



News from the Plains



Volume XII, No. 1

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

January 1998



Effie Ritchey at the Ezra Meeker monument,
in Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

— Photo By Roger Blair

"I Remember the Day"

A Connection To Ezra Meeker and Oregon Trail History

(Ezra Meeker became one of the best known Oregon Trail emigrants, not just because of his first trip in 1852, but because of a return trip by covered wagon in 1906 at the age of 76 in an effort to create national interest in marking and preserving the trail. Much of the preserved legacy of the Oregon Trail can be attributed to his work.)

by Roger Blair

Most overland trail history can only be studied through books and other written sources. Only rarely can one find a more tangible link to important events or people. OCTA recently lost one such link with the passing of Merrill Mattes, who had met William Henry Jackson and accompanied him in identifying the location at which he sketched his famous painting of Chimney Rock.

On October 4, 1997, Northwest Chapter members met another of these tangible links to our historic past. Mrs. Effie Ritchey addressed a chapter outing in Walla Walla, Washington, telling about the day Ezra Meeker came to address her school.

Mrs. Ritchey began her talk with the words, "I remember the day; I remember it well." This is a remarkable feat itself, considering she was just a few days shy of her 99th birthday. Effie attended fifth grade at Grove School in Milton, Oregon, where, on April 14, 1910, her teacher announced that the students would participate in an exciting historic event.

"A man who had 'come West' fifty-eight years ago with a huge wagon train was going to visit us and tell us stories of

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Kathy Conway Named OCTA Headquarters Manager

Kathy Conway has been named Headquarters Manager for the Oregon-California Trails Association, succeeding Jeanne Miller, who retired last fall.

The appointment was made by OCTA's Executive Committee and took effect January 1st.

Kathy has worked for OCTA since 1990, first performing bookkeeping tasks and later adding membership services to her responsibilities. She is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a degree in American History.

"I have enriched my history background with the excellent trail knowledge made available by our dedicated members from their

on-site trail experiences to their fine research found in the many trail diaries now coming to light," Kathy says.

A lifelong resident of Independence, Kathy and her husband, Jim, have three sons, twins Sean and Ryan who are freshmen in college, and Spencer, who is in junior high school.

The OCTA office in Independence is located at 524 South Osage Street and is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It can be reached by calling (816) 252-2276, by fax at (816) 836-0989 or via e-mail at octahqts@gvi.net.

Remember, too, the OCTA Bookstore should be your first stop when you're looking for books about the trails.

From the Editor's Desk . . .

There's an early December snow falling outside my window and in my mind's-eye I know that the trails through Nevada and across the Sierra are blanketed with white. I'm sure it's the same over most of the Oregon-California Trail network (although our colleagues to the south will undoubtedly continue to enjoy their outings, albeit sometimes briskly, through the winter).

For the next several months, trail hikes will be little more than memories for most OCTA members. For many of us, the only way we will have to visit the trails will be through the books we cherish, revisiting old friends and making new ones..

The biggest challenge, all too frequently, is in deciding which books to read as we settle in for a long winter's nap from the trails. The OCTA Bookstore is overflowing with excellent selections. But where to start? We asked OCTA members to make some suggestions and they didn't fail us.

"If anyone interested in the overland trails experience hasn't yet read John D. Unruh's *The Plains Across*, now's the time to do so," suggests Susan Badger-Doyle. "Unruh's comprehensive examination of the first two decades of the overland trails era is a classic." Badger-Doyle, who co-edited two OCTA books which should be on this winter's reading lists, *The 1849 California Trail Diaries of Elijah Preston Howell* and *The 1854 Oregon Trail Diary of Winfield Scott Ebey*, also suggests two of her personal favorites, *Law For The Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail* and *Policing the Elephant: Crime, Punishment and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail*, both by John Phillip Reid.

Jerry Carbiener suggests *Overland to California with the*

Pioneer Line, The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid, edited by Mary McDougall Gordon, along with *Glory Hunter, A Biography of Patrick Edward Cannor* by Brigham D. Madsen and *The Mormon Battalion, U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848*, by Norma Ricketts.

"Pardon me for stating the obvious," says Bob Mackey, "but Merrill J. Mattes' *The Great Platte River Road* would be a worthy book to mention. This is a classic work that newcomers need to know about."

Rudi Paul Lindner suggests the classic *Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, by Irene Paden. He notes some shortcomings, but adds, "It is a trail narrative within a trail narrative: a story of wagons and swales surrounded by a story of old cars, dirt roads, and road houses, a journey now lost and gone forever."

If your interests turn toward the southern trails, Rose Ann Tompkins suggests *Missouri 49er, the Journal of William W. Hunter on the Southern Gold Trail*, edited and annotated by David P. Robrock. Meanwhile, Bob Munkres recommends *The Indian War of 1864* by Eugene Ware, *Journal of Travels Over The Rocky Mountains* by Joel Palmer ("one of the classic journals of trail travel") and *What I Saw In California* by Edwin Bryant ("filled with information, observations and descriptions").

So, where do you find them? Naturally, we suggest you check the OCTA Bookstore first. OCTA members get a ten percent discount on all purchases and you're supporting a good cause.

Enjoy the reading and we'll see you on the trails — when the snow melts, of course.

-- Bill Martin

Submission Guidelines

News From The Plains welcomes timely submissions of news, features and photos related to the work of the organization and its members and the preservation of our trails heritage.

Material is due 30 days prior to publication dates.

Material is best sent either on a computer disk (in DOS or text format but make sure you include a hard copy) or via e-mail.

Pictures are appreciated but cannot always be returned.

If you have any questions, please call

Editor Bill Martin at (702) 747-2860 or e-mail at words@worldnet.att.net.

Next Deadline Is March 1, 1998

NEWS FROM THE PLAINS

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From The President . . .

The winter months restrict most outdoor activities on the trails, causing a lull in OCTA business, especially at the national level. Many chapters, however, have active monthly programs with some excellent topics and speakers.

One example was the Northwest Chapter's October meeting, organized by Lethene Parks and held in Walla Walla, Washington. See the story in this issue about Effie Ritchey, a 99-year-old lady who shared her memories with OCTA of the day she met Ezra Meeker in 1910.

Also in this issue is the announcement by vice-president Dave Welch calling for nominations for election to the Board of Directors. OCTA needs dedicated individuals willing to work to further its goals. If serving on the Board does not interest you, consider volunteering to serve on a committee of your interest or helping at the chapter level. There are many ways OCTA needs your help and can use your talents.

In addition to identifying potential Board candidates, now is the time to start thinking about rewarding those who have made significant contributions. Awards Chair George Ivory will be seeking nominations for the various awards OCTA bestows at the annual convention.

The Executive Committee met in Independence in November to review Headquarters functions. Kathy Conway has been acting Headquarters Manager since Jeanne Miller's retirement this fall. Kathy has accomplished an efficient and timely transition since Jeanne left, streamlining several office procedures. She will become Headquarters Manager effective January 1, 1998,

working a full-time 40 hour week. On the down side, Ardis Everett will be leaving by year end. The office staff does a good job keeping OCTA functioning smoothly on a daily basis.

On behalf of OCTA's members, I offer congratulations to Kathy and sincere thanks and best wishes to Ardis. The Executive Committee will meet again in January to evaluate further the Headquarters organization and function before bringing a report and recommendations to the Board at the mid-year meeting.

Planning for the Pendleton convention remains on track. This convention will include a portion of the Oregon Trail starting in the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton and extending "Out of the Blues" west as far as the Boardman Bombing Range. The Navy has recently made Well Springs on the Bombing Range more accessible. Please read the article in this issue by Susan Badger Doyle concerning the recent dedication ceremony at Well Springs. The Whitman route and mission also will be included in this convention. Plan to attend the convention August 12-15, 1997. The usual pre- and post-convention tours will be offered.

The mid-year meeting of the Board of Directors will be hosted by the Southwest Chapter and will be held in Phoenix, Arizona, on Saturday, March 28, 1998. The meeting will be in the new facilities of the Arizona Historical Society from 8:30 a.m. to approximately 5:00 p.m. All OCTA members are welcome to attend.

— Roger Blair

Mid-Year Board Meeting

The Southwest Chapter will host the Mid-Year meeting of OCTA's Board of Directors on Saturday, March 28, in the Phoenix, Arizona, area.

All committee chairs and directors are asked to submit a report of their activities since the last Board meeting in August to Kathy Conway at headquarters no later than March 1 to give staff time to distribute them prior to the meeting.

If members have any items which they would like to be brought before the Board for consideration, they should contact OCTA President Roger Blair. All OCTA members are welcome to attend the meeting.

The all-day Board meeting will be held at the Arizona Historical Society, 1300 North College Avenue, in Tempe. A no-host dinner will be held at a nearby restaurant.

In addition, Rose Ann and Harland Tompkins will host a casual coffee and dessert at their home on Friday evening. The Southwest Chapter is also making plans for a day-trip over a portion of the trail along the Gila River on Sunday, March 29th.

New Bookstore Offerings

Just when you think you have every book title in your library, the OCTA Bookstore has added several new selections.

New titles include:

The Expedition of the Donner Party and Its Fate, edited by Kristin Johnson, paperback, \$16.

The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, by John Sunder, paperback, \$17.95.

News of the Plains/Rockies, Vol 3, compiled and annotated by Dr. David White, clothbound, \$50

The Missouri, by Stan Vestal, paperback, \$15

Mormon Pioneer Trail, by Stanley Kimball, paperback, \$6

Finding the Trail in Oregon, by Keith May, paperback, \$14.95

Oregon Trail Revisited, by Gregory Franzwa (new and revised Silver Anniversary Edition, paperback, \$19.95.

Books can be ordered directly from OCTA at P.O. Box 1019, Independence MO 64051-0519. Please add shipping and handling charges of \$3 for the first book and \$1 for each additional book.

