



DECEMBER  
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# NEWS FROM THE PLAINS



THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519 (816) 252-2276

## USFS AND OCTA COOPERATE TO SAVE TRAIL ARTIFACTS

reported by  
Andy Hammond

Earlier this year some of our California OCTA members joined with U.S. Forest Service personnel to survey and retrieve emigrant artifacts on the Lassen Trail. Their combined effort provides an outstanding example of cooperation whereby OCTA and a government agency worked together to achieve an objective important to both. Following is the story as told by Andy Hammond, Kevin McCormick, and Diane Watts.

apex which only accommodated pack animals and foot traffic. Wagons and teams were forced to turn down into a deep V-shaped ravine which drains into Deer Creek to the south, and both the downhill and uphill slopes took a heavy toll of wagons and their cargo. The difficulty of this passage was noted by trail diarists J. Goldsborough Bruff, James Pratt, and Israel S.P. Lord. Conversely, Alonza Delano gave it little

note: i.e. "... We here left this ridge, and crossed by a deep ravine to another on the right . . . "

The uphill route out of the Hollow had been located earlier by Dick Davis as it was relatively free of brush and marked by wagon debris and other artifacts. The downhill route, however, had not been precisely located because of a thick cover of scrub oak, manzanita, and

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**Andy:** After leaving the Applegate trail, travelers enroute to Lassen's Rancho probably found no greater obstacle for their wagons than Steep Hollow. At the Hollow, the ridge between Deer Creek and Mill Creek narrows to a sharp rocky

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FEBRUARY 15, 1992



Above: Typical artifacts found at the Steep Hollow site include straight razor, complete ox-yoke ring assembly, wheel hub bearing, ox-yoke ring clevis, fancy wagon box side brace, misc. hardware.



*Left: Steep Hollow downhill trace - looking up. photo by Andy Hammond*

elevation snow on the 25th made access doubtful but by Friday evening roads were passable when Steve Larmore, Frank Tortorich, and I drove in and camped at the Ishi Wilderness boundary. Early Saturday morning we walked the two miles to the Hollow where we were greeted by a sight not soon to be forgotten: well over a hundred deer were feeding on green shoots and leaves sprouting from the ashes. Steve started photographing the general area and we were flagging artifacts when joined by Don Buck, all aforementioned Forest Service personnel and Gail Coensgen, a post-graduate geography student at California State University, Chico.

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poison oak, which was virtually impenetrable. This situation ended with a wildland fire which started on August 6, 1990 and ultimately covered 130,000 acres, including the Ishi Wilderness portion of the Lassen Trail.

After the fire I asked Kevin McCormick, Archaeologist, Plumas National Forest, to accompany me to assess the effect of the fire on the trail and also to paint Trails West markers at the Narrows, Obie Fields, and Steep Hollow. We were joined by Bill Smith, Forester, Plumas National Forest. We found that the fire destruction was spotty; little damage was done at Obie Fields and the fire did not enter Bruff's Camp. However, at Steep Hollow the fire had been so intense that most of the area was essentially bare except for a few larger trees. Not only did we find a deep, very obvious down-hill trace but the area, especially at the bottom, was littered with artifacts.

I immediately notified Tom Hunt of our discovery and also of our concern that the artifacts would be lost to vandals. Tom asked that I organize a "rescue" operation.

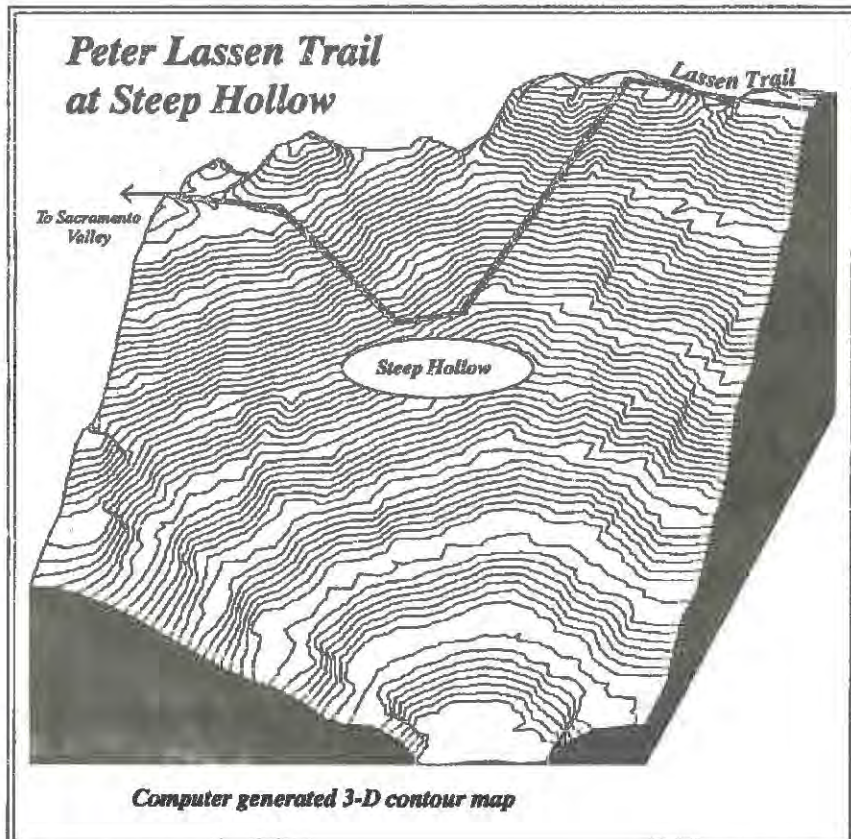
Except for limitations imposed by the fire season last fall and access problems caused by winter and spring weather, organization was easy. The Lassen National Forest, which administers the Ishi Wilderness, was as eager to have the site surveyed and recorded

as were the OCTA people involved. In this regard we are indebted to Diane Watts, Archaeologist, Lassen National Forest; Richard Jenkins, Archaeologist, California Department of Forestry; and Bob Grate, Fire Management Supervisor, Lassen National Forest.

The weekend of April 27-28 was chosen for the survey. Rain and higher-

**Kevin:** The purpose of our work was to "rescue" or capture the historic information potentially contained at the site. To accomplish this, we recorded the extent of the artifact scatter, accurately mapped all artifacts and trail segments, and collected items mapped. All

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of the information collected will be compiled into an "Archaeological Site Survey Record". To the archaeologist, this systematic recording is an important first step in learning more about what occurred at a site. Research of historic diaries, maps, and other archival material can tell us much about a historic site; however, through archaeology we are better able to add details of activities that occurred which are not available to the historian. A textbook on historic archaeology was aptly entitled Small Things Forgotten. That is one of the goals of historic archaeology; to learn more about the lifeways of the past through an examination of material remains that long since have been forgotten.

Our recording activities consisted of systematically examining the site and "pin flagging" the artifacts with wire flags. A site datum was established and bearings and distances from the datum were taken for each artifact using a Brunton compass and 100 foot tape measure. In addition, the "downhill" and "uphill" trail alignments were plotted from the datum. Due to the long distances involved in recording the trail segments, a "string machine" was used to measure the distances. Roughly, each segment was 900 feet long. Other recording equipment used included an altimeter for determining elevations, and a clinometer for determining the degree of slope.

Due to the potential for theft from the site, another goal was to remove the artifacts for further study and curation. This is where the expertise and knowledge of the OCTA members was invaluable. In short, they were able to identify most of the wagon parts, many of which the archaeologists were unfamiliar. Over one hundred artifacts were noted on the site and all were photographed by both the OCTA and USFS teams. Among the artifacts tagged and collected were wheel parts, various hardware items from wagons, ox yokes, trunks, and personal effects such as a straight razor.

The final phase of recording the site will be the completion of the Archaeological Site Survey Record which

## TWO CONFERENCES YIELD A NEW SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Two outstanding conferences were offered in November by the Long Distance Trails office of the National Park System. Both were held at the Menucha Retreat and Conference Center approximately 25 miles east of Portland, Oregon on the Columbia River Gorge.

