

# News from the Plains

Volume XIII, No. 3

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

July 1999

## Catch "Gold Fever" at the OCTA Convention In Chico



OCTA members will have a chance to follow in the boot tracks of the 49ers during the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention August 11-15 in Chico, California.

Coinciding with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of gold, the convention features nine pre-convention tours focusing on the Gold Rush trails to California, as well a number of papers and presentations tied to the journey to the gold fields.

It's not too late to register for the convention. For details, contact OCTA headquarters at (816) 252-2276.

Pre-convention tours are scheduled Friday, August 6, through Tuesday, August 10 and post-convention tours will be held on Sunday, August 15.

Following a meeting on the OCTA Board of Directors on Tuesday, August 10, full convention activities get underway on Wednesday at the Chico Elks Lodge.

J.S. Holliday, author of *Rush for Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California*, a book written for the California Sesquicentennial, will give the keynote speech at 10 a.m. on Wednesday. (The book will be available at

the OCTA Book Table.) Also Wednesday, the traditional OCTA Recognition Banquet will be held.

Thursday and Friday include bus tours of the Nobles Trail, the Beckwourth Trail and the Grass Valley-Nevada City area. An Italian dinner is scheduled for Thursday night, which is also Authors' Night in the bookroom.

Saturday's schedule include a number of papers, chapter meetings and a concluding barbecue and entertainment on Saturday night.

Papers scheduled to be presented during the convention include "The Gold Rush Trail" with Frank Torrich, "The Other Forty-Niners" with JoAnn Levy, "The California Gold Rush and the Future of the Republic" with Curtis Grant, and "The Emigrant Trail - Then and Now" with Greg MacGregor.

As of the end of May, there was still room available on most of the pre- and post-convention tours. (See story on page 5).

**Last Minute Convention Details**  
— See Page 5



Gateway Chapter President Suzette McCord-Rogers, left, helps unveil the new California Trail sign at Riverfront Park in St. Joseph, Missouri. See stories inside. — Photo by Candy Moulton

## From the Editor's Desk . . .

Thinking about going to the OCTA convention in Chico, but not sure whether it is worth the effort? Think again. OCTA's annual conventions are great opportunities to learn about the trails, meet people who share your interests, and soak up a lot of historical atmosphere.

That's especially true this year. Convention organizers have put together a wide-ranging program tied closely to the 150th anniversary of the California Gold Rush, the most significant event in the opening of the western wilderness. From the presentation of papers to opportunities to get out on the trails, the convention is chock full of education and entertainment. If you're a "nut nut," you don't want to miss it.

Also, there are great opportunities to meet hundreds of people who share your interest in trails history. One of the meaningful side benefits of an organization like OCTA is that usually our conventions are held in relatively small towns like Pocatello, Elko, Pendleton and Chico. If you've been to conventions in Las Vegas or Chicago or other major cities, you know it's a challenge to see other attendees outside of the convention proceedings. OCTAns can't help but bump into each other all over town.

It's not too late to register for the convention (or some of the great pre-convention tours which can *really* open your eyes to the emigrant experience). Look at the convention stories in this issue of *News From The Plains* and plan to

be in Chico. It will be a week well spent, guaranteed.

Also in this issue, there are several stories that focus on activities around Ben Kerns' California National Historical Trail Wagon Train, which is partly sponsored by OCTA, and dedication of the new California Trail sign at Riverfront Park in St. Joseph. Included is a first-hand report from Candy Moulton on rain-soaked first few days after the wagons left St. Joseph for the trip west. There's a schedule on page 14 and if you get a chance to visit the train when they are near you this summer, they will welcome some friendly faces.

Finally, in addition to their interests in trails, OCTA members frequently share an interest in genealogy. We wanted to point out a terrific new resource that just became available this spring. For those of us interested in tracing our family roots, the trails have always led to the LDS research center in Salt Lake City. Just in case you missed it, the church recently made a great deal of its family history documentation available via the internet. It's located at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). Of course, there's no substitute for actually visiting the research rooms in Salt Lake City and wearing out our eyes staring at microfilm. But it's a great way to while away spare hours - wearing out our eyes staring at the computer screen.

Have a great summer and we'll see you in Chico.

-- 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 (775) 747-2860 or e-mail at [words@worldnet.att.net](mailto:words@worldnet.att.net).

**Next Deadline Is September 1, 1999**

### NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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## From The President . . .

by Roger Blair

In the last issue, I reported the donation of 40 acres of land in California to OCTA by Pat Loomis. I am pleased to report that since then the land has been sold, with OCTA netting more than \$126,000 after closing costs. It is generous and dedicated members like Pat who make OCTA a special organization. I am pleased to count OCTA's members as my special friends.

Reflecting on the numerous friendships has been in the fore of my thoughts recently as the last few months as my tenure as President come to a close. This will be my last NFP report as President. At the Chico convention I will preside over my final meeting of the Officers and Board of Directors.

I would like to thank everyone for the work and support in carrying out OCTA's functions, especially all the committee chairs. There are also many, many others who quietly work for OCTA without recognition and often even without thanks. Kathy Conway and the headquarters staff, in particular, keep OCTA functioning smoothly and without fanfare. I extend my sincere thanks to all of you.

At the Chico meeting Dave Welch will assume the presidency. Dave has been a welcomed support and wise counsel to me and will make a great president. I am convinced that perhaps my greatest contribution during my tenure was the recognition of the talent and abilities that Dave can and will bring to the job.

Another change in officers will occur in the treasurers' position as Jim Budde chooses to turn over the books to a new treasurer. Not only I, but OCTA as an organization, owe Jim a great expression of gratitude for what OCTA has become, not

just fiscally but in overall policy matters as well. Thanks, Jim, and good luck Dave!

OCTA faces some serious issues in its near future that will directly impact it and define it as a historic trails organization.

One of the most important will be actions that define our commitment and dedication to preservation. In the week prior to composing this report, OCTA filed a motion in federal court in Boise, seeking status as a Friend of the Court in support of the National Park Service's defense in a suit brought by The Access Fund seeking to overturn the NPS's decision in the City of Rocks Climbing Management Plan to ban rock climbing on the Twin Sisters rock formations in City of Rocks. OCTA has long been opposed to climbing on the Sisters and holds a firm conviction on this position, despite compromising and allowing climbing access on all other rocks in the preserve. This is the first time that OCTA has entered into legal proceedings to protect its interests and preserve a nationally significant historic resource, not for just OCTA but for all Americans present and future.

Other important issues include passage of corrective legislation to federally recognize and protect with National Historic Trails designation the trails eliminated in the soon to be released California Trail Comprehensive Management Plan, as well as some Oregon Trail variant routes. I urge each member to work for passage of this legislation as well as for more general preservation and trail recognition matters.

The Chico convention promises to be exciting and informative. I look forward to seeing you in August.

— Roger Blair

## News From Headquarters

Several OCTA members ready to embark on their spring trail adventures have stopped in to visit Headquarters to say hello. It was good welcoming members Charles Vanderford; Michael Karas; Jim and Sue Cobbs Armed with trail books, maps, enthusiasm and a lot of determination, all seemed to want to experience every "inch" of the trail.

