of Dr. John McLoughlin. He arrived in 1851 after a failed attempt to get rich in the California gold fields, and opened a trading post at the crossing of the Oregon Trail on the Umatilla. He only stayed until driven away by the Native Americans in 1855. Later, McKay returned to Pendleton and served as the Indian Agency Doctor until his death in 1893.

After the Indian scare was over, several entrepreneurs operated various trading posts in the bottom land along the Umatilla River to service the Oregon Trail travelers. After gold was discovered outside of Baker City in 1862, the gold miners headed to the gold fields of Eastern Oregon and Idaho.

In 1862, Umatilla County was created -- without a county seat. After a little struggle with the upstart town of Umatilla Landing on the Columbia River, the little station at the crossing of the Umatilla River became the county seat and was named Pendleton.

The town was named after George Hunt Pendleton (running mate of Gen. McClellan) at the insistence of the only judge in the county -- who happened to be a Democrat. In the early days, those wishing to settle in the town were asked their political affiliation and if the answer was "Democrat" they were welcomed with open arms. If not, they were shown the way out of town.

Pendleton's first population boom occurred when a few Republicans managed to make a stand and open businesses in town. Consequently, there were two of everything -- a Republi-

can barber and a Democratic barber!

With the coming of the transcontinental railroad in the early 1880's, Pendleton became the headquarters for the construction crews, a major roundhouse and humping yard center.

The Chinese that had come looking for gold soon found work constructing the railroads and the foundations for the town of Pendleton. Massive basalt blocks were laid to support the buildings. Service tunnels were used to interconnect under the streets and sidewalks so that the Chinese could move around town freely and avoid the harassment of the cowboys.

Later these tunnels were used by the "Fancy Women" to do their shopping from the basements and avoid the eyes of the town folks. Still later the underground was used by bootleggers and gamblers during prohibition. About 5 percent of the Underground remains for people to tour via the Pendleton Underground Tours.

By the turn of the century, Pendleton was the fourth largest city in Oregon and was the second to have paved streets (well, with all those cowboys and their horses, wouldn't you want streets that were easy to clean?) The extensive wheatfields, cattle ranches, wool industry and all the services that keep those businesses going, could be found in Pendleton.

By 1909, Pendleton Woolen Mills was producing Indian blankets at their plant in Pendleton. They still do - and it makes for a very interesting tour.

Another boom to the town occurred when the Pendleton Airbase was activated during World War II. The region around Pendleton had over 15,000 military men and women at various times during the war. And those guys all needed something to do when they got a pass -- so Pendleton continued to be the "Entertainment Capital of the Northwest".

The mothers in town wanted to protect their daughters so they lobbied the town council, and the brothels were allowed to stay operational (some as late as 1967!). Dolittle's Tokyo Raiders were trained at the Pendleton Airbase.

Since 1910, Pendleton has hosted the world famous Pendleton Round-Up (the third largest rodeo in the United States). Often the population of Pendleton grows from 15,000 to 70,000 during Round-Up week every September. Entertainment is still a way of life in Pendleton, as locals get involved staging this annual event that takes the town back to its early roots as a cowboy town.

There are walking tours of Historic South Main Commercial District, the Pendleton Woolen Mills, the Round-Up Hall of Fame Museum and the Historical Society Museum. All are convenient to the downtown area to help round out your history lesson.

The hillside neighborhoods are decorated with historic Victorian era mansions, antiques stores galore abound in town and the brand new Tamastlikt Cultural Institute is located just outside of town.

Truly, there is something for everyone, but especially for the historically minded! Welcome to the REAL west!

More 1998 Convention Highlights

Thursday, August 13

Speakers and Presentations

Buffalo Stew Trail Meal

Fanny and Friends

Marv Ross Trail Band

Friday, August 14

Hiking Tours

Bus Tours

Book Room Authors Party

Saturday, August 15

Hiking Tours

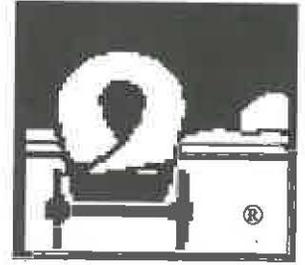
Bus Tours

Awards Banquet



WAGON WHEELS ON THE INTERNET

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



HOT LINKS ON THE INTERNET TRAIL

By Lesley Wischmann

The OCTA website will soon have a new, and hopefully terrific, addition: a virtual tour of the California Trail. The tour will consist of some 45 sites from Independence, Westport, Fort Leavenworth, and St. Joseph west to Placerville and Sutter's Fort.

When it first goes on-line, there will probably only be information about the main California Trail (through Idaho) and following the Carson Pass route but planning is underway to add in the other cutoffs and routes as soon as possible.

Each site will include information about the site, diary quotes from emigrants, and lots of great photographs.