The first conference was a two-day training course about Long Distance Trails attended by 28 people from various scenic and historic trails groups and NPS, BLM and Forest Service. Bill Watson and Ross Marshall were among those invited to attend.

The second conference was the second bi-annual National Conference on National Scenic and Historic Trails, which lasted three days and was attended by approximately 75 people from the same above mentioned groups. Attending were Bill Watson, Jim Budde, Ross and Jana Marshall, and several other OCTA members, particularly from the Northwest Chapter.

Both conferences were co-hosted by the National Park Service and OCTA. Bill Watson served on the planning committee, Jim Budde and the OCTA Headquarters staff handled all the registration funds and expenses, and the Northwest Chapter, under the leadership of Dick and Trudy Ackerman, handled all the local arrangements including registration, and uncountable trips to and from the airport. Truly, OCTA had high visibility with the National Trails community at these conferences. A lot of hard work was done by the above people.

Much of the first conference was training regarding the National Trails System Act (NTSA) of 1968 which provided the legislation for all trails to exist. However, it was not until 1978 that the NTSA was amended to provide for historic trails. As of this date, 17 trails have been authorized by Congress through amendments to the NTSA.

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will include artifact inventory forms for each artifact with an accompanying photograph of the item inventoried, plus a map showing site topography and the location of plotted artifacts and trail segments. A computer mapping software application is being used that will create a contour map and three dimensional model of the Steep Hollow site. A copy of the site survey record will be made available to OCTA.

**Diane:** When Andy first contacted me regarding the proposed Steep Hollow project I had only minimal knowledge of OCTA, and must admit my first reaction was one of caution (experience has taught us to be defensive of archaeological sites). The Steep Hollow project was initiated by OCTA and the "lions share" of fieldwork was performed by volunteers under the direction of Forest Service and California Department of Forestry Archaeologists. We, as agency archaeologists, should

strive to increase public awareness of archaeology and advocate a responsible approach to public participation in cultural resource preservation by taking advantage of opportunities such as the Steep Hollow project.

The collected artifacts from Steep Hollow are at the Almanor Ranger District headquarters in Chester, California. When all of the items have been properly inventoried and catalogued, it is our plan to prepare an interpretive display for the public to view at the Chester Ranger Station. At this time I am unable to give a completion date for the display but hope to provide an announcement in the near future.

To reiterate, I am pleased to have had OCTA cooperate with the Forest Service and hope it will be an ongoing relationship. As a result of our experience with OCTA, I have become a member as have other agency archaeologists (Kevin McCormick and Richard Jenkins) involved in this project.

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Eight of these are scenic: Appalachian, Pacific Crest, Continental Divide, North Country, Ice Age, Potomac Heritage, Natchez Trace, and Florida. Nine are historic trails: Oregon, Mormon, Lewis and Clark, Iditarod, Overmountain Victory, Nez Perce, Santa Fe, Trail of Tears, and DeAnza. Others are pending, including the California Trail - Pony Express Trail.

Of particular interest to us was the amount of funding and partnership agreements with various federal agencies that many of the trail organizations have already achieved.

Sad to say, the Oregon Trail has been sort of an orphan in the scheme of things. The original ten year Oregon Trail Advisory Council did very little. Only recently did the National Park Service, our sponsoring agency, assign a person to the Oregon Trail. Peggy Dolinich is only part-time and has very little budget, but it is a start. We need to be working with her to attract more funding not only for her office, but for more partnership agreements like the couple we have already.

In the second conference, several workshop sessions were held by break-

out groups. The subject area for each was determined in large groups beforehand, and each person chose which ones to attend. Several ideas emerged from the workshops. From the groups composed of over 20 members of each of the historic trails, a consensus was reached to meet again next year to explore areas of common concern to historic trails. Bill Watson and Mike Duwe, from the NPS regional office in Denver and assigned to the Mormon Trail, were selected as co-conveners for the national Historic Trails Coordinating Committee. This was probably the most important thing to come from this conference.

Another group selected one member from each of the 17 trails to pursue increased funding from Congress. Other

groups chose to cooperate towards a National Trails Day, trail use, trail research, planning, state trails, etc.

The real significance of the above is not necessarily the subjects, but the new spirit of cooperation between the various trail groups and between NPS, BLM, USFS and the private not-for-profit trail groups.

This was truly an exciting week and one that will benefit OCTA and the overland emigrant trails greatly in the coming years. We were especially proud to represent OCTA, an organization whose traditional broad mission combined with strong local focus gives us high respect within the national trails community.

Ross Marshall and Bill Watson



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## PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE NEEDS HELP

In August, I was asked by David Bigler, OCTA's Vice President, to chair the public relations committee. I was initially reluctant but when I realized that I was being asked to take over a committee with no members that hadn't been active in a couple years, I thought, Why not? You can't do it any harm." In fact, I would hope that I can do it some good. But, to do that, I need help and ideas. If you are interested in working with the public relations committee or if you have ideas about the kind of public relations work you would like to see OCTA doing, please let me know!

Initially, I will be working with the chapters and trying to help them publicize their efforts and activities which, hopefully, will bring OCTA new members and raise public awareness of the trails and our organization. I also be-

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lieve that the upcoming Sesquicentennial of the Oregon Trail offers us a unique opportunity to build awareness and membership. As a freelance writer, I did a number of articles promoting the Northwest Centennial statehood celebrations in 1989-1990 and I learned how in love with anniversary celebrations magazine and newspaper editors are. As a result, I believe the Sesquicentennial could be a tremendous boon to OCTA and those members who are or have harbored dreams of becoming freelance writers or photographers. But we will need to begin working on this soon. I will be putting together some "freelancing tips" for members interested in writing about the Sesquicentennial and these will be available from OCTA headquarters. Watch News from the Plains for an announcement about

their availability.

In the meantime, I would like to hear from OCTA members who consider themselves writers, photographers, fund raisers or public speakers or anyone who would like to work on public relations for OCTA. If you are interested in working with the public relations committee in any capacity, or if you have suggestions about the kinds of things the PR committee should be doing, please drop me a note. I need ideas and, from what I know of OCTA members, there is no shortage of them out there, so please send yours along. Thanks!

Lesley Wischmann, Chair  
Public Relations Committee  
712 South Second Street  
Laramie, WY 82070  
(307) 742-5449

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by  
Ross Marshall

Two things your new President has learned so far. The first is how much this organization depends on the sincere, dedicated efforts of so many people, without which I would be buried up to my ears! The second is how much mail I receive each day. When I am gone for several days, a whole stack has accumulated - nevertheless, keep the cards and letters coming! It's the only way I can stay informed.

Thanks go to so many people. Space is limited here, so let me just say thanks to: Jeanne Miller for the workload she carries at headquarters; to Jim Budde not only for handling the duties of treasurer, but spending a lot of quality time at headquarters; to Elaine McNabney for all the volunteer time she puts in; to Bill Watson for his leadership with the National Scenic and Historic Trails and also continuing to lead the fight for passage of the California Trail-Pony Express Bill; to all the officers for accepting the responsibility of coordinating the various OCTA Committees; to Greg Franzwa for his generous help in getting our new four-color brochure printed within our limited budget; and to Lois Daniel and Rose Ann Tompkins for our publications. I am proud of Overland Journal and News From the Plains.

Jana and I were able to enjoy a week in Oregon recently at the two conferences on Long Distance Trails co-hosted by OCTA. The facilitator for both conferences was Steve Elkinton, Long Distance Trails Manager for NPS in Washington. Steve really loves trails, and we are

fortunate to have him in that position. We were also able to travel the Barlow Road on a very nice Oregon November day, with a full van of people accompanied by a Forest Service guide.