Several visitors seeking trail information liked what they were told about OCTA and joined right on the spot! We'd like to welcome them into our great trail family ... Jim and Mary Ann Roberts from Milpitas, CA. Michael Lamb from Champlin MN; and Stan and Marilyn Copeland from Fort Leavenworth, KS.

By now you have received the report of the Nominating Committee, including ballots for electing Board members. Be sure to return your ballots, postmarked no later than July 18, to be sure it is included in the count.

Don't miss out on OCTA's "golden" opportunity this year in Chico. Register for the August 11-15th Convention where you are to sure to "Strike it Rich" with great tours, exciting activities, making and renewing OCTA friendships.

Richard and Ffion Wilkes, our OCTA members from England, are anxious to participate again this year in the convention. We know they will be prepared as they have purchased a number of books from OCTA's catalog for the California "gold" adventure.

Recently, we have added several new items to the OCTA catalog:

*Tail of the Elephant, The Emigrant Experience on the Truckee Route of the California Trail 1844-1852*, by Olive Newell (Nevada County Historical Society) \$16.50 plus \$3 P&H

*America's National Historic Trails*, by Kathleen Ann Corder (University of Oklahoma Press) \$19.95 plus \$3 P&H

*Skookum*, (audio) read by Shannon Applegate (Leo Productions) \$29.95 plus \$3 P&H

*Undaunted Courage* (audio) Steve Ambrose (Simon & Schuster) \$25.00 plus \$3 P&H

Order these from Headquarters by phone (816-252-2276) fax (816-836-0989) or e-mail (octahqts@qvi.net)

That's all for now, hope to see you in Chico, especially at the OCTA Table in the Book Room.

— Kathy Conway  
Headquarters Manager

## National Trails Conference

The sixth Conference on National Trails will be held September 12-17 at the Zephyr Point Conference Center at Lake Tahoe.

It will focus on strategies and methods for securing "full performance funding" for all national historic and scenic trails. Field trips will include visits to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and several routes of the California National Historic Trail leading to the gold fields.

Plans for the conference are being made by a steering committee, which includes OCTA members Bill and Jeanne Watson and Ross Marshall, representing the Santa Fe Trail.

-- Jeanne Watson

## Chico Postage Cancellation



OCTA Colorado chapter Member Ward Crowley has prepared another special pictorial cancellation for the 1999 OCTA Convention in Chico.

The U.S. Postal Service authorizes such special cancellations for use during major events such as this.

This year's cancellation will feature the convention logo of a miner panning gold against a mountain background. It is not intended for general use on outgoing mail from Chico, but will be applied to envelopes submitted by stamp collectors, convention attendees or others desiring a souvenir of the OCTA Convention.

The Chico Post Office will have a table in the convention hall on Opening Day, August 11, to cancel envelopes with the special convention marking. Available for purchase will be a special postage stamp issued in June commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of gold in California. Details will be announced during the general membership meeting at the convention.

Members not attending the convention can obtain samples of the cancellation by submitting a stamped self-addressed envelope (preferably size 636) to: Convention Station c/o Postmaster, 550 Vallombroasa Street, Chico, CA 95926-9998. A self-addressed stamped #10 envelope should also be included for safe return of the specially cancelled souvenir. Requests should be sent no more than one week prior to August 11 nor more than 30 days after that date.

-- Ward Crowley

## Fund Raising Drive Completed

As of May 20, 1999, OCTA had received \$15,415 from the Sixth Annual Fund Drive (1998-99). Results follow:

Endowment Fund	\$9,618
Annual Funds	\$1,329
Designated Funds:	
Preservation	884
Archaeology	797
Trail Marking, G & S	1,410
Trail Mapping	405
COED	175
Education	75
Special Publications	722
	\$4,468

Grand Total \$15,415

The success of this year's Fund Drive was made possible by 172 generous donors. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend a warm thanks to those members who chose to make a difference.

Recent donors included: Robert A. Iverson, Ervin & Ardyth Engel, Ann Doolen, and Joseph F. Baumgardner.

— James E. Budde

## Gold Fever In Sacramento

The exhibit "Gold Fever! The Lure and Legacy of the California Gold Rush" will be in Sacramento in time for OCTA members to see it en route to or from the convention in Chico.

It opens August 1 at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium, coinciding with major observances of the Gold Rush Sesquicentennial, which also includes special exhibits at the discovery Museum, and programming in old Town Sacramento through October 31.

This exhibit opened January 24, 1998, at the Oakland Museum of California to celebrate James Marshall's discovery at Coloma in 1848 and later traveled to the Gene Autry Museum. It is being sponsored by the city and county of Sacramento and administered by the city's Downtown and Regional Enterprise Department working with museum and management professionals.

The exhibit includes sections about California before the gold rush as well as both sea and overland routes to the gold fields. It features a miner's cabin, in storage for more than 30 years, plus hydraulic mining equipment, a gold dredge and stamp mill plus a unique collection of artifacts and documents from mid-19th century and a look at the effects of the gold rush upon present-day California.

-- Jeanne Watson

# Find Nuggets of Trail History in Chico In August!!

## Convention Tours Available

At press time for *News From The Plains* there were still openings available for all of the pre-convention tours. While some were almost full, others had plenty of space.

No matter which highway you will be driving to reach the Chico Convention in August, OCTA has a tour for you.

Pre-convention tours are open to all OCTA members on a first-come, first-served basis. To check the availability of tours, contact Ed and Bernie Scoles at (650) 858-2748, e-mail [escoles@leland.stanford.edu](mailto:escoles@leland.stanford.edu).

### Pre-Convention tours:

1. Oregon to California Trail (Monday-Tuesday, August 9-10). Ashland, Oregon, to Chico.
2. Truckee River Route (Sunday-Tuesday, August 8-10). Forty-Mile Desert, then along the Truckee River to Bear Valley.
3. Applegate Trail (Friday-Tuesday, August 6-10). Rye Patch Reservoir, Nevada, over the Black Rock Desert to Goose Lake, then Lassen Trail to Chico.
4. Carson River Route (Sunday-Monday, August 8-9). Forty-Mile Desert, then over Carson Pass to Placerville.
5. Lassen Trail (Friday-Tuesday, August 6-10). Goose Lake north of Alturas to Lassen's Ranch near Chico.
6. Beckwourth Trail (Sunday-Tuesday, August 8-10). Sparks, Nevada through Beckwourth Pass to Quincy/Lake Oroville.
7. Nobles Trail (Sunday-Tuesday, August 8-10). Rye Patch Reservoir to Gerlach, through the Smoke Creek Desert to Susanville and Shasta City.
8. Southern Route to Oregon & Yreka Trail (Sunday-Tuesday, August 8-10). From the Oregon border to Clear Lake and Lava Beds National Monument, to Yreka and Chico.
9. Sonora Trail (Saturday-Monday, August 7-9). Backpacking through wilderness area on West Walker River to Fremont Lake and Chain of Lakes.

