

News From The Plains



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Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

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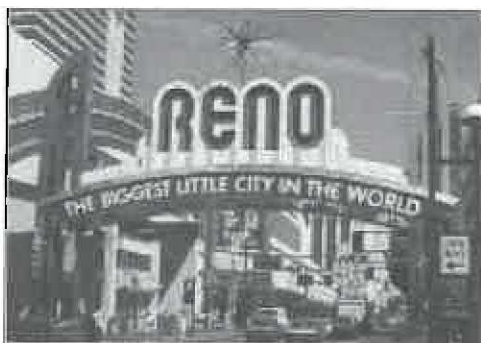
Reno Offers Visitors Rich Trail History

The host city for the 2002 OCTA Convention is flush with history, from the explorations of John Fremont to California-bound emigrants to the Comstock Lode. To get OCTAns in an appropriately historic mood, we asked Convention Chair Chuck Dodd to provide a brief history lesson on the valley surrounding the Truckee River.

By Chuck Dodd

The larger area now occupied by Reno and Sparks is today called the Truckee Meadows. Originally, the Truckee Meadows referred just to the real meadows area that occupied most of the low-lying eastern half of the valley in which the communities are located.

Using today's landmarks, the original Truckee Meadows would extend somewhat north of Interstate 80, which bisects the valley, with the Virginia Range of mountains on the east, McCarran Boulevard on the south, and US-395 on the west. The Reno-Tahoe International Airport would be in the south-



The world-famous Reno Arch will greet visitors to the "Biggest Little City In The World" at OCTA's 20th Annual Convention.

western corner and nearby Rattlesnake Mountain would define the southern border.

Traditionally, the Truckee Meadows was one of the camp sites and winter home of the Washoe Indians. The Washoes lived in the mountains and

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OCTA Convention Trails Lead To Reno August 14

The "Biggest Little City" will host the biggest little concentration of rut nuts when OCTA's 20th Annual Convention opens on Wednesday, August 14, in Reno, under the theme of *What Lies Ahead on the Trails*.

Several hundred trails enthusiasts will take part, enjoying an opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones while being entertained and educated, thanks to an impressive roster of speakers, tours of surrounding trail sites and social gatherings.

It's not too late to register for the convention. For inquiries, contact OCTA Headquarters at (816) 252-2276. At press time, space was still available on some of the tours, although space guarantees cannot be made at this late date.

The Convention officially begins at 8 a.m. on Wednesday with a surprise "Something Special" opening ceremony, including opening remarks by Convention Chair Chuck Dodd and a blessing by Robyn Burdette of the Summit Lake Paiute Indian Council.

The keynote address at 9 a.m. will be made by Elaine Marquis-Brong, Director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management National Landscape Conservation System, who is charged with coordination of management and oversight of all national historic trails on BLM lands.

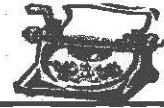
The General Membership meeting at 10 a.m. will introduce newly elected national Board members and a break for regional Chapter meetings will be held at 11 a.m.

Wednesday afternoon speakers will include Rose Ann Tompkins and LeRoy Johnson talking about the South Trail Complex and Death Valley trails, respectively, and a pair of presentations on conflicting interpretations of the trail through



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



I confess to a fair amount of contentment with life alongside the Chisholm Trail in Texas. People down here take their history seriously and there are some excellent preservation activities underway. Texas attitudes aside (they do, after all, take this whole Alamo thing very seriously), the legend and lore of this widespread state can be habit forming. And, for the record, every morning on my way to work I pass a "herd" of three longhorns alongside Interstate 35. Well penned and well fed, they pay very little attention.

That said, I do sincerely miss the emigrant trails environment in Nevada, where I lived for almost 30 years before a mid-life make-over brought me to Texas. A desire to once again see the Nevada trails is a big reason why I'm looking forward to this year's 20th Annual OCTA Convention in Reno in August. And so should you.

I won't begrudge Nebraska's love affair with the Platte River Road or Missouri's pride in its jumping off points or California's Gold Rush heritage or Oregon's end of the trail status, or the trail tradition shared by any of the states the emigrants wandered through. My own ancestors followed the Mormon Trail, so I'm partial to that as well.

But there's something about the trail through Nevada that generates at least in this writer some particularly profound emotions for the trail experience. "Pristine" is an ill-used word these days, but there are places in Nevada where a strong argument can be made that things haven't changed all that much in 150 years and the scenery is probably pretty close what the emigrants saw. Much of the Silver State, after all, remains a place to get through as quick as you can, without lingering. Modern day travelers on Interstate 80 aren't much different than pioneers in that regard.

But Nevada trails that have left an unforgettable impression on me, and may do the same to you.

First, there's the Humboldt River portion of the trail (subject of a pre-convention tour), nearly every mile of which bears testimony to the will power of the emigrants.

Second, it would be hard to find a section of the trail anywhere that can match the poignancy of the Forty Mile Desert (subject of a convention tour.) The image of worn, weary and ragged emigrants plodding across this wasteland is indelible.

Third, consider the Applegate Trail and the Black Rock Desert, now part of a new National Conservation Area, with their history of misery and viewscapes that are as good as anything you will find anywhere on any trail.

And fourth, of course, the climb up out of the Truckee Meadows and over the Sierra Nevada. At the very end of their journey, after surviving the bone-wearying travel and just barely getting across the parching desert . . . they had to go over those mountains!!

It is here in Nevada that the majesty and misery of the overland experience is evident, often in landscape that has changed very little in a century and a half.

I've heard an occasional question as to why a convention of history-seeking, outdoors-loving, emigrant-researching, rut-wandering OCTAns would gather under the neon lights in a casino in the "Biggest Little City in the World."

Well, really, for the same reason we meet in Casper and Pocatello and Grand Island and Manhattan, Kansas: Because that's where the trails are, of course.

If you haven't made up your mind about going to Reno this August, do it. I can promise you an unforgettable experience.

— Bill Martin



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, 2002

From The President . . .

by Randall Wagner



First, I'd like to welcome two relatively new OCTA members to the organization's leadership ranks.

Beth (Elizabeth) Finger of California is the new Membership Committee chairperson. Membership growth, as most of you know by now, is one of my priorities. Beth is already initiating a campaign to contact those members who have recently dropped out of our organization and invite them to return. She has developed a series of logical and compelling reasons for them to do so. Those same reasons should encourage all existing members to renew their memberships when the time comes.

Beth has not yet named a formal committee to assist her efforts, but is already receiving some help and advice from interested members, Chapter presidents and one of the special Board Committees. I also request that all Chapter membership chairpersons contact Beth and offer their help.

Most of the work of retaining existing members and encouraging former members to return to OCTA can be done from the national office, but the critical job of finding and recruiting new members must be done at the local or Chapter level. Once the national membership office and the key membership people in every chapter start working together, good things will happen.

Please contact Beth at P. O. Box 3831, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, (707) 838-7530 or by e-mail at <Fingrini@aol.com>. She needs your help, thoughts and inspiration.

Douglas Brown has re-joined OCTA and taken on the job of Treasurer. Doug is from Independence and is a CPA with an MBA and 30 years experience working in the financial end of the Independence school system. Doug replaces Marilyn Bryan, who resigned following the Salt Lake City Mid-Year Board meeting. Needless to say, he is taking on a big job with a ton of responsibility. And, if Marilyn will pardon me for saying so, he has some really big shoes to fill. You will all have a chance to meet Doug in Reno. Make sure you welcome him back to OCTA.

Speaking of Independence, the City Manager and the Na-

tional Frontier Trails Center (where our national office is located) have served notice that OCTA is to end all of its sales operations through the NFTC gift shop as of July 1, 2001.

The reasons for this significant change in our long-standing cooperative agreement are not entirely clear, but are clearly not acceptable to OCTA. NFTC has been notified of that fact. The gift shop book store is a major public contact point for OCTA in addition to the income it provides for our various preservation causes. On top of that, the entire inventory of books for anticipated summer sales has already been purchased and we have no other outlet to sell them. Subsequent discussions have resulted in delaying the decision until after this summers season. We will keep the membership informed.

Martin's Cove still dominates the news here in Wyoming and is now receiving some national attention. A bill introduced by Congressman Hansen of Utah would require the Federal Government to sell public land within the Cove to the Mormon Church. The Church already owns all the lands surrounding the Cove where it operates the Handcart Visitor Center and has helped the BLM with developments and interpretation within the Cove through a lease agreement.

OCTA has objected to the Hansen bill as written on the basis that it would set precedent for the sale of other historically significant public lands to private interest groups; that it provided no guaranteed free public access to the Cove; that the current lease partnership with the BLM is working and doesn't need to be fixed; and that the events surrounding the 1856 handcart companies are important to all trail historians, not just the Mormons.

Hearings were held in both Casper and Washington D. C. The bill was heavily amended to cover some, but not all, of the issues and was passed on for full House of Representatives consideration. Action was pending at NFP's deadline. A companion bill had not yet appeared in the Senate.