Also recently, I was able to attend the ceremonies at three locations certifying these sites as part of the Santa Fe Trail, under the provisions of the National Trails Systems Act of 1968 (NTSA). David Gaines of NPS in Santa Fe, who has been assigned to the Santa Fe Trail, coordinated the ceremonies. All were well attended, including many OCTA/SFT people from the local area. The three sites were the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence, a trail segment on Ninety-Third Street owned by Lou Schumacher (1990 recipient of OCTA's 'Friend of the Trail' Award in Omaha), and trail ruts in Prairie Village, KS. All three sites are a part of the Oregon-California-Santa Fe Trail system in the Kansas City area.

Site certification is a long-neglected issue on the Oregon Trail - we need to take advantage of this opportunity under the NTSA provisions.

The mid-year Board meeting will be held in Independence on Saturday, March 28, 1992. A reception is being planned on the evening of the 27th at the National Frontier Trails Center. More details later. Anyone is invited to attend, particularly all chapter presidents and committee chairs.

On behalf of the officers and directors, let me express our sincere wishes to each of you for a happy and enriching holiday season.

## FOUR DIRECTORS TO BE ELECTED

The Nominating and Leadership Committee (David Bigler, Chairman) reports that four members of OCTA's Board of Directors are to be elected at the annual meeting in Rock Springs, Wyoming in August. Suggested candidates and nominations are now being accepted.

Terms expire in 1992 for Robert L. Berry, Susan Badger Doyle, William E. Hill, and Charles W. Martin, Jr. Berry, Hill, and Martin have each served two consecutive terms, and therefore are not eligible for reelection at this time. Susan Badger Doyle is eligible for reelection, having served only one three year term.

According to OCTA's bylaws, all current members of OCTA are eligible to be nominated and/or to submit one or more suggestions for nomination. Also any current OCTA member may submit one or more written and signed nominations as long as each contains written and signed endorsements from three additional members.

Whether the suggested or endorsed nominee is new, a previous nominee, or an incumbent, the bylaws require that the following material be submitted to the Chairman of the Nominating and Leadership Committee before the nomination can be considered:

- A brief description of the person's trail qualifications and experience.
- A brief description of the person's activities.
- A statement of willingness to serve, if elected, signed by the nominee.

Deadline for receiving suggestions and nominations is **April 1**.

Nominations should be mailed to: David Bigler  
11696 S. Oak Manor Dr.  
Sandy, UT 84092

phone - (801) 576-9316

**Ballots will be mailed in May.**

# REPORT FROM THE TELEVISION FRONTIER

by Merrill J. Mattes, OCTA Co-founder and Director Emeritus

The September issue of NFP ran an article about Steeplechase Films of New York City, now well known for their stunning success with the PBS feature, "The Civil War," Ric Burns of Steeplechase Films is now working on a documentary about the Donner Party tragedy of 1846. At our Sacramento convention Ric lined me up for a later interview on the subject. Thus while he and crew were slowly returning eastward to film scenes between the Sierras and Salt Lake City - aided by Dave Bigler - I spent some time refreshing my memory about details of 1846, no mean challenge after having divested myself of 99% of my Western Americana Library as a donation to OCTA, now 650 miles distant at the National Frontier Trails Center, Independence, MO.

On the morning of August 28, right on schedule, Ric Burns, Lisa Ades and crew showed up to be greeted by Clare and myself. First they had to set up their rather elaborate paraphernalia in our big "family room" which once housed my late lamented library. In fact it seemed to take most of the morning for them to fine-tune their gadgetry, and get me properly positioned for the interview. Once under way, camera, sound and subject had to be fine-tuned at intervals, so it was high noon before the interview was wrapped up, all their equipment dismantled, packed, and the crew headed for New York City by way of another stop, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Whether this "take" was successful I have no way of judging, and we won't know until the production is released next October. Earlier, back in Sacramento, but with far less fanfare and gadgetry, I had been interviewed in like manner by Mike Trinklein, Inc. of Idaho Falls, ID. Their subject, "The Oregon Trail," was more general in character and less of a challenge to me. I note here that I know of two other videos on the Oregon Trail already on the market, one produced by Friends of the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence MO, and another by folks in Dundee, Oregon, who advertised in the last issue

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*Above: Merrill Mattes being interviewed at his home by the crew from Steeplechase Films. photo by Clare Mattes*

of NFP, and there are probably others getting into the covered wagon act.

Already completed and currently shown on Public Television nationally is a tour de force entitled "The Platte River Road" produced by Mike Farrell with Nebraska Educational TV, based in Lincoln. I had been drafted to assist in planning this effort three years ago, and a year ago last summer I met with Mike and his crew at North Platte, NE in order to follow the Oregon-California Trail through the Nebraska Panhandle. At Ash Hollow State Park I was posed at the top of the famous but mis-named Windlass Hill for an interview about details of the California gold rush. These producers focus on a dramatic re-enactment of emigrant scenes, combined with trail photography and contemporary sketches. The complete production later gets into historic controversies about land and water use, climaxed by giant dams and diversions that have now reduced the once rambunctious Platte - except in spring flood - to a mere network of trickles. (Look for repeats of this production on your PBS station.)

## FROM THE EDITOR

In the midst of the holiday season, I hope you will take a few minutes to read your NFP. There are a number of articles and reports you will find interesting and informative.

A number of articles have been submitted by various members, and I am glad to see a response to my request. If you submitted something, but don't find it in this issue, look for it next time.

One article received was from Robby Gunstream who left St. Joseph last May to walk to Sacramento on the trail. His report will be in the next NFP.

### FUTURE DEADLINES

**FEB. 15 FOR THE  
MARCH ISSUE**

**MAY 15 FOR THE  
JUNE ISSUE**

Rose Ann Tompkins, Editor  
1125 W. Mission Drive  
Chandler, AZ 85224  
(602) 963-3565

## AN INTERNATIONAL MEMBER SHARES HIS THOUGHTS

November 28, 1991

Hello from Japan

In the summer of 1991 I visited the US and attended the convention held in Sacramento. This was my third visit to the US. I like America very much. I've never been to Europe. I enjoyed beautiful American scenery. Before the convention I visited the Washington Monument to see two Japanese stones brought by Commodore Perry in 1853 and 1854. At Wheatland, PA I saw a big blue bowl, which was one of the gifts to President Buchanan by our first Mission to the US in 1860. The scenery of the farmland in Lancaster was very beautiful.

On my way to Sacramento I took a continual 68 hour-bus ride: from Chicago, Salt Lake City, Portland and back to SLC to see the Oregon Trail and the Dalles, "where the water foamed and boiled like an enormous cauldron." (OJ Vol.2, No.3) I saw many people enjoying themselves in the Columbia River swimming or windsurfing. A man with a bow and arrow for fishing surprised me. The scenes along the Columbia were wonderful.

At the convention I took part in the two outings. One was a bus tour to the Donner Pass. A man sitting next to me, Mr. Crary, was kind enough to explain many things to me such as the snow sheds in the high Sierras and the depth of snow, 22 feet deep, which trapped the Donner party in 1846. Another outing to Gold Country was wonderful. The clear contrast of green trees and scorched grasses was marvelous. At Placerville I was impatient for my turn to the tunnel, Gold Bug, since I have an interest in 49ners. Touching the hard rock, I thought of miners' hard work and gave up my illusion to easily find gold. At Coloma a kind member took me to many places. Thanks to her, I could find my bus in time among a crowd of gold seekers. But because of me, she missed her bus.

## CONVENTION SCHEDULE OUTLINED FOR 1992 IN ROCK SPRINGS

### UPDATE FROM MIKE BROWN

The schedule for OCTA's 1992 Convention in Rock Springs, Wyoming has been developed.

The program for the August 12 - 15 convention includes bus tours to Fort Bridger and South Pass; a one day float trip on the Green River which will visit various ferries and trail sites along the river; a hike along the Lander Cutoff in the Bridger Teton National Forest; and several pre/post convention pickup caravan tours. Because of the pristine nature of the hundreds of miles of the main Trail and various cutoffs in southwest Wyoming, many areas and sites are not accessible by tour bus. If you have a vehicle with clearance - such as a pickup, Blazer, etc., - plan on driving it out.