## OCTA Trail Band Organizing

Once again, the call is made for any OCTA member (y'all come) musician to pack that instrument and head for the Chico Convention. As you register for the convention, please notice the "CALL" board that has messages for the conventioners. Watch that board for announcements of times and places of rehearsals and performances. Any OCTA member who plays an unplugged instrument and enjoys playing old tunes like "Turkey In The Straw," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "O Susanna," et al, is invited to join this group. For more information, call Olive Donaldson (530) 221-3061, e-mail [Fidollie@cs.com](mailto:Fidollie@cs.com)

— Olive Donaldson

## Last Minute Reminders

### Food

The only food that will be available for you to eat while at the Elks Lodge, the Convention Site, will be that which you have signed up for PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL! So, if you forgot to indicate that you want the "No Charge" Continental Breakfast on Wednesday, just as many have because it is "Free", you still must sign up for it so that the food will be available for you!

If you need to sign up for other meals or make changes to your initial registration sign up, please send a photocopy of your Confirmation Sheet and send it to OCTA Headquarters immediately with changes and any additional money that you might owe.

### Bidwell Magnet

If you received a Bidwell Mansion magnet at the CA/NV table in Pendleton, bring it with you to Chico '99 and turn it in for a free drawing ticket!

### Author's Tables

Book dealers who wish to sign up for a table in the Book Room and authors who have not already signed up and want to sign books must contact George or Bev Hesse at (408) 377-3699.

### Other Questions

Questions about any part of the CHICO '99 registration should be directed to Bill and Shann Rupp at (209) 984-3401, e-mail [shabi@sonnet.com](mailto:shabi@sonnet.com)

## Chico Drawing Prizes Still Needed

Stake your claim to fabulous prizes in the "Luck of the Draw" at the Chico Convention.

To insure that you're not disappointed, we've salted the gold fields with dozens of nuggets. Prizes include a hand-crafted silver belt buckle and key chains, books of the trails, gold rush diaries, a copy of an 1830 map, pewter bookmark, poke bonnets, denim western shirt, gift baskets of California olives, wine, rice and nuts, to mention a few.

We still depend on you, the dedicated and diligent OCTA dons and damsels, to donate dynamite devices and delicacies to delight dozens of diggers! To offer a donation, please contact Bernadine Scoles, 844 Esplanada Way, Stanford, CA 94305, Phone (650) 858-2748, e-mail [escoles@leland.stanford.edu](mailto:escoles@leland.stanford.edu). — Bernie Scoles, Drawing Chair



## Dave Hollecker: From Hollywood To History

News From The Plains will regularly profile the men and women of OCTA who are quietly going about the work of preserving and enhancing the emigrant trails. If you have a suggestion for someone whose activities are important but unsung, please send a nomination to NFP Editor Bill Martin.

by Richard Greene

Dave got his first exposure to trails and wagon roads when he attended a YMCA day camp at age 10 in the Little Belt Mountains of Montana. Growing up on a diet of Saturday morning Westerns at the local theater, his imagination went wild when a group hike was taken on an old abandoned stage and freighting road that connected two old mining camps. The images of Roy Rogers, Gene Autrey, Hopalong Cassidy and an assortment of cowboys riding down that very road, hooked him on old roads and the "romance" of the Old West.

Growing up in the shadow of the Lewis and Clark trail and the Great Falls of the Missouri didn't hurt either. Many years later Dave and his father often floated the Missouri River on hunting trips and would take along Lewis and Clark's diary and pick out places that they wrote about. The area today is unchanged from when the Lewis and Clark expedition went through.

After graduating from the University of Montana, Dave went to "Hollywood" and became a film editor for CBS Television for a number of years. Tired of the hectic schedule, he grabbed his motorcycle and spent 15 months traveling around the world with lengthy stops in Australia, Africa and England. He returned to market foul weather clothing he designed during his journey. He later got into real estate sales and appraising which led him to a position as Senior Real Estate Appraiser for a savings and loan in Great Falls, Montana.

In 1982, Dave moved to Reno and shortly after started working for the University of Nevada System on the Truckee Meadows Community College campus Media/AV Center. He retired at the end of 1993.

In the 1980's, Dave was making attempts to locate the emigrant trail east of Reno when he stumbled across a T-shaped marker that told of the emigrant trail passing nearby. Taking down the info on the marker, he soon joined Trails West, an emigrant trail-marking organization, which led to his meeting Mary Mueller who handed him an OCTA membership application. He has been a member of both organizations the last 12 years and recently joined the Old Spanish Trail Association and the Lincoln Highway Association.

Dave's interest in the trails and Western history has always been foremost . . . "which is why I moved to Reno" he says, "and Harrah's Auto museum" he adds. Dave has a weakness for old cars. His garage is slowly being taken over by a '39 Chevy street rod he is building.

Dave's work in Trails West has been ongoing, helping



Even Dave Hollecker's vehicle proudly proclaims his membership in Trails West and OCTA. -- Photo Courtesy Dave Hollecker

with the placing of new markers along the various routes of the California Trail. He has missed very few outings since he joined. The same can be said for the CA-NV chapter of OCTA where he has been on nearly every mapping and work party that has been scheduled. He says "for a couple of years in 1990 and 1991, I had several major surgeries which relegated me to be more spectator than worker". In 1993 he was asked by the chapter board to chair the 1996 Elko convention.

Dave and a committee of six Renoites spent a year and a half laying the ground work for the convention until it was taken over by chapter members living in Elko.

Dave is also a member of the Southwest Chapter and has spent at least two weeks every year since 1996 working with a dedicated group of members to map the emigrant route via the Southern Trail to California. He has become proficient at using the GPS, looking for rust on rocks and "reading" the land for trail remnants. He has attended all but two OCTA conventions since joining. Like all active volunteers, he spends his own money to find the history that benefits the rest of us and travels a long way to participate in both chapters' activities.

The first time I got to appreciate Dave was during the CA-NV chapter trip along the Mojave Road. Dave was kind

(continued on Page 7)

## Tahoe-Area Highway By-Pass May Impact Donner Trail



This is the area near Truckee, California, where a portion of the Donner Trail may be threatened by a planned freeway project.

— Photo by Bill Martin

### Dave Hollecker *(continued from Page 6)*

enough to handle all the sanitary arrangements while we dry camped for a week. He volunteered to do this task . . . he is a bit odd at times, I'll have to admit.

There are a few people in OCTA that Dave admires for their effort in mapping and educating others about the trail. Don Buck and Tom Hunt – “I’ve learned a ton from these two.” Andy and Joanne Hammond for their Herculean effort in mapping the Beckwourth trail. Don Wiggins for his work on finding the real Truckee River route and Rose Ann Tompkins for her dedication and work on the Southern route. A part of American history will be preserved because of their efforts.

James Beckwourth is Dave’s favorite character to come out of the western emigration period, “Beckwourth accomplished so much in his life under the most challenging of circumstances.”

Right now, Dave is working to get an interpretive kiosk placed on a part of the Beckwourth trail in North Reno to tell the story of the emigration west and about Beckwourth’s contribution.

When Dave isn’t doing trail work, you will find him traveling to car shows and jazz festivals. “Being retired does have its advantages,” he says.

Dave is one of those active volunteers that is the backbone of OCTA - without them, we would only be readers.

*Richard Green is editor of Desert Tracks, the newsletter of the Southwest Chapter*

### Notice

Lesley Wischmann is continuing to collect and distribute the e-mail addresses of OCTA members. If you have an e-mail address and have not sent it to Lesley, you can do so at [LWisch@trib.com](mailto:LWisch@trib.com)

A section of the historic Donner Trail may be adversely impacted by a \$30 million freeway project near Truckee, Calif.

