

# NEWS

*from the*

# PLAINS

Volume IX, No 1.

NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

January 1995

## ABBOTT VISITOR CENTER OPENS AT CHIMNEY ROCK

by James Denney

The \$475,000 Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center at Chimney Rock National Historic Site on the Oregon, California and Mormon Trails was dedicated September 9 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and several talks, including an address by Nebraska Gov. Ben Nelson who praised the spirit of its construction. About 250 attended the dedication.

Nelson said that like the pioneers of the 19th Century, those who built the new permanent center raised the money for construction by appealing to individuals and organizations rather than asking for funds from the taxpayers.

Chimney Rock was mentioned in more diaries of those who traveled the trails than any other geographic site, according to historian Merrill Mattes of Littleton, Colorado. Composed of brule clay, volcanic ash and Dakota sandstone, the chimney rises some 400-plus feet above the North Platte River Valley near the town of Bayard, Nebraska. It could be seen for miles by the covered wagons approaching it.

It was the subject of numerous paintings, including an 1866 watercolor by artist-photographer William Henry Jackson whose illustration is now owned by the National Park Service Museum at Scotts Bluff National Monument near Gering, Nebraska.

The center is named for Ethel and Christopher J. Abbott, both pioneers in aviation in Nebraska. The late Mrs. Abbott is the former Mrs. Ray Paige of Lincoln, Nebraska. She and her first husband were instructors in teaching Charles Lindbergh how to fly. After the death of her first husband and after the death of his first wife, Mr. and Mrs. Abbott married and lived on a ranch in the Nebraska Sand Hills.  
*(See CHIMNEY ROCK on page 4)*



### OCTA Events



Even when snow covers the grass, OCTA stays busy. Here are some of the great events scheduled for 1995.

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|-------------|---|
| January 19  | Utah Crossroads Chapter Membership Meeting. Dr. William Mulder will speak on historian Dale Morgan. |
| March 13    | Gateway Chapter Annual Pioneer Dinner, 2610 Messanie Street, 6:30 P.M.                              |
| March 18    | Board of Directors Meeting, 8:30 A.M., National Frontier Trails Center, Independence, MO.           |
| April 1     | Nominations due for OCTA Board. See page 16.  |
| April 8-9   | California-Nevada Chapter sponsors Southern Trails Symposium, Zzyzx, California. See page 16.       |
| June 1      | Nominations to Awards Committee due. See page 16.   |
| August 7-12 | OCTA Annual National Convention, Grand Island, Nebraska.  |

# THE EDITOR'S CORNER

The new year brings OCTA members a new issue of *News from the Plains*—and a new look from the new editor of the ninth volume of the association's newsletter. For a variety of technical reasons, it was easier to roll out the new format all at once rather than ease into it—but we hope our readers will not be too discomfited by the change. *News from the Plains* is now in a period of rapid evolution—nothing is set in stone, and it will probably take a few issues to wring out the bugs of the "new look." If you have comments or suggestions, send them in.

Fortunately, the heart of the newsletter won't change. Its primary duty is to alert members to upcoming events and preserve a record of chapter and association activities—I hope the NFP will continue to be OCTA's main communication line. You'll still find most of the departments you've relied on in past issues, including event announcement, letters to the editor, reports from headquarters and officers, and chapter news, but we hope the new design makes them easier to find and enjoy. We plan to continue the tradition of reporting on field and research news of interest to OCTA members, and we hope to publish short source pieces, such as John Bidwell's Colusa County reminiscence in this issue.

Several new departments should enliven and broaden the newsletter. We've added a "Queries and Comments" section for letters and to help researchers tap into the incredible knowledge of OCTA's membership. "Announcements" will alert you to policy changes and upcoming deadlines. I think our new "Buffalo Chips" feature, aimed at young readers, is the most exciting—and fun—change. It wasn't easy coming up with a name for this department. Recalling my own youthful prejudices, I didn't want to use the words "kids" or "children" in the title—assuming that no

self-respecting human under the age of 21 would have anything to do with something called a "Kid's Corner." Careful observers will recall the name "Patty Reed's Page" was considered, but wise readers alerted me to possible problems with such a moniker. I'd almost settled on "Prairie Schooners Camps" (think about it) when I had a most fortunate conversation with Lyndia Carter. Lyndia, a professional educator with great insight into young 'un psychology, provided the name and the recipe for "Buffalo Chip Cookies" included on our charter pages. While some may disagree, I think it's the perfect name, since gathering chips was a common chore for young pioneers, and I suspect the name will appeal to the—shall we say—less refined nature of some of our younger readers. I tried it out on my ten-year-old son, and the name was greeted with resounding affirmation: "Cool!"

Bill Carper's eighth grade class in Murray, Iowa is our first "Classroom of the Quarter," and we encourage members—especially educators—to make future nominations for teachers and classes who have made significant contributions to the study of western trails. So teachers take note—we'd be glad to feature your classroom's work on the pages of "Buffalo Chips." Not that we want to restrict contributions to the pros—the success of the feature will depend on the entire membership. Send us poems, puzzles, stories, pictures, crafts, maps—you name it—and remember that we accept material from anyone who is young at heart.

Which brings us pretty much full circle. I've been perusing the *News from the Plains* archives and, as Rose Ann Tompkin's first editorial observed, "I depend on all of you for my material." OCTA members provided Rose Ann with five years of great material, and I'm confident we can keep the tradition going.—WB

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

*News from the Plains*, the quarterly newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, publishes information for and about its members, and is interested in articles, photographs and artwork about overland emigrant trails.

*News from the Plains* is committed to printing all the news that fits, so your best chance at getting an item into the newsletter is to submit it early. Issues are published in January, April, July and October, and submission deadlines fall on the first of December, March, June and September. You can also increase your chances of publication by sending both paper and computer disk copies (in any format) of your material. If possible, save computer files in both text and RTF formats.

Unfortunately, the newsletter cannot be responsible for unsolicited submissions. Since the operation runs on volunteer power, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you would like material returned and a postcard if you would like notification of publication decisions.

## NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

Editor

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Assistant Editor Robert Hoshide

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Next Submission Deadline for *News from the Plains* is March 1, 1995

## PATRICIA ETTER ARTICLE WINS PRESTIGIOUS COKE WOOD AWARD

Patricia A. Etter accepted the Coke Wood Award at the Westerners International Fiftieth Anniversary celebration during the Western History Association Conference in Albuquerque this October. The award, a three-dimensional replica of a Charles Russell buffalo skull, was for the best published article dealing with the history of the American West during 1993. "Ho! For California on the Mexican Gold Trail" appeared in the Fall 1993 issue of the *Overland Journal*.

Westerners International, a non-profit organization, was organized in 1959 to stimulate interest and research in the history of the American West. The WI home ranch is located at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

The *Overland Journal* also published Etter's article, "The 1849 Diary of Stanislaus Lasselle" (1991), which recounted the adventures of an argonaut on the Gila Trail during 1849. The University of Arkansas Press published her *An American Odyssey*, the reminiscences of Robert Brownlee, an 1849 traveler on the Southern Trail to California, in 1986.

Etter has been a member of OCTA since 1988 and is active in the Southwest Chapter. She is Associate Archivist for Information Services at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

## FROM THE HISTORIAN

Although not recognized until 1986, the California-Nevada Chapter of OCTA was the first to be formed and in 1994 marked the tenth anniversary of its founding with the publication of a chapter history. This history was distributed to each chapter president at the OCTA Convention in Salt Lake City this August and was available for purchase by chapter members.

I recently received a copy of this interesting, well-researched and attractive history. As I prepare the ten-year update of the OCTA history, I am reminded of the words of one historian that "The most indelible historical records we have are locked in the hearts of those who actually lived through the events." The history of OCTA and particularly the chapters is best recorded by those who were there, not by an appointee living miles from any known trail ruts. I urge each and every chapter to consider writing the history of their chapter as it unfolds. You will not only be pleased with the results, but assured of the permanence of the records.

Members wishing to order the CA-NV history may send orders to Beverly Hesse, 2238 Los Gatos-Almaden Road, San José, CA 95124-5317. The cost is \$6.50 and checks should be made payable to CA-NV Chapter, OCTA. I think you will enjoy it as much as I have.

—Ruth Anderson, Historian

## SECOND ANNUAL FUND RAISING EFFORT OFF TO A GREAT START

By now all of OCTA members should have received the special mailing for our Second Annual Fund Raising Drive. I hope that you carefully consider this request and then make a commitment to invest in helping OCTA to preserve our national emigrant trail heritage.

As of December 1, 1994 we had received 14 contributions that resulted in \$985.00. On behalf of OCTA, I wish to thank these early birds.

Floyd and Shauna O'Neil  
 Bill and Shann Rupp  
 Oscar and Eleanor Eggers  
 Jeanne Miller  
 David A. White  
 Norman J. Barker  
 L. M. Henderson  
 Eva M. Allen  
 Richard and Jo Anna Dale  
 Roy Welton  
 Jim Sheik  
 Herbert and Lois Hunn  
 Carl MacDonald  
 Thomas Creigh, Jr.

We are very pleased with this rapid response. If you have not yet contributed, please consider doing so.

