

# News From the Plains



Vol. XX. No. 1

Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Winter 2006

## Emigrant Names Research Package Ready for Sale at OCTA Store

By Sharon Manhart

The most powerful research tool ever created by OCTA went on sale early in December. The Emigrant Names 2 set is the result of years of research by OCTA's Census of Overland Emigrant Documents (COED) Committee. For more than 15 years COED volunteers have visited libraries and personal collections to record original trail documents: diaries, letters, news articles and recollections. The pertinent information from each document is put into survey pages, showing all names, dates and trail sites, as well as the location for each original document.

Emigrant Names 2 consists of two CD's. The first one lists nearly 70,000 names and also includes scans of the document surveys from 1832-1850. The second disc contains scans of document surveys from 1851-1899. A person can log in a name to search for, and then link to each survey where that name is mentioned. Each document survey lists where the original document and/or copies can be found, if further research into the document is desired. The disc set sells for \$39.95 plus postage and is available only for Windows 98 and higher versions. Order by calling 888-811-6282.



Sallie Riehl, right, and Jim Riehl, center, show the Emigrant Names 2 program to an interested client at the Oregon Trail History Center at Baker City, Oregon. Sallie Riehl is the Chair of the OCTA COED committee, and Jim Riehl is the head of COED technical development.



St. Joe, 1850

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## News From the Plains

### Editor

Candy Moulton  
Star Route Box 29  
Encampment, WY 82325  
307-327-5465  
nfpocta@aol.com

### Contributing Editors

Bill Martin  
Vern Gorzitze  
Kathy Conway  
Travis Boley

### Oregon-California Trails Association

News from the Plains  
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P.O. Box 1019  
Independence, MO 64051-  
0519  
888-811-6282  
816-836-0989 (fax)  
octa@indepmo.org

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## 2005-2006 OCTA Officers

**Vern Gorzitze, President**, 3026 Metropolitan Way, Salt Lake City, UT  
84109; vergor@wasatchnet.net

**Glenn Harrison, Vice President**, 1132 30th PL. SW, Albany, OR 97321-  
3419; harrison@cmug.com

**Bernie Rhoades, Secretary**, 11809 36<sup>th</sup> St. E. Edgewood, WA 98372;  
Rhoarclass@aol.com

VACANT, *Treasurer.*

**Dave Welch, National Preservation Officer**, 102 Chinook Lane,  
Steilacoom, WA 98388; welchdj@comcast.net

**Randy Wagner, Past President**, 1007 Monroe Ave., Cheyenne, WY  
82001-6617; rwagnerfoto@aol.com

### 2005-2006 OCTA Board

Bill Martin, Texas  
[lexiconomist@cox.net](mailto:lexiconomist@cox.net)

Dave Vixie, California  
[drvixie@yahoo.com](mailto:drvixie@yahoo.com)

Edna Kennell, Wyoming  
[ednajk@coffey.com](mailto:ednajk@coffey.com)

Bill Wilson, Idaho  
[ma\\_bill@msn.com](mailto:ma_bill@msn.com)

Lethene Parks, Washington  
[lethene@comcast.net](mailto:lethene@comcast.net)

Jack Fletcher, Washington  
[jpletcher@olympus.net](mailto:jpletcher@olympus.net)

John Mark Lambertson, Missouri  
[jlambertson@indepmo.org](mailto:jlambertson@indepmo.org)

Frank Tortorich, California  
[wagonwheel@volcano.net](mailto:wagonwheel@volcano.net)

John Krizek, California  
[JKrizek@aol.com](mailto:JKrizek@aol.com)

Suzette McCord-Rogers, Kansas  
[nahm@kshs.org](mailto:nahm@kshs.org)

## What's Happening...

**March 17-19, 2006**  
OCTA Mid-Year Board Meeting  
Phoenix, AZ

**May 5, 2006**  
CA-NV Spring Symposium  
San Jose, CA

**August 8-12, 2006**  
OCTA Annual Convention  
St. Joseph, MO

**August, 2007**  
OCTA Annual Convention  
Scottsbluff/Gering, NE

**August, 2008**  
OCTA Annual Convention  
Elko, NV

♦♦♦

**NFP Deadline**  
**Spring Issue**  
**February 25, 2006**

♦♦♦



## Think - Believe - Expect - Attitude - Behavior - Performance = WIN

While in the University of Utah football team's locker room recently my attention was directed to a large sign over the top of a set of lockers. I read the message again and again and slowly began to realize how the words were universal as they applied to life and how one can succeed as well as to an athletic team. The words certainly could apply to OCTA.

To become and stay a Championship Team (organization) several things need to be put into play:

- 1. We need each other.** – Everyone has something to offer, take a little time and effort and find it.
- 2. Your role is important,** but the overall Team goal is most important. – Just as the role of individual members is important, so is the role of each and every chapter. We must never lose track of what the TEAM goal is. OCTA is dedicated to the preservation, appreciation and enjoyment of the emigrant trails of the West.
- 3. The TEAM must improve.** – We must continually strive to do better. This can be done by accepting new challenges, developing new programs and placing ourselves in the best possible light.
- 4. There cannot be any Weak Links.** – OCTA as a whole is only as strong as its weakest member. Members and Chapters cannot be indifferent, half hearted, sluggish, or lukewarm. Team players shape and fashion strong links.
- 5. Everyone must pay the price.** – The price is paid by going the extra mile, by doing just a little more than is expected or required. Sometimes the row we are hoeing is filled with rocks. Remove the rocks and finish the job. Success consists simply of getting up one more time.
- 6. We must have great leadership.** – Leadership starts on a chapter level with the elected president and elected officers. Leaders must instill confidence in their members and ask for their support by way of actions.
- 7. The bench is critical.** – The entire membership is in this game together. After all, where does the leadership come from? – The bench. Where do the board members come from? – The bench. When asked to serve, give it a try and do your best, I think you will be surprised what you can do and how much your contribution means in the overall picture.
- 8. You can't have a bad ATTITUDE.** – "It's your ATTITUDE, not your Aptitude, that determines your Altitude in life."

**WANTED: Large and small items needed for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention that will be held in St. Joseph, MO. August 7-12, 2006.**

Calvin and Sandra Smith, chair persons for the annual Convention Raffle, need your assistance through the donation of items. As the New Year begins, think of what item you might donate to help support OCTA.

All Chapter presidents and fellow OCTA members will be getting a letter in February with more detailed information.

Thank you and watch for our letter in February! If you already have something to donate, contact:

Calvin and Sandra Smith  
2509 Shirley Drive  
St. Joseph, MO 64503  
mrcls@stjoelive.com



## Association Manager...

*Continued from Page 5*

members. I know that our tour guides will talk about OCTA's myriad projects, from mapping, marking and monitoring our trails to the various genealogical projects we undertake, from our vast education programs to our annual convention. They will talk about the work of our local chapters and how to get involved with them and the need for more volunteers to engage themselves in the work of preservation and education.

But I will also forward the names and addresses of these new members to chapter leadership and committee chair-people who are looking for more volunteers. In that way, we can continue to communicate with these new members. Then (and only then) do we have any hope of retaining them at higher-than-average levels.

So I invite each and every one of you to not only engage our new members, but also to engage yourself in all that OCTA has to offer. Occasionally, I get a call or an email from a member asking why he or she should renew their membership. I usually turn this question around on them and ask them what they expect from OCTA. In this way, I quickly learn of their interests within the organization.

But this need to engage members extends beyond new folks to also include those of you who have been paying dues for some time. If you would like to become more active, please call e-mail me at [tboley@indepmo.org](mailto:tboley@indepmo.org) or call toll free at 888-811-6282 and I will try to get you hooked into work that appeals to you.

## Nominate Board Candidates

*By Glenn Harrison  
Nominating and Leadership Chair*

Serving on the OCTA Board is a great opportunity to serve the members and the organization.

Each year the members vote on candidates for four of the twelve, 3-year positions. The board meets twice a year. The meetings for 2006 will be in Phoenix in March and in connection with the OCTA Convention in August. There is partial support for expenses for the mid-year meeting.

In August 2006 terms expire for David Vixie, Glenn Harrison, Lethene Parks and Frank Tortorich. Frank is completing his second term, so is not eligible to run this year. Glenn is now the Vice President and chooses not to run for the board. Dave and Lethene are eligible to run for a second consecutive term.

If you are interested in serving on the board, be sure to apply. If you know someone who would be a good board member, encourage them. OCTA Board members serve at-large, so the location of residence or chapter affiliation is not a requirement.

Candidates need to submit the following: 1) Information about the nominee's trail qualifications and experience and the extent to which the person has participated in the affairs

of OCTA. 2) A written endorsement from three (3) additional OCTA members. 3) A written statement from the member being nominated indicating his or her willingness to serve actively on the board if elected. 4) A brief statement (approximately 100 words) of what you would like to see the board accomplish in the next three years and how you will help OCTA reach its goals. 5) A photo of the candidate to be used in publicity. The photo should be at least 1.5 inches wide and 2.5 inches deep. Either prints or digital images (scanned at 300 dpi) are acceptable.