See you in Reno. -- *Randy Wagner, President, OCTA*

From Headquarters . . .



Remember to cast your vote for the election of four Directors to the National Board. For your vote to be included in the official count, please have your ballot returned to Headquarters postmarked no later than July 15, 2002.

It's never too late - Get ready, get registered and meet us in Reno, Nevada for the OCTA 20th Annual Convention in Reno, August 14-17. You are bound to have a great convention experience with the trail tours and "talks" that have been planned for your education and enjoyment.

OCTA's Vitality - Volunteers: OCTA's membership generously donated \$19,500 in the Annual Fund Drive that began in November of 2001. Of that amount, \$3,100 has been designated to the Restricted Endowment Fund.

OCTA's website is undergoing revision. Internet Chair Lesley Wischmann and Mark Wheeler, a new OCTA member and professional web-designer, are making major changes to

our site. In the near future, a special "members section" will be created. It will be accessed with a special "code." Possible uses for this section include posting the Membership Roster and Chapter Newsletters. We'll keep you advised!

OCTA has a new Membership Chair, Beth Finger. Beth recently joined OCTA this spring and has enthusiastically volunteered to be the lead in recruiting new memberships. Welcome Beth!

OCTA has a new Treasurer, Doug Brown of Independence, MO. Doug is a CPA with 30 years of accounting experience. We'll be in good financial hands. Welcome Doug!

Headquarters wishes to thank our local Trails Head Chapter for again, this year, getting the Convention Registration Packets ready to send to our Membership.

-- *Kathy Conway, Headquarters Manager*

From the National Trails Preservation Officer

Report

By David Welch

National Trails Preservation Officer

Energy development activities near the Wyoming historic trails continue. In general, OCTA's activities have taken two forms: review of drilling and pipeline permits and participation in the revision of Resource Management Plans (RMPs). The BLM's Rock Springs Office is processing much of the work, although the Rawlins, Lander, Pinedale and Kemmerer Offices are also active.

Except in a few cases, drilling and pipeline permits have been in areas with substantial previous development. The new wells and connecting pipelines have not had a significant long-term impact on the trails or the viewshed. However, one recent case proposes a well in a new area clearly visible from the Slate Creek and Desert Kinney Cutoffs. In this instance, new mitigation techniques have been proposed by the BLM and are being supported by OCTA. In accordance with existing regulations, none of these activities are within 0.25 of the trail.

The importance of the development or revision of the RMPs should not be underestimated. These documents provide the guidelines and regulations for the follow-up actions like drilling. They are developed with extensive public participation. All interests (developers, environmentalists, ranchers, historians, etc.) are invited to provide input and comments. If you live near a BLM or Forest Service Office, please take the time to learn what they are doing and participate in the processes.

OCTA was recently informed that a geophysical survey is to be conducted in an area of 411 square miles along the Sublette Cutoff just northwest of Farson. This is an undisturbed area that has significant potential for future energy development. This development is permitted (with appropriate restrictions) under the management plan for that area (Green River RMP 1997).

In Nevada, the development of a plan for the Black Rock-High Rock Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area is proceeding. Public comments have been gathered. As in all cases, the comments are diverse and often conflicting. The BLM will use these comments to develop a draft RMP and Environmental Impact Statement that will be published in late 2002. Again, participation by interested OCTA members is encouraged.

Opinion

As long as there are trails there will probably be arguments over the trail location in certain places. Ideally, we could just look for the ruts and swales, right?

Unfortunately, it is not that easy. In the course of over 150 years, the trails (or more correctly, the trail corridors) have been used by emigrants, stage lines, freighters, early public roads, modern highways, railroads, pipelines, power lines and farmers and ranchers. Can the various users and uses, other than those evident now, be distinguished? In many cases, probably not.

I have to admit I am a skeptic when it comes to precisely locating the trail. Before someone jumps to the conclusion that the preservation officer is a non-believer, let me point out that skepticism is defined as "the doctrine that true knowledge is uncertain." I think that describes much of the trail. Even when we can be fairly certain that one trace is the emigrant trail, does that mean that the emigrants did not use some other slight variation in the area?

Some claim that the "evidence" shows that they traveled a particular path (and not some other). But what is the evidence? Diary quotes can be notoriously vague. While the text may seem to match a particular location, does it also match another nearby location?

Ox shoes and wagon parts are also sometimes cited as evidence. However, there was little or no change in this hardware over the 50 to 75 years of trail use. When was the material deposited at the site? Is it unique to a particular time period?

All of this would be moot (and perhaps entertaining and enlightening) if the discussions were friendly. Naturally, we could expect some heated discussion as the proponents state their cases. However, some of these exchanges have gone beyond scholarly disagreements to the detriment of the organization. The view seems to be that not only is the other guy wrong, but he (or she) is a low-down scoundrel purposely misleading the public.

It is probably naive to think that some settling down of these discussions might occur. When asked, I have suggested to the advocates of various trail interpretations that the proper forum is to document their case and present the results in the *Overland Journal*. These articles should be a scholarly presentation without denigrating remarks about other views. Let the readers judge the results.

I would also like to encourage members to think beyond the ruts and swales. If we are to preserve the emigrant experience, we need to insure that the total feeling of the journey is preserved in certain locations. Having an undisturbed viewshed is the only way this can be accomplished. There are only a few places on the trails where this is possible and we must work to preserve them.

— David Welch

For Convention Information:

www.wagons-1841/convention2002.htm

or call

OCTA Headquarters at

(816) 252-2276

Plans Move Ahead For OCTA Endowment Fund Drive

At the Mid-Year Board meeting, OCTA approved a special \$100,000 fund-raising campaign to build OCTA's endowment funds. The drive will be headed by OCTA Vice President Richard Pingrey. In the following, Dick explains the purposes of the drive and why it is of vital importance to the organization.

An active organization such as OCTA incurs expenses as it operates its programs and tries to accomplish its objectives. To provide additional funds to help establish a consistent source of revenues, in 2000 OCTA established an endowment designed to grow over the next decade, providing consistent revenues to help us focus on trail preservation matters and less on finding ways to balance the budget.

Our greatest responsibility is to identify, map, mark, protect and preserve what remains of the old emigrant trails. Producing high quality publications is another important part of OCTA. Then there are administrative costs necessary to the operations of our headquarters at Independence. These and many related activities are important if OCTA is to accomplish its missions, and they all require the expenditure of money. Additional funds will better help us accomplish our goals and be an effective organization. Without sufficient revenue we simply can not survive – nor will the trails.

OCTA revenues come from a variety of sources. Membership dues, convention revenues, income from the sale of bookstore items, occasional government and foundation grants and individual gifts, and the annual fund drive are traditional sources. Efforts to increase membership and bookstore revenues are promising, and a variety of cost-saving measures have been instituted, but our budget is always tight and some important programs must be delayed or limited due to budget restraints.

A solution identified by the OCTA Board of Directors is to build the size of our endowment funds, a common practice for non-profit organizations like ours. Simply put, an endowment fund is a large sum of money that has been invested. The earnings from the fund help support the organization and contribute to its long-term financial health. Most often, once fully established, the principal of the endowment fund is not touched and only the earnings or a portion of the earnings are used in the organization's annual budget. The principal is available in times of extreme emergency, but usually it is protected against being used for any other reason. To accomplish the organization's primary goals, a small portion of the endowment principal may be used, with appropriate safeguards, in the early stages of building the endowment when there is insufficient other revenue. This use of endowment principal is done only when all other sources of revenue have been exhausted and there is no other way to accomplish very important programs. It should be considered as the last resort source of revenue.

If OCTA could build an endowment fund that generated significant income, we would have a larger and more stable revenue source for planning our annual budget and our programs and activities would reflect that financial stability. As it now stands, we find it necessary to call upon our members to

support and supplement our programs and activities through the annual fund drive, which brings in around \$15,000 most years. Even with the annual fund drive, we have a very tight budget and many desirable programs simply cannot be undertaken for financial reasons.

How big of an endowment does OCTA need to insure that we are able to meet our organizational objectives? It would be highly desirable if one-half of the annual budget revenue was generated from earnings from our endowment funds. Even one-quarter would be a major help. OCTA currently has an annual budget of about \$200,000, so an endowment fund that generates \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually would be ideal. Traditionally, the usable income from a fully established endowment fund can be considered to be in the range of five percent annually. In other words, a \$1 million endowment could be expected to provide about \$50,000 a year.

OCTA already has a fairly good start. Thanks to two large gifts and a major effort to set aside funds from years when we ended the year with more income than we spent, our endowment funds total about \$650,000. However, the two large gifts are earmarked for specific purposes, one for legal defense and the other for trail preservation. Because of those restrictions, the funds are generally not available to be applied to our general budget needs. We still need to add several hundred thousand dollars to the endowment fund to get us on our way toward achieving our goal of one million or more dollars in a basic endowment fund.

