

News From the Plains



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Newsletter of the Oregon-California Trails Association

Winter 2007

Construction Begins on Elko Trail Center

By **Candy Moulton**
NFP Editor

From Interstate 80 west of Elko, travelers can see rebar and steel, plus freshly moved dirt at the site of the California National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. West Coast Contractors of Nevada, Inc., was awarded the \$9.45 million construction contract last fall and is

making good progress, according to the Bureau of Land Management.

"Every time I visit the site, I see change," said BLM Trail Center Manager Dave Jamiel in November. "We're all hoping the weather continues to hold so we can get as much done as possible."

By early December, the company had excavated the foundation for the main building, graded the site of

the future amphitheater and poured concrete for some of the foundations, Jamiel said. Work is also underway on a geothermal heat exchange system, which will be used to heat and cool the building.

"Power to the site has been installed near the main building," said BLM Elko Field Office Engineer Norm Rockwell. "The final connection will be done next summer so it doesn't interfere now with on-going construction activities around the building footprint. This is a major step getting power on site so the contractor has electricity for his office and construction activities."

Jamiel said, "We're pretty pleased with the contractor. Nothing short of a major blizzard is expected to slow the progress."

When completed, the Trail Center will occupy an 11-acre footprint and will include 16,000 square feet in the main facility and a similar-sized interpretive plaza east of the building. Construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2008.



Construction has started on the California Trail Interpretive Center near Elko, Nevada. (Photo by Mike Brown/Elko BLM)

2006-2007 OCTA Officers

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

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

Bernie Rhoades, *Secretary*, 11809 36th St. E. Edgwood, WA 98372; Rhoarclass@aol.com

Turner Rivenbark, *Treasurer*, 119 Sunset Rd., Wallace, NC 28466; rtrivenbark@earthlink.net

Dave Welch, *National Preservation Officer*, 4374 Vashon Dr. NE Lacey, WA 98516; 360-923-0438; welchdj@comcast.net

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

2006-2007 OCTA Board

Robert Clark, Norman, OK; bobclark@ahclark.com

Jack Fletcher, Sequim, WA; jpletcher@olympus.net

Duane Iles, Blue Rapids, KS; drugrus@bluevalley.net

Edna Kennell, Casper, WY; ednajk@coffey.com

John Krizek, Prescott, AZ; JKrizek@aol.com

John Mark Lambertson, Independence, MO; jlambertson@indepmo.org

Bill Martin, Georgetown, TX; lexiconomist@suddenlink.net

Suzette McCord-Rogers, Highland, KS; nahm@kshs.org

Lethene Parks, Hunters, WA; lethene@theofficenet.com

Dave Vixie, Paradise, CA; drvixie@yahoo.com

Dave Welch, Lacey, WA; welchdj@comcast.net

Bill Wilson, Boise, ID; ma_bill@msn.com



News From the Plains

Editor

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

Contributing Editors

Robert Clark
Bill Martin
Vern Gorzitze
Kathy Conway
Travis Boley

Oregon-California Trails Association

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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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Changes in Congress May Affect Trails Legislation

**Bill and Jeanne Watson
Trails Liaison Co-Chairs**

and minority staff will swap offices but keep their old telephone numbers.

Congressional leadership changes are the reverse of what occurred in 1995.

The Four Trails Studies of Additional Routes Authorization bill died when the final session of the 109th Congress ended in early December. By press time, Congress also had failed to pass the budget for Fiscal Year 2007, which began October 1. That means our National Park Service partners continue to operate at a budget rate less than 2006.

Harry Reid, the new Senate Majority Leader, and Nancy Pelosi, new House Speaker, were expected to announce their Committee Chairs for the 110th Congress in December while the new Minority leadership also was expected to announce new Committee Ranking Members. Each Committee Chair controls which legislation or funding authorizations are considered. The new Senate Majority Leader and the House Speaker control the schedule for bills coming to the floor for vote. These major

Trail Advocacy Week is in mid-February 2007 and we are delighted that Vern and Carol Osborne will be joining us for those "Hike The Hill" activities. We hope to determine then how receptive the new Congress is to the re-introduction of our Four Trails Additional Routes Studies Authorization legislation and to line-up sponsors. There is a lot of work for the four of us, but we hope to have some answers for the OCTA Mid-Year Board meeting.

By the time you read this article, in each House or Senate Committee and Subcommittee the former majority

Trails Volunteer Time & Expense Report Year 2007

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The President Sounds Off...

Vern Gorzitze
vergor@viawest.net

This Should Make You Proud to be an OCTA Member

While contemplating the content of this column for NFTP, I received a copy of an endorsement letter written on behalf of OCTA. I read it repeatedly, each time feeling more and more proud to be a member. I would be remiss in my duties if I did not share it with you, the membership, who made it and makes it happen. Like they say on TV – "...only the names have been omitted to protect the innocent."

November 1, 2006

Dear: xxxxx

OCTA has been a leader for two decades in the identification, protection, promotion, and support of America's overland pioneer trails. The organization's founding and continuing Statement of Purpose includes this goal:

To initiate and coordinate activities relating to the identification, preservation, interpretation, and improved accessibility of extant rut segments, trail remains, graves, and associated historic trail sites, landmarks, artifacts, and objects along the overland western historic trails, roads, routes, branches, and cutoffs of the Trans-Mississippi region.

The national historic trails of America form a wide-ranging network of routes, sites, associated structures and resources, and interpretive centers. Starting in 1978, Congress has established 16 national historic trails. OCTA is the lead nonprofit partner for two of these

trails, the 1,200-mile Oregon Trail and the 5,666-mile California Trail. These trails are complex, multi-jurisdictional, often remote, and highly variable in scenic and resource quality. OCTA, as an organization of over 2,000 members organized into 11 chapters, has devoted itself to many aspects of this work – not just one project. The inventorying and tracking of significant trail-related resources is a huge job. Protecting threatened resources from damage and neglect is an even greater challenge. The members of OCTA have valiantly taken on this work with great effectiveness. Their diverse and creative projects (many of which are ongoing) clearly make them eligible, from my perspective, for this Preserve America Presidential award.

Many of the aspects of OCTA's historic preservation work fall neatly under the award's qualifying categories. Under "Preservation of cultural heritage assets," OCTA has:

- Purchased critical trail lands when endangered, such as California Hill, Nebraska. Generally these lands have later been donated to public agencies to become state parks or other conservancy lands.
- Developed the 5-class Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) typology of remnant trail traces. These classes reflect a gradient of disturbance – from pristine to obliterated. They have become accepted as standard for all national historic trails. The MET classification was first developed in the late 1980s and

has been continuously upgraded and integrated in Federal agency practice.