—Jim Budde, Treasurer

### The Right Way to the Info Highway

Due to operator error, the October 1994 issue of *News from the Plains* incorrectly described how to join the Internet's overland-trails mailing list. (Translation: Bagley blew it.) The mailing list is growing slowly but surely and supports an increasingly interesting discussion of emigrant trails. To join the list, send E-Mail to this address:

`listserv@hipp.etsu.edu`

The initial message should read:

`subscribe overland-trails your_name`

Leave your comment line blank. For example:

`subscribe overland-trails Wylie Coyote`

Messages to be distributed to members of the overland-trails mailing list should be sent to this address:

`overland-trails@hipp.etsu.edu`

If you need additional help, you can send mail directly to Will Bagley at:

`wbagley@dsd.es.com`

## (CHIMNEY ROCK from page 1)

Del Linemann, another speaker at the ceremonies, noted that Mrs. Abbott and her second husband often mentioned that Chimney Rock was "a guide even for early pilots in Western Nebraska." Linemann is chairman of the Ethel Abbott Charities of Lincoln, the foundation which gave the major gift of \$250,000, some of which will be used for operations. A total of 1,600 individuals, organizations and foundations also contributed to the construction. Among the contributors were numerous members of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

The construction of the center completes interpretation of the trails, as well as the Pony Express, in Nebraska. There now are historic visitor centers at Rock Creek Station, near Fairbury; Fort Kearny near the city of Kearney; Ash Hollow, near Lewellen; and Scotts Bluff National Monument as well as many markers of trail happenings across the state.

"We are very pleased to have this center open," said Lawrence Sommer, director of the Nebraska State Historical Society which will operate the center-museum near Chimney Rock. "Chimney Rock had a temporary visitor trailer since 1967. It annually attracted about 25,000 visitors for just the months of June, July and August. Now, this permanent center will be open the year-around except for Thanksgiving and Christmas. This will give us an opportunity to explain the importance of Chimney Rock to school children and others who travel across Nebraska."

The center is just off of U.S. Highway 26 and Nebraska Highway 92. A paved road leading to the center parking lot was completed at 4 A.M. on dedication day.

Inside the center, visitors can see artifacts and learn why Chimney Rock was important during trail travel as well as its importance today for Nebraska citizens. The Rock currently is illustrated on Nebraska auto license plates. There is a gift shop for purchasing books about the trail and trinkets as well as post cards which can be stamped "mailed from Chimney Rock" for those who so desire.

Children were not forgotten, either. A small wagon is available to them where they can load goods for travel. When the

wagon has reached its capacity a light goes on nearby to show how important wagon capacity was to the pioneers.

Perhaps the most unusual artifact is a recently purchased sketch book done by the late William Quesenbury, a journalist, poet, artist and political cartoonist from Arkansas. He traveled from Arkansas to California in 1850, taking the Cherokee Trail along the Arkansas River to the Rocky Mountains. He then headed north and picked up the Oregon-California Trails in Wyoming.

After working as an editor in Sacramento, Quesenbury joined John Wesley Jones, a daguerreotypist, and returned over the Oregon-California Trails in 1851. His sketchbook, which was discovered by Martha Sandweiss, a historian at Amherst College Art Museum, was purchased by *The Omaha World-Herald* for use by the Nebraska State Historical Society in the new center at Chimney Rock.

Quesenbury's sketches include scenes across Wyoming as well as Western Nebraska including Scotts Bluff and Mitchell Pass, plus two excellent illustrations of Chimney Rock and Courthouse and Jail Rocks near Bridgeport, NE.

Other speakers at the ceremony included Mrs. Jamalee Clark who told of the original efforts to erect a visitor center. Her father, the late W. L. "Speed" George, former Bayard Mayor, was the major pusher for a visitor center.

Supt. Larry Reed of Scotts Bluff National Monument expressed gratitude for the center and its interpretation because of the closeness to the national monument which was established in 1919.

Charles Oldfather of Lincoln and James Denney of Omaha told of the money raising efforts. Denney, an OCTA member, said that his first pitch for funds was through OCTA. He attended the National Trails Center dedication in Independence four years ago and appealed for help. The

OCTA board gave Denney a mailing list so that all OCTA members who so desired could contribute.

"Many OCTA members gave us a helping hand by mail and at two conventions," Denney said. "We are very grateful for their contributions and hope OCTA members will stop at Chimney Rock either going or coming to the 1995 convention in Grand Island." ■



*Chimney Rock looms above crowd gathered to dedicate the Abbott Visitor Center.*  
—James Denney Photo.

# EARLIEST EXPLORATIONS OF COLUSA COUNTY

BY GENERAL JOHN BIDWELL

*Chapter Three of Justus H. Rogers' most-interesting Colusa County: Its History Traced from a State of Nature through the Early Period of Settlement and Development, to the Present Day (Orland, CA., 1891), is unusual, in that it was "furnished by Gen. John Bidwell," one of the earliest and most remarkable of California's overland pioneers. Bidwell's chapter began with this introduction:*

General John Bidwell, of Chico was one of the first to cross the plains from the Missouri River, making his journey to California between May 5 and November 5, 1841. But as the first-known white explorer of Colusa County, his travels and experiences form necessarily an interesting chapter in the early periods of Colusa County. General Bidwell kindly consented to furnish us with his autobiography, of which we gladly availed ourselves, taking down his narrative as he dictated to us. As the autobiography is complete and somewhat lengthy, we are obliged to cull only those passages therefrom which pertain to Colusa County. The narrative as a whole is most interesting, in some places thrilling, and is told in such simplicity of style and attractiveness of manner that feeling obliged to omit it, we do so with regret. Only a fear of marring the unities of our purpose to treat here solely of Colusa County caused us to forego the pleasure of giving his autobiography in its entirety.—Author.

*Bidwell's reminiscence—one of several, almost all of which have been republished, although this item seems to have escaped the notice of the best experts—consists of 17 pages of small type, but as Rogers' introduction indicates, it is apparently only a small part of the information Bidwell provided for the country history. (The book also contains the recollections of Stephen Cooper, an 1846 overland pioneer.) This brief excerpt omits interesting commentary on the county's original inhabitants and an exciting tale of a grizzly bear hunt, but it includes most items of interest to trail buffs and historians. Bidwell's stories of Lansford Hastings appear in slightly different form in other Bidwell memoirs, but this version contains specific detail lacking in the others. For example, here Bidwell says Hastings met with Sam Houston of Texas on his return to the United States in 1844, and implies that Houston rejected Hastings' scheme. Other versions state Hastings planned to meet Houston. Bidwell's good humor and story-telling genius shine throughout, and perhaps no one has ever given a more telling appraisal of Peter Lassen's character.*

*Could we encourage our California members to try to locate the complete recollection? It would be a great item to publish in time for the 1999 OCTA Convention, to be held on the site of Bidwell's Rancho at present California State University at Chico.*

—Will Bagley

...After completing my journey across the plains, which occupied six months of the year 1841, I went to Sutter's ranch, near Sacramento, and entered the employ of Sutter, where I remained till the January following. There was at that time no fort yet built, only a station for a few ranchers, hunters, and fur traders. Sutter employed Indian hunters and trappers. They used carbines chiefly, though a few had rifles. The settlement, if it could then be so designated, was in an embryo state. No crops had been raised; grain had been sown, but, owing to an unprecedentedly dry season, it had failed to mature. There was no such thing as bread, so we had to eat beef and occasionally game, such as elk, deer, antelope, wild geese, and ducks. Our Christmas dinner that year was entirely of ducks.

The country abounded in these, besides crane, beaver, and otter. The grizzly bear was an hourly sight. In the vicinity of streams it was not uncommon to see thirty or forty in a day. The same may be said of the Colusa region at that period. In this connection let me relate an incident.

Becoming tired of beef, James John, one of the first overland party, declared he would have some bear meat. An old Rocky Mountain hunter named Bill Burrows offered to go with him to get his bear meat. It was only a walk of one, two or three miles to find bear, so they started and soon came in sight of one, a monster in size, feeding in the tall grass not far from the river timber, on the west side of the Sacramento River, opposite to where Sacramento now stands. A man who knows anything about the grizzly is cautious. Old hunters always keep to the leeward of a bear, and so take advantage and take a dead shot, but raw hunters, till experience has taught them caution, are often careless, and so Jimmy John went to within fifty yards of the bear and fired, the old mountaineer screaming at him, "You fool! don't go there! Come back!" But Jimmy, as we used to call him, was one of those strange individuals you may see once in a life-time, who never seem to know what fear is. When the grizzly heard the shot, he broke into one of the dense thickets of grape-vine and willows along the river bank. Jimmy followed right along after the bear into the thicket, and was gone about fifteen minutes, when he came out greatly disappointed, because he had not succeeded in killing his game. He said he had bad luck because he got within six feet of the bear and fancied he was wounded, and when the animal opened his mouth, he wanted to make sure work of it by thrusting his muzzle into it, but the bear suddenly took to his heels and scampered off still deeper into the thicket.

The people I found at Sutter's belonged to various nationalities. Robert Livermore had charge of the stock,

cattle and horses, of which Sutter had about two thousand head. This same Livermore had a farm in Livermore Valley (now in Alameda County), and gave his name to it. He was a runaway English sailor and had grown up in this country, was familiar with the customs of the people, and spoke the Spanish language fluently.

Without imputing dishonesty to the people—cattle and horses were so plentiful that the loss of one was scarcely noticed. Herds of them roamed at will; they got mixed up, and unlawful appropriation was not uncommon, and sometimes designedly. Livermore was, as I have said, a stockman, and there was quite a competition between him and a neighbor in the pride of owning the largest herd or securing the greatest number of hides. One day, so the story ran at the time, a friend of Livermore's hurried breathlessly, telling Livermore that his competing neighbor had just killed one of his, Livermore's, bullocks, and if he would be quick about it he would catch him in the act of skinning it. Livermore coolly replied, "No, I'm too busy just now skinning one of his bullocks myself...."