How does OCTA go about adding to our endowment fund? There are several models that have worked well for other non-profit organizations. One is to seek significant donations from wealthier members. Another is to seek financial support from charitable foundations in the form of grants and gifts from corporations and businesses. A third source is through bequests from estates and wills. Provisions in the tax laws make it possible for individuals and married couples to set up their wills or trusts to give to non-profit organizations such as OCTA and avoid some taxes that would otherwise apply to those funds. Even small donations from members can add up and are important.

In March 2002, the Board of Directors voted to establish a special endowment fund committee and an endowment fund drive to start immediately. The goal is to bring in \$100,000 by March, 2003. To kick off this drive, three pledges of \$5,000 each were made by members of the newly formed endowment committee. The committee has challenged the remaining officers and the Board members to collectively match the \$15,000 pledge. I have high expectations that, as a demonstration of the importance of this endowment fund drive, individual members will agree. These pledges represent not only a significant start to the endowment drive, but also reflect clearly the importance placed on the drive by OCTA leadership.

Even with the \$100,000 sought from this special endowment fund drive we will be well short of the \$1 million total

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20th OCTA Convention

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the Truckee Meadows.

The first day of the Convention will climax with the annual awards banquet and celebration in which a variety of national OCTA awards will be presented, including OCTA's highest award, the Meritorious Achievement Award.

Thursday and Friday are devoted to bus tours, an opportunity to see some of the same land the emigrants saw 150 years ago. Four different tours are offer both days, including:

- The Forty Mile Desert, from the Truckee River to the Humboldt Sink;
- Sand Springs Station, which includes Grimes Point Archaeological Area, 3,500-year-old Hidden Cave and the Sand



Springs Pony Express and Stage Station;

- Truckee-Truckee, from the last crossing of the Truckee River near Reno to Donner Lake near Truckee, CA; and
- South Branch Hike & Bus Tour (moderate to strenuous hiking), from the South Branch (of Dog Creek) Canyon to First Summit, overlooking Dog Valley.

Friday night is Author's Night in the OCTA Book Room, your opportunity to pick up vintage books and publications and have them autographed by a select number of authors in attendance.

On Saturday, August 17, morning speakers focus on the Forty Mile Desert, Jedediah Smith and the Beal Road in Arizona, while afternoon speakers will discuss the Big Trees Road and the South Trail.

Saturday afternoon workshops include a mapping panel with Jere Krakow, Superintendent of the Long Distance Trails Office of the National Park Service, and OCTA Mapping Committee chair Frank Tortorich. Other scheduled workshops include chapter building, convention planning, archaeology and COED.

The convention concludes with a Saturday night barbecue at the National Automobile Museum, home of the William F. Harrah collection of vintage and antique vehicles.

The traditional pre-convention tours include the Fort Hall Road, the Humboldt River Trail, Lassen Meadows to Ragtown, the Big Tree Road, and the Truckee River Trail. The post-convention tour is the Applegate Trail. For information on pre- and post-convention tours, contact Bernie Scoles at (650) 858-2748.

Except as noted, all convention activities will be held at the host hotel, Circus Circus. For reservation and room information, call (866) 447-7728. Be sure to mention OCTA for special convention rates.

— Bill Martin

Volunteers: The People Who Make Conventions Happen

In an effort to give credit where credit is due, NFP asked Reno Convention Chair Chuck Dodd to give us a list of people who have volunteered to help with the 2000 OCTA Convention. Chuck's response:

What are you trying to do to me? Asking me for a list of the volunteers who are putting on the convention? I can't win with that one, because I'll be sure to leave someone out. Besides, some of the convention chairs have people helping them that I don't yet know about. And we're still adding people to the list. Want to help? Can I put you down to help load lunches, water, and sodas on the buses? Want to help at the registration/information table?

OK. If you insist, here is the latest list I have (as of June 10). My apologies to everyone who is helping who is not on the list. (The list is from my mailing list, so I may have not included a wife or a husband where I should have.)

The list does not include our speakers and several very important people whose work will make the convention a success. And I have to mention Kathy Conway, our Headquarter Manager, who is entering all the data from the registration forms, often working Saturdays to keep up, and -- well, you get the idea. It takes a lot of good, dedicated, hard-working people to put on a convention.

All the volunteers will have ribbons on their badges that will identify them as volunteers. I hope everyone attending the convention will take an opportunity to stop the volunteers and say, "Thanks." Without these people there would be no convention.

The list:

Barbara Abeyita, Jim Allison, Nancy Anderson, Warner Anderson, Ann Barrow, Bill Bordisso, Charlotte Bordisso, Judi Bowers, Don Buck, Vilma Buck, Kathleen Buob, Delna Campbell, Jim Carman, Joe Cobery, Kristin Cobery, Chuck Convis, Michael Digangi, Barbara Dorr, Tom Dougherty, Joe Ellingson, Steve Ellison, Bob Evanhoe, Cherie Evanhoe, Joyce Everett, Tom Fee, Lois Gobin, Stephen E. Graham, Jack Greenhalgh, Delia Greenhalgh, Dick Hallford, Randall Ham, Virginia Hammerness, Jim Hardee, Terry Hardwicke, Lewis Hess, Merdene Hess, Bev Hesse, Joanne Hinchliff, Dave Hollecker, Tom Hunt, Robert Iverson, Barbara Kabel, Norine Kimmy, Patty Knight, Steve Knight, John Kost, Mary Lu Kost, Steve Larmore, Charlie Little, Nora Little, Pat Loomis, Larry Lyons, Carol March, Roland Masuo, Sally Masuo, Dee McKenzie, Jack Moore, Scott Mortimore, Mary Mueller, Geno Oliver, Ford Osborne, Ellen Osborne, Fred Osterhagen, Dave Palmer, Alison Portello, Andy Quinn, Sharron Quinn, Dave Roethler, Kathy Roubal, Anne Schulte, Dave Schulte, Bernie Scoles, Gene Serr, Bob Shellenberger, Dave Stone, Marilyn Tolen, Priscilla Van der Pas, Bill Webster, Don Wiggins, Linda Wilford, Glee Willis, and Susie Winner.

Just so Chuck is comforted (and protected), the October issue will include a list of the names he left out.



One of the highlights of the Saturday night OCTA barbecue at the National Automobile Museum will be an opportunity to view more than 220 antique, vintage, classic, special interest and one-of-a-kind vehicles. No covered wagons, but one of the gems of the collection is the 1907 Thomas Flyer, shown here, winner of "The Great Race" from New York to Paris. The entire 105,000 square foot museum and its collection will be closed to everyone but OCTA members during the event.

Author's Night 2002

Author's Night at the Convention is Friday, August 16. Authors are invited to make themselves available in the book room, to meet with and autograph books for loyal readers.

If you want to be included in Author's Night, please contact book room chair Kathy Roubal (kathy@cksierra.com or 530-993-1425) so she can make sure a table is available.

If you want your book sold at the convention, but don't want to have a table in the bookroom yourself, please contact Kathy Conway at OCTA headquarters (octa@indepmo.org or 816-252-2276) about having your book sold at the OCTA table.

Commemorative Postal Cancellation

A special pictorial postal cancellation for the 2002 OCTA Convention has been prepared by Colorado Chapter member Ward Crowley. Special postmarks have become a tradition at OCTA conventions.

This year's postmark will feature the convention logo and appropriate wording. It will not be in general use on outgoing mail from Reno, but will be applied to envelopes submitted by stamp collectors, convention attendees and others desiring a souvenir of the convention.

Members not attending the convention can obtain examples of the cancellation by submitting a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Convention Station, c/o Postmaster, 2000 Vassar Street, Reno NV 89510-9998.

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 14, nor more than 30 days after that date.

Schedule For Reno Convention Speakers

Wednesday, August 14

9 a.m. – Keynote Speaker – *Elaine Marquis-Brong*, Director of the BLM National Landscape Conservation System

1:30 p.m. – *Rose Ann Tompkins*: The Southern Trail Complex – OCTA's Next Challenge?

2:30 p.m. – *LeRoy Johnson*: Death Valley 49ers' Trails and How Artifacts Confound Historians

3:30 p.m. – *Marshall Fey*, The Trail in the Truckee Meadows: The Earlier Interpretation

4:30 p.m. – The Trail in the Truckee Meadows: The Recent Interpretation (*Speaker to be named*)

Saturday, August 18

8 a.m. – *Jim Byrkit*: The Beal Road: A Northern Arizona Component of the South Trail Complex

9 a.m. – *Guy King*: Trials of the Forty Mile Desert

10 a.m. – *Jim Hardee*: The First Sierra Crossing: Jedediah Smith and Mount St. Joseph

11 a.m. – *JoAnn Levy*: Crossing the Forty Mile Desert: Sorrowful Recollections of Women Pioneers

1:30 p.m. – *Frank Tortorich*: The Big Trees Road

2:30 p.m. – *Blaine Lamb, Terry Cook and Dave Bigler*: On the Southern Trail

Note: This schedule is subject to change.