An old-fashioned evening barbecue is planned on the banks of the Green River. Bring your "trail" clothes and be prepared to have fun!

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In spite of my poor hearing ability, at the COED workshop I was deeply impressed with the instructor's sincere attitude to precisely record a great many emigrants' diaries. It was quite natural that she was awarded at Award Banquet. I felt ashamed, compared with her since I was also given a wonderful book as a member from the farthest country. Thank you, Mr. Kawahara, for giving me your prize. Next year I have no plan to compete with the people from the North Pole or outer space.

After the convention, Tom Hunt was kind enough to take me out on the trail for four days despite the fact he was likely very tired. Thanks to him, I could trace the Sonora route, the Carson route and the Lassen Trail. I could visit many places: Tragedy Springs, Fort Churchill, the Forty-Mile Desert, the Humboldt River, the Sink, the dike, playas, the boiling springs etc. These were the places I had read about in Overland Journals and I had long wanted to visit.

A three day preconvention hands-on Archaeology Workshop is scheduled for Aug. 9 - 11. The workshop will involve actual work on one of Ben Holladay's stage stations on the overland stage route and possibly inventorying/recording emigrant inscriptions along the Slate Creek Cutoff. Optional college credit for the Archeology Workshop will be offered through Western Wyoming College.

A number of excellent papers and speakers have been scheduled for Friday, Aug. 14; and hopefully a "surprise" that same day. The OCTA Board will meet on Tuesday, Aug. 11 and the general membership meeting will open the convention on Wednesday, Aug. 12.

The convention hotel will be the Holiday Inn right off Interstate 80. A list of other motels, eating places, and RV sites will appear in the next issue of NFP.

See you in Rock Springs!

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Many of my American dreams have come true!

At Salt Creek I could taste the water and understand how the water was unsuitable to drink for emigrants and animals. I remembered reading a sentence about a horse which refused to drink the water but would accept the coffee.

I have two unforgettable memories from Black Rock Spring. One is that I shaved there. Sorry for a little contamination. The other is that I saw the young Tom Hunt there for the first time long before I knew him. I happened to learn about him through a book: Trails West by National Geographic Society. He was repairing a marker. But he never mentioned it until I told him. Later he reluctantly admitted to it when shown my proof.

We pitched tents in the meadow below the Black Rock Spring. I could not stop thinking about that I was in the

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desert to spend a night. Tom Hunt guided me all the way and this was the very place where emigrants slept under the canopy without water. I was quite satisfied, drinking beer and looking up at a skyful of stars. I woke up late, for as emigrants kept watch, I also was a night guard to keep coyotes away from him.

How wonderful and desolate Black Rock Desert and High Rock Canyon are! I've seen many beautiful scenes in America. I was perfectly overwhelmed by such strange and dreary scenery. I became silent since the scenery was breathtaking and beyond description. I was wondering what made emigrants advance through such desolate country. I could not but marvel at their iron will. If I had been an emigrant, I might have decided to go back. I would rather have had many cups of salty water at the Sink than I have taken the Lassen Trail. I would have taken a raft from the Green River, down the Colorado River to the Gulf of Mexico before I would have taken the Lassen's Horn Route. I want to advise you not to trespass on the Lassen Route: otherwise you will get lost in the labyrinth with the road partly washed away and a V-shaped gully even a jeep can't cross. However I also want to advise you to visit there because of dreary but beautiful and breathtaking scenery. Indeed America the Beautiful. You have all that a librarian in San Francisco told me.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the people who kindly explained many things to me and who put up with my bad pronunciation. I got many kindnesses from you during the convention. If you have a chance to visit Kyoto, please don't hesitate to write to me. I'll take you in and around Kyoto as my return.

Sincerely,

Yuji Aisaka  
1-22-6, Oosumigaoka  
Tanabe, Tsuzuki, Kyoto 610-03  
Japan

## NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Jeanne Miller, Headquarters Manager

The second week in November, we mailed the 1992 OCTA catalog, and once again we are extending a 10% discount on book sales to members. To place an order, you may phone 816-252-2276, FAX the same number, or drop your order in the mail. In this 1992 Catalog, we offer selections of children's books, educational materials, trail state map puzzles, maps and books of maps, OCTA insignia merchandise, and current and classical western history books, as well as a listing of the available back issues of the Overland Journal. A handy way to do your Christmas shopping. (Please let us know if you didn't receive your catalog, and we'll send another.)

### BE EXPERT WITH MAP AND COMPASS: THE ORIENTEERING HANDBOOK

by Bjorn Kjellstrom

This new and enlarged edition includes everything a beginner needs to know about the popular sport of Orienteering: understanding map symbols, traveling by map alone, by compass alone, or by map and compass together; finding bearings; sketching maps; traveling in the wilderness. Inside the back cover are a sample Orienteering map, a practicing map, protractor and compass, and addressed post cards for obtaining more information about compasses and maps to help the beginner. Includes dozens of illustrations.

Paperback \$14.95      Postage and Handling \$1.50

NEW TITLES since the last NFP. They can all be ordered from OCTA.

### THE DONNER PARTY RESCUE SITE: JOHNSON'S RANCH ON BEAR RIVER

by Jack Steed

Robert Berry's OJ review says: "This book . . . tells the story of Johnson's Ranch - the first evidence of civilization many emigrants saw after crossing the Sierras north of Lake Tahoe and entering the Sacramento Valley in California . . . not much was known about the place until the interest of a father and son from Sacramento was aroused . . . Jack and Richard Steed . . . finally located the long lost site of Johnson's Ranch." Included is a history of the ranch, the role the ranch played in connection with the survivors of the Donner party tragedy, and it also contains the story of the Steed's search for the site, for confirming artifacts, and their research through diaries.

Hardback \$14.95      Postage and Handling \$3.00

### THEY SAW THE ELEPHANT: WOMEN IN THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

by JoAnn Levy

Quoting from Charles Martin's OJ review: "This interesting and informative book sheds light on an overlooked facet of gold rush history . . . [it] is filled with quotes from women's reminiscences, letters and diaries . . . [covering the] journey, arrival, and living conditions in San Francisco, women in the entertainment business, and women's role in civilizing California."

Hardback \$25.00      Postage and Handling \$3.00



# CHAPTER NEWS

## WYOMING CHAPTER

### CHAPTER BOASTS DEEPEST

Wyoming now lays claim to having both the deepest ruts (Guernsey ruts) and now the deepest swales. Randy Brown, the modern day Pathfinder, in his new Nissan Pathfinder, led the Wyoming Chapter September Trek to observe the trails leading out from Ft. Laramie.

When going into Mexican Hill, Randy in the lead vehicle, advised that this time we would turn right instead of left. This area has had much more rain than normal and the grass in places is as high as the hood of our vehicles. He also told us we would be right in a trail swale much of the time.

Well, guess what, the rest of the caravan got lost in a weeded gully that had banks 10 to 15 feet high. Closer examination by our trackers determined that he went thataway. We followed what we thought was an abandoned main irrigation canal to where we finally found our fearless leader standing on a rise where one of "canal" turned into two. It was to all an amazement when Randy told us that we were traveling in the main branch of the trail and this point was where another branch joined the trail.

In this area over the years the wind has blown soft sand to create a swale 50 to 100 feet wide at places and up to 20 feet deep. Grass lines the swale and today most would think it to be one long abandoned irrigation canal.



*Above: Wyoming chapter members on Mexican Hill near Guernsey.*

*Below: Deep swales near Guernsey. Note vehicle at left. Randy Brown is standing on the rise.*

Articles and photos by  
Lee Underbrink



### VOTERS DEFEAT CASPER HISTORIC TRAILS CENTER

Natrona County voters soundly defeated a proposal to construct a six million dollar Historic Trails Center. Of the five capital construction projects on the ballot, the Trails Center had very little opposition in local papers. The overwhelming 10 to 1 defeat was more likely due to the "No New Taxes" sentiment because all five projects were soundly defeated. Amoco's recent announcement that they are closing Caspers largest refinery did not help enthusiasm for new taxes. The Wyoming Chapter of OCTA had many persons that put in long hours to promote the Center. Hopefully the seed had been planted and someday Wyoming's Trail Center may be built.