In 1843 a company came by land from Oregon, composed partly of immigrants who had arrived in Oregon the year before, having crossed the plains via Fort Boise and Pitt River. They journeyed down the west bank of the Sacramento River into what is now Colusa County, crossing it below the mouth of Stony Creek. I met them shortly afterwards on the Feather River. This party had with them men, two at least, who might be styled "Indian killers," and on the way very frequently fired at Indians seen in the distance. The better portion tried to dissuade them from this uncalled-for conduct, with, however, only partial success. On arriving at the present site of Red Bluff, the company camped early in the day, intending to remain during the night, but broke up camp hastily, owing to the following incident: One of the "Indian killers," seeing an Indian on the opposite side of the river, swam over, carrying a butcher-knife in his mouth. The Indian allowed him to approach till he came very close, but at last ran away. The man with the knife pursued him, threw a stone, and, crippling the Indian, completed his barbarous work by killing him with his knife. The party in camp now fearing Indian retaliation, concluded to travel on. After a few miles an Indian was observed following them, no doubt out of curiosity and not because he had heard of the killing of a member of his tribe a few hours previously. One of the "Indian killers," seeing the opportunity for another murder, hid in the brush till the Indian came up, and shot him. The company continued to travel on the west side of the Sacramento River with more than ordinary haste, feeling very insecure lest the Indians, who were very numerous in the valley at that time, should exhibit hostility on account of what had occurred. One of the encampments, I remember, was near the river, below what is now called Stony Creek, then Capay River, in

Colusa County. The Indians, however, came near in considerable numbers, and hence evidently had not heard of the shooting and kniving just mentioned. In the morning, as they were packing up to leave camp, one of the "Indian killers" missed his bridle and swore the "damned Indians" had stolen it—a most unreasonable thing, since the Indians had no horses and never had. In his rage he fired at an Indian who stood by a tree about one hundred yards distant. The Indian fell back into the brush, while the rest of his frightened companions fled in great haste. The company was again rendered panicky by the blood-thirsty imprudence of the "Indian killer," hastened on their journey, and found the missing bridle in a few minutes under a pile of blankets.

All that day the Indians on the east side of the river manifested great excitement as the company moved along down on the west side. For more than forty miles there was at that time no place where water could be found for the horses to drink, the banks being so steep or so grown up with jungle and grapevine as to be unapproachable. The day following, however, the company encamped on the spot where Colusa now stands. The excitement among the Indians had now preceded them, and consequently numbers of them swarmed on the opposite side of the river. When the horses were led down to get water, in an almost famished condition, the Indians fired at them with their arrows, but no one was hit or hurt. For some unaccountable reason, when the party arrived at Sutter's place a few days afterwards and reported what had transpired, Sutter came to the conclusion that the Indians who shot arrows across the river were hostile and ought to be punished. Let me say right here that the Indian village then on the site of Colusa was one of the largest in the valley, but there were many other villages in the vicinity on both sides of the river, both above and below the Colus village, and I believe I can truthfully say that the number of Indians within ten miles of this point numbered not less than fifteen or twenty thousand. They lived largely upon fish, mostly salmon, which they caught in great numbers in the river. For the purpose of fishing they had formed a fish-weir some miles above Colusa, by using willow poles, the ends of which had been rounded and sharpened by burning, and then in some manner being made to penetrate the sandy bottom to a depth sufficient to resist the force of the current, and by use of cross-sticks, lashed with grapevines, the structure formed a bridge not less than eight or ten feet wide for them to pass and repass over it. At this point the river was very wide, the bottom very sandy, and the water not more perhaps than four or five feet deep.

The immigrants told their story at Sutter's place, and some here thought that the Indians where the shooting was done were hostile, but most of them, and the best informed as I thought, did not blame the Indians, in view of previous occurrences. Sutter, however, concluded to punish them, and went, with about fifty

men, and attacked the Indian camp at daylight. His forces were divided, a part of them going above and crossing on the Indian bridge. They were ready to begin a simultaneous attack at daybreak. The Indians fled and mostly jumped into the river, where they were fired on, and great numbers of them killed, after which the Indians in that part of the valley were never known to exhibit any purpose of hostility. I do not believe there was sufficient reason to consider them hostile before. At any rate, I remember no offensive act on their part, having occasion to go among them almost a year afterward, twice at least, and once with only five men with me, when we camped all night near a village without any molestation.

Two years later, in 1846, I went from Sacramento during the prevalence of a great flood, passing not up the river but over the plains which were like a sea of waters, and arriving in a canoe near the place where the Indians were killed in 1843, to trade for Indian twine, with which to make seines for taking salmon. No white man was with me, only two Indians to paddle the canoe, and I found the natives perfectly friendly.

I might mention here another fact that might have had some relation to the present county of Colusa. A part of the before-mentioned party from Oregon left the main body somewhere about the time, or a little before, it entered the Sacramento Valley, and reached Sutter's Fort some days in advance, and had seen nothing of similar occurrences which caused the campaign against the Indians just described.

Among this advance party, in fact its leader, was one L. W. Hastings, a man of great ambition. He was from Ohio, and was afterwards a member of the first [California] Constitutional Convention. His purpose in coming to California was to see the country and write a book to induce a large immigration here, declare the county independent, and of which he should become the first president. It did not take him long to learn that the Mexican Government was in the habit of granting large tracts of land. Not knowing how long it would require to establish here an independent republic, and having an eye to business, he at once took the preliminary steps, with a view of securing a large grant of land of ten or twelve square leagues, lying on the west bank

of the river between Colusa, and extending from the town towards what is now Knight's Landing. To that end Hastings employed me to make a map of his land, which was to be kept a profound secret. True to his purpose of bringing in immigrants, he made his way across California through Mexico and Texas to the Eastern States. On his way he conferred with Sam Houston, President of Texas, in regard to the aid and encouragement he expected from that source. He was not, however, in the least discouraged. He wrote a book, called the "Emigrant's Guide," of two or three hundred pages, describing, in most glowing terms, the country of California; but it so happened that the accomplishment of his purpose was largely interfered with, owing to the trouble which arose between Mexico and our government, simultaneously with its publication. The book, however induced six or seven hundred to cross the plains in 1846. Hastings preceded them late in the previous fall to lay the foundations of his republic. Let me give a little incident in the career of this active, ambitious man.

After Hastings had written his book, it was some time before he could raise money with which to publish it. Among other efforts to procure funds he took to delivering temperance lectures in Ohio and adjoining States, and while on his tour became acquainted with a Methodist preacher named McDonald, who rendered him some aid, and thereby became friends. Late in the fall of 1846, Hastings having returned again to California after meeting his



*John Bidwell at the time he dictated "Early Explorations of Colusa County" for Justus Rogers.*

immigrants, he arrived at Yerba Buena, now San Francisco, in the midst of a cold rain. His friend, preacher McDonald, whom he had never expected to see in California, had preceded him to the bay, and, for want of other employment, was actually attending the only bar in town. Hastings, the temperance lecturer, drenched in a chilling rain, went up to this bar, called for some brandy, and poured out a glassful. As he was about to drink it, McDonald, the bar keeper, recognized him, and said, "Why, my temperance friend, how do you do?" Hastings, then recognizing the preacher who had helped him in Ohio, and reaching out his hand, said, "My dear old preacher, I'm glad to see you....

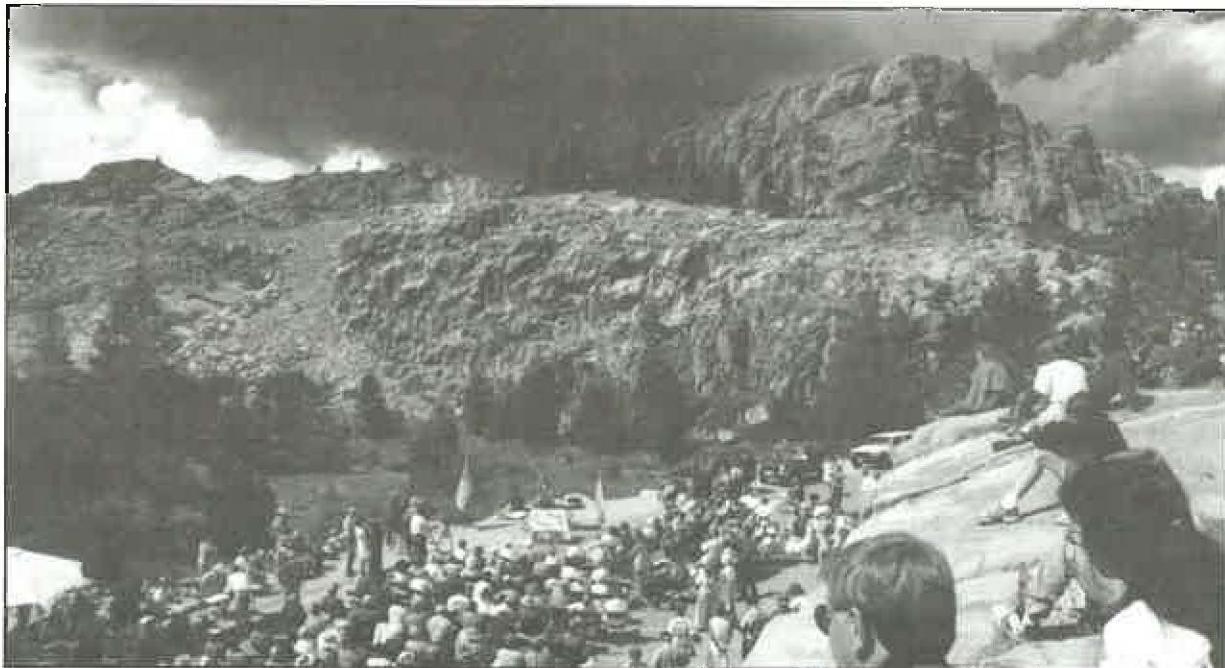
[Bidwell made his first visit to Colusa County in March, 1843, while looking for lost animals, and met a party bound for Oregon.] The leaving of a company for

Oregon was an event, as I was advised, of sufficient importance to make people look out carefully for their horses. Sutter furnished an Indian to go with me. The company had been gone over a week. Peter Lassen, whose name now attaches to Lassen Peak and Lassen County, happened to be at this time at Sutter's Fort in search of a place to locate a ranch. He joined me to come up the valley for that purpose. At Hock Farm, on Feather River, forty miles from the fort, we took fresh horses, traveling as rapidly as possible. At a place now called Nicholas, on Feather River, a German named Joe Bruheim also joined us. We were on no trail, but simply pushed through the center of the valley....