Tom and Dee Birch of Foresthill, CA, won the pre-Convention lottery to upgrade their Circus Circus accommodations to a mini-suite. All early registrants were eligible for the drawing, which was held on May 18 during a bus tour guide training session. Pulling the winners' names out of hat held by Convention Chair Chuck Dodd is young Chad Mortimore, son of tour guide Scott Mortimore of Reno. In the background is Stampede Reservoir, the scheduled lunch stop on the Truckee-Truckee Tour route.

Trails Opened The Door To the Biggest Little City

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The first emigrant party to pass through the area was the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy in 1844. At the Humboldt Sink near the Forty-Mile Desert, they met a friendly Paiute Indian, whom they called Truckee. He advised them of a river to the southwest that flowed easterly from the mountains.

After an exploratory trip to verify the Indian's story, and with no better alternative, the party decided to chance it. After crossing the Desert, they arrived at the Truckee River near the present community of Wadsworth. From there, following the river valley and with many crossings of the river, the party passed through the Truckee Meadows and continued up river into the Sierra, to the lake we now call Donner Lake.

Although difficult, they succeeded in getting their wagons over the Sierra Nevada. The road to California was then a reality, and its path led through the Truckee Meadows.

In the following years, hundreds more emigrant wagons, including the Donner Party wagons, would pass through the Truckee Meadows. Historical figures that traveled through the Truckee Meadows include John Fremont, with Kit Carson and others, in 1845, and the Donner Party in 1846. Fremont returned through the meadows again in 1847, but this time with, and at the formal request of, General Stephen Watts Kearny to face court-martial.

Between 1844 and 1852, the emigrants crossed the Truckee River 27 times after first reaching it at the edge of the Forty Mile Desert, in today's Wadsworth, Nevada. The river runs about 25 miles through the Lower Truckee River Canyon, between Wadsworth and the eastern edge of the Truckee Meadows, after which it turns north to Pyramid Lake. In the approximately 25 miles of the Lower Canyon, the emigrants forded the river 22 times.

The Truckee River flows generally west to east across the Truckee Meadows, through Verdi, at the state line, across Reno, and then through Sparks, with a north-bending "hump" in the middle.

The early trail passed through the real Truckee Meadows near the Truckee River, but cut across the river's north-bending hump, passing about 1-1/2 miles south of Circus Circus. If you fly into Reno, the trail crossed about where your plane will touch down, assuming the typical north-to-south landing pattern.

Just west of the real Truckee Meadows, the trail crossed a rocky, sage-covered ridge for a distance of about six miles. About two miles east of the 23rd crossing of the Truckee River – the first stop on the Truckee-Truckee Bus Tour – the trail approached close to the river. Large pines near the river at that point were mentioned in a number of diaries.

The Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party, which opened the Truckee Trail in 1844, continued up the river, through the Upper Truckee River Canyon, to Donner Lake, from which they crossed the summit of the Sierra Nevada with wagons, being the first to achieve that feat.

In 1845 and after, the trail, after the 27th crossing, left the river, bypassing the Upper Canyon by going through Dog

Valley and reaching the Truckee River again in today's town of Truckee.

The route of the Central Pacific Railroad lay through the Upper Canyon, but vehicle traffic used the Dog Valley route until U.S. highway 40 was cut through the Upper Canyon around 1926. Today, Interstate 80 passes through the canyon, giving knowledgeable drivers a powerful impression of what emigrants escaped by going through Dog Valley.

By 1857, a few settlers had moved into the Truckee Meadows. Then, in 1859 the Comstock Lode silver strike discovered at Virginia City caused a huge surge of traffic through the area. About that time, C.W. Fuller established a ferry, a small lodging house, and a bridge at a site where today Virginia Street crosses the Truckee River in downtown Reno (about four blocks south of Circus Circus, OCTA's convention headquarters).

M.C. Lake bought the property in 1863 and it became known as "Lake's Crossing." In 1868, the Central Pacific Railroad reached Reno (the tracks, still following the original route, are about three blocks south of Circus Circus). Railroad officials laid out a town plat around where the station stood and sold lots. They also named the new town "Reno," after General Jesse Reno, who was killed in the Civil War.

In 1906, Reno's tourist industry got a big boost when the wife of the president of U.S. Steel Corporation, William E. Corey, came to Reno to file for divorce. This was a major scandal at the time as she was a wronged, faithful wife whose husband had taken up with a young actress.

The divorce attracted worldwide publicity for Reno and helped establish its reputation as a divorce mecca. This reputation was further enhanced when actress Mary Pickford obtained a divorce in 1920. The tourism industry was firmly established when gambling was legalized (again) in 1931.

Today the divorce industry is a thing of the past, as other states have reduced the waiting time and the legal requirements for obtaining a divorce. Reno gambling is also under pressure with increasing competition within the state from the world-class facilities in Las Vegas, and the spread of Indian gaming in the surrounding states. However, high growth in the area continues, as diversity is the watch-word in Reno today.

Besides gaming and entertainment, the tourism industry promotes many special events, and stresses sports activities such as golfing, bowling, and winter skiing. Warehousing and light industry are also heavily courted in the Reno area. "Hot August Nights," centered around vintage automobiles from the 1950s and other eras, will pack Reno and neighboring to overflowing the week before our OCTA convention.

Circus Circus is on Virginia Street (Reno's main north-south street) a little more than 1/2 mile north of the Truckee River.

Casper Trails Center Opening; Elko Plans Move Ahead

Wyoming . . .

The grand opening of the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, WY, will be held on Friday, August 9, at 10 a.m.

The center, built on a sand dune bluff overlooking the city of Casper and the valley of the North Platte River, interprets the story of emigrants traveling along the Oregon, Mormon, California and Pony Express Trails in the 1800's, as well as Native American life ways of the area and the regional Bozeman and Bridger Trails.

The center will include state-of-the art, life size interactive exhibits designed to appeal to a wide range of visitors.

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

For more information, contact Edna Kennell of the Trails Center Foundation at (307) 265-8030 or Lesley Collins of the BLM at (307) 261-7603



Theater section of the National Historic Trails Center under construction. — Photo by Ron Lund

Nevada . . .

Elko County historic trails experts and BLM Elko Field Office California Trails Center staff have passed some major milestones on the way to construction of the California National Historic Trails Interpretive Center to be built near Elko, NV.

"We have completed the Historic Trails Center Interpretive Plan, issued the contract to begin the environmental work for the main Trails Center site and the first 12 wayside exhibit sites, and hired the Trails Center Manager," said BLM Elko Field Manager Helen Hankins.

Deputy Trails Center Manager Don Cushman commented, "The California National Historic Trails Center Interpretive Plan is completed. This plan serves as the 'blueprint' or starting point for the interpretive planner and exhibit designer team. The design of the building will flow with the exhibit design."

A limited number of the Final Interpretive Plans are available on a first-come, first-served basis from the BLM Elko Field Office.

The environmental assessment contract for the Trails Center and wayside exhibits, was awarded to EDAW, a well-known national and international landscape architecture, and environmental planning company. EDAW earlier produced Feasibility and Siting Studies for the Trails Center.

Environmental paperwork for the Trails Center and the first 12 wayside exhibit sites should be completed early this fall. That will allow ground breaking for the infrastructure, including drilling a water well and starting the work on the access road before winter snows arrive.

The Trails Center Manager is Dee Lloyd, who will start work in mid-August. Dee is currently a Cultural Resources Manager with the Department of Energy in Pasco, WA. "Several Elko citizens assisted BLM with the interviewing and selection process for this critical position," Hankins said.

"The Trails Center project started as a grass-roots effort among Elko County citizens and that critical public involvement continues today and will in the future," Hankins concluded.

For more information about the California National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, contact Don Cushman at the BLM Elko Field Office (775) 753-0246.

— Mike Brown, Bureau of Land Management

What's She Doing?



Cooking, of course!

This is a LifeCast of a woman who will be posed cooking over a trailside fire at the Casper Trails Center.—Photo by Shawna Bolin

Along the Humboldt:

“Dust . . . like a lake of smooth muddy water”

Part of the Nevada experience is the emigrant trail along the Humboldt River, from the northwest corner of the state until the river peters out just short of the Forty-Mile Desert. OCTA convention-goers, particularly those en route to Reno from the East on Interstate 80, will have their imaginations challenged as they consider the emigrant passage over the sagebrush-covered landscape, in many places unchanged in 150 years. The following is excerpted from a piece written for the Central Nevada Emigrant Trail Association with a grant from the Nevada Commission on Tourism.

by Chuck Barrett

From 1843 until 1859, and to a lesser extent until 1869 when the transcontinental railroad was completed, the Humboldt River was the highway across Nevada.

It has been estimated that some 200,000 people took this arduous route to California between 1840 and 1860, the greatest peacetime migration in history. By comparison, 53,000 people traveled the Oregon Trail during that same period.