— Kathy Conway

Nominations Open For OCTA Board Positions

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

Terms expire in 1998 for Norman Wilson, Lowell Tiller, Michael Bateman and Vic Bolon. Vic Bolon is presently serving the last year of Doyle Reed's term and is eligible for reelection, as are Norman Wilson and Lowell Tiller, who are completing their first three year terms. Michael Bateman will complete two consecutive terms, and is not eligible for reelection.

According to OCTA's bylaws, all current members of OCTA are eligible to be nominated and any current OCTA member may submit one or more written nominations.

The following must be submitted to the Chairman of the Nominating and Leadership Committee before the nomination can be considered:

- Information about the qualifications and experience of the

person recommended and the extent to which such person has participated in the affairs of the Association.

- A written endorsement of from three OCTA members.

- A statement of willingness to actively serve, if elected, signed by the nominee.

While trail-related activities are a key consideration for all nominees, service on other boards and management and financial expertise are encouraged. Experience as an educator, historian (amateur or professional) or researcher should be noted. To assist the Committee, submission of a resume for each nominee is encouraged.

The deadline for receiving nominations is April 1, 1998. Nominations should be mailed to: David Welch, P.O. Box 88947, Steilacoom, WA 98388. Ballots will be mailed about May 1, 1998. If you have questions, please contact Dave at (253) 584-0332.

— David Welch

OCTA Members Cited

Three OCTA members have received national awards from the American Association for State and Local History.

Considered among the most prestigious awards in the field, they recognize excellence in the collection, preservation and interpretation of state, provincial and local history throughout North America. The awards were announced at the 52nd annual AASLH meeting in Denver Oct. 1-4.

Dr. Brigham D. Madsen of Salt Lake City received one of the 36 Awards of Merit for his "tremendous contributions" to the understanding of Utah history and its interpretation through his extensive writings on the cultural history of the state. This award is given for "performance deemed excellent compared nationally with similar activities."

Certificates of Commendation were awarded to Norma Baldwin Ricketts of Mesa, AZ, and to Kristin Johnson of Salt Lake City. These are given based upon "excellence within the context of available means and regional standards."

Mrs. Ricketts' book, *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848*, was recognized as the "first complete history of an insufficiently recognized group whose members opened four major wagon roads." The AASLH Certificate also noted the book "revealed the importance of the Gadsden Purchase corridor" and called attention to the Battalion's important contributions to the development of San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Ms. Johnson was recognized for her book *Unfortunate Emigrants: Narratives of the Donner Party*. "By revisiting early accounts of the Donner Party experience," this book "provides an enlightening account of their history and an interesting view of the early public fascination with the disaster," her citation noted.

— Jeanne Watson

Call For OCTA Awards

Nominations are now being accepted for OCTA Service Awards and for Outstanding Educator Awards which will be presented at the 1998 Convention in Pendleton.

OCTA Awards include the Meritorious Achievement Award, the highest award given by OCTA, which goes to individuals or organizations who have made long-term and significant contributions.

Other awards include the National Certificate of Appreciation, for individuals or organizations who help with specific short-term projects, and the Volunteer of the Year Award, given to an individual OCTA member.

Letters of nominations should be sent by June 1st to George Ivory, Awards Chairman, 970 East Woodoak Lane, Salt Lake City UT 84117. The nomination should include details as to why the nominee deserves the award.

Outstanding Educator Awards recognize achievement in educating students of all ages about westward migration. Nomination is open to any individual and may reflect a whole unit or a special project or course on westward migration.

The awards are based on a unique or imaginative approach which goes beyond the normal teaching of the topic, as well as the historical accuracy, the range of student participation and its effectiveness. Programs from the 1996-97 or 1997-98 school years are eligible.

Separate awards will be presented in four categories: Elementary-primary/intermediate grades, Middle school/Junior high, High school, and Post secondary/college/adult education.

The deadline for applications is March 21, 1998. Forms and additional information can be obtained either from the OCTA office in Independence or from William E. Hill, chair of the OCTA Education Awards Committee, 91 Wood Road, Centereach NY 11720-1619, phone (516) 585-2592.

Ebey Signature Discovered At Independence Rock

By Susan Badger Doyle

Winfield Scott Ebey painted his name in large letters high up on the northeast face of Independence Rock on July 4, 1854.

He vividly describes his harrowing "adventure" in the recently published *The 1854 Oregon Trail Diary of Winfield Scott Ebey*, OCTA's Emigrant Trails Historical Studies Series Number 2.

Ebey was so scared after he finished painting that he froze in terror. He laid down and refused to move for fear of falling down the steep grade. He was soon rescued since the ledge he was on was only a few feet from the top.

When his diary was being prepared for publication, it was assumed that the signature was no longer visible since it had been painted with axle grease, and also it is not listed in Robert S. Ellison's published register of names on Independence Rock.

Fortunately, Levida Hileman, a member of OCTA's board, has been resurveying Independence Rock for previously unrecorded names. In October, Levida noticed the name W.S. Ebey in her data. She notified me, and I immediately called Randy Brown, chair of OCTA's Graves and Sites Committee.

Within days Randy drove out to Independence Rock to check it out. Given

Ebey's description and his own familiarity with the rock, Randy "walked right up to it, it was uncanny." The name is on a vertical face at the top of a steep grade, about fifty feet above the fenced area on the northeast end of the rock.

Just as Ebey describes, the letters are very large (thirteen or fourteen inches high) and would have been clearly visible from the variant route of the trail that went around the north side of the rock to a bridge over the Sweetwater one mile to the west.

In fact, Randy reports that from this height the swale of the trail is visible going along the base of the rock and running into the present highway.

Near Ebey's name Randy also found the inscription G.W. Beam, Ebey's cousin George Wesley Beam who climbed with him to the ledge that day. And a mystery was introduced, as

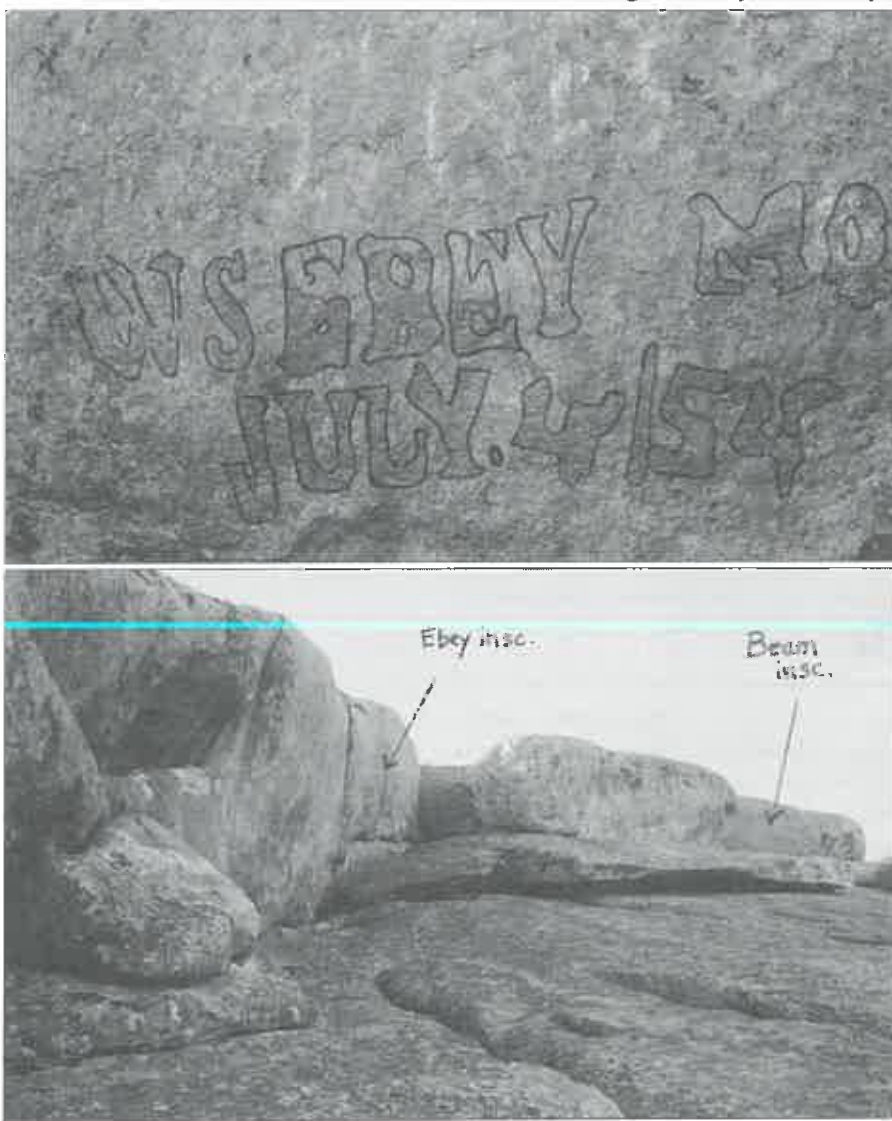
Randy discerned J. Eby just above W.S. Ebey. This is probably Jacob Ebey, Winfield's father. But Jacob did not climb up with them, so Winfield probably painted it. The different spelling is not a concern, since both spellings are found in the family's genealogy.

A fascinating aspect of this incredible discovery is the nature of the inscriptions. The painted letters resisted lichen growth, and although the paint is now gone, the bare rock of the letters stand out while lichen covers the rock surrounding them, creating what Randy calls a "shadow effect" and BLM archaeologist Jude Carino calls "negative relief."

Randy also thinks that the large size of the letters is probably the reason they survived, since smaller painted letters tend to become obscured by lichen growth. However they were

preserved, these signatures are tangible evidence of Ebey's memorable experience on Independence Rock.

Susan Badger-Doyle is co-editor, with Fred W. Dykes, of the Ebey Trail Diary, available from OCTA at P.O.Box 1019, Independence MO 64051. The cost is \$27.95 for clothbound and \$14.95 for paperback.



Top, an "enhanced" photo of the Ebey inscription. Bottom, specific locations of the Ebey and Beam inscriptions, directly above the trail. — Photos by Randy Brown

OCTA Annual Fund Drive Off To Great Start!