You may contact a chapter president or one of the members of the Nominating and Leadership Committee for further assistance. All nominations should be mailed or e-mailed by April 1 to:

Glenn Harrison, Chair  
Nominating and Leadership  
Committee  
1132 30th Place SW  
Albany, OR 97321-3419  
541-926-4680  
[harrison@cmug.com](mailto:harrison@cmug.com)

Others on the OCTA Nominating and Leadership Committee are John Atkinson of St. Joseph, MO and James McGill of Nampa, ID

## Mid-Year Board Meeting in Phoenix

The Mid-Year OCTA Board meeting will be held March 17-19, 2006, in Phoenix, AZ. The exact location has not yet been established. The meeting will include a strategy session on Friday, March 17, with a board study session on March 18 and the official meeting on March 19.

Chapter presidents are invited to attend along with committee chairs and interested OCTA members. If you have an item for the agenda, contact President Vern Gorzitze at [vergor@wasatchnet.net](mailto:vergor@wasatchnet.net). For details about the meeting contact Headquarters at 888-811-6282.



# Three New Markers Placed on Trail in Wyoming

By Randy Brown  
Graves and Sites Committee Chair

The Graves and Sites Committee placed three new markers last fall. They were paid for with a grant from Colorado Interstate Gas Company, part of mitigation for two pipelines it had constructed near the trail from west of Douglas to beyond the vicinity of Glendo, WY. The trail impacted during construction was virtually 100 percent private property along the main and "Middle Route" segments of trail between Bitter Cottonwood and Bed Tick Creeks. With OCTA's help, damage to trail remnants was kept to a minimum. In several instances the company was persuaded to divert the course of the pipelines' routes in order to avoid damaging the trail, and in some cases was alerted to the presence of the trail by OCTA Carsonite trail markers. Regarding these interpretive plaques, the company expressed an interest in marking sites near its new pipelines, so two of the markers are in Converse County. The third, "The Grave of Dr. McDermott," was placed at the grave in Platte County.

The first marker is titled: "Natural Bridge and the Oregon Trail." Natural Bridge is a noted landmark about 12 miles west of Douglas and is owned by Converse County. Some OCTA members will remember Natural Bridge Park as the site of picnic lunches during bus tours at the two Casper conventions. The county maintains an excellent park and this

historic interpretation will be welcomed.

The second marker is titled "Knob Hill." This curious but minor landmark is on the trail south of Douglas west of Wagonhound Creek. Knob Hill was nearly always mentioned by trail diarists, some of whom are quoted in the marker text. It is located on private property. The marker will be placed along the county road at a spot that provides a good view of the valley and Knob Hill.

The third marker is for the McDermott grave near Warm Springs on the trail near Guernsey. While identifying this grave site as actually being McDermott's is somewhat speculative, contemporary diary accounts clearly indicate its location on this knoll across the draw south of the spring. The grave was mentioned by several Forty-niners and a few travelers of later years. They found the grave curious because it was marked by McDermott's sign or doctor's shingle brought with him from his home in Iowa to use at the office he no doubt hoped to establish at the end of his journey, probably somewhere in California. No family information about McDermott has been found, so all that is known of him comes from the diary accounts. The grave site is owned by the National Guard camp in Guernsey. The spring itself remains private, but it and the surrounding ranch land may be purchased by the Guard Camp within the year.

## Forgotten Journey Gets OK for Classes

By John Krizek

The California Learning Resource Network, an agency that screens audio-visual materials for use in California schools, has announced that the DVD/Educational Supplement edition of *Forgotten Journey--The Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Saga*, has met its criteria regarding legal and social compliance with California standards, and is now included on the CLRN web site.

The compliance designation will make it easier for more teachers to use supplemental school funds to obtain the film package, according to producer and OCTA board member John Krizek.

The CLRN review notes that teachers can select specific chapters in the one-hour documentary from the menu. The Educational Supplement on CD-Rom provides 11 chapters of information plus a resource guide, references to historical organizations including OCTA, a bibliography, and a link to a teacher's guide on the film web site. The Educational Supplement CD-Rom was partially funded by OCTA. The package is available through OCTA, as well as Forgotten Journey Productions (P.O. Box 2456, Toluca Lake, CA 91610-0456, or on the web at [www.thecaliforniaatrail.com](http://www.thecaliforniaatrail.com)).

*Forgotten Journey* is the award-winning public television documentary on the history of the California Trail, based on the first pioneer party to get wagons over the Sierras in 1844. It was completed and premiered in 2001.

### Do you have your new OCTA Map?

Call toll-free 888-811-6282

or order on line at [WWW.OCTA-trails.org](http://WWW.OCTA-trails.org)

Visa and MasterCard accepted



# Rivers, Plains & Wagon Trains

By John Atkinson & Jackie Lewin  
Convention Co-Chairs

“Rivers, Plains & Wagon Trains” is the theme for the 2006 OCTA Convention in St. Joseph, MO, on August 8-12, 2006. Pre-convention field trips will be held on Tuesday, August 8, and one tour will take us to Fort Leavenworth, Weston and Atchison – places that played key roles in the development of the Western Emigrant Trails. The tour will be led by the experienced team of Ross Marshall & Craig Crease. Another Pre-Convention Field Trip is a response to requests to include some local history. The Jesse James’ Country tour will visit the James Farm near Kearney, Missouri, where Jesse and Frank grew up. Also included will be a fascinating tour of Watkins Woolen Mill, the finest example of an 1850 woolen mill factory still in existence. Original equipment, some of it operational, will show how large mills operated in the mid-1800s.

Even if travel plans don’t allow for arrival in time to do the pre-convention tours, be sure to attend Tuesday evening’s welcome reception, entertainment and Author’s Night. In addition to making and renewing friendships, Tuesday evening will be an opportunity to meet the authors and obtain autographed copies of their work. The entertainment will include a program of hammered dulcimer music presented by the talented Esther Kreek, featured on the albums “They Passed this Way” and “Touch the Past.”

Several excellent speaker presentations will follow the Opening and General Business Meeting on Wednesday. After a buffet lunch, tours of St. Joseph Historic Sites and

Museums will be offered. Chapter meetings will be held in the late afternoon and in the evening the Awards Banquet will follow a social hour and entertainment by the OCTA Band.

Thursday is a day for field trips. In addition to repeating the Jesse James’ Country tour, a field trip to Historic Mormon Sites of Northwest



Missouri will be offered as will a tour along the St. Joe Road. The evening will be filled with an interesting array of workshops organized by Ken and Arleta Martin.

Speakers will be featured on Friday. In the evening there will be a banquet at Ramada Inn followed by a program of time period music by Fresh Cut Grass and then a special appearance by “Ezra Meeker” as portrayed by Ray Egan. The Meeker Wagon, seen by OCTA convention goers in 2004 in Vancouver will be at the St. Joseph convention on its extensive re-enactment tour of Ezra Meeker’s cross country trek begun in 1906 to mark and memorialize the Oregon Trail.

Meeker was in St. Joseph on May 23, 1908, when he received word that Congress might pass a bill to appropriate \$50,000 to mark the trail. He decided to end his journey and left St. Joe by rail on May 26. About St. Joe he wrote, “While public sentiment there was in hearty accord with the work of marking the trail, yet plainly it would be a hard tug to get the people

together on a plan to erect a monument.” Meeker would be pleased that his work continues.

Saturday field trips will again offer the Historic Mormon Sites and St. Joe Road tours and add a hiking option on the St. Joe Road. A tour called “River Rats in the Missouri River Valley” will round out the field trip opportunities. The culminating event of the 2006 OCTA Convention will be a barbecue held on the banks of the Missouri River at the St. Joe Frontier Casino. At the event the Missouri Town Dancers will demonstrate mid-1800 dances and will involve the audience.

New at the 2006 Convention will be an ambitious program of parallel activities for children and youth. In cooperation with the Pony Express National Museum, children of convention goers will have their own set of experiences related to the various trails that traverse the region of St. Joseph. OCTA Board member and recipient of the 2005 Disney Outstanding Educator Award, Dave Vixie, has volunteered to be part of the leadership.

Thanks to the efforts of Keith May of the Northwest Chapter, those desiring to extend their education credentials may obtain undergraduate or graduate credit through a program developed by Keith and Antioch University of Yellow Springs, Ohio. For details, check the registration materials when available.

Come join the fun with Rivers, Plains & Wagon Trains in St. Joseph, Missouri, on August 8-12, 2006.

For Convention Updates:  
[www.stjomo.com/octa2006.htm](http://www.stjomo.com/octa2006.htm)

On-line registration will be available beginning early in April 2006.



# Stop and Rest Your Oxen in Montpelier

Story and Photos by Bill Speiden

To many of us history buffs, the lure of the Oregon-California Trail is irresistible. Whether it is the ruts, visions of man's obstinate determination to fight often overwhelming odds, vicarious wanderlust, romantic notions of winning over challenges, man's confrontations with the elements, his confrontations with other men, his confrontations with himself, the ultimate in escapism, a belief in a heaven-sent paradise just 2000 miles over the mountains or the magnetism of gold, the trails west held and hold many appeals: both then and now.

My wife, Sandra, and I live in Virginia. A retired dairy farmer who has turned to back-grounding beef as an easier agricultural enterprise, I have had time freed up to ply my true love—participating in living history events with oxen. When, during the summer of 2004, I was offered a third opportunity to take my oxen west, and this time get most expenses covered, I jumped at the chance.