This is a major undertaking with a number of contributors, including Bob Munkres, Jackie Lewin, Randy Wagner, Duane Iles, Richard Klein, Ross Marshall, Gail Carbiener, and Lesley Wischmann.

Photographs have been contributed by Tom Hunt, Bill Hill, Randy Wagner, Jim Tompkins of Oregon, Jim Tompkins of California, Rose Ann Tompkins, Susan Carbiener, Leslie

Kelly, Larry Jansen, John Grebenkemper, Stafford Hazelett, Steve Ellison and Lesley Wischmann.

Primary source materials include relevant articles from the *Overland Journal*, Bill Hill's *The California Trail: Yesterday and Today*, Tom Hunt's *Ghost Trails to California* and Chuck Dodd's *California Trail: Voyage of Discovery*.

We currently hope to have the virtual tour on-line shortly after the Pendleton convention. Check

<<http://calcite.rocky.edu/octa/trailmap.htm>>

for the tour.

And for those of you who are wondering, "What about the Oregon Trail?" Never fear! We will be working on that one as soon as we finish the California Trail tour. California comes first because 1999 marks the Sesquicentennial year of the 1849 start of the Gold Rush. In the meantime, you can take a virtual tour of the Oregon Trail in Oregon by visiting the NW Chapter's website at

<<http://members.aol.com/octanw/maps/clickable.html>>

"See you on the virtual trail!"

E-Mail Directory Compiled

OCTA Board member and webpage guardian Lesley Wischmann is compiling a directory of OCTA member's e-mail addresses.

If you have an e-mail address and would like to be included, please send Lesley a message at LWisch@trib.com with the following information:

In the subject line, put 'e-mail directory' and then, in the body of your message, send your information in the following format:

WISCHMANN, Lesley LWisch@trib.com

Of course, substitute your own name and address. She will also be sending copies of the directory electronically to anyone who is interested.

If you would like to receive a copy, simply add a line that says: Send directory. The directories will go out as Word attachments to an e-mail. If you do not have the ability to receive a Word attachment, please specify the alternative in which you would like to receive it -- such as WordPerfect, DOS text, etc.

Thanks for your help.

Pony Express Site Wins Award

The Pony Express Home Station, maintained by OCTA member Tom Crews of Concord, CA, has been selected by the editors of the publication *Bonus.com* as a "SuperSite for Kids." The Pony Express Home Station can be found at

www.ccnet.com/~xptom

and the *Bonus.com* criteria is to identify sources of entertaining and education works on the World Wide Web which educators can use in the classroom and which children will learn from an enjoy.

"Many of the 'awards' one can acquire on the net are self-nominating," Crews said. "This one was totally unsolicited. That makes it special to me."

CA-Nevada Webpage Available

The CA-NV Chapter website is up and running and being maintained by Shann Rupp. It includes photos of the Truckee and Carson routes, as well as information about the chapter's recent outings and the chapter's newsletter. You can find the website at

www.sonnet.com/usr/ca-nv/

"From Russia With Love"

A Russian Journey Across The Oregon Trail

In 1996, Anatoly Shimansky, a 56-year-old Russian emigrant, traveled across the Oregon-California Trail, accompanied only by his horse, Vanya. The following is excerpted from a book he is writing about his experience.

By Anatoly Shimansky

Towering on our left in the haze of a beautiful spring day are Chimney, Castle and Table Rocks. My predecessors in the last century, going down the same road, had been both amused and impressed by these natural phenomena.

These rocks are early announcement of the even more majestic Rocky Mountains dividing the continent into its eastern and western parts, and somewhere to the west the travelers hoped to find their Promised Land. This desire of people to find something waiting for them was expressed by the great American writer Henry Thoreau in 1862: "I must walk toward Oregon and not toward Europe.... We go eastward to realize history and study the works of arts and literature, retracing the steps of the race; we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure." The pioneers were going West, to the ocean hoping to see the sun from another perspective; they wanted to find something yet unknown.

Passing Scotts Bluff National Monument, I couldn't help but see it as also a monument celebrating people's courage. The people who traveled these roads, built these towns and seeded these fields did so not only with grain but with their own bones.

On the grounds of Fort Laramie, my wagon was parked in the picnic area, right on the banks of the Laramie River, and I had a lot of time to learn about this important landmark.

The recorded history of this site began in the early 19th century with the arrival of Jacques LaRame, a trapper with the American Fur Co. From 1834 until 1849, the fort was an important fur trading post. To protect Oregon Trail emigrants, the U.S. Army purchased the fort in 1849. By 1890, the last Indian warriors were neutralized in this area and the post was abandoned, its land and buildings sold at public auction.