OCTA's annual fundraising drive is off to a strong start. As of December 1, OCTA had received 143 responses with contributions totalling \$10,510. These included \$6,003 for the Endowment Fund, \$2,089 for the Annual Fund and \$2,418 for Designated Funds, including Preservation, Graves & Sites/Trail Marking, COED, Special Publications, Archaeology, Trail Mapping, and Education. A special thanks to those members who have chosen to help OCTA to dispel all that "talk about going home." Here's a list of contributors, though December 1st:

-- James Budde, OCTA Treasurer

Richard and Lethene Parks
Katherine Kirkland
Beverly M. Cannon
Mark Howe
Mike & Renee Bateman
Jim & Ardis Everett
James & Patricia Whitworth
Jim Sheik
Edgar Weber
Mr & Mrs A. S. Littlefield
Dean & Mary Hand
Harold Smith
Norman J. Barker
Richard L. Rieck
Marilyn K. Pummell
Tom & Nancy Modrein
Richard & Jo Ann Dale
Mr Thomas James
Shaffer H. Fulton
Frank and Laurie Brown
Laurel C. Frost
Stanton & Addie Rickey

James G. Stearns
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Carleton L. Fuhrman
D. W. Wilson
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James K. Graves
Jil Stark
Greg Childs
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Lois Revak
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George & Bev Hesse
Richard & Rosemary Klein
Carol Ann Buss
Barbara A. Kelly
Campbell M. Wade
Clarice & Earl Whitney
Emma L. Puckett
William H. Knight
Percy J. Wetherbee
Lloyd & Gladys Robinson
Nelson S. Weller
William E. Eaton
Linda Cook
Bob & Jean Bennett
Clifford H. Fiscus

Virginia Nelson
William A. Rhoads
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Richard H. Skinner
Chip Gash
Ilene Hunter
Donna Rehbeck
Dr & Mrs Phillip S. King
Norman Lindberg
William R. Lindley
John Balmforth
Adelard & Princess Everton
Dale R. Robbins
Edwin Winn
Gene & Nancy Serr
John A. Bond
Betty Keane
Bucky Green
Eva Allen
Hal & Dorothy Goodyear
Dennis Wentland

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Meeker-Effie

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that journey, and he would be in a covered wagon driving two oxen!" Meeker was visiting Milton-Freewater, Oregon, on one of his treks over the Oregon Trail, locating the fast disappearing route and raising funds for monuments. Milton-Freewater lies on the cutoff to the Whitman Mission.

Effie recalled the students were marched to Central School, just a few blocks from where Meeker was. "A covered wagon was standing at the edge of the road where Main [Street] and 'The Road' [Elizabeth Street] joined, the oxen were chewing their cud, the man was digging a hole in the earth. We saw him put a long pipe in the hole, then pack the earth around it, clean off his spade and put it in the wagon. Next he climbed to the high seat, flicked his whip and the oxen began their slow pace our way."

Upon reaching the school children, "The man gave a flick of his whip and turned the oxen in before us and climbed down. Our superintendent hurried to greet him, and present the great Ezra Meeker! How we clapped and cheered!"

After telling the group tales of his life and of crossing the plains, he then told them he had just "placed a lead pipe in the earth where the 'Old Road' (Elizabeth) and Main turned a bit to the right to the 'Stage House' and Little Walla Walla River on the way to Whitman Mission and Walla Walla [Washington] This pipe was on 'Shield's Place.' This area was not being used for any purpose — just a good quantity of rocks and weeds.

"Each child had the privilege of selecting one medium-size rock — not a huge one! — placing them carefully about the pipe in a

pyramid, then standing back respectfully until all had participated in the ceremony. It had a very quiet sort of reverence The next day Meeker retraced his trail to Main Street and began the steep ascent of the old road to the East and our nation's capitol."

Over the years Milton-Freewater development overspread the "rocks and weeds" and the location of the lead pipe was lost. That is, lost to all but Effie's memory. Prior to 1989 she had pointed out where she believed the pipe was located. That year, "Dr. Michael Garton, 139 S. Main St., was having some landscaping cared for. A large excavator ran against a lead pipe.

Investigation proved it was not a water pipe nor a boundary line. It was within a few feet of the site I had indicated some time before. This was the site of the memorial 'monument' placed by Ezra Meeker 79 years before on April 14th, 1910. "I was so excited and pleased. I'd missed by just a few feet—a bit of a miracle after 79 years."

It may seem miraculous to her, but not to those who know this very active 99-year-old lady who still volunteers as a docent, leading tours at the Frazier Homestead Museum in Milton-Freewater. In September 1993 Mrs. Ritchey was the special guest at the dedication of a new granite monument on the exact site where Meeker had placed the original lead pipe marker. She composed the text for the monument and at the ceremony also recounted the day Ezra Meeker came to Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

Roger Blair is President of OCTA.



OCTA National Convention - Pendleton, Oregon

(The winter months are a great time to start thinking about getting out on the trails during the year ahead. For many of us, our thoughts will turn to Pendleton, Oregon, site of the 1998 OCTA convention the week of August 10. The following information has been provided by Jim Tompkins and is an overview of the many tours which are planned. The schedule is subject to change, so watch future issues of News From The Plains for more convention details.)

The weather in Pendleton will probably be hot, but can be unpredictable. Some tours are in the Blue Mountains and others are in the Boardman Desert. Come prepared for any weather. Bring shoes good for walking, especially if you sign up for a hike. Come with protective clothing and hats for sun and rain. Bring sun-screen and insect repellent.

Pre-Convention Tours

Monday August 10

Hat Point Bus Tour

An all-day bus tour to the rugged "Oregon Alps" wilderness of the extreme northeast corner of the state. Passing through LaGrande, Imbler, Elgin, Minam, Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise and Joseph, the destination is Hat Point, a 7000-foot high ridge overlooking the Snake River.

Here one can peer nearly straight down into Hells Canyon, over 6000 feet below, the deepest gorge in North America. You can meander along an easy trail system and enjoy striking views, or clamber to the top of the fire lookout tower for an even better look at the panoramic mountain skylines of Washington, Idaho and Oregon.

Monday - Tuesday August 10 - 11

1836 Whitman Route Auto Tour

Join this 4WD adventure retracing the 1836 Whitman horseback route across the Blue Mountains. The tour -- traversing high, open prairies and narrow ridges -- starts at Hilgard State Park, about nine miles west of LaGrande and ends up in Pendleton.

The Whitmans traveled about 35 miles in a day and a half. Inaccessible canyon crossings requires us to drive 140 miles in two days. The tour includes a gentle half mile lunch hour hike to Whitman's first camp north of the Grande Ronde River. That night we will dry-camp near the descent Narcissa Whitman described in her diary as, "... one of the most terrible mountains for steepness and length I have yet seen. It was like winding stairs...."

Camping equipment must be provided by participants.

Tuesday, August 11

Joseph-Wallowa Lake Bus Tour

An all-day bus tour to the northeast corner of Oregon, known as the "Switzerland of America." At azure-blue, mountain-cradled Wallowa Lake, where Nez Perce Indians had their traditional salmon fishing grounds, we will visit the grave of Old Chief Joseph - now a National Historic Site. Included is a spectacular tramway ride to the top of 8200 foot Mt. Howard, the steepest and longest 4-passenger gondola ride in North America.

Convention Tours

Tour A - Blues to Well Springs

This tour will pick up where the 1993 Baker City convention left off. After bussing to Blue Mountain Crossing Park, we will follow the trail west as it crosses and descends the Blues, and then proceeds across the high plateau to Well Spring about 40 miles west of Pendleton.

At the Park, we will see interpretive panels explaining the Oregon Trail and later stage roads that crossed here. Near Emigrant Springs we will view a Meeker Marker and other monuments. We will also visit the base of the Blue Mountain descent (or downspout).

Tour B - Whitman Mission

In 1836 Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, Henry and Eliza Spalding and William Gray crossed the "western desert" and established missions in what is now eastern Washington and western Idaho. The Whitman Mission, called Waiilatpu, was near present Walla Walla. It was an important supply point for early travelers on the trail who were short of supplies or who arrived too late, too tired or too ill to cross the Cascades. Although not the most direct route to The Dalles, the route through Whitman Mission was the most popular until the 1847 incident in which the mission was destroyed.

Tour C - Flagstaff Hill

The purpose of this tour is to provide an opportunity to visit or revisit the Flagstaff Hill interpretive center which was featured at the 1993 convention. In addition, the tour will present highlights of the trail from Baker City to Pendleton.

Convention Hikes

Out of The Blues

This tour will provide the unique experience of descending the Blues along the emigrant route. The walking route is not open to

(continued on next page)

Sharing Your Interests Through the *Overland Journal*

by Marilyn Holt

Editor, *Overland Journal*

OCTA members represent a wonderfully diverse group. Some members are interested in ruts or graves or cutoffs. There are also those intrigued with archeology, diaries, individuals, trail management, wagon types, or . . . Well, you get the idea. At the annual convention in Elko, Nevada, OCTA members had an opportunity to respond to a questionnaire about the organization's publications.

As expected, many individual interests surfaced when people were asked what they would like to see in the *Overland Journal*. Some wanted more articles on trail life (including edited diaries); some asked for more on California, Northwest, Colorado, or Kansas routes; and others asked for articles about trail preservation, mountain men, trail exploration before 1840, forts, and pivotal events such as the Oregon Land Donation Act that encouraged emigration.

The journal editor could not agree more with these -- and other -- suggestions. There is just one small problem. Before an article can be published, it has to be *written*.

In a past *News From the Plains*, Rose Ann Tompkins, OCTA

Publications Chair, asked "Where is Your Research Hiding?" This is another reminder to share your research and your interests with journal readers.

If you have been studying some aspect of trail history or experience and want to write about it, please contact me. It is best to write or call about an article or the idea for one, rather than sending a manuscript unannounced.