I soon found my way to the Oregon camp, leaving Peter Lassen and the others of my party on the opposite side of the river. In the Oregon camp I found several [friends] who had crossed the plains with me in 1841, notably Ben Kelsey, Andrew Kelsey and Dawson, generally called Bear Dawson, from a circumstance in the Rocky Mountains. I at once made known the object of my visit—to find my mule and horse. These men at once declared that if these animals were there and I could identify them, I should have them, but nearly all protested there were no such animals there. It was now agreed that all their horses and mules should be driven up for my inspection. As a result, I soon discovered my animals and demanded their surrender. There was some opposition to this but Ben Kelsey, a very resolute man, and on this occasion a very useful friend, declared stoutly that I should have them. All opposition being now withdrawn, the animals were driven to the river and made to swim across. And now having accomplished my object, we at once set out on our return journey.

I have already mentioned Peter Lassen as being of

our party. Peter was a singular man, very industrious, very ingenious, and very fond of pioneering—in fact, of the latter stubbornly so. He had great confidence in his own power as a woodsman, but, strangely enough, he always got lost. As we passed Butte Mountain going south, our route of course lay between the Sacramento and Feather Rivers. The point we wished to reach that night was Sutter's Hock Farm, on Feather River. Night had overtaken us when some fifteen miles from it. Peter Lassen insisted on keeping the lead. Our Indian vaquero, however, who knew there country well in that vicinity, pointed to the eastward as the way we should go. Lassen, however, could not be persuaded to diverge to the east, and finally at midnight we concluded to tell him we must go to the east or we would leave him. But this had no effect on Lassen; he kept on to the south, while we, following the Indian, came to the farm. The only place Lassen could reach was the intervening tule marsh. Now if you have any curiosity to observe a man's humor after being in a tule swamp full of mosquitoes all night, you ought to have seen Peter Lassen. The next morning, when he came to camp at Hock Farm, he was so mad he would not speak to any of us; would not travel in the same path, but kept a hundred yards to either side of us all day. I think he never forgot or forgave us. Still he was a man possessed of many good qualities. He was always obliging in camp. He was a good cook and would do any and everything necessary to the comfort of the camp, even to the making of coffee, provided those traveling with him would pretend to assist. If they did not offer to aid him, they became the target for the best style of grumbling that any man born in Denmark is capable of inventing.... ■



*Storm clouds roll in over Mount Stephens at the ceremony this fall commemorating the sesquicentennial of the California Trail.*

—Jim Rose Photos.

# MOUNT STEPHENS HONORS CALIFORNIA TRAIL PIONEER

*The Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party Sesquicentennial Celebrates the Opening of the Truckee Route across the Sierra*

by Jim Rose

On Saturday, September 24, 1994, a typical, partly cloudy autumn day in the Sierra Nevada, the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission hosted the sesquicentennial celebration of the opening of the Truckee Route of the California Trail, and honored Captain Elisha Stephens and the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party of 1844. The ceremony took place near the trail over the Sierra Nevada the party pioneered 150 years ago, almost to the day. Representatives of state and local government presented resolutions recognizing the historic achievements of these courageous pioneers. Over five hundred people attended the event, including the elder statesmen of California and emigrant trail history, Clyde Arbuckle. The size of the crowd was remarkable considering that thunder showers had been predicted for the day. Dozens of descendants representing each of the various families from the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party came from around the state and nation to attend the ceremony. The gathering of these people at the Sierra Nevada pass pioneered by their ancestors in 1844 was an inspiring and emotional experience for all who attended this very special celebration.

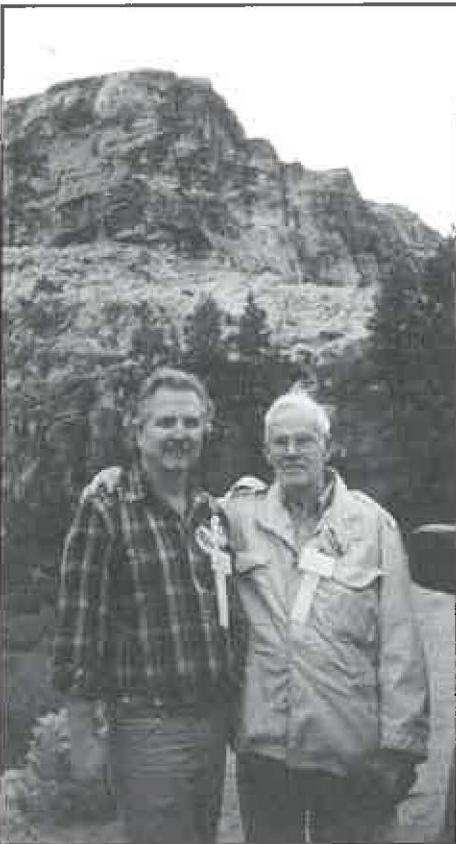
Historians and guest speakers revealed their personal feelings of the historic event and the reason for the celebration. "I'm happy to see a great injustice in Western history has been corrected," said George Hesse, president of the CA-NV Chapter of OCTA. "Elisha Stephens and his fellow party members have finally been recognized for their contributions." Chuck Graydon, longtime OCTA member and the key figure in the tracking and mapping the Truckee Route, gave a memorable speech on the history of the trail and the pioneers who opened the first wagon road across the Sierra. Perhaps the most moving speech was that of 15-year-old local area high school student Theo Black,

who spoke eloquently about the heroics of the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party, and in particular the courage of 17-year-old Moses Schallenberger. "Why has so much been named after a failed party instead of a completely successful party?" he asked, "We're fascinated by the Donner party's failure, but today we're here to honor a successful crossing of the Sierra."

The first of the day's two major events was the dedication of "Mount Stephens," the first and only geographic feature located along the California Trail that honors the courage and leadership of the man who captained the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party. The 7,250-feet of Sierra granite proudly stood out against a backdrop of increasing thunder clouds as an American flag waved in the stiff breeze from atop of the newly named peak. Elisha Stephens finally took his rightful place in the history of the overland emigrant trail, as well as on the Sierra Nevada pass he helped pioneer 150 years ago.

The distinction of unveiling the commemorative plaque was graciously performed by several descendants of the emigrant party. It truly was the highlight of the ceremony. As a patchwork quilt was lifted by the descendants, revealing the beautiful bronze plaque that for the first time, gives a complete, concise and historically accurate account of this courageous wagon party's epic journey to California, a clap of thunder rang down from the ever-threatening sky, as if the spirits of these courageous pioneers were giving their approval to the day's events.

The Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission takes great pride in having seen this project through to fruition. Nearly three years of hard work by many people made it a success. I want to thank all the members of the CA-NV Chapter of OCTA who helped on this very special project, especially Mary Mueller, Pat Loomis and Chuck Dodd. For myself, I feel honored to have been a part of the effort finally to bring this long-overdue recognition to Elisha Stephens and all the pioneers of the Truckee Route of the California Trail. ■



Jim Rose and Chuck Graydon stand below Mount Stephens at dedication ceremony.

## AIR GUARD MAPS NEBRASKA TRAIL

The Nebraska Air National Guard has photographed the route of the Oregon and California Trails across Nebraska for use of historians doing research on these two famous routes that helped to open the West.

The 155th Tactical Air Reconnaissance Unit was one of several recipients of awards given recently by the American Association of State and Local History during its annual meeting in Omaha. The award to the Guard was for its 1993 effort of shooting the entire routes of the two trails across the Cornhusker State. The trail was photographed from near Steele City in Southeast Nebraska to near Henry in the western part of the state.

Trail ruts are in evidence where land has not been cultivated as shown in the photos. The pictures are now at the Nebraska Historical Society in Lincoln. Director Lawrence Sommer said the photos are to be used for research.

OCTA member Jim Denney of Omaha first suggested the project in 1992 to Gov. Ben Nelson of Nebraska. He noted that the 155th would soon be phased out to be replaced by a refueling unit. Denney asked that the trails be photographed before the reconnaissance unit gave up its aircraft.

"Since this was a last opportunity for the pictures to be taken," Denney said, "I made the appeal to the governor, pointing out that the 155th made photos during many training missions across the state, including ice jams on rivers and certain land formations. I suggested this would be a great contribution to history if the pictures could be taken."

Gov. Nelson left it up to the guard officials who in turn decided it was worthy of a mission attempt. Robert Hurst of Lincoln, a retired Air Force computer specialist who works as a historical society volunteer, drew the trail routes on navigation maps so pilots knew what to look for. Hurst, working with St. Darren Mehl of Lincoln, a photo interpreter, identified ruts and landmarks on the film.



*At the Mount Stephens dedication, Theo Black spoke eloquently about the courage of 17-year-old Moses Schallenberger. See story on page 9.*

## TRAILS HEAD HOLDS MISSOURI VALLEY TRAIL SYMPOSIUM

On October 29 the Trails Head Chapter sponsored its first symposium, "Missouri Valley and the Emigrant Trails." The Western Historical Manuscripts Department of the University of Missouri-Kansas City hosted the event on the UMKC campus. Opening remarks were shared by David Boutros of UMKC and Ross Marshall, Trails Head chapter president. The symposium was co-chaired by Jim Budde and Barbara Magerl. About 65 people attended the program, including social studies teachers of middle-school level.

