

News From The Plains



Volume XV, No. 3

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

July 2001



Those attending the Casper Convention will get "up close and personal" with Oregon Trail landmark Independence Rock.

— Courtesy Wyoming Department of Tourism

Trails Legislation Passes House, Moves To Senate

Legislation authorizing a one-time-only Feasibility Update Study for the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Trails was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on a voice vote on June 6 and referred to the U.S. Senate for further action.

In April, Pat Hearty and Jeanne and Bill Watson had testified in Washington, D.C., in support of HR-37 before the House Resources subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, chaired by Congressman Joel Hefley of Colorado.

Congressman Doug Bereuter of Nebraska and National Parks Service Associate Director Kate Stevenson also testified in support of the bill, which would authorize a one-time-only Feasibility Update Study for the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails.

Each speaker submitted 85 copies of their eight to ten pages of written testimony a week before the hearing. NSP Trails Superintendent Jere Krakow produced two pages of color maps that showed in yellow each proposed study route shared

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19th Annual OCTA Convention Set for Casper

It's not too late to join the excitement and follow the trail to Casper, WY for the 19th Annual Convention of the Oregon-California Trails Association the week of August 12-18.

Registration information can be found through the OCTA website at www.octa-trails.org or the Wyoming Chapter website at w3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html. Information can also be obtained by calling OCTA headquarters at (816) 252-2276. A late registration fee of \$15 is charged for registration after July 1.

The theme of the convention is "The Last Crossing of the Great Platte River Road." Featured will be a pre-opening tour of the new National Historic Interpretive Trail Center in Casper, as well as bus tours of area attractions, including the Martin Handcart Center at Devil's Gate, Independence Rock and a number of trailside graves. Bus tours are offered both Friday and Saturday, August 17-18.

Pre-convention tours include a John C. Fremont Tour along the North Platte River and a hike to Independence Rock and Devil's Gate. (Organizers reported the pre-convention hike was full as of June 1, but space was available for all other pre-convention and convention activities.)

The official convention opening will be on Wednesday, August 15, with a keynote address by Dr. Fred R. Gowans, a historian and author whose books include *Fort Bridger*, *Fort Supply*, *The Great Fur Trade Road*. Other speakers on Wednesday include Susan Badger Doyle on the Bozeman Trail, James Lowe on the Bridger Trail and Jack and Patricia Fletcher on the Cherokee Trail.

Speakers on Thursday include Victor Douville on Trail Impact, Lesley Wischmann on The Horse Creek Treaty and John McDermott on Upper Platte River Crossings.

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From the Editor's Desk . . . by Bill Martin



Good news for trails preservation is easier to spot than a wagon rut on Nevada's treacherous but well-preserved Forty-Mile Desert in this issue of *News From The Plains*.

To begin with, work is moving ahead rapidly on the new National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper. It won't be finished in time for the OCTA Convention in August, but with an expected completion date of October, convention-goers will get a pretty good idea of what the finished product will look like.

Meanwhile, a new Trails Center is in the planning stages in Elko, Nevada. The center, still several years away from construction, will open the history of the emigrant West to the millions who travel Interstate 80 across Utah and Nevada and should be a great tourist attraction.

Elsewhere, the hoped-for feasibility study update for the National Trails system has passed the House of Representatives and now awaits action in the Senate. Send those cards and letters to your Senators, because it is an important tool for preserving thousands of miles of trail segments.

Not reported in this issue because of our deadline were plans for the official dedication of the Black Rock Desert/High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area in northwest Nevada on June 30. The dedication was planned for the Black Rock play, 12 miles north of Gerlach.

In each of these exciting developments, OCTA members played an important role, whether it was working with legislators to get funding or specific bills passed or helping "on the ground" to promote the trails and make preservation a reality.

We won't name the names of OCTA members who were involved, because once we start, there's a good risk of leaving someone out. Besides, they'll be the first to tell you that these projects are not personal achievements. They are achievements for the trails.

Imagine the future generations who will have an interest in western emigration piqued because of a visit to one of the growing number of interpretive trails centers . . . and then can actually see the Applegate Trail and walk in the footsteps of those who drove covered wagons westward!

OCTA's top priority has always been preserving the trails, followed closely by promoting awareness of our trails heritage and its importance as a cultural and historical asset. Whether you are talking about trails centers in Casper or Elko or trails preservation on the Black Rock Desert or the Nebraska City Cut-Off, it all fits with those missions.

Of course, there's no time to throw any "mission accomplished" praise around. Each victory is a small – albeit permanent – step for preservation. But there is no shortage of threats to the trails. But as long as OCTA has vigilant, committed members, we think the trails will be in pretty good shape.

On another front related to trails preservation, OCTA Treasurer Marilyn Bryan is working on a program which would increase funding for the trails through OCTA's Endowment Fund.

"There are numerous ways you can help OCTA achieve its mission," says Marilyn. "One of the best is the gift of long-term appreciated securities. Your gift of stock to OCTA's Endowment Fund can help us do more to preserve the trail and its history. And, you will avoid the capital gains tax that would have applied had you sold them, as well as receive an immediate income tax deduction or the full fair market value of your donated securities."

Sounds like a great idea from here. For more information, contact Marilyn.

See you in Casper in August.



News From The Plains

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Masthead Photo Courtesy of Denver Public Library,
Western History Collection

Submission Guidelines

News From The Plains welcomes news, features and photos related to the work of OCTA and its members and to the preservation of our trails heritage. Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates. Material should be sent either on a computer disk (in Word or text format; please make sure you include a hard copy) or via e-mail. Pictures are appreciated and can be sent via e-mail, on a disk (jpg format) or originals for scanning.

Next Deadline Is September 1, 2001

From The President . . .

by David Welch



I would like to begin my last letter to you as OCTA's president with a thanks to all of you. In my first letter I said, "my success is dependent upon the support and participation of all..." I have had both and I have enjoyed my term very much. It is an honor to be selected as president of a great group with an outstanding purpose.

While we have had some successes in the past two years regarding preservation of the trails, challenges remain. In fact, we can expect increasing pressure on trail resources where energy development is being pushed. I can not emphasize too much the need for early local involvement in the public processes associated with the development of wells, roads and pipelines.

In May Wendy and I attended the National Park Service's Intermountain Region Park Superintendent's Conference in Keystone, CO. There are over 80 park units in the Intermountain Region, one of which is the Long Distance Trails Office (LDTO) in Salt Lake City. I believe that by investing time to understand the Park Service's issues and challenges (too many or too few visitors, not enough budget, etc.), we are in a better position to put forth our concerns about trails. My suggestion to conferees that an increased focus on the trails could

provide a means of alleviating overcrowding at many national parks and monuments while expanding the public's knowledge of the trail's importance met with modest acceptance.

I was also invited to participate as a member of a panel providing feedback to the park service leadership. It was interesting, to say the least, to speak to about 300 park superintendents, who collectively probably have over 6,000 years of experience, on my views on the impairment of resources and collaboration with partners. I noted that they were concerned about resources being damaged by over-visitation; our concern was the outright destruction of cultural resources due to development. On collaboration I noted that the implementation left much to be desired.

While participation in public meetings and conferences is tedious and time consuming, I am confident that it will improve trail preservation in the long term. A "smoking letter" may make you feel good, but they usually have little effect. We need to be at the table and involved constructively when historic trails are discussed.

Thanks again for your support. See you in Casper and on the trails.
--Dave Welch

News From Headquarters . . . by Kathy Conway



We are in full swing of the tourist season now. Tour buses are visiting the National Frontier Trails Center in droves. Don Popejoy, OCTA's membership chair and guide for an Elderhostel group, stopped in at Headquarters to let us know he had a captive audience in the bus and was sure there were some would-be members for OCTA! (See separate story beginning on page 10.)

Earlier this spring, two couples from England, visited our office to acquire more trail information and suggestions for hitting the high points along the trail. Luckily for them, Jim Budde was available to give a private tour of the Independence/Kansas City area. He then spent numerous hours going over their trail plans to help them create and experience a memorable trail trip. If they do become members, we hope all of our UK members will form a chapter.

Don't be surprised if you see more of Elaine and Kendall McNabney on the trail this summer. Dr. McNabney, now retired, has a destiny with the trails...(almost a quote from Elaine). Elaine just last December "officially" retired from volunteering at OCTA Headquarters. We miss her, but are happy to know her retirement dream is here!

Elsewhere in OCTA, John Krizek premiered his video "Forgotten Journey" on May 31, 2001 in Council Bluff, IA, where the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy wagon train left from 150 years ago. This is the story of the first wagon train that successfully crossed the Sierra Nevada to finally open a route to California. PBS will be airing this fine piece this summer. Be sure and check your local listings. We are proud of John's

accomplishment!

Back in New York, our Education Chair, Bill Hill, has been diligently putting together our third educational workbook, *Following Lewis and Clark's Track*. It should be back from the printer in July and available for sale at the convention.

Speaking of the convention, we hope all of our members can come to Casper, Wyoming for the OCTA 19th Annual Convention August 15-19. You don't want to miss visiting the newly constructed National Historic Interpretive Trail Center as part of the activities. (See OCTA's ad on page 17.)

What an opportunity to see such important trail sites such as Independence Rock, Devil's Gate and Fort Caspar. Edna Kennell, Lee Underbrink, Dr. Ron Lund, and convention committee members will all be on hand to greet you!

As a reminder, our election ballots for the 2001 slate of Directors for the National Board of OCTA are due back at Headquarters postmarked no later than July 16, 2001.

Please make note of our new e-mail address for Headquarters: octa@indepmo.org

Former OCTA Executive Director Jeanne Miller has a new mailing address: c/o Rosewood Health Center at the Groves, 1415 W. White Oak, Independence MO 64050. For those who have sent her cards, she sends her thanks.