For those unaccustomed to writing for publication, I will be glad to work with you, and members of the editorial committee have been most generous with offering comments and suggestions on articles submitted for publication.

Ever been to summer camp or in college or in the military and watched as everyone around you got letters while you had none? Remember the saying, "You have to write 'em to get 'em?" In a way, that's the way it is with the journal. If you want to see a particular topic addressed or expanded upon, maybe you are the one to share your research and knowledge.

To discuss an idea, how to get started, or receive a copy of the author's guidelines, you can contact: Marilyn Holt, 902 N. Buckeye, Abilene, KS 67410. Phone: 785-263-1572



Out of The Blues

(continued from previous page)

the public. This is a rare opportunity to hike this segment of the trail. Special permission has been obtained from the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla and landowners in order to offer this special walking tour.

The tour begins with a short visit to the Blue Mountain Crossing Park. Trail evidence is extensive.

The descent down the Blues is approximately fivehike is relatively gradual (a drop of about 2000 feet in five miles), but it is over rough jeep trails and ranch roads. The walk should be acceptable to persons in "good" physical condition.

Boardman to Well Spring

Of the two walking tours, this is the more challenging, especially if the typical summer weather prevails. The five-mile Boardman walk is across dry, sage-covered rolling terrain. The terrain is relatively flat, with short up and down hill segments. This hike permits one to fully experience the difficulties the emigrants encountered when crossing the Eastern Oregon plateau. Prior to the cultivation of most of the plateau area, the entire trail in this area was similar to that found now only on this segment.

Participants must be prepared for this hike. Water and shade are totally lacking. Personal water supplies, broad brim hats and sun protection are required. Temperatures can exceed 100 degrees and access for emergency purposes is very limited. Hikers should be in "excellent" condition and have experience with the conditions to be encountered on this tour.

Convention Schedule

Here's a tentative schedule of highlighted events planned at the 1997 OCTA Convention in Pendleton, Oregon:

Tuesday, August 11

National OCTA Board Meeting
Workshops

Wednesday, August 12

President's Breakfast
Chapter Meetings
General Membership Meeting
Happy Canyon Luncheon
Welcome by Umatilla Tribes
Keynote Address by Stephen Dow Beckham
Friendship Feast at Tamastslikt Institute

Thursday, August 13

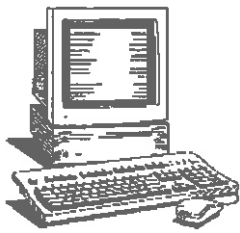
Plenary Papers and Speakers
Buffalo Stew Trail Meal
Fanny & Friends and Marv Ross Trail Band

Friday, August 14

Hiking Tours
Bus Tours
Author's Reception in the Book Room

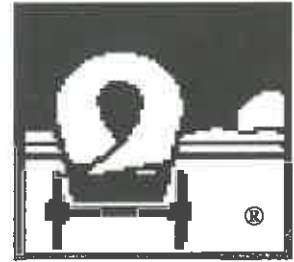
Saturday, August 15

Hiking/Bus Tours
Awards Banquet



WAGON WHEELS ON THE INTERNET

Visit the Oregon-California Trails Association website
<http://calcite.rocky.edu/octa/>



HOT LINKS ON THE INTERNET TRAIL

by Lesley Wischmann

People always say that the World Wide Web is a very fluid medium and I guess OCTA is helping to prove that.

In August, Bob Wier took a new position at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, and, of course, he took all of the OCTA internet presence with him. As a result, there are lots of changes in addresses to be announced.

First of all, Bob Wier can now be reached at
wier@calcite.rocky.edu

The OCTA website is now located at
<http://calcite.rocky.edu/octa>

And the Overland Trails mailing list has also moved. If you are already subscribed, you should now be sending messages for posting to

overland-trails@calcite.rocky.edu

If you are not subscribed and would like to join in the conversation, you can subscribe by sending the following message -- and NOTHING else, not even a signature --

subscribe overland-trails yourfirstname yourlastname
to:

listserv@calcite.rocky.edu

Since this is a machine-read message, it is important that you include nothing else in the message. You should not even include a subject line but if your mailer requires one, just put xxxxx.

Shortly after sending this message, you will receive confirmation of your subscription along with information about how to post information to the list. Remember that only subscribed members can post to the Overland Trails mailing list. We look forward to having more of you join with us on the list!!

And, finally, in all this address changing, Lesley Wischmann is also going to be changing ISPs and she can now be reached at LWisch@trib.com

We're all still out there but, if you want to keep in touch, we suggest you update your address books!

CHAPTER WEBSITES

In Pocatello, I made another appeal to the chapters to try to develop their own websites which could then be linked in to the main OCTA website in order to promote the activities of the local chapters. Well, I am very pleased to say that we have had good success in getting more chapters on-line.

In addition to the Crossroads website at

<http://www.metrogourmet.com/crossroads/>

which was announced in the last NFP, we now also have websites for the KANZA chapter at:

<http://www.ukans.edu/kansas/seneca/oregon/kanza/sites.html>

for the Southwest Chapter at:

<http://www.primenet.com/~tompkin/SWOCTA.html>

and, for the Northwest Chapter at:

<http://members.aol.com/tomactor/nwocta/NWOCTA5.html>

Information about the Wyoming Chapter treks is available at:

<http://w3.trib.com/~rlund/treks.html>

If your chapter is still not represented and you have any interest in trying to develop a page, please contact either Lesley Wischmann at LWisch@trib.com or Lyn Ryder at ryder@kryos.Colorado.EDU and we will be glad to help you. We have developed a wonderful group of volunteers who can give you all kinds of information and help in developing a webpage. It is not as hard as you might imagine and, in fact, it is really a great deal of fun. All you need is a computer, a modem, an interest, and a few basic tools which we can help you acquire.

You do NOT need to be on-line 24 hours a day, as some have thought. Your ISP is on-line 24 hours a day and that is sufficient. So, please, if you have any interest in developing a chapter website -- or a website devoted to a particular trail site or issue -- contact us and we will be happy to help you become part of the global network.

Oregon Trail Websites

Since OCTA members will have the "End of the Trail" on their minds this year with the upcoming convention in Pendleton, here's a couple of sites that might be of interest.

The BLM National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon, has launched a website at

www.or.blm.gov/nhotic

Although still under development, the site includes a calendar of events, travel information and current activities of the Trail Tenders volunteer group.

Trail history and educational activities are also offered to help answer the numerous inquiries received from school students.

Also available is the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center website, which can be reached at

www.teleport.com/features/ortrail/

Both sites provide some great educational background on the Oregon end of the trail.

— Bill Martin

Leavenworth, Kearny, Henrietta, Bidwell:

How The Forts of the Trail Got Their Names

(Much of the trail lore we enjoy today surrounds military forts and camps which sprung up to provide protection and important stopping points for pioneers on the trail. Many of us might be curious about the origins of the forts and how they got their names. OCTA member Bob Munkres of New Concord, Ohio, has researched it and submitted the following report.

by Bob Munkres

KANSAS

Fort Leavenworth -- Established May 8, 1827 on the right bank of the Missouri River about twenty-three miles above the mouth of the Kansas River. Established by and named for Colonel Henry Leavenworth, 3rd U.S. Infantry. Originally called Cantonment Leavenworth, it was designated Fort Leavenworth on February 8, 1832. It was evacuated in May, 1829, but was regarrisoned in the fall of 1829. It is the oldest still operative U.S. post west of the Mississippi.

NEBRASKA

Fort Kearny I -- Fort Kearny I was established in May, 1846 about fifty miles below Omaha on the Missouri River near the present town of Nebraska City. The site was selected on May 23, 1846 by Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny, 1st U.S. Dragoons and other officers. The post was named for Colonel Kearny. It was abandoned in June or July, 1846, reoccupied on September 15, 1847 and permanently abandoned in May, 1848 because it was too far removed from the line of travel on the Oregon-California Trail.

Fort Kearny II -- Fort Kearny II was established in June, 1848. The site, on the Platte River perhaps eight miles southeast of the present-day town of Kearny, had been selected the year before by First Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury of the Corps of Engineers and had been acquired from the Pawnee Indians for \$2,000 in trade goods. Originally called the "Post at Grand Island" because it was located at the western end of the "Grand Island" in the Platte River, it was also sometimes referred to as "Fort Childs". In December of 1848, the post was formally named "Fort Kearny", again in honor of Colonel S.W. Kearny; it was abandoned in mid-May, 1871.

Plum Creek -- More properly called a "station", which function it did indeed fulfill for the stage route, this post was established in 1864. It was located on the south side of the Platte River at Plum Creek, hence its name. A sub-post of Fort McPherson, Plum Creek Station was abandoned in 1866.

Fort McPherson -- The original post on this site (some eight miles above the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers) was called Cantonment McKean after Major Thomas McKean, 38th Pennsylvania Militia, who was the commanding officer of the territory. In February, 1864, and again in May, 1864, the post was re-named, first as "Post of Cottonwood" and then "Fort Cottonwood". Almost two years later, on January 20, 1866, the post received its permanent designation as "Fort McPherson" in honor of Brigadier General James B. McPherson who was killed in action near Atlanta on July 22, 1864. The post was abandoned at the end of March, 1880. The post cemetery had been declared

a national cemetery in 1873, and it remains today "Fort McPherson National Cemetery".