(A final decision on the project was pending as *News From The Plains* went to press.)

The section of the California Trail located by OCTA member and trails historian Don Wiggins of Mogul, Nev., is just east of Truckee, about five miles from where the Donner Party spent its ill-fated winter encampment in 1846-47.

While the precise location of the trail through the Sierra to Truckee has been subject to considerable research, efforts by Wiggins over the past several years have resulted in new evidence that the trail crossed precisely in the path of the planned California 267 highway bypass.

“The diaries give an excellent description of the location,” says Wiggins. “You can look out and see it exactly as the emigrants described it. It’s a class one trail.”

An initial California Department of Transportation report said the bypass would not adversely affect the trail, but the U.S. Forest Service and the California-Nevada Chapter of OCTA have disagreed.

On May 19, a California State Historic Preservation Officer meet with CalTrans, the Forest Service, Wiggins and others, to discuss the issue. The project cannot proceed until the Preservation Officer gives his approval. A decision was expected in early June.

The Forest Service and OCTA do not oppose the bypass, which would reduce traffic congestion in Truckee and which is needed, Wiggins said. However, CalTrans is being asked to mitigate the impact by putting up signs and providing public access to the trail.

“We’re talking about a few thousands of dollars in a \$30 million project,” Wiggins said. “For some reason CalTrans has resisted saying the project will have an adverse affect when its clear the project would bisect the trail.”

— Bill Martin

### Clarification

The report from the Mid-Year Board Meeting in *News From The Plains* April issue which stated that Randy Wagner had been appointed to handle public relations duties for OCTA is not exactly accurate.

The Board was asked to allow Lesley Wischmann to begin a restructuring of the PR functions which would include splitting up the budget between Internet PR and traditional PR. Wagner agreed to assist with traditional PR.

In addition, Wischmann has been talking with Tom Laidlaw, who currently handles the NWOCTA website, about becoming more involved with certain aspects of the main OCTA website. “All in all, it is hoped that these changes in the PR functions will help OCTA better spread its message to the general public,” Wischmann said

## California Bound By Wagon Train: The Early Days

*An important part of the Gold Rush Sesquicentennial is the Ben Kern wagon train which is on the trail between St. Joe and Sacramento this summer. Candy Moulton, a writer and chair of the OCTA Publications Committee, is spending part of her summer with the wagon train. She filed this first-hand report after "jumping off" from St. Joseph.*

*By Candy Moulton*

Wagons, horses, mules, and people started gathering in St. Joseph, Missouri on Friday, April 23, to begin a four-month crossing of the California Trail.

Our campsite in St. Joseph, Missouri, was the center of a transportation corridor. We had eight lanes of Interstate highway overhead, the Missouri River to our west and three railroad tracks to our east. To say that it was a little noisy is an understatement. Our tents didn't do much to insulate from the noise, but they did keep the rain off.

Those of us who are going all the way to California are a part of the California National Historical Trail Wagon Train led by Ben Kern of Evansville, Wyoming, and Donny Marincic of Sidney, Nebraska. The train has sponsorship from OCTA, and a wagon sponsored by the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management. There are many other sponsors including Cargill (feed), Coliseum Motors (a pickup), Wyoming Comfort Stations (portapotty), Randy Wagner (photographs), Les Kelly Publications (website assistance), and more.

For the first eleven days the train traveled with the Echoes of Times Past Wagon Train, organized by Ken and Arleta Martin of Oketo, Kansas. They did a great job in putting together the trail, and had a good group of people with wagons and saddle horses. Many of their wagon train are OCTA members, who have been working on mapping and other trail projects, so it was good to meet them and take advantage of their knowledge of the country.

Most of the people were wearing period garb, and I particularly liked the outfits worn by Yvonne Larson of Waterville, Kansas and her sister Chris of Austin, Texas. An Oregon Trail Recreator (and OCTA member), Yvonne had several different period skirts and one bloomer outfit. Their camp outfit was also the best on the train. It included a couple of different canvas flies that could be used to create a rain and wind break. They even had a small wood stove (which was particularly nice to huddle around on the cold, rainy days).

On April 25 the Gateway Chapter of OCTA and the Platirix Chapter No.2 of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus dedicated a new California Trail marker at the Riverfront Park where we were camped in St. Joe. E Clampus Vitus was a miner's fraternal group that organized in California during the Gold Rush. It is still going strong and is dedicated to preserving California and Western history.

At the program, the St. Joseph Museum gave wagon train participants each a journal, in which to write our own record of the trail crossing.



*OCTA Board Member Ken Martin, left, and Wagon Master Ben Kern with the wooden chest of letters which will be delivered to Sacramento. Proceeds from the sale of the letters will go to OCTA Trail Preservation projects.*  
— Photo by Candy Moulton

Those planning to travel all the way to California in addition to Ben and Donny include cooks Gary Bowen and Bart Call, and walker Chris Thomas, who was reared on a ranch near Montpelier, Idaho. She and her husband Kelly, had been living near Boise, but earlier this year they relocated to Moorehead, Minn. Chris intends to make most of the trip on foot. She is keeping a journal, which you can read on the wagon train website (<http://www.californiawagontrail.com>).

Chuck and Mary Quillin of New Sharon, Iowa, are also making the trip. They are trail veterans, having covered many miles of various routes in Iowa, and also traveling the Mormon Trail from Nauvoo, Ill., to Salt Lake City in 1996 and 1997. Chuck will be driving his wagon and he is also keeping a journal on the website. Mary will not be able to be with the train every day, but will be traveling off and on much the same way my husband Steve and I will do.

OCTA member Kay Threlkeld is an employee of the Long Distance Trails Office of the National Park Service in Salt Lake City, though her home is actually in Torrington, Wyoming. She has been working for years on the California and Pony Express Trail CMP and will be providing information and programs along the route. An intern with the NPS also planned to travel much of the trail.

It started raining during the dedication of the new trail marker in Riverside Park on April 25 and was overcast on Monday, April 26, when the teamsters hitched their horses and mules to wagons and prepared to begin the journey. There were 14 wagons and about 50 horseback riders who began the trip in the combined wagon trains.

Ken Martin and Ben Kern started the day by loading the wooden box Ken made, which contains the California Trail Commemorative letters that he and Arleta sold. The money from the letters will be used for OCTA trail preservation projects. The box went into the Government Wagon, which

Ben and Phillip Ropp (an Amish farmer from Missouri) drove out of town. At the St. Joe Post Office they stopped to pick up additional mail, which also was placed in the box, for delivery in California.

We headed out of St. Joe under gray skies, though it didn't rain on us until we got in to our first camp at Troy, Kansas. A fine mist was falling as we pitched the tent, and it started coming down hard not long after. We should have spent the night in the fairgrounds buildings like some of the people did, but Steve and I opted for the tent, which had puddles of water in the bottom by morning.

**Tuesday, April 27.** We had a cold and wet ride to Highland, Kansas. When we pulled into camp OCTA member Suzette McCord-Rogers from the Kansas State Historical Society Native American Museum at the Iowa, Sac, and Fox Mission greeted us and said we were invited over. There were bathrooms, chairs and it was warm and dry. We took the time to see the exhibits and used the telephone. In the evening we returned to the mission for a program presented by some local people. It was fine music and refreshments: coffee, tea, punch and cookies the size of dinner plates.