- Encouraged volunteer mapping of thousands of miles of historic trail routes and cutoffs throughout the Western States, often using cutting-edge GPS equipment and GIS software to accurately and consistently map these trails. In general, this work was painstakingly accomplished through volunteer labor, assisted by minimal Federal funding for equipment and some travel expenses. These maps and data sets have proven invaluable to Federal agencies administering these trails.
- Helped ensure that rock climbing at City of Rocks National Preserve in Idaho is managed so as to protect the setting and this formation so important to emigrant travelers.

In addition, under "Commitment to protection and interpretation," OCTA has:

1. Installed Carsonite trail markers along thousands of miles of both the Oregon and California Trails, using volunteer labor.
2. Served as a key review partner with the Bureau of Land Management for oil and gas leases in Wyoming along the Oregon and California Trail corridors, helping minimize the visual intrusion of modern facilities to enhance the public's

The President Sounds Off...

enjoyment of the historic scene, while not affecting the output of nearby oil and gas wells.

- 4. Developed and published the Census of Overland Emigrant Diaries (COED) for quick retrieval of names, dates, and simultaneous accounts. Over 3,263 diaries, journals, and other documents have been digitized and entered into this system – all retrievable by name or source.
- 5. Faithfully published the quarterly, Overland Journal, the only peer-reviewed scholarly journal of historic trail issues in the United States.

And, for “Innovative, creative and responsible showcasing of community-based historic resources,” OCTA has:

- ▣ Awarded “Friends of the Trail” awards to private landowners who have protected and preserved trail ruts on their property. In most cases, these resources are open to the public and involve community-based education programs. OCTA has realized that recognizing both public and private efforts at trail segment and site protection helps bring visibility and protection to such trails for their entire length.
- ▣ Organized and sponsored teacher workshops as part of OCTA’s annual meetings.
- ▣ Recently been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Malcolm E. Smith Jr. Foundation for producing a documentary film

about the 19th Century westering emigrants who used the Oregon and California National Historic Trails. OCTA is eager to excite school children about the value, significance, romance, and hardship of this important chapter in American history.

- ▣ Provided in 2005, 59,053 volunteer hours valued at \$1,036,380 and budget contributions of \$602,178 for the Oregon and California Trails, and the National Trails System.

In short, of all of the national historic trail organizations who valiantly try to commemorate America’s rich trail heritage, none succeeds at this work better than OCTA.

Sincerely,
xxxxxx

Yes, you the members of OCTA, did all of the above – be proud – it’s a special organization to be a member of – keep up the good work – support your chapter and its leadership.

Headquarters has sent me the names of a number of new members and some past members who have chosen to re-enlist. Welcome to OCTA or welcome back into the fold as the case may be. I encourage the new members to become involved and active in their respective chapters. Current chapter members, please welcome the newer people, seek out their interests, learn their talents, their strengths, and put them to work – To paraphrase – busy chapter members are happy members.



By the time you read this item, Jere Krakow will have turned in his badge (government property and is on an inventory list), donated his extra uniforms to the Seasonal Employee Clothing Pool, and cleaned out his desk in the Santa Fe Office.

Jere served for nearly a dozen years as Superintendent of the Intermountain Region’s National Trails System Program. There was an open house at the Salt Lake Office where friends and acquaintances visited with Jere and his faithful and long-suffering wife Jan. The day was highlighted by a farewell dinner at which he was honored and presented with a scrapbook of “Trail” memories. It’s not too late to add to that book – send your thoughts and best wishes to the SLC Office and they will be forwarded. I know we have not heard the last of this great guy. OCTA and I wish you and Jan well, Jere, “Walk In Beauty.”

What’s Happening...

March 2-3, 2007
OCTA Mid-Year Board Meeting
Independence, MO

April 21 & 22, 2007
CA/NV Symposium
Yreka, CA

August 7-12, 2007
OCTA Board Meeting and Annual Convention
Gering-Scottsbluff, NE

Trail Journal...

Candy Moulton
NFP-Editor, nfpocta@aol.com

It is December as I write this, but it seems just a few days ago that I was visiting trail sites in Missouri, and I am already anticipating the 2007 convention and related activities that will take place in Nebraska.

Although I knew about the trail and had been to some sites in Wyoming, I had my first real Oregon Trail experiences in Nebraska. The Nebraska Division of Tourism joined with Wyoming Tourism in 1992 to take several journalists across the trail from Rock Creek Station to Fort Bridger.

I had never been to Nebraska before and the journey was a trip I will always remember. Mary Ethel Emmanuel of Nebraska Tourism was the guide in her state. When we arrived at Scotts Bluff Randy Wagner took charge. Admittedly the tour formats were different. Mary Ethel stuck to the highways; Randy preferred dirt roads.

In Nebraska we saw swales at Rock Creek, Fort Kearny, sod houses, California Hill, Ash Hollow, Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff.

I rode wagons on Nebraska's trails in 1993 and in 1997, so had a chance to see many more places on both the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails.

As you make your own plans to attend the 25th Anniversary Convention of OCTA, I encourage you to plan a few extra days to explore Nebraska's great trails.

Headquarters' Manager's Report

Kathy Conway
Kconway@indepmo.org

Happy New Year OCTA Members! Congratulations on our 25 Year Anniversary of preserving a huge piece of American History – the overland emigrant trails!

Members/friends if you would like to wish OCTA congratulations on this 25-year milestone, you may do so by purchasing an ad that will appear in the *Overland Journal's* Anniversary issue, Summer 2007. Your personal messages of good cheer can be shared with all the membership. For details, see page 19 of this issue. What a great way for our members to honor OCTA's twenty-five years of preservation!

As you go about making your New Year's Resolution List, you might want to add:

Make a donation to OCTA: If you haven't contributed yet to the OCTA's Annual Year-End Fund Drive, please send your donation today. Our goal this year is \$22,000!

Come to an OCTA meeting: The OCTA Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting will be held in Independence, Missouri, March 2, 3, 4, 2007.

Place an OCTA order: If you haven't ordered from our 2007 Book and Merchandise Catalog mailed in mid-November, take a moment to check out our new offerings and give us a call to place your order.

Become an OCTA Volunteer: Volunteers are always needed. Elsewhere in this issue you'll see a call for nominations for directors of OCTA's national board. We need you and your talents. It can be fun and rewarding as well. Give Travis Boley a call and he will find you an assignment.

OCTA volunteers Jim and Sallie

Riehl were recently interviewed by newspaper reporter Gloria Clark of the *Northwest Senior and Boomers News*. Sallie chairs the 13-member COED Committee and Jim heads the COED technology development. Their interview appeared in the November issue of that newspaper. It was a good article with topics covering OCTA, COED and the OCTA's Emigrant Names 2 CD. Also, a great picture of OCTA's Overland Trail Map appears in four-color on the front page. Thanks Jim and Sallie for the great "PR" and all your devotion to our organization.