Americans are very fond of their history and study it very meticulously. The same day of my own arrival, archeologist Dr. Danny Walker also showed up. With a team of volunteers, he was planning to dig out the garbage dump of former Fort Laramie. Each summer groups of volunteers come here to dig at their own expense, working every day under the broiling sun.

We spent a lot of time with Professor Walker talking about the romantic, heroic and tragic history of this country. Danny was

impressed to learn that Vanya and I were retracing the historical Oregon Trail and noted in my ledger that "I'm sure you are making Americans think about their country."

In the dusk, the recorded notes of an army trumpet playing "Taps," signalling the end of the service day for the soldiers, was mostly addressed to me and to the shadows of those soldiers who were resting in their graves.

In such a quiet state of mind a lot of thoughts were passing through me. Especially about those deceased soldiers who lived in the absolutely different country that we do. They are far off and little known, despite all these excavations and re-enactments. The past, like the future, is another country with borders and customs which we'll never cross. Those people are foreigners for us as much as we for them.

Besides its museum and army barracks exhibits, Fort Laramie boasts a Trader's Post Store with reproduction items for sale. All I could afford to buy was a replica of baked hardtack which came with instructions explaining "it is extremely hard and almost impossible to eat." This hardtack is still in my possession. I'm keeping it for hard times.



Anatoly Shimansky and Vanya

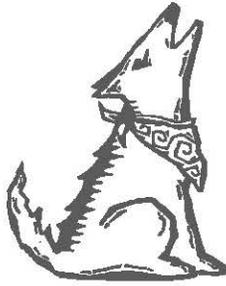
Eight American mountain men came in from Colorado in three cars with canoes attached to the roofs. They were wearing trappers' outfits, and were armed with firearms circa the beginning of the last century. The men set up camp down river and when I paid them a visit,

they gave me a shirt to wear that was made in the style of the last century and invited me to canoe down the North Platte River from Register Cliff.

The next day we began our trip in the style of the last century. I used to whitewater raft down Siberian rivers, but this travel was an absolutely different experience. The North Platte here is only about 50 yards wide and quite shallow, but its current is much faster than on the plains of Nebraska. Water snakes were crossing the river, hoping to find a better life on the opposite bank.

Just after passing a railroad bridge, we should have come to the mouth of the Laramie River, but we couldn't find it. Finally we moored on a sandy bank and hauled our canoe out to a country road, having no idea about our location. Perchance, it was a perfect re-enactment of what used to happen with trappers when they had no maps or Indian guides.

Anatoly Shimansky is now planning a horse and wagon trip around Australia for 1998-99. If you want to know more, you can write to him at 394 Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11211. Or call (718) 599-1568



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Northwest

With the return of good weather, ten Northwest Chapter members, working under the leadership of Vic Bolon, placed 140 carsonite markers on trails between Hilgard and Meacham in the Blue Mountains.

The team included Chuck Hornbuckle, Bob Coward, Dick Pingrey, Tom Laidlaw, Billy Arends, Gail Carbiener, Bud Shoaf, Roy Schapler and Don Popejoy.

The work involved placement of new markers, replacement or re-installation of old markers and updating of logos. The effort required nine-hour work days from April 23 through April 29, and over 7,000 miles of travel were logged.

The work was performed as part of the Chapter's Challenge Cost Share Grant from the National Park Service.

Dick Ackerman, Lowell Tiller and the convention team continue to put the finishing touches on convention plans. At the end of May, registrations exceeded 300 with excellent participation in all events. The pre-convention tours to Joseph and Hat Point are proving to be very popular. If you have not made your reservations, you are encouraged to do so. Some tours have limited seats available.

By the time this report is published, we will have completed "dry runs" of most convention tours. The hikes will be checked out on June 6 (Boardman-Well Springs) and June 7 (Blue Mountains Descent) and Chuck Hornbuckle will lead a group across the "Whitman Route" on June 13 and 14.

We are looking forward to seeing you all in Pendleton in August.

— Dave Welch

OCTA members donated 28,376 volunteer hours valued at \$397,264 during 1997, according to PATHWAYS, a newsletter published by the American Hiking Society under a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service.

That placed OCTA fourth nationally behind the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation, the Pacific Crest Trail Association and the Florida Trail Association.

Trails Head

Never has the early railroad come alive like it did at Avila College in Kansas City, Missouri, when 54 members and guests of Trails Head Chapter got together to hear Dr. Jim Lee speak on the early railroad in Kansas City.

Dr. Lee, a member of OCTA, gave a very informative talk beginning with the start of transportation in the area and going all the way through today's railroad station.

A very interesting trek to Fort Leavenworth and the surrounding area was taken by Trails Head Chapter along with friends from Gateway and KANZA chapters in April. The weather was beautiful, the company delightful, and the area is always a wonderful place to explore. Several guests from the Leavenworth area were very informative on the history of the area. Led and planned by Ross Marshall, it was a most interesting day.