**Wednesday, April 28.** Pulled out of camp and went back over to the Mission where we took two wagons down some California Trail ruts to get some pictures. It was misty rain and the ruts are in a grassy area with big trees. The trees have grown up in the ruts, but it was possible to get the wagons down them. We traveled on pavement a good part of the day, which I don't like. It is noisy and the sound of iron rims on the wagon wheels against the pavement gets on your nerves after a while. We had a short break in a grassy spot above the site of Cedar Creek camp, which was used by the forty-niners, and which has never been disturbed. Ken Martin had a map of the trail along and, made sure everyone on the train knew where the trail crossed and the location of the historic campsite.

Toward the end of the day, we ran out of road and turned into a two-track between corn fields. The going was much smoother and not so noisy, but the horses and mules really had to work because of the mud. The ground was very muddy and the farmers told us they are really concerned. Because it is so wet they can't plant their crop. If it doesn't dry out pretty soon they told us they'll have to switch from corn to beans.

We got in to camp early at the ag museum in Hiawatha, Kansas and found a laundromat with commercial dryers so we could dry some of our things. Best of all everyone had a chance to take a shower!

The ag museum in Hiawatha has quite a collection of windmills, and several buildings with all types of farm equipment. The people were so great. They left some of the buildings open tonight so sleeping accommodations were inside, out of the rain.

**Thursday, April 29.** Woke to clear skies. Had a great day on the train with only a slight breeze and sunshine throughout. Camped in Albany, a museum/ghost town just west of Sabetha, Kansas. Had a parade through Sabetha on our way to camp and then lots of people came out to camp to visit with us.

One of the sponsors for Chuck and Mary Quillin is Garst Seed, and Chuck had some papers he was handing out to the



*Up and over the Kansas Hills, the wagon trains dealt with rain, mud, wind and even some sunshine as they made their way over the St. Joe Road in northeastern Kansas.*

—Photo by Candy Moulton

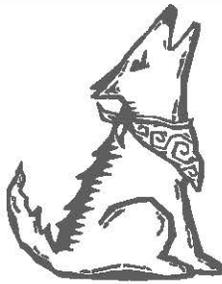
kids who came to see us. The kids were then making their rounds in camp, getting everybody to autograph the paper. Full Moon tonight.

**Friday, April 30.** Sunny again today. Chris walked the entire route to our camp north of Seneca. Kay joined us in camp this morning. She had intended to start the journey in St. Joe, but had some unplanned surgery just a week ago and had to delay a few days to recuperate. This is a great campsite on private land. There are trail swales crossing it leading down to the Nemaha River crossing and many people took the opportunity to walk in them and take photos. We crossed the Nemaha today and could see where it had really been running high earlier in the week. We have been having a lot of people out to visit the wagon train and it is surprising how many of the older generation tell us they have lived in the area since childhood, and had no idea the trail went through here. That is why we are making this trip, to follow the trail ourselves and to let others know about it so they can help to preserve it for the future.

**May Day.** Kay told me Ben was going to give me a May basket—filled with horse droppings, not flowers—but lucky for me he didn't find a basket to use. Chris, Kay and I led the train out of camp this morning. Though Chris is a strong walker and can keep up with the wagons, Kay and I aren't able to do that for very long, so we decided to walk ahead and then climb aboard when they caught up. When you are away from the wagons, it is quiet so you can hear the birds and other animals. Occasionally we pass by a hog operation. With all the rain the smell is RICH!

I'd climbed aboard the wagon after walking about three miles and then jumped off again not long before lunch. The wagons stopped soon after I began walking and I came to a cross-road. About half a dozen of the men in the train—including Allen Prell and Glen Herman who are leading this portion of the train for Ken Martin—pointed toward the north, so I headed on down the road. They had told me Chris went straight, but had gone the wrong direction. I walked about another half mile and

*(continue on page 14)*



# NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

## Gateway

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the California gold rush, OCTA and the E Clampus Vitus Chapter No. 2 placed an interpretive sign at the St. Joseph River Front Park. Gateway Chapter coordinated the dedication event held on April 25.

Jackie Lewin and Marilyn Taylor wrote the script and designed the sign. OCTA trail marking chair Randy Brown oversaw the production of the sign and Gateway members Bob Hamilton, Jim Jarrett, Mary Knab, and Glenn Calhoun placed the sign.

Taking part in the dedication were Marci Bennett, St. Joseph Convention and Visitor's Bureau director; St. Joseph Mayor Larry Stobbs; Suzette McCord-Rogers, Gateway president; Steve Born of the E Clampus Vitus; Richard Nolf, St. Joseph Museum director; and Jackie Lewin, past president of OCTA.

The dedication ceremony and unveiling were very meaningful. Not only was it held on the bank of the Missouri River in the exact location where thousands of gold seekers began their journey to California, but also the group experienced what many of the early emigrants experienced — rain. About 100 people attended the dedication even though the weather was cool and a heavy drizzle was falling. Umbrellas were welcome.

Steve Born spoke of the E Clampus Vitus tradition of placing over 1,200 markers at historic sites, primarily in California and western states. This is the first sign that the group has placed so far east. They recognized that St. Joseph was the jumping-off point for many who traveled to the California gold fields and later became fraternal members of E Clampus Vitus. He also explained that in the 1930s the E Clampus Vitus was revived by historians Carl Wheat, G. Ezra Dane, and Leon Whitsell as a men's group dedicated to preserving California and Western history. Steve, who traveled from Granada Hills, California, for the event, is also a member of OCTA.

The sign is recognized by the California Sesquicentennial Committee, and their logo appears in the text.

The wagon train reenactor's encampment was also at St. Joseph River Front Park. As part of the afternoon ceremony, the St. Joseph Museum recognized the members of Ken Martin's and Ben Kern's wagon train. A representative from



OCTA members Jim Jarratt of Cosby, MO, and Mary Knab of St. Joseph with the new trail sign at River Front Park

— Photo by Bob Hamilton

each wagon was presented with a journal to keep a record of their journey. Included in the journal was a booklet with quotes of the 1849ers.

The wagons rolled out of River Front Park in St. Joseph on Monday, April 26th at 8:00 a.m. Wagon master Ken Martin directed the line up and Wagon Master Ben Kern led the group by driving the National Park Service/Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management wagon. Fifteen wagons and numerous horseback riders followed. The group paraded through downtown St. Joseph and around the City Hall before crossing the Missouri River via the Pony Express bridge. Four school groups were at the City Hall and each school presented the lead scout with an OCTA commemorative letter to be carried on the trail. Also, the wagons paraded past two St. Joseph schools (Neely and St. Patrick's) where the entire student body lined the streets to cheer the travelers on. The weather was cool and overcast at the start, and by the end of the day, the members of the wagon train experienced a thunderstorm.

Ken Martin's "Echoes of Time Past Wagon Train" followed the St. Joe Road through Kansas. Ben Kern's "California National Historic Trail Wagon Train" is traveling the entire length of the trail and will end their journey in California on September 2.