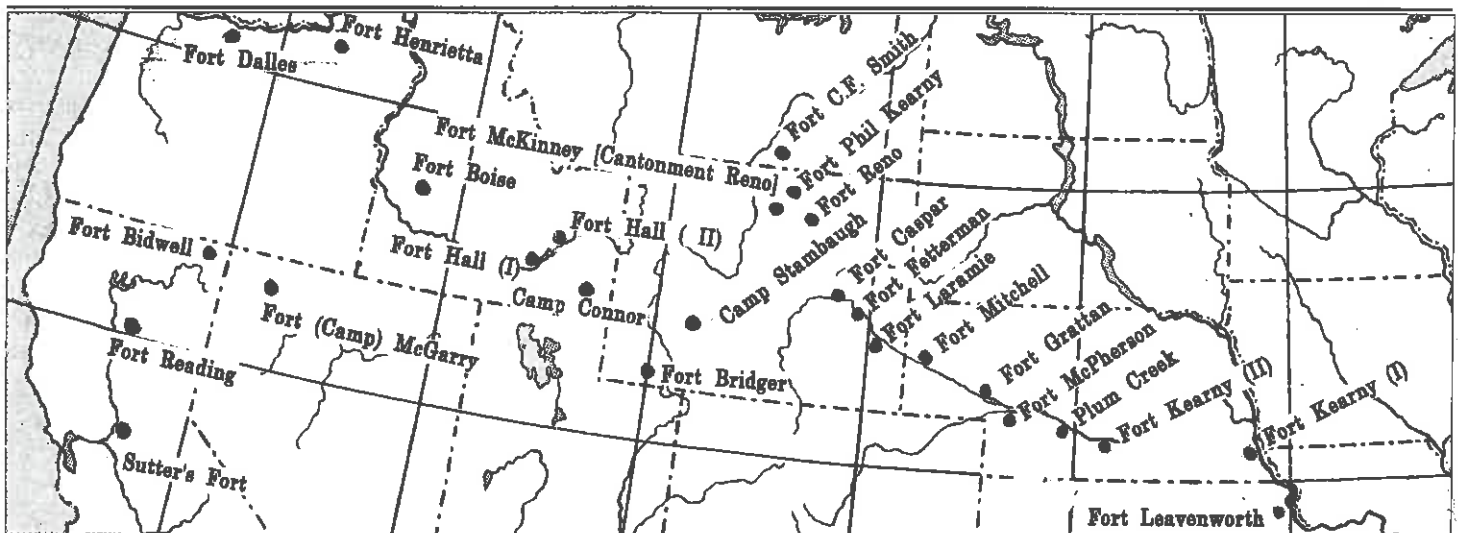
Fort Grattan -- On August 19, 1854, Brevet Second Lieutenant John L. Grattan and his entire immediate command were destroyed as they unwisely, even brashly, attempted to effect the arrest of a Dakota warrior who allegedly stole a cow which had strayed from a Mormon wagon train. The following year, Colonel William S. Harney and his 2nd Dragoons attacked the Brulé village of Little Thunder at Blue Water Creek, about six miles north of Ash Hollow. After that engagement, Harney ordered the construction of an earthen works barricade at the mouth of Ash Hollow; he designated the works "Fort Grattan" on September 8, 1855. It existed for only a bit more than a month, being abandoned on October 1, 1855.

Fort Mitchell -- This post, located just beyond Scotts Bluff on the North Platte River perhaps a dozen miles east of the present Nebraska-Wyoming border, was never officially designated a fort. Initially named Camp Shuman after Captain Jacob S. Shuman, 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, in August, 1864, at the end of that month Captain Shuman himself changed the designation to Camp Mitchell; this action honored Brigadier General Robert B. Mitchell, District Commander, who had ordered the establishment of the post in the first place.

WYOMING

Fort Laramie -- Originally erected in 1834 as a trading post by employees of William Sublette and Robert Campbell, the post was sold a year later to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company among whose owners/operators were Thomas Fitzpatrick, Jim Bridger and Milton Sublette (who was subsequently buried in the post cemetery). The American Fur Company of John Jacob Astor acquired the post and renamed it Fort John, apparently after John Sarpy, a clerk for the company. The post, located on the bank of the Laramie River about a mile above its confluence with the North Platte river, quickly came to be known as Fort John-on-the-Laramie. Having earlier acquired Fort Kearny, in mid-June of 1849, the U.S. Government purchased Fort John and converted it into a military post which retained the popular name for the establishment-Fort Laramie. The name "Laramie" memorializes Jacques LaRamee, a French-Canadian trapper reportedly killed by Indians in 1821 somewhere near the headwaters of the river that henceforth bore his name. In addition to the fort and the river, the name also attaches to the Laramie Mountains, Laramie Peak, the Laramie Plains and the present-day city of Laramie (site of the University of Wyoming). For more than forty years the post served as a supply source for emigrant travelers and as a staging area for the decades-long conflict which came to be known as the "Indian Wars". The post was abandoned in 1890; in 1937, it came into Wyoming State ownership, with title being transferred to the Department of the Interior of the Federal Government. The post is now a National Historic Site administered by the National Park Service.

Fort Fetterman -- Established on the bank of the North Platte River near the mouth of La Prele Creek in mid-July, 1867, the



post was not in existence during the years of greatest travel on the Oregon-California-Utah trail. The post's name memorializes Captain William J. Fetterman, 27th U.S. Infantry, who was killed (along with his entire immediate command) after leading his men into an ambush near Fort Phil Kearny on December 21, 1866. Fort Fetterman was abandoned in September, 1882. Today, the area is a state historic site.

Fort Caspar -- Through the earlier years of emigrant travel on the Oregon-California Trail, this site served as a camping stop-over for the wagon trains because it was the point at which the trail crossed the North Platte River. The so-called "Mormon Ferry", constructed in 1847 and maintained by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, remained in operation until 1849. In 1858 the Platte Bridge Station was constructed here, and between July 29, 1858 and April 20, 1859, troopers, part of the Utah Expedition, were stationed here for the purpose of safeguarding emigrant and military travel. Adjacent to this site, Louis Guinard built a 1,000 foot bridge across the North Platte River in 1859 and the post acquired the name "Platte Bridge Station". In 1865, the Platte Bridge Station became permanent and in November of that year, by order of Major General John Pope, Department Commander, it was renamed Fort Caspar. The fort's namesake was First Lieutenant Caspar W. Collins, 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, who was killed on July 26, 1865, leading a small command to the relief of a wagon train under attack by Indians near the site. The following year the post was rebuilt and enlarged. Because of the activation of Fort Fetterman, Fort Caspar was abandoned on October 19, 1867. Today, the privately maintained site is open to the public. Lieutenant Collins' father, Lieutenant Colonel William O. Collins of the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, was the commanding officer at Fort Laramie. Camp Collins (later Fort Collins) Colorado is named after him. This is perhaps the only instance in which frontier forts were named after a father and son who served in the same military unit.

Camp Stambaugh -- In August, 1870, Camp Stambaugh was named after First Lieutenant Charles B. Stambaugh, 2nd U.S. Cavalry who was killed by Indians in early May of 1870 near Miner's Delight, Wyoming. Never officially designated as a fort, the site was located between Atlantic City, Wyoming and the Oregon-California Trail, some eight miles north of the

Sweetwater River. The post was abandoned in mid-August, 1878.

Fort Bridger -- Jim Bridger and his partner, Louis Vasquez, built a trading post on Black's Fort of the Green River in 1842; it "opened for business" the following year. Continuing disputes between Bridger and Mormon authorities in Salt Lake City culminated in a takeover of the site by the latter in 1853. The fort was substantially rebuilt in 1855, but was abandoned and burned by the Mormons in October 1857, upon the approach of United States troops, who were part of the Utah Expedition (sometimes called "The Mormon War"). In November, 1857, the U.S. Government leased what remained of the fort from Bridger to be used for military purposes. Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, 2nd U.S. Cavalry, formally designated the area an army post named Fort Bridger when, on June 7, 1858, he prepared to lead his troops on to Utah. Bridger received \$6,000 from the government for the improvements he had made on the site but no purchase money because he was unable to demonstrate he held clear title to the property since it was located on a nine square mile Mexican land grant. At the end of May, 1878, the post was abandoned, but reoccupied two years later in response to the Meeker Massacre and Ute uprising. The post was permanently abandoned on November 6, 1890. Today, it is a State Historic Site open to the public in the town of Fort Bridger.

IDAHO

Camp Connor -- Camp Connor was named after the officer who ordered its establishment on May 23, 1863, Brigadier General Patrick Edward Connor. Located east of Soda Springs on the Bear River, the site was never officially designated a fort. It was abandoned on February 24, 1865.

Fort Hall I -- Located on the Snake River about three miles above the Hudson's Bay post of the same name, the first military Fort Hall was established August 5, 1849, by Lieutenant Colonel William W. Loring of the Mounted Riflemen who was the commander of the Oregon expedition.

"Cantonment Loring" was named after him, but it was frequently referred to as "Fort Hall." Poorly located, the post lacked forage and provisions; for this reason it was abandoned on May 6, 1850.

(continued on next page)

Fort Names

(continued from previous page)

Fort Hall II -- Some twenty years after the abandonment of Cantonment Loring, Fort Hall II was established May 27, 1870, on a site near the present town of Blackfoot and east of the original Hudson's Bay trading post between the Snake and Portneuf Rivers. This post, which was abandoned on June 11, 1883, was named after the original Fort Hall trading post which had been established in 1834 by Nathaniel Wyeth and two years later sold to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Fort Boise -- Drawing its name from the Boise River, Fort Boise was located something over forty miles from the confluence of that river with the Snake River--the site of the present town of Boise. Established on Independence Day of 1863, the name of the post was changed to Boise Barracks on April 5, 1879. Although reactivated and discontinued several times since then, the post's garrison was withdrawn in 1913.

OREGON

Fort Henrietta -- Named after the wife of Captain Granville O. Haller, 4th U.S. Infantry, Fort Henrietta was established on November 18, 1855, as part of a campaign to deal with what was regarded as a general Indian uprising in eastern Oregon and Washington in that year. One of the very few posts to be named after a woman, it was abandoned in 1856.