Planning is moving ahead by the Trails Head Chapter for the National Convention in 2000. We are working hard to "SHOW YOU" what an interesting place the "trails head" is, and what a most exciting time you will have in the year 2000 at the OCTA National Convention.

— Judy Budde

Nebraska

Russ Genung led the Nebraska-Iowa Chapter spring trail trek through Adams County, NE. Our tour began at Hastings, NE, with stops at many Pony Express, Stage Stations and other historical sites. Some stations were destroyed by the 1864 Indian raids. However, ruts and swales remain.

Several sunken graves are visible at the old Kingston Cemetery, one of those places you need a guide to find. We explored the trail south of the OCTA marker at the Simonton-Smith Wagon Train burial site. A marker labeled "Government Well, Summit Springs" has been moved to a spot near the ACHS Summit Springs Station marker. That station was abandoned after the Indian raids. Our tour ended at Susan Hail's grave. Those were a few of our stops.

Most of the sites we visited were marked by the Adams County Historical Society with stone from the old courthouse. Very nice, Adams County!

— Corrine Rickner

MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

CA-NV

El Nino and planning the 1999 convention in Chico have been keeping CA-NV Chapter members busy.

Here it is June and the Sierra still has snow and no-name creeks spilling across campgrounds.

Places like Henness Pass, one of the emigrant routes over the Sierra, are still waiting for summer. This scenic route, incidentally, has been added to the list of post-convention tours for the Chico Convention.

Dick Davis, one of OCTA's charter members, has financed reproduction of Goddard's 1857 map of California and limited numbers will be offered for sale at Pendleton.

Labor Day weekend has been set for a clean-up of Bruff's Camp under the leadership of Ted Gobin of Paradise, Calif.

The next planning meeting for the 1999 Convention will be October 24 in Sacramento.

See everybody in Pendleton.

-- Pat Loomis

Upcoming Activities

Selected events sponsored by OCTA Chapters or of interest to OCTA members. Schedule subject to change.

If no contact name is provided, contact individual chapters for details.

July 12 – KANZA Chapter General Meeting. Contact: Ken Martin (785) 744-3333

July 25 – Trail Pilots Association, Baker City, OR fly-in. Contact: Bill White (435) 755-0330

July 30-August 2 – Santa Fe Trail Days, Marshall, Missouri. Contact: (660) 886-2225

August 1-3 – CA-NV Chapter Beckwourth Trail Outing (chapter members only). Contact: Andy Hammond (530) 343-5971

August 8-9 – Trail Pilots Association, Pocatello ID fly in. Contact: Bill White (435) 755-0330

August 10-15 – 16th Annual OCTA Convention, Pendleton OR. Contact: (816) 252-2276

August 21-24 – CA-NV Applegate Trail Outing (chapter members only) Contact: Chuck Dodd (530) 993-1425

Wyoming

The June 14 Wyoming OCTA Chapter trail trek was scheduled to be led by our most fearless leader, Randy Brown, and go from Glendo to Douglas. We had about twenty vehicles (including ones with license plates from as far away as Oregon and New Jersey!) and some 35-40 people. But, sadly, the weather just did not want to cooperate! As we gathered in Glendo, the skies were overcast, the temp was hovering around 50, I'd guess, and the rain was trickling down.

Nonetheless, we started out and it seemed for a while as though things might improve. We saw some terrific swales along what Randy has designated the "middle route" south of Glendo. There were three trail routes running in this area -- the river route, the middle route, and the Black Hills route -- and we were scheduled to follow the middle route. Randy had taken his students out the week before to make sure the trail markers were all in place so we could see the route clearly. In addition to the swales, we saw some original telegraph pole stumps. It would have been absolutely terrific if the rain and cold had not been so persistent. Unfortunately, though, they simply would not cooperate.

Before we got to Elkhorn Station, it was simply too bad to go on, so Randy called off the trek about 10:30 AM. BUT!!! This was, remember, a group of OCTA rut-nuts with Lee Underbrink in the "second chair," and so no one was quite ready to hang it up just yet. We reconnoitered in Glendo yet again and decided to go back to Douglas and have lunch and discuss the options. During lunch, of course, the sun came out and things looked a little better -- so we headed back out toward La Bonte Ridge. We saw some more great swales, including one magnificent three-pronged swale going up a little hill, Grindstone Butte or Knob Hill (which is very strange looking!), and La Bonte Station and Cemetery where we saw a LC Bishop-Paul Henderson post and learned about those.

But, unfortunately, soon after we headed out from that stop, the toll on the roads became clear. The 4WDs were slipping and sliding and Susan Badger Doyle and I discovered a good new use for my crutches, i.e., scraping thick chunks of red earth mud from wheels and mud flaps. By now, even the most hard core among us could see the handwriting on the wall. It was time to head home.