-- Jackie Lewin

## More Gateway

Doniphan County is still reeling from the excitement of the "Echoes from the Past" wagon train organized by Ken Martin. The wagon train helped people feel part of national history as the wagons helped them realize that the California Trail went through their county and city.

Historical re-enactments bring it home so that people can identify with the pioneer experience. Highland seventh and eighth graders had been studying the California Trail for one month before the wagon train visited their community, studying land claims, writing journals, outfitting wagons, and creating characters. Earlier in the year they had placed 28 markers on the trail and walked in the swales. Forty-four kids walked in a light mist with the wagon train for about five miles and begged to go the all of the way to the Wolf River. Afterwards, they thanked me and Ken for giving them an unforgettable experience, the privilege of walking with the wagon train. Their teachers assure me that the kids will never forget it, I know I won't.

During the afternoon the Native American Heritage museum, Highland PRIDE, and the Gateway Chapter of OCTA, offered wagon wheel cookies, coffee and a dry place to sit and talk. That evening townspeople and wagon train pioneers were welcomed by the Honorable Mayor Roger Hopkins of Highland. One hundred and twenty-five in all, came to the museum where they were treated to trail music by Orville Sutherland on the harmonica, and his daughter Deanne on the guitar.

Fellow OCTA member Tom Laidlaw from the Northwest chapter, wore many hats as he re-enacted revolutionaries, fur trapper and William Blanton, the first American at Fort Vancouver. Hats off to Tom, he did an outstanding job, a true professional. The Gateway Chapter presented Ken Martin with a dream catcher made by Iowa artist Reuben Kent and a certificate for crossing the Wolf River into Iowa and Sac and Fox territory. At Ken's request, the Governor's proclamation was read creating April 26 to May 3 as official Gold Rush Days in the state of Kansas.

Ken and Arletta Martin awarded Gateway President Suzette McCord-Rogers with a certificate. It was an emotional moment. The evening closed with Bea Whetstine's musical group. Professional performers, as an ice breaker, they had the audience play act a song and then invited us to sing along creating such an atmosphere of warmth and community that I had tears in my eyes and shivers down my spine. Although it was 9:00 p.m., everyone begged the Whetstines to keep singing. The day ended with a glow. The next morning the town of Highland and the all of the schools lined the streets to see the wagon train go by.

— Suzette-McCord Rogers

## Northwest

April 17th brought the NW chapter out of its winter hibernation with a tour of Oregon City and the End of the Barlow Road. It was a beautiful day as some 20 people showed up on what turned out to be a well guided and informative tour lead by Jim Tompkins.

We saw many interesting sights, some of which were Hiram Straights' old home and cemetery, some wonderful traces of the Barlow Road up Moss Hill, The Baker Cabin, and the favorite of almost everyone on the tour, the Abernethy Elm. Jim supported the tour with an enormous tour book full of information and facts.

April 25th brought Vic Bolon's undaunted crew back out on the trail, marking and mapping the Well Spring diversion on the Boardman Bombing Range. "Incoming!" yells Vic as we all hit the ground!

The hardy souls that faced a strong wind and blowing dust where Rich Herman, Chuck and Susanne Hornbuckle, Wayne Burck, Vic and Nancy Bolon, and Don Popejoy. This diversion of 3 ½ miles to the Northeast in Juniper canyon, was a water source to those who did not have enough water to get from Butter Creek to Willow Creek. The next trail marking dates were scheduled for May 25-28 west of Pendleton.

On May 1st, nearly 50 chapter members and friends met Arlie Holt at the new but not yet finished Polk County Historical Society in Dallas, Oregon for the "Trail to the Luckiamute" outing.

The morning started with a pre-opening tour of the Polk County Museum followed by a presentation of the history and background of the South Road Expedition, which is now known as the Applegate Trail.

After lunch an auto caravan started in northern Polk County following the South Road Expedition as it traveled down the Old California trail and ended at the land claim of Levi Scott in northern Benton County. Arlie had an excellent guide book which will serve as a study for future reference. "I thought the country between the Yamhill and Mary's River the finest I had ever seen." -- LEVI SCOTT

With these trips and memories behind us we all look forward to the June 5<sup>th</sup> Applegate Trail bus tour from Sunny Valley to Eugene. Also, June 19th-21<sup>st</sup> a joint weekend outing with the Idaho/Montana chapter is planned. This will be a caravan/CB tour following the Oregon Trail from Caldwell, Idaho, to Baker City, Oregon.

Mention should be made about the April 25th sternwheeler cruise with the Washington State and Oregon State chapters of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. This was a two-hour champagne brunch aboard the "Columbia Gorge" and was attended by about 15 NW chapter members. Besides the great scenery and the brunch, a stunning performance was given by Joyce Badgley Hunsaker as Sacajawea.

For more information on these outings and future events see the NW chapter website at <http://www.rutnut.com/nwocta/home.html> (Webmaster: Tom Laidlaw)

-- Don Popejoy

## MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

### Southwest

From April 22 until April 29, six members of the Southwest Chapter traveled the emigrant trail from Ft. Smith, AR to Anton Chico, NM. For Don Buck, Tracy & Judy DeVault, Richard & Marie Greene, and Rose Ann Tompkins, it was not the usual mapping week.

We knew little about this portion of trail, and considered the week a reconnaissance trip with a double purpose; the first being to learn more about the country the trail passed through, and the second was to more closely follow one emigrant's route. William Goulding was a 49er who left a detailed diary, one being considered for future publication by OCTA.

Primarily a driving trip, we used the usual guides: diaries, old maps, and local information. Rain was an almost constant companion, once sending us to a motel rather than braving another night of listening to the rain beat on the vehicles. From the diaries we read that the emigrants found the spring rains of 1849 made for slow travel, and we encountered the same. We were forced to remain on paved roads in many areas, but continued to move west along the Canadian River through Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle.

This trail is not well known by the local population in many areas, but we did find help in Holdenville and Weatherford, OK as well as the State Historical Society in Oklahoma City. A wonderful find was a gentleman in Amarillo, TX who welcomed us to his home and spent several hours sharing a wealth of trail information gathered over many years.

Also in Amarillo, chapter member Charles Davis had organized a dinner where we met other history buffs, including the president of the local chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association. Other highlights included the group salads, DeVault's newly acquired antique camping oven producing pizza and biscuits, and wild turkeys roaming through one campsite. The trip was considered a success as we gained knowledge of a trail traveled by thousands of emigrants. Now it's back to the books and



*Emigrants on the Ft. Smith to Santa Fe Trail mentioned "natural mounds" they passed in western Oklahoma. Grain fields have replaced the prairie grass, but they remain on the landscape.*

— Photo by Judy DeVault

maps to put our new information together with them and decide the next actions.

The chapter Trail Outing on May 15 and 16 was a time for us to look over a little known trail in Arizona, the Ehrenberg Wagon Road linking the Colorado River and the new capital of the Arizona Territory, Prescott. More than 20 chapter members and guests attended the event. The trip leaders, Fred & Joyce Rozum and Tracy & Judy DeVault, researched this road and became acquainted with the ranch owners. On Saturday, in addition to hiking on trail remnants, we saw graves from an 1865 Indian ambush, an 1878 rock inscription, Indian petroglyphs, a puzzling rock structure, and a gold mine.