Fort Dalles -- The name "Dalles" (flagstones) was used to describe this portion of the Columbia River by French voyageurs. A trading post, never called a fort, was located here in 1820 by the Northwest Company which later abandoned it. During the Cayuse War, sparked by the Whitman massacre in November of 1847, volunteer troops established a stockade here in January, 1848. The regular military post, established on May 21, 1850, was first called Camp Drum, then Fort Drum probably after Captain Simon H. Drum, 4th U.S. Artillery, who was killed in the assault on Mexico City, on September 13, 1847. In July, 1853, the post was formally designated Fort Dalles; a significant rebuilding effort was undertaken in 1856. A town had sprung up around the fort by 1852 and in 1857, a town named Fort Dalles was chartered by the State of Oregon. Although the name of the town was soon changed to Dalles City, the Post Office Department continued to use the designation "The Dalles", which name became the town's permanent title. Apparently the fort was active for the last time between March 27 and May 22, 1867.

CALIFORNIA

Fort (Camp) McGarry -- Named after Colonel Edward McGarry, 2nd California Cavalry (and subsequently a lieutenant colonel with the 32nd U.S. Infantry), this post was apparently the only military establishment located on the Applegate Cutoff to Oregon. Established near Summit Lake on September 9, 1867, the post was a camp; it was never formally declared to be a fort. It was abandoned in 1868.

Fort Bidwell -- Initially established in 1863, abandoned in early 1865, then reactivated in July of 1865, the post was named after John Bidwell, co-leader of the first bona fide family wagon train to traverse the Oregon-California Trail in 1841. Bidwell subsequently served as a major in the California Volunteers during the War With Mexico. After the post's garrison was

withdrawn in October of 1893, the area became an Indian school and headquarters for the Fort Bidwell Indian Reservation.

Fort Reading -- Another fort might be mentioned in connection with Fort Bidwell, even though its purpose was not directly connected with overland travel. Established at the end of May, 1852, Fort Reading was located near the present town of Redding on a tributary of the Sacramento River. The post was named for Major Pierson B. Reading who had served as a paymaster with the California Volunteers during the Mexican War. Major Reading was also one of the early settlers in California; anyone reasonably familiar with the Oregon-California Trail will recognize Major Reading as having earlier authored "Journal of Pierson Barton Reading", a frequently cited source of information about the trail. The post was abandoned in April of 1870.

Sutter's Fort -- Established as a private defensive and trading post by Johann August Sutter in 1841, the U.S. Army took possession of the post on July 11, 1846. It was garrisoned in 1846-47. Sutter's Fort is best remembered, not for its service as a military installation, but for its role in the California gold rush. Constructed by Johann August Sutter in 1841, the military took possession of the post on July 11, 1846, and stationed troops there during the remainder of 1846 and into 1847.

*Want to know more? All of the basic information came from the book **Forts of the West: Military Forts and Presidios and Posts Commonly Called Forts West of the Mississippi River to 1898** by Robert W. Frazer, which was originally published by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1965. Says Munkres: "Anyone who is interested in the subject matter of this article, or any related subject, should, by all means, acquire a copy of this volume for their library. As a reference/research tool it is invaluable."*

And Speaking of Forts . . . Alert Your Grandkids

Applications for students grants for the 32nd Annual Military History Conference May 6-10 in Lexington, Kentucky are due no later than February 20.

Any full-time student, from grade school through college, can apply. The awards will cover all conference costs, plus \$300 for lodging, transportation and non-conference meals.

The conference is sponsored by the Council on America's Military Past (CAMP), which promotes the identification, location, restoration and preservation of old military installations and their history and traditions.

Interested students should write a short (one typewritten page) statement on why they want to attend the conference and send it to: CAMP, P.O. Box 1151, Ft. Myer, VA 22211.

The overall theme of the five-day conference is "Opening of the West," from the days of the frontier and Daniel Boone's volunteers, through the American Revolution and the Civil War. More information on the conference can be obtained by writing to CAMP or by calling (703) 912-6124. Deadline for registration is April 5, 1998.



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Colorado

About 30 Chapter members toured portions of the Smoky Hill Trail on Saturday, September 27th. Participants met at the Elbert County Historical Society's museum in Kiowa.

Dioramas, maps and artifacts at the museum initiated members on the various trails in Eastern Colorado. The Smoky Hill Trail was one of the three routes to Denver and the gold fields of Colorado in 1859. The other two routes were the South Platte River Trail and the Cherokee Trail.

Tour leader Lee Whiteley led members to trail ruts and sites along the South Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail, used by David Butterfield's Overland Despatch, starting in 1865. Lunch and a trail hike were at the intersection of the Smoky Hill Trail North Branch and the Texas-Montana Cattle Trail, southeast of Limon. This north branch of the trail was used by Ben Holladay's Stage Line, later Wells Fargo. The trail was heavily used until the completion of the Kansas Pacific Railroad into Denver in 1870.

Members finished the tour with a visit to the Limon Heritage Museum & Railroad Park, located at the intersection of the



Members of the Colorado OCTA chapter at the intersection of the Smoky Hill Trail North Branch and the Texas-Montana Cattle Trail

-- Photo by Lee Whiteley

Kansas Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific) and the abandoned Rock Island Railroad. Refreshments were provided in the old rail dining car.

-- Lee Whiteley

Southwest

SWOCTA Continues Mapping Project!

With those words, the Southwest chapter can announce it has begun its third year of week-long mapping trips on the trail. A small group, staying longer in the field twice a year, can accomplish quite a bit, even when roaming through virtually uncharted areas.

From October 31 through November 6, 1997, seven chapter members worked their way across the landscape of Southwest New Mexico. Multiple GPS units and radio contact eased the work. To help us, we had the benefit of earlier work done by a BLM volunteer out of Las Cruces. This was helpful in getting us to the right arroyo, ridge or valley. Then we could pick up the clues that put us on the trail.

Even 4WD roads are scarce here so there were days when the miles walked seemed to outnumber the miles driven. In addition, obvious swales were seldom seen, making the work tedious. The data is still being processed and the maps drawn; hard numbers are therefore not yet available.

The weather was sunny and mild with the heat of summer fading. Nights were nippy as our five vehicles tended to camp where the end of the day found us.

Sundown comes early this time of year, and evenings were spent with dinner (not much in the way of gourmet but community salads on several evenings came close), conversation (twice we were able to have those around a campfire) and an early retreat to our respective vehicles.

We had three flat tires, but no one got stuck. We had to do a bit of road fill to get through one spot, but never had to reverse our path and look for another. Didn't meet up with any rattlesnakes, but scared up lots of jackrabbits and some antelope.

As we headed for the highway and civilization the last evening, the sunset was one of those spectacular western ones that can only bring us back for more.

-- Rose Ann Tompkins

MORE NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Northwest

Chapter activities are focused on preparation for next year's convention in Pendleton. *(See page 7 for more information on the convention.)*

In early October a seminar and auto tour explored the history and trails around the Whitman Mission and Walla Walla areas. From a trails perspective, this is a complex area with multiple routes reflecting the travels of fur traders, the Whitmans and Spauldings, early emigrants, the Fremont Expedition, and later emigrants. With extensive cultivation, few trail remnants remain.

Chuck Hornbuckle has been working diligently to understand and explore the route used by the Whitman party in 1836. This will be the subject of the pre-convention 4WD tour. There are at least three routes that have been proposed by researchers, none of

which can be proved with certainty due to limited primary documentation.

The route that will be followed by the convention tour will be the one documented by the National Park Service. It seems to most closely follow Narcissa Whitman's description, but some take exception to that interpretation.

The U. S. Navy, proprietor of the Boardman Bombing Range, has taken significant steps to preserve the trail leading to Well Spring on the range. As a result of their studies, new trail segments and sites have been identified. The area at Well Spring that can be reached by county roads is now more easily accessible and new interpretive panels have been installed. *(A longer report on the Well Spring dedication can be found on Page 16.)*

We are all looking forward to next summer's convention in Pendleton. We look forward to seeing you all "Out of the Blues" and on the Umatilla.

— Dave Welch

KANZA

KANZA members always note and appreciate nice weather for outings, and Friday, October 17, 1997, was a lovely day for being out of doors at the Western Resources Oregon Trail Nature Park, near Belvue, for Kids Day.

Re-enactors arrived with equipment to present a variety of early days events in the life of Trail travelers. Oscar Krouse brought horses for a demonstration of how to saddle a riding horse and how to pack and to use a pack horse. Jim Bradley invited participation with stilt walking, ring rolling with a forked branch. Duane Durst talked about life on the trail and supervised stick Pony Express horse races. Carol Cook told trail stories and Cindy Martin explained her murals on the silo of three Oregon Trail scenes. Vern Osborne had a display of photos of events in the area, maps, and news clippings. Mollie Ledeboer, Carol Osborne and Carol Cook provided tastes of trail food. Molly was overall hostess for this day and displayed more maps of the area and was ready with a cool drink for the thirsty adventurers.

The KPL/Western Resources personnel provided an educational display. Guests were 68 students from Northview School, Manhattan, Kansas, plus teachers, aides, and their bus driver, who drove over a portion which was Trail and is now Oregon Trail Road and were able to view some swales left from the Trail.

As everyone boarded the bus for returning to school they received a small bag with taste of jerky, bookmark and a map. The students learned about the carsonite signs designating the Trail and added a California Trail sticker to complete one of the signs. The route back to school included a drive by a portion of visible Military Trail between Louisville and Manhattan. Education of our next generation is an important part of OCTA goals so this exposure for the youth of the area is a healthy interaction with that group.

The chapter's November meeting included a Pot Luck Dinner



Duane Durst, Curator at Hollenberg Pony Express Station, supervises Pony Express stick horse races during the KANZA Chapter's Kids Day festivities.

— Photo by Jim Bradley

with turkey and trimmings. At the meeting, the 1998 Chapter Officers were elected and were to take office on January 1, 1998.

Officers include: President, Ken Martin, Oketo, KS; Vice President, Mike Philbrick, Seneca, KS; Secretary, Glenn Larson, Waterville, KS; Treasurer: Jim Bradley, Westmoreland, KS. Board members will include Duane Durst, Hanover, KS; Duane Iles, Blue Rapids, KS; and Vern Osborne, St. George, KS (Past President).