Visit the OCTA Bookstore
On the Internet
www.OCTA-trails.org

OCTA Secretary Vacancy

The OCTA Nominating and Leadership Committee is looking for a volunteer to fill the position of Secretary to the Board of Directors.

This is an officer-level position. The Secretary is required to attend the Annual Meeting and the Mid-Year Meeting of the Board, plus any special meetings that may be called.

The Secretary is responsible for taking and transcribing the official minutes of all Board meetings. The Secretary is elected by the Board of Directors.

Interested persons should contact Nominating and Leadership Committee Chair Randy Wagner by e-mail (rwagnerfoto@aol.com), telephone (307-634-4263), or at P.O. Box 2926, Cheyenne WY 83003.

BLM Approves Wyoming Natural Gas Well Drilling

The Bureau of Land Management has approved a proposal by the Wolverine Gas and Oil Corporation of Grand Rapids, MI to drill three exploratory natural gas wells on their leases located in Sublette County, about 19 miles northeast of Farson, WY. These three exploratory wells are located near the designated National Historic Trails System.

(For a report from OCTA's National Preservation Officer on this project, see facing page.)

BLM Rock Springs Field Office prepared an Environmental Assessment which analyzed the proposed wells because their proposed locations were in close proximity to the National Historic Trail System; specifically the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express National Historic Trails. Two other proposed wells were not in close proximity to the trails.

In issuing the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact, Rock Springs BLM Assistant Field Manager Ted Murphy said, "My decision on this project was based upon the analysis in the Environmental Assessment, public concerns and comments, and other multiple-use resource objectives or programs that apply to the project. Wolverine relocated the wells which originally would have been visible from the Historic Trails. In addition, well facilities will be screened - resulting in no visual impacts to people traveling the trails."

The Decision Record also authorizes construction and maintenance of about 1.8 miles of new access road. Based on the outcome of the exploratory wells, additional facilities such as a pipeline may be constructed. Drilling is proposed to begin this summer and will take approximately 90 days to complete.

The Decision Record is available at www.wy.blm.gov/field_offices/rsfo/rs_home.html For more information on the project, contact Ted Murphy (Ted_Murphy@blm.gov) at the BLM Rock Springs Field Office, 280 Highway 191 North, Rock Springs, WY 82901; or call (307) 352-0321.

- Bureau of Land Management

Legislation (continued from Page 1)

with an existing National Historic Trail. The maps illustrated how many study routes would add new trail logos, not new trail miles.

The speakers were well received and Chairman Hefley had the record note that Jeanne Watson give her testimony without notes. Chairman Hefley mentioned that an ancestor of his went from Illinois to California in 1863, but they had no record of it. (Unfortunately, a subsequent search of OCTA's COED database also failed to find him.)

Arleta Martin of the KANZA Chapter created Certificates of Appreciation for Congressman Bereuter, who introduced HR37, along with the nine co-sponsors, including Congressmen Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, Tom Lantos of California, Chris Cannon of Utah, Earl Blumenauer of Oregon, Dennis Moore of Kansas, George Miller of California, Samuel Graves of Missouri, Sherwood Boehlert of New York and Loretta Sanchez of California.

Subsequently, during subcommittee mark up of the legislation on May 16, words were added noting the rights of private landowners, as requested by Congressman Richard Pombo of California. The National Trails Act covers those rights. The full Resources Committee then approved HR37, which went to the floor of the House where it was passed on June 6.

The bill was then referred to the Senate, where companion legislation, S-213, is pending in the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee. The Senate bill was introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch and Robert Bennett of Utah, with Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho the only co-sponsor as of press time for *NFP*.

All OCTA members are urged to write to their Senators asking them to co-sponsor S-213. Senate mail should be sent to your Senator at U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

-- Bill and Jeanne Watson, Trails Liaison Co-Chairs

Santa Fe Trails Symposium Set

The Santa Fe Trail Association will hold its 2001 Symposium September 27-30 in Las Vegas, NM, hosted by the Carazon de los Caminos/Heart of the Trails Chapter. This year's theme is "Caminos y Comerciantes: Trails & Traders in New Mexico."

The symposium will include presentations on trail research, bus tours to historic trail sites, a buffalo dinner at Fort Union National Monument, and a fandango at the awards banquet.

For details, visit the Corazon web site at www.nmhu.edu/research/sfrail/corazon.htm or contact the Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce at (800) 832-5947.

Preservation Officer Report

By Dick Ackerman

OCTA National Preservation Officer

The search for energy and the pioneer trails have finally met. The location is approximately 10 to 12 miles west of the Continental Divide at South Pass in Wyoming, near a location known as the Big Sandy Crossing.

The Wolverine Gas and Oil Corporation of Grand Rapids, MI has applied for and received authorization to drill three exploratory wells in close proximity to the Oregon, California, Mormon, Pioneer and Pony Express trails, all basically using the same corridor. It is a very pristine area, with a viewscape that is essentially the same as what the pioneers saw when they traveled through in the mid-1800s.

To protect South Pass, it has been designated a National Historic Landmark and Wolverine's exploratory site is very close to that location. The problem is that the National Register boundaries have never been established. Without a clear definition of the boundary, you can't say the drilling area is three miles from the junction or border or five miles.

It is pretty safe to say that when the area is clearly defined (if it ever is), it would be within eight miles of the boundary to the proposed drilling location. The site is defined in the management plan as a *high potential segment of the trails*. With that designation, it has been determined to be the highest quality of trail resource, one that evokes a sense of the past. If you have ever been along the trail in this area, I'm sure you would agree with that classification.

On March 15, there was a meeting in the Bureau of Land Management District Office in Rock Springs, WY. In attendance were approximately 16 BLM representatives, three representatives from Wolverine (including the president), and representatives from the Wyoming State Historical Preservation office, the National Park Service, the Wyoming Chapter of OCTA and National OCTA.

The meeting was called to review the draft of the Environmental Assessment Statement covering the exploratory drilling of three wells. The meeting was conducted by Ted Murphy, Assistant Field Manager of the Rock Springs Office of the BLM and lasted approximately 3 ½ hours.

Besides going over the draft of the environmental assessment for the operations, everyone had an opportunity to ask questions or make statements. I was impressed with the quality and professionalism the BLM staff exhibited in preparing the draft. I was also impressed with the Wolverine Company and its dedication to proceed with this project in a manner that would be environmentally safe and obstruction-free for the trail.

The plan for how to do it has now been established. I'm sure it was studied and restudied before it was made public. I now have reason to believe if they follow these plans as carefully as they were put together, we can be *cautiously optimistic* that after it's over we will see no evidence of them ever having been there.

There is every reason to believe that the dedicated BLM employees that put this plan together will be right there to see

that their plan is followed and I congratulate them for that. I also feel that OCTA has a big responsibility here: to be at the site often and see that it all does go as planned.

I believe the Wyoming Chapter is functioning very well as a unit. They are working as a team and are quite capable of keeping a close watch on a project of this nature. I also believe that it is the National Preservation Officer's obligation to meet periodically with chapter members, the BLM and perhaps the Wolverine employees on site so that he can accurately report back to the Board of Directors on the progress of the project.

During the drilling process, a portable drill rig will be used and will be visible for some distance, including from the adjacent highway. It is estimated that it will need to be at each well location for 90 days and then will move to the next drill site. None of these wells are within the half-mile protected area of the trail. In addition, all of the wells will be directionally drilled to reach the target area. This will take them even farther from the trail.

Wolverine has said that all of the permanent equipment that it has to leave there will be low profile and located in depressed areas of the earth so it will not be visible from any distance or from the trail itself. The company has also said it will paint the equipment a color matching the terrain. The only planned crossing of the trail will be on an existing BLM road right-of-way that crosses the trail and the pipeline going out will use that same right-of-way so there will be no damage to the trail.

The Wolverine people seem to be very environmentally oriented and at this location even more so. In a recent correspondence from their President to me, he states: "My hope is that five years from now, when we are producing natural gas, which is the cleanest fuel we have, we can both look back and feel we accomplished this in a way that was good for the environment and good for the energy crisis and the public."

I certainly hope he is right and I will stand there with him and thank him and his company for a job well done.

New Historic Trail Proposed

Congressman Ciro Rodriguez of Texas has introduced federal legislation to designate "El Camino Real de los Tejas" as a National Historic Trail.

The Trail was used as early as 1690 and was the route traveled by Stephen F. Austin and other early emigrants in the 1820s. Davy Crockett used part of the trail to reach the Alamo and General Santa Anna and his soldiers used it during their military campaign.

Also known as the Old San Antonio Road, the Trail linked Natchitoches in Louisiana with San Antonio in Texas. Rodriguez said the Trail "put Texas on the map and served as a turnstile for soldiers, settlers and traders destined for points across North America.

Postage Cancellation Planned

A special pictorial postal cancellation for the 2001 OCTA Convention has been prepared by Colorado Chapter member Ward Crowley. The U.S. Postal Service authorizes such special postmarks for uses such as this.

This year's postmark will feature the convention logo, *The Last Crossing*, with a sketch of a covered wagon and appropriate wording. It will not be in general use on out-going mail from Casper, but will be applied to envelopes submitted by stamp collectors, convention attendees and others desiring a souvenir of the OCTA convention.

An added feature this year will be envelopes bearing the convention pin design. A limited number of these will be available at the Post Office table in convention headquarters and can be canceled with the special postmark. Postal workers will be present only on Wednesday morning, August 15.