The Humboldt River was first seen by non-native Americans on November 9, 1828, when Peter Skene Ogden and his party of fur trappers stumbled upon the river in the vicinity of present day Winnemucca. Originally called Mary's River, the Humboldt was renamed by John Charles Fremont.

First taken in 1833 by a rough and tumble group of trappers under the command of Joseph Walker, the route along the Humboldt was both salvation and damnation — salvation for the water and feed along its banks; damnation for the poor water, meandering channel and alkali dust. Oh, how they cursed the dust and the terrible alkali water!

The journey to the promised land of California usually began at a Missouri River jumping off point around the first of May. If travelers left too early, the roads would be too muddy, the rivers too full and the grass too immature to sustain the livestock; too late, and the feed would be all eaten and trampled by those who started earlier, and there was danger of being trapped in the Sierra by an early snowfall. The rule was, be over the Sierra no later than October 1. That meant they had about 123 days to go 2200 miles

Ironically, nature saved the worst for last. In the early stages of the trip, fresh men and fresh teams had only the flatlands of Nebraska to deal with. Later, with the oxen starving and worn out, and the emigrants bone weary and gaunt, they faced poor water, alkali deserts and finally the terrible challenge of the Sierra. Nearly one fourth of the entire trip was taken up crossing Nevada. It is a miracle that any of them made it at all.

When the wagons reached the site of present day Carlin in northeastern Nevada, a decision had to be made. The usual course was to stay close to the Humboldt River, for here was water and hopefully grass for the hungry oxen. But just below Carlin is Palisade Canyon, with steep basalt cliffs towering 800 feet into the sky just a few feet from the river's edge. Once past the cliffs, the river cut for 12 miles through a rug-

ged range of mountains with little grass, and no place for a wagon except in the river channel itself. For obvious reasons, few chose this route except in the driest of years.

Instead, most of the emigrants chose to leave the river as it swung south into Palisade Canyon, and head almost due west, climbing higher and higher until they crossed over Emigrant Pass, just as Interstate 80 does today. Just over the summit was Emigrant Springs (today just a clump of willows on the south side of the freeway). From Emigrant Springs, the trail led down into a canyon and then climbed again before cresting the final ridge. Before the exhausted travelers was a wide panorama - the river off to the left some five or six miles, down a shallow draw; ahead, low rolling hills and finally the river again, this time as it turned almost due north to sweep around the northern edge of the Shoshone range.

While straight ahead would be the shortest route, the wagons almost always turned to the left and made a bee-line for the river. Men and animals were exhausted by the last few days climb, and the feed had been scarce — time to find a place to rest the animals!

The trail struck the river at one of the major landmarks on the Emigrant trail — Gravelly Ford. Here the river had a good solid bottom of gravel, where the heavy wagons could cross with no fear of bogging down in mud or quicksand. Across the river was excellent grassland, and a little further down the river on that same side was what was later named Whirlwind Valley — full of grass and springs. A perfect place to let the exhausted teams recoup.

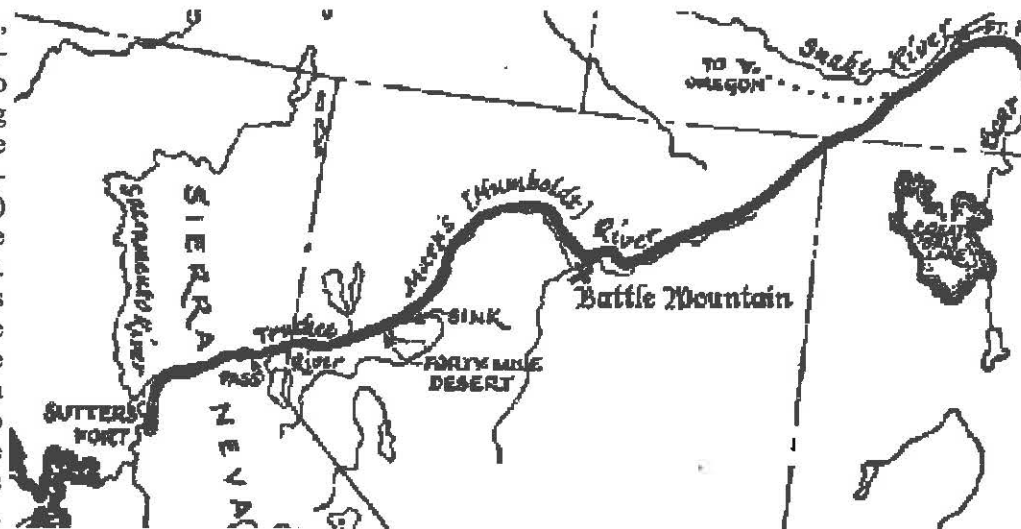
Once recovered from the climb over Emigrant Pass, the teams were hitched once again. Some recrossed the river at Gravelly Ford and headed northwest, leaving the river briefly, and then rejoining it as it rounded Shoshone Point. Others stayed on the south side of the Humboldt, traveling across the mouth of Whirlwind Valley, and then turning north with the river as it reached the flank of the Shoshone Mountains.

As the river rounded Shoshone point, it again turned westward. Here most of the emigrants crossed the Humboldt, regaining the north bank of the river. The trail on the north side of the river was by far the best. Ahead, the river would swing far to the south and then cross the alkali flats formed by the Reese River sink. Those on the south side would have to detour far to the south to get around the river, and then cross the dusty dry sink where the Reese River usually petered out in the heat of summer without reaching the Humboldt.

Once across this dry, dusty valley on this southern route, fresh water could be found at what came to be known as Blossom Springs, and further along the trail, more water was available at Stone House. Stone House got its name from a small stone building that was built above the spring, probably around 1851 or 52 by men running pack trains of mules carrying the U.S. mail between Sacramento and Salt Lake City.

Just across the river from Stone House is a little hill called

Treaty Hill, which is traditionally held to be the dividing line between the lands of the Paiute (to the west) and the Shoshone (to the east). Other sources hold that the line was along the crest of the Edna Mountains just to the west. A little further along this southern route, the travelers



There was one band of Indians who did attack the emigrants every chance they got, and those were the Bannocks, a small band whose homelands were in southern Idaho. They were known to range as far south as the Humboldt River.

reached Emigrant Canyon, a narrow gap through the Edna Mountains. The pass is so narrow that there is no room on the south side for a wagon route, so the trail turned up a canyon to the south that led over the top of the mountains and then back down into the valley at Golconda.

Meanwhile, those travelers who had remained on the north side of the river had it far easier, but equally dusty. One emigrant wrote:

Towards sundown the air becalms and the dust after rising a few feet high overspreads the plain like a lake of smooth muddy water. Along our line of wagons some are completely submerged in it. Others show only their tops, which seem to go floating along like little boats in the water. Here and there the heads of the men on foot stick up and glide along in rows and groups like ducks on a pond.

As the river swung south just past Argenta Point, they would leave the river and travel west, cross a point of land jutting down from the Sheep Creek range, and then rejoin the river after it had once again swung northward.

This little point of land was called Stony Point since it is littered with volcanic rock. Here, in the summer of 1857, a number of "Indian" attacks took place, making Stony Point one of the bloodiest landmarks along the Humboldt River portion of the California trail, and probably giving its name to the Nevada community of "Battle Mountain."

During that horrific summer a number of Indian battles occurred within a short period of time. On August 13, a small group of six wagons came under siege. Five men were killed and one escaped. Eleven days later, a small group of government surveyors was attacked. The running battle that ensued resulted in one dead, three wounded — all horses! Today, it is believed that many of these "bloodthirsty Indians" were not Indians at all, but whites masquerading as Indians.

The indigenous population in this area were the Shoshones, and just to the west, the Paiutes. The Shoshones were often disparagingly referred to as "Digger Indians" because of their diet of roots and grubs. They were not warlike, being far too busy trying to eek out a living in this harsh land; however, they were not above trying to run off cattle and oxen whenever possible. The Paiutes were not much more aggressive, although they did later wage war against the whites in 1861.

There is extensive evidence that bandits, disguised as Indians, preyed on the hapless travelers. They would have been a mixed group of Californians, Mexicans and Indians who attacked for profit. Many of the victims of attacks reported that they heard the "Indians" speaking English, and others could plainly see that they were whites painted as Indians.

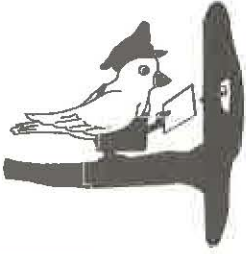
But all in all, Indian attacks were not a significant danger to the traveler — it has been estimated that between 1840 and 1860, only 362 whites were killed by Indians while 426 Indians were killed by whites. By way of comparison, the three leading causes of death on the trail were: disease, drowning, and accidental gunshot wounds.

Once safely past Stony Point, the trail continued along the northern bank of the Humboldt River all the way to Emigrant Canyon. As on the southern side of the river, there was little or no room for the wagons to pass through without getting down into the river itself. While some chose the river during dry summers, others chose to swing briefly away from the river and cross over the low lying hills to the north, before rejoining the Humboldt near present day Golconda.