— Marian Bradley

MORE FROM THE CHAPTERS

California-Nevada

The California-Nevada Chapter will hold its Winter Symposium February 7-8 in historic Mariposa at the south end of the Mother Lode.

The two-day meeting will include talks on the history of Mariposa, "Gateway To Yosemite," and the area which once was held by the huge Fremont grant.

A guided tour is planned and attendees will also be able to visit the California State Mining and Mineral Museum.

Speakers and topics include Scott Pinkerton, "Polk's Secret Orders, or the Politically Inspired Gold Rush;" Jerry Dwyer, "The Golden Years: Fremont and Mariposa, 1849-1864;" Donald Weston, "The Influence of Jesse Fremont;" and Leroy Radanovich, "Mariposa Miners and Yosemite."

Registration for the Symposium is \$40 and should be sent to Shann Rupp, Box 753, Jamestown CA 95327, (209) 984-3401.

Meanwhile, the Chapter is planning a series of "practice" tours this summer for the 1999 OCTA Convention in Chico. The tours, primarily for California-Nevada chapter members, will cover the nine major trails leading into California during the gold rush period and are designed to test proposed routes for the Chico convention.

— Bill Martin

Trails Head

Trails Head Chapter held its annual meeting October 25th at the West Wyandotte Public Library in Kansas City, Kansas. Jim Lee, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of officers. The officers elected include Judy Budde as president, Jim Lee as vice-president, John Leamon as secretary and Jim Budde as treasurer.

Jim Lee, a follower of both railroads and trails, was the speaker for the annual meeting. Jim Lee presented specifics many had never heard before. Restoration of the Kansas City Union Station has been a much-talked about topic for a couple of decades. Yet the history of the first centralized railroad station in Kansas City, which was replaced by Union Station, has remained largely obscure. Jim presented his archival research of the Union Depot, which was in operation from 1869 until 1914. The first building was replaced after nine years due to a fire. Jim placed the Union Depot in context by delineating the most important events of the nineteenth century in the area that would become greater Kansas City.

— Mary Conrad

Mark Your Calendars!
1998 OCTA Convention,
August 10-15,
Pendleton, Oregon

Wyoming

As I write this to meet the Editor's deadline, the snow is falling and laying a beautiful carpet of white on cars, trees, streets and the famous Wyoming trail ruts and swells. It is hard to turn our thoughts to treks, chapter meetings, preservation and all the other activities we try to carry out while the fire (pellet stove) chugs along and provides the warmth needed to keep these old fingers from stiffening at the keyboard. (Of course, if I didn't make so many typos, I wouldn't have to re-type so much).

The year just closing saw Wyoming's trail segments exposed to thousands of visitors. At last report, the trails survived. Predictions of disaster, like those about so-called global warming, didn't come about as reality. We're thankful.

The coming year promises a respite of sorts. There will be fewer organized visits to the trails because there are no sesquicentennial events to draw crowds. But, there will continue to be people seeking their heritage or simply being cultural resource tourists.

Wyoming chapter members are working on preparations already for the convention in 2001. I certainly echo Editor Bill Martin's comments in his October issue that we are a graying organization and need to attract more youthful members. That's certainly our situation in Wyoming.

The past two years of being at the helm has been very rewarding. I deeply appreciate the help, encouragement and good wishes from countless folks. Mary Holden becomes president of the Wyoming chapter in January. Frank "Pinkie" Ellis is back as vice president; Sally Lund as Secretary; Dorothy Okes as Treasurer and Don Hartley of Rock Springs as Preservation Officer.

Board elections will follow. Take care, and we'll see you on the trail to the next National Convention in a great location.

— Tim Monroe

Upcoming Activities

Selected events sponsored by OCTA Chapters. Schedule subject to change. If no contact name is provided, contact individual chapters for details.

February 7-8 — CA-NV Chapter Winter Symposium, Mariposa. Contact Bill & Shann Rupp, (209) 984-3401

March 8 — KANZA Chapter hosts Tri-State Meeting, National Guard Armory, Marysville, Kansas. Contact Ken Martin, (785) 562-5681.

March 28 — OCTA National Board of Directors Mid-Year Meeting, Phoenix, Arizona. Contact OCTA Headquarters, (816) 252-2276.

May 2 — California-Nevada Chapter Johnson's Ranch Tour. Contact Jack Steed, (916) 922-7038

May 16-17 — California-Nevada Chapter Forty Mile Desert Tour. Contact Jim McClain, (916) 477-7750.

Gateway

Gateway Chapter's annual Pioneer Dinner was held at the Native American Heritage Museum State Historic Site in Highland, Kansas on September 13. The dinner featured plenty of pioneer atmosphere as the Boy Scouts treated members to son-of-a-gun stew, apple cobbler and corn casserole cooked in three-legged iron kettles over the campfire.

Picnic tables were set up in one of the two remaining swales in Doniphan County. The program featured diary entries from travelers who had stopped at the former Iowa, Sac and Fox Mission to rest, drink from the springs or make use of the blacksmith. The swale was located on a major road from the Iowa Point ferry crossing to the St. Joe Road.

Community involvement and partnership has proved successful

for Gateway Chapter's trail marking efforts along the St. Joe Road. Gateway members have teamed up with Boy Scout troops in St. Joseph and Wathena to place trail markers, put on new stickers and maintain a vigil on placed markers.

Nine Gateway members joined with representatives from the Brown County Historical Society and Hiawatha Tourism and Convention Bureau on October 18 to place fourteen trail markers in Brown County. Future trail marking ventures include the Glacial Hills Resource, Conservation and Development Agency for Nehama County. Gateway plans to join with Ken Martin and the enthusiastic folks from the KANZA Chapter to finish the St. Joe Road to Marysville.

New Gateway officers for 1998 are Suzette McCord-Rogers, President; Jim Jarrett, Vice President; Glenda Leimbach, Secretary; Merry Virginia Wright, Treasurer.

— Suzette McCord-Rogers

Interpretive Panels Dedicated At Well Springs Camp

By Susan Badger Doyle

On October 29, 1997, at 11:00 a.m. about sixty people gathered for a dedication of ten newly-installed interpretive panels at Well Springs, a frequented emigrant campground on the Oregon Trail twenty-six miles west of Echo, Oregon.

OCTA members who attended included Dick and Trudy Ackerman, Keith May, and Susan Doyle. The focus of the dedication ceremonies was a 200-acre area on the Boardman Bombing Range that has been fenced and opened to the public as a historical interpretive area by the Department of Defense.

Captain Larry J. Munns, commanding officer of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, was the featured speaker during the ceremonies. The Army National Guard set up large tents against the wind and occasional rain that day, and the Navy provided a buffet lunch.

The opening of this formerly inaccessible trail site and several miles of pristine trail is an important event for trail preservation. The Boardman Bombing Range (technically, the Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility, Boardman), based out of

NAS Whidbey Island, has long been closed to the public. In recent years it was deactivated as a bombing range and is now used by reserve units for training exercises.

Several years ago the Navy hired environmental consultant Gregory Green to do a natural resources study of the area. In addition to producing the interpretive panels, Green discovered more than three miles of pristine trail. This new segment augments seven miles of trail that OCTA Northwest Chapter members had already located and marked on the range.

The Well Springs area will be featured during the upcoming Pendleton convention. Emigrant diarists mention two locations with springs in this area, which locally became known as the Upper and Lower Well Springs. It is now known that Tub Spring, located a mile and a half northeast of the interpretive site, is actually the lower spring, and the two springs at the site are the upper springs.

As a special bonus, participants in one of the convention tours will install Carsonite markers on the recently discovered three-mile segment of the trail that leads to Tub Spring.

More Annual Fund Contributors

(continued from Page 6)

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Contributions to the Annual Fund Drive can be mailed to: OCTA, P.O. Box 1019, Independence MO 64051-0519. All gifts to OCTA are tax deductible as allowed by law.

The Mystery of the Independence Rock Wreath

by Levida Hileman

My husband and I devote many summer hours volunteering at Independence Rock, Wyoming, furnishing trail information to the visitors. Summer, 1997, was a very busy time, with an estimated 65,000 visitors. Since I have spent three years surveying the names on the Rock, I have a list of about 1900 names and we help visitors locate the names of their ancestors.

In early September visitors would come to our booth asking us about a memorial wreath that was placed close to the Rock. As it had not been there earlier in the summer we knew nothing about it. Then someone told us it had the name of Rachel Morgan on it.

I recognized the name immediately as one I had received correspondence on from a descendant looking for a specific inscription. We went over to look at the wreath and the simple card read *"In memory of Rachel Morgan. Rest in Peace."*

The cardboard card was tied to a varnished, carved walking stick that was stuck in the ground. At the base of the walking stick a circular floral wreath was also placed securely in the ground. The center of the wreath was a plastic inset with the words Holy Bible on it.

As soon as I got home, I went through my correspondence files and found the following family information on Rachel Woodsides Morgan:

Rachel was 25 at the time her family left Illinois for Oregon in the spring of 1847. They were going in a family group of Morgans and Woodsides. She was probably six or seven months pregnant at the time of their departure.

She and her husband, Daniel, had three other children when they started their trip. Shortly before the family reached Independence Rock, a baby girl was born to Rachel. Rachel died at Independence Rock and was buried there on June 21, 1847. The family thought she may have died from food poisoning. The new copper pots reacted with the alkaline water they had to use for their cooking, causing death for many of the pioneers.

The Brigham Young Pioneer Party was at Independence Rock at the same time and the following quote is from Wilford Woodruff's Journal:

"And while we were attending to our prayers the Missourians was burying A woman A little distance from the rock by the name of Rachel Morgan 25 years of Age being the third one of the family buried on the road. They were supposed to be poisoned by cooking in new Copper vessels."

The family moved on, caring for the new baby girl, but they never gave the baby a name. She is referred to as 'Baby Morgan' in family records. Tragedy struck several times along the trail as the Woodsides Morgan train became known as the "sick train". Rachel's father, Thomas, and siblings, Eleanor, John, and Mary also died on the trail.