Members not attending the convention can obtain examples of the cancellation by submitting a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Convention Station, c/o Postmaster, 411 N. Forest Drive, Casper, WY 82609-9998. A self-addressed and stamped size #10 envelope should also be enclosed for safe return of the souvenir postmark. Requests should be sent no more than one week prior to August 15 nor more than 30 days after that date.

-- Ward Crowley

Convention Photos Wanted

News From The Plains would like to see your photos from the 2001 Casper Convention, especially photos of OCTA members out on any of the Convention tours. A selection of photos will be used in the October post-Convention issue. You can either mail your pictures to NFP, P.O. Box 811, Georgetown TX 78627, or send it in a JPG format to OCTANFP@aol.com. Every effort will be made to return pictures which are submitted. Deadline is September 5.

Convention (continued from Page 1)

The Annual Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday and the General Membership Meeting on Wednesday afternoon, followed by Chapter meetings.

The traditional Get Acquainted Social will be combined with Author's Night on Wednesday beginning at 6 p.m. and the Awards Banquet will be held on Thursday, also at 6 p.m.

In addition to bus tours on Friday and Saturday, the American Living History Theater by Dorene Ludwig will be held on Friday and there will be a barbeque to close the convention at Fort Caspar on Saturday. Workshops scheduled for Thursday afternoon include those on Chapters, Archaeology, Historical Research, Mapping and Conventions.

In addition, convention organizers are promising "two unannounced surprises for those that attend our convention. One is for sure, the other is a maybe for sure."

For updates on the Convention, visit the official website at w3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html.

OCTA Trail Band & Chorus

It is time to tune up your vocal chords and shake the dust off the instrument you are going to bring to the OCTA 2001 Convention. Yes, you read that correctly, the OCTA Chorus will have a chance to perform as well as the band.

The chorus is a collection of any OCTA members who wish to sing some of the songs of the trail, along with the OCTA Band. Any member of OCTA attending the Convention may participate.

If you enjoy playing or singing tunes like "Sweet Betsy from Pike" or "O Susanna," watch the message board in the registration area for times and places of performances.

For more information, call Olive Donaldson, (530) 221 - 3061 or e-mail fidollie@snowcrest.net

Wyoming Trail Chronology

Highlights of the history of the Oregon-California Trails in Wyoming; taken from the Wyoming Chapter website, as compiled by Michael Cassity:

- 1812: South Pass crossed by Astorians led by Robert Stuart.
- 1824: South Pass rediscovered by Jedediah Smith.
- 1830: Smith, Jackson and Sublette inform Congress of practicality of wagon road to Pacific through South Pass.
- 1832: Bonneville takes first wagons through South Pass.
- 1834-1840: Missionaries travel with fur traders to Oregon.
- 1840: First non-missionary emigrants to Oregon, traveling with fur trade caravan.
- 1841: First emigrants to Oregon without fur trade caravan.
- 1841-1843: Jim Bridger builds trading post for emigrants.
- 1846: Francis Parkman visits Fort Laramie.
- 1847: Mormon exodus to Utah begins.
- 1847: Mormon Ferry on North Platte starts operations.
- 1849: California gold rush begins.
- 1850: Government-owned ferry operates at Fort Laramie.
- 1851: Permanent mail system to California established.
- 1852: Peak year of emigrant traffic: around 70,000 emigrants.
- 1852: Virtually all major rivers have bridges or ferries.
- 1853: About 25 trading posts within 20 miles of Fort Laramie.
- 1856: Mormon handcart company disasters near Devil's Gate and South Pass.
- 1857: Col. Frederick Lander surveys, builds Lander cutoff west of South Pass.
- 1859: Louis Guinard trading post and bridge on Fort Caspar site.
- 1859: Russell, Majors and Waddell's Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Co. established
- 1860-1861: Pony Express operates along trail route.
- 1861: Telegraph along trail completed.
- 1862: Stage traffic moves south to "Overland Trail" in southern Wyoming.
- 1867-1868: Union Pacific Railroad construction begins.
- 1869: Transcontinental railroad completed.

Wyoming: Rich In History, Rich In Trails

While the focus on the OCTA Convention is, as usual, on the trails, there's more to Wyoming than ruts, plentiful though they may be. To put your convention visit in historical perspective, the following is offered courtesy of Marlyn Black of the Casper Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and of the Wyoming Department of Tourism.

The hills and mountains near the City of Casper have been greeting visitors to the area for centuries. Prehistoric man drove giant bison to their deaths over cliffs near the new National Historic Trails Interpretive Center. Native Americans hunted the sand hills and plains, and trappers used the North Platte River to speed their progress south and east.

More than 150 years ago, the first Euro-Americans passed through as they began to settle the western-most boundaries of the United States and in 1889 Casper began to form along the Platte. Today, old trails are still visible near new the entertainment and convention venues that will welcome OCTA members for their convention. The Platte River Parkway Path ties convention hotels to the Casper Rockies Baseball Park and beyond, where you can see trail ruts visible north of the river.

Painted Past Enterprises will present strolling theater in the downtown, with actors telling of the lives of some of Casper's earliest residents. Outfitters offer guided river float trips or drift boat rentals for do-it-yourself fishing or floating, and pontoon boats are available for exploration of the River through Fremont Canyon on Alcova Lake.

That's modern Casper. In contrast, the history of the state extends far past recorded history.

There is evidence that the area we know today as Wyoming has been occupied for more than 12,000 years, first by the prehistoric Clovis culture and later by the Folsom. By about 500 A.D., there were many groups with a mixed hunting and gathering economy. These were followed by the predecessors of the historic Indians.

On the crest of Medicine Mountain, 40 miles east of Lovell, Wyoming, is located the Medicine Wheel which has 28 spokes and a circumference of 245 feet. This was an ancient shrine built of stone by the hands of some forgotten tribe. A Crow chief has been reputed as saying, "It was built before the light came by people who had no iron." This prehistoric relic still remains one of Wyoming's unsolved puzzles.

More modern historic residents of Wyoming were the nomadic Plains Indians, including Arapaho, Arikara, Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Kiowa, Nez Perce, Sheep Eater, Sioux, Shoshone and Ute tribes. Of all of these tribes, the Cheyenne and Sioux were the last of the Indians to be controlled and placed on reservations.

One of the first white men to explore Wyoming was John Colter in 1807, who found "Colter's Hell," now better known as Yellowstone National Park.

Famous mountain men such as Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Davey Jackson and Jedediah Smith were among the trappers, explorers and traders to first roam the Wyoming territory. Gold in California and the lure of rich land in Oregon brought increasing numbers of pioneer wagon trains rolling over the

Oregon Trails through Wyoming. Pony soldiers came to protect the wagon trains from hostile Indians, and the soldiers established forts along the trails.

The most important of the western military posts was Ft. Laramie in southeastern Wyoming. Ft. Laramie became a haven for gold seekers and weary emigrants. It was also an important station for the Pony Express and the Overland stage-coaches, and it served as a vital military post in the wars with the Plains Indians.

Wyoming was the scene of the end of the great Indian battles. Ft. Phil Kearny in northern Wyoming had the bloodiest history of any fort in the West. Thousands of well-organized Indians from the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Sioux tribes fought battle after battle with the U.S. Cavalry.

Great herds of buffalo once grazed on the rolling hills of Wyoming, giving rise to one of the state's best known citizens, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Near the turn of the century, Buffalo Bill took his Wild West Show to Great Britain and Europe, spreading the name and reputation of Wyoming to a new continent.

Wyoming is also known as the "Equality State" because of the rights women have traditionally enjoyed here. Wyoming women were the first in the nation to vote, serve on juries and hold public office. In 1869, Wyoming's territorial legislature became the first government in the world to grant "female suffrage." In 1894, Estelle Reel (Mrs. Cort F. Meyer) became one of the first women in the United States elected to a state office, that of Wyoming State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1924, Nellie Tayloe Ross was the first elected woman governor to take office in the United States.

Carved from sections of Dakota, Utah, and Idaho territories, Wyoming Territory came into existence by act of Congress on July 25, 1868. The territorial government was formally inaugurated May 19, 1869. The first territorial governor, John A. Campbell, appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant, took his oath of office on April 15, 1869.

Talk of statehood for Wyoming began as early as 1869, although it wasn't until 1888 that the Territorial Assembly sent Congress a petition for admission into the Union. The bill for Wyoming statehood finally passed in 1890 under the administration of President Benjamin Harrison and Wyoming became the nation's 44th state on July 10, 1890.

Historic sites of special significance in Wyoming include, Independence Rock, Fort Bridger, Fort Caspar, Fort Laramie, Fort Phil Kearney, Fort Fred Steele, the Wyoming Territorial Prison and South Pass City, plus lots of trail remnants.

OCTA Headquarters
New E-Mail Address:
OCTA@indepmo.org

Abernathy Green Marker Dedicated in Oregon City

By Jim Tompkins

The skies cleared, briefly, Saturday April 7th for the dedication of OCTA's newest site marker. The marker designating Abernathy Green was placed at the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon City, Oregon. Representing OCTA were David and Wendy Welch, Roger Blair and Susan Doyle, Tom Laidlaw and Jim Tompkins.

David Welch, national president of OCTA and recent president of the Northwest chapter, gave a few brief remarks before symbolically handing over the marker to the EOTIC. He noted that this is the northernmost marker as yet placed by OCTA. He reminded the audience that "this represents OCTA's mission of preservation, appreciation and education of overland trails."

David Porter, executive director of the Oregon Trail Foundation, which oversees the EOTIC, in accepting the marker, said "this presents tangible evidence to visitors of the significance of this historical place."

John Williams, mayor of Oregon City, noted that this is "another little bit that adds to the totality of Oregon City's place in history." Mayor Williams then stated that his ancestors came over the Southern Applegate Route to found the town of Blodgett, Oregon. This information led to a conversation with Dave Welch, whose ancestors followed the same route.