Saturday evening after dinner together in Prescott, we met at DeVault's home for a presentation on Camp Date Creek by Bill Smith, the state site steward. He also was our guide on the 16th as we visited the site of Camp Date Creek, established in 1867. This extensive ruin of rock foundations and melted adobe walls was a busy military post along the Ehrenberg Road.

— Rose Ann Tompkins

## Graves Memorial Dedication

A new historic interpretation exhibit — *The Graves of the Unknown Emigrants* — will be dedicated on August 7 at the Pilot Butte view site approximately 14 miles west of Farson, Wyoming.

Representatives of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, descendants of the James Birch family and historic reenactors will take part.

The dedication will be a 19<sup>th</sup> century funeral service and burial. The event will include a dedication program, living history re-enactment and more.

— From the Wyoming Chapter Newsletter

## Meet & Greet First-Timers In Chico

If you'd like to make your experience in Chico even better, why not sign up to welcome first time convention goers. It's only a two-hour commitment. You name the day and time. Any and all help is greatly appreciated! This is going to be the best convention yet! If you are interested, please write, call or e-mail Kathy Lewin at 1009 King Street, Santa Rosa CA 95404, (707) 526-7712, KTLinSR@AOL.com.

— Kathy Lewin

## Trails Head

A very busy schedule has kept Trails Head meeting, planning, and socializing. Of course, most of it is to prepare for our sponsorship of the OCTA convention in 2000.

However, we have not put everything aside just for the planning of the convention. Education is still going on with Trails Head members going into elementary schools speaking about the trails; working with the teachers on how to teach the trails and (listen up, Bill Hill) promoting the excellent workbooks that are available through OCTA. Several senior hostels have also included speakers from OCTA.

Dry-runs of the treks being considered for our fellow OCTA members are "in the happening." The hospitality committee, as well as the speakers committee, are working to make this the "convention you WON'T WANT TO MISS".

In April, Trails Head had a meeting at the Shawnee Indian Mission which featured Kelly Kindscher of the University of Kansas. Kelly was an absolutely fascinating speaker. He held our attention with the descriptions of plant life along the trail in Kansas, much of which the early immigrants used for many different purposes. His pictures were spectacular and he answered questions that many had, such as is it still used for that today, etc. His knowledge on the subject, as well as his manner of speaking made for a most interesting plus entertaining evening. I think the group would have stayed there all night had we not realized how long we had him staying up there answering questions, etc. after his talk.

In May a combined meeting of convention planning, plus a slide presentation by Barbara Magerl of previous conventions made for another informative evening. The officers of Trails Head hoped to inspire those who have not ever attended an OCTA convention by the slide show. Barbara did an excellent job and it was delightful looking back on "old friends and activities" at past conventions.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in Chico (look for the Convention 2000 table there). Have a great summer!

-- Judy Budde

### Growing Years Available

The OCTA publication *The Growing Years, 1987-1999* by OCTA historian Ruth Anderson is now available from the OCTA Bookstore. Order now from Headquarters for only \$5 plus \$3 shipping and handling. It is the companion piece to *Preserving Our Historic Trails, The Story of OCTA*.

## Idaho Trails Center Now Open

The grand opening for the National Oregon/California Trail Center at Clover Creek in Montpelier, Idaho, has been scheduled for July 13. Tours started at the Center on Memorial Day weekend.



The Center and Museum is dedicated to promoting the pioneer trails in the state of Idaho and surrounding states. The Center is located directly on the Oregon Trail in the southeast corner of Idaho. It can be visited by those traveling U.S. 89 between Salt Lake City, Jackson Hole and Yellowstone Park.

The \$3 million center includes a Rails & Trails Museum and a multimedia exhibit showing trails sites, a computer lab, a gift shop, multi-use theater, gun shop, blacksmith shop, mercantile store and art gallery.

The center received a U S West technology grant for the computer lab, which was developed in partnership with the Bear Lake County Library and the Bear Lake County School District. For information, call (208) 847-3800 or visit the Center's website at [oregontrailcenter.org](http://oregontrailcenter.org).

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"As important in its own way as the chronicles of the Adams family or the Beechers"

- Lillian Schissel  
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## Wagon Train *(continued from Page 14)*

the wagons started to turn down the road following my route, then they switched and went straight. When I rejoined everyone later at our lunch stop (having hitched a ride with caterer Doyle Ray who happened to be in the area) I told them I knew they wanted to get rid of me, but doing it before lunch was not very nice.

For the first eleven days the combined trains traveled the St. Joe Road. Those involved with Echoes of Times Past Wagon Train finished their portion of the trip at Lanham, Kansas on May 6. A few of them continued on with Ben for another day to Rock Creek, Nebraska. From that point the three wagons in the California National Historical Trail Wagon Train struck out on their own. Other wagons, walkers and horseback riders will join in at various times throughout the summer.

The train will participate in the ground breaking for the Historic Trail Center in Casper, Wyoming, on June 21, and in the dedication of the new trail center in Montpelier, Idaho, on July 13. It will end the journey in Old Sacramento on Sept. 2.

See the summer schedule for the wagon train at right. Other details are available on the train's website.

Anyone wanting to participate for a day or longer is invited to do so. It costs \$50 to ride in the wagon or walk and that includes three meals. Or you can just come out to camp for dinner-usually served about 6 p.m.-that costs \$10.

*OCTA member Candy Moulton is a freelance journalist living in Wyoming. She is writing about the California National Historical Trail Wagon Train, and the California Gold Rush for several publications including The Fence Post, Rawlins Daily Times, Casper Star-Tribune, and Western Horseman.*

## Charter Member Troy Gray Dies

OCTA charter member Troy Gray passed away the last weekend in May at the age of 85. Troy and his wife Billie of Dallas were both enthusiastic trail buffs and probably visited more trail sites than anyone I know.

While on a visit to Wyoming in the early 80's they asked me to come with them to a meeting in Denver where they were to help start a club, as they put it, for trail fans. The club became OCTA and for several years Troy and Billie were active in the leadership. Troy's dream was to get the entire trail marked in a way similar to what the BLM had done on public lands in some states, particularly Wyoming. Eventually with Bob Berry's help the OCTA marking program got started in 1987. Troy was the godfather of OCTA's trail marking program. Troy also helped get the Graves and Sites marking program started in 1985 when he recruited me to get the Joel Hembree grave fenced and marked. Troy was an ardent and early supporter of trail preservation and often reported with sadness what portions of trail had disappeared on each subsequent trip. I got Troy interested in the Civil War and characteristically he found a project for that interest by attempting to visit and photograph the grave of each and every Confederate general. He and Billie came pretty close to accomplishing that daunting task. Old trail hands will miss Troy Gray.