Headquarters just received a review copy of Roy Tea's, field trip guide, *A Tragic Decision*. It covers the Hastings Cutoff and the Weber Canyon Route and includes information about the decision that caused the Donner/Reed Party to arrive too late to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We will have copies of this book (spiral bound with 24 pages of text plus 11 maps), which you may purchase for \$10 each plus \$4 S&H.

A New OCTA Membership Roster is Now Complete

*Paper copies are
available for \$5, S&H included.*

Contact Headquarters to
order by calling
(888)811-6282

From the Association Manager...

Travis Boley
Tboley@indepmo.org

OCTA's annual fund raising campaign is now underway. This year, our most pressing need is for general operating funds.

Due to generous donations from OCTA members David Fairbanks of Maryland and Joe Nardone of California, we will have incredible enticements for those who donate to the general operating fund of OCTA.

Mr. Fairbanks donated several 11 ¼" x 11 ½" bronze plaques depicting the 1924 Old Oregon Trail markers created by his late father, the famed artist Avarad Fairbanks. Each plaque is individually numbered, and only 100 of them were created. The first six people who donate at least \$800 to the general operating fund will receive a copy of this beautiful bronze plaque (see image at www.octa-trails.org/store).

Mr. Nardone donated a number of signed and hand-colored prints of the Brockliss Bridge over the American River near Sacramento, a work of art he commissioned from artist Carol Mathis in 1990 (see image at www.octa-trails.org/store). The bridge was utilized by Pony Express riders and the artwork reflects a scene from November 1860. The first six people who donate \$250 to the general operating fund will receive one copy of a full color limited edition signed print of this artwork. The first 100 who donate \$100 to the fund will receive a signed black and white limited edition Artist Proof, and the first 100 who donate \$75 to the fund will receive a signed black and white print.



Next summer, OCTA will once again partner with Elderhostel

to put on two, 15-day treks from Independence, MO, to Oregon City, OR. The two treks, which will be aboard a motor-coach, begin in Independence on June 13 and August 15.

OCTA members will serve as step-on guides along different sections of the Oregon Trail, and longtime OCTA member Don Popejoy of Spokane, WA, will serve as a guide for the entire route. Those who pay for the trek will automatically receive an OCTA one-year membership. This is an excellent opportunity to see the entire length of the Oregon Trail and learn from local OCTA experts along the way, all in about two weeks! For more details, visit www.elderhostel.org.



Be sure to make plans to be in Gering/Scottsbluff, Nebraska from August 7-12, 2007 as OCTA celebrates its 25th Annual Convention. I promise you it will be a gala event unlike any you've ever seen. The cities of Gering and Scottsbluff are rolling out the red carpet for OCTA, and the state of Nebraska is proving to be an excellent partner as we make our plans for next summer. There will be lots of surprises, and you will not want to miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate 25 years of OCTA's incredible history.

Information continues to be added to the convention website at <http://visitscottsbluff.com/octa/>, so be sure to check the site often for updates.

OCTA has reserved blocks of rooms at a number of Scottsbluff hotels, including the Super 8, Holiday Inn Express, Comfort Inn, and Candlelight Inn. You have the option of riding a shuttle from the Scottsbluff hotels to the Gering Convention

Center, or driving your own vehicle. We also have a few rooms available for general convention attendees at the Microtel Inn & Suites in Gering, which is right next door to the Gering Convention Center. You can access all hotel information at the website listed above.



Remember, if you're planning a trip and need a hotel stay, be sure to book your room online at www.octa-trails.org. Not only will you likely be able to save 10-15 percent on your rate, but OCTA also receives 6 percent of your total booking fee.



If you shop online, be sure to utilize our online link to Fundraising Solutions at www.octa-trails.org. You can shop at hundreds of well-known online vendors, and OCTA receives up to 25 percent of each purchase you make.



Thank you to everyone who commented on the draft OCTA Strategic Plan. The committee is now incorporating your suggestions into the plan and will make its recommendations at the Mid-Year Board meeting in March in Independence, MO. It is hoped that the board will adopt the final draft of the plan and put it into action at that time. A special thank you to our National Park Service partners Sharon Brown and Jere Krakow for helping to facilitate our planning process!

If you need anything from OCTA Headquarters contact us at (888)811-6282.

Litter Removed from Fernley Deep Sand Swales

By Tom Fee

On the 40 Mile Desert of the Truckee River Route of the California Trail, the most difficult portion the emigrants traveled was the seven miles of deep sand prior to reaching the Truckee River. The historic Great Sand Swales north of Fernley, NV are part of that seven-mile stretch of sand.

Unfortunately, some citizens in the area dump their trash in and near the swales because it saves paying the fee at the local landfill transfer station. Couches, mattresses, appliances, tires, general trash and piles of tree branches are routinely dumped. We sense that the amount of trash has been decreasing the past few years, possibly due to our attempt to educate the local citizens via articles in the local newspaper and "History of the Swales" handouts given to the volunteers.

Nevertheless, there is a continuing need to remove trash from the area. The annual cleanup of the Fernley Deep Sand Swales occurred on October 7, 2006. This cleanup will continue to be scheduled on the



Patty Knight and Dave Valentine gather debris.

first Saturday of October in future years. This is the seventh Fernley Swales Cleanup we have organized. Previous cleanups have occurred in June 1998, May 2001, August 2002, December 2003, November 2004 and October 2005.

Each cleanup has involved increased community involvement. Groups that contributed this year to the cleanup effort included the CA-NV Chapter of OCTA, the Bureau of Land Management, Waste Management (Fernley Transfer Station), The Truck Inn, Fernley Preservation Society, Fernley Parks and Recreation Department, and the *Leader-Courier* newspaper.

Nine CA-NV members turned out to help us. These OCTA volunteers were: Linda Sanders, Andy Quinn,

Leslie Fryman, Dave Hollecker, Steve and Patty Knight, Helen Martin, Tom Fee and Dave Valentine, a BLM archaeologist. Leslie drove in from Citrus Heights and Helen drove all the way from Vacaville. We had two representatives from the BLM including Valentine and Peggy McGuckian, who is also an archaeologist from the Winnemucca BLM Field Office. Three people represented the Truck Inn: Karen Giron, Barbara Corbin, and J. J. Hill. We had four people associated with the Fernley Parks Department: Randy Giles, Tom Haas, Steve Van Meter, and Megan White. Two students from the Fernley Green Team also helped out.

We had four long-bed trailers and one pickup truck for hauling trash. We hauled four very large loads of trash to the Fernley Transfer Station and Waste Management supplied free dump passes. The Truck Inn supplied trash bags and bottled water.

All in all, it was a very productive day and we were pleased we had restored these historic Sand Swales closer to their original state.