Some scholars believe that it was here in the area of Emigrant Canyon that the famous fight between John Reed and John Snyder occurred on October 5, 1846. Both men were part of the ill-fated Donner party. Reed killed Snyder while protecting his wife from blows being delivered by Snyder, angry over Reed's wagon trying to pass Snyder's. Reed was banished from the wagon train, and made it safely over the Sierra. Traffic on the trail peaked in 1852 when an estimated 50,000 people took the trail west. In 1859, Captain Simpson surveyed a more southerly route that was about 250 miles shorter. (This is the route now taken by Highway 50.)

The new trail was quickly adopted and soon gained fame as the Pony Express route, and while use of the Humboldt trail dropped off, it did not cease all together. Then, in 1868, the Central Pacific Railroad (the western half of the Transcontinental railroad) chose the Humboldt route for their tracks, and traffic once again shifted back to the Humboldt River route.

The Central Nevada Emigrant Trails Association owned and operated the Trail of the 49ers Interpretive Center in Battle Mountain, NV. The center was transferred to the City of Wells, NV in 2001 and CNETA was dissolved.



News From The Chapters

Southwest

This past April, several members of the SWOCTA mapping committee took a two-week reconnaissance trip over the Upper and Lower Roads of Texas. These were the two main Texas trails used by California bound emigrants. We covered much territory in a short time.

Texas does not have the public lands found in much of the West. Therefore the group kept to the main roads while visiting restored forts, stopping at historical markers, and viewing the trail corridor.

Ken and Pat White put together an impressive itinerary for

and Fredericksburg.

We did get to spend one day hiking the trail, thanks to a good contact made by Ken. Joe Allen of Crane, Texas is a local trail expert. Ed Anderson is the landowner of Castle Gap. Both men spent a day with us

and we were able to hike through Castle Gap and visit Horsehead Crossing. Joe first showed us a PowerPoint presentation he had put together for a history conference. This gave everyone a better understanding of the area and we eagerly followed Joe and Ed through the area. Although it made for a very, very long day for us, it was well worth it.

As we traveled out of the desert landscape of West Texas and into the hill country nearer San Antonio, the wildflowers along the roadsides were spectacular. It was a beautiful show and appreciated by all. At San Antonio we treated ourselves to a motel, local Mexican food, and the famed River Walk. Some visited the missions, including the Alamo.

Several left the group due to prior commitments, while the rest began the return trip on the Lower Road. Quite by accident we came upon the Landmark Inn in Castroville. Now run by the Texas State Parks, it is still a working inn, but has a small museum and restored buildings from trail days.

Among the sites we visited heading west were Fort Lincoln, Fort Inge, Fort Clark, Camp Hudson, Fort Lancaster, Fort Stockton and Comanche Springs, Wild Rose Pass, Fort Davis, Van Horn Wells, Quitman Canyon, and San Elizario. We also took a two day side trip to Big Bend National Park, played tourist and enjoyed this unique piece of wilderness.

As everyone headed for home, we had a better understanding of the difficult travel the emigrants had through this region. Seeing the landscape brings the diaries alive. Research continues.

— Rose Ann Tompkins



Inscription found at Hueco Tanks State Park.
— Photo by Ken White



Planning the day's route. Clockwise from lower left, Tracy DeVault, Richard Greene, Don Buck, Vilma Buck, Ken White, Pat White and Judy DeVault. — Photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

the group with each day having its own packet of maps and information.

We met at Hueco Tanks State Park campgrounds, just east of El Paso, Texas. Before reaching our rendezvous point, some stopped in El Paso to visit historic Fort Bliss and the Magoffin Home. The watering holes at Hueco Tanks were important for various Indian tribes over the centuries and were mentioned in trail diaries. The group spent time photographing a large number of early inscriptions scattered in with the spectacular Indian rock art.

Then we headed east along the Upper Road corridor. Along the route to San Antonio, we visited the Pinery stage station, Castle Gap, Horsehead Crossing, Fort Concho, Fort McKavett

Crossroads

It was a weekend to remember – a two-day trek over the Bear River Divide, from Fort Bridger, Wyoming, to Soda Springs, Idaho.

An enthusiastic group of 36 to 41 trail buffs, traveling in 19 vehicles with four-wheel drive, met at Fort Bridger on Saturday, May 18, for the drive north over the Bear River Divide to Cokeville, WY. It was the first time many of us had followed the Oregon and California Trails north from Fort Bridger to where the trail joined the Sublette Cutoff at Cokeville.

Our tour guide the first day was Lynn Harrell, BLM archeologist from the Kemmerer office, who had also guided a few of us a week earlier over this little publicized route of emigrants and gold-seekers. Lynn left us where the trail crossed highway 30 west of Sage and Dr. Mike Bateman, who knows the trails in Idaho like the back of his hand, took over the guide duties. Mike led the group the second day as we traveled from Cokeville to Soda Springs, Idaho.

The north and south views from the Bear River Divide ridge were spectacular. As we made our way through Carter and Cumberland Gap and followed the trail up Little Muddy Creek, then Chicken Creek and finally the Road Hollow variant to the summit, we passed several Oregon Trail markers.

Dropping down from the ridge trail to Bridger Creek, we found the north fork impossible to cross and detoured on drill-pad and ranch roads to backtrack our way to the north fork where we followed the Bridger Creek trail in and out again until it exited across the highway.

Willing hands and stout tow ropes pulled a few vehicles out of a deep muddy wash on Bridger Creek that we had to cross to reach our detour point and cross again to reach highway 30.

During the second day we crossed Thomas Creek a few miles north of the junction and skirted the mountain where three distinct trails snaked their way to the top of Border Summit. Carsonite posts marked the trails as they merged at the summit and where they made their descent.

Off-road visits to trail ruts coming from the base of Big Hill, a visit to speculative sites of Pegleg Smith's Trading Post, and other sites and stops too numerous to mention in this article filled the second day. We took a lengthy stopover in Montpelier to eat lunch and tour the Oregon/California Trail Center.

A few weary travelers left the wagon train at Montpelier and the rest of the group continued on to Soda Springs where other trail sites were visited and good-byes were said. It was a great trail adventure and it was fun to be with friends from other chapters who joined us.

For a more detailed account of this trek over this relatively unknown and little publicized trail route, read the article in the upcoming issue of the chapter newsletter, Crossroads.

During the Fort Bridger to Soda Springs trek, we enjoyed a sociable evening in Cokeville Saturday night where the Volunteer Fire Department had cooked us a tasty dutch oven dinner, complete with cobbler and ice cream. It was a great way to relax and shake off the dust of a long trail day.

Crossroads Chapter and OCTA member Robert D. Carter



On the summit of the Bear River Divide, Lynn Harrell of the BLM briefs the group on the Bridger Route Trails.

— Photo by Al Mulder

was recently awarded the Mormon History Association Award for Excellence for his article, "Fish and the Famine of 1855 Through 1856." Bob's article appeared in the fall 2001 issue of *Journal of Mormon History*.

Joe Nardone, Executive Director of the Pony Express Trails Association, was in Salt Lake City and Murray-Midvale areas recently to place a post at the Snyder Pony Express Station near Kimball Junction and to arrange for a marker to be placed at the Trader's Rest Station site.

We spent some time together discussing the historically correct site of the Trader's Rest Station in the Murray-Midvale area. A marker will be placed at the 7200 South & State Street location where it has been determined by Nardone's careful research that the station was located – not at the 6400 South site where a previous marker had been placed before construction of the interstate.

The fall chapter meeting and outdoor barbeque is scheduled for September 14 at George Washington Park in Parley's Canyon. Members from other chapters are invited to attend.

— Al Mulder

Convention Photos Welcome

Share your photos of the 2002 OCTA Convention!

Send your pictures of trail outings, receptions, entertainment or any other convention activities to *News From The Plains* and we will print them on a space available basis.

Photos should be sent no later than September 1 in order to make the deadline for the October issue.

You can e-mail the photos to OCTANFP@aol.com or snail-mail them to P.O. Box 811, Georgetown TX 78627.

We look forward to helping you share your memories of the 2002 Convention.

Idaho

On April 24, 2002, dedication ceremonies were held for a marker at the Oregon Trail Reserve Park in Boise, ID. The following is excerpted from remarks by Jeff Fairbanks at the ceremonies, provided by Bill Wilson of the Idaho Chapter.

My grandfather, Avard Fairbanks, was born in Provo, Utah in 1897, a descendent of the Mormon pioneers who crossed the plains in covered wagons. His father, John B. Fairbanks, was himself an early frontier artist, and recognized in Avard a gift for creating art.

He took him to study in New York and Paris, where he was recognized as a child prodigy. By his late teens he was creating sculpture for the Salt Lake City Public Schools and the LDS Temple in Hawaii.