Even though we were all cold and wet and disappointed, it was still a good day with good friends and good trail -- and that's about all you can ask for in this life.

-- Lesley Wischmann

Burning Man, Burning Issue: An Update

In mid-June, the Bureau of Land Management agreed to allow the Burning Man festival to be held on the Black Rock Desert. The combination arts festival, social event and "experiment in community living" will be held August 31 through September 7. According to Associated Press reports, the BLM said it would place stipulations in its permit process to guard against damage to the playa, which includes portions of the Applegate-Lassen and Nobles Trails. OCTA's Chuck Dodd has been following the issues (see NFP, April, 1998) and filed the following report.

By Chuck Dodd

As the last issue of *News From the Plains* was going to the printer, with my appeal for letters supporting the BLM's decision not to process the Burning Man application, the BLM reversed itself and decided to process the application. On June 17 the BLM granted the permit.

The BLM's decision can be appealed within 30 days following the decision. However, appeals will be upheld only if it is shown that the BLM, in granting the permit, failed to act in accordance with its procedures. In other words, if the BLM made the dumbest decision in the world, but followed their own procedures in making that decision, an appeal will not be granted, and the decision will be allowed to stand.

As I write this, the decision to appeal or to accept the decision without appeal has not yet been made.

I do want to thank everyone who wrote or e-mailed the BLM on this issue. Our response was great. Although there is a lot of opposition to allowing the Burning Man on the Black Rock Desert, OCTA was the only organization to take a stand. And at the BLM's public hearings, OCTA (through me) was the only organization to state its opposition.

Do I believe the trail will be damaged by the 1998 Burning Man event? Actually, I don't know. It all depends on how the

plan works. The plan emphasizes that participants in the event will be kept within the event area. Volunteer security people who are part of the event will patrol the outlying areas, which include important sites on the Applegate Trail, to make sure participants do not use these areas.

In past years, however, skinny-dipping in the hot springs at the important trail sites was a favorite activity of the Burning Man participants. Can the promoters keep the people in the event area and away from the hot springs? Last year, the promoters kept people contained better than many of us expected, but last year's event had hot springs adjacent to the Burning Man site. It will be different this year. In 1996, a lot of participants used the hot springs on the trail and water was actually pumped from Black Rock Springs and trucked to the Burning Man site for showers. (Water will not be pumped from the springs this year.)

So, we don't know. If the event takes place, we will have to see how it goes. If the plan works, the trail should not be damaged.

What about the future? The BLM finally, after years of our urging, is preparing a management plan for the Black Rock Desert. The Burning Man promoters are already marshalling forces to oppose any element of the plan that would restrict large scale events in the area.

The Black Rock Desert is a unique, beautiful place that provides an overwhelming sense of peacefulness. The real issue is, "Will this place of solitude be allowed to exist?" Ron Volk, in his response to the BLM, said of the Burning Man, "They bring madness to a place that is a refuge from madness." Will madness reign supreme in this domain of peacefulness?

For an alternative opinion, please see Frederick Osterhagen's letter on Page 15.

Advice For Pendleton Hikers: Take Water!

If you are planning to participate in either the Wells Springs or the "Out of the Blues" hikes at the Pendleton convention, OCTA's Gail Carbiener submits this report:

Just returned from the "practice" for the hikes to be part of the 1998 Pendleton Convention. Great hikes, maybe best so far...several words of advice. (My comments, not official NWOCTA in any way!)

Wells Springs: This is relatively level with minor canyons or draws. The hike will be on dried, tall (6" - 12") grass, very slippery with leather shoes. Suggest high tops, definitely long pants and light weight long sleeve shirt. "Big" brim hat and bandana around your neck will help. Sun screen for exposed skin. There is NO shade what-so-ever!!!! At a potential of 100+ degrees, you must take

plenty of water. One canteen is probably not enough, to offset the dry, hot breeze. This is a very long hike, but spectacular ruts!

Hike out of the Blues: Other than the first 1/2 mile this hike is all down hill. Again it will be on very tall dried grass that will be slippery. Good high top shoes are recommended. The ground is rocky, and has been made very uneven with cattle grazing. No trees, NO shade! Please take lots of water! Views are great.

Both "practice" hikes were done in about 74 degree temp, with an occasional cloud giving shade. Most of us could have used more water! Please read the convention brochure for additional information. Don't be afraid, come with us, but be prepared!

Alcove Spring Campout

At Alcove Spring, the wagons gathered Friday, June 12, on ground that may have been used for the same purpose 150 years ago. The evening air was quiet and the campers relaxed around a campfire.

After Saturday breakfast, Nancy Nolte, Molly Ledeboer and Yvonne Larson baked two cherry pies, a rhubarb pie and a loaf of bread in the dutch oven.