Tom Fee, left, Linda Sanders, center, and Leslie Fryman, right, assisted in collecting trash from the Fernley Swales. (Photos by Steve Knight)



Helping gather trash from the Fernley Swales was Barbara Corbin of the Truck Inn. Other volunteers from OCTA and various businesses and agencies also took part in the cleanup.

California and Nevada Preservation Issues

Leslie R. Fryman
CA-NV Chapter
Preservation Officer

Compared to some past years, 2006 has been pretty quiet regarding trail preservation issues, and the number of on-the-ground disasters relatively low. This may mean that agency planners are more aware of the trail and are working more to avoid damage and loss during timber harvests, road projects, land exchanges, development, etc. On the other hand, it could also mean that OCTA is not monitoring the trails closely enough and threats/damages are going unnoticed and unreported!

As you know, the emigrant trail branches are many (and extensive), especially in California, compared to

a mere half-dozen or so active OCTA members who monitor their condition by periodically driving by and reporting signs of activity or damage. Much pristine trail on public land remains entirely unmonitored, or receives too little attention to prevent accidental damage. Ground-disturbing projects such as timber harvests on national forests and road projects where highways parallel emigrant trails are still the most frequent cause of direct damage to trail swales and features.

Industrial and residential development in proximity to trails, particularly in booming western Nevada, is rapidly becoming a serious "indirect" threat to the historic setting of emigrant roadways.

Here is a trail-by-trail summary of preservation activity for 2006. Many thanks to the "trail bosses" mentioned below who reported, researched and helped to ensure that trail segments are still intact for all to enjoy.

The most activity occurred in 2006 along the Truckee River Route, mainly due to its proximity to the I-80 corridor and developing areas in the Reno-Sparks-Fernley region. In February of 2006, a local resident contacted OCTA about development around Roller Pass and Coldstream Canyon; Dave Hollecker, Don Buck and Tom Dougherty determined it unlikely that any intact trail segments would be involved. Also last February,

Continued on Page 15



Get The Latest Offerings From The Oregon-California Trails Association. Order Today While Supplies Last!



PLU # 1755

The third in OCTA's series of historic trails commemorative coins, this coin is .999 pure silver and celebrates the Centennial of a remarkable achievement. This coin depicts Ezra Meeker, who set out in 1906 to put markers along the Oregon Trail. Each coin is numbered and the minting is limited to only 250 pieces, so be sure to get yours now. **Order PLU #1755, Only \$29.95 each.**

See note below for postage and handling.

Here Comes the Pony: The Story of the Pony Express

By William E. Hill, (OCTA Member), Order PLU #1768, \$7.95, Paperback

64 page workbook published in August 2006 in conjunction with the Pony Express Museum in St. Joseph, Missouri. Fun-filled activity book suitable for children of all ages, but especially geared toward 4th graders and up. It contains a teacher's guide at the end of the book.

Add \$4.00 for S&H for single item or \$5.00 total shipping charges for multiple purchases.



THE OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 1019, Independence, MO 64051

Call toll free, 1-888-811-6282 or visit the bookstore on the web at www.octa-trails.org

Trail Preservation Officer

Dave Welch
Welchdj@comcast.net

Mapping and Marking Projects Continue

With winter upon us, it is appropriate to make plans for the summer. Now is the time to formulate plans for mapping, marking and monitoring the trails. I know treks are enjoyable, but it is also fun to work on the trails. Ask anyone who participated in the South Pass studies last spring or mapping and marking efforts in Idaho and Colorado.

There is a pervasive but mistaken belief that all the trails are known and mapped. At a macro level this is somewhat true, but at the level needed for preservation activities, very little has been documented. I am talking about mapping in accordance with the Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Guide. This requires data collection and mapping on USGS 1:24,000 quadrangles or their computer-based map equivalent.

The process is as follows: (1) review past trail mapping work and select an area that has not been previously mapped at the required level of detail, (2) assemble a team with skills in map reading, use of GPS devices and trail history, and (3) schedule and promote the event. Include seasoned pros as well as newcomers to develop an expanded volunteer base. Depending upon the complexity of the trails, the "study area" size can vary greatly. Where multiple routes traverse an area, one or two miles may be more than enough to keep everyone busy. With one linear route, five or more miles might be studied.

During the South Pass studies, we learned that a team of about four volunteers works best. Multiple teams can be working in the area with assignments covering different

segments of the trails. The team members can divide up the tasks of recordation, measuring and photographing the trail. Before the teams begin their detailed work a visit by team leaders to scope out the area can make it easier to organize the field work. Research is also needed to locate diaries and journals that reference the study area. All field work needs to be coordinated with landowners. As you can see, there is work for a variety of interests and specialties.

Another task that can be undertaken by individuals is a photo monitoring project. Elaborate equipment is not needed. All that is required is to take the same picture from the same spot over a period of time. A simple digital or film camera will suffice. You might begin by locating some historical photographs to establish an earlier baseline. Bob Kabel's work at Devils Gate as documented in the spring 2006 *Overland Journal* shows what can be done (although climbing mountains is optional).

Mapping, marking and monitoring work is coordinated by the chapter preservation officer or mapping chair. Contact your chapter leadership and volunteer to be part of or lead a mapping and marking project. The products (maps, etc.) should be sent to Jim McGill, the OCTA mapping chair, and to OCTA headquarters and the National Park Service. Marker location information should be sent to Randy Brown, the trail marking chair.

Preservation training has now been presented to members of the Northwest, California-Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming and Crossroads chapters. It

will be presented to members of the KANZA, Gateway and Trails Head chapters in April or May.

Energy Development Still an Issue for Trails Preservation

In other news, energy development activities in Wyoming continue at a rapid pace. Many trail areas are impacted, but the trail itself and a quarter mile on each side are protected (except for pipeline crossings). In general, there has been an improvement in the efforts to protect trail resources by government staff and energy companies. Wind energy development is a growing threat to trail viewshed in Oregon and Wyoming.

The change in leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives may bode well for our legislation to designate additional routes and cutoffs as national historic trails. The legislation previously passed the Senate, but was held up by a House committee chairman who was defeated for re-election. Bill and Jeanne Watson will be working with House and Senate staff next year to get the legislation moving again. The prospects for passage should be good.

Finally, Jere Krakow has carried through with his intention to retire as superintendent of the National Trails System Office. Jere has worked tirelessly for the trails for more than a dozen years. Fortunately, he has in place a great staff and a budget that should insure the continued good works of that office. Good luck, Jere! We expect to see you on the trails often.

Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter

Columbus Weekend Tour Along Cherokee Trail to Bent's Fort

By Carolyn Moree

The Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter hosted a tour over Columbus Day Weekend. The event started at the 20-Mile House in Parker. The 20-Mile House is on a portion of the original Cherokee and Smoky Hill trails. Stage stops or roadhouses were established along the combined Cherokee Trail-Smoky Hill Trail and were named for their distance from Denver.