Left: This dry stream bed of today at Prairie Creek leaves much to the imagination when compared to the words of Velina Williams in her 1853 diary.

Loup River trail, stating that six companies were camped on the west bank,

*"304 men, 24 women, 21 children, 920 head of cattle, 73 horses and 154 wagons."*

The discomfort caused by the excessive rains in 1853 was expressed in the diary entry of William Richard Brown at the Looking Glass Creek crossing:

*"It rained and thundered and stormed all night. We awoke up and found the water pouring through the tent which completely drenched us, wetting the bed clothes so much that we could wring the water out."*

Following a lunch stop at Genoa, Bob Berry, our "trail boss", led us to the lower Loup River crossing near Fullerton, NE. Among the diary excerpts that Charles Martin read, one especially

continued on next page •••••

## NORTHERN LOUP RIVER TRAIL TREK

**Columbus to Central City, Nebraska  
Oct. 9, 1991**

Twenty NE OCTA members and guests met on October 9 to follow the emigrant trail that left the Platte River to continue along the north side of the Loup River. After crossing the river at either the lower or upper Loup River crossing, the trail turned south to meet the northern Platte River trail at Wood River. Before leaving on the trek, we heard an introduction, written by Dorothy Dustin, summarizing the history of the Council Bluffs-Mormon route.

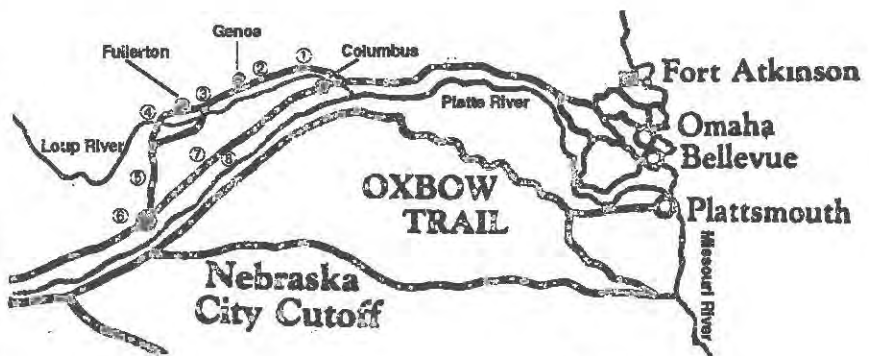
Our first stop was near the confluence of the Loup and Platte Rivers where Charles Martin read excerpts from emigrant diaries related to that crossing. In 1850, the emigrants complained of the long wait to use the ferry in operation; sometimes as many as 100 wagons were ahead of them. Many opted to take the trail north of the Loup River, the route our present day argonauts followed.

Our group soon appreciated the problems the emigrants faced in crossing the creeks during the rainy years of

1850 and 1853. At the stop at Beaver Creek, we heard a description of the crossing written by diarist Jerome Dutton in 1850:

*"Here we were again water-bound, and built, not a wire, but a brush suspension bridge. There was some flood trash collected in the middle of the stream and using this for a pier, we felled some willows onto it from each shore. We then cut some brush and laid across the willow thick enough so that we could haul our wagons over by hand."*

This same diarist gave us an idea of the large number that used the northern



- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ① Looking Glass Creek | ⑤ Prairie Creek       |
| ② Beaver Creek        | ⑥ Wood River Junction |
| ③ Lower Coup Crossing | ⑦ Lone Tree Marker    |
| ④ Upper Loup Crossing | ⑧ 1864 Road Ranch     |

• • • continued

impressed us as to the hazardous crossing. Mary Burrell wrote in 1854:

*"Very bad river to cross. Thought we all should be drowned in crossing. The sand kept changing & sometimes we go down 2 or 3 feet & then up again. Six horses on a wagon & a tight match at that."*

We continued along the north side of the river and heard of similar problems in crossing Cedar River. The group left the highway at Fullerton for country byways to follow the trail to the upper Loup River crossing. Again, diary excerpts reinforced the perils of crossing the river. In 1853, Samuel Handsacker wrote:

*"The current is about 50 yards wide, and four feet deep, with a very bad bottom, so much quicksand."*

On the final leg of our journey, we followed the trail south to Wood River junction where the emigrants joined the northern Platte River trail. Even though we were in a sparsely populated area, it



Left: Charles Martin, Sr. from Omaha, NE reads diary excerpts to the group near the confluence of the Loup and Platte Rivers.

was difficult to visualize the country as John Clapp saw it without a bush or a tree in 1850. He said:

*"It seems like looking off upon the mighty ocean, unruffled by the passing breeze."*

Again, we had to stretch our imagination when we reached a dry stream bed that was Prairie Creek. There we heard diarist Velina Williams say in 1853:

*"The banks were high and steep. Before we started this journey, we would have thought this stream impassable without a bridge, but no accident occurred."*

Our last stop was in Central City at the site of the Lone Tree marker. A giant cottonwood stood here and served as a landmark for argonauts who carved their names or initials on its massive trunk.

Joe and Lois Fairfield provided us with a bonus stop near Clarks, NE at the site of Lois' grandparent's home. In 1864, a road ranch was located here to serve the northern Platte River travelers. As our group headed homeward, we could appreciate the comfort of our cars and the ease of travel on paved highways in contrast to the hardships and difficulties that the northern Loup River travelers faced in order to reach their destination.

It was a great day and an important one in that this was the first OCTA trail trek to follow the northern Loup River trail. Thanks are due to the trail committee, Bob Berry, Charles Martin, Kim Naden and Betty Scheinost, for planning this most interesting day.

## A TOUR OF THE TRAILS Nov. 3, 1991 - Omaha, NE

The planners of a chapter program at the Swanson Library did not anticipate the Halloween snowstorm that struck Omaha two days before the event. Despite the unseasonable weather, sixteen people gathered together to enjoy the slide presentation and talk by Charles Martin. Even though the after-effects of the storm reduced the expected attendance by over one-half, three visitors in the audience indicated their interest in becoming OCTA members.

Elizabeth Bergstrom, chapter member from Lincoln, braved the roads to drive to Omaha for the program. Elizabeth is a long-time trail enthusiast. From her large collection of slides, she is preparing a program for NE OCTA members and guests to be held in Lincoln at the Nebraska Historical Society museum on April 26, 1992 at 2 P.M.

## TRAIL TREK JUNE 1992

Chapter "trail trekkers" will follow the Oregon-California trail in central and western Nebraska to determine tours for the Grand Island convention in 1995. A planning meeting in Grand Island will be scheduled in May.

Chapter report  
and pictures by  
Helen Sundell,  
Chapter Chair



## TRAILS SYMPOSIUM SAFFORD, ARIZONA

Our Third Annual Trails Symposium will be Sat., Jan. 18, 1992. We will meet in Safford at the Old Armory, 921 Thatcher Blvd. (Hwy 70), across the street from the Chamber of Commerce building and Firth Park.

Our weekend will officially start on Saturday morning about 8:30 am (social half-hour) with the presentations starting at 9 am. The symposium will finish between 4 and 5 pm. Sunday morning, we will visit the Neri Jilda Ruins, an old Salado Indian Pueblo in the foothills of Mt. Graham. We will start around 8 am and finish up around noon on Sunday.

This year's symposium has speakers from New Mexico, Arizona, and California. The Graham County Historical Society's museum will be open for us during the noon hour on Saturday.

Contact persons: Program Chair - Harland Tompkins (602) 963-3565; Local Arrangements Chair - Betty Lee (602) 428-1196.

## YUMA IN MARCH

SW OCTA will meet in Yuma, Arizona on March 7 and 8 at the site of the historic Yuma Crossing. The California/Nevada/Hawaii chapter has been invited to join us.