After I started training oxen 29 years ago I not only came to respect the beasts as easy animals to train, but also learned of their vital role in history. I have had many opportunities offered to me, which have allowed me to demonstrate my oxen and tell their story. This has become an obsession.

In 2002, Sandra and I were vacationing by driving and horseback riding the Lewis and Clark Trail. On

our way home we stopped in Montpelier, ID, so the board of trustees of the National Oregon-California Trail Center could interview me for a short-term job as interpreter there.

The center is right on the trail and is a natural attraction for “rut nuts” with its unique real-life presentation of traveling on the trail, and its proximity to preserved Idaho trail segments which include Big Hill and Soda Springs. I would characterize Montpelier as a friendly rural town of around 2,800 residents with wide streets and three Mormon churches. We were welcomed into town by a large highway sign suggesting that the traveler “stop and rest your oxen.” How could this potential job be less than a great fit?



Bill Speiden, left, with Nip and Tuck and Luke Conner, right, with Pole and Cat at the Oregon-California Trail Center in Montpelier, ID. (Photo by Bruce Grayum)

I was hired along with Luke Conner, my 17-year-old “adopted grandson,” as my alternate ox drover, assistant and alter ego. During the last week of June 2004, Luke and I drove my pickup and gooseneck trailer across country carrying more than



four tons of oxen and two tons of gear. The mature team, Nip and Tuck, weighing in at 3,000 pounds each and veterans of wagon-train reenactments on the California Trail in 1999 and the Bozeman Trail in 2001, were heading west again. Pole and Cat, two-year-old Dutch Belted oxen weighing about 1,300 pounds each, were making their first trip west. The gear consisted of hay, grain and part of my trail display, which included period tents and educational picture boards about the Oregon Trail, use of oxen and shoeing of oxen.

As we would be working mostly on a paved parking lot, I was concerned about wear and tear on the oxen's feet with no shoes. Without shoes, two or three days on pavement or gravel roads would be about the limit before potential lameness might set in. So I shod Nip and Tuck before leaving home—not my favorite part of the hobby! Pole and Cat were not shod, as I did not want to expose them to the risks of shoeing, quicking through narrow young hoof walls and shoeing stock trauma. Both the twins, Nip and Tuck, walk with a slight twist to the front feet every step, thus making it difficult to keep front shoes on. As I would have no shoeing facilities in Montpelier, I brought with me some homemade wooden shoes to be glued on with a special acrylic glue in case the oxen scrubbed off their front iron shoes. They did; and I glued on the wood shoes, which was an

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# Answering Inevitable Oxen Questions

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experiment on my part; but it did work, and it got them through the gig in Montpelier without their going lame.

Bruce Grayum, the center's photographer, lives two blocks from the center. He kindly offered his fenced-in half-acre back yard as a "motel" for the oxen. It was a perfect place to water and feed them, which Bruce did every morning before Luke and I arrived. As a bonus, Bruce was ecstatic about having the organic fertilizer provided daily by the oxen.

Our first (work) play day at the Center was a Fourth of July parade in nearby Paris, Idaho. The parade was held on Saturday, July 3, in deference to the Mormon desire not to parade on the Sabbath. We hitched the oxen four-up and pulled the covered wagon belonging to the Center. We started our Idaho gig with a bang by winning first place for the Center in the parade.

That afternoon Luke and I set up our display next to Montpelier's spacious park and parking lot. We started giving ox-drawn wagon rides with a "tourist" wagon, which to my "historic accuracy" horror had no hoops and pneumatic tires. This actually turned out to be a blessing, as the town fathers allowed us to work the oxen on the grassy park area rather than the paved parking lot, since the pneumatic tires did not cut up the grass as was previously feared would happen with the use of iron-tired wheels. For the month of July up through August 4 we gave 355 rides to 3,063 people. A little more than half were locals enjoying the oxen's visit to their town. Luke and I gave "mini" (30 seconds to 2 minutes) interpretative talks on oxen and the

Oregon-California Trail to our captive audiences on the wagon. Examples:

## **A. What is an ox?**

Few knew. Webster's definition is a "four year old castrated bovine male." There is no such thing as a breed of oxen. Essentially an ox is a steer (a castrated bull) of any bovine breed used for draft purposes. If you eat him, he was a steer. If you work him he is an ox. Moral of the story: you cannot have your ox and eat him too!

## **B. How are oxen used?**

All across the country from the time of the earliest Spanish and English settlements, the ox was the primary source of power for agriculture, logging and freight. Oxen can work and thrive under conditions that would kill an equine. Sixty to 80 percent of the pioneers' wagons were pulled west by oxen rather than by horses and mules.

## **C. Why oxen over equines on the Oregon-California Trail?**

1. Economics – in Independence, MO, one of the first "jumping off" places to the West, an ox cost roughly \$25 vs. an equine at \$75. In the nineteenth century \$25 was a month's pay. So if three yoke (three teams) of oxen were purchased at \$25 per ox

that would be \$150-- or one-half a year's average salary for the oxen alone.

2. Because it is a ruminant (having four stomachs) an ox could graze on the prairies and sustain its body condition better than an equine. The huge first stomach, the rumen, can hold a large amount of forage as opposed to an equine's small single stomach, which had to have a more constant flow of feed to maintain body condition in the harsh conditions.

3. Indians would steal equines (a coup to them), but rarely took oxen—



Luke Conner with Nip and Tuck at the bottom of Big Hill.

at 2-3 mph oxen made poor get-away vehicles!

4. Cattle are not as susceptible to diseases such as colic as are equines: i.e., they are easier keepers.

5. In case of a food shortage, would you prefer eating your horse or ox? Most would choose an ox – although I doubt at that stage of the trip, there would have much difference between the meat from a scrawny ox or a scrawny horse.



## Big Hill Beckons

# First ox-drawn wagon in over 130 years?

Among the tales we told about the Oregon-California Trail were methods used to lower wagons safely down steep hills. All loaded wagons descending nearby Big Hill used skidlocks, chains tying spokes to axles, hold-back ropes wrapped around trees and held by several men or a combination of these. The wagons had brakes, but the brakes did not have sufficient holding power for a heavily laden wagon on a steep descent. The wheel team (team closest to the wagon) had some braking power, as the yoke would ride forward on their necks up against the horns (the reason not to dehorn oxen). Oxen quickly learn to hold their heads up as the yoke comes to rest behind their horns, and "hold back." Hills (mountains) often had to be traversed as wetlands or gullies sometimes made it impossible to go around the obstacle.

As per my contract with the Center, I had two days off during the month of July. That sure beats dairy farming!! On our first day off, Luke, two members of the Center's Board of Trustees and I walked Big Hill to see if it would be possible to go over it on the original trail with an ox-drawn wagon. It was a bit of a haul up and a steep rocky descent, but I determined that with an essentially empty wagon with at least one skidlock on it, the trip could be accomplished safely.

Once landowner and Bureau of Land Management permissions were obtained, a number of Oregon-California Trail enthusiasts asked to be part of the event. Monte Smith of Georgetown, ID, volunteered his prairie schooner for the oxen to pull.



Ascending Big Hill on the original Oregon-California Road.

On the big day—rather, Big Hill Day July 30, 2004—a caravan of trucks, flatbed and gooseneck trailers

filmed it and produced a marvelous film on our summer together, featuring the Big Hill trek.

Our loads were minimal and included only around 800 pounds of gear and water in my wagon, as opposed to the 2,000 or more pound-load the pioneers would have carried—which made their descent much more hazardous. On the uphill stretch Monte Smith's wagon was hitched four-up to my oxen with nine-year-old Quade Smith riding as brakeman. An ox drover does not ride. He walks to the left of his team (the reason the steering

*"We went a few miles farther when we had to cross a very high hill, which is said to be the greatest impediment on the whole route from the United States to Fort Hall. The ascent is very long and tedious, but the descent is still more abrupt and difficult"*—Theodore Talbot, September 7, 1843

left Montpelier's recreation park parking lot for the ten mile trip south of town off U.S. Highway 30 to Big Hill. It was a picture-perfect day with scarcely a cloud in the sky. We assembled the party, including three wagons: one pulled by my oxen and two wagons pulled by horses; nine outriders; nine walkers; two bullwhackers; two teamsters, five photographers and four support crew. The event was well covered by the local media, both print and TV. Also, Luke, a budding young videographer,

wheel is on the left side of our cars and we drive on the right). A pioneer's chance of gaining his western goal was improved if his oxen did not have to pull his weight also. Oxen can be driven with reins if trained to do so, but that would not be historically correct. At two to three miles per hour, they are normally easy to keep up with while walking. However, walking up hill, driving a four-up team and coping with the 6000 plus foot altitude was making frequent oxygen breaks

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# Montpelier Trail Center

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necessary for this Eastern flatlander. About a third of the way up from our starting point, Luke came to my rescue and took over the droving duties. Handling his filming job was much easier for me to cope with on the uphill leg.