The marker is attached to a large rock at the very entrance to the EOTIC and has drawn the attention of most every person arriving at the center. The text of the marker, written by Northwest chapter member and Oregon Trail Foundation trustee Dr. Jim Tompkins, reads:

Abernathy Green

Originally called Green Point, Indians gathered here for over 3,000 years to fish at Willamette Falls.

George Abernathy arrived here June 2, 1840, with the "Great Reinforcement" of Jason Lee's Willamette Mission. He took 640 acres just north of Oregon City including a neck of land that extended to the Willamette River. This neck became known as Abernathy Green. George and Anna (Pope) Abernathy built their house at the mouth of Abernathy Creek next to the Methodist Mission where the first laws of Oregon were drafted.

Oregon Trail emigrants started arriving on rafts from Fort Vancouver in 1843. They put in at Abernathy's house and climbed up to Abernathy Green. Arriving in late fall or early winter, most of them opted to winter over in encampments at Abernathy Green. During their stay here they would scout out their piece of the Willamette Valley, file their claim at the Government Land Office and resupply in Oregon City at places like Pettygrove's Red Store or Governor Abernathy's Mercantile.

Beginning in 1846, two-thirds of Oregon Trail emigrants took Sam Barlow's Mt. Hood Toll Road, which ended right here at Abernathy Green. During peak years of the Oregon



From left, Susan Badger Doyle, Jim Tompkins, Roger Blair, Mayor John Williams, OCTA President David Welch and Wendy Welch.

— Photo by Tom Laidlaw

Trail migrations, Abernathy Green would be filled with covered wagons and neighbors Hiram Straight, Hugh Burns, Daniel Tompkins and Jacob Hunsaker took the overflow. In 1851 Hunsaker's wife took in an emigrant family with mountain fever and she lost a son and daughter to the disease. A rose from Mayor John McLoughlin still grows on their grave.

A devastating flood in 1861 destroyed everything nearby. Abernathy was financially ruined and left for Portland. By this time improvements along the Oregon Trail had cut travel time almost in half and emigrants no longer needed to winter over. Abernathy Green ceased being the encampment at the end of the Oregon Trail.

Elko Trails Center Planned

The Bureau of Land Management has started the public workshop process for selecting a site as the permanent home of a California Trail Interpretive Center in Elko, NV.

The Center, first proposed by OCTA members Paul Sawyer and Bob Pearce and others in the mid 1990s, won \$12 million in federal funding during the last session of Congress through legislation introduced by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada and Congressman Jim Gibbons of Nevada.

The center will focus on the history of westward migration in the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s along the California Trails and the associated Hastings Cut-off. The Center will also include a history of American Indians in the area.

The legislation authorizes the planning, construction and operation of a visitor center, including \$12 million in funding over several years. Planning and development of the center has been a cooperative effort involving: the State of Nevada, the Advisory Board for the National Historic California Emigrant Trails Interpretive Center, Elko County, the City of Elko, and the Bureau of Land Management. Elko County, NV has more than 400 miles of National Historic Trails.

Hi My name Kiera, I'm 8 year
old and in 2nd grade. These are

Hi, my name Kiera. I am 8 years old and in 2nd grade. My family joined OCTA in 2000. We are Rut Nuts too. That's my favorite part.

- We go walking for wagon tracks.
- Me and my brothers wade in water, we get dirty, pick flowers & we whistle with grass. I call it flute grass.
- We go on a picnic on these days & we eat junk food in the car.
- I also cleaned up a cemetery, with other Rut Nuts.
- I dressed in old fashion clothes at the wagon train weekend. I got to eat panCakes that were made on a small pot bellied stove. I played beside and under a covered wagon & saw how to pack them up. I saw some one make spoons out of metal. We played on stilts, with hoops and sticks.

We live on the St. Joe Road. There are 2 trails beside our land, and a trail marker too. I am learning how some of my grandparents might have moved to Kansas. In 2nd grade I have learned about communities; people and places; of then and now. When we go walking I hear stories about how some people so sick they died.

My family & I go on vacation, we like to look at the maps. We stop at NE & WY. To see trail stuff.

- × Ash Hollow - it's so steep, that your legs start to hurt.
- Chimney Rock
- × Scotts Bluff
- Register Rock & the Ruts
- Independence Rock - dad & us kids climbed the rock, but mom didn't. (Remember the backside is the easiest to climb up and down.)
- Devil's Gate
- Split Rock - we got into our car, because there was lightning coming.

I had fun at these places but I had to be careful to watch out for snakes.

When mom, grandma or grandpa talk about other people I ask if they had cars or not. I can't believe that my big grandma used a horse and wagon when she was a little girl.

The end.

Kiera Keegan — Kanza Chapter

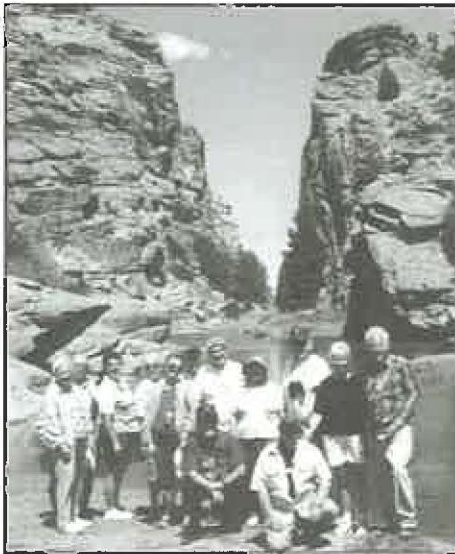


You're never too young to be an OCTA member — or a Rut Nut. This was written by eight-year-old Kiera Keegan. She's, the daughter of Pat and Alicia Keegan of Bailey, KS, and the granddaughter of Ken & Arleta Martin, of Oketo, KS.

All Aboard The Big Blue Bus: Elderhostel Hits The Trail

By Don Popejoy

On May 7, 2001, an Elderhostel group once again set out for the wide open spaces along the old (pun intended) Oregon Trail. Twenty seniors with the pioneering spirit met in Kansas City, MO and began what they all agreed was a once in a lifetime experience.



Don Popejoy and his Elders at Devil's Gate

As one gentleman put it so bluntly after the fact, "My God, who would ever want to do this again?"

May 6th brought the group together for orientation and a welcome dinner at the Holiday Inn, where they were greeted by the staff from Alton L. Collins Retreat Center, located just outside Sandy, Oregon on the Barlow Road. Each received their packets of information, among which

were corresponding maps of the Oregon Trail from Gregory Franzwa's epic *Maps of the Oregon Trail*.

The itinerary was set up by Janice Stevens, the on board coordinator from Collins, and as you will see, she did a tremendous job. Molly Smith, who lives on Mount Hood near the Barlow Road, was one of the on board historians, along with myself (Don Popejoy) and a geologist named Joe Dirt from Ashland, Oregon. (Honest, that's his real name.) Janice and Molly joined OCTA after last year's Oregon Trail tour. Today's adventures were very relaxing, as we made stops at Jesse James Farm and the steamboat *Arabia*.

Tuesday, May 8th, found the Big Blue Bus, as the hosteler's called our wagon, driven by wagon master Mike Warren, at the National Frontier Trails Center and the Bingham Waggoner House. While my elders were searching the Center for books and information, I headed over to OCTA HQ's and had a nice visit with Kathy and Suzanne. I had asked them to work up an OCTA packet for the group which included the recent *OJ*, a copy of the recent *NFP*, application forms, the September 2000 *National Geographic* with the California Trails article and the wonderful fold out map, and the OCTA logo pin.

Ross Marshall gave the group a nice tour of the Santa Fe Trail swales on the Bingham Waggoner estate, just across the street from the NFTC and OCTA HQ's. Ross was just the first of several on-site OCTA hosts that I had asked to visit with us along the way. As you can tell by now, OCTA played a major role in telling the history of the Oregon Trail and related sites.

In the afternoon we found ourselves at Alcove Springs, where

in fact some water was going over the top and formed a lovely waterfall, not only to see, but to hear as well. Duane Iles asked a Friend of Alcove Springs, Jack Holler, to speak to us about the springs and show us the swales near the Big Blue River in Kansas. Jack also showed us where he thinks the location of Sarah Keyes grave is. It sure fits the diary descriptions and we had the chance to use divining rods and sure enough, there is someone buried there. It must be Sarah! We all agreed.

The evening was idled away in wonderful Marysville, KS and after a delightful morning, May 9th was spent at Homestead National Monument, we rode across the gentle prairies and rolling hills, following the Little Blue River to Rock Creek Station located just inside the Nebraska State line.

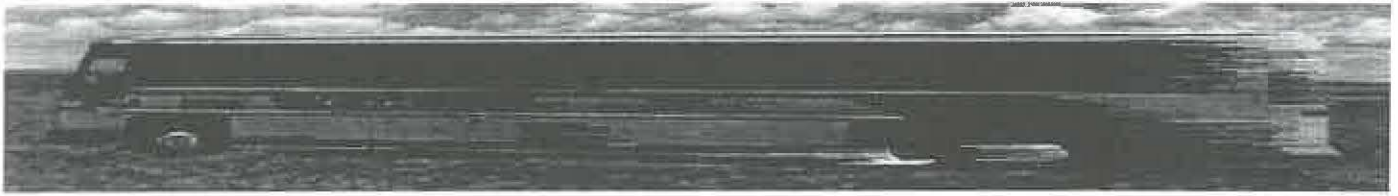
After a couple hours following the trail through the area and accumulating numerous ticks, we loaded the wagon with more supplies and books, and headed off for Kearney, NE and the Platte River. The hosteler's learned about the Great Platte River Road and how the Mormons followed the north side of the river while the Oregon and California bound emigrants stayed on the south side. The Platte River was magnificent as it flowed in and out of inlets and small coves, and then around islands and sand bars which were populated by thousands of birds, among which were the tall and sleek Sandhill Cranes.