The Yuma Crossing Foundation and the Arizona Historical Society will host parts of the weekend with tours offered at the Quartermaster Depot and the Century House Museum.

Highlights of the weekend will be a historic overview of the Yuma Crossing and the trails that converged there.

Sites to be visited over the weekend include Pilot Knob, a landmark on the river where the trails headed west; Sears Point, an Indian petroglyph site; and Arizona's Independence Rock, with its historic signatures (1846-1857).

Contact person - Reba Wells (602) 992-0339



Above: Jim Byrkit points out the direction the Overland Road went across Garland Prairie. It came through the hills in the background as it headed for the Prescott area.

photo by Rose Ann Tompkins

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## OUTING ON THE OVERLAND ROAD

On October 5, eight members met at noon at the flagpole in north Flagstaff, near the site of the original flagpole raised in 1876 by a party of emigrants from Boston, in recognition of the nation's centennial and which gave Flagstaff its name. Jim Byrkit was to be our knowledgeable guide for the weekend's outing, and he briefed the assembled enthusiastic group on the history of Flagstaff's beginnings and the Overland Road we were to follow.

That afternoon we stopped at several sites along the Overland Road first laid out in 1863 from Flagstaff to the Prescott area. Most traces of the road are now gone, but Jim supervised the marking of the route with rock cairns in the Kaibab National Forest. We saw many of the cairns and stopped at some of the emigrant camps and springs. Dow Spring was still an impressive stream, now coming out through a pipe, and some of us drank its cool water. It was easy to see how these would have been important to the early travelers. Nearby was an old stage station, a one-time sawmill, and remains of a narrow-gauge railroad bed.

We ended the day's trip at the lookout point on the brim of Sycamore Canyon, which rivals the view at Grand Canyon.

On Sunday, with the addition of two more people, our first stop was Pomeroy Spring. The large amount of worked obsidian and chert we saw there seemed to confirm the fact that the Overland Road followed an older Indian trail, as is generally the case for emigrant trails.

Later we stopped to photograph a spectacular stand of aspens in full fall color, one of the unexpected highlights of this lovely fall weekend. We ended the day with a picnic lunch at Bear Spring, after a very dusty 4WD into the area on the original Overland Road, and broke up around 2 PM. Thus ended another well-planned and thoroughly enjoyable chapter outing.

Susan Badger Doyle

## TRAIL TREK VIII: RIVER CROSSINGS

*Trip report taken from the October 1991 issue of TRAILS HEAD TIDINGS, the chapter newsletter.*

On Saturday, Oct. 19, twenty-plus members gathered in Independence as Ross Marshall provided an overview of plans for the day, plus commentary about the significance of the chosen sites. The route would wind through portions of Independence and eastern Kansas City, MO, to give an idea of portions of the routes of the Independence-Westport Road and Byrams Ford Road.

The first stop was at the cemetery in Hill Park near the original trail, where Pauline Fowler spoke about the Hill Family and the surrounding area. Adam Hill, a Santa Fe trader, first purchased land in the area around 1833. The Hill Cemetery was donated by deed to the county by the Hill family.

The trekkers then traveled to the nearby Rock Creek Crossing where Ross Marshall and Eric Fowler spoke. This was an excellent crossing, except in spring flood times, as the creek bed at

this point is very rocky. This crossing was used by Indians before the Independence-Westport Road was established on top of the trace. A bridge was built fairly early at this location, as Civil War soldiers crossed a bridge at this point.

The modern travelers then visited the Pitcher Cemetery located in Phil Roberts Park just west of Blue Ridge Cut-Off. Ross Marshall spoke about early travel in the immediate vicinity, and Kathleen Tuohey presented the history of the cemetery. Totally forgotten until recently, the cemetery has been restored mainly by Kathleen's efforts. As cleanup progressed, some markers were found as much as twelve inches below the surface.

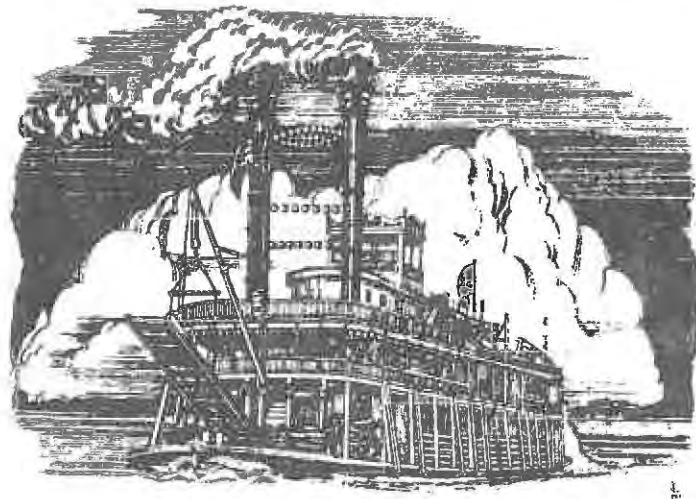
The Pitcher Family burial ground, consisting of half an acre, was set aside by Thomas Pitcher who had a two-story mansion nearby. The earliest known burial was in 1834, but may have been established earlier. Most individuals buried in the cemetery are related, except for travelers and soldiers. A mass grave of some emigrants who

succumbed to cholera is believed to be on the western edge of the cemetery.

The next stop was near 27th and Topping with a hike to the Blue River Crossing in Blue Valley Park. Nowadays many trail enthusiasts call this this 27th Street Crossing. After walking down toward the river, the trekkers hiked up the trail which comes up diagonally toward the intersection 27th and Topping. A stone marker with a bronze plaque reads: "Santa Fe Trail 1821 and 1872". This connecting link of the trail between Independence and Westport was established in 1837.

Following the general vicinity of the Byrams Ford Road, a ridge that followed the high ground all the way to the ford, stops were made to view remnants of the Byrams Ford Road. At the last stop of the day, the Big Blue River ford, Ross Marshall provided commentary. Even though mud seems to cover the crossing, a rock bed has been confirmed, making this a desirable crossing. The area is being purchased for preservation.

# Season's Greetings



## RETRACING THE BARTLESON-BIDWELL TRAIL

On Sept. 21 and 22, members traced the trail of the first covered wagons to cross Utah, the Bartleson-Bidwell company. Starting in Soda Springs, ID, 33 members followed the path of the party to the Nevada border.

The research of Dave Bigler and Rush Spedden, who located two versions of the 1841 diary of James John, enhanced the trip. Roy Tea combined the accounts of Bidwell and John with the mileages recorded by "Cheyenne" Dawson to create a comprehensive record of the sources.

Participants left the Oregon Trail at Soda

Springs and followed the Bear River south through the Gentile Valley into Utah. Dr. Mike Bateman of Pocatello shared his knowledge of Idaho trails, providing many colorful details.

At the site of the 1863 Bear River Massacre, George Ivory read a heroic military account of the fight, while Jenille Ivory read Shoshone Mae T. Parry's moving traditions of the battle.

After lunch in Preston, trekkers traced the trail through Cache Valley and across the Wasatch Mountains near the Gates of the Bear. A side-trip and a short hike brought us to the company's ford on the Malad River. Viewing the location and hearing the accounts of the party's triangular detour to present Corrine put the events in perspective: they needed water at Bear River.

The first day ended with a trip to an overlook of the Great Salt Lake, where Vern Gorzitze guided a tour of the hill's extensive petroglyphs.

Sunday began at the Golden Spike National Historic Site, where we watched the replica locomotive Jupiter

roll into view. We followed the line of the transcontinental railroad across the stark desert and mud flats of the Great Salt Lake, tracking the path of the Bartleson-Bidwell party from well to well through the barren desert.

The greenery of Park Valley and lunch provided relief from the starkness of the Salt Desert, but the afternoon's journey toward Pilot Peak crossed country that was even more desolate than the deserts on the Salt Lake's north shore. To appreciate the fortitude of these pioneers, you simply need to view these landscapes.