We went down the trail south along Highway 83, which follows the Cherokee Trail closely, to the small settlement of Russellville, which was established in 1859. It was originally called East Cherry Creek when first surveyed in 1866. Small amounts of gold had been found here. We saw where the original sawmill and stage station were located.

Continuing along the trail we visited Blackfoot Cave, which was a good area for the emigrants to spend the night in a warm, sheltered place. Some of our group entered the cave and went its length, which was about 50 feet. It is located on private property, which is in the process of being subdivided. However, the owner of the property has dedicated portions of the land to Douglas and Elbert Counties for conservation easements that will assure that these areas will not be disturbed. The original trail ruts are across this property and we walked them and marveled at being able to step in the same tracks as the pioneers. This swale and ruts are well preserved. Ian Griffis manages the property and we are indebted to him for the conservation easement

and preserving the ruts from future development.

The Jimmy Camp area was the next stop on our trip. There is a spring located there that the pioneers talked about being the "best water" they had seen on the route. Trail ruts were seen on a hill on property previously owned by Lee Whiteley's family. It was noted that during times of snow or in the springtime the ruts would become more visible.

Point of Rocks and Fagan's grave were the next attractions along the trail. The ruts were very visible on this ranch owned by Ruth Ann Steele in Elbert County. Fagan's grave was interesting to see. He was a civilian teamster with the Loring-Marcy military expedition and froze to death in a snowstorm May 2, 1858. Ms. Steele has been carefully taking care of the grave.

A short business meeting was held at the Steele ranch where Camille Bradford, the chapter President, introduced the members.

We followed the old Pueblo Road and saw Fountain Creek, which provided water for the travelers on the Cherokee Trail. Fountain Creek is the main tributary of the Arkansas River.

We spent the night in Pueblo

and some of the members went to the historic downtown area for the evening.

Sunday morning we traveled through Pueblo where we saw the Mormontown marker, the Cherokee trail marker, Chico Creek and the confluence of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas River. Several interesting old bridges were traversed across the rivers.



Colorado Chapter members at Fagan's Grave located on property owned by Ruth Ann Steele.

We drove east along Highway 50, which closely follows the Cherokee Trail to LaJunta and Bent's Old Fort. The fort is a reconstruction of the original that was built by William Bent, Charles Bent, and Ceran St. Vrain. Bent's Fort was a major trading post on the Santa Fe Trail and the jumping off place for the Cherokee Trail. The weekend we visited was the celebration of the Explorers' Encampment at the fort where more than 60 living history volunteers brought the past back to life.

Award Nominations Needed

By Donna Fisher
Awards Committee Chair

**Make Your
Nomination by
June 1, 2007**

OCTA Board Candidates Needed

By Glenn Harrison
Nominating & Leadership
Committee Chair

Serving on the OCTA Board is a great opportunity to assist the members and the organization. Each year the members vote on candidates for four of the twelve three-year positions. The board meets twice a year. The meetings for 2007-08 will be at the Business Meeting of the Gering-Scottsbluff, NB OCTA Convention in August, a location to be determined in March, and in connection with the Nampa, ID OCTA Convention in August 2008. There is partial support for expenses for the mid-year meeting.

In August 2007, terms expire for Edna Kennell, John Mark Lambertson, Bill Martin and William Wilson. Edna is completing her second term, so is not eligible to run this year. William has decided not to run for the board. John Mark Lambertson and Bill Martin are eligible to run for a second consecutive term.

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

Candidates need to submit:

1. Information about the

It is time to begin the nomination process for the OCTA Awards to be presented at the August convention in Gering-Scottsbluff, NE.

To make a nomination, it is necessary to complete the Award Form, which is published on the OCTA website. If possible, complete the form and e-mail it to the Awards Committee by sending it to ppphistory@bresnan.net. To reach the "Members Only" section of the OCTA website where you will find the forms, log in at www.octa-trails.org. The username is **octa** and the password is **trailswest**. If you do not have access to the Internet and need a form, contact OCTA Headquarters at (888)811-6282. The deadline for nominations is June 1.

The categories and the qualifications are as follow:

Meritorious Achievement Award – The highest award OCTA can give to recognize long-term and significant contributions to OCTA. Only members can qualify for Meritorious Achievement.

Elaine McNabney Distinguished Volunteer Award – Bestowed on OCTA members who contribute significantly to achieving OCTA goals and projects. Only OCTA members can qualify for Distinguished Volunteer.

Distinguished Service Award – Granted to organizations, businesses, government agencies, individuals, or others who contribute or participate in furthering OCTA's programs directly or provide substantial support in a non-affiliated way to trail preservation and education.

Friend of the Trail Award – Presented to groups, individuals,

or organizations that have direct ties to lands over which historic trails pass. Neither property ownership nor current residence on trail property is required, but emphasis is placed on preservation of trail remnants, education of the public about their historic resources, and allowing responsible public access to the historic resources.

National Certificates of Appreciation – Presented to individuals and organizations that have made a particular effort in achieving a short-term OCTA goal. These certificates are for efforts of national scope; appropriate chapters should recognize more regional or local efforts.

Young OCTA Award – Presented to children and youth between the ages of six and twenty-one who have demonstrated particular interest in OCTA and the history and/or preservation of historic emigrant trails. The nominee will have demonstrated this interest by an activity in the field or via a school or class project in such a manner that is considered outstanding and far above the typical field or school project. The project may also be an outstanding personal endeavor undertaken on the nominee's own initiative. An entire class or group of school-aged children may be nominated as one aggregated nominee. Qualifying standards would include participation in OCTA meetings, outings, and/or work projects over an extended period. OCTA membership is not a requirement.

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CA-NV Chapter

Pat Loomis Library Developed

By Virginia Hammerness

On September 29, Mary Mueller and Pat Loomis drove to Arroyo Grande, CA, to participate in the dedication of the *Pat Loomis History Library and Resource Center*. Pat dedicated her 39-volume set of Bancroft Works, plus many more books on various aspects of western and California history.

There was a large turnout of people including many of Loomis' relatives.

Jane Line, President of South County Historical Society made remarks and an editorial in the *Times-Press-Record* stated noted:

"Thumbs up to the South County Historical Society for its work to turn Ruby's House into the *Pat Loomis History Library and Resource Center*. A centralized repository for historical documents and books has long been needed in the South County, so historians – professional and amateur alike – can research the rich past of not only the South County and its pioneers but also the state as a whole."