Grace Cobb and her daughter Norma Jean visited camp. Grace's father, Arthur McNew, owned the land surrounding Alcove Spring from 1902 to 1960. Grace and Norma told many stories about the area we had not heard before.

Saturday afternoon visitors included a tour bus of Kansas Historical Society volunteers. Saturday's supper was a big black pot of beef stew. Jim and Ardis Everett and Kathy Conway from OCTA Headquarters were at the campout on Saturday and displayed and sold books from the OCTA Bookstore.

In spite of storm warnings, the rain didn't begin until Sunday morning. The campers stayed around until everything they had was wet, then packed up and headed out. Even the rain didn't spoil a good time.

Alcove Spring is located in Kansas north of Blue Rapids and south of Marysville on the East River Road. Visitors can walk the swales left by wagons 150 years ago, look at inscriptions left by the Donner-Reed party in 1846 and search for pioneer graves.

The Alcove Spring Preservation Association and the KANZA Chapter thank the volunteers and campers who made the campout a success.

— Yvonne Larson

Nobles Trail Outing

Twenty-nine OCTA members and guests joined Tom Hunt for a three-day trek over the Applegate and Nobles Trails in northwestern Nevada June 27-29.

The trek was one of several pre-tours scheduled by the California-Nevada Chapter this summer to test and refine tours planned in conjunction with the OCTA Convention in Chico, CA, in 1999.

The trip began with an early Saturday morning rendezvous on the Humboldt River near where the Applegate-Lassen Trail departed from the California Trail. At mid-morning, trekkers stopped at the trailside grave of Susan Coon, who died following childbirth in 1860. Because a stonemason was traveling with her wagon train, her grave is one of the few marked by a headstone, most of which has been preserved.

Later in the day, after lunch at Rabbithole Springs, the trekkers followed the Nobles Trail cut-off over Kamma Pass (only one vehicle got stuck!) to Trego Hot Springs and the Black Rock Desert. After overnighting in Gerlach, the trail was followed along the Smoke Creek Desert and then through Smoke Creek Canyon and on into Susanville, where the party



Wagons at the Alcove Spring Campout

— Photo by Yvonne Larson

BLM Plans Graves Memorial

The Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming is planning a memorial to the unmarked graves on the trails at an interpretive site between Farson and the Green River.

According to OCTA member Terry Del Bene, the agency is looking for diary accounts on burial practices on the trails, including texts of funeral services, memorials and the like.

"We're especially interested in materials related to unmarked burials in the vicinity of the Big Sandy, but can use a wide variety of materials to interpret death on the trail," Del Bene said. "We're hoping to come up with an emotionally powerful interpretation."

OCTA members can contact Del Bene via e-mail at wytldelbene@wy.blm.gov. His snail mail address is 241 East Second Street North, Green River WY 82935. His phone number is (307) 875-8179.



Tom Hunt, at far right, explains the significance of a trail marker on the Applegate-Nobles Trail near Rye Patch Reservoir on the Humboldt River in Nevada

— Photo by Bill Martin

visited the grave of Peter Lassen.

The tour ended on Monday after following the trail from Feather Lake to Shasta City, now Redding, CA.

— Bill Martin

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 Drive, Reno NV 89523-1228. They also may be sent via e-mail to: words@worldnet.att.net

Burning Man

Editor, NFP:

Hello, OCTA. I have only recently joined this organization, although I have long had an interest in the trails, especially those that pass through my state of Nevada. One of my most prized possessions is my 1944 edition of J. Goldsborough Bruff's diary and I am looking forward to touring the Applegate-Lassen Trail this August with Chuck Dodd.

But what brought me to OCTA - and the reason for this letter - may surprise you. I learned about OCTA last March when OCTA opposed the BLM permit for the Burning Man Festival on the Black Rock playa. Through OCTA's website, I "met" Lesley Wischmann who told me about this organization and encouraged me to write this letter. Because, you see, I am also a supporter of Burning Man. I have attended the festival for the past three years and believe that OCTA members really do not understand the festival, its goals, or, more importantly, the ways in which OCTA might work with Burning Man to further their goals.

Burning Man is, first and foremost, an arts festival. Performance art, avant-garde art. A community of people dedicated

to looking at life and culture in new and different ways. For a few glorious days each autumn, we celebrate free expression. We come together as old friends, new friends, and would-be friends to experience something different and to enjoy the company of people who are not afraid to look at life with fresh eyes. Not everything that I see pleases me but it is all, always, challenging. And those challenges bring me back to experience more each year.