After a visit to the Donner Springs and Munsee Homestead, the final crew stopped below Tea's Knob on the Bartleson-Bidwell Pass for a view of Silver Zone Pass. As usual, the trip ended on a high note of camaraderie and good will. Flat tires plagued the second day's trip, but teamwork saw them changed in minutes. Again, the field trip was informative, inspirational, dusty, exhausting, adventuresome, and fun.

*Items taken from the Fall, 1991 issue of CROSSROADS, the chapter newsletter.*

## MUNSEE HOMESTEAD PRESERVATION NAILED DOWN

On Saturday, October 12, members gathered at the Munsee Homestead on the edge of the Salt Desert to put a roof on its 110 year old, hewn log cabin.

This is the second time the friends of the homestead have made the 135 mile trip from Salt Lake to roof the building. Last May's effort was blown away by a 100 mile an hour wind. With the help of State Historic Architect Don Hartley and a \$250 grant from the Utah State Division of History, the preservationists came up with a more stable and less aerodynamic design that should substantially prolong the life of this historic landmark.

While the crew ate lunch. Shirley Peterson and family, relatives of Eugene Munsee, arrived and told stories about their mother's residence at the homestead. According to Mrs. Peterson, her mother and ten children grew up on

the farm. (Mrs. Peterson made a generous donation to support the effort. The chapter is considering using the money to fund stabilization and restoration of the Donner Spring.)

Eugene Munsee, builder of the homestead, is emerging from the shadows. According to his obituary, Munsee was born in 1843. Mrs. Peterson remembered that Munsee worked as a blacksmith and, in addition to farming, shoed most of the horses in the area. The family of his brother Edgar also occupied a house on the farm. The Munsee bothers spent most of their later years in Wendover, though Eugene appears to have continued to make

extended visits to the homestead, where he may be buried.

Chapter members have shown again the power of cooperation and a commitment to historic preservation. Organizers Roy Tea and Will Bagley thank members who have contributed to making the project a success.



OUTINGS CALENDAR - 1992

**January 25:  
SYMPOSIUM**

The chapter's first symposium will be on Saturday, January 25 in the California History Center at De Anza College, Cupertino, California. The Symposium theme will be on the first company of American emigrants to enter California overland, The Bidwell-Bartleson Party of 1841: how they got to California and what happened to them after their arrival.

Program Chairman  
David Johnson  
(408) 274-3718

**March 7 and 8:  
YUMA CROSSING**

A jointly sponsored field trip with the Southwest Chapter are in the capable hands of Reba Wells, Technical Advisor and Sheri and Bob Lee, Logistics. Preliminary planning includes an orientation lunch in Yuma where a brief

presentation of overlays will give everyone a good background in the area and its history. Activities include a tour to Pilot Knob for emigrant and Anza Routes, Quechan petroglyphs, etc. with Boma Johnson, BLM Archaeologist, as leader. Sunday morning will include a trip to Sears Point (Indian petroglyphs) and Independence Rock (1847-1870's anglo initials - guides, surveyors, stage/mail entrepreneurs, etc.)

Contact - Reba Wells  
(602) 992-0339  
or Sheri Lee  
(602) 299-7143

**March 9 to 11:  
ANZA TRAIL**

Reserve these dates if you are interested in a "slow-paced" 4WD, high clearance vehicle tour of the Anza Trail from Calexico to Coyote Canyon, north of Borrego Springs.

Contact - Mary Mueller  
1112 Silver Oak Ct.,  
San Jose, CA 95120

**April 5 (April 12 rain date):  
JOHNSON RANCH TOUR**

Travel by car caravan to Johnson Ranch, east of Wheatland. Bring a lunch and beverage.

Contact - Jack Steed  
(916) 922-7038

**June 6 and 7:  
FORTY MILE DESERT**

Highlights will include the Boiling Springs and trail traces on the Truckee Route and Salt Creek Crossing, Parran Flat, and the sand dunes on the Carson Route. There will be overnight camping on the Carson Route. High clearance vehicles are a must, 4WD not necessary. Moderate hiking. A CB radio will be a great asset.

Contact - Jim McClain  
(916) 265-3541

**June 26 to 28:  
LASSEN AND YREKA TRAIL**

The highlight of this outing will be a walking tour of the emigrant trail in the inner Pit River Canyon, over flat rock, with a picnic lunch in the Canyon. Headquarters will be in Alturas. Regular passenger automobiles, 4WD not necessary.

Contact - Tom Hunt  
(415) 941-0815

**July 18-19:  
MORMON/CARSON TRAIL**

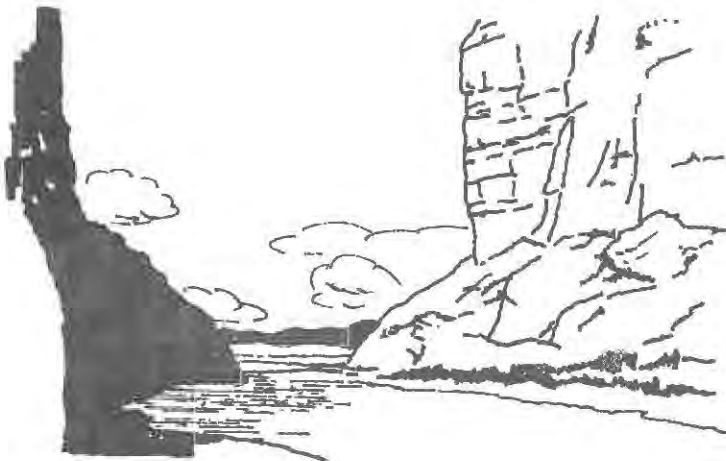
This will be a 4WD, high clearance trip east bound from Pleasant Valley (Placerville area) with overnight camping at Horsethief Springs. On the second day, a drive/hike to West Pass, after which the trip will follow the Mormon/Carson trail as close as is possible. The tour ends at Genoa.

Contact - Tom Mahach  
(916) 644-4384

**July 25:  
JOHNSON CUTOFF**

This one day tour will begin at Spooner's Summit and follows the route of the Johnson's Cutoff just below Genoa Peak to Kingsbury Grade. 4WD vehicles required. Attempts will be made to find rides for those without 4WD.

Contact - Dana Supernowicz  
(916) 677-1615



## CEMETERY FENCED

IOCTA has donated funds to the Friends of Stricker Ranch, Ind. to construct a fence around the Stricker Ranch Cemetery located just west of the store. Members are encouraged to visit the site and see the newly installed wood pole enclosure. It measures approximately 30 x 30 feet.

Cattle were greatly damaging the site and the only way to preserve the integrity of the cemetery was to enclose it. IOCTA members can justifiably take pride in helping to preserve this historic cemetery.

## 1992 TREKS

Plans are now being formulated for next year's outing. One of the trips will be a work outing along the California Trail west of Granite Pass. IOCTA was asked by Trails West to place one of their markers along Birch Creek and we gladly accepted to help. In addition, we need to remove one of their markers near the mouth of Birch Creek and place it a little farther south on the trail. This outing will probably be in June. Other possibilities for outing are another trek along Goodale's Cutoff near Craters of the Moon to mark the trail on private land, a tour along the Oregon Trail from Raft River to Interstate 84, or a trip along the Salt Lake Alternate.

## CITY OF ROCKS PLAN

Since the creation of the City of Rocks National Reserve in 1988, the National Park Service has been involved in gathering information toward the formation of a comprehensive management plan. This is basically a three phase operation.