CA-NV Symposium in April in Yreka

"Gold is Where you Find It!" (But it helps to know where to look!) is the theme of the 2007 California-Nevada Chapter Symposium that will be held April 21-22 in Yreka, California. Yreka sits in northern California and is surrounded by rivers, forests, mountains and small towns. The surrounding areas are steeped in history, culture and beauty.

The event at the Miner's Inn Convention Center and Siskiyou County Museum will offer lectures, tours and camaraderie. The history of the emigrant trails and gold in northern California and the geology of the Cascade Range and Mt. Shasta will be featured topics. For Symposium information contact Bob and Cherie Evanhoe by e-mail: yreka98bob@sbcglobal.net or phone: 530-842-5563.

Board Hears San Juan Bautista History

By Patricia Loomis

The San Jose area and adjacent San Benito hosted CA/NV chapter members for a Fall Membership/Board meeting in San Juan Bautista October 28-29. As a special treat Frank Tortorich, who just completed two terms as director on the OCTA board, spoke on the Fremont-Castro standoff at San Juan Bautista in 1845.

For three days in March 1845, Fremont looked down on San Juan Bautista and Castro's growing force. For that same length of time, the Mexican leaders looked up at an American flag that Fremont's

men had raised atop Gavilan Peak. On the evening of March 9, the flagpole fell down. Fremont decided to treat this as an omen and that night left the mountaintop and eventually worked his way slowly north through Sacramento Valley to Oregon.

After Frank's talk members visited the historic plaza and cemetery where the Donner party members Patrick Breen and members of his family are buried. A great-grandson of Edward Breen, Greg Cornell who lives in Watsonville, shared a personal account of his family. Edward was a son of Patrick Breen.



Buy a book at the OCTA Store
www.octa-trails.org

New Members

Edson F. Allen
12903 W. Amigo Drive
Sun City West, AZ 85375
623/975-1815
edsonallen@yahoo.com

William Altizer
1503 Superior St., Apt. 13
Lincoln, NE 68521
yaponchik@yahoo.com

Grant A. Anderson
50 East North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84105
801/240-2274
andersonga@ldschurch.org

Stephan & Janice Anderson
1520 Satterfield Dr.
Pocatello, ID 83201
208/237-9772

David & Madge Armstrong
691 Pumping Station Rd.
Hanover, PA 17331
717/632-8669

Rich Bartke
1315 Devonshire Ct.
El Cerrito, CA 94530
richbartke@aol.com

Della Bauer
11322 Harney Plaza Cir.
Omaha, NE 68154
402/697-8544

Edward & Marilyn
Beardslee
P.O. Box 191
Wrightsville, PA 17368
717/252-3104
ebeardslee@sus.com

Walter & Barbara Breyfogle
3210 Friends Rd.
Hayes, VA 23072
804/642-2496
wab@visi.net

George & Marilyn
Carruthers
408 Mustang Ln.
San Marcos, TX 78666
512/392-0878

Anita Corum
7511 Fairway Two Ave.
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
916/962-2110

Ruth Davis
P.O. Box 162
Ionia, NY 14475
585/657-0023

Karma Dewitt
1359 Regent St.
Alameda, CA 94501
510/864-8653
karmadewitt@mac.com

Carolyn Dickinson
HC 67 Box 15
Wells, NV 89835
775/472-8540
wagontrailswest@aol.com

John & Jo Ellen Dobson
721 Palermo Way
La Habra, CA 90631
562/691-9376

Dublin Heights Ranch LLC
73035 Amber St.
Palm Desert, CA 92260
760/779-0721

William & Barbara Dufresne
15956 Cornia Ct.
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745
626/968-0431

Mary Lou Eastman
1507 Bellshire St.
San Antonio, TX 78216
210/494-3077

Pat & Jamie Ellenbecker
1137 8th Rd.
Marysville, KS 66508
785/562-2891

Dwight Fine
2343 Via Sonoma Unit E
Palm Springs, CA 92264
760/327-8684

John Flasch
15106 Walters Rd.
Houston, TX 77068
281/537-2779

Connie Franz
931 Oneida St.
Denver, CO 80220

Charles J. Fritz
8912 Susanna Drive
Billings, MT 59101
406/652-2971

Hal Garrett
2560 N. Anacortes Ln.
Eagle, ID 83616
208/939-0036

Charles Hicks
Hicks Realty
2917 N Chandler Dr.
Hernando, FL 34442
352/637-6262

Paul & Judith Hinkle
165 Walnut
Pikeville, KY 41501
606/437-7915

Donald Hodgson
2959 West B St.
Torrington, WY 82240
307/532-2009
jdhodgson@scottsbuff.net

Timothy Holabird
P.O. Box 5
Doyle, CA 96108
530/827-3018
hummingbird_T@
frontiernet.net

Kenneth H. Z. Isaacs
301 W Poplar Suite 230
Walla Walla, WA 99362
509/525-1086

Marilyn Johnson
Brookside Est.
Jamestown, NY 14701
716/484-3621

David Lanning
105 S. 4th St.
Artesia, NM 88210
505/748-1471
dlanning@ypcnm.com

Jane Leche
701 Harlan St. #E-13
Lakewood, CO 80214
303/275-5349
jleche@fs.fed.us

William M. Moe
P.O. Box 37137
Tucson, AZ 85740

Allen R. Morrisette
3538 Avalon Dr.
Hood River, OR 97031
541/386-5187

Evelyn Marie Mullen
119 Maple Dr.
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Suzi Neitzel
2001 N. 20th St.
Boise, ID 83702
208/861-2355
suzineitzel@ishs.idaho.gov

Gary Noy
P.O. Box 22
Loomis, CA 95650
916/652-7147
gnoy@sierracollege.edu

Brooks Ragen
320 39th Ave. E
Seattle, WA 98112
206/464-8879

John Randall
N-1012
880 Mandalay
Clearwater, FL 33767

California and Nevada Trail Preservation Issues in 2007

Continued From Page 9

the Tahoe National Forest requested that OCTA help them rate the “desirability” of four land parcels they were considering for acquisition. Don Buck and Tom Dougherty agreed that only one parcel was relevant for trail preservation.

Over the spring and summer, Tom also made a field visit with Caltrans staff to verify that equipment-staging locations near the Yuba Gap exit would not impact the trail or the Dutch Flat-Donner Pass Wagon Road. Distressingly, in early summer a private land owner destroyed 1.3 miles of the Truckee Route east of Brady’s Hot Springs. The Class 2 trail was mostly on private land but partly (.3 mile) on BLM land, and had been bladed, widened and graveled for use as a new road. When Don

Buck discovered this activity in July, he spoke to the land owner and found him fully aware of what he was doing to the historic trail.

OCTA members reported the incident to archaeologist Peggy McGuckian at the Winnemucca BLM, whereupon BLM cited the land owner for trespass – requiring payment of a fine. It should also be noted that Geno Oliver had reported the activity to the BLM state office earlier in June, but evidently they did not respond.