The morning of May 10th was a-buzz with talk of visiting the newest interpretive center, the Great Platte River Road Arch. This arch spans the interstate and some 12,000 vehicles pass under its shadow every day! The Arch opened last year in July and is an amazing historical attraction.

After lunch and a visit to Fort Kearny, we made our way leisurely to Buffalo Bill Cody's Ranch, completing what one hosteler said was a wonderful display of three of the toughest men ever to roam the West: Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickock at Rock Creek Station and now Buffalo Bill. "Yes, sir're" I said, "only on the Oregon Trail can that happen." I'm not sure what that meant, and neither did he. The night was spent in Ogallala, NE and I could hardly wait to proudly show them OCTA's California Hill.

May 11th was to be a very busy and exciting day. These folks had waited a long time to become official "rut nuts," to actually, finally, get to walk in real Oregon Trail ruts. Well, here my dear elders is California Hill! Today they earned their OCTA pins. I explained how this was the emigrants' first ascent of any kind and as we walked to the top of the hill, they understood the significance of this area and could look back to the crossing of the South Platte. I told them to keep this vision in their minds as we traveled through the valley of the Platte, towards Windlass Hill and the descent into Ash Hollow.

Once we reached the top of the Windlass Hill, it was fantastic to see the looks of awe and understanding on their faces! What could be any better than this? How about Courthouse and Jail Rock? Or Chimney Rock? How about Scott's Bluff and gazing across the Badlands towards the river and the town of Scotts Bluff, or looking down on the Oregon Trail that went through Mitchell Pass? "Oh my," said one lady "I had no idea of the Oregon country's grandeur."



Dinner was at the Chuck Wagon opposite Chimney Rock and after a jolting wagon ride, a tremendously large and thick steak and several ice cream cones, we enjoyed a wonderful campfire sing-along with Molly and a tall, dark stranger, whom the women said had a voice like an angel. That night, with sunburned faces, arms and legs and with delirious smiles on their faces, the rut nuts slept well. Saturday was another beautiful day and as we crossed over into Wyoming, the sun seemed to shine brighter and hotter. Our visit to Fort Laramie saw the elders scurrying about listening to the headsets provided by the visitor center and taking pictures of Old Bedlam, the Officers quarters and the oldest building in Wyoming. At Register Cliff we saw Alva Unthank's signature and hundreds of others, then marveled at the depth of the Guernsey ruts. As we made our way towards Casper, WY I pointed out the location of Alva Unthank's grave and told his story to a saddened group.

Day by day, we made our way across Wyoming. Leaving the Platte River behind at Casper, we picked up the Sweetwater River near Independence Rock, following it closely to the Devils Gate, past Split Rock and into Lander where we spent another restful night. Then it was on to South Pass where the Big Blue Bus made its way on the Oregon Trail, kicking up dust just as the oxen of old did.

Once across the Continental Divide, we knew we were half way home. Two days were spent in Rock Springs, a time to relax, do laundry, catch up on post cards, write in our diaries and journals. A side trip was taken to the Flaming Gorge in Utah and became one of the highlights of the entire trip.

Fort Bridger was the main event on May 16th, as was the crossing of the Bear River at the Wyoming/Idaho border. Montpelier offers a small town atmosphere with a big time trail attraction, known as the Oregon California Trail Center. The tour group visited this center on the morning of the 17th and here it was that I almost got married! Well, not really...you had to be there to understand what I mean. Anyway, after lunch it was on to Fort Hall, the Stricker Store, the Raft River Crossing and the Last Parting of the Ways, and into Twin Falls, Idaho.

Friday, May 18th brought us to a major decision: Should we stay on the south side of the Snake River, the Southern Alternate, or cross over at Three Island Crossing? Since we were having lunch at Carmella's Winery in Glens Ferry, we crossed over. Bill Wilson, president of the Idaho/MT chapter, met the hosteler's at Bonneville Point and gave a historical background about Captain Bonneville and the point that bears his name. Bill read some diary quotes and then, along with my good friends Gail and Muriel Carbiener, who were meeting with the Idaho/Montana chapter over the weekend to do some trail marking, we walked some of the trail as it descended into the Boise Valley and the city of Boise, Idaho.

Saturday morning we were off quickly and as we crossed over into Oregon, we made our way through Keeney Pass and walked in the parallel ruts, then followed the BLM concert markers into Vale where we stopped at the Rinehart Stone

House. We followed Interstate 84 into the Baker Valley and Baker City. Another great steak dinner found us in Haines, and then another miracle day on the Oregon Trail ended.

The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City was a remarkable site for everyone on the bus. Hanging there on the side of Flagstaff Hill made the trail, coming out of Virtue Flats, seem truly like a mirage in the desert. Next came the wonder of the Blue Mountains, and as one of the ladies said "I can't believe it, the mountains are blue!" We saw amazing ruts descending Ladd Hill.

From Hilgard Junction to Meacham, I was able to point out the many carsonite markers that the NW chapter had put up in the spring of 1998 and we saw portions of the trail as it paralleled the interstate for many miles. The Oregon Trail took us into Washington as we followed closely the Whitman route into the town named twice: Walla Walla.

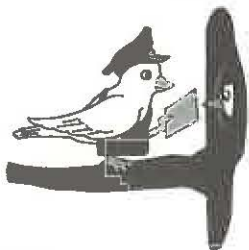
Here we once again, and for the last time, walked on the Oregon Trail as it passed by the old mission grounds. When night fell, we had made it to The Dalles and just like the emigrants of old, we had another decision to make. Weather permitting, we would go around Mount Hood and follow parts of the Barlow Road in the morning. If the weather turned bad, we would follow the river route into Oregon City.

Monday, May 21st, was the last day of this incredible journey. Can you save the best for last? Not always, but we came very close. The weather was as beautiful as you could wish for and Mount Hood stood out like the glacier gem that she is. Sam Barlow (Tom Laidlaw, another OCTA host) met us at Laurel Hill and discussed the near impossible odds of making it down these 60 percent grade chutes.

The splendor that is Mount Hood showed us the way into Oregon City and the end of the trail at Abernathy Green. Sam Barlow lead a weary, but elated group of Oregon Trail elders around the green, explaining passionately, as only Sam can do, about what the emigrants faced next. Sam seemed stricken, but about what I was not sure. I boldly asked him what he seemed so concerned about and his reply was "Why are all these people so old looking? Have they been on the Trail long?"

This 16-day journey ended at the Alton L. Collins Retreat Center in Eagle Creek, Oregon. Dave Welch, OCTA President and guest speaker, told of his research for his great-great grandfather who came out on the Oregon Trail and headed for California. One lady (Dorothy Krugner) said that Dave's talk "was inspiring. My husband understands now why I pursue genealogy, not for the dry data, but for the real life drama and experiences that families should not forget."

The closing dinner and ceremony, was a fitting testimony to our "shared" journey across this wonderful land of ours. Twenty-five lives touched each other briefly, but poignantly. Thoughts, feelings and emotions were not hidden, but rather, expressed openly, for we had done what few others have ever attempted to do, we followed the Oregon Trail in a Big Blue Bus.



News From The Chapters

Southwest

SWOCTA'S mapping group, the Trail Turtles, met at the Fort Cummings, NM cemetery in the late afternoon of April 18, 2001.

Eleven chapter members from five states made up this crew, all ready for the week to come. They included: Don Buck (CA), Tracy and Judy DeVault (AZ), Richard and Marie Greene (NM), David Hollecker (NV), Brock and Levida Hileman (WY), Ken and Pat White (AZ), and Rose Ann Tompkins (AZ). When the group broke up and headed for home on the afternoon of April 24, there was the usual feelings of exhaustion and accomplishment. A new technology was used for the first time during a mapping week. A web site called TerraServer has aerial photographs of terrain we were going to access and copies were brought along to be used every day. Utilizing the "goto" feature of the GPS units could get us to a potential trail spot. In areas where finding the trail has been elusive, this approach was very effective and cut down both time expended and hiking distance in certain areas.

A new wrinkle in our meals was a more communal approach to dinner entrees. Most evenings a different person or couple provided the entree for the group, with others adding to the meal in a stone soup fashion. It was a definite plus for those whose usual fare is opening a can or freeze dried container. The prize for most original went to the DeVaults who surprised us with ice cream, brought in dry ice. It was so hard, even after several days, it had to be left out to soften and then pried out of the carton with a Bowie knife.



SW Trail Turtles gather for a group photo near Cooke's Spring during the April mapping week. Southern Trail landmark Cooke's Peak is visible on the horizon.

— Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

The biggest problem for the week was the wind. Temperatures were reasonably mild, and there was no rain, but some days, and nights, were extremely uncomfortable due to wind and dust. Three of the seven vehicles experienced tire problems. These seem to be common place in this environment and are dealt with accordingly. On the plus side was the compelling scenery, camping in quiet, open spaces, and the continued friendship of the group working and having fun together.

The work concentrated on filling in some of the gaps from previous mapping trips. Hard to reach areas, or areas that needed revisiting were the focus. Our mapping over the last five years has been along on the Southern Trail between the Rio Grande and Guadalupe Canyon in SW New Mexico. This stretch of about 200 miles is now almost done.