## EWING YOUNG AND EARLY OREGON

The death of trapper Ewing Young in 1841 set in motion events that led to the establishment of the first government in the Oregon country, but the life of this remarkable western adventurer reads like a novel about the conquest of the American West. Young went with the first wagons down the Santa Fe trail to New Mexico, where he hired a young runaway named Kit Carson as his cook. Young explored the southwestern trails to Mexican California, and drove horses north to the Oregon in the 1830s. Young settled on Chehalem Creek, where his moonshining enterprise counterbalanced the efforts of American missionary activities in the Willamette Valley.

OCTA members and educators Gene and Betty Comfort have produced a most entertaining videotape, "Ewing Young's Venture with Destiny," which recounts Young's life on the frontier and provides excellent background information on the origin of several western trails. The piece is generally well reproduced and reflexes the Comfort's considerable research efforts.

A supplemental "Discovery Learning Teacher's Activity Book" is also available. For further information call (503) 538-3990.

## NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

*Jeanne Miller, Executive Director*

Your hard-working OCTA Headquarters staff has mailed the 1994 Membership Roster and Catalog, and we're going into winter camp to prepare for a busy 1995.

We've decided to offer our special on William Jackson prints again (see the ad on this page), and we'd like to encourage members to take advantage of this opportunity to buy some great western art at a great price.

### HAMMONDS' BECKWOURTH TRAIL GUIDE HONORS FAMOUS BLACK PIONEER

Joanne and Andy Hammond, OCTA members from Chico, California, recently completed five years of research with the publication of their book, *Following the Beckwourth Trail*. This route across the Sierra—probably the best wagon road ever found into California—was pioneered by mountain man Jim Beckwourth (or Beck-with), an adopted Crow Indian and certainly the most famous black explorer of the American West.

Kevin McCormick, archaeologist for the Plumas National Forest, ignited the Hammonds' interest in the trail when he introduced himself shortly after the couple moved to Chico. The Hammonds' spent nearly every weekend exploring the mountains in their 1977 Dodge Ram Charger, which Andy says has spent so much time on the trail "I think I could turn it loose and it could find its way home." The couple spent between 1,200–1,500 hours on the project and estimate they've walked the equivalent of the trail twice. "In the wintertime, we'd [study] the diaries," reports Joanne. "In the summer we'd do the field work."

The Fall, 1994, issue of the *Overland Journal* contains the Hammonds' article, "Mapping the Beckwourth Trail," which describes the couple's adventures locating and mapping the route.

*Following the Beckwourth Trail*, which includes a capsule biography of Beckwourth, maps, and descriptions of trail markers, can be obtained for \$8.45 from the Plumas County Museum, Quincy, California, P. O. Box 10776, Quincy, CA 95971. Checks should be made out to the museum, which receives all proceeds from the book.

### DEATH VALLEY CONFERENCE COVERS

#### TRAILS TOPICS

The Fourth Death Valley Conference on History and Prehistory will be held in Death Valley, February 2–5, 1995. Two of the many talks relate to the Death Valley Forty-Niners. Speakers include OCTA members Leroy and Jean Johnson, who will explore "Arguments Pro & Con for Indian Joe Spring as the Site of Mrs. Brier's Providence Spring," while Robert Hoshide will talk about "The Mississippi Party: 1849–50."

Pre-registration is a must. Registration is \$100 for participants and \$60 for family members. Included are box lunches for the field trip and presentation days, an

icebreaker, wine tasting, banquet dinner, and a copy of the conference proceedings.

For information, write to the Death Valley History Conference, Death Valley Natural History Association, P. O. Box 188, Death Valley, CA 92328.

### CHARLES TRUE HAS HAPPY BIRTHDAY

OCTA recently published my grandfather's memoir, *The Overland Memoir of Charles True*, about his experiences as a teenager on the California Trail, 1859. Charles' birthday was October 15, and he arrived at Sutter Creek on his 17th birthday. I arranged with Jane Way, owner of historic Sutter Creek Inn, to honor Charles on October 15, 1994. Susan Maylahn, a Chicago teacher, whose 7th and 8th grade handicapped students are studying the memoir, had her class make two colorful banners, one reading "Happy Birthday, Charles True," and the second, "Westward Journey." Sixteen people gathered around a roaring fire at the Inn. The banners were hanging from draperies. Copies of the book were displayed. Champagne and an elaborate cake were served. Many toasts to Charles were made and all had a marvelous time.

—Dr. Sally True

## CLOSE-OUT SALE

### William H. Jackson Prints



William Henry Jackson  
(1843–1942)

*Quality Reproductions of Jackson's classic watercolors of these legendary trail sites:*

Crossing the South Platte (13x20, \$100)

Approaching Chimney Rock (10x15, \$85)

Independence Rock (10x15, \$85)

All Three for \$29.95 + \$3.50 P&H



**OREGON-CALIFORNIA  
TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

P. O. Box 1019 / 524 S. Osage St.  
Independence, MO 64051-0519

## THE READING TRAIL

A long time ago, when I was about eleven or twelve years old, I fell in love. His name was Merritt Parmelee Allen. I spent every minute I could with him. I curled up with him on the sofa, under our big shade tree, even on my bed. But that was O.K. with my mom and dad, because my heart-throb wasn't a boyfriend—he was an author and I spent my time with his books. He wrote historical fiction, mostly western history, and I loved it. I read them all. It was a crush that lasted a lifetime. Here I am, daily becoming more a piece of ancient history myself, still occasionally picking up and reading a Merritt Parmelee Allen book written about half a century ago.

I'm hooked on history books for kids. Years of being a teacher have only fed my addiction. You can still often find me curled up with history books written for curious, young people like you. It might be historical fiction, biography, or non-fiction (information) books; I like them all. Because I find some of these books wonderfully exciting and really fun to read, I want to share them with you, hoping you will read them, too, and get a "crush" just as big as mine.

One great true pioneer story is about the seven Sager children who came west on the Oregon Trail. One account was written many years ago by Honore Morrow, entitled *On to Oregon*. I loved that story as a kid, too. Then I grew up and found out her story was only partly true. But, I also found out that the truth about the Sager kids was every bit as exciting and interesting, even more so. *The Stout-Hearted Seven*, written by Neta Lohnes Frazier, is based on fact, but written in story form. It is so good you might think someone had imagined it! The year they came west was 1844. The Sager parents and six, nearly seven, children were going to find a new home in Oregon. They traveled by covered wagon, but the journey was very difficult. First, Mr. Sager died and before long, so did Mrs. Sager. There was nothing that the Sager children, including the tiny new baby sister, could do but keep going west. Kind people in the wagon train helped to take care of them, but the orphans worried what would happen to them and would they be able to stay together. When they arrived at the mission where Marcus and Narcissa Whitman lived, they were adopted into their household. Mrs. Whitman's little girl had died and she could not resist the little Sager baby who needed her so much, but she wasn't so sure about taking in the boys, but she did. It was an adjustment for the children and the new parents alike, but in time they grew to be a family. The Indians who lived near the mission were upset when Dr. Whitman could not heal their people who were dying of the measles. The Indians believed they must get rid of the white people before all the Indians died and so attacked the Whitman home. What happens next is an exciting part of American his-

tory.

From the very beginning when the Sager family leaves Missouri to the frightening climax in the Oregon Country, this book hold your attention. Each chapter will make you want to hurry to the next. The author tells the story in a way you will never forget. The characters and their conversations make you feel like you know them and are right in their adventures with them. So get out your library card and head for the public library or ask your school librarian for *The Stout-Hearted Seven* by Neta Lohnes Frazier.

Another excellent fictionalized biography of the Sager children, Cornelia Shield's *Seven for Oregon*, is written for more advanced readers in a very interesting style, and the illustrations add to the enjoyment of the book. Ms. Shields has done her research well.

Both are fictionalized biography (real people and events, but fictionalized dialogue).

Maybe you have read some good "trail" books you would like to tell *News from the Plains* about and encourage others to read. Please send your ideas in care of the editor to *News from the Plains*. If it's one I haven't read yet, I'd like the chance to know about it so I can enjoy it too.

—Lyndia Carter

Neta Lohnes Frazier, *The Stout-Hearted Seven* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973; Whitman College, 1984). For grades 5 and up.

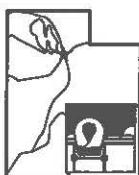
Cornelia Shields, *Seven for Oregon* (Dayton, WA: Green Springs Press, 1988). For grades 8 and up.

### NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARDS

Nominations for OCTA's first Outstanding Educator Awards are due February 28, 1995. The citation will recognize exceptional contributions to the teaching of the history of the overland migrations for work done between 1993 and 1995. Awards will be given at the elementary, middle, high school and college level, and winners will receive free registration and one day's room and board at the National Convention in Grand Island.

For nomination forms or additional information, contact OCTA National Headquarters (P. O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519) or call William E. Hill at 516-582-2592.

# NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS



## Crossroads

### FALL SOCIAL A GOLDEN EVENT

The beautiful autumn evening of September 24 found some 100 Crossroads members at the Washington Terrace pavilion in Washington Park. Parley's Canyon was a perfect setting for the Crossroads chapter's annual autumn meeting and social. The air was mellow with the fragrance of September and the bright colors of the season filled the park.

Greetings and pleasant conversation were the prelude to dinner, as friendships were initiated, renewed and deepened in the relaxed atmosphere. No OCTA gathering is complete without the music of a spontaneously formed trail band, so Will Bagley, Al Mulder, Catherine Goates, Jeff Carlstrom and Byron Anderson kept the group entertained until dinner. We feasted on barbecued chicken, a variety of salads, fruit, baked beans and orange rolls, then topped it all off with brownie sundaes for dessert. We took in plenty of calories to keep us warm as the shadows of evening began to fall and a chill crept into the air.

During the business meeting, President Al Mulder gave a convention wrap-up. To our pride (and relief), the convention was a great success and Al relayed the many positive comments and letters he had received.