The festival is organized around "theme camps." Each group establishes their own theme camp in which they present their view of the world for others to experience, to enjoy, and to learn. We emphasize "No spectators" because we don't want observers but participants. Nearly everyone believes in a few key principles: the sanctity of the earth, the worth of our fellow human beings, and respect for heritage. While it is difficult to erase the presence of 10,000 residents, we try hard to do so. I spent this last weekend on the playa working to literally leave no trace of the 1996 event. And yes, there is nudity and, sometimes, drugs. But neither is what Burning Man is about; Burning Man is about art, creativity, and expression.

OCTA members might be surprised to learn that many Burning Man supporters are like me, people interested in the history of the West and the historic trails. Many of us are aware of the trails crossing the playa and enjoy exploring them. Yes, even at Burning Man, you find "rut nuts."

(Continued on page 18)

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

Burning Man

(Continued From Page 14)

Which is why I would like to propose something rather radical to other interested OCTA members. Why not join the Burning Man Festival? Rather than fighting the permits, or hovering on the edges passing out literature to isolated vehicles, why not get a group of OCTA members together and set up an Emigrant Theme Camp at the festival itself to educate Burning Man participants about the trails and those who crossed this spectacular, harsh playa?

Wouldn't it be terrific next year, during the Sesquicentennial of the California Trail, to have OCTA members participate in this festival, the largest of its kind in this area, to bring that fascinating piece of American history to the festival participants? I believe it would not only be a great addition to the festival but a terrific opportunity for OCTA as well. After all, the festival receives a lot of national and international publicity and also attracts large numbers of people under age fifty -- an age group that I know OCTA is interested in recruiting.

I know this is not something that the organization, per se, would undertake but I would be eager to work with any other OCTA members who might want to work on an emigrant theme camp for 1999 and I would be happy to answer questions from anyone interested in learning more about the festival. You can also learn more by visiting Burning Man's website at <<http://www.burningman.com>>.

Frederick Osterhagen
Carson City, Nevada

Property Protection

Editor, NFP:

I see in the last issue (April) that the historic Johnson Ranch is now closed to trail buffs. This announcement illustrates a disturbing trend which has not received our proper attention.

There are many members of OCTA who have done much more trail sleuthing than I. Still, I must say that, with one exception, I have never been turned away by a landowner when requesting permission to enter his property. That exception was a Kansas man from whose land a "tourist" had removed an artifact. Except for this instance, I have always found landowners (and their dogs) to be particularly friendly and interested in my research.

At the same time, every landowner contacted, without exception, has voiced frustration over the number of trespassers crossing his land, and expressed dismay that these people feel they have a perfect right to go wherever they wish.

Some time ago I was searching for the common grave of

some massacre victims in central Nebraska, with the assistance of a state archaeologist, the landowner, and his extended family. During our probing, the conversation turned to options for marking the grave, and the archaeologist stated his concern that it might encourage trespassers to visit some dark night and dig up the remains. The farmer also indicated that he was troubled by trespassers, and a marker on his land was probably the last thing he wanted. In the end we decided to leave matters as they were to forestall trouble for those who had so graciously allowed us onto their property.

Issues of liability are also becoming of increasing concern for landowners. As more Americans are heeding Judge Wapner's advice to "take 'em to court," property owners are becoming more reluctant to allow trail buffs, particularly children, on their land, thereby exposing themselves to lawsuits arising from injury. I first became aware of this several years ago when the owners of an abandoned World War II factory town refused to allow access to my junior high students, citing the hazards of rattlesnakes and uprooted metal pipes.

Three factors, then -- ill-mannered trespassers, emotionally disordered vandals, and the threat of liability -- are increasingly becoming enemies, not of the trails themselves, but of our access to them. Since one of the purposes of OCTA is to promote "improved accessibility of (to) extant rut segments," we have reason to be concerned. I am wondering if there is any feeling among our members and our board of directors regarding the possibility of producing a series of public service announcements such as have been done to promote drug and alcohol awareness? Such bulletins could be sponsored by a coalition of concerned groups, including peace officers' associations, other trail associations, the Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau Federation, etc. Maybe other members have better ideas for calling the attention of the American people to the problem of trespassing on privately owned segments of the trail corridors.

It would be sad if, in another quarter century, the only way to visit the trails would be via the "Flying Rut Nuts," valuable as they are. But the closing of the Johnson Ranch, the past troubles at Alcove Spring, and the closing of the Bluewater Battlefield above Ash Hollow seem to be portents of such a time. Meanwhile, we can all take care to be responsible visitors to the property of those who work and pay taxes on the land encompassing historical sites. They are, after all, stewards of a tangible portion of our national heritage.