Over the years we have perfected several techniques useful in the unforgiving high desert terrain. Just locating the long abandoned and forgotten trail has been part of the challenge. Certain landmarks are well known, but the path from one to another was often a problem to be solved. Mainstays continue to be diary accounts, other historical literature, and maps. Equipment such as FRS radios, multiple GPS units, digital cameras and computers help the process. But in the end, it is the legs and eyes of the trail turtles that get the job done. SWOCTA has a dedicated group.

— Rose Ann Tompkins



Three members of SWOCTA's mapping group, prior to the CA-NV Spring Symposium. Left to right, Tracy DeVault, Rose Ann Tompkins and Don Buck. — Photo by Judy DeVault

Northwest

March 10th, 2001, was a day as most days are in the Columbia Gorge in early March: windy, overcast with a smattering of sunshine, chilly but promising spring would soon be here. Sixty plus NW chapter members attended the chapter's General Membership meeting, which included taking care of old business, electing a board member (Rich Herman), and discussing new business and outings.

Lethene Parks, chapter president, made a call for members to step forward and help with chapter projects. Joyce Bolerjack and Gail Carbiener volunteered to develop a new chapter budget, Glenn Harrison took on the added responsibility of updating the chapter Bylaws, and Marley Shurtleff is writing a chapter handbook as a guideline for new officers and board members. The highlight of the meeting was presenting a very surprised Joyce Bolerjack with the Dick & Trudy Ackerman Meritorious Achievement Award for her outstanding work and devotion to the Northwest chapter.

April 29th found a group of NW members in Baker City, Oregon for a joint meeting with the Oregon Historic Trails Advisory Council, the BLM, the Trail Tenders, and TIC Historical Markers Committee. The meeting and activities were held at the Flagstaff Hill Interpretive Center and planned by Jim Renner. This was a first for our chapter, an indoor/outdoor meeting so those who did not want to do any hiking or sight seeing could still enjoy themselves. The idea was prompted by Lowell Tiller.

The opening activity was the dedication of a new historical road sign on Highway 26. This sign "The Lure For Gold" interprets the theme of reverse migration on the Oregon Trail when gold was discovered in the 1860's. Among the day's speakers were Dave Hunsaker, Dick Ackerman, Sarah LeCompte, and Ray Egan, who portrays Ezra Meeker. Jim Renner then dedicated the Ackerman Meritorious Service Award and had it placed in the auditorium at Flagstaff Hill. Joyce Bolerjack's plaque was put in place and she was asked to speak: "The weekend was fantastic! My three children were present and we were asked to stand. I gave a short thank you and was shaking so hard it was a true miracle it got spoken at all. Much applause, many flash pictures...good heavens, you would have thought we were movie stars!"

Once again Don Popejoy led an Oregon Trail Elderhostel tour along with historian Molly Smith, an OCTA member, and Tom Laidlaw, who put in a special appearance as Sam Barlow when the tour reached Mount Hood. The tour was from May 6th through the 22nd and started in Independence, Mo. and finished in Oregon City, Oregon. For more information about this tour, see the related article in this issue of the *NFP*.

Gail & Muriel Carbiener lead a fun, but hard working outing to clean up the Agency Valley Cemetery near Juntura, Oregon. The Carbs brought a trailer full of tools, concrete, water, and a brand new OCTA marker honoring Levi Scott, pioneer of the Southern Route to Oregon - also known as the Applegate/Scott Trail. Wayne Burck, Dick Klein, Jean Bennet, Mike and Dell Rose Banks, Roger Riolo, Charles Prince and Tom Laidlaw all

worked hard cleaning up the area, placing the new marker and making a new fence with a gate. Also present were members of the Malheur County Historical Society and Stafford Hazelett, Mildred Ariola, Mona Mendiola (great granddaughter of Levi Scott) and Arlie Holt.

Another indoor outing was held at the Tumwater Middle School in Olympia, Washington on May 19th where Jack and Pat Fletcher gave a slide show about their 15 year research project on the 1849 - 1850 Cherokee Trail that lead to the California gold fields. Jim Tompkins did a one hour diary quotes reading of the emigrants crossing the Oregon Trail from the jumping off places in Missouri to Abernathy Green in Oregon City. Chuck Hornbuckle, who set up the meeting, welcomed the visitors and talked about many of our activities, both on the national and local levels, and showed an exhibit of his recently finished report to the NPS on the chapter's trail marking outings over the last four years.

The June 2nd National Trails Day outing following the Oregon Trail across the Deshutes and the John Day Rivers, will be reported on in the next issue of the *NFP*.

Future Outings: For more information on these adventures check out our website at www.nwocta.com or the Trail Scout listed.

Applegate Trail Outing, June 11th and 12th: contact Gail Carbiener at cypmcgc@oregontrail.net

The Barlow Road - The Dalles to Oregon City, June 23rd and 24th: contact Jim Tompkins at tompkins@teleport.com or Tom Laidlaw at tomactor@aol.com

The Naches Trail Flyover, July 28th and 29th: contact Dick Pingrey at ripingrey@msn.com

The Columbia River Connection - On the Path of Lewis and Clark: TBA, contact Don Popejoy at dpocalc2@aol.com

-- Don Popejoy

OCTA Chapter Websites

CA-NV

members.home.net/canvocta

Crossroads

www.utahcrossroads.org

Gateway

w3.trib.com/~lwisch/gateway.htm

KANZA

www.ukans.edu/kansas/seneca/oregon/kanza/index.html

Nebraska

incolor.inetnebr.com/gnelson/neocta.html

Northwest

nwocta.com/

Southwest

members.home.net/roseann2/SWOCTA.htm

Trailhead

www.trailhead.org

Wyoming

w3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html

Crossroads

In April, a smaller than usual (the date conflicted with some Easter observances), but very enthusiastic, group of Crossroads members and their guests attended an interesting presentation by Terry Del Bene, BLM archeologist.

His talk, "Soldiering on the Trail, the Civil War Years" was highlighted with slide and overview pictures of early military profiles, activities, military stations and camps. A Wyoming resident, Del Bene is an active and ardent supporter of OCTA and the Utah and Wyoming Chapters. His recent discovery of trail ruts and swales along the Big Sandy River, southwest of Simpson's Hollow, has opened the possibility of another trail route which will be explored further in the coming months. Additional research may reveal documentary evidence of this trail route.

The spring field trip May 19-20 to the San Rafael Swell and Green River was a big success with 34 people in 18 vehicles participating. Our guide, Oscar Olson, planned an outstanding tour and his knowledge of the area's many interesting sites and "secrets" made the field trip both educational and entertaining.

Chapter President John Eldredge prepared excellent handouts for the trek. Saturday's activities included following sections of the Spanish Trail and Gunnison's Trail, including the 1880 D&RGW rail bed. Visits to early trail watering holes, Indian petroglyphs and pictographs sites, and test holes and tunnel excavated by the Defense Department in the '50's, completed the first day's activities. We spent a fun Saturday evening at the Book Cliff Lodge in Green River and gathered at several eateries for dinner, entertaining each other with "tales of the trail" and recounting the day's activities.

On Sunday, the group visited the John Wesley Powell River History Museum and the Spanish Trail crossing on the Green River. A highlight of the field trip was the time we spent visiting with 87-year-old Howard Hastings, who has lived near the Green River Crossing since 1925, and viewing his remarkable collection of Indian camp and early ranch and settler artifacts. Remarkably, we experienced only one flat tire and had perfect weather -- OCTA's field trip gods were smiling on us for sure. To view some of the beautiful pictures taken on the field trip by Steve Berlin, visit Crossroads website: www.utahcrossroads.org.

The chapter newsletter Crossroads is back on schedule and being published quarterly. Interesting articles by Jeff Carlstrom and Lyndia Carter (who also writes the "Reading Trail" for NFP) appeared in the spring issue and Editor Angie



Terry Del Bene points out trail variant along the Big Sandy River in Wyoming. — Photo by Al Mulder

Larkin promises more of the same.

With good weather the "trail junkies" are stirring and trail marking activities are picking up. We are working with UDOT and the Long Distance Trails Office to install trail crossing signs on state road 36 near Faust where the Pony Express trail crosses the road; at Castle Rock where the Mormon Pioneer/California Trails cross highway I-80; and near Grassy Mountain rest stop where the Hastings Cutoff (California Trail alternate) crosses I-80. The UDOT sign shop has the signs ready, but with the interstate reconstruction, the project has been slowed. We will be working with Utah State Parks & Recreation this summer to mark a hiking trail on the Mormon Pioneer/Donner-Reed/California Trail from Birch Springs to the site of Hanks Mountain Dell Pony Express Station. The trail will be improved for use by the handicapped.

We lost another valued member of Utah Crossroads with the passing of Floyd Garn Hatch, aged 83, who died at his home on May 1st. Garn was a founding member of Utah Crossroads and the founder and first president of the Mormon Trails Association. His encouragement, influence and efforts in the preservation of historic trails will be sorely missed, but he will always be remembered by historians and preservationists for his unfailing support of causes he believed in. OCTA has lost a true "friend of the trail" and we will miss him.

Kudos and a hearty "Well Done" to Ken and Arleta Martin and the KANZA Chapter for their work in saving the location site of the Historic Trails Park west of Marysville. This is historic trail preservation work at its finest.

— Al Mulder

*For Up-to-date Information
On the 2001 OCTA Convention in Casper,
check out the Wyoming Chapter Website
W3.trib.com/~rlund/chapter.html*



Trails Head

Trails Head members are pursuing the elusive but exciting possibility that there are two sites at which overland travelers carved their names into rocks.

The first, which we described in our last report, is located on the western edge of Johnson County, KS. Although we have excellent primary documentation, we still are searching this very difficult site for the stone, which was confirmed as late as 1943.