-- Randy Brown

## Wagon Train Schedule

*The tentative summer schedule for the California National Historic Trails Wagon Train (subject to change).*

July 1-Rock Creek, Wyoming	2-Private Ranch
2-Pacific Springs (Cross South Pass)	3-Private Ranch
3-Parting of the Ways	4-Eureka
4-layover (Dry Sandy)	5-Layover
5-Sublette Flats	6-Private Ranch
6-Names Hill	7-Hickison Summit
7-Opal Junction	8-Austin
8-Kemmerer	9-layover
9-Emigrant Springs	10-New Pass
10-Cokeville	11-Midlegate
11-layover	12-Sand Springs
12-Montpelier, Idaho	13-Fallon
13-layover	14-layover
14-Soda Springs	15-layover
15-Lava Hot Springs	16-Silver Springs
16-Hawkins Reservoir (Hudspeth)	17-Fort Churchill
17-Daniels Reservoir	18-Dayton
18-layover	19-Carson City
19-Twin Springs	20-layover
20-Sublette Reservoir	21-layover
21-Gardner Ranch	22-layover
22-Almo	23-Zephyr Cove
23-Goose Creek (Moulton School)	24-Meyers
24-Little Goose Creek	(cross into California)
(cross into Nevada)	25-Strawberry Lodge
25-Layover	26-Kyburz
26-Corral Canyon Creek	27-Pollock Pines
27-Winecup Ranch	28-Placerville
28-Wells	29-layover
29-Halleck	30-Eldorado Hills
30-Lamoille	31-Folsom
31-Jiggs	September 1-Coloma
Aug. 1-Layover	2-Sacramento

## Reading Trail *(continued from Page 15)*

watching Fortune's personality mature and unfold. They will be able to see themselves in her and they will likely fall in love with Jamie, the kind-hearted, hard-working and unassuming hero, or be attracted to Aaron's charm and ego. Boys will likely enjoy the adventure of the journey and get caught up in the plot, and it is probable they will even enjoy the romance. The trek across the plains is authentic enough, the adventures real enough, to paint a good picture of the emigration. In addition, the theatricals the Plunkett Players produce during the journey to earn their way after disaster strikes presents a different aspect of trail life. The troupe's efforts to earn a living in the rough California mining towns add a new dimension to life in the gold fields. Coville has researched trail life, and frontier theatrics and blended this research with a vivid storytelling style and an interesting plot, then stirred in a wonderful mix of characters to come up with a novel that pre-teens and young teens can enjoy while learning something about America's westering experience.

Fortunately, all three books are currently in print and available at many bookstores in the children's or young adult sections. If your bookstore does not carry these in stock, you may wish to place a special order. Remember, there are few pleasures greater than sharing a book together. Enjoy the reading trail with the young people in your life.

# The Reading Trail



by Lyndia Carter

Not everyone who traveled to the great American West went as gold-seekers or settlers on the land. Some came to display their talents on the stages of the infant towns and mining camps. The children's historical fiction books this issue deal with this very unique and entertaining group of migrants, namely the traveling showmen and entertainers. To the mining camps of California came those who would entertain the miners in a most pleasant way by providing them with music, drama, and comedy. Traveling bands of musicians and singers and troupes of actors and actresses visited the isolated farming communities and the new commercial centers to brighten the settlers' difficult and toilsome lives and feed their hunger for the arts. Few of these entertainers stayed long in one plain; for some wagons were their homes on the road from town to town. Besides that, unless these entertainers came around South America on sailing ships or risked the tropical jungles of the Isthmus of Panama, they got West exactly the same way as the gold seekers, the farmers, and the merchants--by covered wagon using the California, Oregon, and Mormon trails or their southern alternates across the Southwest.

*The Golly Sisters Go West* by Betsy Byars (Harper Trophy/Harper Collins, 1985) will delight young readers reading on their own and entertain pre-readers as parents, siblings, or grandparents read to them. In addition, and for even more fun, there is a cassette tape edition to listen to while reading. The taped reading is wonderfully performed by Kathryn Grody. The tape and book are a pleasant way to keep the kids enchanted and amused (and distracted from squabbling) while driving to trail sites or the convention! And speaking of squabbling, the two Golly sisters, May-May and Rose, do enough of that to set any girl who has experienced sibling rivalry to giggling. May-May and Rose are hilarious characters and Sue Truesdell's pictures accentuate their silliness and the comical situations they create for themselves. The girls' unsophistication at show-business (they have a singing and dancing sisters act) and their inexperience at traveling by wagon and handling their horse will keep young readers laughing. Something is always happening that will tickle a kid's funny bone. For easy reading, the vocabulary and sentence structure is very simple. Much repetition helps elementary readers pick up skills for reading on their own. (*The Golly Sisters Go West* is "All I Can Read Book", level 3. Two other *Golly Sisters* books are also available.) The text is geared for children who are in grades two through four, ages 7 through 10., Admittedly, the kids won't learn much information about the trails or wagon trains, but they will be charmed by these girls' crazy adventures in a wagon headed for a career in musical theater out West. And maybe such a reading experience will prepare them for wagons of a more accurate and factual color as they grow older. Cost of the book alone is \$3.75; with the cassette tape is about twice that. (Sorry, as usual I flubbed up and lost my receipt, so I can't precisely remember the price, but it is something like \$7.95 or

\$8.95.)

For readers a little older, the middle bracket of children ages 9 through 12 or 13, *Mr. Mysterious and Company* by Sid Fleischman (A Beech Tree Paperback Book, 1997) is magic! This humorous and heart-warming book is about a traveling magician and his family. Mr. and Mrs. Hackett and their three resourceful children head west from Texas in their traveling show wagon to begin a new life in southern California as farmers. (Mr. Hackett, better known as the great magician Mr. Mysterious, thinks he wants to settle down). As the family tries to earn its way west in the early 1880's by giving shows along the trail at the isolated towns in New Mexico and Arizona, they run into a passel of adventures. The children, naturally, are always the heroes and get the family out of these messes or save the day. They rescue a very smart dog from his abusive owner (by the way, this dog can do wonderful tricks and becomes part of the show); they capture a notorious and wicked outlaw; and they save the family from Indian attack, just to mention the highlights. And of course, there is the invasion of frogs. Besides that, the three Hackett children, Jane, Paul, and Anne, are important parts of the magician's magic in the shows. This book is fast-paced and light-hearted reading. Fleischman's characters and plot line are absolute winners to attract the attention and laughter of kids who really couldn't help but enjoy this book. Sid Fleischman is an award-winning children's author. Eric von Schmidt's line drawings are whimsical and fun. *Mr. Mysterious and Company* has been around for a long time (first published in 1962 by Little, Brown and Company, then by Greenwillow Books in 1997). Fleischman's delightful wit, charming characters, and wonderful sense of adventure in this book still has the power to entertain young people.

Going up yet another notch in the age scale, *Fortune's Journey* by Bruce Coville (Bridge Water Books, Troll Communications, 1995, paperback edition 1997) features an acting company going to the gold fields of California in 1853. Teen-aged Fortune Plunkett "inherits" her father's acting troupe when her father dies. His greatest dream was to take his company to California, and Fortune resolves to follow that dream. In this coming of age story, the troupe's experiences on the trail west and their first months in California serve as a journey toward maturity for the young Fortune. She acquires the ability to face danger, hardship and challenges. She learns about the depth and meaning of love and friendship. As with most books that appeal to teens, there is a strong element of romance. Fortune learns the hard way to tell the difference between a "crush" and love when she nearly loses the young man who profoundly cares for her. Besides the element of romance, a sense of mystery pervades the pages as the reader discovers the hidden identities of the characters and their relatedness to each other. Girls aged 11 to 15 or 16 will enjoy

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