Ron Becher
Lincoln, Nebraska

Mark your calendars

Future OCTA National Conventions

1999 August 11-15	Chico
2000 August 9-13	Kansas City
2001 August 8-12	Wyoming

The Reading Trail



by Lyndia Carter

For young readers, books based on historical settings should be accessible, readable, informative and, most of all, fun. These books fill the order. One is non-fiction and is an excellent example of how books about history can be made interesting and readable for even beginning readers. The other two are fiction and show how fun and personable history can be made to entice kids to want to read for the sheer joy of reading while learning a bit of history on the way.

Dairy - Josh's Journal by Tom Novak (1993) is a pure delight. Josh sets out for Oregon with his widowed mother and his hilarious Grampa. His mother gives him a journal and one of his trail jobs, since he is free from school for six months, is to write about their great adventure as they travel. Leaving his dog, Molasses, and cat, Clover, behind is difficult for Josh, but the pets have other ideas and do not intend to be left. How they catch up is one of the many fun parts of the book. Josh faithfully and humorously records all kinds of other things, such as river and creek crossings, Grampa's attempts at starting fires, interesting people they meet along the trail, places they see, life camping out for months on end, and the things that make their journey exciting, appealing and true to life. Many of us enjoy reading authentic trail journals and this book makes the journal experience "real" for children, as well. This is daily trail life as a child would have seen it, full of child-like joy, anticipation, and even the frustration children can feel. It is lively and personal, though not always perfectly accurate, a sin that can be forgiven as long as the child reads and has a good time doing it. This is a great book for family sharing. Even quite young children can enjoy this story as a read-aloud. Children from fourth through seventh grade should relish it on their own. Parents and older siblings can have a great deal of fun reading it with younger children and filling in some historical detail. One thing that makes this a good "read" is the illustrations. Novak, the author/illustrator, has taken some of the situations that Josh writes about and illustrates them with clever and funny pictures, much like candid photographs in an album, and captions each as a young person would label a scrapbook after a family vacation. Each complements the story effectively and creatively. To obtain this book, contact The Paper Shop, Route 1, Box 93, Baker City, Oregon 97814.

Wagon Train, written by Sydelle Kramer and illustrated by Deborah Kogan Ray (1997), is a non-fiction book for beginning readers, grades 1 through 3. It is part of the **ALL ABOARD READING**, level 2 series. It is quite a challenge for first grade readers, but second and third grade should be able to easily handle the vocabulary and sentence structure. It is a unique book because it is the first non-fiction history of the westward emigration that I have seen that is effectively written for children who are just beginning to be independent readers. It does not have a story-line with characters, but is a straight-forward history, written on a child's level. Most other non-fictions for children, though lavishly illustrated, aim at an older

audience or require adults reading to the young child. This factual book fills a need. The text is simply and accurately written to teach children about wagon travel and the illustrations enrich the text and make the westering experience more understandable. One thing that is difficult for youngsters 6-8 years old to comprehend is how long ago these events occurred. Parents will have some explaining to do. For those of you who want to travel the trail with your little children or grandchildren, I would recommend you use this book to prepare them for the experience, as well as have it available for the children to read during the trip. The wagon train in this story is going to California, but the book can be effectively used to learn about life on the Oregon and Mormon trails as well. Find this book at better children's bookstores. It is published by Grosset and Dunlap, Inc., of New York, part of The Putnam and Grosset Group.

Go West, Young Women! is an absolutely hilarious adventure. The book, written by Kathleen Karr (1996) is the first book in the Petticoat Party series. The story of Phoebe Brown's journey to Oregon in 1846 is a sure winner for girls, ages 10 to 14. Having raised three daughters and having taught sixth and seventh graders, I can guarantee these girls are going to like this book. It is well-written, funny and clever, and girls will love the characters, especially spunky Phoebe, who tells the story. In addition, the historical background is surprisingly accurate for such a light-hearted and comical story. The party in which Phoebe Brown travels is dominated by males, though much outnumbered by their wives and daughters, most of whom are going west only because husband and father said so. However, a freak buffalo hunting accident changes all that. The females take over the leadership and the fun begins. The women and girls find that by relying on their own resourcefulness they can still get to Oregon, after all, but on their own terms. The characters are loveable and personable. They demonstrate a wide-range of types, from the boy-crazy 15 year old twins, Sarah and Hannah, to the strongwilled Miss Simpson. The men definitely end up taking a back seat in the wagons. The fathers, who take themselves all too seriously, are good for plenty of laughs. But delightful, bright and independent Phoebe steals the show. Romance, heroism, comic incidents and high adventure fill the pages and keep the reader going at a fast pace. This first book in the series takes the Petticoat Party from Independence to Fort Laramie. I have not yet seen the others in the series, but I'm looking forward to them. This is trail nonsense at its best for kids who like novels with historical settings and parents who want to make trail history enticing for their daughters. It's good fun. This is a Harper Trophy paperback, published by HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

Have a joyous journey on the reading trail this summer. Take plenty of books with you on your travels for pleasure and learning.

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