Once on top of Big Hill we took a water break and enjoyed the magnificent view of the distant mountains (hills to the locals) and the relatively flat farming acreage below us. Before we started the descent, a local teamster, Dennis Turner, bravely volunteered to ride

our wagon as brakeman. Dennis had had no experience with oxen, but did have a shaky faith in the oxen and me! We installed a single skid-lock. The lead team, hitched to the wheel team yoke by a chain, would have had no "hold back" capability, and would just have been in danger should the wagon run away. Therefore we tied the light lead team, Pole and Cat, to the back of the wagon. By being tied there they could act as a check in the event of a potential wreck. With Nip and Tuck, at 6,000 pounds for the team, plus the braking action on one rear wheel and the skid-lock on one rear wheel, the wagon had plenty of hold back capacity for descending the steep and rock-strewn hill. Nip and Tuck are

about twice the size and weight of oxen in the 1800s because oxen at that time were derived from smaller breeds

Hulme Dunford. The hospitality shown to Luke and me by this most generous community was

unsurpassed. We were invited out to dinner more times than we could handle; and the people demonstrated great support for us, their county and their Trail Center.

Luke and I left town at 5:30 a.m. on August 5, 2004, after loading our gear and oxen with the help of Bob Walker, a local teamster who admired the oxen, and who happened by on his way to work. It was with heavy hearts that we left Montpelier, leaving behind many new-found friends, but taking with us

innumerable unique and fond memories. When you rut nuts explore the Trail this—or any—summer, be sure to "stop and rest your oxen" in Montpelier, Idaho.

OCTA member Bill Speiden has been featured on RFD-TV demonstrating ox driving and training.

*"We started at six o'clock, forded Thomas Fork, and turning to the west, came to a high spur we were compelled to climb. The distance is seven miles, and we were five hours in crossing. Part of the way I rode horseback, the rest I walked. The descent was very long and steep. All the wheels of the wagon were tied fast, and it slid along the ground. At one place the men held it back with ropes and let it down slowly." --Margaret A. Frink, July 6, 1850*

of cattle. For the descent Luke went back to filming and I did what I could to keep abreast of the team.

Unless someone comes up with evidence to the contrary, I am claiming to have driven the first ox-pulled wagon over Big Hill in more than 130 years. Ezra Meeker has been mentioned as a possibility on his return trek in 1906. However, by that time many more roads were in use and Ezra avoided major challenging obstacles whenever possible.

Back in Montpelier all the "Big Hill" participants who could be rounded up were invited to dinner at a local restaurant by one of Montpelier's most distinguished citizens, and Center benefactor,

## National Oregon-California Trail Center

320 North 4th Street, P.O. Box 323  
Montpelier, Idaho 83254

Telephone 208-847-3800  
Toll Free 866-847-3800

[www.oregontrailcenter.org](http://www.oregontrailcenter.org)



## Colorado Chapter

### 17 Mile House restoration project

The historic 17 Mile House property in Arapahoe County, which was acquired by the County as part of its Open Space program, is presently undergoing restoration with funds provided by the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The house was originally an inn that was an important stage stop on the Cherokee Trail. The property, located at 8181 South Parker Road, also includes a barn built around the same time in the late 1860s. The Trail passed between the two structures. The site was the first feed lot in the region and had the first Swiss cattle and registered horses in the area.

The restoration project is expected to be completed in two years and will include a Visitors' Center. A farm south of the property, owned by the town of Parker, will become a trailhead for a connecting trail to the



17-Mile House

Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park and Cherry Creek Trail, which eventually will connect to Cherry Creek State Park on the north. Camille Bradford recently visited the

property with Lynn Wodell, Open Space Manager for Arapahoe County, and Jeffrey Baker, the County's Project Manager for the restoration.

The Colorado Chapter of OCTA hopes to plan an upcoming chapter event centered around this project.



17-Mile Barn. The Cherokee Trail ran between the two structures.

### OCTA Gives Books for Teachers

The Education Awards & Publications Committee sponsored a drawing for a class set of OCTA's educational activity books. Teachers were invited to send a postcard indicating the title of the book they wanted to receive along with their name, school's name, address and

telephone number. Books included in the program were *Reading, Writing and Riding Along the Oregon-California Trail*, *Finding the Right Place*, and *Following Lewis and Clark's Track*. The deadline for entries has now passed, and the drawing will be held in mid-January.

## KANZA Chapter

### Attebery Grave Marked

By Jim Bradley

On November 6, 2005, KANZA Chapter members were joined by Ray Ring, Jr., Mary Lou Davis, Ted Hopkins and Robert Vopata in the unveiling and dedication of a stainless steel cross grave marker to mark the grave of D. Attebery. The grave is located in a wheat field to the west of the cross on land now owned by Ray Ring, Jr. and his sister Mary Lou Davis. The Dedicatory Address was made by Ted Hopkins, a relative of D. Attebery.

The grave stone is simple: **D. Attebery Died May 31 1849.** D. Attebery died along the Independence Road near the spot where the new marker has been placed. He was traveling with close friends. They neatly inscribed his name and date of death on a large piece of native limestone, and presided at his burial over 156 years ago. The original marker was long ago removed from the gravesite, and was given to the Kansas State Historical Society. It is now on display in the Visitor's Center of the Hollenberg Pony Express State Historic Site. Fortunately, the general location of the grave remained known down through the years. Thanks to the landowners, relatives of Ken and Arleta Martin, Ernie White who made the new marker, and KANZA Chapter of OCTA, the new marker was placed near the D. Attebery grave.

*Continued on Page 20*



**Additional Routes and Cutoffs  
proposed for study under  
Bill S-54**

**OREGON NHT** - Whitman Mission; North Alternate; Upper Columbia River; Goodale's Cutoff; Cowlitz River; North Side Alternate; Meek Cutoff; Cutoff to Barlow Road; Free Emigrant Road; Naches Pass.

**CALIFORNIA NHT** - Blue Mills; Independence Road; Blue Ridge Cutoff; Westport Landing Road; Westport Road; Westport - Lawrence Road; Gum Springs - Ft. Leavenworth; Ft. Leavenworth - Blue River; Atchison/Independence Creek; Road to Mazonia; Ft. Leavenworth - Kansas River; Union Ferry; Nebraska City Cutoff; Old Wyoming - Nehr, City Cutoff; Minersville - Nebraska City Road; Lower Platismouth; Upper Platismouth; Lower Bellevue; Upper Bellevue; Woodbury Cutoff; Cherokee Trail including splits; Diamond Springs Cutoff; Weber Canyon Route - Hastings Cutoff; Secret Pass; Bishop Creek Cutoff; Greenhorn Cutoff; McAuley Cutoff; Central Overland Trail; Bidwell-Bartleson; Johnson Cutoff; Georgetown - Dagget Pass Trail; Luther Pass Trail; Big Trees Road; Volcano Road; Grizzly Flat Cutoff; Sacramento - Coloma Wagon Rd; Nevada City Road; Burnet Cutoff; Yreka Trail; Placer County Rd. To Auburn; Hennes Pass.

**CALIFORNIA NHT routes and cutoffs with significant Oregon emigrant use**- St. Joe Road; Old Fort Kearny Road (Oxbow Trail); Council Bluffs Road; North Side Platte River; Raft River To Lassen Meadows; Childs Cutoff; Sublette Cutoff; Applegate.

## Please Write to Congress Now In Support of Trails Study Bill, S-54

*By Bill and Jeanne Watson  
Legislative Liaisons*

Just before Thanksgiving, Congress went home for the holidays still debating about parts of the Fiscal Year 2006 federal budget. They extended the 2005 budget until mid-December and hoped to resolve their differences by then. Fortunately, the budget areas which cover operations of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service were approved by Congress several months ago.

As you know, our Trails Studies Authorization bill S-54 was passed by the Senate and sent by House Speaker Dennis Hastert, IL - 14<sup>th</sup> District, to the Resources Committee for consideration. Unfortunately, Resources Chairman Richard Pombo, CA - 11<sup>th</sup> District, National Parks Subcommittee Chairman Steve Pearce, NM - 2<sup>nd</sup> District, and their staffs are too busy with more urgent matters to consider bill S-54 now.

Therefore, we need you to write to your Representative now and ask

him/her to urge Chairman Richard Pombo to give prompt and favorable consideration to bill S-54.

The best way to contact your Congressional representative is via e-mail or fax because there are often long delays in delivering regular letters. For the e-mail address and fax numbers visit <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> or, if you do not have access to the Internet, call OCTA headquarters at the toll-free number, 888-811-6282, and the staff will on get the information for you.

On Page 15 of this newsletter you can see a sample letter that could be sent by either of those methods.

If you must send your letter by regular mail and do not have your representative's address, call Headquarters and the staff will look it up for you. You also can send the letter addressed to your representative, with the address (U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515). However because of mail delays, this is the least effective way to contact your representative.

Thanks, in advance, for your help.

### Charter Member Betty Lee Dies

Betty Lee, a charter member of OCTA, died November 27 in Tucson, Arizona. She and husband Robert E. Lee were instrumental in forming the Southwest Chapter of OCTA and in 1994 she received the OCTA Meritorious Service Award. She had served as chair of the Archaeology Committee and with husband Robert led many treks along the southern trails.

The Lees moved to Safford, Arizona in 1967 and Betty worked at many archaeological sites with various university groups. She became an anthropology and archaeology instructor at Eastern Arizona College and was the first director of the EAC Museum of Anthropology. She retired in 1985.

Betty was preceded in death by her husband in 2002.