Consultation between OCTA, the Eldorado National Forest and Kirkwood Ski Resort continues over proposed new developments in Emigrant Valley. The newly formed Johnson’s Cutoff mapping team is in the process of researching the historic records and identifying trail in the difficult approach areas to Bartlett’s and Brockliss’ bridges.

In July, Frank Tortorich consulted with the Toiyabe National Forest to prevent a road project from significantly damaging the trail in Hope Valley. Frank is also making progress on OCTA’s project with NPS to install interpretive signs at trail viewpoints around Carson Pass.

Richard Silva and Stafford Hazelett reported two incidents of “accidental” damage to trails that evidently occurred in late fall of 2005 so were not discovered until early spring. A section of the Applegate Trail near Pothole Springs was bladed out by Modoc National Forest district staff and a section of the Lockhart Wagon Road was obliterated during a Shasta-Trinity National Forest timber harvest. A historic property damage report filed for the latter incident indicated that Shasta-Trinity cultural resources staff had failed to refer to Silva’s mapping data when planning for the timber harvest. The good news is that all the map data collected by Silva et al., for the Lassen and Nobles trails are now in the Lassen National Forest database – hopefully they will be used once incorporated into their system.

Larger projects that OCTA is monitoring include the upcoming exchange of Bureau of Reclamation lands in Nevada (near Rye Patch Reservoir, Battle Mountain and the Humboldt Sink), which is in its final stages of environmental review. Also coming up is the potential disposal of approximately 85,000 acres of public land scattered throughout the national forests of California – some of which could include segments of emigrant roads.

New Members

Peter & Lois Rimsa
85 Park St.
Proctor, VT 05765
802/459-2725

Ann Rutherford
866 E. 6th St.
Chico, CA 95928
530/345-1894
aharruth@aol.com

Dr. Sue Schrems
4500 Highland Hills Dr.
Norman, OK 73026
405/364-9647
schrems@alumni-ou.edu

Colleen Sievers
P.O. Box 511
Rock Springs, WY 82902
307/362-2319
C4sievers@hotmail.com

Miriam Sprankling
Stagecoach Inn Museum
Complex
51 South Ventu Park Rd.
Newbury Park, CA 91320
818/889-7700

Terry Taylor
2107 9th St. SW
Austin, MN 55912
507/433-4566
tdtaylor@smig.net

Carol Tebo
5390 Lynn Drive
Arvada, CO 80002
303/422-7094

Joan Thompson
3711 Hunters Circle
San Antonio, TX 78230
210/492-3550

Ginger Whetham
1102 Cayuse Circle SE
Salem, OR 97302
503/581-7598

Richard Woodbury
12449 Kodiak Lane
Grass Valley, CA 95949
530/268-7771
dick@woodburyspace.com

Bill & Ann Worthington
836 8th Ave. SW
Rochester, MN 55902
507/282-7906

Crossroads Chapter

Trail Preservation Training Held in October

By Al Mulder

A chapter meeting and barbecue at Benson's Mill in September closed out chapter activity for 2006. A good turnout enjoyed the special event that included a tour of the historic Mill and the park exhibits. Oscar Olson gave an excellent talk and slide presentation on the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail and the red rock country of Southern Utah. This 1880 trail was blazed by a pioneer group of 250 men, women and children in eighty-two wagons. They traveled from Escalante to Bluff, UT, taking their wagons down the "hole" and across the Colorado River.

It was good to see friends Bill and Donna Smart and Frank and Dorothy Karras at the event. Bill Smart authored the book *Utah Trails* several years ago which included the story of the "Hole-in-the-Rock" Trail. Boyd Blanthorn conducted tours of the old restored mill. The barbecue meal prepared by Meiers Catering was outstanding as usual and no one left hungry.

In October, a two-day trail preservation training session was conducted by OCTA and hosted by Utah Crossroads. On October 19, classroom training on the MET program was conducted by OCTA's Preservation Officer, Dave Welch. He was assisted by Leslie Fryman and Jim McGill. Kay Threlkeld gave a briefing on the OCTA/NPS Cost-Share Projects Program. Vern Gorzitze, OCTA President, hosted the event and made all the arrangements. On October 20, the attendees took a field trip to several sites on the Mormon-California



(Above) Members of the OCTA trail preservation class look for trail evidence and classify existing ruts on the Mormon-California Trail at Hogsback Summit. (Below right) Trainees look for rust marks and trail evidence near Large Spring campsite on the Mormon-California Trail. (Below left) Participants have lunch at Mormon Flat during the trail preservation clinic. (Photos by Oscar Olson)



Trails to determine trail classifications and discuss trail marking and mapping. Our thanks to OCTA and Dave Welch for setting up this program for all the chapters.

In January, the chapter will hold an election for officers to lead the chapter in 2007. Trailing is over for this year – time to store the wagons and put the teams out to pasture.

Trails Head Chapter

Highway Crossing Dedicated; Exhibits Placed at Shawnee Indian Mission

From the Chapter Newsletter

In early October the highway intersection of Interstate 435, Interstate 470 and U.S. Highway 71, known locally as the "Grandview Triangle," was officially renamed the 3-Trails Crossing Memorial Highway by the Missouri Department of Transportation. The new name commemorates the Independence Route of the Santa Fe, Oregon and California National Historic Trails that pass right through the area.

Tens of thousands of mountain men, traders, freighters, missionaries, emigrants and other adventurers passed through this intersection on their way to seek their fortune as a part of the westward movement of this country.

Guest speakers for the highway dedication included OCTA members Ross Marshall and Craig Crease.

Most of the new exhibits at the Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site opened to the public in September. OCTA Member Barbara Magerl, co-chair of the Shawnee Indian Mission Development Committee, took part in the ceremony. Assisting in the Trails room, which had a temporary exhibit, were OCTA members Judy Budde, One Gieschen, Kendall McNabney, Silvia Mooney and Dick Nelson.

Two additional exhibits will be part of the Mission displays including one dedicated to the Oregon-California and Santa Fe Trails.

The Trails Head Chapter purchased an inscribed brick that will be placed at the Mission.



Work is continuing on the Gardner Junction Project that calls for renovations and regrading at the site plus the addition of several interpretive panels prepared by the National Park Service. The \$150,000 needed for the project is now in place and contract documents were being prepared last fall.

The site, located southwest of Gardner, KS on U.S. Highway 56, is a small roadside park near the junction of the Westport and Independence routes of the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails. It is also the point where the Oregon-California Trail departed from the Santa Fe Trail.