Special praise was given to the Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake District, for its support of the convention. The "Covered Wagon Award," a special Crossroads chapter award for service, was presented to BLMer Glenn Foreman.

Kristin Johnson was introduced as the new editor of the *Crossroads* newsletter. Kristin comes to the position with much writing and research experience and is loaded with good ideas. She will be a fantastic addition.

Next, Roy Tea announced the October 8 field trip on the Hudspeth Cutoff across southern Idaho, with Arimo, Idaho, the rendezvous point. Gar Elison, who was the guide over the Cutoff, gave further details about the trail segment, which was opened by Ben Hudspeth and John Myers in 1849.

After Al's pitch to buy ox-skull bolo ties, paper weights and Utah Crossroads caps to raise funds for trail marking and preservation projects, the Cottonwood Gang took over. This western band had a lot of fun with each other and the audience. The band, composed partly of Crossroads members and including fiddle champion Joanne Hinkle, enlivened the evening with rousing and rowdy music, stimulating toe-tapping, hand-clapping and even a bit of singing along.

A very special part of the evening came when the

"Covered Wagon Award" was awarded to David L. Bigler. Dave was the moving-force behind the Salt Lake OCTA Convention. His able leadership, patience and perseverance led the convention committee to success. The award recognized his "exemplary leadership and outstanding service." Dave was unable to attend the Social, so Will Bagley accepted the award in his behalf.

Since the award ceremony got Will to the microphone, it became his turn to present the evening's lecture on Parley P. Pratt's Golden Pass Road, near which the evening's social was located. Bagley began with a brief history of the wagon routes from the Weber River into Salt Lake Valley. One was through Weber Canyon, virtually impassable but yet used on occasions. The Donner-Reed party opened the second route, which was improved and used by the Mormons from 1847 until 1862. This road, known as the Mormon Trail, passed through Main and East canyons, went along "Kanyon" Creek, over Big and Little mountains and down Emigration Canyon. The third trail—the Golden Pass Road—went up Silver Creek to Parley's Park, along Mountain Dell Creek and through Parley's Canyon to Salt Lake Valley. In 1847 Parley's Canyon was so narrow, so constricted and so difficult that wagon travel was not feasible, so the Mormons followed "Reed's Road" over Big and Little mountains.

The difficulties of the Mormon Trail quickly started a search for an easier route. In the summer of 1848, Parley P. Pratt explored Mountain Dell, Parley's Park and Kimball's Junction. Pratt saw the potential and applied for funds to open the road, but in early Utah revenue was scarce and for a while there was no money available.

Yet Pratt acquired property in the canyon that was to bear his name and in the summer of 1849, he began road building. He basically followed the route that over a century later was to become Interstate 80 into Salt Lake Valley. In 1850 Parley P. Pratt opened the road, with the *Deseret News* promoting its virtues. The toll road covered forty miles, with the toll booth at Suicide Rock. Six thousand gold rushers used the Golden Pass road down Parley's Canyon, but most Mormons followed the free Emigration Canyon route. In 1851 Pratt went on a mission for the Mormon church and the road fell out of use.

In 1862, the Salt Lake City leaders opened the Parley's Canyon road again and it became the main wagon road to the valley. Even with the massive interstate running through the canyon, the route still maintains a geologic charm; its natural beauty and history make it golden even yet.

The social was topped off with a raffle by Jerry Dunton, who had gained much valuable experience and some unclaimed prizes from the Salt Lake Conven-

tion. Happy winners claimed their booty. Fortunately, no one was really a loser since the raffle tickets were free and everyone had a wonderful evening as a prize. After last-minute socializing and a speedy cleanup, the Crossroads social ended under the magnificent stars over the Wasatch Mountains.

## Gateway

### MISSOURIAN SPEAKS ON MORMON EMIGRATION

Richard Hill, a resident of Cameron, Missouri, and a member of the Gateway Chapter of OCTA, is a descendant of the Poachin, Kilpack, Chapman, Curtis, and Linge families, all Mormon emigrants to Utah. At the Gateway chapter meeting held on November 8, 1994, at the Pony Express National Memorial in St. Joseph, Richard talked about his ancestors who came from England in response to the efforts of Mormon missionaries. Most traveled to Salt Lake City in wagon trains, but one set of ancestors went west with a handcart company.

It is not unusual for people living in the western states to have ancestors who traveled to the West as emigrants on the Oregon or California Trail. In Missouri, it is more of a rarity since the majority of the people who emigrated stayed in the West to establish their homes and raise their families. Richard's personal connection with the emigration provided an educational and entertaining program for the Gateway meeting.

Last year, the Gateway Chapter created bookmarks with a reading list of books about the Oregon and California trails. Gateway Chapter meeting dates, times, locations and programs for the coming year were listed on the back of the bookmarks, which were distributed to local and regional libraries. The project proved so successful that it has been updated for this year. In addition to being distributed at the libraries again, the



*Richard Hill, descendant of Mormon pioneers and a member of the Gateway Chapter of OCTA, presents a talk about his pioneer ancestors.*

—Jackie Lewin Photo

bookmarks were included in the October 1994 mailing of the Gateway newsletter.

## Nebraska

### SUGGESTED READING FOR 1995 CONVENTION

The Nebraska Chapter is busily preparing for the 1995 OCTA National Convention in Grand Island. Since we are very anxious for OCTA members to enjoy the prairie and the Platte River we would like to submit a reading list that will acquaint everyone with our area. Members are familiar with the standard trail books by Mattes, Franzwa, Unruh and others. Our list pertains to Nebraska and the prairie.

*The Platte River Road: An Atlas of the Big Bend Region*, edited by Allen Jenkins, published by University of Nebraska Press.

*Man of the Plains*, Don Danker.

*The Platte Channels of Time*, by Paul Johnsgaard. *Nebraska Voices*, published by the Nebraska Humanities Council.

*Nebraska Historical Tour Guide*, by D. R. Wilson.

In addition, you can't go wrong with any books by these Nebraska authors: Marie Sandoz, Willa Cather, John G. Neihardt, Wright Morris, Bess Streeter Aldrich, Loren Eisely, Nellie Snyder Yost, John Janovy, James Hansen, and Donald, R. Hickey.

For further information, write to:

Travel and Tourism Division  
Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development  
P. O. Box 94666  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
P. O. Box 30370  
Lincoln, NE 68503

## Trails Head

### CHAPTER HAS A BUSY 1994

1994 has been a busy and very productive year for the Trails Head Chapter and the local trails. The year included three treks by the chapter:

On the Military Road to Fort Scott on March 18.

The Westport to Lawrence Trail on May 14.

The Oregon-California Trail from the Nebraska Line down to Alcove Springs on September 24.

Our first symposium was held 29 October at the University of Missouri in Kansas City. An article on the event appears elsewhere in this issue of the NFP.

Our annual meeting was held November 10 at the Mahaffie House, which was a stage station on the Westport branch of the trail near Olathe. Mary Conrad

presented the program, showing slides of her participation in a 1988 archaeological dig at the site. Her presentation was followed by a brief tour of the House.

These chapter officers were elected for 1995: Ross Marshal—President; Mary Conrad—Vice President; Jim Budde—Treasurer; Tom McCutcheon—Secretary.

The above activities did not happen without a lot of work by the officers and members. A planning meeting was held approximately every month, and I want to thank each volunteer for their dedication to preserving the local trails.



## CA-NV

### HOSTS SOUTHERN TRAILS GABFEST

The California-Nevada Chapter will hold a full week of field trips and lectures April 8–9, 1995 to call attention to the historic trails crossing the Mojave Desert near Baker. A 4-wheel-drive trek commencing in Kingman, Arizona on April 3 will end at Zzyzx on April 7. The trip is limited to 15 vehicles whose occupants will dry-camp for four nights on the old Mojave Road.

Zzyzx is the site for meetings that begin Saturday morning, April 8. The facility, known as Desert Studies Center, is administered by California State College, Fullerton. The center offers sleeping accommodations, but guests must furnish their own bedding. Lecture facilities seat 100 for meetings that will be opened to local historical societies after OCTA members register. Tent and RV camping dry camping nearby at The Granites is available at no charge. Zzyzx is a Nature Conservancy, so pets must be left at home or in camp.

Field trips are scheduled both days after lunch, with 4-WD transportation provided for those who need it. On Saturday, Bill Mann will lead a tour of Afton Canyon. On Sunday, Emmitt Harder will lead an auto tour to the Mormon Trail Ruts and the Old Death Valley Mine.

Speakers and topics are:

- Dennis Casebier—The Mojave Road
- Cliff Walker—Old Mormon Trail through California
- Dr. Leo Lyman—Cajon Pass Trails
- Dr. Delmer Ross—The Bradshaw Road.

Don Buck will speak Saturday evening when the group meets at Baker High School Gymnasium for a catered dinner. Don will speak on "Designating the Southern Route as a National Historic Trail." As architect of the proposal, Don writes: "Aside from having informative talks and exciting tours on southern trails, a major reason for the symposium in southern California is to generate momentum on having Congress designate the various trails in the southwest and southern California, collectively called the Southern Route, as National Historic Trails (like the recent designation given the DeAnza Trail and the California Trail by

Congress). At its mid-year board meeting in March, 1994, OCTA's Board of Directors approved a proposal that the association seek such designation but decided to leave it up to the three chapters involved (CA-NV, Southwest and Crossroads) to implement the proposal. So our forthcoming Southern Trails Symposium will become a step in that direction. We hope to generate active support and discuss a plan of action to eventually have those southern trails designated as National Historic Trails."

Don Buck will provide literature, maps and written information on the proposal to participants. If you plan to attend this Symposium a registration form needs your prompt attention. To get one, call or write Mary Mueller, 112 Silver Oak Court, San José, CA, 95120 (Tel. 408-268-7389).