## Sample Letter, E-mail or Fax, to Your Representative

*Honorable (first & last name)  
(office room number & building name)  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515*

*(If a man) Dear Congressman (last name) or  
(If a woman) Dear Representative (last name)*

I realize that you and Congress are very busy now with a wide variety of major issues that need to be resolved. However, as a constituent, I would like to call your attention to the non-controversial bill S-54 that authorizes the study of additional routes and cutoffs for Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails to identify those that meet the National Trails Act criteria for future addition to these Trails. Those routes/cutoffs that meet these criteria will later be submitted to Congress for approval.

Last summer, the Senate passed this bill and sent it to the House where it was referred to the House Resources Committee for action. The Committee staff has suggested that there may be time in early 2006 to consider this bill.

The 1999 Comprehensive Management Plan for the California and Pony Express Trails with updates for the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails recommended each of these additional Routes and Cutoffs in S-54 for future study.

During the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House unanimously passed a bill similar to S-54 but it died in the Senate. During the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress both the House and Senate unanimously passed similar bills but there was not time to resolve the slight wording differences.

*(If there are one or two routes proposed for study that you are interested in, please write a few words here to tell your Representative why they are historically important, Please DO NOT send the entire study list.)*

When you have a moment, please write to Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo and National Parks Subcommittee Chairman Steve Pearce and ask them to give prompt and favorable consideration to bill S-54. Thank you.

Also, many thanks to you for the Congressional Supplemental and Challenge-Cost-Share-Program funding for our trails that allowed development of the Oregon-California Trails Association and National Park Service Trail Mapping, Marking, & Monitoring training guide which is being implemented and will soon be shared with the other National Historic Trails.

Regards

*(your signature)  
(your name & address)  
(your telephone number and/or e-mail address)*



# OCTA Trail Mapping in

Story and Photos by  
Rose Ann Tompkins

In October 11 SW-OCTA mappers headed for Anza-Borrego Desert State Park to map for the first time along the Southern Trail in California. We met at a primitive campsite in Blair Valley, which put us almost on the trail and we could work in both directions from camp. We had a large flat area for our vehicles and a portable shower setup (greatly appreciated by all who used it). The weather cooperated the entire time with warm sunny days in the 70s and clear nights in the 50s. The modern paved highway parallels the trail through here so we did not have back country, 4WD travel to follow the trail. Since we are all experienced at mapping, several groups could work at once in different areas and be



taxied easily from place to place on the highway. As a result, we covered more miles in less time.

This proved to be a difficult part of the trail to map. It has been a travel corridor from Spanish days to present. It was the route used by Spanish and Mexican mission-aries, traders and settlers; by military, gold seekers, cattle drives, and emigrants; by stage lines; and more recently as a county highway. Artifacts are few, having been scavenged by collectors or "cleaned up" by others. Mormon Battalion, Butterfield Stage,



and state historical markers have been erected at various places. Sometimes they are on an actual trail, sometimes close-by. We puzzled our way along, but felt we made progress.

Some landmarks are well known; the emigrant diaries tell about them, and the histories written since emigrant days continue to identify them.

## Foot and Walker Pass

Our campsite was near a place now known as Foot and Walker Pass and this was our starting place. Diaries did not use this name, but it was clear in the writings that they passed through it. It is not a high pass, but a rocky ridge. The trace up the ridge is deep from wear. It is not a long hill, but steep. There is another trace showing road building that is documented as the Butterfield Stage Route and the later county road. It has a historical marker at the top.

*January 20 [1847] I marched before sunrise and was soon at the rocky hill, which was very bad. But, by using ropes, the wagons were got over in about an hour. There was an excellent descending road five or six miles to San Felipe . . .*  
Phillip St. George Cooke, p. 224

We worked in both directions from the pass, finding little trace of the trail in the flats which goes into playa areas so not much remains except for occasional rust on rocks.

## Box Canyon

This canyon located south of Foot and Walker Pass is aptly named. Phillip St. George Cooke put the



# Southern California

Mormon Battalion men to work making a road through this canyon, in one place having to widen the solid walls in order to make it possible for the wagons to fit. There is also a dry waterfall to go around. Evidence of several roads around the waterfall area are still visible and were mapped. The trail through the entire canyon can still be traced except where it was in the actual sandy bottom drainage. Several miles were mapped through here and across the valley leading into the canyon from the south and east.

*January 19 [1847] Then, up a mountain torrent bed, I came to the canyon and found it much worse than I expected - there were many rocks to cross, etc. But the worst was the narrow pass, besides crookedness of hard, high rocks. Setting an example myself, there was much labor done on it before the wagons came; that is, with axes we pounded, broke, split, and hewed the rocks to increase the opening. I thought it was all safe before the wagons came, and went on a short distance and found a hill to be ascended, to avoid a still narrower canyon, with a great rock to be broken to pieces with our axes before it was practicable. Much work was done here . . .*  
Phillip St. George Cooke, p. 222

## Campbell Grade

This was known in emigrant days as The Door or *El Puerto*. It separated the sandy desert areas on the east from the better watered areas to the west and is a steep, rocky ascent with several traces going up. We attempted to map the various traces, but it was

difficult to discern which were the earliest. At the top is a very good trace, just a few feet from the paved highway. The area certainly shows a lot of use through the years.

*Wednesday Sept 19<sup>th</sup> [1849]  
March to El Puerto meeting on the road and at El Puerto a multitude of emigrants, all just "Gold Sot." How sadly many of these will be disappointed in a few weeks more. . . Cave J. Coutts, eastbound, p. 68*

## Vallecito Stage Station

This reconstructed Butterfield stage station is a county park with a campground. We worked in both directions from this spot, finding occasional rocks with rust and little else.

*Vallecito (Little Valley) was a veritable oasis in the desert to the travelers over this route. There was grazing here and springs of water, the water although slightly sulphurous, was palatable. The location had always been a favorable camping place. . . Roscoe and Margaret Conkling, p. 223.*

It would appear that the trail can still be found in rocky areas and through ridges. However, in the flats and playas, little remains, although possible traces show up on the aerial photos. Perhaps techniques can be used in the future to give us a better picture of the various trails.



## Notes:

*Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846-1854*, edited by Rulph P. Bieber. Procupine Press, Philadelphia, 1974.

"From San Diego to the Colorado: The Diary of Cave J. Coutts," *Brand Book Number Nine. The San Diego Corral of the Westerners*, Edited by George M. Ellis, San Diego, 1995.

*The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869*, Vol. II, by Roscoe P. Conkling and Margaret B. Conkling. The Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, 1947.



## CA-NV Chapter

### President Elected, Member Honored

By Jim Allison and John Krizek

The CA/NV Board of Directors has elected Steve Knight as President and Carol March as Recording Secretary. Steve was Vice President under Bill Webster and a board member up to August 2004 at which time his second term expired.

John Robinson, a member of the CA-NV Chapter, was made a Fellow of the Historical Society of Southern California at its annual gala at the Huntington Library last fall.

Robinson is a prolific author who has written books and articles about the mountains of Southern California and the Sierra and the history that took place in them. His first book, *Camping and Climbing in Baja*, published in 1967, set the standard for regional hiking guidebooks. Since then there have been over twenty others.

He also has written extensively on mid-19<sup>th</sup> century California history penning articles for *The Southern California Quarterly*, *The Pacific Historian*, *The San Diego Journal of History*, *Arizona and the West*, *Westways*, *the Overland Journal* and *the California Territorial Quarterly*. Soon to be in the bookstores is his newest work titled *Gateways to Southern California*, the history of the horse trails, Indian footpaths, wagon trails, railroads and highways into the Southland.

## Crossroads Chapter

### Wilderness Area Could Affect Trail

By Al Mulder

Utah winter has closed down most, if not all, of the trail activity for 2005. A final chapter meeting was held in October at chapter Vice President Marie Irvine's condo in Midway, Heber Valley where she gave a presentation on the Simpson Military Road from Bear River through Chalk Creek through Heber Valley to Soldier Hollow in Midway. The next chapter meeting will be in January when chapter officers will be elected for 2006.

Perkins Flat in Emigration Canyon was recently purchased by a coalition of open space supporters. A conservation easement will ensure that the historic property will be preserved in perpetuity by Utah Open Lands. The Mormon Pioneer Trail goes through the property and it is the site of an 1847 pioneer campground. Traversed by Emigration Creek, the land is a refuge for wildlife in the overdeveloped canyon. The ownership of

a section of the old "Sheep Trail" that followed the Mormon Pioneer Trail in upper Emigration Canyon is in dispute and efforts by historic groups to place markers in the area are on hold until the property ownership problem can be resolved.

The efforts to prevent the storage of nuclear waste on the Goshute Reservation still continue with the government proposal to declare the Cedar Mountain Range a Wilderness Area. The Private Fuel Storage (PFS) Consortium's efforts to build a rail spur to the storage site on the reservation would be blunted if the Cedar Mountains become a controlled Wilderness Area. Our use of the Hastings Cutoff trail across Skull Valley and access to Hastings Pass could also be affected by the designation. Stay tuned.

The Patrice Press is moving from Tucson to Tooele, Utah, and the welcome flags are out!



Looking east from Hastings Pass Summit. Cedar Mountains could become wilderness area. (Photo by Al Mulder)



## Training Program Underway for OCTA Chapters

About a year ago, with support from the National Park Service, OCTA initiated a preservation training program. The program was in response to the realization that while we asked members to become active in preservation efforts, we did not provide many of the tools and much of the understandings required to be effective. To date we have conducted training for the Idaho, Northwest and California-Nevada chapters. Other training sessions are scheduled in 2006 and 2007.