The second site is definitely identified and is in the area of our neighboring KANZA Chapter. Our chapter is making a trip to Lawrence and to the campsite in the near future. Either of these sites could be the easternmost point at which emigrants carved their names.

Our chapter will soon erect a new OCTA marker at Cave Spring, MO. Cave Spring is the campground for the Barnes Place, which succeeded the Rice Place at the first overnight campsite out of Independence.

The Barnes Place has been the subject of controversy since OCTA's founding, and Trails Head acknowledges the valuable research and dogged determination of OCTA member Walter Cook in clarifying the history of the trails in Jackson County, MO.

— Bill Bullard

KANZA

Nebraska OCTA members were guests of the KANZA Chapter on April 8, when they met for a sack lunch at noon, at Rock Creek Station State Historic Site near Fairbury, NE. After the noon meal, Ken and Arleta Martin served cake to celebrate KANZA's 5th Anniversary.

Wayne Brandt, curator, welcomed the group and gave a short narrative about the site. We then watched a short video about this historic site and toured the visitor-interpretive center.

After leaving the visitor center, the group viewed the wagon ruts that parallel the center. These impressive ruts were carved into the earth by the many wagons, which came through this area. We also visited the reconstructed buildings and corral, which make up the East and West Ranches.

We then traveled north of Fairbury and visited the grave of George Winslow, which is being protected by the Boddye family. Our next stop was at District 10 School to view several other historic trail markers. To the west of the school are some beautiful swales. Jefferson County has some spectacular ruts and historic sites to visit.

We had eight guests from Nebraska, coming from Franklin, Hastings, Milford and Columbus. Also attending were 31 KANZA Chapter members.

— Arleta Martin

Membership Report

June 30, 2001 will end OCTA's first ever Membership Drive and so far two members stand out for their amazing efforts at bringing in new members.

They are Suzanne Vinduska, from Headquarters in Independence and Joyce Bolerjack from Bellevue, Washington. They both went over the top and will receive their rewards and recognition at this year's convention in Casper, Wyoming. There is still time for more winners from the ranks and there are several members who are close to level one.

This has been a good year for membership as a result of the membership drive and personal recruiting on your part. I would like to encourage all of you to give Gift Memberships and sustain them over the years. This is a great way to involve students and to create an awareness of the trails and how to preserve them. Thank you to all the members who have given Gift memberships over the years.

The Membership Committee will have its first meeting at the convention. From the start one of my major goals was to have a working Membership Committee with a member from each of the Trail states sitting on the committee and this is slowly, but surely becoming a reality. With Ross Marshall's help as Chapters Chair I can visualize this happening in 2002. If you would like to be a part of this important committee, contact me for information.

The new OCTA brochure is out and ready for distribution to any of you who would like some for distribution. Over 30,000 were printed and they look awesome as the printer did a wonderful job. Some changes were made; the location of past conventions was deleted, the membership rates were updated and the OCTA website and bookstore URL's were added.

We are currently working on a mailing to the Montana State Historical Society and Susan Badger Doyle wrote a letter of introduction for us. We wanted a name that had a connection with the historical society and since Susan has done so much work with the society, we asked her for her approval. Two more mailings are in the works, the big one being the Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation. Also, a library mailing of some 250 plus libraries is being considered.

Bob Clark, editor of the *Overland Journal*, will be adding a flyer to his next catalog which will be designed to bring in new members. As a "teaser" we are offering a free issue of the latest *OJ* to those who send in the coupon to HQs. If this works well, we will follow up with a couple more such offerings through his catalog. Thanks to Bob for offering to do this for OCTA.

A new effort is in the works to bring in past members from the last several years along with several other ideas that need fine tuning. Got ideas? Let the Membership Committee know. Also, I would like to put out a "call for volunteers" to help us with mailings and other time consuming efforts.

A lot of people have helped with membership this year and that's what makes OCTA such a great organization. "Thank You."

-- Don Popejoy, Membership Chair

BLM Completes Johnston's Scout Rock Preservation Project

Historic inscriptions at Johnston's Scout Rock about 15 miles northeast of Kemmerer, WY are now protected from further damage thanks to several local livestock operators.

The Horseshoe Spear Cattle Company, Rodwell Ranch, Arnold Larson, and David Thoman cooperated with BLM to complete the project this spring. The Bureau of Land Management furnished fencing materials and the operators contracted the fence installation from P & F Fencing. A buck and pole fence now surrounds the rock and protects the historic inscriptions from cattle rubbing against them. In addition, a National Register of Historic Places sign was installed.

During the westward migration, it was common for the emigrants to carve or paint (with axle grease or wagon tar) their names on convenient rock walls. According to the 1974 National Register Nomination for the site, Johnston's Scout Rock got its name from the once visible inscription of "T.C. Johnston" and "1860 Scouts." Much of the original inscription and the date have since eroded away, giving historians a challenge. The earliest inscription ever seen on the rocks is that of W.A. Williams, July 1850. The site is near the Slate Creek Cutoff of the Oregon and California National Historic Trails.

BLM Cultural Resource Specialist Lynn Harrell noted, "Inscriptions like these always raise more questions than they answer. We don't know who T.C. Johnston was and who were the 'Scouts' in 1860. We'd love to hear from anyone who knows anything about Johnston or the Scouts."

BLM Kemmerer Field Manager Jeff Rawson commented, "Once again we've had people in the community partner with BLM to protect public resources. The fence at Johnston's Scout Rock will help preserve the site for future generations. I'm very pleased with the generosity and cooperation of the livestock operators to get this project done."

— Bureau of Land Management

Trail Marker Installed In Iowa

A new marker has been installed on the Mills/Pottawattamie County line about five miles south of Council Bluffs, Iowa, near where the Stephen/Townsend/Murphy party crossed the Missouri in 1844.

The site of the original Council Bluffs, it is near the location where Peter Sarpy and Alexandre LaForce Papin operated a ferry across the River in 1830s and near where the Mormon Battalion outfitted for its march westward.

In 1852, the former town of Kanessville took the name of Council Bluffs and eventually most of the original town was purchased by the infamous gambler and confidence man Ben Marks.

It later became known as Traders Point because of illegal whiskey traders who set up shop in the area to serve the Council Bluffs Indian Agency.

— Western Historic Trails Center



BLM Kemmerer Field Office Cultural Resource Specialist Lynn Harrell with the newly installed National Register of Historic Places sign at Johnston's Scout Rock. — BLM Photo

Trails Partnership Meets In Casper

The Partnership for the National Trails System will convene the 7th Conference on National Scenic and Historic Trails August 17-21 at the Radisson Hotel in Casper, Wyoming.

Join Federal trail managers, state and local agency partners and trail organization leaders from throughout America to renew friendships, share information and enjoy the beauty and history of the high plains and mountains of Wyoming.

"Howdy Pardner - Strong Partnerships Make Great National Trails" — the theme of the 7th Conference — is an invitation to learn together how to nurture a culture of collaboration and to strengthen and celebrate the partnerships so essential to the National Trails System.

New initiatives will be highlighted, including BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, Forest Service's Recreation Agenda and the NPS Cultural Resources Initiative, plus ongoing programs such as FHWA's TEA 21 and Recreational Trails Fund, ADA Standards & Guidelines.

Workshops will explore ways to protect trail resources, secure adequate public and private funding, improve education and public outreach, and increase your organization's capacity to recruit and retain volunteers. Field Trips will explore the beauty and history of the high plains and mountains of central Wyoming. Interpretive tours will trace the routes of the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails up the Platte and Sweetwater River valleys to such famous landmarks as Independence Rock and Devils Gate.

Registration materials will be available in early June. Contact Partnership for the National Trails System, 608-249-7870, NATTRAILS@aol.com for information and registration materials.

— Gary Werner

Gummi Bear Bribery On The Oregon Trail

By Debera Carlton Harrell
Seattle Post-Intelligencer

They froze after fording the Platte River, got drenched in an unexpected storm, and were exhausted after hauling broken wagons up slippery slopes.

Still, the pioneers persevered. Some were blinded. Others broke their arms. They had to rely on one another, in some cases carrying one another's burdens.

Good thing they had Gummi Bears.

Thinking not only outside the box but outside the classroom, Lakeside Middle School yesterday taught about the Oregon Trail by simulating an 1840s experience that settled the West -- and unsettled the students.

Erik Gearhart and his fellow faculty members taught both American history and the need for teamwork. Nothing like grueling, muddy, chilly conditions, they reasoned, to make seventh-graders appreciate pioneer sacrifices, and one another.

It took about six hours for 70 students, divided into groups of three or four, to negotiate a 1.5-mile trail that wound around and across the stately Lakeside campus. Following red-ribboned trail markers, they traveled beyond the grounds to wooded paths and steep-stepped walkways, clearly not designed for pulling Red Flyer wagons with 100-pound sandbags (the "supplies").

"You're gonna die!" yelled one pioneer to another as they hauled loads up and over chain-link fences and "forded" a frigid pond representing the real trail's Platte River.

"It's tough being a pioneer!" responded Gearhart, chuckling into his walkie-talkie.

Indeed, while the grits (potato chips) and garb (nylon warm-up pants duct-taped to rubber boots) were different from trail days, the will to survive was not.

"This is not good," said Julie Ralph, surveying a muddy up-hill climb for a wagon whose cargo kept dropping. Her classmates and companions, Welles Wiley and Jennie Warne, were "inflicted" with scripted injuries at "Fort Lippert," a midway point that proved a false summit for youths hankering for the trail's end.

Ralph eyed Wiley, a bandanna wrapped around his "injured" arms, and Warne, sporting a blindfold to simulate blindness caused by cholera. Then she mustered the kind of pluckiness one would expect from a real pioneer.