## Southwest

### EXPLORES COOKE'S WAGON ROAD

Eighteen intrepid rut-stompers converged in Lordsburg, New Mexico, on November 11, to begin mapping the Coyote Hills segment of the Southern Trail. Don Buck and Doyle Reed came from California, while other members convened from all around Arizona and New Mexico. It rained hard for two days, as forecast, but everyone showed up anyway. The phrase, "but it never rains in the Southwest" was repeated—over and over—to no avail.

The downpour grounded the trail trackers, so Pat Etter and Rose Ann Tompkins divided everyone into teams in various motel rooms to plot trail information from GLO plats onto 7.5-minute quad maps. We learned a lot from the exercise and planned our February and March mapping trips to Cooke's Pass (near Deming) and Whitemire Pass (near Lordsburg).

When the weather subsided for a couple of hours on Friday and Saturday, we drove about 30 miles southeast of Lordsburg to Coyote Hills, and located about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles of Class 2 trail (used original trail). Interestingly, the local population has little idea that the dirt road winding through the Coyote Hills once was an historic trail that linked the copper mines in the north with Chihuahua in the south, and that the Spanish and Mexicans trod its length long before the Mormon Battalion turned the track into a wagon road in 1846. Nor do they know that close to 20,000 goldseekers followed along in 1849—and more in 1850.

By mapping and photographing the Southern Trail, members of Southwest OCTA hope to preserve the location and history of the Southern Trail and make others aware that there was a significant migration through Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California. It therefore becomes a very important aspect of the Westward Movement—Patricia A. Etter

# Announcements

## BOARD MEETING NOTICE

The mid-year meeting of officers and directors of OCTA will convene on Saturday, March 18, at Independence to consider all business of the association that comes before it. The one-day session will open at 8:30 A.M. in OCTA's headquarters at the National Frontier Trails Center.

Chapter officers, committee chairs and all other members of the association are invited to attend. Anyone who wishes to appear before the meeting or propose an item to the agenda for discussion should notify Jeanne Miller, Executive Director, P. O. Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051-0519, or David Bigler, President, 11696 So. Oak Manor Dr., Sandy, UT 84092.

## CALL FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

All chapters and members should now consider nominations for annual OCTA awards. Nominations should be in the form of letters providing details on each nominee and why he or she (or an organization), deserves the award. Awards are made in the following categories:

**Meritorious Achievement Award**, OCTA's highest award, made to those individuals or organizations who make many contributions, over a long period of time, (1) toward identification, marking, or awareness of significant trails, or (2) toward strengthening OCTA as an organization. Usually only one or two such awards are made each year.

**National Certificate of Appreciation**, given to individuals or organizations that make particular efforts toward achieving short-term OCTA goals.

**Volunteer of the Year Award**, given to one particular individual who, on his or her own initiative, and over several months, undertakes and completes a complex task that brings credit to OCTA in furtherance of its objectives.

Nominating letters should be directed to the OCTA Awards Chairman, W. L. (Bud) Rusho, 5299 Gurene Dr., Salt Lake City, UT 84117. To be considered by the Awards Committee, the letters should arrive no later than June 1, 1995.

## CALL FOR BOARD NOMINATIONS

The Nominating and Leadership Committee reports that four members of OCTA's Board of Directors will be elected at the annual meeting in Grand Island, Nebraska, in August. Nominations are now being accepted.

Terms expire in 1995 for Susan Badger Doyle, Michael Bateman, Doyle Reed and James Renner. Susan Doyle has served the maximum of two terms

and James Renner declined to run again. Doyle Reed and Michael Bateman are eligible for re-election, each having served only one three-year term.

According to OCTA's bylaws, all current members are eligible to be nominated and can submit suggestions for nominations. OCTA members can also submit written and signed nominations, which should include signed endorsements from three additional members.

The bylaws require that nominations include a brief description of the person's qualifications, experience and activities, and a statement of their willingness to serve, signed by the nominee.

The deadline for receiving suggestions and nominations is April 1. Ballots will be mailed to members in May. Send nominations and recommendations to:

Jackie Lewin  
Pony Express National Memorial  
P. O. Box 244  
St. Joseph, MO 64502-0244  
Tel: 816-279-5059

## TRAILS HEAD CHAPTER HONORS GAGE

### FAMILY AS FRIENDS OF THE TRAIL

OCTA Friend of the Trail Awards were presented to Mr. & Mrs. John Gage and Mr. & Mrs. David Gage in the Lawrence public library on September 23. The award recognized their preservation of Bluejacket's Ford, a trail site located on a farm owned and operated by the Gage families. The Gages were not able to attend the national convention in Salt Lake City to receive the awards, so Ross Marshall made the presentation after reviewing OCTA and its objectives and discussing the role of Bluejacket's Ford during the overland emigration.



Gage family gathers to accept "Friend of the Trail" award from OCTA Director Ross Marshall for their preservation of Bluejacket Ford. Front: Mary, Eleanor and John Gage. Back: Ross Marshall, David Gage and John Leamon.

# Queries and Comments

I have a query. Some records of the Mormon Pioneers of 1847 tell of their affliction with a condition they referred to as "mountain fever." The most notable of the afflicted was Brigham Young, who became ill near the crossing of the Bear River. He was delayed in his arrival in the Salt Lake Valley by his recuperating for several days in a camp on Coyote Creek near the Needles.

My research concerning this condition indicates this illness was limited to the Mormon emigration. If any of the readers have any references to this condition noted in journal entries, describing suspected causes, duration of illness, symptoms and deaths, please send me the references. Of particular interest would be references to mountain fever afflicting non-Mormon emigrants. I would be most appreciative of any information.

Jay A. Aldous  
2355 Country Club Circle  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109  
Phone (801) 487-2484

In the October issue of *News from the Plains* someone asked: "[Between Lisco & Oshkosh, Nebraska there is] a series of rows of double fencing out in the field next to the road. There is a single barbed wire fence next to the county road and then about fifty yards out in the field are double rows of fencing, 15 yards wide and sometimes

1/4 to 1/2 mile long. What are they?"

As I come from Bridgeport, about 15 miles west of Lisco, Nebraska, we decided to investigate, and upon getting to Lisco found my old friend Bill Heldt, who had

lived all his life there, and knew about it. As I suspected, the tree line was put up to help barricade snow from the north, to prevent it from getting on the nearby county road in the winter. Since it is out in pasture land, fencing was put up to keep cattle out and protect the trees. In this country, and on as dry land generally, it takes a number of years for trees to mature.

Sincerely,

Joseph W. Fairfield  
Bridgeport, Nebraska

My copy of Eliza P. Donner Houghton's 1911 book, *The Expedition of the Donner Party*, started me wondering about Eliza's burial site. A circuitous search led to Nona McGlashan of Auburn, California. Nona is the author of *Give Me a Mountain Meadow*, the life story of her grandfather, C. F. McGlashan, who wrote the pathbreaking *History of the Donner Party*.

Nona put me in touch with Ann Smith of Arroyo Grande, California—Eliza's granddaughter and great-granddaughter of Tamsen Donner. Mrs. Smith kindly filled in the blanks. Mrs. Smith also said "Houghton" is pronounced "How-ton" in the West, and "Hoe-ton" in the East. On one of my Johnson Ranch tours, a descendant pronounced it "Who-ton." Take your choice.

Best regards,

Jack Steed  
Sacramento, California

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Prof. Roger McGrath of UCLA: "a well-reasoned and thoughtful challenge to George R. Stewart's *Ordeal by Hunger*, exhaustively researched, an enormously valuable contribution."

THE AUTHOR HAS SERVED AS ADVISOR AND PARTICIPANT IN DONNER PARTY FILMS FOR TV ON "THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE" AND "THE REAL WEST" SERIES.

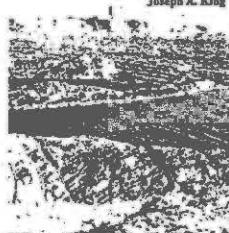
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This may be the book of the year as the 150th anniversary of the Famine heats up the interest not only of Irish Americans but of all Americans in immigration studies. This is a classic example of scholarship allied to lively writing.

Reading as easily as a novel, the book conveys the excitement and the pain of a people forced to risk an uncertain voyage to a hoped-for better life. The author focuses on one family's hegira as typical of the many from West Cork who, landing in Canada, eventually spread their wings to Maine, Wisconsin, Minnesota and the West Coast. He concludes with a chapter detailing his step-by-step route through the genealogical maze. This may be helpful to other seekers. A somber story raised to a heroic and heartlifting saga.

Prof. Stewart Donovan, *Atlantic Provinces Book Review*: "Done gently with feeling and care, a noble service, worth reading and having."