The training covers the three Ms of trail preservation work: mapping, marking and monitoring. The program includes training materials, lectures, classroom discussions and field work.

OCTA's Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Guide is the basis for the mapping portion of the program. The MET guide describes techniques for identifying, classifying and documenting emigrant trails. Types of trails (ruts, swales and traces) are defined as are a set of classifications

(Class 1 through Class 5) for determining the quality of the resource. Preservation efforts are focused on the highest quality remnants, Class 1 through 3.

The mapping program also includes instruction on the use of USGS maps and Global Positioning System (GPS) units for documenting trails both in paper and computer-based formats.

Monitoring is the process whereby volunteers keep track of what is happening to the trails by periodic visits and photo documentation. The training program includes information on laws and regulations that protect historic resources and how they are applied. Interactions with both public and private landowners are examined. Alternative chapter-based groups to conduct trail monitoring are examined.

OCTA's approach to trail marking is covered by our "Trail Marking Policy," OCTA's official guide to markers and their placement. Markers

include carsonite posts, Novalloy interpretive panels and others. The contents of the marker policy and procedures for selecting, designing and installing a marker are reviewed.

In the field session, the lessons learned in the classroom are tested. Students map and classify a trail segment applying MET techniques and establish marking and monitoring plans. The field session is only offered with a two- or three-day training program.

Preservation training is open to OCTA members who are seriously considering involvement in one of the three Ms. This participation can range from home-based computer research to field installation of markers. The program is designed to offer something for members of all capabilities and interests.

For more information about the program and upcoming training sessions call me at 253-584-0332 or by e-mail: [welchdj@comcast.net](mailto:welchdj@comcast.net).

## GIS Marking Underway along Idaho Trails

*By James McGill  
I-OCTA Preservation Officer  
OCTA Mapping Chair*

On October 21, 2005, three I-OCTA members and two visitors, both familiar with our National Park Service Tremble GIS units, finished the data gathering on the trail for three miles of the Oregon Trail near Mountain Home, ID. This is the first Idaho outreach as a result of the GIS training in Salt Lake City in May, 2005. I-OCTA President, Doug Jensen, and Jim and Patti McGill were

assisted by Sharon Pager of the Canyon County Parks Dept. and her husband Neil Maier, both Tremble unit users. We appreciated them as we began the practical use of the unit for data collection on the trail which was much different than the classroom practice.

At least 73 "features" of information were collected about conditions of rut sections, erosion changes of trails, trail artifacts found, markers that have been placed, photo points that can be points to monitor to watch for trail changes, wheel

grooved rocks that give evidence of wagon passage, braids or variant ruts that sometimes run parallel (we actually GISed about 4.5 miles of ruts in the 3 miles) and many other features (graves, structures, water crossings, etc.) that will be found along trails.

All the collected data has been uploaded to the NPS Web page, and to Adam Sober of the digital lab at the University of Utah. That is where the server is located that will be compiling all the GIS data from all

*Continued on Next Page*



Hopkins said Attebery was most likely one of the many 49ers headed west on the overland trail for the California goldfields. The goldseekers were participating in one of life's great adventures and hoping to strike it rich. After the discovery of gold at Sutter's Fort, gold fever swept over the country. Thousands of mostly young men formed companies and in the spring headed for the jumping off places on the border. They wanted to get on the road to riches as soon as grass was available for their livestock. Unfortunately, Asiatic cholera was also moving with them and would claim many victims along the trails. D. Attebery may have been stricken with cholera as he died early on the trip. There are five known 1849 grave markers along the Oregon California Trail in Kansas and all died in May of that year. These are T. S. Prather, Henry Roush or Roushi, S. M. Marshall, D. Attebery and Thomas Mastin. Many more victims of the cholera epidemic lie in unmarked graves.

Hopkins added, "When I first saw the grave marker in the Hollenberg Museum, the Attebery name caught my attention. I have a great, great grandmother Mary Emeline Attebery, born in Kentucky in 1831, and raised in Missouri. In 1845 she married Solomon Mulkey, and in 1853 they immigrated to Oregon with three young children. She gave birth to a son on July 4 near Ft. Hall, and they settled in Benton County Oregon in late August. She had passed on information to her children that one of her brothers had "died on the plains." In researching this clue I found that she had two older brothers: Preston, born in 1821, and David,

born about 1825, in Kentucky. Family history passed down through Preston Attebery's descendents states, "David died in 1849 on the way to the California gold rush." David is not found in any census or family records from 1850 on, whereas Mary's other brothers Preston, Jonathan, James and Benjamin all married and can be accounted for in later years. Preston named his first son, who was born in November 1849, David probably after his brother who died earlier that year.

Another piece of evidence connecting the D. Attebery stone to David Attebery is the spelling of the name. Attebery is an uncommon spelling using one r in the -bery, but

this is the spelling used by the family in several letters from Mary Emeline's parents, brothers and sisters written in the 1850s. David's companions, who carved his name on the gravestone, knew the correct spelling of his name. More commonly the census takers and others spelled it Atteberry, Atterberry or Attebury, etc.

Therefore based on the available evidence, Hopkins believes David Attebery, the son of James and Mary Attebery of Freedom Township, Lafayette Co., Missouri is the D. Attebery buried along side the Independence Road in Marshall County.

## GIS Marking

*Continued from Previous Page*

our historic trails. Adam is our expert who helped Kay Threlkeld of the NPS build the Historic Resource Database and who developed the program that will coordinate all the data into a detailed resource of trail information. He received our reports and will be putting this all together into a block of data on the Web, including maps, photos, and other images.

This is the start of many long experiences of data collection from trails across all the western States, unmatched by any previous methods to accomplish such a database. Several OCTA Chapters have begun

collecting such information but the Idaho project is the first completion of a local project and submission of the data, according to Adam, and will soon make evident the value of this program and database.

Volunteers to help with this work are always welcome. Additional training sessions are being organized. Next summer will offer opportunities to continue to add to the trail data for other sections of the trail, until they can be connected together for a complete database on each trail.

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or order on line at [WWW.OCTA-trails.org](http://WWW.OCTA-trails.org)

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## Idaho Chapter

### Markers Placed on Goodale Cutoff

By Jim McGill  
*I-OCTA Preservation Officer*

In mid-November Wally Meyer and I began one phase of the preservation of the Goodale Cutoff northwest of Boise and Eagle, Idaho. We placed markers on swales and ruts on both private and BLM lands. We have now covered most of the area,



Wally Meyer marks trail on the Goodale Cutoff. Photos by Jim McGill.

although there are still some private segments that have not been visited.

The first one mile of BLM land across which the trail ran, on the top of the ridge and across the bottom of Little Gulch, has a well defined and constant swale—even across the bottom of the gulch where some runoff has chosen to follow the trail from the northern canyon drainage. We believe that every effort should be made to preserve this segment, since much of the route crosses private land and nothing can be guaranteed. And the housing development on the south is butting right up against the fence that separates the BLM land from the private land. There is now a marker on the ruts at that wooden rail fence



and there are five markers with OCTA decals on the BLM land nearby. In some areas the trail is marked with OCTA decals and private property stickers.

The area being marked is believed to be the route of the Goodale Train in 1862 and many other emigrants who soon followed him. Most of those emigrants, however, went on down the Payette River and crossed into Oregon by way of the Olds Ferry near Farewell Bend. This also became the Boise to Umatilla stage and freight road by 1863-64. Some trains did go on north from Emmett on the Crane Creek variant to the Middle Weiser River area and Middle Valley (Midvale), and some all the way to the Brownlee Ferry and other following ferries on the same site. We hope this is the beginning of marking all that remains of the northern part of Goodale's Cutoff.



Marker on BLM land.

## New Members

C. Eugene Abshier  
1200 Starlite Lane  
Yuba City, CA 95991

Gary Babler  
387 Oak Hill Road  
Red Bank, NJ 07701

James H. Barker  
307 12th Ave N  
Buhl, ID 83316

John Bicknell  
15692 Prosperity Dr.  
Haymarket, VA 20169-2117

Catherine J. Blair  
1406 N Broadway  
Louisburg, KS 66053

John E. Christensen  
1610 SW Jewell Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66604

Roger Cottrell  
856 Navajo Road  
Marysville, KS 66508

Fred Drucker  
14185 Powder River Dr.  
Reno, NV 89511

L.J. Ferdenber  
5805 San Carlos Way  
Pleasanton, CA 94566

James and Doreen Hamilton  
2628 S 357th St.  
Federal Way, WA 98003

Victor Heath  
8355 S 1330 E  
Sandy, UT 84093

Connie C. Holbrook  
86 H St.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103

Kari Kohnmeyer  
363 S Harvard St.  
Hemet, CA 92543



## New Members

George P. Kroh  
5715 Windsor Dr.  
Fairway, KS 66205

Cathy Lynch  
P.O. Box 277  
Encampment, WY 82325

David C. Miles  
P.O. Box 1818  
Nampa, ID 83653-1818

Carolyn Moree  
3301 Stover #197  
Fort Collins, CO 80525

Peter and Margaret Patterson  
16384 W Glacier Court  
Surprise, AZ 85387

Pamela Paulin  
39914 SE Fall Creek Rd.  
Estacada, OR 97023

William W. Quist  
2234 F Suada Dr.  
Holladay, UT 84124

Bud and Mary Rhoades  
2473 Broadway  
Grand Junction, CO 81503

George and Emma Roney  
5609 Anita Road  
Chico, CA 95973

Dr. Robert Santos  
1101 N Commons Rd.  
Turlock CA 95380

Major John C. Varden III  
KBK Services  
Taji, Iraq APO-AE 09378

Robert Verbeul  
365 Nelson Road  
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

Mark K. Watson  
1419 E Marbella St.  
Sandy UT 84093

Kirke Wilson  
172 Hancock St.  
San Francisco, CA 94114

## Gateway Chapter

### Gateway Chapter Elects Officers for 2006

*By Jackie Lewin*

The Gateway Chapter held its annual membership meeting and dinner at the home of Del and Joyce Sutherland in St. Joseph on November 15. President John Atkinson reflected on the year's accomplishments including educational programs open to the public: "Off to the Gold Fields" by Jim "Two Crows" Wallen, "From the Skin Out" by KANZA Chapter member Yvonne Larson and "Kit Carson" by Frederick Krebs. The last program was a Kansas Humanities Council speaker co-sponsored with the Doniphan County Historical Society and the Native American Heritage Museum.