1. Gather information
2. Consider the possibilities
3. Select and refine a proposal

The park service is currently in the second phase. In August they made public a planning workbook that listed four alternatives aimed toward the acceptance of a workable management plan. Officers, directors and members of the chapter attended public hearing on the workbook and voiced opinions on the process and the alternatives. Written comments were formulated and sent to the park service on September 30. Those comments closed with the following:

"The condition of the resources at City of Rocks are such that a management plan needs to be adopted as soon as possible in order to avoid further deterioration of the area. The Park Service is encouraged to develop a plan that is in keeping with the intent of the legislation and addresses the needs of private landowners and the public. Long range planning is encouraged, but the plan should also be flexible enough to annually assess and address the current management and private landowners concerns. It is imperative that the selected alternative contain measures that will insure good avenues of communication between all interested parties. The Idaho Chapter OCTA has always been a willing participant in helping to preserve and interpret Idaho's emigrant trails, and will continue to offer whatever help we can in the future."

*News items taken from the Fall, 1991 issue of TRAIL DUST, the chapter newsletter.*



In the clouds at Roller Pass  
August, 1991



# TRAIL BITS

## CAN YOU HELP?

Is there a Copyright Attorney in the OCTA house? The COED Committee is seeking the advice of just such an individual for basic questions regarding our program and how it relates to copyright laws. If you can help us with general information, please contact Kathy Roubal, COED Chair at (708) 345-7128.

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## MEMBER HAS BRAIN STORM!

A suggestion was received from a member and is passed along to all. Do you collect anything special that is trail related? Would you be willing to write to the NFP about your collection? Many of us take pictures and slides, purchase trail books, copy diaries, etc., but there are a variety of other trail items one might collect. Things like wagon wheels, horse/mule/oxen shoes, clothing, postcards, coffee cups, knick-knacks - just to name a few. If you have a collection, let me know about it. Send a picture of a favorite piece from the collection or of the whole collection. Tell us how you got started, where you find your pieces, how you display them, whatever. As space permits, I will include them in future issues.

Rose Ann Tompkins  
1125 W. Mission Dr.  
Chandler, AZ 85224

.....

## CORRECTION

The OCTA members below request that their permanent address be considered as follows:

Mr. & Mrs. Robert E. Woodhouse  
2797 E. Geddes Ave.  
Littleton, CO 80122

Elaine McNabney

## RESEARCHING

Northwest Chapter member William E. German is looking for information concerning the east toll gate of the Barlow Road, including photographs, diary quotes, articles, books, etc. Contact him at 4747 N. Channel Ave., Portland, OR 97217 - (503) 283-8626.

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## RESEARCHING

OCTA member, Dr. Arthur King Peters, is researching a book on the trails that opened the trans-Mississippi west after 1800, and is looking for any unpublished diaries, letters or reminiscences of pioneers who travelled the Oregon-California, Santa Fe or Mormon Trails. If you have any information on such materials, please contact: Cynthia Henthorn, c/o A. K. Peters Company, 230 Park Ave., Suite #1518, New York, NY 10169-1518.

## FUTURE CONVENTION SITES

1992  
Rock Springs  
Wyoming

1993  
Baker  
Oregon

1994  
Salt Lake City  
Utah

1995  
Grand Island  
Nebraska

*Below: Ron Lund, Wyoming Chapter President, looks at the cylindrical rock formations described by Byron McKinstry in 1850.*



# THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1st U.S. EXPLORING EXPEDITION & THE 1st AMERICAN OVERLAND EMIGRANTS IN 1841

by Earl F. Schmidt

The First United States Exploring Expedition, 1838 - 1842, commanded by Lt. Charles Wilkes reached the west coast in 1841, the first expedition of its kind under the US flag. While the sloop *Vincennes* surveyed and charted the Straits of Juan de Fuca and portions of Puget Sound, other vessels proceeded to explore the Columbia River Basin. In August the *Vincennes* was ordered to San Francisco Bay for an extensive exploration of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

At the Columbia, on September 1, 1841, Lt. George Emmons received orders to proceed south to California by an overland route used by Hudson Bay Company trappers. The naval party included 12 officers and men with 5 members of the Scientific Corps. As his guide, Emmons enlisted Baptiste Guardapii, an experienced Voyageur, with Baptiste Molair and an Iroquois hunter, Ignace.

Word of the Expedition had spread and other Oregonians and Mountain Men who welcomed the protection and firepower of a large group waited on the upper Willamette to join it for the trek south into Mexican territory.

Joel P. Walker (older brother of the famed Joseph R.), with his wife, Mary (Young), and five children, was headed for New Helvetia to take a job with John Sutter. In 1840, the Walkers came west on the Oregon Trail, with a party of missionaries led by American Fur Co. Brigade Commander Dripps as far as the Green River. Henry Black, Henry Wood, Calvin Tibbetts, James Warfield, and men identified only as Burrows and Boileau had been over the trail earlier as trappers or drovers, and were headed back to California with horses. Accompanied by Indian wives and children, two servants, and a Dutchman named Nichols; the party finally numbered 39 people, 76 horses and one dog.

The trip was a rough and harrowing experience for all. The Siskiyou Trail had been used by the HBC Brigades ever since Jed Smith followed the

Willamette to safety at Ft. Vancouver after the Umpqua Massacre in 1828. The Indians seasonal burning of grass and forest growth left the sky obscured for days, and all members of the group suffered from ague, dysentery and/or malarial fevers.

On September 30th the group crossed "Bloody Pass" at the 42nd parallel, and entered California near present day Hornbrook. On leaving the Siskiyou they experienced freezing nights, 100 degree days and downhill problems. Experienced Hudson Bay Brigade men said the "Shasty" Mountains were rougher than any they encountered in the Rockies. The Upper Sacramento, flowing past today's Dunsmuir and Castle Crags, was justifiably called the "Destruction River".

On reaching the valley floor they camped at a HBC trappers cache site in the Sutter Buttes where the hunters found plentiful flocks of birds and abundant wild game. However, coyotes stole what Indians could not, and grizzly bears were so numerous at times that six were killed out of over 20 seen in one day. Near the mouth of the Feather River, at a deserted village site, more than 200 Indian skeletons were observed and recorded. This area, known as the "Valley of Death", was the result of virulent malarial fevers introduced by the whites.

On October 19, the saddle-weary and footsore group finally reached Captain John Sutter's "New Helvetia" on the American River and a most hospitable welcome. Joel Walker was hired immediately to superintend Sutter's growing cattle, sheep and horse herds at the Hock Ranch. Burrows, Wood, Nichols and Guardapii also accepted Sutter's offer of employment.

On October 20, Lt. Emmons willingly accepted Sutter's offer to use his longboat to take the sickest members of his Naval party downriver to join Wilkes. They boarded the *Vincennes* at Whalers Harbor on October 24. Midshipman Eld led the remainder of the party overland with a young Mexican Vaquero

named Romero as their guide. They left Sutter's on the 21st with the remaining stock, reaching Yerba Buena on the 28th of October to finish the first official American overland exploration of, and entry into, California.

Bancroft's History of California,

Vol. IV, P. 279, calls Mary Walker, -"the first American woman in the Sacramento Valley, or who came to California by land; Mrs. Kelsey of the Bartleson company, to who the honor is usually credited, arriving some twenty days later".

Vol. V, P. 765, - "Mary Young Walker of Mo., was the first white woman to arrive in Cal. by land or to settle north of the bay".

Vol. V, P. 271-272 records that Bidwell-Bartleson did not reach the eastern slope of the Sierra, "Walker River, called by them the Balm River", until October 16. And, the lower valley of the Stanislaus River, "—which they entered on the last day of October", reaching Marsh's Rancho November 4.

It should be noted that besides the Exploring Expedition and the Bidwell-Bartleson Party, a third significant emigrant party entered California in 1841; the Workman-Rowland Party traveled from Santa Fe via the Gila or Southern Route. The records are not clear, but 25 people left Albiqiu in September and arrived at San Gabriel Mission in November.

*NOTE: It is true that Mrs. Walker was the first American woman who came to California by land, but Mrs. Kelsey was the first who came directly to California by land. Also the Bidwell-Bartleson Party was the first to use wagons (though they had to abandon them eventually). Mrs. Walker came to California via Oregon. So in one sense both Walker & Kelsey were "first".*

Don Buck



# **OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

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