"We'll make it!" Ralph said encouragingly, as Wiley tried to nudge the wagon forward with soggy kneecaps while preventing Warne from smacking into a holly tree.

Unlike one group that left a member behind ("He likely was eaten by a cougar or died of exposure," a teacher said solemnly), Ralph, Wiley and Warne helped one another every step of the way. They were undeterred by a sudden "storm" -- produced by teachers on ladders, hosing unsuspecting students as they rounded the bend of the arts building.

Some, like Wiley, helped his group by using his head.

"Out West, pioneers didn't want money; it was useless. They bartered with food and candy," Wiley said. "Don't you

want some Gummi Bears? They have real fruit juice!" he said, successfully bribing a "trail guide" for help.

Some moments weren't exactly Laura Ingalls Wilder.

"Another hill?" Oh mannnnn!" moaned one boy.

"We're gonna sue!" yelled several soaked students after emerging from the storm.

Students knew, because they had studied just as tenaciously as they hauled wagons, wheelbarrows and even a grocery cart, that the actual Oregon Trail pioneers took six months to cover 2,000 miles. Still, suffering is relative.

"It was a great simulation," said Alayne Cartales, who took pictures of her son, James, as his burgundy sweat shirt was soaked to the skin.

"They have learned so much. They'll never forget this," she said.

The students had come prepared academically as well as with supplies, having learned lessons ranging from cholera epidemics to the ill-fated Donner Party.

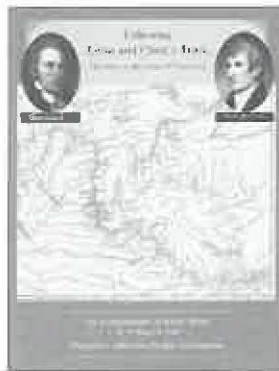
When the numbed pioneers finally reached the trail's end, some kissed the ground. Others collapsed in a heap of duffel bags outside the gym, yelling "We're in Oregon!" (As this part of Washington used to be called...)

"It was definitely the weirdest thing I've done in school," Ian Bolliger said. "But it makes me appreciate what the pioneers went through."

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Following Lewis and Clark's Track

The Story of the Corps of Discovery



Almost 200 years ago President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the exploration of the Louisiana Territory. OCTA and author, William E. Hill's, 3rd educational activity book, *Following Lewis and Clark's Track, The Story of the Corps of Discovery* will be available in August.

This illustrated 64-page book includes maps, word searches, charts, graphs, and puzzles. These activities should appeal to young and old alike. Excerpts from the journals provides insight into one of the most important events in the history of the United States. \$6.95 plus \$2.00 shipping.

Available from OCTA, P.O. Box 1019,
Independence, MO 64051-0519
or toll free 1-888-811-6282.

For online orders see www.OCTA-trails.org

Order your copy today!

Casper Trails Center Nears Completion; Opening May, 2002

The National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper has gone from an idea to a building under construction. Completion is tentatively set for October, 2001, with the official grand opening set for May, 2002. OCTA convention-goers will get a special sneak preview of the construction.

The \$12 million project is a combination of ancient building materials and state of the art electronics. Etchings on the huge rock walls throughout the building will image the signatures left by travelers on Independence Rock and other sites along the pioneer trails.

Through technology, the interpretive displays will take people on a wagon across the North Platte River or make them shiver in a coolness like the winter winds that felled so many emigrants in the handcart disaster at Martin's Cove near Devil's Gate.

The center will provide information on the Oregon, California, Mormon and Pony Express Trails, as well as the Bridger and Bozeman Trails.

The National Historic Trails Interpretive Center is sure to become one of the most-recognized man-made attractions in Wyoming. It will be unique due to its use of the most modern technology in exhibit design.

The Interpretive Center is a cooperative effort of the Bureau of Land Management, the City of Casper, the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center Foundation and hundreds of donors.

-- National Historic Trails Interpretive Center



One of the unique features of the Trails Center in Casper will be the reproduction on interior stone walls of actual emigrant carvings and engravings. Pre-selected stones are taken to the workshop of engraver Ron Potter, pictured above, who reproduces the original emigrant engravings from photographs taken by Jude Carino, Randy Wagner and Randy Brown at various places in Wyoming.
— Photo by Lee Underbrink, courtesy Wyoming Chapter

OCTA Officer Directory

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*Memberships are available for full-time students at accredited colleges/universities, with verification. Student memberships are limited to four years.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO OCTA ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE TO THE FULL EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW.

The Reading Trail . . . by Lunda Carter



During the hot, boring days of July and August, parents and grandparents ought to explore a significant trail with the young people in their lives, the trail that leads to the public library. It's a journey of exploration and adventure; one that only a real excursion on an actual emigrant trail can beat. Summer is a great time for library exploration. Parents are often at their wits end to find ways to keep the kids from languishing with boredom. Grandparents frequently find the grandchildren camped out at their house for visits or vacations and need activities to keep the young 'uns entertained and busy. The library is *cool* in more ways than one; so grab a book bag and make the trek! Recently I found some excellent books about the westward movement in the local library. Children's fiction about the journey to Oregon, California or Utah delights me. Writers are bringing history alive for children by telling stories set on the trails west. (My one pet peeve is that too often the writer does not take the little bit of extra effort needed to get trail geography correct. As teachers, parents, and grandparents, it may be wise to have maps, simple and readable for children, around so that you can discuss inaccuracies with the kids.) Of course, I am also suggesting that you read the books yourselves, either with the children or before suggesting or making books available. There are few activities more enjoyable or worthwhile than reading with a child. The following books, for different ages, are all creative, entertaining, well conceived and appealingly written.

For the little tykes, *Red Flower Goes West* is one of the best picture books I have ever seen about the overland journey and how it impacted children. Author Ann Turner tells the story of James and Jenny, who are uprooted from their home when their father makes the decision to go to California. The change is difficult for Ma, too, who decides to take a little bit of home with her. She digs up a special red flower from her garden to carry in the family wagon and plant at their new home in the West. The children help safeguard the flower, which becomes a beloved symbol. It is their lantern to show them the way; their good luck charm; their barometer of success. The children come to believe that if the flower dies, they will never make it either. James and Jenny protect it, share their precious water with it, check on its safety and progress. Turner tells a sensitive and charming story of moving, surviving a dangerous journey, and beginning a new life. I cannot say enough good things about this wonderful book. One of the best things are the illustrations by Dennis Nolan, who provides tender pastel illustrations that marvelously enhance the story. If your library does not have *Red Flower Goes West*, request that they get it. Chances are you just may want your own copy. (New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1999. Ages 3 upward.)

If the child you aim to please is from ages 9 through 12 or so, you will find *Julie Meyer: The Story of a Wagon Train Girl* just the thing to bring enjoyment to you and them. Many of us can understand the powerful, loving bond that exists between a grandparent and a special grandchild. Nanna (grandma) goes west with the Meyer family, despite her knowledge that she will never live to see Oregon. But no way will she miss the adventure or stay behind! The relationship between Julie and

Nanna is touching. This is a great multigenerational family story. Besides Nanna, Julie's older married (and pregnant) sister and her husband join the Meyer family (Julie, her parents, two brothers, and the dog Major) for an exciting journey. Red-headed Julie is a character that both boys and girls will like. Her fiery temper defeats a bully; her opinions and independence sometimes get her into trouble; her bravery saves her little brother; and her loving heart endears her to those who get caught up in her adventures and emotions as they read her story. Co-authors Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler throw in a whole host of adult character-types to fill out the wagon train, which we see through Julie's childhood eyes. It makes for a delightful blend of personalities. The story line will fascinate kids and make for delectable reading. I did find the geographical errors in Wyoming disturbing. For instance, distances in the Sweetwater Valley are extremely inaccurate. And I doubt that Jim Bridger was at the Columbia River in 1848 to advise emigrants. But don't let these minor drawbacks prevent you from choosing this book—the story and the characters are going to spark children's interest in history and the trails, and that is our goal. (*Julie Meyer: The Story of a Wagon Train Girl*, by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler, in conjunction with Carey-Greenberg Associates, illustrations by Robert Gantt Steele; Parsippany, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1997.)

For girls in their early teens, *West Against the Wind* by Liza Ketchum Murrow is great summertime reading. Having taught junior high school, I know that girls will treasure this book. It may, however, mildly embarrass boys of the same age (nothing too shocking, but our heroine assists in a childbirth, copes with menses, and wonders about the same things that every teenaged girl wonders about—all tastefully handled by the author). The author captures the emotional and physical changes that envelope 14-year-old Abby while traveling with her family to California in 1850 to join her father who left the previous year in the Gold Rush. There is, of course, a romance. A mysterious young man, Matt, joins the wagon train. Abby notices that he is searching for something very important, but it's not gold, and she becomes involved in the mystery; meanwhile, Matt and Abby's emotions also become entwined, although the headstrong and independent Abby knows she has a lot of life still ahead of her and Matt is a perfect gentleman. Many teenaged girls will find themselves relating to Abby's emotions: she sometimes clashes with adults, is confused about her own emotions, wants to try new things, to live life and experience the world; wants a friend, who might also qualify as a boyfriend. As a subplot in the story, there is another teenaged girl who has made a wrong choice, nearly destroyed her family and herself, and must live with the consequences. Abby helps to save her. Meanwhile, the author skillfully weaves in historical material. Unfortunately, Murrow did not do enough background research and makes some very serious errors in Nebraska geography. Despite that, modern teenaged girls will be transported by this story to life on the trail. (*West Against the Wind* by Liza Ketchum Murrow, Mahwah, New Jersey: Troll Associates, copyright 1987.)

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