In his 20's, he served on the faculties of the University of Oregon and the University of Washington and created monumental sculpture in America's Northwest, including this monument as well as memorials to the heroes of World War I.

He won the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship to further his sculpture studies in Italy, mastering the techniques of the classical Greek and Roman sculptors. Returning to the United States, he became professor of sculpture at the University of Michigan, where he acquired his PhD in Anatomy, working side by side with the medical students dissecting cadavers, and learning the structures of the human body in the tradition of Michelangelo and Leonardo daVinci.

In 1947 he returned to his native state as the founding dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Utah. His public monuments, depicting great characters and great moments in history, number over one hundred. His masterful smaller works number hundreds more.

The Old Oregon Trail was created in 1924 by my grandfather while he served on the University of Oregon faculty. It was inspired by his friendship with Oregon Trail Pioneer Ezra Meeker, whose passion for recognition and preservation of the Trail was legendary. It depicts a pioneer mother and child in a covered wagon with her husband driving the oxen on a rocky trail.

Original placements of this sculpture are in Baker City and Seaside, OR. Additional locations of the monument include Vancouver, WA and Casper, WY at the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center. The Fairbanks design was also selected for the Oregon Territory Centennial U.S. Postage Commemorative Stamp in 1948. The new bronze casting placed in Boise, ID is taken from the sculptor's original model.

The Oregon Trail was the "backbone" of transportation in the early American West. Along it traveled the greatest land migration in human history. From 1841 into the 1880's, nearly one half million pioneers trekked it to settle America's western frontiers. Some 20,000 perished along the way. It stretched from points along the Missouri River into the Northwest Territories, and it encompassed parts of the California Trails ("Donner Party," "49ers," etc.), the Utah ("Mormon") Pioneer Trail, the Pony Express Trail, and the Overland Stages Trail.



Left to right, Boise Mayor Brent Coles, Dr. David Fairbanks (son of the sculptor), Idaho State Historical Society Director Steve Guerber, Dr. E. Jefferson Fairbanks (grandson of the sculptor), and Boise Parks and Recreation Director Jim Hall.

— Photo by Bill Wilson

I grew up watching my grandfather work in his studio. When people were with him, he would take each opportunity as a teaching moment. If he was working on a portrait of a great individual such as Abraham Lincoln or George Washington, he would begin placing clay on a wooden framework to make the skeleton or the skull. Then he would overlay them with the muscles, layer-by-layer, reciting their names as the anatomist that he was. Next would come the skin and hair, and finally the facial features that would make the person recognizable.

And not just how he physically looked in life, but as he lived in the greatness of his character, because my grandfather was both a scientist and a visionary. The anatomist in him allowed him to create sculpture with great accuracy and detail, realistically portraying the person or event. And the idealist in him allowed him to create sculpture which communicated the greatness of the person or event.

I am certain that my grandfather is pleased to have his Old Oregon Trail here in this beautiful setting, where the public may pass by and give pause to reflect on this image.

It is with great pleasure that our family presents the Old Oregon Trail to the community of Boise.

Visit OCTA and the
OCTA Bookstore
On the World Wide Web:
www.OCTA-trails.org

Trails Head

Spring has arrived, the grass is up and the wagons are getting ready to roll west from Independence. That is what would have been happening over 150 years ago where Trails Head Chapter is located. We have been active through the winter and now it is time to get outdoors and enjoy Trail activities.

In April, the Chapter participated in the Missouri History Conference Expo, with a booth stocked with books and brochures all having to do with some aspect of the Trail. It was well attended.

Also in April we held a mapping workshop at OCTA headquarters using the guidelines from the MET manual. This will now become a Chapter project to mark the Trail on 7.5 minute quadrant maps in Jackson County, MO, and Johnson County, KS.

On June 1, National Trail Day, we were to have an OCTA marker dedication at the site of the Elm Grove campground, located just west of present day Olathe, KS.

On June 15, we had scheduled a Chapter trek to Ft. Osage near Sibley, MO, which was founded shortly after the Lewis and Clark Expedition and figured prominently in trade with the Indians.

The Chapter will take a breather in July and then in August it's Convention time. Hope to see you on the Trail.

— Dick Nelson

Western Trails Collection Benefits From Ashton Gift

Long-time OCTA members Bert and Inez Ashton have donated 184 trail books to the newly established Western Overland Trails Collection housed in the California State Library in Sacramento.

With help from CA-NV chapter member Tom Dougherty, the books were boxed up at the Ashton's Albany, CA, home and delivered to the Special Collections Branch of the Library on April 1.

There are now over 200 volumes in the OCTA Collection. Anyone thinking about making book or periodical donations to the OCTA Western Overland Trails Collection can contact either Don Buck at (408) 739-8521 or Dick Davis at (415) 397-2870 to get the procedures on making a donation.

Creation of the library was approved through a Memorandum of Understanding authorized by the OCTA Board of Directors in August 2001. It followed a six-year effort by a CA-NV chapter ad hoc Library Committee to find a suitable west coast repository for emigrant trail related materials.

— Don Buck, reporting in Trail Talk, newsletter of the CA-NV Chapter.

E-mail: Octa@indepmo.org

California-Nevada

Volunteer tour guides, narrators and navigators climbed into the Sierra and braved the 40-mile Desert in mid-May in trial runs for the upcoming OCTA convention in Reno.

A full bus followed the Truckee trail into the mountains stopping at major points on the trail and taking short hikes in the footsteps of the pioneers.

Don Wiggins led the Truckee tour, pointing out river crossings, the descent into Dog Valley and mysterious stones that mark a short piece of trail through a meadow.

The desert trip was led by convention chair, Chuck Dodd, and was a car caravan that stopped at hot springs, forgotten graves, and sand swales on this most dreaded section of the California trail.

Diarists have left many colorful records of the early travels across the deserts and mountains and their observations have been noted in the materials prepared for OCTA members traveling the routes in 2002.

Among these are Edwin Bryant, John C. Fremont, Heinrich Lienhard, Sarah Royce, Ansel McCall, A.R. Burbank, James H. Simpson, and Mark Twain.

Norine Kimmy is putting finishing touches on the photo album that will commemorate all of OCTA's annual conventions from the first at Independence, MO in 1982 to including scenes that conventioners will see at the 20th convention in Reno.

Virginia Hammerness still needs items for the raffle and auction and urges OCTA members to take another look in attics and basements for stashed giveaway items that OCTAs might like to own and that can be brought to Virginia at the convention. See you in Reno.

— Pat Loomis

Fryman Named CA-NV Trail Preservation Officer

Leslie Fryman of Citrus Heights, CA, has been appointed Trail Preservation Officer for the California-Nevada chapter by Chapter President Bill Webster. She succeeds Tom Hunt, who resigned at the end of 2000.

Fryman has worked for more than 20 years as a professional historian and archaeologist. She is on the Board of Directors of the California Council for the Promotion of History and serves on the Native American affairs committee of the Society for California Archaeology.

Leslie is well versed on most aspects of federal and state preservation laws and regulations, particularly how they relate to emigrant trails. She would like to provide advice on government regulatory issues for chapter members who oversee the protection and preservation of trails and can also review government projects to ensure that OCTA's preservation concerns are heard and considered.

Leslie can be reached at 6944 Le Havre Way, Citrus Heights, CA 95621. Phone (916) 737-3000 x 3451. E-mail leslief@jsanet.com.

— Don Buck, reporting in Trail Talk, newsletter of the CA-NV

Gateway

Gateway member JoAnn Wann teaches Gifted Students (Rainbows) in the St. Joseph, MO, School District. Mrs. Wann has taught a unit on the Oregon Trail for the past 14 years as part of the fourth grade curriculum. This year 54 fourth grade students took part. Approximately 30- hours of instructional time were devoted to the Oregon Trail. The following appeared in the Gateway Chapter newsletter.

By JoAnn Wann

"Tis the spring of 1848 and the prairie grass is greening. Many men, women and children are ready to leave from St. Joseph, MO, to cross the continent to Oregon in their prairie schooners."

My fourth grade Rainbow students began our study of pioneers by examining reasons for going West. The students found these reasons in letters written to the folks back home, diaries of those who traveled the Oregon Trail, and the newspapers of the time. Many of the stories told of unbelievable adventure, excitement, land, freedom and wealth. Others told of hardships, problems and tragedies.

Each student used his imagination to create a family for the travel West that included the name of each family member, original home, occupation and livestock. The students then organized into wagon trains for a pretend westward migration.

We learned about the hardships, numerous dangers, and day to day life of the trip by reading more diaries and historical fiction. The students became involved in decisions about what to do about a lack of water, how to cross a river, how to deal with Indians, which trails to take, etc.

These decisions provided the students with a realistic view of what trail life was like. After building a background of knowledge about life in 1848, students wrote diary entries from that perspective and told about their fates as they traveled the trail.

Our writings are historical fiction with the characters' words and actions based on the 1848-49 time period. Students included news about their friend and family, how they felt at certain times, important world happenings, their dreams and plans for the future, and more.