Gateway also sponsored two field trips in 2005: "Fort Leavenworth, Atchison and Weston" led by Jerry and Jackie Lewin and "Jesse James Country" led by Tom Holloway and John Atkinson. In addition, Gateway members conducted a trail reconnaissance of the St. Joe Road in Brown County. Carsonite trail markers were checked and some new

ones added. Preservation Chair Paul Dittimore gave a report of the reconnaissance event to the group at the membership meeting. The last program of the year was given after the November 15 dinner by Clyde Weeks, director of Robidoux Row Museum in St. Joseph.

New officers are: President - Bill Leppert; Vice-President - Wayne Schutte; Past President - John Atkinson; Secretary - Sandy Smith; Treasurer - Marilyn Bryan; Board members - Del Sutherland, Pete Duncan and Millie Humphreys. Appointed members of the Board are Jackie Lewin, Newsletter Editor, and Paul Dittimore, Preservation Chair.

The chapter would like to thank John Atkinson for his years of service as president and Bob Hamilton who formerly served as president and past-president. Newly elected president Bill Leppert pledged to promote the 2006 convention in St. Joseph and continue previous activities of the chapter, tours and trail markings.



Gateway leaders, back row, from left,; Paul Dittimore, Pete Duncan, Sandy Smith, Jackie Lewin and Del Sutherland; front row, from left, Martha Parker (outgoing treasurer), John Atkinson and Bill Leppert. Not shown are Millie Humphreys, Wayne Schutte and Marilyn Bryan.



By Ross Marshall

*"There is no other tree or bush or shrub save one Elm tree, which stands on a small elevation near the little creek or branch."* --Susan Shelby Magoffin, June 11, 1846

Such was the appearance of one of the most famous campgrounds on the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails in the latter part of the 1840s. This campground has now been preserved and interpreted thanks to the efforts of members of the Oregon-California Trails Association in the Kansas City area working in partnership with the Parks Department of Olathe, KS and Director Kevin Corbett.

With the completion of the athletic fields, an impressive "Rendezvous" shelter house and the installation of several interpretive exhibits, the site was officially dedicated as the Lone Elm Park on June 9, 2005, and opened for visitors.

Ending several years of concern by many about how to accomplish preservation of this key historic site, good news was received from the City of Olathe in 2000 as it finalized the purchase of a 160-acre family farm. In total, the city has invested several million dollars to create both a historical and recreational city park.

Softball and soccer fields now occupy approximately one-half of the acreage that was farmland. The rest of the land including a branch of Cedar Creek, which comprised most of the historic camping area, has been preserved and interpreted for visitors. Extensive archeological investigations

have been done on the construction areas and many trail-era artifacts have been recovered.

The Lone Elm campground was one of the most famous frontier trail campsites and rendezvous points. In the almost four decades of its use starting in 1821, thousands of Santa Fe traders, Oregon and California emigrants, mountain men, missionaries, soldiers and 49ers passed through or camped at Lone Elm, including such frontier notables as William Becknell, John Fremont, the Donner-Reed party, Kit Carson and Francis Parkman.

This trail campground was first known as Round Grove, named by the earliest traders to Santa Fe because it had a grove of trees just before trail travelers entered the "treeless prairie." By 1827 it shared duty with Elm Grove Campground, 2¼ miles northwest on the same Cedar Creek, and the two campgrounds were often mistaken for each other. By the mid-1840s, when the grove had been reduced to one huge elm tree, this site was known as Lone Elm.

Along with traders and emigrants who camped at Lone Elm on the first or second night out of Independence or Westport, the Mexican War in 1846 brought the frontier military through Lone Elm. Several of these soldiers and 49ers who succumbed to cholera are buried here at Lone Elm.

Dr. F. A. Wislizenus recorded in 1846, "How long the venerable elm tree [will remain]..... I am unable to say, but I fear its days are numbered....."

J. F. Pritchard recorded in his 1849 California diary "This lone tree stands on the bank of a small stream, with no other tree or shrub in sight, all its branches have been cut from it by traders and emigrants for the purpose of fuel."



At the dedication are, from left, Trails Head members Craig Crease, Lee and Dorothy Kroh, Ross Marshall and Olathe Parks Director Kevin Corbett.

By the end of the 1840s the great old tree was gone—used for firewood—but such was its fame that spurious reports of its existence continued through the 1850s.

The trails were harsh. Stream crossings were hazardous. The elements were unforgiving. Illnesses took their toll: "This morning we buried John N. Collins, a private in Captain Turney's company. His grave is situated on the right hand of the road about 150 yards east of the 'Lone Elm' the only tree to be seen on the prairie for miles around...". (Pvt. Benjamin L. Wiley, July 13, 1847.

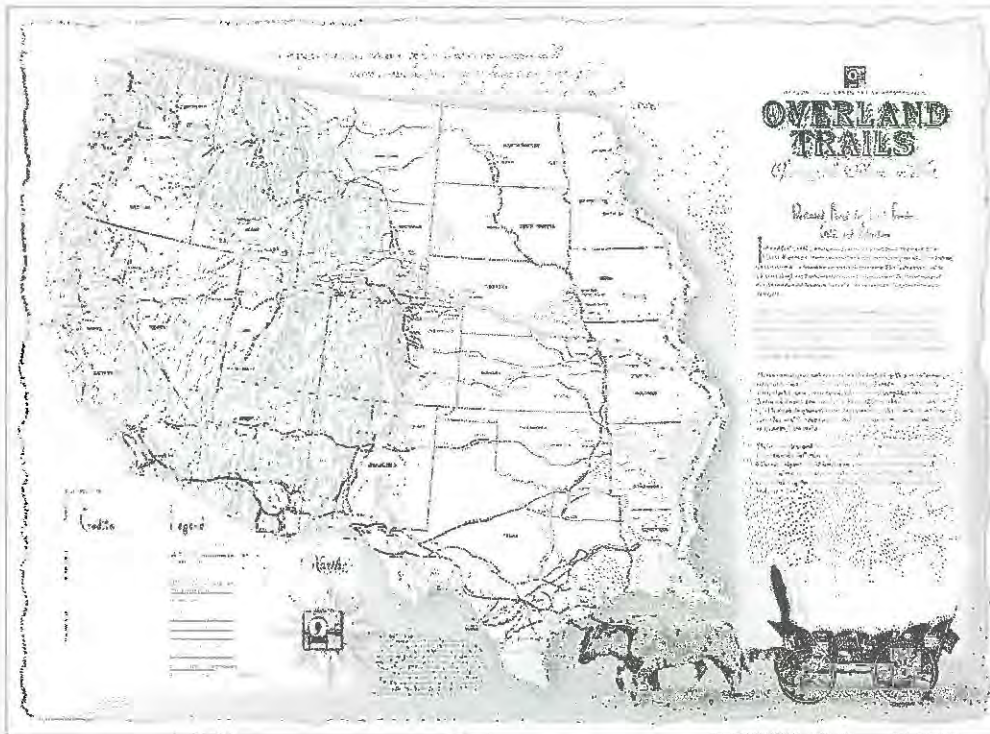
Thanks to the partnering efforts of Trails Head Chapter members, other local trail groups and the City of Olathe, people can once again gather at Lone Elm.



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# Recruit New Members for Chance at Prizes

By Joyce Bolerjack  
National Membership Chairwoman

In an effort to help increase membership and bolster initiatives being undertaken with Elderhostel (see the Association Manager report by Travis Boley elsewhere in this newsletter), OCTA is undertaking three efforts in the next year. First, OCTA HQ will include five membership applications in your next membership renewal package. To entice you to convert these applications to new members, OCTA announces its second initiative: if, over the course of the next year, you are able to recruit four new members to OCTA you will receive a free membership during the next year.