Before the family reached their destination, Baby Morgan died following an injury caused by a fallen wagon gate at Summit Meadow, Mt. Hood, Oregon. The marker on the burial rock there is an accepted Oregon Historical Marker.

Who is the descendant who remembered Rachel Morgan 150 years after her death? At the time of this writing we do not know. I contacted the great-great-granddaughter of Rachel Morgan to see if she knew. She had no knowledge of it but was going to see if any family members knew.

In late October the walking stick and wreath were still there. The name card had blown away and was faded but I tucked it tightly behind a ribbon on the wreath. We tied the wreath very securely to the stick in hopes it will survive the winter winds and snow. If it survives, I will put a laminated card on the walking stick in the spring.

The most heartwarming aspect about the gesture is that even though numerous visitors were still coming to the Rock in September and October, no one disturbed the walking stick or the wreath.

So many families had to lay loved ones in unmarked graves along the trail and are long since forgotten. To someone in the Morgan family, however, this ancestor is not forgotten and is touchingly honored in memory.

Information on Rachel Morgan and the Woodsides Morgan Wagon Train furnished by Lynn Morgan Sullivan, Walnut Creek, Calif.

Overland Trails Panel Topic

A panel on the interpretation, preservation and management of the Overland Trails was presented at the October 1-4 annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History in Denver, chaired by Jeanne Watson, OCTA board member.

Jere Krakow, Superintendent of the Long Distance Trails Office in Salt Lake City, discussed the new "corridor" trail incorporating the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express Trail, plus the addition of the Cherokee Trail. He also discussed NPS challenge cost-share grants and showed slides of the four trails.

Susan C. Boyle, Historian with the NPS Denver Service Center, presented an overview of the multi-cultural background

of trail explorers and pioneers. She described her findings on the hispano traders along the Santa Fe Trail, which appears in her new book "Las Capitalistas," published by the University of New Mexico Press.

The third speaker, Jerome Thompson, Bureau Chief, Museum and Archives, State Historical Society of Iowa, told about planning and building of the new Western History Center which opened in Council Bluffs on October 4, illustrating his presentation with slides. The Center's orientation film comparing a trip to Oregon by a 1995 family with that of an emigrant one was also shown at the AASLH meeting.

For further information about AASLH, contact Jeanne Watson or OCTA Treasurer Jim Budde, who also attended the meeting.

— Jeanne Watson

Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters

Letters are always welcome, but are subject to editing due to space considerations. Letters should be sent to Editor, News From The Plains, 1908 Tuolumne Dr., Reno NV 89523-1228. They also may be sent via e-mail to: words@worldnet.att.net.

Editor, NFP

The 1997 annual convention in Pocatello, Idaho was a resounding success. We had 666 people register in various categories and they all seemed to find something to make their convention worthwhile. Nate Bischoff did a great job publicizing the book room and the attendance and sales were great and well attended by the local citizens. The food was outstanding and plentiful according to some of the thank you letters that we received. The weather just barely cooperated although the pre tours were not so lucky. We would like you to publish our thank you to the volunteers who were so helpful in the planning and production of this event but most importantly thank those friends and individuals who attended the convention as without their support the event would just be an empty shell. Thanks for attending and on to Pendleton next year.

Convention Chairmen

Michael Bateman

Jim Allen

Pocatello, Idaho

Editor, NFP

I would like to thank OCTA for honoring me with its Volunteer of the Year award for my work in establishing the OCTA website and the Overland Trails Mailing List. Both were a true labor of love and I have received so much positive input from both OCTA members and others that this lovely award was really extra icing on the cake. Nonetheless, it is always nice to have your efforts appreciated and I thank everyone involved in

bestowing this award. And, I am sure that I also speak for Lyn Ryder and Bob Wier who received Certificates of Appreciation for their work on these projects. Believe me, I could not have done it without them and the many others who have contributed to making these outreach efforts a success. Thanks, folks!!

Lesley Wischmann

Laramie, Wyoming

Editor, NFP

I was interested to see in the October issue a notice for the PBS documentary, "The Gold Rush." I don't know if the next issue will appear before the program airs (January 20th, 1998), but I'm featured in the program. I've been an OCTA member since way back when, and have met a few people at various conventions so it would be nice if folks knew I'm in the program. In fact, January, being the sesquicentennial of the discovery of gold, will be a very big month for me. My passion for gold rush history has resulted in two books so far. *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* has become a bestseller for the University of Oklahoma Press. My newest, *Daughter of Joy, A Novel of Gold Rush San Francisco*, is about the Chinese in the gold rush and inspired by the life of the famous courtesan, Ah Toy. It will hit the bookstores in January. On the 24th, I will be speaking at the State's official sesquicentennial kickoff ceremonies at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park. And last, but not least, Sacramento's PBS station, KVIE, is co-sponsoring with the State Railroad Museum a book launch event for my new book, tentatively scheduled for January 18, 4-6 p.m. at the State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. I'd love to have local OCTA members attend.

JoAnn Levy

Sutter Creek, California

<http://goldrush.com/~joann/>



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Explore the actual Oregon-California Trail ruts at South Pass, Jedediah Smith's "Gateway To The West"

The Reading Trail



by Lyndia Carter

Adventure looms ahead on the trail. These action-packed books are guaranteed to stir even the most reluctant young male readers into eagerness to take to the reading trail. Full of danger and challenges that must be met by resourceful young men, the stories will grip the attention of boys between the ages of ten and fourteen. However, don't be surprised if the girls in the family also love them. Beyond the adventure, young readers will also find characters with whom they can identify. Though not always perfectly accurate in depicting the trail experience, these books create curiosity which motivates the reader to go back in time to an historical setting that can well set the stage for more accurate and in-depth reading. Be ready, parents, grandparents, and teachers, to answer questions and supply information about the relationships between emigrants and Native Americans.

Mr. Tucket and *Call Me Francis Tucket*, two books by renowned children's author Gary Paulsen, tell the tale of a 14-year-old boy, Francis Alphonse Tucket, who is captured by Pawnee Indians while his family is in route to Oregon in 1848. During the next year he manages to escape from the Indians, lives with a mountain man, survives all kinds of dangerous escapades, learns the ropes of survival, and begins the search for his family. The author depicts Tucket's adventures with gusto and in a style that will fascinate his young readers, whose imaginations will take them on the journey into the wildness of early western America. While attempting to *make* his way to Oregon on his own in the second book, *Call Me Francis Tucket*, Francis learn from his mistakes, escapes a buffalo stampede and outwits some desperadoes, with the help of a very interesting mule. The boy also finds and takes into his care two young orphan children who have been abandoned by a wagon train because their father was stricken with cholera. His newly acquired family further heightens the action and adds a significant dimension to the young boy's growth. Adventure after adventure fills the pages of these two fast-paced books. Gary Paulsen is a master storyteller and is famous among young readers who devour his highly acclaimed books. Far-fetched, exciting, and delightfully fun, these books are winners and the fulfillment of a young reader's dream of adventure. (Reprinted by arrangement with Delacorte Press by Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, copyrights 1994 and 1995. These two books are available in most bookstores that carry high quality books for young readers.)

Louise Moeri's *Save Queen of Sheba* is another story of a young boy's determination to survive in the wilderness and reunite his family. King David and his irritating little sister Queen of Sheba (yes, unfortunately those are their names) and one horse are the sole survivors of part of a wagon train attacked by Indians when a few of the wagons became separated from the main train. It is up to King David to protect his sister and keep them both alive until they can find their parents who were with the other part of the train, if it escaped. As the two children struggle to survive and find the wagon train, David is faced with

challenges that try him to the limits of physical and emotional endurance. Besides the wilderness and fear of the Indians who could return, he must cope with his spoiled sister. Their story of survival is told with realism and presents a very human and emotion-filled account of David's loyalty to his family and his struggle against nature and his own personal feelings. It is a powerful and compelling book. Young male readers will relate to King David, whose emotions are likely their own. (Puffin Books, a division of Penguin Books, 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10140 copyright 1981. This book, originally published by E.P. Dutton, is currently in print as a paperback by Puffin Books and is available in many bookstores that carry children's books.)

The Moccasin Trail by Eloise Jarvis McGraw first made its debut in 1952. It is one of those excellently written books that outlast generations and is now in a paperback edition. The book is in print and available in the juvenile section of many bookstores. Only a segment of the book deals with trail life; the majority focuses on settling down in Oregon. Yet it is an important book in understanding the motivations to go West, the transition between the time of the mountain man and the era of the settler, and the displacement of the Indian way of life. Young Jim Keath is the heart of the story. As a mere boy he ran away from home with an uncle and went to the Rocky Mountains as a fur trapper. An encounter with a grizzly bear nearly killed him; Crow Indians healed the injured child and he lived with them for six years, becoming more of an Indian than a white man. But finding that remnants of his past existence still held him, he was not truly Indian. So he left his Crow life and became again a young mountain man, where he found the best of both worlds. However, the trapping era was coming to a close. Then he received word that his two younger brothers and his sister are headed to Oregon and need his help since their parents have died. When he goes to find them, Jim is thrown reluctantly back into an ill-fitting white man's culture. Through the pages of this book, Jim, caught between two worlds, struggles with himself, his family and civilization to find his personal place. His little brother Dan'l idolizes him and his lifestyle; his sister Sally mistrusts him and is repelled by his Indian ways; his teenaged brother Jonnie, who remembers him best, tries to help him change from Indian to farmer. Slowly Jim must find for himself where he really belongs and what love and family loyalty mean to him. It is a difficult struggle. This touching story is filled with lots of action and adventure, but Jim's search for his niche and the Keath's growing together as a family are the beautiful fabric which holds the book together and makes the tale very worth reading. (Originally published by Coward-McCann, this book is now available from Puffin Books, a division of Penguin Books, see address above. Copyright renewed In 1980, published by Puffin Books beginning in 1986.)

Have a joyous journey on the reading trail.

— Lyndia Carter

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