Following are a collection of the journal writings by several students:

"Today was a very tragic day. Last night a rattlesnake got in Kathy Ellen's blanket and bit her on the leg. Her husband, Roger Ellen, found her this morning and realized what had happened. He started to suck all of the poison out. After he was done he had to spit the poison out so he wouldn't get sick. Unfortunately Kathy was delirious for the next few days but she grew stronger and became well again." – Lauren Van Cleve

"I can hear thunder rumbling threateningly in the distance. I decided to look outside. I walked out of the wagon. Freezing rain pelted me. I noticed the sky was horribly dark. Trembling, I rushed back into the wagon. I wrapped myself in a wooly blanket. Lorie was lying down on the bed shivering. We don't think she will make it through the storm. The cattle

are terrified. I hope this horrible storm will pass soon." – Kaylee Peden

"We have just crossed the Platte River. We crossed by ferry. Some people were waiting for others crossing by ferry. Alice, William and Kate, and I are staying the wagon. Then William decided to go outside. The water was calm so we were not very concerned. Then William's shoe fell into the water. Without asking he jumped into the water and went after his shoe. His hose had floated down the river. He didn't know anything about swimming. I became hysterical. We were all very worried about him. Joseph jumped in and saved William (and his shoe). We had a long day on the river." – Mary Jane Dodgeson.

"Today started out regular, but it wasn't! We got up just like regular with the sound of gunfire. While the mothers were making breakfast, Mary, one of the Morris girls, wanted to make her doll fly high in the air, so she threw it. It ended up hitting papa's gun and shot her in the foot. She whaled long hours and louder than a buffalo stampede. Then later after the fathers had inspected her foot they told her that her middle toe had to be amputated, so they amputated her middle toe. It was a long day with that amputation but we got through it." – Charles Hinde.

"We are having some very harsh wind and rain. The wind sounds like a moaning sound when bouncing off things. You can feel it streaming through your bonnet and almost knocking you over with such force. The rain is always coming down hard. It makes the path muddy and sometimes it is so bad, you can't even see if front of you! And the lightning strikes with such a sound, it makes your eardrums want to burst! We are also in some danger. Albert almost fell out of his wagon! His mother was laughing, crying, and looking scared all at the same time. I thought it was funny, Ma said it wasn't. That day, a rattlesnake almost bit me! I was so scared! But Pa shot it, then I felt safe. We are having such an exciting trip!" – Natalie Gay.

Endowment

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that is our goal. It is important to note that the Board is making a commitment to put OCTA on a sound financial footing. We cannot reach our goal overnight or even in a year. What we are doing is making a start. We can and will grow the endowment by reinvesting as much of the earnings from the endowment as possible. Membership support is vital to the success of this effort and that support will come, we feel certain, when our members understand the importance of the endowment fund to the financial well being of OCTA.

The purpose of this letter is to explain the need for the endowment fund and to describe, in general terms, the steps that are being taken to build the endowment as the fund drive progresses. We will keep the membership informed.

Dick Pingrey

Special Endowment Fund Drive Committee Chairman

Names On Plains Delayed

Because of unanticipated developments, production of a compact disk containing a database of overland emigrant names has been delayed.

As a result, the *Names On The Plains* CD will not be available for sale at the 2002 OCTA Convention in Reno, contrary to what had been reported in the April issue of *NFP*.

However, there will be a demonstration of the COED database and the affiliated *Emigrant Trails Researcher's Tool* at the convention, during a workshop session on Saturday afternoon, August 17.

Status of the COED program and production of the CD are expected to be discussed at the OCTA Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, August 13.

Treasurer's Addition To Financial Reports Corrected

Due to an editor's goof, some comments were omitted from the Treasurer Marilyn Bryan's financial reports in the April issue of News From the Plains. Although Marilyn resigned as Treasurer effective March 31, her comments are still important. Marilyn wrote:

"Members are the life support for the organization. OCTA has established revenue-generating activities that gives the member significant value for their dollar. Although current membership stands at 2200, only 145 members purchased books or other resources on-line or through the catalog. 488 members attended the convention. 221 members participated in the annual fund drive.

"Balancing the budget will be a significant challenge again this year. Perhaps you could ask yourself, is there is any additional way I can align myself with OCTA's services that will be valuable to both of us? And while you are asking questions, perhaps you know some of the 1,100 inactive members who are in OCTA's database. Could you persuade them to re-join and become active again? Thanks for making OCTA profitability a priority in your life this fiscal year."

Good advice - The Editor

Progress Continues On Trails System Legislation

Mark up of pending federal trails legislation by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources subcommittee on National Parks was not expected before Congress adjourned for the July Fourth week.

The legislation, HR37 and S213, would authorize studies of designated additional routes and cutoffs for possible addition to the California, Oregon, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express Trails.

"We expect the Senate will require us to return to Congress in a few years with a new bill asking their approval for each proposed new route that meets the qualification requirements of the National Trails System Act," said Bill & Jeanne Watson, OCTA Trails Liaison co-chairs. "Existing shared routes could be approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

Originally scheduled for late May, Senate markup of the bills was postponed because of higher priority issues faced by the subcommittee. Markup is a closed session where wording of a bill is accepted or changed based on comments from all Committee members.

Senate wording changes must be agreed to by the House, which unanimously approved HR37 in 2001. OCTA oral and written support was provided at House and Senate committee hearings and for the Congressional Record.

"Hopefully, markup of HR37/S213 will be followed by House approval of changes so that this legislation can become part of the bundle of 'non-controversial' bills planned for approval by early October, before Congress goes home to campaign for reelection," the Watsons noted.

OCTA Board Meeting Planned

The annual pre-Convention meeting of the OCTA Board of Directors will be held at U.S. Bureau of Land Management State Office in Reno on Tuesday, August 13.

The meeting will be held from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and is open to all OCTA members.

The BLM office is located at 1340 Financial Boulevard in Reno. For detailed directions, call the BLM office at (775) 861-6400.

In addition, the General Membership Meeting, at which official business of OCTA is conducted, will be held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, August 14, at Circus Circus.

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OCTA Trails Video Nears Completion; Premier Possible In Reno

A video program is nearing completion that will highlight what OCTA and others are doing to map, preserve and promote the Oregon-California Trails.

The video is being produced by OCTA through a cost-share grant from the National Park Service. Public Relations Chairperson John Krizek is the executive producer. CA/NV Chapter member Larry Fritz is the writer/director.

The video will feature many well-known OCTA members including Randy Wagner, Frank Tortorich, Jere Krakow, Andy and Joanne Hammond, Ken and Arleta Martin, Levida Hileman, Wally Meyer and Russ Tanner.

The approximately 15-minute video is titled "Saving a Legacy: The Oregon-California Trails." It will take viewers on a tour of seven trail locations from Kansas to California.

The trail locations feature a variety of preservation activities ranging from field surveys on foot and by helicopter, to land acquisition and donation. Those involved in preservation activities include OCTA members, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, private ranch owners and a golf course association.

If production is completed in time, the video will be premiered at the OCTA Convention in Reno this August. Copies of the program will then be available to members and other interested parties.



OCTA Board member Frank Tortorich, left, prepares for a film segment with CA/NV Chapter members Ford and Ellen Osborne on how to use GPS equipment on the Carson Trail.

Despite the long list of OCTA celebrities who appear in the video, the real star of the program is "The Trail". It is hoped that the video will increase the general public's awareness of the emigrant trails and motivate people to become involved in trail activities.

— Larry Fritz

8th Trails Conference To Be Held In Arkansas in October


The Partnership for the National Trails System announces the 8th Conference on National Scenic and Historic Trails to be held October 17 - 21, 2002 at the Holiday Inn City Center in Fort Smith, AR. The Conference will be hosted by the Trail of Tears Association and The Cherokee Nation.

"Telling Our Trails' Stories - Educating the World about the National Trails System" -- the theme of the conference -- is an invitation to learn together how to learn new skills for preserving and telling the stories of both our historic and scenic trails. Workshops will present ways to interpret landscapes for both historic and scenic trails, to make fully accessible exhibits, how to pay for them with Transportation Enhancement

funds, how to use school curricula and other means to connect children with the rich heritage of our trails, and ways to build community support through trail story telling activities.

Field trips will visit important sites along the Trail of Tears and the Cherokee Cultural Center in Tahlequah, OK. We will review the status of the National Trails System GIS, National Trail Training Partnership and TEA 21 and Recreational Trails Fund re-authorization by Congress.

Conference Registration materials will be available in July. Contact Gary Werner, Partnership for the National Trails System, for registration information and materials at 608-249-7870, or NATTRAILS@aol.com

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Commemorative Photo Album



**Hikes, Dedications, Social Gatherings, Research,
Deserts, Rivers, and Lakes - all and more -
become part of the OCTA experience.**

New Feature! - A special 20th convention item, a pictorial review of events from OCTA conventions, will be available for sale during the Reno 2002 convention.

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