Simply take the applications that are coming in the mail to you and write your name somewhere on the form identifying yourself as the facilitator for this membership. You can either provide the new memberships in the form of a gift membership (OCTA memberships make GREAT Christmas gifts!) or by simply encouraging someone else to join on their own nickel. Finally, to encourage you to keep bringing your friends, family and colleagues into the OCTA fold, we're holding one final contest. The one person who brings the most new members by December 31, 2006 will receive a \$100 gift certificate to spend at the OCTA store at [www.octa-trails.org/store](http://www.octa-trails.org/store). The person who brings the second most new members

will receive a \$50 gift certificate and the third place finisher will receive a \$35 gift certificate.

Remember, OCTA cannot continue to grow and thrive without you! Please encourage others to not only join OCTA but participate in all that OCTA has to offer, whether that is the new mapping, marking and monitoring initiative or working to continue our incredible COED project. An active member is a renewing member!

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [jpbolerjack@comcast.net](mailto:jpbolerjack@comcast.net) or HQ at [contact@octa-trails.org](mailto:contact@octa-trails.org) or by calling toll free at 888-811-6282 should you have any questions.

Good luck!

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## Headquarters Manager Report...

By Kathy Conway

### Happy New Year 2006 OCTA Members!

Your staff appreciates your past support in 2005!

In response to our Annual Fund Drive letter in late October, 137 fellow members have donated over \$7,000. We are a little over one-third of the way toward our \$20,000 goal this year. We hope you will write your check today to help us reach our objective.

**Members** contributing through December 4, 2005 are:

Dick and Trudy Ackerman  
Eva Allen  
Lynne Alvord  
Adah and Max Bakalinsky  
Richard Bennett  
Gary J Bjorge  
Ouida Blanthorn  
Victor and Nancy Bolon  
Dennis and Judy Brown  
Dorene and Marvin Burke  
Mrs. John E Cahill  
Gail and Muriel Carbiener  
Robert and Lyndia Carter  
Greg Childs  
William Colvin  
Vincent Correll  
Tom and Beth Crow  
James W Dayley  
Lois A Dove  
Douglas V Duncan  
Lorraine Dyson  
Elmer and Betty Eberhardt  
Raymond J Egan  
Janet Higley Elliott  
Donald Enneking  
Ardis and Jim Everett  
Thomas Fee  
Greg and Kathy Franzwa  
Dwight J Garrison  
Gene and Patsy German  
Archie Gordon  
Sharon Hamby  
Virginia Hammerness

John Haner  
Scott Hendricks  
Richard and Phyllis Herman  
Richard A Higgins  
James E Hoelter  
Chuck & Suzanne Hornbuckle  
Kathee Houser  
Doug Howard  
Wayne E Huffstutter  
Betty Hughston  
Lois Johnson  
Jim Johnson  
Hedy Jones  
Robert and Barbara Kabel  
Frank and Dorothy Karras  
Caroline Kaszuk  
Dr. and Mrs. Phillip King  
Rudolph Kolb  
Esther Kreek  
John Mark Lambertson  
Ormie Lamson  
John Latschar  
Jean Leamon  
Jackie and Jerry Lewin  
Charles and Hariett Lewis  
Charles and Nora Little  
Howard and Barbara Magerl  
Hal and Sharon Manhart  
Hugh and Carol March  
Keith Meldahl  
Walter H Meyer  
Lynn Meyers  
Jack E Moore  
Loren D Munro  
Josephine Nattkemper  
Virginia Nelson  
Olive Newell  
Floyd A O'Neil  
Keith A Palmquist  
Richard Pingrey  
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Mark W Voth  
Randall A Wagner  
Gil Ward  
David G Way  
Vernon Wedel  
Kathleen W Weigel  
Nelson S Weller  
Sandra Wiechart  
Gareth and Deanne Wilson  
Alexa Wood  
Henry K Woodward

In addition, friends and family of OCTA charter member, Mort Sumberg, who died October 26, 2005 have honored his life by sending donations to OCTA's Restricted Endowment Fund.

The OCTA store now has available several of the tour guides prepared for the Salt Lake City 2005 OCTA Convention. Each retail for \$5 plus (\$2 S&H) Titles are: *Salt Lake City Cutoff*; *Donner Spring*; *Hastings-Bryant Russell-Golden Pass*; *Mormon Flat: To Mt. Dell Over Big Mountain*; and the *Keep Sake 2005 Convention Guide*. **Call us toll free 888-811-6282 and order any or all of these.**

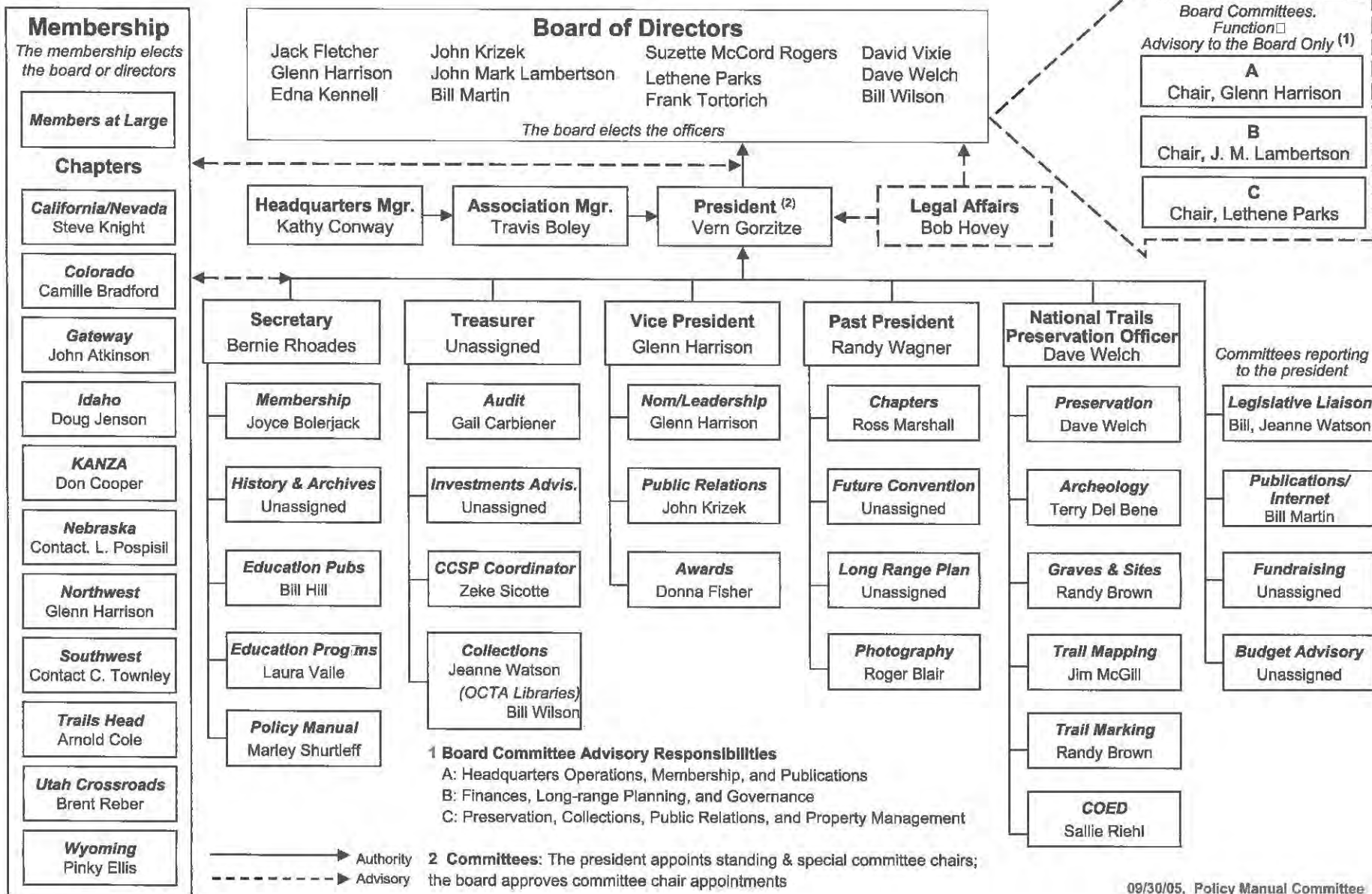
And lastly, if you have questions regarding your membership, please do not hesitate to give Headquarters a call.





# OCTA Organization

News From the Plains





# *The National Frontier Trails Museum is Celebrating the California Gold Rush!*



*"John Sutter and the California Gold Rush" by Matt Doeden, Illustrated by Ron Frenz and Charles Busman III. This children's book is a fun, historically accurate account of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in California in 1848. This story is told in comic book format with beautiful color pictures. This is the perfect book to encourage "reluctant readers". National Frontier Trails Museum Director, John Mark Lambertson was the author's historical consultant. For ages 8 - 12. Hardback \$25.00 plus tax.*

*The National Frontier Trails Museum presents the story of the exploration, acquisition, and settlement of the American West. An award-winning film prepares visitors for the interpretive exhibits which guide them along the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails. Quotations from trail diaries are extensively used, allowing pioneer travelers to tell their experiences in their own words. The museum has an authentic covered wagon, relics and artifacts, hands on activities for kids, wagon train swales, and museum store.*

*For more information for this or our other special events, please call 816-325-7575, or check our website at [www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org](http://www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org). Shop our museum store for this and many other book and gift items.*

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