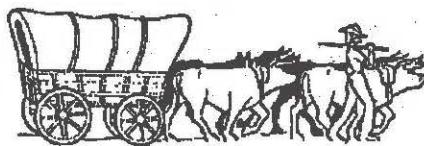
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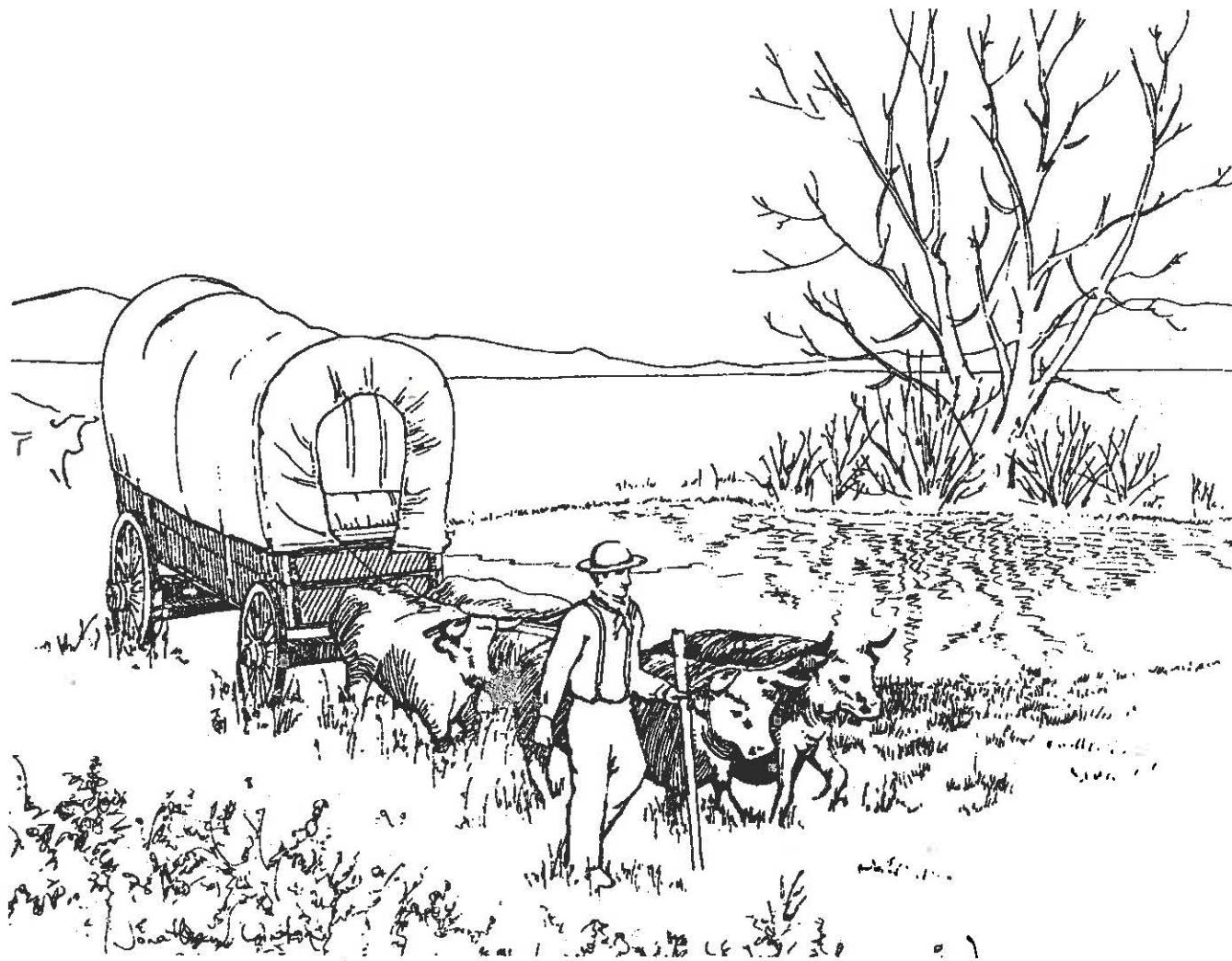
# Buffalo Chips



## CLASSROOM OF THE QUARTER

Bill Hartley of Brigham Young University has nominated Bill Carper's eighth grade class at Murray Community School (Murray, Iowa, 50174) as our first Classroom of the Quarter. The class received a \$5,000 grant from the Iowa Sesquicentennial Commission to document, map, hike and videotape the Mormon Trail between Garden Grove and Mount Pisgah, and they hiked this entire segment of the trail. Professor Hartley reports, "Great project! They excitedly showed me their photo albums of the venture, and the maps and a great little brochure they produced."

OCTA is proud to support these efforts to pass on an awareness of western trails and their role in American history.



*Jonathan Litton drew the picture of Heinrich Lienhard at Donner Spring that now graces our masthead for the cover of the program for the dedication of the preservation project at last year's convention. Mr. Litton, a Sterling Scholar now studying at Brigham Young University, has graciously agreed to let us use his artwork, and we've reproduced the original picture in "Buffalo Chips."*

## Buffalo Chip Cookies

*Every member of the family going West had important responsibilities on the trail. Children contributed one of the most essential ingredients for mealtime—buffalo chips! On the prairies there was very little wood for making fires to cook food, and so a substitute had to be found. Buffalo dung was very plentiful and burned well. It looked somewhat like a "cow-pie," but larger. When dried out and aged in the sun for a good long time, it answered the need for firewood. And since kids were always on foot walking the trail, they were in a great position to gather the chips through the day to be used that evening. It wasn't a pleasant chore, but one that had to be done, and often the kids, especially the boys, could make it a fun adventure. Maybe the children of the trail, didn't really enjoy buffalo chips, but these "buffalo chips" are guaranteed to please you and your friends.*

### Ingredients

1 cup melted butter	2 1/4 cups flour
3/4 cup granulated sugar	1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup packed brown sugar	1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla	Green food coloring
1/4 water	One 12 oz. pkg. chocolate chips
2 eggs	1 cup shredded coconut (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Melt the butter in a small ovenproof dish in the oven. In a large mixing bowl, beat together granulated and brown sugar, vanilla, water and eggs. Stir in the melted butter. In another bowl mix the flour, baking soda and salt together. Then mix the flour mixture into the sugar mixture, stirring well so all ingredients blend. Next, drop in a few drops of the green food coloring. (Start with just a few drops and add a little more at a time until you have the desired color—more drops give a "fresher, just deposited" chip; fewer drops make a more real looking aged, "ready for the fire" chip. Don't put in too much green, or it doesn't look like a buffalo chip, it just looks like something left over from St. Patrick's Day. Experimentation is half the fun!) Mix the green so it looks even. Stir in the chocolate chips thoroughly. If you like coconut, stir it in when you add the chocolate chips; if you don't like coconut, you can leave it out—they are still good. Shape your cookies into spoonsful about the size of your fist or a tennis ball. Only put about three at a time on an ungreased cookie sheet for baking so they have room to spread out nicely. Spread the gobs down just a little bit so they will still have a good globby appearance when they are baked. Bake them for about 15 to 18 minutes, or until they look a bit golden and firm around the edges. When finished baking, remove them from the cookie sheet and put them on a wire rack to cool. Cool them completely before eating. Happy eating!

—Lyndia Carter

## Overland Acrostic

S V T A C D F G B M L X T M C G L E R O C K I E S O S J T F  
 P O P S B F O R T H A L L B T K Z S B T M D L J Q B O R N O  
 E S U L A K V B M Y M M T C V H H T D L M V B R I D G E R R  
 D C L V A K D T C O W D S J B Q O J D K O D I N V D M S R T  
 V H A M H T I H L E W I S U M E S O R S Y S U F Q M R J B L  
 O I Z B U J T Q O G N L Z O R T I F D N B M W U H U V S T A  
 U M J N Z B K E U M L L H A M T Z A O S M N B A J S A W M R  
 L N O M O T N R G W A A J S F E Z N H C O D P Y L M P N X A  
 M E K O H S T M H D X H T T N L M A O H L V R U P E P Q M M  
 W Y S L X F S U L Y O T N O X B U R N S S A I T S N L X S I  
 J R Z B N E M J I F R F W R M U W E B F G T R M Y T E U T E  
 A O Z S H R N Q N N D O X G D S O L Q U N O G K A D G N H N  
 W C B M O R U O R E G O N C I T Y O W V F F D I M J A O K L  
 I K J T S Y C B S N D S N O D F J H N G B F T S F N T I C A  
 S A K D N G X A J I M I Z N M O L C T M D J A T M G E T O M  
 C C L R E M I G R A N T R U E H X O M E E K B L A H E I E S  
 K A O G M I C R D L M K D S R R L B A D E M O A O M R N S E  
 Q L A N T N A M T I H W I K O L P N O Q H T I M S I D U A D  
 D I I C B J R Z E S W U M X M U V A K Z I O R B Y A I M Z A  
 S C S A N V S T D F O W S T D N B J S W N L Y K A B N M F C  
 E O J T I X O A S L W S S A P H T U O S J Y M O C R R A J S  
 R S I T N Q N U F T K E A R N Y E K W F D A O J K I L D U A  
 W S M L S O L O S M L B I N I M S W B X I S Q O Y E M O K C  
 S W E E T W A T E R Z V A A A T W A G O N R R U O L F Y W S  
 I I M R C D O M V H O D W C U S S O D A S P R I N G S R X N  
 B H I F O I B A U B K A S I O M W N O D V U T O Z O N T Y A  
 I N D E P E N D E N C E O M T N D I A V A I B M U L O C A Y

See if you can find these words—they run up, down, diagonally, and even backwards! We're out of room, so for the solution, send the editor a postcard.—submitted by Teresa Santucci.

### Places

FORT HALL  
CHIMNEY ROCK  
DONNER PASS  
SODA SPRINGS  
FORT LARAMIE  
INDEPENDENCE  
FT. KEARNY  
PLATTE River  
SOUTH PASS  
OREGON CITY  
MT HOOD  
SWEETWATER River  
COLUMBIA River  
CASCADES  
ROCKIES

### People

Joe MEEK  
Meriwether LEWIS  
William CLARK  
Dr. Marcus WHITMAN  
Jesse APPLEGATE  
Jim BRIDGER  
Jedediah SMITH  
Kit CARSON  
John Jacob ASTOR  
Sam BARLOW  
Andrew SUBLETTE

### Things

OXEN  
CHOLERA  
SWINE  
FLOUR  
BUFFALO  
BACON  
WAGON  
AMMUNITION  
CALICO  
EMIGRANT  
FERRY  
YOKE  
CATTLE

Out on the trail  
in the woods  
on the prairie  
in big wagons  
out of food  
out of water  
no more oxen  
hot and dusty  
my life

Traci Dewater  
Buckeye School  
Placerville, CA.

—Submitted by Shirley Grosche

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