The Annual Meeting of the Trails Head chapter was held in early November and included a program, "Zebulon Pike and Dr. John Robinson 200 Years Ago" presented by Craig Crease. This recognized that 2006 was the bicentennial year of Pike's Southwestern Expedition, which crossed Missouri and Kansas before continuing into Colorado. There the expedition was ordered by Mexican authorities to travel south through New Mexico and on to Chihuahua, Mexico. After interrogation there, Pike's expedition traveled back east across Texas to Louisiana.

Gateway Chapter

Gateway Considers Partnership in the Living History Preserve

From the Chapter Newsletter

Cindy Weaver, representing the St. Joseph Parks and Recreation Department, has met with the Gateway Chapter Board regarding the master plan for the River Front Park and the Living History Preserve. The master plan was developed 17 years ago and resulted in the beautiful river walk with interpretive signs, earth lodge and fort.

The Living History Preserve is the last part of the master plan to be completed. The Living History Preserve will include various buildings devoted to segments of St. Joseph history.

Weaver proposed that the Gateway Chapter partner with the Park Department in designing and constructing a building devoted to the Western migration. Now that the 2006 OCTA Convention has been concluded, the chapter will be considering this proposal more fully.

25th Anniversary OCTA Convention Planning Underway

By Loren Pospisil
Chapter Event Coordinator and
Convention Chair

Planning is in full swing for the 2007 OCTA 25th Anniversary Convention to be held in Gering-Scottsbluff Aug. 8-12. Our committee accomplished quite a bit this summer. We laid out three bus tours. We also got a lot of good ideas, food for thought, and caveats from the 2006 convention.

One thing sort of fell in our lap and we are still working out the details, but Ben Kern from Wyoming has made several wagon trips across Nebraska, and we are working on details of having a wagon train as a lead-up to the convention. A number of other people from other states have stepped forward to provide help in critical areas.

Activities will include two tours led by OCTA Trail Marking Chair Randy Brown, and potential bus trips to the Ash Hollow area, Fort Laramie, historic sites in Morrill and Scotts Bluff Counties, and one to Julesburg, CO. We are planning a grand evening at Scotts Bluff, a cookout at Oregon Trail Wagon Train near Bayard, a reception at Chimney Rock, a musical, and possibly a parade.

We still need as much help as we can get. We have two requirements in prospective volunteers. One would be the ability to talk about stuff you love (I think that is the entire membership of OCTA), and the other is to have fun. Word on the street is that we should expect 500 people. It has been 20 years since the convention was here last, and people are excited. I'm not kidding! We are going to need helpers just to "be around" and greet

and talk and help out people.

The tentative schedule calls for the OCTA Board meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 7, the Annual Business Meeting, speakers, and other programs on Wednesday, Aug. 9 through Aug. 11, and speakers plus the awards program on Friday, Aug. 10.

More specific details will be included in future issues of *News from the Plains* and in the convention registration packets to be sent later this year.

A convention website is available at www.visitscottsbluff.com/ota.



Fort Kearny has extensive historical displays, buildings and information that will be of interest to travelers heading to Nebraska.

Check the site frequently for updates on convention activities, accommodations, and other specifics you will need in planning your trip to Gering-Scottsbluff for the 25th Anniversary Convention.



Robidoux Pass is one site near Gering-Scottsbluff that OCTA Convention attendees will want to visit. (Photos by Candy Moulton)

Board Candidates Needed

Continued from Page 12

nominee's trail background and experience and the extent to which the person has participated in the affairs of OCTA.

2. A written endorsement from a minimum of 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 can help OCTA reach its goals.

5. A good quality photo of the candidate, which could be used in publicity. (This should be a print, or if digital, scanned or taken at 300 dpi.)

For further assistance you may contact one of the members of the Nominating and Leadership Committee, a current OCTA Board member or a chapter president.

All nominations must 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
glennharrison@cmug.com

Others elected to the OCTA Nominating and Leadership Committee at the last convention are:

James McGill
305 Melba Drive
Nampa, ID 83686
208-467-4853
jwmcgill@pobox.com

John Atkinson
1113 Safari Drive
St. Joseph, MO 64506
816-233-3924
atkinson@stjoelive.com

YOU CAN CONGRATULATE OCTA ON 25 YEARS OF SERVICE!

WE ARE PLANNING a special extended Summer issue of *Overland Journal* to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Oregon-California Trails Association. Show your appreciation by adding your name to the "Congratulations" list or buy a space in which to compose a message.

ADVERTISING RATES

Add your name to the list: \$25

"Congrats" message, in which you can compose a maximum 90-word message (3.5" x 2").

Suggestion: make this an ad in memory of family members who actually came west on the overland trails: \$50

Quarter-page (3.625" x 4.875"): \$85

Half-page (horizontal or vertical): \$150

Full page (7.25" x 10"): \$250

Outside back cover (7.25" x 10"): \$400

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO RESERVE YOUR AD SPACE,
please contact OCTA headquarters: contact@octa-trails.org · 888.811.6282
THE DEADLINE FOR AD RESERVATIONS IS APRIL 21; ADS ARE DUE MAY 21.**

Visit the National Frontier Trails Museum to explore the Westward Expansion.



The Prairie Bride or, the Squatter's Triumph by *Max Henry A. Thomas*
146 pp. paperback \$2.95

"A Reprint of the Classic Beadle Dime Novel 'The Prairie Bride'... Theed of her controlling stepparents, headstrong heiress Annie Howard goes west and encounters a series of adventures... including a blazing prairie fire, a sinking croquet, the kidnapping of her beloved servant, and, of course, romance. When 'The Prairie Bride', was first published in 1869 by Beadle & Adams, it was a best-seller. Western history fans will delight in the novel's whimsical presentation of a claim fight over a homestead... perhaps even more charming now than it was in the nineteenth century."

The National Frontier Trails Museum is the only museum, library and archives in the nation exclusively devoted to the history of the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails. It recreates the story of those daring pioneers using quotes from journals and diaries, original illustrations and artifacts they left behind. The exhibits include the explorations of Lewis and Clark, the vital role of fur trappers and traders, the unique story of Mormons looking for religious freedom, and the transcontinental railroad which brought the overland wagon trails to an end. During the trails period, thousands of wagons rolled down the hill from the Independence Courthouse Square and passed over the property where the museum now sits. Evidence of the migration can still be seen today in the form of swales, or grassed over wagon ruts, left in the field directly across the street from the museum.

For more information on the Trails Museum and upcoming special events, please call 816-325-7575, or visit our website at www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org.

The National Frontier Trails Museum
318 W. Pacific, Independence, MO 64050
816-325-7575 frontiertrailsmuseum.org

Mon./Sat. 9:00 am - 4:30 pm
Sunday 12:30 - 4:30 pm

Adults \$5.00, Seniors (62 & older) \$4.50
Youth (6 - 17) \$3.00, Age 5 & under Free



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**March 2 & 3, 2007
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